Full Length Research Paper

Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and the future possibilities in Library Science (LIS) development

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Training of qualified professionals is of paramount importance in the provision of library services in the school system. The position paper takes a critical look at Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and the future possibilities in Library Science development. An appraisal of the History of Nigerian Library Association, structure/ achievements was recapped. It highlighted paradigm shifts in the new millennium, the basic skills and competencies that a professional in Library Science must acquired. Also, the additional roles of Nigerian Library Association and the future possibilities in Library School development were highlighted. The paper concluded that Nigerian Library Association should be fully involved in the development of Library School curricular, training of Librarians and regular capacity building workshop should be the center place at NLA annual events than the conventional paper presentations at conferences.

Key words: Nigerian Library Association, competences, library school development, capacity building.

INTRODUCTION

The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) serves as the umbrella organization for persons interested in Libraries, Librarianship and Information Services in Nigeria. It seeks among other things to promote the establishment and development of Libraries and to assist in the promotion of such legislation as may be considered necessary for the establishment, regulation and management of libraries in Nigeria.

Since inception its activities has been centered on capacity building of librarians and the development of all types of libraries for steady relevance in the society. In the technology era librarians need some skills, knowledge and attitude to flourish in librarianship. The information landscape is changing and is requiring some skills different from the traditional skills of librarianship of acquisition, organization, dissemination and preservation of library materials. Khoo, (2011) noted that the awareness of the competencies, the acquisition and application of these competences are proportional to the talent, aptitude, personality and interest of the individual professional. In essence, librarians need to be innovative, need to be

savvy, understand changing technology and the needs of their community, Eze & Uzoigwe, (2013).

Competencies according to Griffiths and King (1993) comprise of knowledge, skill and attitude related to effective behaviours and work performance. They stressed that knowledge refers to having information about, knowing or understanding something, skill is the ability to apply knowledge effectively and attitude refers to the individual`s interest mental or emotional approach to something. It is therefore imperative for the library professionals in the present era to engage in a value added work, such that will be accomplished by evaluating, filtering, interacting, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing and packaged into a ready form for immediate use by their clients for decision making and other useful purposes instead of just identifying the source of information and providing documents. This will make them move from information work to knowledge, thereby having direct impact on their users` work and the effectiveness and competitiveness of their parent organization.

The librarian in public and private organizations may be called upon to participate in a lead knowledge management projects and initiatives in their organizations therefore they have to keep tracts of developments in technology and new information products to assess them

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for use in their libraries and to exploit them to improve their services. They also need sufficient IT knowledge to supervise IT projects in their library and draw up specifications for these projects. These Information professionals play the teachers` roles and serve as IT trainers, providing workshops and short courses on the use of new technologies and new information products, and on interest and technology-oriented topics Ashcroft,(2004).

The role and expectations of the Librarians have changed over the years as a result of the introduction of Information Communication Technology. Mole & Dim (2013) affirms that the infusion of ICT into all human activities has completely changed the practice of Librarianship all over the world. Libraries are no longer what they should be.

As new roles and skills emerge, new era Librarians are expected to be technology application leaders who work with other members of the information management team. Libraries too have a responsibility to take advantage of the new technologies, new standards to make our collections easier to discover, our systems easier to use, and our physical spaces converted to digital space. Atinmo, (2013) Therefore, management and interpersonal skill will make them effective manager of networks resources and services by managing the digital information system, creation of web pages which helps to promote their services to internal customers and choosing automated library management systems.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:
1.   Identify ways of facilitating the capacity building of the Librarians in order to remain relevant.
2.   To ascertain the extent of awareness of the emerging roles of the new era Librarians.
3.   To reappraise the need to review the NLA annual events to societal relevance and membership capacity buildings

METHODOLOGY

A documentary research and observatory method was used for conducting this study. It involves gathering of data from authenticated documents for analysis. The documents used for this study were selected related studies by Librarians in journals, NLA constitution, compendium of NLA conference papers, annual reports and books.

History of Nigerian Library Association

The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) started as a Div-ision of the West African Library Association (WALA). West African Library Association itself was established in 1954 as an United Nation offshoot of a UNESCO Seminar on the development of Public Libraries in Africa held at Ibadan in 1953. With the political independence from colonial rule of Anglophone, West African Countries in the late 1950s –ind early 1960s West African Library Association national divisions transformed to National Library Association (NLA) in 1962.

The objectives of the Nigeria Library Association include the following:
a.   To unite persons interested in Libraries, Librarianship and information services.
b.   To safeguard and promote the professional interest of Libraries.
c.   To promote the establishment and development of libraries and to assist in the promotion of such legislation as may be considered necessary for the establishment regulation and management of Libraries in Nigeria.
d.   To watch legislation affecting and to assist in the promotion of such legislation as may be considered necessary for the establishment, regulation and management of Libraries in Nigeria.
e.   To promote and encourage bibliographical study, research and library cooperation.
f.   To do all lawful things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objective.

Structure/Achievements

The supreme organ of the Nigerian Library Association is the council which consists of the elected national officers of the Association, eight elected Councillors and all the Chairman of State Chapters and Federal Capital territory, as well, as special subject interest section Chairmen.

Individual members of the Association now numbering about six thousand are drawn from carious types of libraries throughout the country. Every Librarian would normally, belong in the first instance to one of the thirty-seven (37) states/FCT Chapters and/or more of the twelve (12) interest groupings.

The twelve special interest sections currently in existence are as follows:
1.   Academic and Research Libraries (ARL)
2.   Association of Government Libraries (AGOL)
3.   Association of News media Librarians of Nigeria (ANLON)
4.   Association of Women Librarians of Nigeria (AWLIN)
5.   Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing (CACLIN)
6.   Nigeria Association of Law Libraries (NALL)
7.   Library and Information Science Teachers (LIST)
8.   Public Libraries (PL)
9.   Information Technology (IT)

10.   Nigerian School Library Association (NSLA)
11.   Association of Libraries for Visually Handicapped (ALVH)
12.   Preservation and Conservation (PC)

The Nigeria Division successfully made a proposal for a National Library Policy, which became the blueprint for early library development and led to the inauguration of the Library advisory committee in 1958. This committee became the forum for the discussion if library development at the national level and advice on library matters and conditions of service for Librarians in the Federal Civil Service.

•   The Nigerian library association made representation to Government for the establishment of the national library of Nigeria and the national library Act of 1962.
•   The association was also instrument in securing Government support for the professional education and training of library personal leading to the establishment of the institute of Librarianship at the University of Ibadan.
•   The promulgation of the librarian's registration council of Nigeria (LRCN) Decree in June 1995 and the subsequent inauguration of the council by the Honourable minister of Education, Professor Bodis Hade on 28th may, 2002.
•   The association has successfully influenced the government in inaugurating the council in May 2002 to enable it perform its stipulated functions of regulating the practice of the library and information profession in the country.
•   Today, the Nigeria Library Association has thirty-seven (37) chapters with each state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) having its own chairman and local administration.
•   Similarly, the association has twelve registered subject and professional sections, each after its own interest group.
•   The Nigerian Library Association has successfully mobilized its members to be aware of the wind of change blowing around the world of information by encouraging training and re-training on information and communication technology (ICT).

Paradigm Shifts in the New Millennium

•   The future possibilities in Library Science development in the new millennium are the transition from paper to electronic media as the main form of information storage, retrieval and dissemination.

•   Increasing demand for accountability through strategic planning, performance measurement bench marking and continuous improvement.

•   New forms of work organization and environment relating with a more varied and dynamic types of clients with changing needs and characteristics.

Basic Skills and Competencies in Library & Information Science Development

Library schools are expecting their students to be computer literate, have productivity software skills like performing basic word processing using various presentation tools. Be innovative, and creative, be able to create directories and download/install software, internet use expert/webmaster, have the ability to evaluate the outcomes of information use and conduct research related to the solution of information problems; have expert knowledge of content of information resources, including the ability to critically evaluate and filter them; ability to develop, adapt and implement new thinking that distinguish him from his peers and before the rest of the bunch, etc.

Library School Curricular

An overview of Library schools curricular globally indicated that most schools now include courses like:
•   Library management
•   Management information systems and services
•   Information processing and retrieval
•   Information systems and programmes
•   Information sources and services
•   Information technology application
•   Information literary
•   Scholarly publishing. Etc

In addition to the above others skills are:
•   Digital Librarianship.
•   Management of digital libraries, roles and responsibilities of the digital libraries.

Ashcroft (2004) and Osa (2003) characterized the work environment of Information professionals in the 21st Century as one of fast-paced and content change. They concluded that information professional have to be flexible in adapting and adopting new skills and strategies for handling them, they also opined that the work environment of the Information professionals often has the characteristics that include competition, rapidly changing technology and uncertain status. This was established as a need for career-long learning skills for Information professionals as posited by a recent study conducted by Adomi & Famola (2013). It was reiterated by them that a librarian that wants to be relevant throughout the career span must be able to develop the habit/skill of continuous learning.

Changing Traditional Skills

The traditional roles of library school have changed with the advances in Information Communication Technologies library science professionals are now expected to possess competence to work in "New" technology driven environment. According to Ajuwon & Olorunsaye (2013) in their recent study conducted, it was highlighted that the past two decades, has witnessed a tremendous increase in the

availability and use of electronic information resources including online databases, online Public Access Catalog (OPAC), e-conferencing, e-mail discussion forums, full text journals, e-books, scholarly websites, bulletin boards, gateways, portals, digital archives and institutional repositories among others.

The Role of Nigerian Library Association (NLA)

The role of Nigerian Library Association is to organize workshops and short courses on the use of new technologies be involve in management and leadership, planning, budgeting, project management, administrative and strategic planning entrepreneurship skills which include ability to practice profession on private basis and charge fees for services should be included in the library school curriculum.

The Nigeria Library Association should design training programmes for capacity building and this should be held simultaneously with the conferences. As against the current practice of having a separate division for workshop under the auspices of Library and Information Technology (LITT): a division of the Nigerian Library Association. Identify information seeking behavior, design, query and evaluate information retrieval systems. Demonstrate proficiency in use of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) and articulate ethics and values of the profession in order to promote national development through accesses to information.

The need to review the curricula of library schools needs to be overhauled and geared towards preparing students for the 21st century as Librarians and Information professionals taking into account the skills, similarly, the present curricula need to be more geared towards information and systems management to strengthen student's knowledge in Information Communication Technologies (ICT) in addition to having a solid background in library science. The curricula for the undergraduate bachelor's degree need to be beefed up, made to be the ''all comer's'' entrance into the profession and strengthened further in the detectives with more credits to enables the graduate to function efficiently and effectively in the field.

The Profession of Librarianship

Librarianship is a noble and exalted profession whose motto is "service of mankind". This esteemed profession has made waves and very wonderful progress globally. It has successfully built a wealth of healthy traditions in the field of such as Dr. Ranganathan, in India who invented the five laws of Librarianship and John Dewey an American who introduced a now popular classification scheme named after him.

Librarians are the persons who have to be vigilant and conscientious to keep existing high ideals alive. If one destroys the library profession the people will become amenable to the demon of ignorance. So in order to keep the lamp of knowledge burning, a librarian has to work hard and be up-to-date. Librarianship is a body of people who carry on their duties in accordance with rules designed to enforce certain standards with two main objectives the better protection of its members and the better service to the public.

As a profession, Librarianship aims at service. Only those persons who are passionate about the profession and interested at least as much in opportunities to help others or mentor the young to a satisfactory conditions of work should be encouraged to enter the field. A Librarian must like books and also like people and be able to work and relate well with people. Good physical health, high intelligence, honesty and a certain amount of vitality are also required.

A Librarian is for the readers and the letter cannot do without the valuable and expert services of a qualified Librarian. Their bond of friendship is unbreakable. A Librarian is called "the guide, the philosopher and the friend "of the uninitiated and the scholar alike. A Librarian has an onus to prove himself worthy of this honour.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerian Library Association should enforce constant capacity building for the library professional development as a panacea to professional development. The Association should devote more time to training, establishing libraries and library schools, designing library building and mentoring of Librarians.

The librarian is an embodiment of a digital information profession and a knowledge worker who can add value to make libraries truly useful and user-friendly. New skills and competencies are essential for the multiplicity of web-based digital resources and accesses to a network of key contacts.

Librarianship is indeed on the top gear as markup languages, database technology, user interface designs, programming web technologies are fast replacing our traditional, narrow and broad terms in the field we all know and love so much. It is now a multi-skill and multi-tasking profession requiring special personal and professional competencies with effective skills. We need library schools that are ready, and intellectually ready, technology savvy, and business skill/enterprising oriented teachers to take Nigeria through to the 20:20 transformation agenda and beyond.

Skill development should not be only information Communication Technology (ICTs) skills acquisition but must include knowledge management, project management, users focus and supports leadership management and strategic thinking.

There should be total evaluation of library school curriculum to accommodate the recent changes in information management and service delivery. We must conform to the trend in other to forward propelled libraries, embrace change, creating new services, improve on the existing ones, get out of the four walls of the library, relate effectively with our service community, develop a 'long throat' approach to best practices and skills in developed nations, localized our context, think creatively and innovatively as Librarian to reposition the library and the Nigerian Library Association for needed visibility and relevant now and in the future. The performance index of the

librarians must be regularly measured and rewarded. The right and privilege of librarians for being a member of the Association should transcend the recent right to vote and be voted for as embedded in the constitution. Special salary structure and allowance should be advocated for the practicing Librarians fro effective service and membership drive

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