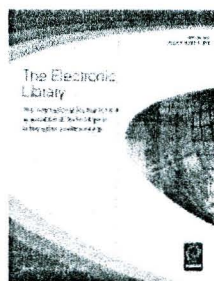


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Chinwe Nwogo Ezeani, Helen Nneka Eke and Felicia Ugwu,
Nnamdi Azikiwe Library,
University of Nigeria,
Nsukka,
Nigeria.

6th March 2013.

Dear Dr Ezeani, Miss Eke and Miss Felicia Ugwu,

The Electronic Library

It is a pleasure to accept your manuscript entitled "Professionalism in Library and Information Science: an examination of current trends, needs and opportunities in Academic Libraries in South East Nigeria" Manuscript ID EL-10-2012-0134.R1 for publication in *The Electronic Library* Vol. 33 No. 1, 2015.

By publishing in this journal, your work will benefit from Emerald EarlyCite. This is a prepublication service which allows your paper to be published online earlier, and so read by users and, potentially, cited earlier.

Thank you for your contribution. On behalf of the Editorial Team of *The Electronic Library*, we look forward to your continued contributions to the journal.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Baxter,
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Professionalism in Library and Information Science: an examination of current trends, needs and opportunities in Academic Libraries in South East Nigeria.

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Keywords:	Professionalism, Library Practice, Librarianship, Library Trends, Opportunities

ONLINE

Professionalism in Library and Information Science: an examination of current trends, needs and opportunities in Academic Libraries in South East Nigeria.

Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Abstract

This paper examined the current trends, needs and opportunities of professionalism in librarianship in Nigeria. The broad purpose of the paper was to investigate the level of professionalism in librarianship and to ascertain the current status, trends, and opportunities within the profession among academic librarians in Nigeria. Five specific research questions were formulated which are: to examine how librarians value librarianship as a profession, to elicit the efforts made by librarians with regards to professional development, to ascertain methods of acquiring current competencies within the profession, to investigate the role of professional bodies in promoting professionalism and excellence within the library and information science profession, and to proffer strategies to enhance professionalism and excellence among librarians in Nigeria. The area of study chosen for the paper was Libraries in South East Nigeria and the population comprised all sixty five academic librarians from the three Federal university libraries in South East Nigeria. The sample size was all the sixty five librarians. Analysis was done using descriptive statistics. The study revealed the challenges facing professionalism and excellence within the library and information science field as lack of funding for professional development, lack of sponsorship to workshops and conferences, lack of uninterruptible internet facility, a dearth of professional mentors in the South East zone. Other problems gathered from a scheduled interview with some senior professionals in the institutions revealed that most librarians are still facing the challenge of imbibing and utilizing emerging skills in the LIS professions such as digital archiving, data mining skills for their day-to-day activities. Recommendations arising from the study were proffered such as the Creation of staff development programmes by management; collaboration and partnership by libraries within the zone; acquisition of training through workshops and conferences irrespective of sponsorship by the institutions; teaming of Academic Librarians to enhance their visibility and publication output. International staff exchanges and opportunities for sabbatical leave which hitherto was not common in the South East Zone were recommended. Among other recommendations also were; building of consortia with libraries in the country; LIS professional bodies helping to create visibility and prestige of the LIS profession and finally in order to scale up the image of the profession the marketing of library products through profiling of patrons and furnishing them with required information has not only become necessary but critical.

Keywords: *Professionalism, Library Practice, Librarianship, Library Trends, Opportunities.*

Introduction

The twenty first century has brought a lot of dynamism within the Library and Information Science profession. This has come as a result of the sophisticated nature of the present day library user. Our library patrons are constantly prompting Librarians to be more pro-active in their service delivery. The advent of the Internet has also compelled librarians to work at providing services in more dynamic ways. Library and Information Service is an umbrella term covering all services obtainable in the library. This does not only imply 'within-the-library services', but also includes mobile library services which in essence is the provision of library services to clients outside the library building. There is therefore, the need for professionalism in providing these library services. Professionalism in a general sense is a term

that simply entails the art of playing expertise in one's field; trying to meet up to standards as demanded by the profession. Professionalism in library and information services is regarded as a 'hidden treasure'. In the words of Brooker (2010), 'Professional Development in the library and information profession in Australia is our profession's gold that remains a hidden treasure.'

In the library and information science field, professionalism has to do with the whole gamut of the operations within a library workforce, that is, the relationship of the librarians with the library management, their clients, colleagues, team spirit, staff development, role of the Nigerian Library Associations, etc. Librarianship as a profession has to do with the application of these work ethics in the realization of the goals of the profession. Entsua-Mensah (2004) succinctly encapsulates this idea when he opined that some of the basic attributes of a profession are that it should have a body of knowledge that allows people assess the accomplishments and standards of the formal content of education systems of the profession. In addition he affirms that there should be the presence of an underlying theory and code of ethics that guides the activities of the practitioners as well as a common association that takes care of its members. Professionalism of the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession is a novel area which many scholars have not delved into. A few scholars in Africa such as Entsua-Mensah (2004) and Lawal (2000) have done some theoretical works in this area. However, no empirical studies known to the authors have been done in the South East part of Nigeria. This has created an obvious gap which this study is set to fill.

Research Questions

This study is set to examine professionalism in the Library and Information Science profession and also to ascertain the current status, trends, and opportunities within the profession among Academic Librarians in South East Nigeria. The following Research Questions guided the study:

1. How do librarians value librarianship as a profession?
2. What are the various efforts made by Librarians with regard to professional development?
3. What are the methods of acquiring current competencies within the profession?
4. What roles do professional bodies play in promoting professionalism among Librarians?
5. What are the challenges faced by Librarians with regard to professionalism and excellence within the Library and Information Science Profession?
6. What are the possible strategies for enhancing professionalism and excellence among Librarians in South East Nigeria?

It is germane at this point to make some conceptual clarifications in order to put issues in a proper perspective

Conceptual Clarifications

Librarianship as a profession and its value

Writing on the legal qualifications of librarians, Takeuchi and Kim (1999) remarked that the goal of library and information science education is to produce qualified librarians. There is a universally accepted definition of a librarian. This is that they are a corps of professionals that are trained to carry out core duties of a library, beyond the day-to-day routines of library officers and library attendants. These duties include cataloguing, Indexing, Collection development, Serials management, Reader services. Wikipedia (2012) records that A librarian may provide other information services, including computer provision and training, coordination of public programs, basic literacy education, assistive equipment for people with disabilities, and help with finding and using community resources.

Librarians in Nigeria: Who are they?

Narrowing it down to Africa and Nigeria in particular, librarianship as a profession has indeed come a long way. This is evidenced by the establishment of library schools in various renowned universities in Nigeria. Based on (Lancour 1958 and Sharr 1963) reports on library needs of West Africa and Northern Nigeria respectively, two library schools were established in Nigeria. The first was the Institute of

Librarianship which was opened in 1960 at the University College Ibadan and the second was at the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, in 1968. These institutions were built on different philosophical and professional orientations. While the Ibadan library school began with one year basic professional program leading to the award of the post-graduate diploma in accordance with the main objective of the Institute which has been to educate the leadership for the library profession, the Zaria library school mounted an under-graduate program leading to the award of the Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) degree based on the objective to train professional librarians at all levels with well rounded education up to international standard while placing emphasis on the problems facing libraries in Africa. Today several LIS programmes have been mounted at both the undergraduate and post graduate levels.

In Nigeria today, librarianship has grown to be a widely recognized profession. As noted by Saleh (2011), the stage for the development of library profession in Nigeria was set up with the arrival of John Harris as the librarian of the University College Ibadan, in 1948. "He was not only instrumental to the development of the University College Library, but also organized the Native Authority Libraries, the first organized Library Training course in 1950." According to reader (1966) quoted In Lawal (2000) most occupations need professional associations to focus opinion, work up a body of knowledge, and insist upon a decent standard of conduct.. In this regard the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) started off as a body to bring library science practitioners and professionals together to share a common goal. The objectives of the association are:

- To unite persons interested in Libraries, Librarianship and Information services;
- To safeguard and promote the professional interests of librarians;
- To promote the establishment and development of libraries and information centres;
- To watch legislation affecting libraries and assist in the promotion of such legislation as may be considered necessary for the establishment, regulation and management of libraries within Nigeria;
- To promote and encourage bibliographical study, research and library cooperation and;
- To do all lawful things as are incidental and conducive to the attainment of the above objectives (<http://www.nla-ng.org/aboutus.html>).

Although the above objectives hinge on professionalism and the library profession, there is more to professionalism in librarianship than stipulated above. For instance, a professional librarian in Nigeria is referred to that librarian that has obtained a Bachelors or Masters degree in Library and Information Science. This singular reason prompted the body called LRCN (Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria) to start up the process of registering practicing librarians and these librarians must have passed through training in the university. These are differentiated from Para-professionals who could be diploma holders in the same profession. The Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria has the following as requisites for becoming a registered librarian:

- **Obtain Academic Qualification :** The journey towards becoming a chartered librarian starts with the attainment of required academic qualification(s) in Library and Information Science discipline. The minimum qualification required to be a chartered librarian in Nigeria is first a postgraduate degree or its equivalent in librarianship as determined by the LRCN.
- **Pay the required Registration Fee:** The sum of Three Thousand (N3, 000) only for LRCN registration form should be paid into any of LRCN bank accounts.
- **Obtain LRCN Registration Form:** After making the required registration fee payment into LRCN account, registration form can either be downloaded from NLA website (www.nla-ng.org) or physically at any of LRCN Collection Centre in Nigeria with evidence of payment (original bank teller).

- **Complete and Submit Registration Form:** The registration form should be properly completed and submitted at any of LRCN Collection Centre, or at LRCN Head Office
- **Consideration of Application and Verification of Credentials:** LRCN would consider applications received, verify the documentation submitted by applicants and ascertain their eligibility for registration as librarians in Nigeria.
- **Notification of Qualified Applicants:** Applicants who have been adjudged qualified for registration as librarians and chartered have their names advertised in the media (National Dailies or the Online Forum or any other medium accepted by the Council).
- **Induction of Registered Librarians:** Induction ceremony is organized for registered librarians, where certificates are issued. Successfully registered librarians are expected to pay some certain amount of money which is determined by the Council for the induction.

Professional Values and Ethics in LIS

In Library and Information Science Profession, there seems to be no standard written ethics and values that guide the profession world wide. What have always served as a watchword for librarians are the Ranganathan's five laws of librarianship which states:

- Books are for use
- Every book its reader
- Every reader its book
- Save the time of the reader
- The library is a growing organism

The library services revolve around the above stated laws in which case, the librarian matches readers' requests with relevant materials and on time. Nevertheless, there is still need for values and ethics which should guide the library profession. What are these values on a general note? Values may be defined as "generalized abstract ideas held by human individuals or groups about what is desirable, proper, good or bad" (Allan, 1993). In this century, the core values of North American librarianship have included intellectual freedom, open and free access to information, and resistance to censorship.

Academic librarians have demonstrated these values by supporting research and the advancement of knowledge. Although not always without controversy, these values seem clearly defined and easy to support.

Librarians and Professional Development

Most professionals of different fields seem to be eager to develop themselves in their area of expertise. This might be due to competitions or just for the sake of updating their knowledge as the society enlarges in knowledge sharing. In the process of this development, knowledge is acquired, utilized and probably shared among colleagues thereby increasing the value of knowledge. Pan and Hovde (2010) supporting this stated that Professional development (PD) is a lifetime learning process, which is both universal and individualized. It is a universal requirement of all librarians in order to keep up with the rapid changes in the library field and maintain professionalism. At the same time, it is an individualized experience that varies with the needs of specific work duties as well as resources available around one's working, social, and academic environment. For librarians to develop themselves in their profession, there is therefore need for continuous training, scholarship and mastery of their discipline. In the library schools, certain skills are taught the students in preparation for becoming practicing professionals. Such students rise to become librarians, teachers and administrators thereby having installed such individuals in positions that would enable them practice what they learnt and impart such on others.. Tmaszewski and MacDónald (2006) observe that librarians attend library conferences for professional development and continuing education, to learn about new trends, new technologies, and to build a professional network. Vega and Connell (2009) tried to determine why professional librarians attend conferences and to consider their

attitudes toward various conference offerings and whether conference attendance is important to their careers. The study found the main reason the respondents attended conferences was to achieve professional rejuvenation and networking. More recently, Eke (2011) undertook an empirical study on the impact of Nigerian Library Association conference attendance on librarians' professional development and the finding stated that the major reason among others proffered while librarians attend such conference is to learn about professional issues.

Current Trends in Professional Development and emerging LIS skills

Continuing Professional Development is an essential part of the modern library information professional's successful career planning & prospects. The LIS Professionals with better personal, professional and technological competencies have great opportunities and bright future in the modern libraries. Application of new ICT in the libraries immediately requires improvement of different kinds of skills and knowledge in the LIS profession. Continuous staff training on emerging technologies is essential to learn, improve and develop various kinds of professional skills, knowledge and competencies (Ahmad and Yaseen, 2009). Many librarians term conferences as major places for professional development. But beyond and above that, there are other avenues via which librarians can develop themselves depending on their readiness and willingness to widen their horizon and break new grounds.

Technologies have created a new service environment that has pushed conventional boundaries much farther, with calculated risk and opportunities. In this environment, libraries that can survive are those that can react proactively to a broad spectrum of contemporary challenges that focus on speed, cost and quality. Professionals working in such libraries need continuous grooming by acquiring core competencies and new skills so that they never become obsolete in this fast changing environment. For this, they need to shift their focus from traditional library activities of collecting, processing, storing and accessing the information to offer customer-centered automated information services, generated by using online/offline databases, e-resources, e-journals, networks and consortia, etc. Today, majority of the libraries are using computers and latest ICT tools and techniques for performing various house-keeping jobs such as, acquisition, processing, and serial control and also for delivering various computerized services to the users. Technology is reshaping the world of academic libraries at an unimaginable speed. Therefore, technologies must be utilized fully to meet the educational goals and objectives of the university in a strategic way rather than following these technologies blindly (Singh and Pinki, 2009).

Professionalism without adaptation to changes in the contemporary world is nothing to write home about. It is with this attitude of imbibing new technologies and seeing how to apply them in one's field that professionalism is said to be alive, growing, practicable and impactful. As professionals therefore, librarians ought to brace up and take up this challenge of taking up new roles in order not to let even the library users grow ahead of them and become their teachers.

Aside trainings acquired from library schools, workshops are necessary grounds to develop the librarians' professional skills. There are current trends which librarians need to imbibe and flow along with, especially as the users are acquiring such trends, it is expected of the librarians to grasp mastery of such emerging current trends in order to meet up with the demands of users. Such new skills involve but are not limited to Information and knowledge management, Web technology, working as a cybrarian that is focusing on the Internet rather than on traditional Librarianship, digital archiving, Online cataloguing, Digitization and data mining skills.

Research Methods

Descriptive survey design was adopted in the study across both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The area of the study was the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State and the Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Anambra State. Population of the study comprised a total of 63 librarians in the two universities. All librarians were sampled because of the small sample size. The Instrument for data collection were oral interview and questionnaire which contained 53 items derived from the research

questions and built on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree, (A) Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). The criterion mean was 2.50. Therefore any calculated mean below 2.50 was adjudged a negative score while any mean from 2.50 and above was regarded as a positive score. The questionnaire was validated by two experts in measurement and evaluation and pilot tested in the Enugu State University of Technology library, which was outside the study area. Out of the 63 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, 51 were completed and returned representing about 88% response rate. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents through personal contact by one of the researchers. In addition, along side questionnaire distribution was also an oral interview to a few Librarians in management cadre to authenticate the information or otherwise in the responses. Data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, mean and graphical representations.

Presentation of Results

The researchers in an effort to elicit responses on the first research question on what makes librarianship a unique profession got the following results

What makes Librarianship a unique profession?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision.
1	Librarianship is a lucrative profession	30	19	2	0	3.50	A
2	Librarianship embraces all disciplines	31	18	1	0	3.58	A
3	Many people now want to study library science	19	23	6	1	3.25	A
4	Librarianship is not a difficult course to scale through	18	18	9	5	2.84	A
5	Librarians are regarded the same as academic staff	31	18	1	0	3.60	A
6	Librarians always have job offers home and abroad	23	25	1	0	3.35	A
7	Librarians can work as consultants in many companies	20	26	4	0	3.27	A
8	Librarianship is a very prestigious profession	16	31	3	0	3.17	A

Table 1 and chart 1 show total agreement in favor of all the items purported to make librarianship a unique profession as depicted by all the mean scores above the mid-point value of 2.50.

The second research question examined efforts made by Librarians in professional development.

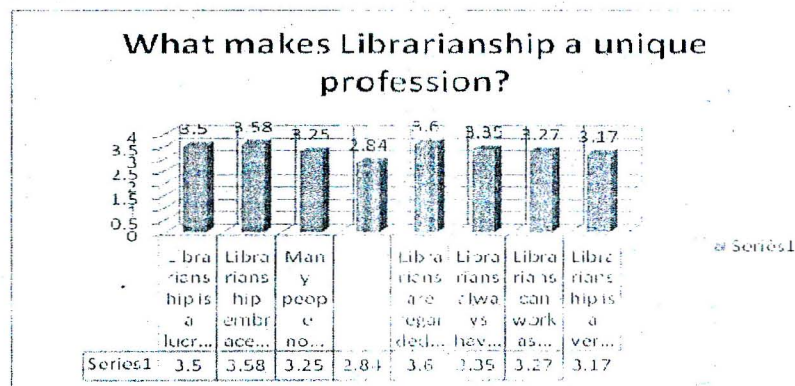
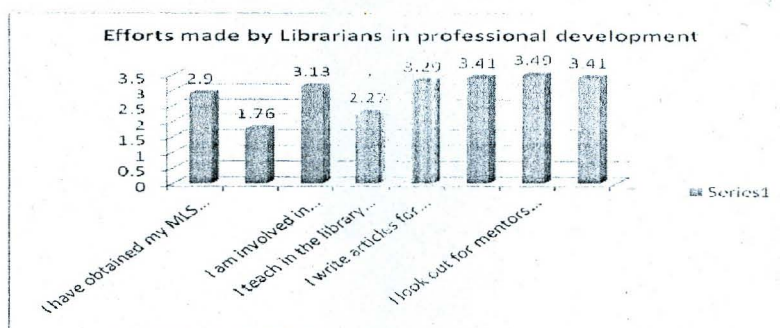


Chart 1: What makes Librarianship a unique profession?

Efforts made by Librarians in professional development

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision.
1	I have obtained my MLS since recruitment	25	6	8	10	2.90	A
2	I have obtained a PhD on the job	5	5	21	15	1.76	R
3	I am involved in continuing education	18	26	2	4	3.13	A
4	I teach in the library school	12	9	13	13	2.27	R
5	I write articles for publication in journals and books	23	23	3	1	3.29	A
6	I brainstorm with fellow colleagues and mentors	25	24	1	2	3.41	A
7	I look out for mentors whom I can learn from	26	22	2	2	3.49	A
8	I attend conferences and workshops related to my field	29	17	2	1	3.41	A

Chart 2: Efforts made by Librarians in professional development



In table 2 (represented in Chart 2), responses show that librarians make a lot of efforts with regard to professional development. However, item 2 shows that many librarians in these institutions are yet to obtain a PhD. Item 4 also shows that many do not teach in the library school.

To gauge methods employed by Librarians in acquiring current trends in professional development the following responses were elicited

Methods of acquiring current trends in professional development

	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision.
1	I utilize social networks like face book, etc to collaborate	26	20	3	2	3.33	A
2	I attend annual conferences of NLA and learn from colleagues	31	17	4	0	3.58	A
3	I attend workshops within the profession	30	20	1	0	3.58	A
4	I participate in NLA online forum to keep abreast	27	17	3	4	3.19	A
5	I learn new skills from colleagues	31	19	1	0	3.62	A
6	I participate in online conferences and workshops	18	12	9	11	2.66	A
7	I learn ICT skills from IT professionals outside librarianship	26	16	3	6	3.19	A

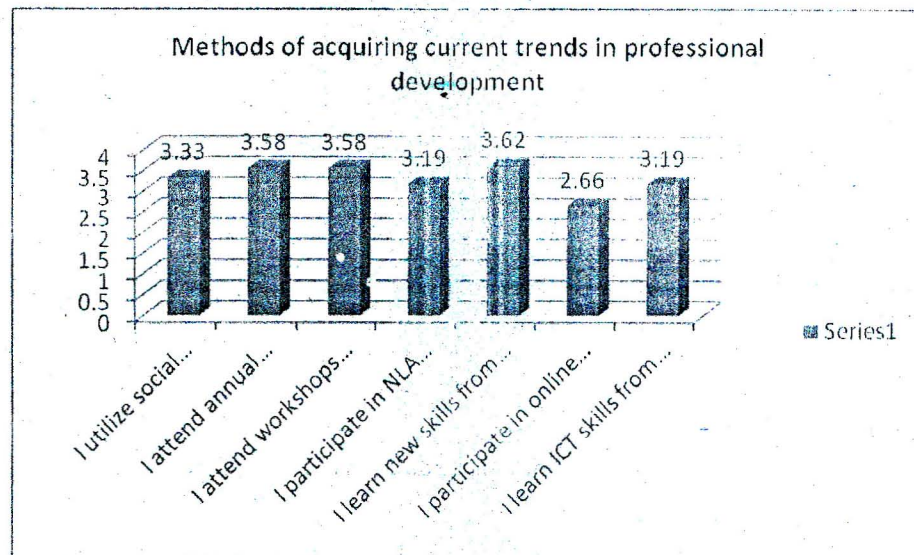
Chart 3: Methods of acquiring current trends in professional development

Table 3 (as represented in Chart 3) shows that librarians are in track with the current trends in the profession by engaging in a number of professional activities as shown by the mean scores above 2.5. Item 6 has the lowest mean score of 2.6 because many librarians are yet to engage in online conferences and workshops. These are still not very popular in these institutions.

Benefits of Professional Development efforts by Librarians

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision.
1	It makes me become a consultant in my Profession	35	13	3	1	3.45	A
2	It offers me opportunities to compete with others	25	26	0	0	3.52	A
3	I gain exposure to many sites of Professional development	31	20	0	0	3.56	A
4	I keep abreast of current trends in Librarianship	36	14	0	1	3.76	A
5	My knowledge and skills expands	33	17	1	0	3.62	A
6	I become more enthusiastic about my profession	34	16	1	0	3.70	A
7	I get to meet with mentors /colleagues at workshops	34	15	1	1	3.62	A

Table 4 shows an overwhelming agreement in support of the benefits of professional development efforts by librarians with all the mean scores of 3.4 and above.

The role of Professional bodies in promoting Professionalism and excellence in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision.
1	LRCN is a Professional body that ensures members are competent	34	17	0	0	3.64	A
2	LRCN certifies Librarians to promote Professionalism	31	20	0	0	3.56	A

3	LRCN enforces licensure enabling only qualified Librarians to practice which promotes professionalism	25	20	6	0	3.25	A
4	I do not like the regulatory function of LRCN	9	2	18	20	1.96	R
5	LRCN does not promote Professionalism	4	6	18	21	1.88	R
6	The Nigeria Library Association (NLA) encourages networking among Professionals	25	23	1	1	3.37	A
7	The NLA also promotes Professionalism through its annual conferences where Librarians present papers	26	23	1	0	3.54	A
8	The NLA is an avenue for mentoring Librarians	29	20	1	1	3.58	A
9	The NLA is expensive to attend and does not promote Professionalism	6	5	15	23	1.92	R

Table 5 above shows that respondents agree on the roles of professional bodies in promoting professionalism and excellence in Nigeria in items 1,2,3,6,7,8. However, scores in items 4, 5, and 9 are quite below the mid-point mean of 2.5 suggesting that the regulatory function of LRCN and the expensiveness of NLA do not promote professionalism.

Challenges faced by Librarians in Professional Development pursuits

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	DE.
1	Unwillingness of colleagues to share ideas and network	24	17	8	1	3.31	A
2	Lack of sponsorship to attend conferences/workshops	22	23	4	1	3.41	A
3	Lack of internet facilities to keep abreast with trends	23	18	8	0	3.33	A
4	Lack of good Professional mentors	18	20	11	1	3.15	A
5	Limited exposure to relevant and timely information	23	19	6	1	3.33	A
6	Being in the wrong Profession; not doing the right job	14	17	13	0	2.92	A
7	Lack of resources like computers and smart phones	22	20	8	0	3.17	A

Table six shows strong agreement in support of the various challenges faced by librarians in pursuit of professional development as depicted by the mean scores above 2.5.

Strategies to enhance Professionalism and excellence in LIS

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	DE.
1	Colleagues should be encouraged to share their ideas	41	10	-	-	3.82	A
2	Sponsorship of staff to attend conferences /workshops	36	14	-	-	3.70	A
3	Professionals must learn to collaborate in terms of publication output	39	11	-	-	3.78	A
4	Consortia building amongst libraries will enhance the sharing of resources among Nigerian academic libraries	37	13	-	-	3.74	A
5	International staff exchanges will enhance Professionalism	37	13	-	-	3.74	A
6	Continuing Professional Development of staff	31	18	1	0	3.62	A
7	Creating opportunities for staff growth through sabbatical leave for Academic librarians	35	15	-	-	3.70	A

In table 7, respondents totally agree on the enumerated strategies for the enhancement of professionalism and excellence in LIS as shown by the mean scores far above 2.5.

Discussion of findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

Librarianship has been adjudged a unique profession. The respondents gave compelling evidence to buttress this claim. Most of what was gleaned from the responses is that Librarianship embraces all disciplines; Librarians in Academic institutions are respected and accorded academic status; and also enjoy most of the privileges accruing to other Faculty members. Librarianship as a profession is *Sui generis* and shares no peculiarity with any other. Melvin (1876) In Entsua-Mensah (2004) corroborates this when he proclaimed that the time had come when Librarians may without assumption speak of their occupation as a profession...from the first, Libraries have commanded great respect and much has been written of their priceless worth.

The study revealed that Academic Librarians in South East Nigeria, are constantly on the march to professional development. Several have obtained a Master of Library Science which is in fact what qualifies them as Academic Librarians. Many are presently pursuing their doctorates vigorously and from our interview with some, a substantial number are on the verge of completing the programme. Many from their responses have published severally in reputable journals and books. To expedite growth in the profession they brainstorm with colleagues and mentors. They also attend workshops and conferences related to their field.

Several methods have been gauged by which these Librarians acquire current trends in their profession, such as collaboration and social networking with colleagues, attending annual conferences of NLA, participation in the NLA online discussion forum with professional colleagues to gather first hand information, networking with professionals outside Librarianship in the area of ICT

Benefits of professional development for Librarians were succinctly espoused from the results of the study. These include offering Librarians the opportunity to keep abreast of current trends; Keeping Librarians enthusiastic in their profession; offering opportunities for gainful and healthy competitions; and getting them exposed to mentors.

The role of professional bodies was also examined and the study revealed that these bodies play a huge role in licensure and in determining who is qualified to practice. This ensures that members are competent. This in no small way promotes professionalism. The Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) is one such body. The NLA also promotes professionalism by creating enabling workshops and conferences where professionals gather to present papers, interact with their peers this opens up avenues for mentoring of professionals. However, the respondents revealed that the Association is expensive and not all librarians particularly the upstarts can keep up with the dues.

Challenges faced by Librarians in the pursuit of professionalism include lack of sponsorship to attend conferences and workshops; limited exposure to relevant and timely information possibly because of lack of uninterrupted Internet facility to keep abreast of trends; a dearth of professional mentors in the South East Zone and slow acquisition of emerging ICT skills such as digital archiving; data mining and web technology skills. This last aspect was a fall out of the interview with senior members of the LIS profession.

The study also proffered strategies to enhance professionalism and excellence in the LIS profession as colleagues sharing ideas copiously with others; collaboration to enhance publication output; International staff exchange and Sabbatical leaves to be encouraged. In the interview with some Librarians in the management cadre Librarians discussed extensively the felt need for Sabbatical leave which hitherto was not common in the South East Zone. They opined that an opportunity to work in other libraries across the geo-political zones would help them imbibe certain skills and competencies needed to grow on the job.

Recommendations of this paper arose not only from the study itself but also from the interaction of the researchers during the interview.

Recommendations

- There is a need for collaboration and partnership in the LIS profession in Nigeria. Libraries must learn to share both physical and human resources. This is a sure way of ensuring both institutional and staff growth.
- Staff development is very crucial for professional growth. Ezeani (2004) succinctly revealed that staff development widens the experience, exposure and practical knowledge of the staff in the practice of librarianship in general and the practice of the library he/she serves. Institutions must commit to staff development to ensure professional growth. Individual librarians are encouraged to commit to their own growth rather than wait all the time for their institutions to sponsor them. Staff Development should always be seen as an investment and not an expense.
- Academic librarians must ensure that they work very hard in the area of research and publication output. The present day academic librarian has two demand cycles. One of service to the library's patron and secondly contribution to knowledge, these two must go *paripassu*. One of the universities under study has recently introduced publishing in Impact Factor (IF) journals as a criterion for Assessment. This is a quality control measure that ensures that staff have the adequate visibility they need as scholars and that they can also be seen as global competitors rather than local champions. Academic Librarians are not exempt from this, and therefore need adequate exposure through international staff exchange and sabbatical programmes to help them scale up in this regard.
- Collaboration has become at this stage both inevitable and critical. Librarians must work towards co-learning, co-researching and producing quality information products.
- The LRCN and the NLA have so far discharged their duties creditably, however, more needs to be done in Nigeria to ensure that Librarianship is accorded the same level of respect and prestige like other professions such as Law, Engineering and others.
- Marketing of library products will also go a long way in making the general public appreciate the contribution we make towards learning and research in our host institutions. This could be done by the creation of profiles of faculty members and sending information through Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) or Current Contents of journals to faculty as is presently done at University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Conclusion

This paper tried to examine the professionalism in the Library and Information Science (LIS) profession through an examination of current trends, needs and opportunities. In doing this six specific purpose of the study were delineated to provide adequate coverage for the title. First was an examination of the value of librarianship as a profession, a study of the efforts made by librarians of the two institutions under study, the methods of acquiring current information by these institutions, the role of professional bodies in promoting professionalism in these institutions, challenges faced by academic librarians of these institutions and strategies to ameliorate these challenges. The study revealed that in the South East Zone librarianship is a prestigious profession, and Academic librarians are steadily making giant strides. Several are currently involved with their doctoral degrees and have published in several reputable books.

and journals. However several challenges are beseeching them most of which are lack of funding for professional development, lack of sponsorship to workshops and conferences, lack of uninterrupted internet facility, a dearth of professional mentors and indeed currently, a dearth of professors in the South East zone. Strategies arising from the study and the interview with senior members of the profession are as follows: Academic librarians must team up to enhance their visibility and publication output. There is a felt need for international staff exchanges and opportunities for sabbatical leave. Recommendations such as collaboration and partnership in the LIS profession; Staff development must be endorsed by management since it shows a concern for staff, Staff on their own should commit to their development. Professional bodies should help in enhancing the visibility and prestige of Librarians and finally marketing of library products as a means of enhancing the image of academic librarians.

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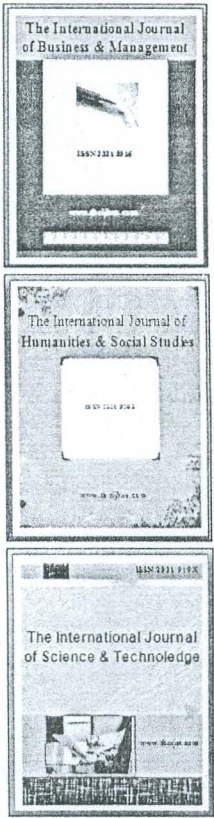
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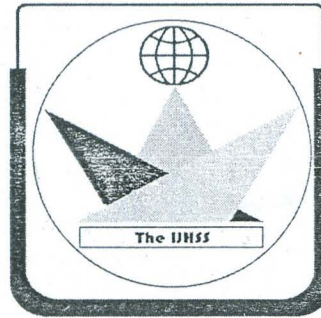
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