EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN NIGERIA

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Amusi Odi
And
Udo Nwokocha
(Editors)

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CHAPTER SIX

LIBRARY PRACTICE: STUDENTS INDUSTRIAL WORK EXPERIENCE: A DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

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In the early days the programmes at U. I. The curriculum contained a high practical component – the PGDL (Postgraduate diploma in librarianship) courses involved numerous practical sessions in cataloguing and classification, using the tools of the trade (AARC and the classification schedules for LC, UDC, LC Bliss and Colon Classification) – many of which were issued to each student for the duration of the whole programme. In addition each student had their own copy of the *Guide to Reference Books* and they went twice a week to the University Library Reference Section for practical sessions; firstly examining and the handling all the basic reference tools and noting their characteristics and later answering specific reference questions.

It did not end there. The courses on information sources in the Humanities, the Social Science, the Sciences and Technology and African Studies – were studied during lecture periods in the Department (or Institute as it was then) and augmented by practical work preparing submissions 3 completed bibliographies in 3 different subject field. All of which involved practical work in several different libraries.

Since LARIS Department started the BLS programme and joined the SIWES scheme, organizing library Practice has become easier.

Formerly the LARIS co-ordinator used to:

1.   Interview every students and discover their library

experience so far and assess the type of exposure that was needed to make them into qualified librarians.

2. Go round all available libraries in Ibadan discovering the current state of the library, the staffing situation, the possible exposure that could be offered and the willingness of the library staff to assist in the training free of charge.

3. Matching students to libraries, sending out letters, preparing notices and circulating them to all concerned.

4. Meeting the students. Advising them on how to behave. Issuing them with students Report Forms, so that the Department has something to counter-weigh the report of the libraries (especially valuable if any personality problem are between library staff and student).

5. Following up with visits to libraries to see that students are working and that libraries and students are understanding one another, and to check that students are understanding and performing well.

6. Then issuing library Report forms and asking libraries to grade the student. Assessing radical work is not easy-because ideally one would watch how they do everything all the time which in practice is impossible. Over the years librarians in so many libraries have done a great job in this regard and we in LARIS, Ibadan can only thank each one VERY MUCH INDEED for their dedication and service. The only reward has been those excellent younger staff who joined their libraries after completing the course [And we hope most of our products fall into this category]

7. Next, collecting up all the assessments and the students' record sheets - and going through both to ensure that there was reasonable consistency between the assessment of younger and older libraries, and between those emanating from younger or older, larger or smaller institutions etc.

8. Finally a score was recorded and thanks said to the library.

The Present

The work in the Department is reduced – for the SIWES office is equipped with administrators, supervisors,

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secretaries, typists, typewriters and computers and even money to get documents PRINTED. So now we are helped at every stage:

1. We still interview each students - but each students also goes to discuss with a staff at the SIWES office.

2. We still prepare a letter to send to the libraries – but the main letter requesting a placement is issued by the SIWES office.

3. Now the students deliver the letters of request to the libraries – which saves us transport problems.

4. Students are prepared at a joint meeting of LARIS & SIWES to advise on all aspects, including the allowance the government now them.

5. When placements have been secured, acceptance letters are returned to SIWES office, who compile a comprehensive list. LARIS works alongside refining certain details of order, matriculation numbers or details of library - so the final document is double checked.

6. Each students issued with a printed instruction Booklet and a Log Book, which is completed daily by the student and counter-signed by the librarian, workers and by the inspectors from LARIS and SIWES when they visit.

7. The assessment forms are completed and returned by the libraries, via the students, to SIWES.

8. Following-up consist of a written report by the students.

9. And an oral presentation in front of all their peers – 5 minutes each – followed by 2 or 3 questions from their peers in the presence of joint LARIS/SIWES panel.

10. Between al these assessments, a final figure is arrived at:

Discussion: Assessing practical work – what advice can we give librarians?

DISSCUSSION DOCUMENT

Library Practice
Let us concentrate on BLS programme.

Placements are found by the students themselves:

Discussion Point

A). Should students find placements or should staff find placements for them? A Compromise is developing whereby: Students act as messengers to convey exploratory letters to libraries (thus helping staff). Students make suggestions of new places that staff may not know about, so they can go and check them out, and approve or other wise.

B). Should only regular libraries be accepted? Quite often a valuable experience may be had in a different place e.g a language school.

- the library may be small
- the collection may be narrow

but they are providing an interesting and important service. So students may gain a lot from being there:

i) they may hold exhibitions - or art displays [cultural benefits]

ii) exposure to another language - educational

iii) exposure to cataloguing style classification scheme, not normally used in other libraries, etc.

iv) should something be done to augment these placements to cover areas left out?

This is where the old style was very good. A student would go to at least 2 different libraries,

- So that one placement could be experimental and the other more ORTHODOX – so at the end of the experience the students is both stimulated and experience in standard practices.

v) Should Computers be regarded as a special or standard challenge?

This generally felt that students should probably enroll for some type of computer appreciation course - whereby they can learn to be familiar with the keyboard, the mouse, the switching on and off, selection of menus and be aware of what library- related activities can be assisted by a computer. They should also learn good computer use habits

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- like saving all information and care of computer disks.
Students should then be able to join in any activity where
their library is using a computer, during their I. T.
vi) Should students be exposed to non-print materials?

It is desirable that students in the information filed should
be aware of the numerous forms of PACKAGING available
for information. How to handle them. How to assess their
quality and DISCRIMINATE between what is good and what
is bad.

vii) Awareness of conservation, Preservation and security
aspect of librarianship.

In this regard we cannot over- emphasis the need for
every student to carry a clean duster at all times.
This will enable then to protect their health (Dust is the cause
of many bronchial disorders including asthma) and also assist
in the preservation of the materials and help the pleasant
appearance of the library. The students should be responsible
for washing the duster weekly – or more frequently if
necessary.

Students have to learn to be alert and to constantly look
out for the well-being of materials and for their personal well-
being is the library.

viii) Students should look out what makes for a good
environment for their clientele for themselves as staff.

The cleaning of the library. They should work closely with
cleaners and encourage them in their work. Such items as
good toilet facilities, where readers and library staff can ease
themselves, ash their hands and dry themselves are important
and students should be sensitized to their importance.
Refreshments for library users and staff are important
because both categories spend long hours in one place
waiting to be stimulated and refreshed.

The library should be pleasant as well as clean. Students
with artistic sense should be encouraged to develop this.

xi) Special events.

As libraries are used for many purposes to increase
awareness, arouse interest, stimulate discussion on civic

matters etc. the more alert and generally informed the librarian is, the better.

With multi-skilling it is also expected that librarians (students) should be trained along that line. For instance while it is necessary for students to be exposed to manual methods of library operation it is also necessary that they are made to have knowledge of computerized method of library operation. In the light of the above, the period of practice can be divided into two, with each period taking care of one of the two methods.

The above scenario is exactly what is desirable, and it is advisable to apply it. Failure to balance the two approaches may not augur well for proper practical training. For example, in the use of reference sources, a novice searching a database or the internet can be overwhelmed by the volume of information that can be made available at the push of a button. Often not all the information is wanted The students has to b taught how to separate the wheat from the chaff. Orthodox bibliography already does this especially in relationship to subject arrangement and indexing. Students are deliberately encouraged to acquire both skills-manual and computer.

However, in order to achieve the above policy, students have complained of constraints. These constraints vary from finance to inability to get a desired place at a particular point in time. These constraints have made it difficult for the co-ordinator of the programme to realize his or her aim in the acquisition of modern skills.

MAIN QUESTIONS
1. How much time should be spent on I. T.? Is it better have two separate intensive periods – than just one as in to the B.L.S programme. Or one exposure a week spread out over the whole programme?
2. What should be the components of I.T?
3. Which is better – learning what is being done in libraries today or/learning what should be done in libraries in the future?

Trying to ensure that all students who emerge from our programme are comparably competent.

i) the form used and to know where they started

ii) Add what they need

iii) See them emerge – employable and enthusiastic

4. How library schools can help one another:

SUGGESTION

i) LARIS to organize a whole workshop on I.T. (Before NLA Lagos): Invite

(a) Librarians

(b) Other allied Workers

(c) Computer people

(d) Students

(e) Teachers of library science

(f) SIWES Officials

(g) Foreign Input, Africa, WALA, B.C. etc?

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