

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS THROUGH THE NIGERIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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Abstract

This paper reviews the continuing professional development of information professionals through the Nigeria Library Association. Professional development is a lifelong learning and is indispensable for professional growth and instrumental for sustaining one's competence. The library can also become more productive with new skills and knowledge acquired through professional development programmes. The various professional development programmes put in place by librarians include seminars, peer coaching, workshops, conferences, mentorship, courses, symposia real-time webcasts, and distance learning programmes with interactive capabilities. The paper discusses the importance of professional development programmes which include to updating knowledge and skills in existing and new areas of practice, keeping professional qualifications up-to-date; raising one's profile through certifications and networking, making oneself more marketable to future employers; and obtaining new improved skills-making challenging tasks easier. The paper highlighted the problems associated with attending professional development programmes which include; lack of interest, on acceptance of submitted papers and lack of awareness.

Introduction

The field of Librarianship is ever expanding and changing, from exploding Internet and media technologies, to ever diverse patron groups with increasingly complex information needs keeping up with today's constant change and innovation is a challenging task, but one must undertake it to remain relevant in the emerging new work environment. Library professionals need to be as savvy as the clients they serve, and the most productive and effective way for librarians to keep up with these changes is to seek out professional development opportunities.

This study intends to find out the various professional development programmes organized by Nigeria Library Association and how it has impacted on the professional needs of the librarianship in the changing trends in library services.

Librarians owe it to their clients and to themselves as competent professionals, to remain abreast of trends and developments in the field. Roy (2012) posited that continuing education is also referred to as professional development and, more recently, as updating or retooling, all of which encompasses the approaches and content tailored for information workers to advance their learning and education once they are in the workforce. Professional development can be acquired through both formal and informal

means and it enables a professional to perform his or her role effectively and efficiently. The professional development of librarians is a vital issue throughout the library world; because immense technological developments are causing rapid shifts and changes in the library profession, as well as traditional ways of acquiring, processing, storing and retrieving information have been changed by computers and telecommunication systems. Supporting this assertion Chaudhary (2001) noted that the factors that have promoted discussions of continuing education professional development for librarianship have been:

- i. the vast growth of new knowledge;
- ii. introduction of new technology in libraries;
- iii. social needs of an increasing highly educated populace;
- iv. outreach programs to attract new groups of patrons; and
- v. changing trends in library services.

Professional Development

Continuing professional development programme which simply means the additional training that professionals go through in order to improve upon skills, understand new techniques, and maintain previously learned knowledge could also be seen as an enabler to creativity and innovativeness. Similarly Bury (2010) defined continuous professional development as learning activities designed to facilitate professionals' acquiring new competencies. Examples of activities include training courses, professional reading, work exchanges and mentoring.

Library Professional Association

In Nigeria, the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) is the professional body for all librarians in Nigeria. It started as a division of the West African Library Association (WALA). The WALA was established in 1954 as an offshoot of the UNESCO seminar on the Development of Public Libraries in Africa held at Ibadan in 1953. The seminar resulted in the establishment of the West Africa Library Association (WALA) in 1954. According to Gbaje (2013) Individual members of the Association, now numbering about 5000, are drawn from various types of libraries throughout the country. Every librarian would normally belong, in the first instance, to one of the 37 States, Federal Capital, Territory Chapters and one or more of the eleven interest groups. One of the interest groups is the Information Technology Section.

The NLA holds an annual conference and general meetings. The conference provides a platform for its members to present papers on current trends in library and information services within a selected theme and sub-themes. Even though not clearly stated as one of its objectives, the Nigerian Library Association, like all other professional associations, plays a vital role in the professional development of its members. Most of the interest groups hold annual workshops at the national level for professional development of its members. The Information Technology Section of the association has, over the past 5 years, organized Library and Information Technology Today (LITT) training workshops to re-train its members with information technology skills for the digital work environment Gbaje (2013).

Types of Continuing Professional Development Programme

Everybody needs self-development professionally. By attending seminars and conferences, the managerial staff can improve professionally. Koontz (2001) also listed the following as approaches that can be utilized for continuous education: (i) in-house training conducted by in-house staff; (ii) regionally provided training; (iii) training offered by professional organization; (iv) university-based courses and (v) web-based distance learning courses.

Workshop: A workshop comprises a small selected group of teachers or experts drawn from actual working situations or related experts with theories on the activities. Librarians as well as other professionals do acquire professional growth through conferences, seminars and workshops.

Seminar: A seminar is a small group discussion in a formal setting with clear agenda. In a seminar a speaker present a theme or a set of papers and it is discussed by all those who participate.

Mentorship: Is pairing more knowledgeable and more experienced person with less knowledgeable and less experienced librarians. Mentorship is a personal developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable

person. However, true mentoring is more than just answering occasional questions or providing ad hoc help. It is about an ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue, and challenge.

Peer Coaching: Is a confidential process through which two or more professional colleagues work together to reflect on current practices; expand, refine, and build new skills; share ideas; teach one another; conduct classroom research; or solve problems in the workplace.

Online training: They are programs that are increasingly becoming popular in professional development for educators. These programs can be completed at the convenience of the educator from the comfort of home using the computer and the internet, the trainee can access course materials listen to recorded lectures, and post assignments.

Conference is a formal meeting or gathering where different people or like minds converge to share ideas and make policies that will be beneficial to their field of study.

In-house training: Akinpelu (2002) defined an in-house training as an in-house programme for staff in many government and business enterprises. It is widely used for continuing education for teachers as well as librarians, bankers and industrial workers.

Statement of problem

The dynamic nature of library and information environment demands that library and information professionals should maintain and continue to develop their knowledge and skills so that they can serve the information needs of society and their individual clients effectively and efficiently. For this reason, it is imperative to know how NLA affects the continuing development programmes of the information professionals for them to cope with the challenges of the information society, be proactive and rise to the current challenges of providing library and information services to Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the types of NLA professional development programmes
2. To know how relevant the NLA professional development programmes are
3. To proffer solutions facing the attendance of the information professional programmes organized by NLA

Literature Review

Importance of Continuing Development Program to Library and Information Professionals
Conferences (both national and international), seminars and workshops have bemoaned and catalogued the multifaceted consequences of refusing to acquire the relevant skills necessary for innovativeness and creativity in Library and information services delivery. In Nigeria specifically, the NLA has emulated the IFLA in creating specialized subject oriented sections such as Cataloguing and Classification Section, Information Technology Sections and Medical Libraries Section. Workshops and training are intermittently organized for the sections with the theme and subthemes covering new trends in the specific area of concern to sections. Continuing professional development programme is important because it is generally seen as the process by which professionals improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and also develop the personal qualities required in their professional practice

Problems Associated With Attending Professional Development Programmes

A review of relevant literature revealed that there are some problems associated with professional development programmes, some of which include:

Cost of Participation: According to Ramirez, Laing and Weiler, cost is important to the convention attendance decision Mair & Thompso (2009); Oppermann & Chon (1997) Rittichainuwat, et al.(2001), Yoo & Chon, (2008) Yoo& Zhao(2010), Zhang, et al.,(2007). Rittichainuwat, et al. (2001) suggested that both affordability and availability of time are considered under the cost factor. Cost of participation in a conference includes cost of registration, transportation, accommodation, and feeding.



Lack of Sponsorship: If a librarian is not sponsored to the national conference, which is expensive, it discourages the person from attending. Sponsorship could come from the institution where the librarian serves or from NLA as a means of encouraging people to be active members of the association. Ramirez, et al., say that, "in some cases, a company offers a limited number of places for its employees to attend a convention and many may apply for this support which can often be competitive between colleagues."

Lack of Interest: Theme and sub-themes largely influences the interest of individual members for any conference. Lack of interest in a conference might be due to stale programme, poor quality, unattractive conference venue, poor quality of invited keynote speakers, lack of rapport among association members, poor quality of food and accommodation provided, lack of social activities, unavailability of conference resources for purchase.

Un-acceptance of Submitted Papers: Papers are accepted primarily because of quality. When some papers are rejected and others are accepted, those whose papers were rejected may not wish to attend the conference.

Lack of Awareness: Some librarians say that they do not hear about the NLA annual conference/AGM and the call for papers. They do not have an opportunity to submit a paper and this may negatively affect their decision to attend the conference.

Research Methodology

A survey research method was adopted for the study. The population of the study includes all the information professionals of the federal university libraries in north central states of Nigeria. Results and

Discussion of Findings

The data was analysed using frequency count and simple percentages.

Table 1: Distribution of the types and awareness of the NLA Professional Development Programmes.

NLA Professional Development Programmes	Institutional Libraries												Total
	University of Jos		University of Lokoja		University of Makurdi		F.U.T. Minna		University of Abuja		Federal University of Lafia		
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	
	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	F %	
Workshop	21 (22.6)	7 (7.5)	12 (12.9)	- (0.0)	11 (11.8)	1 (10.6)	17 (18.3)	6 (6.5)	6 (6.5)	8 (8.6)	3 (3.2)	1 (1.1)	93 (100)
Conference	17 (18.2)	11 (11.8)	9 (9.7)	3 (3.2)	9 (9.7)	3 (3.2)	17 (18.2)	6 (6.5)	6 (6.5)	8 (8.6)	2 (2.2)	2 (2.2)	93 (100)
Meetings	13 (14.0)	15 (16.1)	4 (4.3)	8 (8.6)	8 (8.6)	4 (4.3)	10 (10.6)	13 (14.0)	2 (2.2)	12 (12.9)	1 (1.0)	3 (3.2)	93 (100)
Peer Coaching	- (0.0)	28 (87.5)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	4 (12.5)	32 (100)
Mentorship	- (0.0)	28 (50.0)	11 (19.6)	1 (1.8)	1 (1.8)	11 (19.6)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	4 (7.1)	50 (100)
Webinar	1 (1.8)	27 (48.2)	- (0.0)	12 (21.4)	- (0.0)	12 (21.4)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	- (0.0)	4 (7.1)	50 (100)

Conferences and meetings were most attended by the respondents and the attendance rates were 17 (18.2%) and 21 (22.6%) respectively. The observation from the table was that the attendance rate of the respondents for the development programmes organized by the Nigerian Library Association could therefore be considered to be very low especially in workshop and conferences which is mostly the type of professional development programmes the NLA organizes more often and it is the most interactive session of the programmes.

Table 2: Distribution of the Relevance of the NLA programmes.

Importance of NLA	Institutional Libraries																								Total				
	University of Jos				University of Lokoja				University of Makurdi				F.U.T. Minna				University of Abuja				Federal University of Lafia								
	S	A	D	SD	S	A	D	SD	S	A	D	SD	S	A	D	SD	S	A	D	SD	S	A	D	SD		S	A	D	SD
I have been able to implement	6	17	1	-	5	5	-	1	2	9	1	-	4	11	1	-	2	3	1	-	3	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	72
	8.3	24.0	1.4		6.9	6.9		1.4	2.8	12.5	1.4		5.6	15.3	1.4		2.8	4.2	1.4		4.2	1.4			4.2	1.4			100
I have been able to attract	-	7	8	3	-	3	5	2	-	4	6	1	2	10	5	1	1	1	1	3	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	67
		10.4	11.9	4.5		4.5	7.5	3.0		6.0	9.0	1.5	3.0	15.0	7.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.5		4.5						3.0	100
I have been able to attract collaboration colleagues	4	11	4	2	1	7	-	-	1	11	-	-	2	10	2	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	-	1	1	-	-	65
	6.2	17.0	6.2	3.1	1.5	10.8			1.5	17.0			3.1	15.4	3.1	1.5	1.5	1.5	4.6	1.5	1.5	3.1	1.5		1.5	1.5			100
I have been able to learn ICT skills	1	14	4	1	3	8	2	-	6	5	-	-	5	14	1	-	1	3	11	-	3	1	-	-	3	1	-	-	83
	1.2	16.4	4.8	1.2	3.6	9.6	2.4		7.2	6.0			6.0	16.9	1.2		1.2	3.6	13.3		3.6	1.2			3.6	1.2			100
I have been able to acquire current trends	7	18	1	-	2	8	1	-	6	5	-	-	5	12	-	1	1	1	5	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	76
	9.2	23.7	1.3		2.6	10.5	1.3		7.9	6.6			6.6	15.8		1.3	1.3	1.3	6.6			2.6	2.6						100
I have been able to learn new skills	4	18	-	-	2	8	-	1	2	9	-	-	5	14	-	1	2	3	2	-	3	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	74
	5.4	24.3			2.7	10.8		1.4	2.7	12.2			6.8	18.9		1.4	2.7	4.1	2.7		4.1				4.1				100
I have been able to attend workshop	4	14	5	-	-	9	-	-	3	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	49
	8.2	28.6	10.2			18.4			6.1	16.3										4.1	4.1								100

The table above showed that 11 (17.0%) of the respondents indicated that the programmes are important because it help them to attract collaboration from colleagues. From these observations, it could be concluded that the programmes organized by the Nigerian Library Association could be considered not very important and not very relevant to the professional development of the information professionals involved in the study, because most of the respondents do not acquire much skills and are not most usually motivated. The finding here are in line with Mohammed (2008) who noted that the advances in the application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), particularly the Internet, Intranet and other network technologies have continued to impact positively on the methodologies of library and information service delivery, education and training of information professionals as well as in the area of information seeking behaviour and used in their professional development.

Table 3: Distribution of Challenges faced by the attending Professional Development Programmes

Challenges	Institutional Libraries																		Total																		
	University of Jos						University of Lokoja						University of Makurdi							F.U.T. Minna						University of Abuja						Federal University of Afia					
	N.C			S.W.S			S.C			N.C			S.W.S			S.C				N.C			S.W.S			S.C			N.C			S.W.S			S.C		
	F	%		F	%		F	%		F	%		F	%		F	%			F	%		F	%		F	%		F	%		F	%				
Lack of Sponsors	18	5	4	9	5	5	7	3	5	3	23	11	6	3	1	3	6	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10				
hip	(16.7)	(4.6)	(3.7)	(8.3)	(4.6)	(4.6)	(6.5)	(2.8)	(4.6)	(6.5)	(21.3)	(10.2)	(5.6)	(2.8)	(1.0)	(5.6)	(2.8)	(2.8)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	(1.0)	8					
Lack of Interest	3	7	1	3	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	9	6	3	3	3	6	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	5					
ss	5.9	13.7	2.0	5.9	7.8	5.9	5.9	7.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	17.6	11.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	11.8	5.9	5.9	3.9	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1					
Lack of Awareness	5	7	3	1	3	4	4	6	8	8	8	8	8	8	3	3	8	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	66					
es	7.6	10.6	4.5	1.5	4.5	6.1	6.1	9.1	12.1	21.1	4.5	21.1	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	10					
Lack of awareness of possible conferences	6	4	4	5	8	3	3	3	5	7	8	9	9	4	4	4	9	4	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	71					
	8.4	5.6	5.6	7.0	11.3	4.2	4.2	4.2	7.0	9.9	11.3	12.7	12.7	5.6	5.6	5.6	12.7	5.6	5.6	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	1.4	10					

NC=National Conference
SW=Sectional Workshop
SC=State Chapter

From the expressed opinion of information professionals in above table, the major challenge they faced in attending the development programmes of the association was lack of sponsorship. This challenge cut across the attendance of programmes organized by the association from sectional workshops through state chapters to the National conference level. In The table, 23 (21.3%) of the information professionals were of the opinion that lack of sponsorship affect their attendance of the State chapter, Lack of interest, lack of awareness or lack of awareness of possible conference of professional development programmes, were not seen as major challenges by the respondents. It could therefore be said that lack of sponsorship is the major constraint confronting information professionals from attending the professional development programmes organized by the Nigerian Library Association. The finding here is in agreement with Ramirez, Laing and Weiler (nd.), Mair & Thompson, 2009; Oppermann & Chon, 1997; Rittichainuwa (2001), Yoo & Chon (2008), Yoo & Zhao (2010), Zhang (2007). Rittichainuwa (2001) who respectively stated that cost is important to conference attendance and went further to suggests that both affordability and availability of time are considered under the cost factor and that the cost of participation in a conference includes cost of registration, transportation, accommodation, and food. These therefore calls for sponsorship which in most cases was lacking as observed in this study.

Summary of the Findings

1. Among other programmes the NLA organises, workshops and conferences along with meetings that were organized at sectional, State and national levels for the information professionals were the types of programmes mostly the respondents were aware of.
2. The information professional were of the opinion that the programmes by NLA were important and relevant for the professional development of the libraries and the members of the association especially in the areas of establishing collaboration and mentoring with professional colleague.
3. The information professionals were constrained with the issue of sponsorship in terms of funding and time for attending the programmes.

Conclusion

Professional development is very essential for any professional who wants to remain relevant in this fast changing economy. Various professional development programmes for information professionals are organized quarterly, annually and biannually through conferences and workshops, training and meeting. It also discussed that the professional development programmes organized for librarians will be of importance to the information professionals because the skills they will acquire in these programmes will help them to work in both the traditional and electronic environment. However, the paper pointed out challenges faced in attending this professional developments programmes which includes; lack of sponsorship, lack of awareness and cost of participation. The library association of any country has an important role and responsibility to ensure that its members are continuously trained and professionally updated to help users, the public, organizations and society to benefit from the information and knowledge economy. The PDS is an important response to one of the major consequences of rapid change in the information and technological environment (i.e. knowledge obsolescence) that affects every profession. It seeks to extend the education and learning effort of a professional throughout the lifespan of his/her professional life by establishing a framework which encourages and demand continuing professional development.

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