

# Future of Academic Libraries, Library Schools and Roles of Library Associations and Regulatory Bodies in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The paper explored issues on the future of academic libraries, promotion of library and information professions and library schools as well as roles of regulatory bodies. The role of information as ingredient and efforts made by academic libraries; training of library personnel with associated challenges of meeting the conditions and the poor reading culture among youth were explored as well. The employer's demands made library schools to incorporate ICT components into their curriculum. The roles of Nigeria Library Association and regulatory bodies include: curriculum uniformity for and accreditation of library and information science programmes; continuing professional development; as well as lobbying and advocacy, funding and readership promotion campaign. Challenges explored were those of funding, indifference of LIS professional, divergent curriculum and influence of modern technologies on reading habit. Recommendations were proffered as follows: collaborative effort by library associations and regulatory bodies towards the development of LIS professions in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Academic libraries, National Library, Library Schools, Library Associations, Regulatory bodies, Nigeria

## Introduction

Libraries globally have passed through pre-industrial, industrial and post-industrial era. During the pre-industrial era, information was recorded on crude materials; leaves, stone, tortoise shells, animal skins, assembled stored and managed by the so-called library staff. As time went on and with the invention of printing machine, information was said to be provided by printing machine. The 21<sup>st</sup> century witnessed the organized form of information generation, acquisition processing storage and dissemination for the use by marked through the use of computer and other IT facilities. The information era, which is otherwise known as information age. In fact, the information age is synonymous and used interchangeably with digital age 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because of the paramount importance attached to information as a concept and ingredient to all aspects of human endeavor. However, in the past several decades, the factors of production include: land, labour, capital and entrepreneurship and information now being the 5<sup>th</sup> factor of production and the most important overall and over-riding factor to the other factors. Library education and training begun worldwide in 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first library school known as School of Library Economy in Columbia College in 1887 was established and later called Columbia University (Reitz). The library associations in Nigeria are eight in number and are in the umbrella of Nigerian Library Association (NLA), being the mother association. The sectional associations include the followings:

1. Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science Educators,
2. Cataloguing, Classification and Indexing
3. Information and Communication Technology
4. Conservation and Preservation
5. Association of Law Librarians
6. Association of Women Librarians
7. Nigerian School Library Association
8. Academic and Research Libraries

Since academic libraries are under institutions of higher learning and hence under education sector, there are regulatory bodies as well as parastatals that are charged with the responsibilities of regulating and monitoring the LIS professional practice; and education and training according to established standards. The regulatory body(ies) is/are directly in charge of the entire libraries (academic libraries inclusive) and the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). For the purpose of accreditation of LIS programme and control, the National Universities Commission (NUC) as the case of universities and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) as for polytechnics and LRCN are supposed to be involved in the exercise. Both library associations and the regulatory bodies play vital roles to transform traditional libraries to digital form.

### **Future of Academic Libraries and Library Schools**

Libraries and librarians are striving very hard to transform their traditional libraries to digital form so that information acquisition, processing, storage, preservation and dissemination are carried out through sophisticated processes using computer and IT facilities (Okeoghene, 2018). However, there is the need to train library personnel for enhancement of efficient job performance even though the policies and conditions attached to the training has created the problem of inability to effectively perform their job efficiently (Mohammed, Akor and Alhassan, 2017). In the area of library education and training, library schools have continued to review, revisit, modify and restructure the curriculum to meet the employers' market demand as well as establishing new programmes and library schools at Polytechnics and Universities (Saka, Garba and Zarmai, 2018).

### **The Role of Nigerian Library Associations and Regulatory Bodies**

For Nigeria to have standard and digital libraries and library schools in future, there is the need for collaborative efforts by the Nigeria Library Associations (State Chapters, National Body, Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE); Association of Academic and Research Libraries; Information and Communication Technology, etc) in terms of training programmes, resource acquisition, dissemination and service delivery in a digital form. Furthermore, the role of other sectional library associations and the NALISE is of paramount importance in the areas of organizing timely training programme for library staff and educators, advocacy on the need to provide digital library services as well as curriculum design and implementation, provision of physical and information materials in library schools respectively.

### **What should be done?**

#### **Continuing Professional Development of LIS Professionals**

For skillful manpower and effective job performance and efficient service delivery in libraries, there is the need for aggressive provision for timely training of LIS professionals. The skills, knowledge can be acquired through workshops, conferences, seminars and more importantly through mentorship (Saka, Oyedum and Song 2016). This is challenge pose before Nigerian Library Association (the umbrella association for librarians in Nigeria) and Nigeria Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE).

However, we recognize the fact that NLA and NALISE usually organize annual conferences for LIS professionals and educators in effort should be intensified to organize workshops for both para-professionals, professional library practitioners and library educators to enable them

acquire skills that would enable them perform highly in the service delivery (Okeoghene, 2018) and job performance in library can be enhanced through workshops and conference attendance by library staff (Saka and Haruna, 2013). NALISE directly or indirectly provide professional training programme for future librarians and library officers which can only be offered in library schools i.e. Universities, Polytechnic and Monotechnics respectively.

### **Uniform Curriculum for LIS Schools in Nigeria**

The NLA being the umbrella body of library associations in Nigeria in conjunction with NALISE (association of lecturers teaching in library schools) as well as the regulatory bodies LRCN/NUC, the regulatory bodies to library schools ensure that all library schools running bachelor degree programme adopt uniform curriculum so as to ensure uniform and adequate training of undergraduate students. The LRCN and NUC have designed and developed a-four-year minimum uniform curriculum for Bachelor Degree in Library and Information Science in Nigeria.

As for National Diploma and Higher National Diploma programme run in Polytechnics, the NLA, NALISE, LRCN and NBTE is expected to designed and produce uniform curriculum for Polytechnic and Monotechnics running Library and Information Science. The aim of having uniform curriculum with ICT components for Library Schools is to equip the trainees with necessary skills to be able to work in any type of Library and Information Center or be self-employed upon graduation. This according to Olorunshola, Adeleke and Adeniran, (2010) is to meet employer's market demands on ICT and other related courses. The curriculum for undergraduate programme is therefore to contain ICT and other related courses as well as inclusion of practical in their formal training sessions (Olorunshola, Adeleke and Adeniran, 2010).

### **Accreditation of Academic Libraries and Library Schools:**

This has to do with institutional accreditation and programme accreditation. The NUC/NBTE in conjunction with NLA, NALISE and LRCN can create that academic libraries and library schools are equipped with both human and material/information resources according to precuited standard. We are fully aware that accreditation is a 5-year affairs and as such the library associations (NLA, sectional associations, and NALISE), the regulatory bodies (NUC, NBTE, LRCN), National Library and library schools in Nigeria are expected to perform their roles of resource assessment/evaluation and monitoring of academic and other libraries and library schools' performance in service delivery as well as education and training of future librarians and library officers. This is because having

digital library is a function of equipping academic libraries and library schools with more resources which can only be possible through institutional and programme accreditation by the regulatory bodies.

The final accreditation report is usually graded as: denied, interim and full accreditation status based on meeting the requirements by the library schools as well as the satisfaction of accreditation team. Above all one of the functions of LRCN according to (LRCN 2011) and (LRCN pdf) is to accredit library school programme.

### **Funding Academic Libraries and Library Schools**

The future of libraries in Nigeria is at stake and for digital libraries to be ensure the regulatory bodies and parastatals under Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria such as: National Universities Commission (NUC) and Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) in the first place need to commit adequate funds for the procurement of modern IT facilities and build digital libraries as well as equipping ICT laboratories, departmental library, building modern lecture theatre, staffroom for library schools (Ochogwu, 1992). The National Library of Nigeria (the apex library in Nigeria and one of the parastatals under Federal Ministry of Education) is expected to commit adequate funds to other state branches of National Library with the view of networking all libraries in Nigeria.

### **Reading Promotion Campaign**

Literature search and studies have shown that reading culture among youth, primary, secondary and undergraduates is gradually declining. This is as a result of the preference of ICT to reading books. It is therefore, the responsibility of National Library to ensure that reading culture is imbibed in the minds of Nigeria Youth, thus Shittu (2018) opined that reading nations are leading nations.

The apex Library and other libraries should ensure that story books, fictions literary books newspapers are made available for youth and students to enhance reading. Reading promotion campaign and competition should be instituted and winners be awarded with prize. This is so as reading enhances one's participation in politics; high academic achievement; enhance business transaction, etc. (Ahmed, 2018).

### **Lobbying and Advocacy**

Lobbying is the act or process of influencing the government or individuals at the helm of affairs for various developments, be it educational, cultural, scientific, political or economic. According to Ochogwu (2015), there are four (4) driving forces in lobbying, advocacy and public relations in Library and Information services delivery: they include socio-cultural,

political economic and research perspective. There is the need for professional advocacy and lobbying by the NLA and NALISE so as to have efficient and digital libraries as well as having well equipped library schools (Eze, 2013).

### **Challenges to Future of Libraries and Library Associations**

The future of libraries, library schools associations and regulatory bodies are as follows:

#### **Funding Issue**

Libraries are reading to transform libraries from their present status to digital because funding has being the inhibiting factors - resources, training efficient services, skills acquisition cannot be possible without adequate funding by the parent institutions. National, University, Polytechnic and Monotechnic libraries and library schools are under education sector. Inadequate funding to education sector in Nigeria according to Ekuma, Elejene and Odonodo, (2017) is still below UNESCO budgetary allocation standard more especially in 2017 appropriation.

#### **Indifference of LIS Professionals**

There is negative attitude of librarians especially the librarians' as most of us are not proactive to professional issues in terms of conference attendance, scholarly communication, professionalization, self-exposure; proactive; administrative as opposed to professional duties, and these attitudes are further attributed to the attitude of EXCO; employers as well as funding issue (Saka, 2016).

#### **Divergent Curriculum**

Library schools in Nigeria still run divergent curriculum as this trend may create knowledge gap among trainees (Saka, Garba and Zarmai, 2018).

#### **Influence of Modern Technologies on Reading Habit**

The use of ICT has now made a reasonable number of youth and students to attach much importance to the use of ICT (phone, social media, etc) at the expense of reading novels, textbooks, fictions. This has affected some students in their project write ups and academic performance (Ahmed 2018).

### **Recommendations**

- Government, library associations and regulatory bodies should come together to resolve the issue of funding libraries and library schools.
- Institutional and programme accreditation team should include representatives of NLA, NALISE, LRCN, NUC, NCCE and NBTE as the case of library schools established in universities, polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education respectively.
- There is the need for societal orientation on the importance to reading in National development

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