Concepts, Nomenclatures and Career Options in the Library and Information Science Profession: A 21st Century Perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper tends to clarify some concepts, list sub-disciplines, identify the nomenclatures, and present brief description of career opportunities of the library and information profession.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Exploratory method was used in order gather enough information to establish both conceptual and theoretical framework of the study. This approach helped to discover a relationship between librarians and areas of service, employers or self-employed and operational strategies to remain relevant in the profession.

Findings: This research reveals that many library and information students and graduates are either confused or erroneously use interchangeably some terminologies in the field. And also there are little or no knowledge about existing career options in the field. On the contrary, it is discovered that there are so many other areas of endeavour to explore within the ever expanding functions of the profession.

Practical Implication: Librarians are exposed to various ways in which their services could be felt in the society. Thus the paradigm shift from custodians of books to information purveyors is highly emphasized.

Originality/Value: This paper is of much importance in the sense that career opportunities that were hitherto unknown by a good number of librarians are conspicuously presented. Also self-employment is encouraged for entrepreneurial development.

Keywords: Library Science, Information Science, Librarians, Nomenclatures, Career Options.

Paper type: Conceptual

Introduction

Library Science is an interdisciplinary science incorporating the humanities, law and applied science to study topics related to libraries, and the political economy of information. Library Science is defined as that interdisciplinary knowledge of collections, organization, organization, preservation, dissemination of information resources and its political economy (Wikipedia, 2008).

Historically, library science has also included archival science. This includes how information resources are organized to serve the needs of select user groups, how people interact with classification systems and technology, how information is acquired, evaluated and applied by people in and outside of libraries as well as cross-culturally, how people are trained and educated for careers in libraries, the ethics that guide library service and organization, the legal status of libraries and information resources, and

the applied science of computer technology used in documentation and records management.

Academic course in library science typically include collection management, information systems and technology, cataloging and classification, preservation, reference, statistics and management. Library science is constantly evolving, incorporating new topics like database management, information architecture and knowledge management, among others.

Concepts clarifications

A library, according to Aina (2004) is concerned with the collection, processing storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. The growth and importance of libraries brought about the profession of librarianship. There is no

generally agreed distinction between the terms library science, librarianship, library and information science and information science, and to a certain extent they are interchangeable, perhaps differing most significantly inconnotation. The term library and information science (LIS) is often used; most librarians consider it as only a terminological variation, intended to emphasize the scientific and technical foundations of the subject and its relationship with information science. LIS should not be confused with Information Theory, the mathematical study of the concept of information. LIS can also be seen as an integration of the two fields: library science and information science, which were separate at one point.

Many practicing librarians do not contribute to LIS scholarship, but focus on daily operations within their own libraries or library systems. Other practicing librarians, particularly in academic libraries, do perform original scholarly LIS research and contribute to the academic end of the field.

On this basis, it has sometimes been proposed that LIS is distinct from librarianship, in a way analogous to the difference between medicine and doctoring. In this view, librarianship – the application of library science, would comprise the practical services rendered by librarians in their day-to-day attempts to meet the needs of library patrons. Other uses of these terms do not make the distinction and treat them as synonyms.

Sub-disciplines

Cassell (1997) observes that Library Science is very closely related to issues of knowledge organization, however the later is a broader term which covers how knowledge is represented and stored (computer science/linguistics), how it might be automatically processed (artificial intelligence), and how it is organized outside the library in global systems such as the Internet. In addition, Library Science typically refers to a specific community engaged in managing holdings as they are found in university and government libraries, while knowledge organization in general refers to this and also to other communities (such as publishers) and other systems (such as the Internet). The Library system is thus one socio-technical structure for knowledge organization.

He further identified sub-disciplines of library science to include the study of:

- Human Information Behaviours (information-seeking, search strategies, and use)
- Knowledge Organization (which includes bibliographies, cataloging, classification, indexing & abstracting, metadata, semantic & syntactic analysis (controlled vocabularies, etc.)
- Digital libraries
- Collection development
- Preservation
- Public reference and other services
- Scholarly communication (includes bibliometrics, informetrics, scientometrics, webmetrics)
- Open Access
- Copyright and Intellectual property right
- Information Policy
- Information Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Education for Librarianship

Nomenclatures of the Profession

Librarians in different types of libraries are called different names associated to the aspect of library work they specialize in. Just like the discipline itself has various facets so are the names ascribed to the personality of the profession in question. There are as different types of library science professionals depending on their area of specialty. These include: Archivist, Librarian, Information Scientist, Knowledge Manager, etc. there are as different types of librarians as there are various sections, units or departments of the library. The table below illustrates this fact.

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Table 1: Librarians and their Activities

Types of Librarians	Activities in the Library
Acquisition Librarian	Sources materials relevant to the library needs, orders them from vendors, stamps them and lists them in accession register. In short this kind of librarian is involved in a type of library service called 'Collection Development"
Serial Librarian	In charge of the acquisition and organization of periodicals – Newspapers, Journals, Bulletins, etc., which the library subscribes.
Cataloguer	The librarian who catalogues books, monographs, etc.,
Classifier	The librarian who classifies books, monographs, etc.
Circulation Librarian	The librarian in charge of Circulations or Readers' Services Unit of the library
Reference Librarian	The librarian who renders reference services in the Reference Section of the Library
Audiovisual Librarian	The librarian who is in charge of audiovisual services (TV, CD-ROM, Tapes, Microfiches, films, projectors, etc.
Data or System Librarian	One who collects, collate and manipulate raw (manual) data with the computer system in order to present same to clientele in a ready to use (electronic) format.
Digital Librarian	One who is in charge of digitizing the library resources using computers, scanners, cameras, and other software packages designed for that purpose.

It is noteworthy, to mention here that library science has three categories of people in the field: Professionals, Para-Professionals and Non-Professionals. The table below shows the various categories of librarians.

Table 2: Professional Categories in LIS

Professionals:, BLS, MLS, PhD, Professors	Para-Professionals (OND/HND)	Non-Professionals (School Certificates)
Assistant Librarians, Librarians, Director of Library Services, etc.	Library Officers	Library Assistants
		Library Attendants

Career Options for Librarians

Librarians have the following career options, a few of these will be explained in context. Igbeka (2008) differentiates librarians' careers as follows:

- *Academic Librarianship*: this entails working in an academic library (tertiary institutions; for example, university, polytechnic and college of education libraries). Academic librarians provide support to members of an academic community, such as students, researchers, and teaching staff.

- *Corporate Librarianship*: this entails working mostly in corporations, information management consulting firms, private businesses, government agencies etc. these type of librarians as (sometimes called special librarians) are information resource experts dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goals of their organizations. Corporate librarians can also be found doing traditional library duties such as reference, collection development, evaluation and indexing.

- *Government documents Librarianship*: this entails the ability to provide

assistance when patrons have questions, need directions, or want advice about finding governmental, geographical, or legal information.

- ***Information Architect***: this is the person who synthesizes already supplied information. This information is then forwarded in categories to their different users. For instance, the information architect of a University Teaching Hospital would send some data collected and categorized to administration; to central finance office; some to research laboratories, etc.
- ***Information Broker/Business Librarian***: this is a librarian who supplies information to users for a fee.
- ***K-12 Librarianship:*** "K-12" is a term used to describe the educational stages from the kindergarten (nursery) to secondary school. The librarian is thus in charge of information sources accrued to this group of users.
- ***Law Librarianship***: this is a career people often engage in after studying something else. Some law librarians began as library para-professionals, then made the transition to librarianship. Law librarianship is characterized with variety. There are different types of law libraries (serving law firms, government agencies, law libraries (serving law firms, government agencies, law schools, courts, corporate law departments).

Other career options are:

- Medical Librarianship
- Public Librarianship
- Information Consultancy
- Art & Architecture Librarianship
- Patent Searching
- Serials Librarianship
- Rare Book Cataloguing
- Systems Management

Other field of endeavours by modern librarians

School of Postgraduate Studies UNN (2006) points out that Master's and Doctorate degree programmes are designed to provide professional education to highly qualified and motivated candidates who wish to pursue careers as librarians, information specialists, library educators and researchers.

Igbeka (2008), agrees that a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree prepares students for library work, but some graduates use their education outside library settings. MLS graduates working outside the library include:

- Book publishing workers: they use their knowledge of books to choose and edit manuscripts.
- Chief information officers: they decide on the information technology needed by a particular business and how employees will share information.
- Content managers: they find and organize materials for online communities.
- Database administrators: they organize, update and store data using extensive programming skills.
- Information brokers/business librarians: they conduct research for people and charge fees for information supplied.
- Sales workers: they sell software and other products to libraries.
- Taxonomists: they work for data processing and e-commerce companies by classifying information and putting it in appropriate categories.
- Webmasters: They design, maintain and programme websites.

Prospects in Special Libraries & Information Centres

Industrial organization in all sectors – oil and chemicals, drugs, electronics, coal, gas, steel, electricity, etc. – have their libraries and/or information centres. Most of these libraries/information centres have been built around their companies' research and development programmes, and so have traditionally been heavily biased to particular areas of science and technology. They have to provide a steady flow of the latest technical and scientific information for the research staff, to keep up to date on what is going on elsewhere in their particular field, give answers to highly technical questions, etc. Industrial and commercial firms also use sophisticated commercial information, including current on-line information and statistics, and surveys on potential new markets, government policies, the

economy, industrial relations policy, financial markets and so on.

Some companies have very large and sophisticated combined libraries and information services, while others are very much smaller and can be fairly basic. Most professional firms of solicitors, accountants, architects, engineers, etc. employ professional librarians/information officers to manage the firm's library/information services.

The services provided by special libraries obviously vary greatly, from the large and very sophisticated – producing services, providing access to a range of databases, etc. and maintaining a large collection of printed and other material – through to the fairly rudimentary. The professional librarian can work in any of the following establishments: School and Colleges, Polytechnics, Universities, Research Institutes, Banks, Information Centres, Museums, Hospitals, Law Chambers, Government establishments, Industries, Business Centres with Cyber Cafes, Media Houses (TV/Radio Stations), Companies.

Career Planning Staff (2007) presents a chart on the areas, employers and information/strategies of the getting involved in the Library & Information Science profession.

Table 3: Areas, Employers & Strategies of Library Science Profession

Areas	Employers	Information/Strategies
Academic Libraries Service to Faculty and Students, Reference, Circulation, Technical Services, Serials Management, Manuscripts, Access/Outreach, Music, Metadata, Web Design, Bibliographic Support, etc	Universities and colleges Junior and community colleges Specialized academic programs, e.g., seminaries, optometrist programs	Academic librarians may work one-on-one with students and faculties, teach and present seminars, or work in technically-oriented positions such as systems design or database management.
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
School Libraries and Media Centre, Teaching , Administration, Technical Services, Administrator (School system level)	K-12 schools Public and private Public school districts	School librarians or media specialists may help teachers develop curricula, prepare lesson units, team teach or provide staff development.
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
Public Libraries User/Reader Services Information and Referral Services, Youth/Children, Technical Services, Web Development/ Maintenance, Special Collections, Admin.etc.	Central libraries Library branches Library services to jails, retirement homes, nursing homes, hospitals, senior centre, etc.	Some librarians specialize in a particular subject area, such as government collections or technology, or a particular type of materials, such as maps or photography, or with a special population
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
Special Libraries & Information Centres Indexing/Abstracting, Competitor Intelligence, Strategic Information, Knowledge Management Records Management/Archives, Digital Preservation, Visual Resources, Reprography, etc.	Large hospitals, Medical schools, Law firms/schools. Bar associations, large corporations, industrial and scientific collections, Research labs, Government Agencies, Museums/Art Institutions, TV stations, Publishing houses, etc.	Special collections librarians generally have interests, skills, and knowledge related to the collection and may work with a particular population in special libraries, e.g. lawyers or doctors.
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
Information Services Research, Indexing/Abstracting Online Retrieval, Information Architecture, Programming, Database Management	Information services agencies, Outsourcing companies, Research centres, Large corporations, Self-employed: Consulting, Freelance editing, Research	Information services professionals provide research and services to corporations, writers, or individuals needing information or references on a particular subject.
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
Information Systems/ Technology Design/Development, Management/Operation Database Administration, Computer Support, Network Administration, Programming Systems Analysis, Web Development/Maintenance, Training, Reprography, Information Architecture, Digital Preservation, Privacy Regulation	Libraries: Public, Academic and Special. Data processing centres Corporations, Research centres, Government, Universities,	Professionals involved in information systems help organizations with the storage, retrieval, and management of records or information and support information technology in an organization.
Areas	**Employers**	**Information/Strategies**
Electronic Publishing	Database producers Distributors of electronic publications, e.g. business firms, universities, nonprofit organizations, professional associations, etc. Electronic publishers Self-employed	Electronic publishers or publishing professionals create and distribute publications in electronic form.

Conclusion

Currently, most library science professionals work in school, public, and academic libraries, but employment opportunities are growing most for information specialists in settings such as corporations, consulting firms and information brokers and in environments involving Internet-based information.

When a librarian or information scientist is self-employed: he or she can be engaged in information purveyance, by collecting and disseminating information from his databank to wherever the users are located. He or she can equally be a consultant or a chartered librarian provided he/she has the professional qualification and the expertise. There is wide range of activities a library scientist can be engaged in. Such as Internet search for students or researchers who may need a specified kind of information for their projects or publishable articles in journals. A librarian, when once the necessary skills are acquired can fit into any establishment that have information unit or that has to do with documentation and preservation of source materials either for the staff alone or for other clients.

Recommendations

- Librarianship education in tertiary institutions should include career options for the profession.
- Understanding trends in media, computers/technology, Internet, and publishing is important to success in the profession.
- Different types of libraries, librarians and professional activities should be re-emphasized at all levels of education in library and information science

- "Essential Terminologies" should be included in the Library and Information Science Curriculum at the Bachelors Degree and Masters levels.
- A Master of Library Science (MLS) degree prepares students for library work not only in the academic institutions but also in establishments and Information Centres.
- Students of all levels in this profession should have updated Dictionary of Library & Information Science as a handbook.
- There should be a Career Services Unit in the Library & Information Department whose work should be career planning and orientation for students in the discipline.

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