

Choice of Librarianship as a Career: A Case Study of FUOYE Pioneer Library and Information Science Students

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Abstract

Purpose: This study determines the factors that shape students' selection of Library and Information Science (LIS) as a discipline/career at the Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) in Nigeria.

Design/methodology/approach: This study is based on a questionnaire survey of 82 pioneer students in the Department of Library and Information Science.

Key finding(s): The study revealed that the female respondents, 47 (57.32%), were more (more?), while 54 (65.85%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 16-20 years. The respondents spread across fifteen states in Nigeria, had their subject background differently in Education 30 (36.59%), Science 21 (25.61%) and Arts 20 (24.39%). Likewise, 23 (28.05%) and 21 (25.61%) respondents got to know about librarianship through their mentors and parents respectively. The study revealed that 46 (56.09%) of the respondents, chose librarianship through their personal interest, while 22 (26.83%) by chance. The study further showed that 62 (75.61%) of the respondents wished to be lecturers while 64 (78.05%) aspired to be practicing librarians. The 63 (76.83%) of the respondents had no intentions to change their course in the near future, while 65 (79.27%) agreed that they were already determined to study Library and Information Science.

Research limitation(s): The study is limited to the newly admitted (pioneer) 100 (100 level) students of the new Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Practical implication(s): Librarianship is gaining momentum as more female students in their young age, are showing interest in the profession.

Contribution to knowledge: This study may be used in a comparative context with other developing countries.

Paper type: Research.

Keywords: Librarianship; Library profession; Career choice; Nigeria.

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Introduction

Librarianship, like any other demanding profession, is getting popular in Nigeria. Many of the youth are becoming aware of this profession and they now show interest in making a career in librarianship. Bello (1992) in a related study quoted a respondent who was satisfied with librarianship as a chosen profession as saying that, “as a professional, librarianship in practice produces ‘a sound you’. You can never stop reading. Reading becomes part of you, as you wouldn’t want to be embarrassed by your clients on current issues, subject wide” (p.3).

History of librarianship in Nigeria

The history of librarianship in Nigeria goes back to the establishment of first library school in Nigeria, which is in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

John Harris was widely regarded as “Father of Nigerian Libraries” cited by Busayo (2006). A foundation student viz. Ajayi (1988) at the University College Ibadan from January 1948, who witnessed the arrival of John Harris as the first University Librarian in November 1948, also affirmed it. Ajayi further observed that the Institute of Librarianship, later the Department of Library Studies, which John Harris founded was a full-fledged academic department. Likewise, William John Harris was the only professional staff the library had at its inception in 1948 and that as a result of his outstanding pioneering efforts; the most senior librarians in Nigeria were either trained at Ibadan or worked therein.

The Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies came into existence in 1959 as the Institute of Librarianship at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. At its inception, the Department started the Diploma program in Librarianship and later on Masters and Doctoral programs were started. It was not until 1990 that the Bachelor’s Degree program was introduced. Initially, the nomenclature of the degree was a Bachelor of Library Studies. It was changed to Bachelor of Library and Information Studies (BLIS) in 1995 at the very time when the name of the Department was changed to Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies to reflect the diverse specialties therein (University of Ibadan, 2015).

Librarianship as a professional career

Aina (2004) rightly observed that a library was concerned with the collection, processing, storage and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. He stressed that the growth and importance of libraries brought about the profession of

librarianship. He equally stated that a librarian was the professional concerned with the collection, storage, processing and dissemination of recorded knowledge in a library.

Ajidahun (2008) also observed that at the tertiary education level, especially at the College, Polytechnic and University levels, the establishment of the tertiary institutions depended heavily on the existence and the quality of their library services. He noted that the University library had come to be accepted as the academic heart, hub and the nerve-centre of the University. Since the University was established for teaching, research and community service, no meaningful teaching and research could take place in the tertiary institutions without the provision of adequate library services.

Oyebade (2010) saw a professional as a well-trained person in the art of performing a job that required a high level of skills and competence.

Objectives of the Study

This study intends to find:

1. Why the students choose FUOYE as their university of choice?
2. How the students get to know about librarianship?
3. What informed the students' decision to choose librarianship?
4. The students' choice between being a practicing librarian or a lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Studies.
5. The genuineness of the choice/decision earlier made by the students.

Literature Review

A number of scholars have written about the choice of librarianship as a career, both within and outside Nigeria. Salaam and Owolabi (2010) in a related study observed that previous work experiences in libraries served as a major reason for the choice of librarianship in Ogun State, Nigeria. The duo discovered that some of their respondents started their career as library assistants or library officers and then decided to remain in librarianship after their secondary school education. While some library personnel claimed that they learned about the profession through friends and relatives.

There are many professions. However, librarianship is no doubt a profession as it meets all the characteristics of a profession as outlined by Nwalo (2000, p. 79) namely:

- A profession is learned since it is based on a substantial body of knowledge

- A profession is guided by altruism or concern for the client who comes for help
- A profession has techniques or skills which can be taught
- A profession is practical since this body of knowledge can be used to solve human problems
- It has a standard of professional qualifications for admission to the professional group, based on character, training and proven competence.
- A profession is based by recognition of status by one's colleagues or by the state as a basis of good standing.
- A profession has an organization of the professional group devoted to its common advancement and its social duty rather than the maintenance of economic monopoly.
- The practitioners of a profession enjoy a relatively high degree of autonomy and should have the ability to exercise independent judgment in problem-solving.
- A profession has an official publication for advancement of knowledge of the profession.
- A profession must be useful to society and its practice should be able to provide adequate means of livelihood for the practitioner.

Many of Nigerian youths, particularly, secondary school leavers, often face a number of challenges in the process of choosing a life career. This may be due to their ignorance or failure to seek appropriate counsel. Indeed, many adolescents do carry these problems into adulthood. Geshinde (1986) noted that making a wrong choice of career portended danger. He stressed its adverse effect on physical health, the company of friends and job security. This view was buttressed by Issa and Nwalo (2008) who claimed that wrong choice of career could lead to frustration and low productivity.

Likewise, Ferry (2006) identified the factors that determine people's occupational choice, to include life context, personal attitude, and educational attainment. Tella (2007) equally observed various factors, such as attractive salary, good condition of service and job security, which could promote librarianship as a choice of career. Agumanu (1989) conducted a similar study on factors that influenced the students in Imo State University Library School. The findings revealed that 80% of the respondents entered the library school because they failed to secure admission into other departments such as law or engineering and

that 20% of the students picked the profession due to the influence of librarians in their family.

Alemna (1991) conducted a study on the postgraduates at the University of Ghana Library School and found that despite the fact that most of the students were there because other options were denied, opportunity for intellectual development and further education were a major reason for choosing the profession as a career. This view also corroborated the findings of Nzotta (1982) on the reasons for the choice of librarianship among the postgraduate students at the University of Ibadan. In his findings, the majority of the respondents (58%) indicated that they chose the profession because it gave them room for intellectual development.

Similarly, Issa and Nwalo (2008) examined the factors affecting the career choice of undergraduates in Nigeria library and information schools. They discovered that 68.86% of the respondents claimed that they chose the profession because of their previous work experiences in a library, while 15.68% admitted that they opted for the profession in order to secure a good job.

Busayo (2006) in a survey of librarianship in Nigeria, opined that people went into the field without realizing exactly what they were heading for, neither were they aware of the status a librarian had in the country. Likewise, they were not aware, what opportunities and prospects were available.

Iwuji (1979) opined that Librarianship had a good record of professional association at all geographic levels. He asserted that both the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the regional and national associations were mainly concerned with the development of standards and techniques of service. Iwuji stressed that much premium was attached to the moral and intellectual quality of the professional man because the public image of the profession was created by the aggregate quality of the consisting practitioners. Moreover, the profession renders vital and specialized social service, which only the best breed of men and women can be trusted to dispense.

Aje (1977) in a lecture delivered on "Career in Librarianship" as the Director of the National Library of Nigeria appealed to the Nigerian youths to embrace librarianship, he said:

Lastly, my appeal goes to the youths of this country, to include librarianship on their list of careers when considering a choice. It is a new area; the prospects are very good. It is a profession with a good universal currency - The nation needs you now, join in.

The above assertion of Aje in 1977 is still true as at date. Aje as at then also strongly opposed the general misconception that librarianship took a back seat in the public service. He stressed that if an individual took a back seat in relation to his job, it does not typify a whole profession.

A survey conducted by Bello (1992) revealed that many a people do not decide on librarianship from the onset of their life career. The choice of the profession tended to either be as a result of influence, experience or only as an alternative left. Bello quoted Herther as saying that she did not grow up wanting to be a Librarian, so it came as a shock to her family, friends and even herself when she decided on the profession.

Methodology

A structured questionnaire was administered to the pioneer (100 level) students during one of their compulsory courses (lectures), taught by the researcher. Ninety (90) questionnaires in total were distributed for completion by the students, out of which eighty-two (82) were returned duly completed and found useable for this study, representing a return rate of 91%. The respondents were not allowed to take the questionnaires to homes. They were given about 10 minutes to fill and submit before the commencement of their lecture for the day.

Findings of the Study

Demographic distribution

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents (n=82)

Gender			
<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
35 (42.68%)		47 (57.32%)	
Age			
<i>16-20yrs</i>	<i>21-25yrs</i>	<i>26yrs & above</i>	
54 (68.85%)	27 (32.93%)	1 (1.22%)	
Subject background			
<i>Science</i>	<i>Management/ Social Sciences</i>	<i>Arts</i>	<i>Education</i>
21 (25.61%)	11 (13.41%)	20 (24.39%)	30 (36.59%)

The gender distribution shows that the female (57.32%) is more than the male (42.68%). The age distribution shows that the majority of the

respondents (65.85%) are within the age bracket of 16 to 20 years. The subject background of the respondents shows that the Education (36.59%) has the highest frequency, followed by Science (25.61%), Arts (24.39%) and Management/Social Sciences (13.41%).

The respondents are from fifteen (15) different states in Nigeria. However, Ekiti tops the list with 24.39%, followed by Osun with 21.95% and Oyo with 12.19%. Three of the respondents (3.66%) fail to indicate their state of origin.

Career selection

The items related to career selection are appended in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Choice of LIS as Career (n=82)

S#	Statement	Agree	Disagree
1	I made FUOYE my first choice	78 (95.12%)	4 (4.88%)
2	I wish to be a lecturer in LIS	62 (75.61%)	20 (24.39%)
3	I intend to be a practicing librarian	64 (78.05%)	18 (21.95%)
4	I wish to quit LIS course, if possible	19 (23.17%)	63 (76.83%)
5	I am determined to study LIS	65 (79.27 %)	17 (20.73 %)

The majority of the respondents 78 (95.12%) agreed that they made FUOYE their choice because it was a federal institution of repute while 4 (4.88%) disagreed with this assertion.

The study also revealed that 75.61% of the respondents wished to be academics in the near future while 24.39% of the respondents had contrary views. It can also be seen from the above that 78.05% of the respondents intend to be practicing librarians in the near future, while 21.95% of the respondents are opposed to this claim.

Some of the respondents (23.17%) still intend to change their course and quit Library and Information Science, while 76.83% of the respondents have made up their mind to remain in the profession.

From the above, 79.27% of the respondents further established and reaffirmed the fact that they are already determined to study Library and Information Science, while 20.73% are still undecided.

Sources of selecting LIS discipline/career

The respondents were asked how they got to know about LIS as a discipline. The majority of the respondents got to know about Library Science through their mentor (23, 28.05%), followed by parents (21, 25.61%) and relations (12, 14.63%).

In response to question “what informed your decision to choose/study LIS,” the majority (46, 56.09%) decided to study LIS on their own personal volition (interest), while 22 (26.83%) opted it casually or by chance.

With regard to various LIS career paths, the majority wished to be academics (49, 59.76%), followed by university librarians (10, 12.19%), and librarians in banks, oil companies or other industries (11, 13.41%).

Recommendations

Keeping in view the findings of this study, the following is recommended to guide the prospective career seekers.

- Youth should be encouraged to choose librarianship as a career because of its bright prospects.
- Librarians should mentor the youths to enable them have an insight into librarianship and the prospects therein.
- The various Library schools, that is the Departments of Library and Information Studies should create awareness and let the public, particularly the secondary school leavers (youths), know of their programs.
- Parents should care to seek information from tertiary institutions, particularly on career choice for their children and guide them accordingly.
- The guidance counselors too have a role to play to ensure that the youths are well guided.
- Orientation for freshmen, seminars and workshops should be held regularly to further educate and enlighten the students on the prospects of librarianship as a career.

Conclusion

Library and Information Science professionals may serve as academicians or practicing librarians.

Therefore, future Librarian can aspire to either go into academics or remain a practicing librarian, educationally, there is provision/room to read to Master and PhD levels. So many academic librarians are professors while a number of practicing librarians hold PhD degrees. All full-fledged librarians working in tertiary institutions are also academic staff and they are treated as such.

The future of librarians is bright in Nigeria. However, there are instances of university/polytechnic/college librarians, who after completing their terms in their respective institutions, go back to take up

lecturing jobs in the department of library and information studies. They also become professors. The sky, therefore, is not the limit for any hardworking librarian, but a starting point.

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