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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE EDUCATION: GRADUATE AND EMPLOYABILITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to examine Library and Information Science Education: graduate and employability in the 21st century.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Related literatures were extensively reviewed through an exploratory approach which lead to thorough explanation of concepts associated with the theme such as Library and Information Science (LIS) education in the 21st century, Library and Information Science as a profession in the 21st century, job opportunities in Library and Information Science in the 21st century, required skills and abilities for LIS employment in the 21st century and problems of employability skills of LIS graduates in the 21st century.

Findings The paper found out that career opportunity for LIS graduates include public enterprises, industrial establishments, academic institutions, corporate sector and software industries. Required skills and abilities for LIS employment include computer and information technology, Internet and computer communication networks, information retrieval skill, traditional classification and cataloguing, indexing and abstracting, web/blog design skills, project management/leadership skills, etc.

Practical Implication: Library and Information Science Education have transformed tremendously due to the introduction and adoption of ICT to meet the society's information needs. This has necessitated a radical change in LIS curriculum and syllabus keeping in view the need of information work force required in the international/global market.

Originality/Value: The paper concluded that LIS employers in the 21st century mostly look only for computer literate graduates to recruit into their libraries and information centres for effective and efficient information dissemination.

Keyword: Employability, Graduates, Information and Communication Technology, Library and Information Science, Skills.

Introduction

Library and Information Science discipline is a multidisciplinary study area that deals with the in-depth study of information selection, acquisition, organization, dissemination and storage. Sinha and Pandey (2014) are of the view that librarianship is a growing field which has by now attained the status of a separate discipline in the universe of knowledge. With the introduction of Information and Communication Technology, the definition of the library as well as the librarianship has changed. Earlier, the library was considered as the store house of books and the librarian, as

the custodian of books. But now, the role of traditional librarian is fast evolving from the custodian of books to a facilitator who locates the right information. It is one of the duties of the Librarian to help users to find the right information at the right time as per their requirement and use it effectively and efficiently.

Library and Information Science profession is undergoing a shift from paper to electronic media which necessitated the introduction and adoption of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for information selection, acquisition, organization, storage, dissemination and retrieval. The introduction of Internet and

World Wide Web (WWW) have changed the ways of accessing and locating information and thus changed the functions of the library professionals in the modern information society. ICT has introduced a new service environment in libraries for the library professionals and the information seekers. (Sinha and Pandey, 2014)

Who is a graduate of LIS?

The graduate of Library and Information Science refers to someone who has spent a minimum of four (4) years or (three years (3) for Direct Entry (DE) only) in the university and have obtained first degree in Library and Information Science (BLIS). The graduate of this discipline is expected to possess the basic knowledge about information selection, acquisition, organization, storage, preservation and dissemination of information.

What is Employability?

Employability according to Knight and Yorke (2004) refers to capability of getting and keeping satisfactory work, getting work from somebody for pay or state of being employed. It can be defined as “a set of achievements skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.” In the same vein Robinson (2000) opines that employability are those basic skills necessary for getting, keeping, and doing well on a job. The skills are teachable skills which are in three categories: basic academic skills, higher-order thinking skills and personal qualities.

It is therefore imperative that employment aspirants have to meet the employers' expectations to get an opportunity to work in a particular environment. In addition to this, knowledge, techniques, skills, abilities, values, aspirations, wants, needs, dreams and personal style of a candidate seeking employment also enhance the candidate's employability. (Tadasad, 2015)

Library and Information Science Education in the 21st Century

Library and Information Science Education is the study of organized collections of books and other non-book materials. Through this study, a person acquires relevant skills for maximum utilization of information resources in which a learner, student or researcher of information must possess before being considered as information literate (Etim, 2002). According to Igbeka(2000) Library and Information Science can also be seen as the study of issues related to libraries and information services. This includes academic studies regarding how library resources are used, how people interact with library systems, and the organization of knowledge for efficient retrieval of relevant information. Librarianship is the application of library science which comprises the practical services rendered by librarians in their day-to-day attempts to meet the needs of library patrons or users.

Abdulrahman and Habila (2017) affirmed that education in Library and Information Science has taken a new dimension. Library and Information Science education as a field and area of study is indispensable in this competitive era of knowledge and information management and the technological advancement in the area of ICT has made significant changes in the profession towards achieving the desired objective and to meet up with the modern trends of effective information services delivery.

The field of Library and Information Science education has transformed tremendously due to the introduction and adoption of ICT to meet the society's information needs. The basic objective of LIS education remains unchanged:- to equip LIS students for various library activities and to provide trained manpower to manage different types of libraries. The departments of LIS, in keeping pace with the developments have brought several changes in LIS education including curriculum, methods of instruction, use of IT in teaching, learning, etc to equip their students with relevant skills and

competencies so that they can be absorbed in the job market. (Tadasad, 2015).

Ameen and Wrraich (2011) noted that LIS education is to develop competent and skilled human resources to meet the changing needs of digital environment. Changes at work place in a digital/virtual environment have compelled library and information professionals to reorient themselves and compete in the global market as well. This has necessitated a radical change in LIS curriculum and syllabus keeping in view the need of information work force required in the international/global market. This will eliminate the wide disparities of LIS education, practice and research between the developing and developed countries. The curriculum has to ensure that students are learning the knowledge and skills necessary to work in our rapidly changing field (Chow, 2011). The LIS departments must ensure appropriate alignment between expectations and its curriculum. It is an already established fact that ICT skills have been identified as important educational qualities of LIS graduate students. (Tadasad, 2014)

Library and Information Science Profession in the 21st Century

The profession of Library and Information Science is one of the professions that ICT plays significant roles because of its peculiarity that has to do with information dissemination as the fundamental function of the profession.

Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) admit that the emergence of ICT has redefined the library's role in the 21st century. Print materials are no longer sufficient to store information. CDROM databases, electronic document delivery, automated cataloguing, circulation systems and online information retrieval (OPAC) have become the order of the day; Omezu, Bamidele, Ukangwa and Amadi (2013) opine that the advent of ICT is a boost to the library services since librarians are harnessing the potentials of ICT to reach out to the teeming library users. Halder (2009) affirms that with the development and application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), the library environment has shifted from the traditional library to hybrid library; automated

library and then digital and virtual library. Presently it has shifted to Library 2.0. Most libraries across the world are presently installing servers, creating repositories and databases to deliver digital contents, e-resources and research outputs across the world. According to Issa (2010), libraries today have shunned the mantle of being mere repositories of books and other print materials. The advent of technology has seen the introduction of digitized and electronic services making the library presence felt in the present age. Library has continued to remain the pacesetter in the provision of current and timely information to her users with unprecedented record of research outputs and the closure of lacuna in knowledge.

Employment Opportunities for Library and Information Science Graduates in the 21st Century

Employment opportunities for LIS graduates are enormous and limitless in this digital era. Technological advancement has create vast opportunity and increase market demands for LIS graduates of 21st century in terms of qualification, experience, professional, technical skills etc. LIS graduates are not only expected to have core library skills but also be able to implement IT knowledge efficiently and effectively. (Yadav and Bankar, 2016).

According to Tadasad(2014) LIS graduates are recruited into public enterprises, industrial establishments, academic institutions, corporate sector including software industries. Today one may find opportunities mainly in the private sector compared to the public sector. There are many opportunities and benefits in the job market especially for those having Master's degree in LIS for traditional as well as non-traditional jobs. Sinha and Pandey (2014) noted that due to the rapid growth in the number of learning institutions all over the country, the necessity and the importance of libraries is also growing and with this the number of career prospects available in LIS profession. The qualified and trained professionals are employed in various libraries and information centres. LIS professionals can select the type of library as per their own interest. Thus there is a very bright future

prospect for LIS professional. And only the trained personnel in LIS can have employment opportunities in the various sectors.

Required Skills and Abilities for LIS Employment in the 21st Century.

ICTs have greatly transformed the way and manner information is sought, accessed, processed and presented. It has also given information users/seekers unlimited access to a world of information with questionable credibility and source (Ekoja and Odu 2016) and greatly facilitates the acquisition and absorption of knowledge. Hence, librarians require modern ICT skills in order to provide effective information service to users.

According to Kumar (2010) the goal of Library and Information Science education is to equip LIS graduates with competencies and skills to meet ever changing needs of the users in multi-faceted, inter-disciplinary environment. The changing needs of users' and rapid development on technological fronts demands new competencies of LIS graduates to enhance employability. Future graduates need to develop an understanding of competencies and skills required to pursue a career in librarianship.

Salubi (2017) itemized some skills and abilities employers of LIS graduates require to include computer and information technological, skill for using Internet and computer communication networks, information retrieval skill, traditional classification and cataloguing, indexing and abstracting, web/blog design skills, project management/leadership skills, excellent understanding of library management, software and the virtual environment, negotiation skills, research and publication skills, library automation skills, budgeting and library financing skills, cataloguing and indexing using appropriate digital metadata, classification skills using appropriate subject classification scheme, digitization and management of institutional repository using online databases, traditional/online reference skills, advanced internet search skills, good understanding of electronic security system, collection development in an ICT-driven, application of

social media networks to library services among others.

Problems of Employability Skills of LIS Graduates in the 21st Century

Library and Information Science graduates faced some employability skills challenges that denied them from getting employed. Emezie (2013) observed that there are two major employability skills challenges which hinders some LIS graduate from getting job in this 21st century viz: lack of competency: some LIS graduates are not competent to take on the challenging role of the 21st century information service delivery. They are antagonistic to technology and perceive the application of computers to library work as an aberration. This being the case, they are reluctant to embrace new technology. In the same vein Tanawade (2011) asserts that many librarians lack confidence in the face of increasing information technology.

Lack of technology literacy: some LIS graduates lack the requisite technological literacy needed for a 21st century library service. Technological literacy can be viewed as the ability to responsibly use appropriate technology to communicate, solve problems, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, design and create information to improve learning in all subject areas and acquire lifelong knowledge and skills in the 21st century. Anyira (2011) maintains that librarians without a well-developed ICT skill cannot render effective library services, thus, lack of skills among LIS graduates constitute a major obstacle to service delivery in the 21st century.

According to Warraich (2008) pointed out some of the challenges of LIS graduates to requires them to improve upon which includes their communication skills, problem solving attitude, good knowledge of IT, storage and retrieval of information, presentation skills, proficiency in English language and will have to provide services to customers with motivation and commitment.

Conclusion

Library and Information Science in this 21st century has a lot of opportunities for its graduates. Most library schools have modified their curriculum to incorporate the application of ICT to library services so that upon graduation the student is expected to have acquired necessary ICT skills needed to be successful in this 21st century. With the introduction of ICT into library services the trends has metamorphosed and has eased the work of librarians in reaching to their clientele without hurdles irrespective of the clientele's location. LIS employers in the 21st century mostly look only for computer literate graduates to recruit into their libraries and information centres for effective and efficient information dissemination.

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