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LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE AND GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY

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Abstract
Library and Information Science is the academic and professional study of how information and information carriers are produced, disseminated, discovered, evaluated, selected, acquired, used, organized, maintained, and managed. There are many employment opportunities for library and information science graduates in traditional and non-traditional jobs which have been influenced by digital environment. This environment demands new job titles, new roles and skills from the profession to provide various library and information services. This paper discusses library and information science and graduate employability. The paper defined library and information science and the concept of employability as well as employability skills. The paper identified employability skills needed by library and information science graduates to include information technology skills, information literacy skills, knowledge management skills, managerial skills, personal entrepreneurial skills and technical skills among others. The paper also discusses employment opportunities for library and information science graduates to include teaching, librarians in various types of library and information centres, publishing, development of computer software, production and sale of library equipment, information brokerage and consultancy services, information officers and book selling among others. The paper identified problems affecting the employability of library and information science graduates to include lack of Information and Communication Technology skills, lack of functional workshops and laboratories, nonchalant attitudes of graduates and unavailability of lectures that are entrepreneurial conscious. The paper suggested ways forward among others that, Library and Information Science curriculum generally should be revised on regular interval by all the library schools to accommodate new developments in the field.

Keywords: Library and Information Science, Employability, Employability Skills, Graduates, Employment Opportunities.

Introduction

We are living in a complex information environment that is highly competitive where library and information science profession is undergoing immense transformation that has affected the landscape of library and information service parlance. In our contemporary society where information has become the hub upon which economic development rotates, the place of library and information services cannot be ignored (Anyanwu, 2013). The avalanche of information in our society is to meet the need of the time, where people are constantly in need of current information that will satisfy their information need. According to Anyanwu (2013), we live in a 21st century knowledge economy where increasing reliance on information creates an environment that is full of opportunities for information professionals who have skills to harness and be creatorsof wealth and jobs. Library and information science, as a discipline is designed to produce information professionals that will completely serve different stakeholders for development. As such, the graduates of library and information science ought to be empowered through professional, managerial and generic skills for the task.

Library and Information Science profession have lots of potential to develop the knowledge and skills required to sustain and survive in the present day information society. Globalization and liberalization has opened up multiple career options to the library and information science profession. The field library and information science is multi-disciplinary in nature as a result of which tremendous changes can be traced in the discipline (Kumar, 2010). This has brought radical changes in the outlook of the profession. There are many employment opportunities for library and information graduates in traditional and non-traditional jobs which have been influenced by digital environment. This environment demands new job titles, new roles and skills from the profession to provide various library and information services. As a profession, the discipline offers a wide range of employment opportunities in different types of settings, be it–public, academic, or special; government or nongovernment; traditional, hybrid, or digital; small, medium, or large; corporate, non-corporate to mention but a few. Thus there is a very bright future prospect for library and information science graduates but only the properly trained graduates can have employment opportunities in the various sectors.

The very nature of employment in libraries is also changing as the job market

is a fast-changing environment. All those disciplines that have relations with library and information science have influenced the employers to expect more from library and information science graduates demanding more knowledge, varied skills and techniques that fits present day library's requirements. In the meantime, it is most appalling to know that arguments or debates are floated often on various forums including social media that the image of the profession has gone down and the present library and information professionals lack minimum standards to function in a modern library. This also emphasizes the point that there is an urgent need for creation of new generation of employable library and information science graduates. The traditional roles of library and information science have changed with the advances in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Library and information science graduates are expected to be academics of higher order with competence to work in a hypertext, networked, digital environment. Hence, the library and information science education should impart the learners, the necessary skills to gain employment upon graduation and to develop the vision and understanding to help them cope better with the rapidly changing world. This paper focused on library and information science and graduate employability.

Conceptual Clarification

Library and Information Science Profession

Library and Information Science is the academic and professional study of how information and information carriers are produced, disseminated, discovered, evaluated, selected, acquired, used, organized, maintained, and managed. Library and Information Science profession serves the information needs of a democratic, progressive, technologically sophisticated and culturally diverse society. A key focus of the profession is enabling people to connect with the world of information, interacting with and utilising information in all aspects of their lives. The profession fosters lifelong learning, personal fulfilment, improved decision making, knowledge development, innovation, imagination, creativity and cultural continuity. People who work in the profession have specialised knowledge and skills, as well as employability attributes. The level to which individuals have requisite knowledge, skills and attributes depends on their formal qualifications, work experience, professional development, and the role(s) they perform.

Library and information science professionals require knowledge gained through education to deliver quality library and information services. By meeting the information needs of their clients and encouraging them to acquire information literacy skills to seek, locate and use information, they also facilitate knowledge creation.

All library and information professionals require sound practical knowledge and skills in order to effectively support the delivery of these library and information services. Experienced library and information specialists provide additional support by supervising staff, planning, implementing and evaluating services and systems and providing strategic thinking, innovation and leadership.

Library and Information Science educators are striving continuously to find solutions to the dual challenges of meeting the needs of training students for a profession that is rapidly changing from librarianship to cybrarianship. However, the basic objective of Library and Information Science education remains unchanged - to equip Library and Information Science students for various library activities and provide trained manpower to manage different types of libraries. The profession, in keeping pace with the developments have brought several changes in Library and Information Science education including curriculum, methods of instruction, use of Information Technology in teaching – learning to mention but a few, to equip their students with relevant skills and competencies so that they can be employable upon graduation.

Employability

Employability can also be defined as "a set of achievements—skills, understandings and personal attributes-that make graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy". It also "Enables students to acquire the knowledge, personal and professional skills and encourage the attitudes that will support their future development and employment".

According to Knight (2009) the term 'employability' refers to capability of getting and keeping satisfactory work, getting work from somebody for pay or state of being employed. Employability means "a group of essential abilities that involve the development of a knowledge base, expertise level and mind-set that is increasingly necessary for success in the modern workplace. Pradhan (2015) refer to employability as person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required. In simple terms, employability is about being capable of getting and keeping fulfilling work.

More comprehensively, employability is the capability to move self-sufficiently within the market to realise potential through sustainable employment. For individuals, employability depends on the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) they possess, the way they use the seas sets and present these

to employers, and the context (e.g. personal circumstances and market environment)within which they seek work. Library and Information Science profession should be aware of competencies and skills required for getting a job. The changes in library and librarianship are very fast due to interdisciplinary research and fast developments of technological fronts.

Employability Skills

Employability skills are those basic necessary skills forgetting, keeping, and doing well on a job. Employability skills, while categorised in many different ways, are generally divided into three skill sets: (a) academic skills, (b) higher-order thinking skills, and (c) personal qualities. It also enables students to acquire the knowledge, personal and professional skills and encourage the attitudes that will support their future development and employment (Tadasad, 2015). Pradhan (2015) defined employability skills as the capability of getting and keeping satisfactory work, getting work from somebody for pay or state of being employed. It can also 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. Employability skills mean a group of essential abilities that involve the development of a knowledge base, expertise level and mind-set that is increasingly necessary for success in the modern workplace.

From these definitions it is 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. As such employability is affected by all those factors of 'demand-supply theory' including those that can be controlled by an individual himself/herself. This also applies to the Library and Information profession and Library and Information Science graduates as such; Library and Information Science educators have to design programmes to enhance the employability of these graduates.

Employability Skills Needed by Library and Information Science Graduates

It is said in every forum by every one that Library and Information Science professionals need to have various skills, competencies necessitated by technological advances and changing role of the profession itself. They have to manage information resources of varied nature, involving managerial aspects.

Besides, they are required to perform several information based retrieval and dissemination activities, which range from traditional to most advanced ones viz., reference, referral, online information searching, Internet browsing, digital libraries and online cataloguing among others. It is also said that, library and information science professionals should be competent enough accepting challenges and capable of adapting themselves to changes. Library and Information Science graduates should ably show professionalism, (Warraich, 2008). An analysis regarding the employers' expectations of Library and Information Science professionals reflected through job descriptions found that, the employers do not have any such specific requirements except that they should have some kind of computer knowledge, (Tadasad, 2015).

National Knowledge Commission cited by Yadav and Singh (2012) submitted proposals on staffing of libraries and recommended that skills required for fulfilling the changing role of libraries are: library and information-handling skills; service orientation; ICT knowledge skills; communication and training skills; marketing and presentation skills; understanding of cultural diversity; and, knowledge mapping skills among others.

The transition from traditional library model to digital library model has affected professionals' roles and activities due to new required skills and it is found that that different library sectors had different emphases in terms of the employability skills required (Stephens and Hamblin, 2006). Employability skills include the handling and retrieval of information in any format, communication and presentation, planning and problem solving, and social development and interaction (Varalakshmi cited by Yadav and Singh, 2012). ICT skills have been recognised as essential qualities for Library and Information Science graduates' employment.

Contemporary Library and Information Science curricula are more marketing oriented, but have yet to bridge the divide between system-cantered approaches and clientele-cantered approaches (Harmon, 2003). Professionals should have skills and knowledge for marketing of library resources and services and public relations. In today's competitive knowledge based economy, the theoretical knowledge of academic subject is not enough for Library and Information Science graduate to survive in the information market. The graduates will have to develop market- oriented skills to meet the challenging as well as changing needs of employers (Warraich and Ameen, 2011). Ashcroft (2004) stated that, information professionals are facing the challenge of new and emerging skills and professional demands; the most important aspect of this change is to be able to adapt existing skills and to remain flexible within a changing work environment.

The manpower of today is experiencing the new challenges and the onslaught of the impact of Information Technology on Library and Information Science which envisages making substantial contribution to the ever perpetuating Information Society. They need to be equipped in this context with necessary skills and competency to satisfy the high level, complex and ever growing multifarious information needs of the user. For this purpose, many skills have been identified by Middleton, to prepare incoming professionals for such tasks as: end-user instruction; database design; electronic reference service; metadata management; digitisation project management; Web site evaluation; business analysis; and knowledge management. (Middleton in Umerah, 2017). Therefore, to work efficiently and effectively in the fast-changing digital age, a new generation of Library and Information Science professionals should have the qualifications in providing information as well as dynamically exercising personal skills, generic skills and discipline-specific knowledge (Nonthacumjane, 2011).According to Anyanwu (2013) the generic employability skills required by library and information science graduates include: effective communication skills, professional ethical standards and social responsibility, ability to fulfil client needs/customer service, project management skills, critical, reflective and creative thinking, problem-solving skills, marketing skills, accounting, human resource skills, ability to build partnerships and alliances, effective team relationship skills, self-management skills, a commitment to lifelong learning, relevant information and communications technology and technology application skills, appropriate pedagogical information literacy skills, general knowledge, supervisory skills. Umerah (2017) identified employability skills required by Library and Information Science graduates to include; professional skills, managerial skills, personal skills and technical skills.

Professional skills include: Information technology skills, information literacy skills and knowledge management skills.

Managerial skills: this is the business management skills such as marketing, financing, accounting, control, planning and goal setting, decision making, human relations and managing growth, they are essential in launching and growing a new venture, (Umerah, 2017).

Personal entrepreneurial skills: this skill includes inner control/discipline, risk taking, innovative, change oriented and ability to manage change, persisted, visionary leadership.

Technical skills: writing oral communication, interpersonal, monitoring environment, ability to organise and network building. These skills form the basis of the modular approach to an educational curriculum, (Umerah, 2017). Now that ICT convergence changes the nature of information creation, storage and communication, information provision appears in a variety of contexts. Library and Information Science graduates need to understand the effect of new technology on labour market and demand for information services and how any changes in the way library provide services will affect all stakeholders.

Employment Opportunities for Library and Information Science Graduates

Library and information science is an academic programme that prepares professionals for a broad range of career opportunities. Apart from the traditional library duties and teaching job, graduates of library and information science coupled with required skills acquired are trained in modern information processing, storage, preservation and management of library and information resources. However, modern library and information science out spans the traditional library environment to institutional settings, owning businesses and information centres. There are many employment options available to library and information science graduates. These include:

Information Architecture: this is the act of synthesizing already supplied information and forwarding same in categories to their different users, (Jegbefume & Ikhimeakhu, 2017).

Information brokerage: this involves supplying information to users for a fee. According to Igbeka (2008), they cannot be specifically defined since they perform different functions. Business, individuals and commercial organizations have become conscious of information as a resource. Therefore, the services of information brokers are employed for faster response to their information needs.

Systems management: systems librarians develop, troubleshoot and maintain library systems, including the catalogue. They are also in charge of managing the databases that libraries license from third party vendors.

Publishing: it is the process of producing books, films, computer program, records, newspapers, discs, bulletins, periodicals, magazines and many others for dissemination, reading, studying, searching and entertainment/relaxation (Igbeka, 2008).

Information consultancy: the information consultant among other things can embark on establishing libraries for organizations, schools and institutions.

Corporate librarianship: this entails working mostly in corporations, information management consulting firms, private businesses, government agencies among others. They are information resource experts dedicated to putting knowledge to work to attain the goal of their organisations. They do more than locating information; with new technologies they add value to information by evaluating, analysing, organising, packaging and presenting same in a way that maximises its usefulness (Igbeka, 2008).

Production and sale of library equipment: production of library equipment is another option available to library and information professionals. Graduates of library and information science can be involved in the production of audio-visual equipment, catalogue cards, metal shelf, book stands and many more, used in library and information centres.

Book selling business: graduates of library and information science can be involved in book selling business. With the knowledge of librarianship, they are better disposed to serve the various libraries by supplying books to them and as well liaise with the management of tertiary institution to sell book to their students.

Problems Affecting Employability of Library and Information Science Graduates

Pradhan (2015) pointed out some of the major issues that affect the employability of fresh Library and Information Science graduate. (1) internal promotion policy, (2) proxy librarians-teachers are made as librarians and (3) entry of non- professionals (Information Technology professionals) into professional positions the author studied the compatibility of Library and Information Science education with the today's market demand for Library and Information Science professionals in India and found that, there is a gap between them. Lack of placement cell and medium of instruction often proved to be major hindrances in getting jobs. Unlike other professional courses Library and Information Science course providers rarely offer any placement opportunity. Further, Library and Information Science graduates with non-English medium schooling background do not fare well in the job market as the Library and Information Science job world has become more sophisticated where communication skills matter much.

Other problems affecting the employability of library and information science graduate includes: Lack of ICT skills, unavailability of lecturers that are ICT conscious, unavailability of fund: behind any successful project is availability of finance, lack of functional workshop and laboratories.

Ways Forward

The following recommendations are made for enhancing employability of library and information science graduates

1. Library and Information Science curriculum generally should be revised on regular interval by all the library schools to accommodate new developments in the field. However, theoretical knowledge of academic subject is not sufficient for the library and information science job aspirants to survive; they have to develop certain important employability skills such as communication and ICT skills. Thus the library and information science schools have to accept the challenge of how to incorporate these skills into the curriculum design and ensure its proper implementation so that these can be transferred to the students. To impart soft skills among the students specially designed workshop/programs should be an important aspect of academic schedule. Again, the library and information science schools should practice regular curriculum audit and gap analysis exercises at the time the syllabus is revised. Extensive surveys should be conducted to evaluate the current employment need and accordingly market oriented competencies should be developed.
2. Fresh library and information science graduates should not only look for the employment possibilities from known sources (for example only in academic libraries) rather they should also get exposure to explore other profitable and exciting avenues such as big corporate houses, publication houses, research and statistical institutes, multinational organisations, etc.
3. Library and information science Schools should be giving more emphasis on practical classes than theoretical class. Library and information science Schools should provide huge infrastructure to emphasize web based teaching and learning in the classroom. Developing communication skills is one of the most neglected areas of professional development in Library and information science school. Short term courses and workshops should be planned by Library and information science schools to overcome this deficiency. For this purpose, identify both theoretical and practical teaching applications and methods for specific programs of study by examining global library practices and information environments.

4. Training and re-training of library and information science professionals and lecturers in library schools on ICT skills.

Conclusion

In today's competitive knowledge based economy, the theoretical knowledge of academic subject is not enough for Library and Information Science graduates to succeed in the labour market. The graduates will have to develop employability skills to meet the challenging as well as changing needs of employers. They have to improve their communication skills, problem solving attitude, good knowledge of Information and Technology skills, storage and retrieval of information skills, presentation skills, and proficiency in English language as well as provide services to customers with motivation and commitment. These features will enhance their employability skills. The curriculum of Library and Information Science should mirror these skills.

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