

# Professionalism in Librarianship: Librarians' Functions, Challenges and the Way Forward

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## Abstract

Every profession in the human history has its origin, prospects and challenges; it is the desire of every member of the professional body to seek for solutions to the problems militating against their successful journey in the society. Thus, this paper discusses Professionalism in librarianship with emphasis on the prospects, challenges and it suggests some factors that could help in resolving the problems of librarianship profession in Nigeria; several issues were also discussed. Thus, the practitioners of this laudable profession must possess some characteristics that would make them more effective in providing the much needed information to an individual, organizations and the general populace. The paper concludes by suggesting the following steps as the way forward from the problems militating against the librarianship profession in Nigeria: The activities and programmes of the librarianship profession should be given a wide publicity; People should have a right attitude towards printed educational materials and give due recognition to the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) as being done to other notable associations in Nigeria; Membership of the NLA should be financially committed to their association as done by membership of other associations; Government officials should have positive attitude towards library and the association that represent the interest of librarians in the land; and librarians should know that they are in the highly contested profession. Hence, the library management should act fast and provide all the modern facilities and technologies that are needed to enable library to effectively compete with other organizations that are offering similar services to the general public.

## Keywords

Professionalism, Librarianship, Librarians, Library Profession, Librarians' Functions, Librarianship Challenges

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## 1. Introduction

Every profession in the human history has its origin, prospects and challenges; it is the desire of every member of the professional body to seek for solutions to the problems militating against their successful journey in the society. Thus, in this paper, we shall be considering Professionalism in Librarianship: Librarians' functions, Challenges and the way forward. Hence, we shall look at it in the following dimensions: overview of a profession, professional and professionalism; characteristics of profession; librarianship as a profession; librarianship professional ethics; challenges of librarianship

profession and we shall conclude this paper by pointing out some solutions on how those obstacles confronting the librarianship profession could be surmounted.

## 2. Overview of a Profession, Professional and Professionalism

The term 'profession' was derived from a Latin word '*profiteor*,' meaning to profess, which can also have the connotation of "making a formal commitment in the sense of

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taking a monastic oath". This root might suggest that a professional is someone who claims to possess knowledge of something and has a commitment to a particular code or set of values, both of which are fairly well-accepted characteristics of professions (Lester, 2010). According to Magali (1977), profession could be classified into four or more groups depending on the era when they began to professionalize. Generally these are: the ancient professions (the priesthood, university teaching, law and physicianship); the mediaeval trade occupations (including surgery, dentistry and architecture); the industrial-era professions (typified by engineering); and various groups that emerged or professionalized in the twentieth century (from teachers and social workers to accountants and personnel managers). From the classification above, librarianship can be grouped as part of ancient profession as we cannot isolate librarianship from the university teaching as it provides the needed organized knowledge for the teaching profession.

On the other hand, Lester (2010) observed a professional as a person who embodies the idea inherent in 'profiteor'. A professional is a member of a profession. The term also describes the standards of education and training that prepare members of the profession with the particular knowledge and skills necessary to perform the role of that profession. In addition, most professionals are subject to strict codes of conduct enshrining rigorous ethical and moral obligations. Professional standards of practice and ethics for a particular field are typically agreed upon and maintained through widely recognized professional associations. Some definitions of "professional" limit this term to those professions that serve some important aspect of public interest (Harvey; Mason & Ward, 1995) and the general good of society (Sullivan, 2005; Gardner & Shulman, 2005). In some cultures, the term is used as shorthand to describe a particular social stratum of well-educated workers who enjoy considerable work autonomy and who are commonly engaged in creative and intellectually challenging work (Gilbert, 1998; Beeghley, 2004; Eichar, 1989; Ehrenreich, 1989).

Besides, professionalism can be regarded as the objectivity, rules and codes of practice of a profession. Professionalism consists of some professional standards (i.e. the skill, competence or character) expected of a member of a highly trained profession (culled from system dictionary). Thus, librarianship as a profession has some set of rules and codes of ethics that regulate the activities and practice of its members in the society.

### 3. Characteristics of a Profession

It could be noted that before a discipline could be regarded as

a profession, it must have some qualities and values. Hence, the general characteristics of a profession are stated as follows:

- *Assessment process for entry into the profession*

Becoming a member of a professional body is not meant for every 'Dick and Harris'; that is it is not for just anyone in the society. There are some criteria that are used to assess any interested person in the society before joining a desired professional body. Generally, before anyone could be admitted into any literary professional body, he/she must have some academic qualifications; that is, he/she must have graduated from the prescribed universities that undergo courses related to such profession. In other word, he/she must not be a nonentity, he must be learned. For instance, before joining Nigeria Library Association (NLA) such individual must be at least a graduate of library schools like: University of Ibadan and Babcock University, just to mention a few schools offering the course at all levels in Nigeria. Also, to become a member of Nigeria Medical Association (NMA) or Nigeria Bar Association (NBA) or even Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) to mention a few professional bodies in Nigeria. The membership doors of these aforementioned professions are not opened to just anybody in the society but they are meant for those people who possess the basic qualifications as members.

However, these are the questions that might be rightly asked: what about those illiterate artisans that form association? How can we classify them? To us, we may classify them as mere group of individuals that share common goals due to their similar trades to earn a living. Lester (2010) identifies these set of individuals as semi-formal associations based on communities of practice and bodies that principally fulfil the role of a trade union, and 'paired' bodies. In Nigeria we have trade unions like: Bricklayers Association of Nigeria, Road Employers Association, and Nigerian Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW) just to mention a few ones in Nigeria. But Stan Lester identifies other groups as learned societies that are classical in their formation. This restricts the number of people that could join the professional bodies from time to time. To some professional bodies, intending members have to sit for a qualified professional examination and pass before they could be admitted into their professional groups. For instance, Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nigeria (ICAN); Council of Registered Engineers in Nigeria (COREN) just to mention a few professional groups in Nigeria.

- *Code of Ethics*

An ideal profession body must have a well-designed code of ethics to guide the general conduct of its members. It is a professional standard of conducts for members of a professional body (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1998).

Lester (2010) sees ethics as a branch of philosophy that is concerned with what is right, moral or fair. General ethical codes exist in religion and philosophy; they can be inherent in ideas such as citizenship and civil values, and many people would claim to have a personal set of ethics that guides their behaviour. Most professions have some form of ethical codes that either takes the form of a code of practice or forms a more general set of principles that governs behaviour in the profession, with the code of practice describing specific behaviours expected in particular situations (Brussels, 2007).

- *Professional Association*

An ideal profession must belong to one or more professional associations. A professional association fight and defend the common goals of its members. It must be registered with both the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Productivity before it can function legally as an association in Nigeria. Librarianship is operating in each country under the umbrella of literary professional association such as: Nigeria Library Association (NLA), Nigeria; American Library Association (ALA), U.S.A. and South Africa Library Association (SALA), South Africa just to mention a few countries.

- *Use of Expert or Specialist Knowledge*

As we had earlier mentioned in this paper, a professional body is not for a nonentity in the society; rather, it is a composition of men and women whose mental capabilities have been scientifically proved and found worthy. For example, before anyone could become a qualified medical doctor, he/she must have spent at least seven years in the university medical colleges and teaching hospitals learning and training in order to acquire enough knowledge before being qualified as an expert on the profession.

- *The Exercise of Autonomous Thought and Judgement*

Members of a professional body are experts who use the knowledge that had been acquired for years through rigorous learning and training on the profession to judge and decide on matters that are urgent and timely without waiting for any superior decision. They take responsibility for their actions on any serious matter without necessarily blaming their subordinates for any problem that might surface in the course of carrying out their duties. For example, a professional librarian in the university library exercises autonomous thought and judgement on the acquisition of various books and non-book educational materials which he deems relevant to support the curriculum of a particular programme in the university. Although it is a normal process for him/her to seek for the input of the subject experts before embarking on acquiring any item into the library collection; but he/she can decide to take such urgent step in the absence of the subject

experts.

- *Responsibility to Clients*

The roles play by the clients or customers of any organization cannot be under estimated. In fact, they determined the growth and extinction of the organization. No wonder many companies are folding up. This could be as a result of the irresponsible posture of the management and staff of the organization towards their customers. Thus, a professional body must be responsible to the needs and demands of its customers and provide products and services that will adequately satisfy their needs. For instance, library users are the clientele of the librarian; he/she must select and acquire library resources that will adequately meet their information needs.

- *Continuing Professional Development*

It can be observed that continuous growth is the strength of any living organism. Likewise, for any profession to remain relevant and current in their professional callings, the place of continuous development must take vantage position in its programme for members. Most professional bodies see the importance of repositioning their members; hence, they often organize intellectual programmes like seminars and workshops for their members periodically; this they do so as to train and retrain their members in order to make them relevant and more efficient in their professional callings. Beside the general professional body developmental programmes for its members; each member must also pursue personal intellectual development programme for himself or herself. That is, they have to personally spend quality time and resources to improve and develop their mental capabilities from time to time. This can be achieved through sponsoring oneself in attending seminars, conferences and professional workshops within and outside the shores of his country without waiting for the official financing of such programme. These would make such employee to be relevant to the organization and being desired by many competitors in the labour market.

## 4. Librarianship as a Profession

Librarianship is a professional body that is saddled with the responsibilities of selecting, acquiring, processing and effective dissemination of relevant information resources to the information seekers in order to satisfy their information needs. The profession is the manager and custodian of organized knowledge stored in a conducive environment or building known as library. This profession is one of the most important professions in the human race; because everybody in the human society needs information at every stage of life

in order to survive. This profession is a solid foundation that accommodates all other professions in the human race. Who does not need information to survive? To this end, Ranganathan (1963) opines that 'every reader his book' but we hereby assert that 'everyone and profession his/its information'. This implies that information is vital to everyone and profession; in fact, it is a lifewire and bedrock of every profession.

To buttress our submission, Gorman (1995) reviewed the five laws of library science postulated by S.R. Ranganathan; he asserts that libraries serve humanity- They should serve the individual, community and society to a higher quality. The author suggests that when librarians are making decisions on the acquisition of educational materials for the library, they should consider how the change will better serve humanity. Therefore, librarians should protect free access to knowledge (information) - The library is central to information freedom. It needs to preserve all records so that none are lost, and should be transmitted to everyone in the society irrespective of cultural settings and belief (Gorman, 1995). Then, who is a Librarian? Michael Gorman in his book "*Our Enduring Values: Librarianship in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*", provides a workable definition of librarian as a "person who earns a master's-level education at an accredited school and receives on-the-job training, as well as carries out one or more of the following tasks: Selects printed materials and electronic resources; Acquires the selected materials and resources; Organizes and gives access to them; Preserves and conserves them; Assists library users; Instructs library users; and Administers and manages the library, library personnel, services, and programs" (Gorman, 2000:14).

However, this laudable profession is not a safe haven for the nonentity. Before anyone could be qualified as a professional librarian; he or she must have attended a library school at the university. He/she must have obtained at least first degree in librarianship and goes further to acquire the ultimate academic certificate – Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). This shows that there is no room for the mediocre in the profession. Few of the universities that are offering librarianship programme in Nigeria include: The University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State; Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State; University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State; Bayero University, Kano, Kano State; University of Maiduguri, Borno State; Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State; Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State; Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State; Federal University of Technology, Minna, Niger State, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Kwara State; Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State and other private universities. These institutions of higher learning offered the programme at all levels from undergraduate to the post-graduate so as to give a well robust

knowledge to the graduates of the profession.

Besides, the librarianship profession has a number of values attached to it in order to make membership of the profession to be more efficient in discharging their roles as information disseminators in the human society.

## 5. Values of Librarianship Profession

According to Lester (2010), professional is someone who claims to possess knowledge of something and has a commitment to a particular code or set of values, both of which are fairly well-accepted characteristics of professions. In a related development, Wikibooks (2013) observe that values are essential to the success and future of librarianship: they highlight what is "important and worthy in the long run," and help to define librarianship profession. In a literature review on professional values in Library and Information Science (LIS), Finks (1989) argues that these values fall into four categories:

- *Professional values* are inherent in librarianship and include recognizing the importance of service and stewardship; maintaining philosophical values that reflect wisdom, truth, and neutrality; preserving democratic values; and being passionate about reading and books.
- *General values* are "commonly shared by normal, healthy people, whatever their field." Librarians' work, social, and satisfaction values express a commitment to lifelong learning, the importance of tolerance and cooperation, and the need to feel accepted.
- *Personal values* specifically belong to librarians and include humanistic, idealistic, conservative, and aesthetic values. He must be passionate towards people and reading.
- *Rival values* threaten the mission of libraries with bureaucratic, anti-intellectual, and nihilistic (useless and senseless) ideas. Librarians must have faith in the profession's ability to do good (Finks, 1989; Wikibooks, 2013).

Moreover, Wikibooks (2013) note that in 1999, the American Library Association (ALA) formed a task force "to clarify the core values (credo) of the profession". This task force believed "that without common values, we are not a professional," and proposed the following definition of common goals for our field: Connection of people to ideas; Assurance of free and open access to recorded knowledge, information and creative works; Commitment to literacy and learning; Respect for the individuality and the diversity of all peoples; Freedom for all people to form, to hold, and to express their own beliefs; Preservation of the human record;



Excellence in professional service to our communities; and Formation of partnerships to advance these values (Sager, 2001; Wikibooks, 2013).

However, Wikibooks (2013) observed that despite the work of this task force, the ALA did not adopt a Core Value Statement until June, 2004. This statement represented a compromise between the task force and its critics, and took its 11 core values from ALA policies that were already in effect. While the task force's document positioned these values in relation to librarianship profession (for example, our profession must provide "assurance" that access to recorded knowledge is free and open), the official ALA policy simply lists the values. The ALA's wording also leaves its list open to other values as well, and lists these as *examples of core values*: Access; Confidentiality/privacy; Democracy; Diversity; Education and lifelong learning; Intellectual freedom; Preservation; The Public good; Professionalism; Service; and Social responsibility (American Library Association, 2009). Therefore, librarians must equip themselves with all the aforementioned values of the profession so as to be efficient in their information disseminating roles; thereby becoming more profitable to the entire human race.

## 6. Librarianship Professional Ethics

While discussing the general characteristics of a profession in the early stage of this paper, we mentioned code of ethics as one of the features of a profession. Thus, the membership of librarianship profession is being guided by some numbers of professional ethics so as to add credibility to the profession and to prevent its members from engaging in any unholy activities in the society. In the United States, professional librarian ethics are codified in the ALA's Code of Ethics (Wikibooks, 2013); these are what we adapt for this paper. Therefore, the ALA's 2009 codes of ethics for librarianship include:

- *Highest level of service to all users* – Librarians are to provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources (printed and electronic); equitable service policies; equitable access; and accurate, unbiased, and courteous responses to all requests (ALA, 2009). This implies that there should be no discrimination when providing library services to users. Every reader should be treated equally and justly.
- *Intellectual freedom* – Librarians are to uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources (ALA, 2009). In support of this ethic, Yaya; Achonna and Osisanwo (2013) in their article "Censorship and the Challenges of Library Services in Nigeria" strongly opposed the censorship of any literary work; they advocated that intellectual resources should be made available to everyone and it should not be restricted in whatever form. Unfortunately, Intellectual freedom is a major area of conflict within libraries. Intellectual freedom is a goal that most library workers can agree on in theory, but situations in everyday library work can complicate this seemingly simple rule (Wikibooks, 2013).
- *Privacy and confidentiality* – Librarians are to protect each library user's right to privacy and confidentiality with respect to information sought or received and resources consulted, borrowed, acquired or transmitted (ALA, 2009). As librarians, we should maintain privacy and confidentiality rights of our clientele; it implies that we should not divulge information that pertains to any of our user to the third party. For instance, in the medical, legal, accounting or banking/finance professions, privacy and confidentiality of patients or customers are one of their major ethics. Under no condition must they disclose customers' information to the third party even their spouse(s). Thus, we should emulate them in keeping strictly information that concerns our patrons. Therefore, it is imperative for the librarian to respect the right of a user to privacy, except where it is in the public interest and should not share confidential information or user data beyond the original transaction.
- *Intellectual property rights* – Librarians are to recognize and respect intellectual property rights (ALA, 2009). However, Wikibooks (2013) painfully noted that Intellectual property rights are a difficult issue. They were of the view that while most of the rest of the ALA's Code of Ethics talks about how libraries should provide unrestricted access to information, copyright and other intellectual property rights can sometimes provide restrictions on this flow of information. Libraries have taken an active interest in open licensing (open access journals and books), free software, and new publication and distribution models that respect the rights of information creators while allowing more widespread access to ideas. Nevertheless, Intellectual property rights of authors of the literary works are to be kept by the library, so that they would be encouraged to use their intellectual capabilities in contributing widely to knowledge.
- *Respecting fellow library workers* – Librarians are to treat co-workers and other colleagues with respect, fairness and good faith, and advocate conditions of employment that safeguard the rights and welfare of all employees of their

institutions (ALA,2009). Librarians should note that respect begets respect; that is, respect is reciprocal. Other members of library staff are human beings that have moods and feelings; in fact, they are partners in progress and they should be given their due recognition and respects. The idea of bullying and shouting on the subordinates by the superior library staff should be abandoned in the archive so as to create a peaceful working relationship among all the library staff, it is only then that the library would easily achieve its set goals and objectives.

- *Users Right and Dignity* - Librarians should have respect for the users right and dignity without prejudice to race, gender, religion, tribe, physical characteristics, age, place of origin, etc ([www.ifla.org/.../nigeria-code-ofethics-and-professional-conduct-for-libr](http://www.ifla.org/.../nigeria-code-ofethics-and-professional-conduct-for-libr)). Librarians should note that library users are human being like them that has blood, flesh, moods and feelings; so, their rights should be respected.
- *Non-advancement of private interests* – Librarians should not advance private interest at the expense of library users, colleagues, or our employing institutions (ALA, 2009). This implies that the interest of library users should be paramount above every other personal interest. We should know that library is not a personal estate of anyone where it is being ruled by personal and selfish ideas; rather, library resources and personnel are being guided and controlled by the information policies that are set up by the library management. Therefore, advancement of personal or private interests should be jettisoned.
- *Distinguishing between personal convictions and professional duties* – Librarians are to distinguish between their personal convictions and professional duties and should not allow their personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of their institutions or the provision of access to their information resources (ALA, 2009). As librarians, we are to select all the educational resources that are relevant to the information needs of our readers irrespective of our religion or cultural settings and this has to be done without undue restriction. Librarians must lose their neutral viewpoints and publicly fight for equal access to information (Blanke, 1989).
- *Excellence in the profession* – Librarians are to strive for excellence in the profession by maintaining and enhancing their own knowledge and skills, by encouraging the professional development of co-workers, and by fostering the aspirations of members of the profession (ALA, 2009). It could be noted here that the professional development of co-workers in the library had been in practice for decades. There are three categories of library staff namely:

professional librarians, para-professional and supporting staff. Most of the para-professional and supporting staff had been actively encouraged and supported by the library management to enrol in the library schools and then becoming professional librarians today. One of the authors of this paper is a living example of such categories of library staff; he began his working career in the library as a *Library Assistant* in January 1987 and today, he is a Chief Librarian in an academic library in Oyo State, Nigeria and presently a PhD candidate at Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. This is being done so as to retain an experience staff in the library operations and thereby promote continuity of the library services as “library is a growing organism” (Ranganathan, 1963).

### 6.1. Professional Functions of Librarians

Every profession is set up to carry out certain tasks in order to benefit human race. Thus, librarianship profession is a laudable profession that benefits the human race in so many important areas; hence, it performs the following tasks so as to contribute positively to the growth and development of the community where it is sited; the librarians’ functions discussed in this paper are adapted from [www.liasa.org.za/sites/de...librarianship/2003](http://www.liasa.org.za/sites/de...librarianship/2003):

- *Selection and acquisition of information sources relevant to the needs of the user community*

In any human society, information is very crucial; it facilitates development in every facet of human endeavors. Information is very broad and complex; hence, relevant information has to be selected and acquired in order to effectively minister to the information needs of various information seekers in the society. Therefore, librarians has to take cognizance of the information needs of his users before selecting and acquiring relevant information resources to satisfy their informational needs.

- *Organization and management of the information sources and facilities so that the collections are accessible to the users*

For information to be easily accessible and useful to any information seeker in the human society, such information has to be systematically organized and professionally managed by the librarians. Information has to be classified using a standard scheme in accordance to the subjects it treats. Thus, the following schemes could be used to classify information resources in different libraries: Library of Congress Classification scheme (commonly used in the Academic libraries); Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme (commonly used in Public and School libraries); Colon Classification scheme; Bliss Classification scheme; Universal

Decimal Classification scheme (all are commonly used in Special and Private libraries). With these schemes, librarians could effectively organized library resources so as to enhance their easy accessibility.

- *Dissemination of information to the users*

Librarians can effectively disseminate information to their users through: selective dissemination of information (SDI), open access publications; physically displaying information materials on the library shelves for outright consultation; charging and discharging of information resources for further consultation at the users' convenient time and locations.

- *Facilitating access to information in print and electronic formats*

Librarians do facilitate easy access to the educational resources kept in the library by providing bibliographic details of each library material on 3x5" cards and arranged them alphabetically on the public catalogue; thus, library arranges the bibliographic description of its resources in author/title, subject and classified catalogues respectively so as to give easy access to its holdings and thereby "saves the time of readers" (Ranganathan, 1963). Also, library provides Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC); an electronic format for the accessibility of the library collections. Besides, it provides shelf guides for those books arranged on each library shelf so as to give physical/easy access to them.

- *Creating and managing digital collections in institutional repositories*

An Institutional Repository (IR) is an online archive for collecting, preserving, and disseminating digital copies of the intellectual output of an institution, particularly a research institution (Crow, 2006; Harnard, 2005; Wikipedia, 2014). An institutional repository can be viewed as a "...a set of services that a university offers to members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members (Lynch, n.d). For a university, this includes materials such as monographs, academic journal articles, both before (preprints) and after (post prints) undergoing peer review, as well as electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs). Also, it consists of digital assets generated by academics, such as administrative documents, course notes, learning objects, or conference proceedings. Deposit of material in an institutional repository is sometimes mandated by that institution (Wikipedia, 2014). Some of the main objectives for having an institutional repository are to provide open access to institutional research output by self-archiving it, to create global visibility for an institution's scholarly research, and to store and preserve other institutional digital assets, including unpublished or otherwise easily lost ("grey") literature such as theses or

technical reports (Wikipedia, 2014).

- *Electronic resources management*

These include managing licensing agreements and facilitating access to electronic databases journals and books. In most Academic libraries, examples of electronic resources include: Ebscohost, Mylibrary, Jstor, Science direct, Agora and others. All these provide immediate and current educational materials to the library users. With these online resources, information seekers can access information in any area of their needs and disciplines; they can equally access collections that are stocked by the library at their convenience without necessarily visiting the library for their various information needs.

## 6.2. Challenges of Librarianship Profession

Although the librarianship profession is a worthy profession that is involved in performing the professional functions aforementioned and discussed in this paper. However, its activities are being hampered by some problems; these are being discussed as follows:

- *Lack of adequate publicity*

Adequate publicity is an essential ingredient that enhances growth and development of any organization. It attracts favour and goodwill from high calibres of people in the society to any association that know how to adequately publicize its activities to the world. Unfortunately, the activities of library association lack adequate publicity compare to their counterparts like the Nigerian Medical Association and Nigeria Bar Association whose activities are given adequate publicity whenever they are to hold their annual convention, this always attracts even the president of Nigeria to attend or he could send a delegate of high government officials to represent him in case if he could not personally grace their occasions. The implication that this inadequacy might have on the library association are enormous: first, the association's programmes and projects will not be easily known to the general public; people that could be of help to the association will not be adequately reached for them to render much needed assistance; besides, the attention of the association's membership will not be adequately drawn to her activities, this might prevent her members from actively supporting the association programmes and activities for the year.

- *Lack of due recognition*

Generally, people have low interest for reading; it is a popular adage that "if you want to hide anything from a natural man put in a textbook but if you want such information to be known, put it on the screen". This implies that people transfer such negative notion towards anything that pertains to library and its association. Lack of due

recognition of librarianship association has brought a lot of setbacks to the association; many organizations and wealthy individuals often closed their doors of assistance towards its projects and programs. Unlike their counterparts like Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) or Nigerian Medical Association (NMA) where people and organizations often need their services; this makes people to have high regards to their associations and their projects are heavily supported by some wealthy individuals and organizations in the society. The implication of this problem on the librarianship profession is that people in authorities of any organization or even government officials will not give immediate approval to library budgets and projects as they do to other sectors in the same organization or government establishment.

- *Fund inadequacy*

Money is the determinant factor that accelerates the growth and development of any association. The librarianship association is facing the challenge of short supply of fund; many visions and laudable projects of the executive members of the association remain unfulfilled dream due to scarcity of funds to execute them. The Nigerian Governments are not given financial support to the association. Sadly enough, the membership of the association are not helping matters; most members are not financially committed to the association as they are not faithful in paying their annual dues to the association. In such case, how can the association's project be implemented? The implication of this problem is that laudable programmes and projects of the association for the year will not be adequately implemented. Therefore, there should be total commitment of members towards the association and its dream.

- *Political factors*

As hinted above, the Nigeria Library Association is not getting much needed recognition and support from the government officials. Library is a service delivery institution; government officials see library as not for profit organization in which they must not waste much resources sponsoring its projects and association. This negative posture has greatly affected the growth of the association. Most of these officials built up stiff opposition against the association and they prevented it from having much sought government attention. The implication of this on the library is that it would prevent library from acquiring and adequately providing all the needed information resources for the survival of such organization as "library is a growing organism" (Ranganathan, 1963).

- *Lack of government interest in implementing the report of association*

Every association wants to contribute to the growth and

development of its country; therefore, they usually release some developmental report that could help in formulating policies that would assist in building and developing the country economy. Thus, it is the desire of every association for government to implement their report. Unfortunately, most of these association reports especially that of the Nigeria Library Association are not implemented nor are they used to formulate information policies that would help in developing the economy sector. This has greatly affected the morale of these associations especially the Nigeria Library Association from making any useful developmental suggestion in their report. The implication of this had led to inadequate formulation and implementation of information policies that would enhance growth and development of public libraries that is generally regarded as 'people's university' in the country; most of these libraries are full of obsolete and old collections, dilapidated infrastructures and frustrated library personnel due to non-payment of their salaries and wages for several months.

- *Lack of rich curriculum in most library schools*

It can be noted here that many library school graduates are not competent enough to face the challenges that abound in the labour market. In librarianship; one of the major reasons for these lapses is principally as a result low level or poor curriculum that was used to train this group of young librarians, no wonder they perform woefully in their places of work. In most library schools in Nigeria, they are still using ancient curriculum to train their students without following the modern trend in librarianship; whereas we are in the modern trend in the human race otherwise known as 'information age' where computer applications has taken the place of traditional method of librarianship.

In most library schools, they don't even have computer laboratory where student librarians will be exposed to electronic formats of processing and disseminating information nor do they engage the services of System librarians/lecturers to train these young potential librarians on the application of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and its accessories. How can such young librarian perform in an electronic library set up where they usually transmit the library operations through computer system and its accessories? The implication of this on most of these young librarians and librarianship as a whole is that they are not skilful enough to be gainfully employed in most academic libraries; also, few of them that are lucky to be employed are not productive as they performed below average this made them to be disengaged from such hard earned employment. Therefore, it is imperative for every library school in most Nigerian universities to take a cue from Babcock University, Department of Information Resources Management (IRM) where they have very rich



curriculum to train young librarians even to the PhD levels, no wonder they are excelling in their various places of work.

- *Competitors challenges*

According to Yaya, Achonna and Osisanwo (2014), academic libraries are having some organizations that are competing with their services and if urgent steps are not taken these organizations may send librarians out of their laudable profession, these include: Internet and web sites providers; Telecommunication (telephone) operators; E-journals and e-books providers; Special and private information centers; Archives and documentation centers.

Ironically, the above mentioned competitors are equipped with sophisticated technology, current and relevant information resources with adequate funding that enhance their ability to provide much needed services to the information seekers; these make information users to develop little or no interest in visiting the library for any help, except during examination period when large population of readers (students) will visit the library. The implication of this problem on the library services is that most information seekers will shift their attention from seeking their needed information from the library as they could get such needed information elsewhere, although most academic libraries have acquired some online resources like: Ebscohost, Science direct, JSTOR, Mylibrary, Bookboon.com, AGORA and other educational sources; these are purposely made to enhance their operations; yet libraries are recording low patronage and this could affect its annual budget as library management are not in possession of readers' relative high figure to support her monetary request during budget defence this would eventually affect their active competition with other information providers. Therefore, the library management should act fast and provide all the modern facilities and technologies that are needed to enable library to effectively compete with other organizations that are offering similar services to the public.

## 7. Conclusion

In this paper, several issues that we believe are related to the professionalism of librarians have been fairly discussed. Librarianship profession has been seen as the most important profession in the land in which every other professions depend on for their survival; also, everyone in the human society rely on our profession to provide them with informational resources that will adequately meet their information needs. Hence, the practitioners of this laudable profession must possess some characteristics that would make them to be more effective in providing the much needed information to an individual, organizations and the

general populace. Also, librarians should be more committed to the course of their profession as being done by their counterparts in other professions. Library and information science professionals need to use innovative and creative ways to meet diverse information needs of their users.

## Recommendations: The Way Forward

As mentioned in the early stage of this paper, every profession in the human history has its origin, prospects and challenges; it is the desire of every member of the professional body to seek for solutions to the problems militating against their successful journey in the society. Hence, we postulate the following recommendations as the way forward from these problems:

- The activities and programmes of the librarianship profession should be given a wide publicity. Adequate publicity is an essential ingredient that enhances growth and development of any profession.
- People should have a right attitude towards printed educational materials and give due recognition to the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) as being done to other notable associations in Nigeria. The association should harness every avenue to publicize its activities to the society. Both printed and non-printed media houses as well as social media sources could be patronized.
- Membership of the NLA should be financially committed to their association as done by membership of other associations. Government should not be bordered with financing associations as she has more financial commitment to other areas in the country. In order not to lose their original identity because '*he who pays the pipe dictates the tune*'.
- Government officials should have positive attitude towards library and the association that represent the interest of librarians in the land. Hence, its report should be given a right thought and use to formulate information policies that would help in developing other viable economic sectors which the government officials much catered for. Government officials should know that information is the bedrock of any sustainable development in the human society; library is the legalized custodian of information, hence, money should be adequately invested in order to acquire more relevant educational resources for its collection.
- The library school in most Nigerian university should develop and operate a well-designed curriculum to train their students. Therefore, every library school in most

Nigerian universities should take a cue from Babcock University, Department of Information Resources Management (IRM) where they have very rich curriculum to train young librarians even to the PhD levels, no wonder they are excelling in their various places of work. There, lecturers are fully committed to their teaching activities and also seeing that students complete their programmes on record of time without unnecessarily delaying them.

- Lastly, librarians should know that they are in the highly contested profession. Hence, the library management should act fast and provide all the modern facilities and technologies that are needed to enable library to effectively compete with other organizations that are offering similar services to the general public. Also, librarians should engage themselves in mental and skill capacity building by attending seminars, workshop and trainings on current trends in librarianship especially in the area of information technology so that they can be more relevant in the profession.

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