

## **Full Length Research**

# **Career Development in Librarianship in Nigeria: A Conceptual Review of Issues and Challenges**

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Accepted 28 April 2026

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**Career development remains a critical factor in sustaining professional relevance and effectiveness in librarianship. This paper presents a conceptual review of career development in librarianship in Nigeria, examining the historical evolution of library and information science (LIS) education, professional entry requirements, and the major challenges affecting career development. The key issues identified include discriminatory professional registration practices, inconsistencies in departmental nomenclature and institutional placement, disparities in curriculum across LIS schools, inadequate funding of LIS programmes, gaps between theory and practice, and insufficient ICT competencies among LIS educators. These challenges continue to undermine professional recognition, job satisfaction, and career advancement within the Nigerian LIS sector. Drawing on relevant literature and professional discourse, the paper proposes strategic interventions such as curriculum harmonisation, inclusive professional regulation, enhanced practical training, improved funding mechanisms, and strengthened ICT capacity development. The paper concludes that addressing these systemic challenges is essential for promoting sustainable career development and repositioning the LIS profession within Nigeria's evolving knowledge society.**

**Keywords:** Career development; Library and Information Science; professional challenges; LIS education; Nigeria.

**Cite This Article As: Ola, OS., Adeyeye, SV (2026). Career Development in Librarianship in Nigeria: A Conceptual Review of Issues and Challenges. Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci. 14(3): 144-150**

## **Introduction**

Career development is a foundational determinant of professional effectiveness, job satisfaction, and long-term contribution across disciplines, including Librarianship. The process of developing a career is ongoing and changes throughout the course of a lifetime. This may also be viewed as a step in the direction of a future career goal. According to Agboke & Oladokun, (2025), they posit that career development within librarianship encompasses formal education, ongoing professional learning, regulatory frameworks, and institutional support structures that enable practitioners to navigate evolving information landscapes. This was in tune with another scholars, Sakkaravarthi & Aravinthan, (2020), they opinionated that career development involves making maximum use of training and development programmes to enhance job-related skills and, ultimately, the profession. They went further to say that it entails utilising training and

development programmes to their fullest potential in order to improve career-related abilities. In the view of Perrotta (2015), career development refers to the continuous improvement of knowledge and abilities, which includes professional development and work mastery. She went on to say that the abilities required to successfully carry out one's job are those of a job master. According to Anekwe, Ndubisi-okolo, and Nwantoh (2020), career development is a way of giving people and organizations opportunity to achieve ambitious and specific goals. On the other hand, Popoola (2004) defines career development as the process of choosing a job or profession that one intends to pursue for the rest of one's life and for which one receives regulated education and training over time. Thus, it is a chosen endeavor, a life's work, and professional accomplishment. According to Nitzche et al. (2014), professional development is a lifelong process that requires ongoing effort. The author went on to say that it aids people in seeing where they fall short in terms of developing their talents and knowing how to do so in order to flourish during a period of change. Similar to this, Duberley, Mallon, and Cohen (2006) defined career development as the order in which a person holds significant roles throughout the course of their lifetime. It is a significant development in a person's professional life or a long-term line of action.

In Nigeria context, librarianship profession has transitioned from traditional library services to increasingly complex roles involving digital information management, technology integration, and knowledge dissemination. Although the proliferation of LIS programmes in universities and colleges has expanded training opportunities, career development within the profession continues to confront structural and systemic barriers that impede professional recognition and progression (Anike et al., 2025). These barriers include inconsistent curricular standards, weak institutional support for professional learning, limited access to practical training, and gaps in ICT and emerging technology competencies (Frontiers article, 2025).

The Kenya Post Office Savings Bank's perspective of the effect of career development methods on employee retention was studied by Kemboi (2017). The result shows how these career development procedures are used to support policymaking, provide staff with career-related rights and responsibilities, assist each employee in developing a positive self-concept, and improve relationships and collaboration among staff members at different levels. Kelly (2012) conducted a related empirical study on career development practices in Kenyan commercial banks. The study found that these practices included treating career development as a core human resources function, offering career counselling, educating employees on how to advance their careers, and integrating among staff members at different levels. One of the key components of every job's success is the good career motivation and internal happiness. According to Unegbu, Ezeudu, Babalola, and Madukoma (2020), career development benefits both the employee and the organisation. Additionally, employee development prepares them for future positions and ensures that the organisation has a sufficient number of qualified, committed workers to replace higher-level employees.

Career development in the field of library and information science is understood as the activities conducted by librarians in the library to further their personal and professional development (Meena, 2024). These events typically have a formal or informal setting. According to Moniarou-Papaconstantinou and Valentini (2015), both intrinsic and extrinsic variables can have an impact on a person's decision to pursue LIS as a subject of study and a career. These factors appeared to be shared by many groups and common in various geographical areas when choosing the LIS as a first or second career choice. However, intrinsic rather than extrinsic considerations (such as the work's nature, a love of books and reading, an intriguing job, and a desire to assist others) are more important when choosing LIS (i.e. employment opportunities and career prospects). In other words, intrinsic characteristics of the field like love of books and the nature of the job are more important reasons than the payment and the social status in choosing this field. Therefore, choosing a career in librarianship in Nigeria has never been an easy option. Strong academic background breeds good career. Lawyers, doctors, engineers, and accountants are traditionally held in high esteem because they all demand solid academic backgrounds. However, there are some other professions that require advance education but never receive due respect. Librarianship belongs to the latter category. Librarianship is a profession that is dedicated to serving the general public, providing timely and accurate information, thus contributing to the development of the society. Conversely, the profession of librarianship hardly shares the glamour and respect of those other professions mentioned above. Igbinosa (2007) maintained that people, particularly students, do not like to pursue a career in librarianship. They are unaware that librarians play a crucial role in the achievements of students, researchers, doctors, and other professionals.

### **Brief History of Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria**

The development of public libraries in Africa was the focus of a 1953 UNESCO seminar held at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria, which is where library and information science education in Nigeria began. The seminar suggested that a small number of top-notch library institutions be founded in Africa to offer comprehensive professional training for leadership positions (Lawal, 2000). Before that, only the U.K. and the U.S. offered education in librarianship, and the majority of credentials earned were of the non-graduate variety, such as the British ALA Examinations. In addition, the majority of the librarians employed by the nation's libraries at that time were foreigners.

The commencement of genuine education for LIS in Nigeria started with the establishment of the first Library School in 1959 at the University College Ibadan, (as it was then known). The Carnegie Corporation of New York provided funding for the establishment of the LIS School and expressed interest in the profession's development by sending Harold Lancour to conduct a survey of library conditions and provide guidance on how the Corporation can support library development in 1957. Following his two months survey, Lancour recommended that a postgraduate-level type LIS education be founded, which was eventually established at the Institute of Librarianship (now known as the Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies). The school began with a Diploma in librarianship which was solely meant for graduate students. According to Abubakar (2015), the 1963 F. A. Sharr's report on library needs in Northern Nigeria led to the establishment of LIS School in 1965 at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which commenced with an undergraduate programme with the aim of educating and training librarians at the undergraduate level against that of Ibadan's postgraduate Diploma programme.

Other LIS programmes were later established over time at various universities. According to the Nigerian Association of Library and Information Science Educators (NALISE, 2020), there are currently 37 LIS programmes offered at Nigerian universities, including federal, state, and private institutions. Besides, a number of federal and state polytechnics as well as colleges are now offering LIS programmes at different levels.

### **Historical Background of Library and Information Science Career in Nigeria**

Concern over creating an ideal profession to give practitioners suitable working frameworks led to the development of librarianship education (Cord & Clements, 2010). A highly competent and productive workforce is required to provide good library services, making librarianship a labor-intensive service profession. Personnel are the key to library development, and to pursue a career in LIS, one need to have the necessary education and training. The second half of the 20th century saw the training of librarians in Nigeria as early modern libraries that were built alongside their research institutes faced a severe manpower shortage (Nzotta, 1984). Initially, expatriate staff who manned the libraries could no longer cope with the management of the growing number of libraries. The need to educate and train more indigenous librarians arose, but without any training institutions in any of the African countries. This necessitated in-house training courses organized for indigenous staff by various libraries enabling them to sit for the United Kingdom Library Association examinations in the various British colonies (Adekola, Bola. (2011). by the 1940s, there was more serious interest than ever in the training of native staff to run existing libraries. Igbinosa (2007) stated the following as some of the arguments put forth for the growing need to support library education in Nigeria:

- i. The demand for trained and professional librarians.
- ii. There were libraries with large buildings and growing collections, which required expert management.
- iii. The increase in world population and literacy required more libraries and qualified librarians to man them.
- iv. Trained manpower is required for the complex and scientific nature of library operations.

Libraries and librarianship have evolved over time in Nigeria. However, they have not yet gained a proper recognition or place among institutions and professions in the country. In spite of the rich knowledge and information resources available in libraries, librarianship is among the least sought-after professions in Nigeria (Okoro, 2009).

### **Educational Requirements of Library and Information Science Profession**

In librarianship you must get first degree in Library and Information Science. In order to apply to an MLS programme; you'll need an undergraduate degree from university. There is no particular major requirement if you want to become a librarian, but common majors include English, Art History, Computer Science, and other courses of study that require research and technology skills. If you plan to become a librarian in a specialized library, such as a law or science library, you may need a secondary degree in a specific field. In this case, make sure you choose a major with classes that cover the prerequisites you'll need for acceptance into a master's program in your field. Don't wait until you have your degree- You can gain experience in a library before you finish your MLS, and even while you're still an undergraduate. Apply for a job at your university library or local public library. Many colleges hire students to staff reference desks and re-shelve books, among other duties. It's a good chance to find out whether you enjoy the library atmosphere and want to pursue a career in library science.

## **Issues and Challenges of Career Development in Library and Information Science**

People who oversee the acquisition, organizing, and dissemination of information to a specific audience are at the heart of the term "information professional" (Lazarus, Ogunbote & Funom, 2021). Career development is one of the most important decisions in the life of an individual. Issues and challenges in career development have far-reaching implications on the individual's future in terms of life style, status, income, security and job satisfaction. Although personal philosophy, achievement and self-image are important factors in this decision, the external environment is also very important issue characterizing career and shaping aspirations. The values an individual holds, the successes and failures he experiences, the social class in which he has developed and his interests, strengths and capacities are only some of the factors which could affect his selection of a career. Thus, career path is not merely a decision of a moment but a complex and difficult process spanning years, if not a lifetime (Coetzee, Bergh & Schreuder, 2010).

Some of the issues and challenges to career development or achievement in Library and Information Science are as follows:

### **Discrimination of Registration to Professional body**

The registration of professional body of Library and information science such as Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) has been difficult for some categories of certificates under the same body except you attain to certain level. This does not happen in other noble professions. In LIS only two categories of registrations, that is, those with first degree (universities) in librarianship, and those from other fields and possess master's degree in librarianship. This implies that those with HND and ND/OND are left out, invariably; this does not encourage this group in career development.

### **Contradiction in Nomenclature and Organizational placement for LIS departments in the country**

Initially LIS education in Nigeria sat within Arts and Social Sciences, but increasingly it is moving towards the Science disciplines due to its growing interdisciplinary approach. This makes its status and position uncertain. Moreover, LIS schools lack uniformity on nomenclature as they tussle between "L" and "I" and what is visible within curricula.

The names and nomenclature of the programmes vary. In the beginning, most departments were simply named Departments of Library Science or Library Studies. Lately, however, many of the departments have changed their names to Department of Library and Information Science/Sciences. At the moment, some of the prominent names for LIS departments in Nigerian universities include: Library and Information Science, Library and Information Sciences, Library, Archival and Information Studies, Library and information Studies Information Resources Management etc.

Furthermore, different bachelor's degree courses are provided by LIS departments in Nigerian universities and polytechnics which include among others: Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS), Bachelor of Arts (Library and Information Science) (B.A. LIS), Bachelor of Science (Library and Information Science) (B.Sc. LIS) where LIS is offered together with other academic subjects in the Sciences, Social Sciences or Arts (commonly found at University of Nigeria Nsukka and Bayero University, Kano). Another one is B. Tech (Library and Information Science/Technology). While at the postgraduate level, LIS schools offer variety of post-graduate programmes. For instance, the Bayero University, LIS School has Post-Graduate Diploma in Information Management (PGDIM), Master of Library and Information Science (MLIS), Masters in Information Management (MIM) and PhD in Library and Information Science. Similarly, according to Saka (2015), the University of Ibadan (UI) LIS School runs post-graduate programmes such as Masters in Library and Information Studies (MLIS), Masters in Archives, Records and Information Management (MARIM), Masters in Health Information Management (MHIM), Masters in Publishing and Copyright Studies and PhD with specialization in diverse areas. Other university-based LIS schools have post-graduate programmes in different areas.

### **Disparity in Curriculum**

With regards to the curriculum, for a student to earn a BLIS, B.Sc. or B.A LIS degree, they must pass at least 120 credit units in a four-year programme or at least 90 credit units in a three-year programme (NUC, 2014; Abubakar & Auyo, 2019). There are little variations in terms of curricula offerings, although the contents are more or less the same. However, this is normally dictated by the NUC Benchmark for Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). For the post-graduate programmes, there is also a difference in the curriculum of the LIS schools in Nigerian universities. Lack of participation of critical stakeholders in LIS education matters contribute to the variations in the curricula. Many at times, stakeholders are not fully engaged in curriculum development. This is a long-standing problem since the commencement of LIS education in the country. Nonetheless, some of the LIS schools have updated the contents of their post-graduate curricular to reflect the changing paradigm and societal needs and some are in the process of doing so.

**Gap between Theory and Practice:**

There is a large gap between theory and practice in LIS in Nigeria. In returns, this has a lot of negative impact on the career development of librarians. As the computer laboratories and libraries are not adequate, students do not get the opportunities to gain hands-on experience. This culture produces LIS professionals who have degrees but a little or no practical knowledge.

**Inadequate Funding of Education and LIS Programmes in General**

According to Paulley (2019), among all the challenges facing Nigerian education, especially at the university level, the challenge of funding appears to be the most critical. Also, according to the author, in spite of the bulk of revenue at the country's disposal, the country has not met the 26% benchmark of annual allocation of funds to education as recommended for developing countries by UNESCO. Thus, it is very clear that the perennial failure of the government to fund education at all levels has fundamentally undermined LIS education in Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions. This situation has led to deterioration of physical facilities, learning environment and overall degeneration in standards which affect the career development in librarianship.

**Poor ICT literacy among LIS lecturers in Nigeria which tends to affect negatively the trainings provided.**

Tella, Olufemi and Sunday (2018) investigated the ICT skills required for recruitment of LIS professionals in the digital age through survey approach. The results shows that ICT skills such as word processing, spread sheets/excel, power point presentation, knowledge of databases, email/internet skills, hardware/software, web design, mobile technology and social media skills are the most basic ICT skills needed in the digital age. Similarly, Nonthacumjane (2011) presented the key skills and competencies of a new generation LIS professionals to include among others: personal skills (analytical, creative and flexibility), generic skills (communication, critical thinking, and information literacy) and discipline-specific (metadata, digital archiving, content management and database management). While, Narasappa and Kumar (2016) categorized the skills required by LIS professionals in the digital age into four categories: professional competencies, personal competencies, soft skills and ICT skills and networking. Given the importance of ICT skills to the modern-day training in librarianship.

**Solutions to the Identified Issues and Challenges of Career Development in LIS**

**Discrimination of Registration to Professional Body: Integration** or inclusion of Para-professional into Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) as being practiced in other profession like Council for the Regulation of Engineers in Nigeria (COREN), and Medical Laboratory Registration Council of Nigeria (MLRCN) was not possible before now which discouraged some of the polytechnic students to be fully integrated into their body. Thankfully, in recent time this has been rectified and abolished. Therefore, to include Para-professional such as HND and ND cannot be out of place because it is practiced by other professional regulatory councils in Nigeria. By doing this, it encourages career development of this group.

**Contradiction in Nomenclature and Organizational Placement for Library Science Departments in Nigeria**

The two major bodies in Library and Information Science, which are Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria should come together and work out the modality in the area of having a unified name across all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria as it is being done in other notable professions. For the reason that, membership in any associations also shows the employer and their peers that they are serious about their commitment to member's career. Joining an association may be the best investment individuals make for any career.

**Disparity in Curriculum**

In an effort to address squarely and decisively the curricular issues in Nigerian LIS education, the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) has made a gigantic effort by organizing a summit on Library School Curriculum Review and Development of Benchmarks which was held at Lokoja, Kogi State, from 14th-18th June, 2015 with the main aim of enriching the curriculum of library schools in Nigeria in line with the recent global best practices. In that summit, lingering matters concerning course contents for LIS schools in Nigeria, facilities, nomenclature, staffing, location of LIS programmes, process of implementation of benchmark, establishment of LIS programmes and accreditation were

painstakingly deliberated by stakeholders. As a result of the summit, the LRCN is currently developing a unified curriculum for LIS schools in Nigeria which has passed through some stages.

### **Gap between Theory and Practice**

There is need for short-term courses as we move towards specialisation in employment opportunities, also in our career development in librarianship.

### **Inadequate Funding of Education and LIS Programmes in General**

The government has to meet the recommendation by the UNESCO to implementing 26% benchmark of annual allocation of funds to education so as to consistently turn around the deterioration of physical facilities, learning environment and overall degeneration in standards which affect the career development in librarianship. Without funds, so many things cannot be done. Hence the management of each institution should make funds available for the development of library personnel.

### **Poor ICT literacy among LIS Lecturers in Nigeria which Tends to Affect Negatively the Trainings Provided**

LIS schools in Nigeria should take up this challenge so that they can go in line with the requirements of the digital age. By doing this, LIS training can be more meaningful because employers in this digital age expect LIS professionals to be conversant with emerging technologies. According to Okeji and Mayowa-Adebara (2020), there is the dire need for digital library education in LIS schools in developing countries that will help equip graduate librarians with competencies and skills for developing a good career.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Choosing a career by the individual is one of the most important, yet, difficult decisions to make in a life time, since everyone reserves that right to make the choice. In modern society, every individual always had concern for this need though dealing with it without a real understanding of how individuals make their choice. Career in librarianship in Nigeria has never been an easy option. The distinctive features of our society and the problems associated with development have always demanded imagination and willingness to innovate from those who work with information. This key decision forms the base for a productive and successful career.

Hence NLA (Nigeria Library Association) should be allowed to manage library profession since they are professionally trained in that field also, all issues concerning library and information science in respect to education, nomenclature and organizational placement, professional training, career issues, disparity in curriculum etc. should be handled by NLA. Therefore, job satisfaction, as an individual mechanism, can be used as a transmission mechanism that explains the process of influencing career development.

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