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Librarianship and information work in Ghana: Its impact, accessibility, services and development

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Abstract

Librarianship is quiet an old profession in Ghana even before the establishment of the Ghana library authority and the Ghana library association. The Ghana library board has been the main regulatory body of librarianship within the country. Though it has been in existence with branches within each of the ten region of the country, the development of the industry in the country has been very disappointing. For the credentials of information and library workers to go up or upgrade the government of management of the various tertiary institutions should reduce the cost of pursuing programs in librarianship and information studies. They should also reduce the number of years it takes to earn a degree in library and information studies.

This study also looks at other issues that will develop the stat of the industry within the country making it very useful and part of the Ghanaian life.

Keywords: impact, accessibility, services

1. Introduction

1.1 Background study

Librarianship is a form of cultural enterprise whose main characteristic is the stimulation of the optimum use of mankind's cultural heritage insofar as it consists of coded thoughts recorded in documents that are and must be held in readiness for use with the ultimate objective of making possible cultural progress (also in the fields of religion and science) in its particular sphere librarianship has existed for the past 5000 years or so and Ghana, it has persisted even before the independence in 1957 yet it grown has not been that encouraging. It has become very salient to look at the issues related to librarianship in Ghana. It is an industry which has achieved very little recognition and relevance.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The state of librarianship in the country is deteriorating. The industry has been lacking financial support since the industry began. Information technology has given a new face into the industry yet in Ghana this new era has not been very active in the industry. Though librarianship has now developed into library and information science worldwide. In Ghana it is still termed library and information studies. Areas in information science such as library management, information behavior, information retrieval, data science, information management, knowledge management, electronic publishing, publishing, media studies, are not given much attention. This has led to the industry being limited to only a few areas. There has even been a long misunderstanding in whether publishing studies is art of librarianship. Though this part of book industry (publishing studies) falls under information management. Even in some countries such as Germany and Nigeria, publishing studies is seen as an integral part of the library and information science discipline.

It is very difficult and challenging for the ordinary Ghanaian to access the library and information studies program to the PhD or research level with a first degree or even a Master's degree from a similar or different discipline. This because there is only one university (University of Ghana, Legon) which offer PhD, Master Philosophy and Master of Arts program in information studies here in Ghana. Moreover, management of such institutions has made it additionally difficult to pursue mater of philosophy and PhD in information studies using a similar program let alone a different program from the program use wish to pursue even though elsewhere it can easily be pursued. There are even some countries such as the United States of America and Canada that successfully admit

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prospective students to pursue Master of Arts, Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy in the library programs with first degree or even Higher National Diploma or Diploma.

Avenue for the library worker to upgrade him or herself and work at the same time within the library field through online or distance education is virtually nonexistence. There is no university or tertiary institution here in Ghana that offers online or distance Master of Arts or master of philosophy in library or information science. This has created a lot of library staff who are stuck as far as their credentials within the industry is concerned. Moreover, the cost of tuition for the postgraduate program in the library and information studies is outrageous. Making the ordinary working Ghanaian unable to go back to the classroom for further studies.

1.3 Objectives

This research is being done to create awareness of the setbacks and problems in the librarianship and information work in Ghana. It is also deemed to list out what is lacking in order for the authorities involved to fill the gap. It also a wakeup calls for the industry to learn from their predecessors and develop to meet the international standards. Most importantly the study is meant to make those heading library and information sectors within the country to increase accessibility for individuals who are interested in the discipline.

The impact of librarianship and the information workers in the country Ghana has not been that conspicuous.

1.4 Scope

This project is spans round the library and information services industry. It does not look beyond development accessibility, impact and services. The study also relates to all library and information studies institutions in Ghana including valley View University (certificate in library studies), university of Ghana legon (librarianship and information studies), garden city University College (library studies), Kumasi technical university (certificate, HND in Library Studies).

With respect to information services, this study drew much data from the information services of Ghana.

1.5 Limitations

The challenges I will encounter during the research are: Finance is the first limitation I encountered during my research. The inaccessibility of the ministry of information and other information service offices also contributed to the limitation of the research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Librarianship and the Philosophy of Information by Ken R. Herold, Systems Manager, Burke Library, Hamilton College Clinton, NY 13323 contains information pertaining to Library Philosophy, Library Practice, the origin of librarianship etc. the author of this article sees the duty of the librarian as midwife to the birth of knowledge.

In another publication dubbed "Librarianship: A Definition" by Dr. J.G. Meijer, the author looks at the necessity for a definition of librarianship, a central issue in the scientific study of librarianship, concept or definition? The requirements for a scientifically tenable definition of

librarianship, summary of the true properties of definition indicating the genus proximum and distinguishing the congeners. The publication also throws light on testing of current defining descriptions of librarianship, genus definitions, heterogeneous component definitions, formulation of a definition of librarianship and the true properties. In another chapter, the author talks about librarianship as an essential unit, the library as a cultural institution, librarianship and its congeners, guidelines with reference to the definition of librarianship, guidelines for the library profession and guidelines for the study of librarianship.

3. Methodology

3.1 The department of library and information studies, university of Ghana, Legon

I am an assistant librarian myself. My practical experience in the library, and other experiences in dealing with issues relating to the library and information. In my quest to pursue a postgraduate program in information studies at university of Ghana, Legon, I encountered a whole lot of challenges that inconveniences and obstacles that prevented me from gaining access into the program. Some of these challenges where the cost of the program, the delivery mode, the criteria or acceptance qualifications.

3.2 The information services of the ministry of information

The information service of the republic of Ghana is politically motivated. Most of the activities that goes on within the ministry is politically motivated. Corruption and rot has taken over professional activities that are supposed to serve the country.

The lack of good financial management has led to low infrastructure and inefficiencies within the ministry. The public has little or no access to the work of the ministry with regards to contacts, response to queries etc.

The impact of the information service to the public is quiet small. Their services have not been very significant and satisfactory all because of corruption therefore their development has been stagnant.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Results

From the study conducted it is obvious to see that the librarian and the information worker who has a very crucial role to play in this information age is being rewarded so little at the end of the month and is not motivated in any way to allow him put up his best within his chosen career.

There is no improvement academically and professionally in the lives of library, information and knowledge workers.

If one should take a look at the state of the country, the ignorance rate and the level of lawlessness the person is likely to conclude that there is no such a thing as a source of information for the general public to consume in order to behave a slaw abiding citizens.

4.2 Recommendations

For librarianship information services in Ghana to improve and meet the growing demands of the citizenry, policy makers, heads of departments, ministers and their ministries, heads of institutions must be able to listen to the needs of the public, study to meet the international set standards and create policies and rules that are geared to solve pressing

issues and stop being obsolete.

Candidate with higher national diploma (HND), Diploma, first degrees and Masters Certificates from different disciplines or closely related ones must be able to be given admission to pursue doctor of philosophy PhD or Master of Arts of master of philosophy in library and information studies.

Library and Information studies departments in various tertiary institutions in Ghana must be able to upgrade the name of the department to library and information science and be able to add new research areas which are information technology inclined such as information behavior, data science, information retrieval, information and knowledge management into the department to ensure wider coverage and accessibility.

The information service department of the information ministry must be able to bring salient information right to the doorstep of the public through the print media and other accessible local media knowing very well the country Ghana has large illiteracy rate.

There should be a lot of medium agencies within the information department to educate the public about important issues that may crop up within the country. This will make information closer to every citizen of the country and also proliferate information for the betterment of a nation.

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