

# Career in Librarianship: Perceptions of First Year Undergraduate LIS Students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This study sought to examine the perception of first year Library and Information Science (LIS) students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria towards a career in librarianship.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This study examined the perceptions of first year LIS students at a Nigerian university. A survey of 274 students yielded 134 responses (130 were used or 80% response rate). Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

**Research limitation(s):** This study was limited to first year undergraduate LIS students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma. Students in other levels in the department were not included.

**Key finding(s):** Findings revealed a satisfactory level of awareness of the profession, and a very good perception towards librarianship as a career choice. Employability was well perceived, and they looked forward to working as a librarian for several stated reasons (computing, knowledge, and skills).

**Practical implication(s):** The landscape of librarianship as a profession is changing especially with the application of ICT in all spheres of human endeavor. Respondents in this study have strongly demonstrated their hopes and expectation for the field and ICT is prominently surfacing as one of the major reasons for their choice of LIS as such regulating bodies should ensure a continuous revision of the LIS curriculum to be in tandem with trends in the field.

**Contribution to knowledge:** This study revealed that the profession is experiencing a welcomed transformation which requires taking strategic actions towards sustaining the positive perception, recognition, and patronage the field is currently enjoying.

**Paper type:** Research.

**Keywords:** Career choice; Job prospects; Librarianship; Perceptions; Undergraduate students; Nigeria.

## Introduction

Occupation is a product of human endeavor and a stepping stone towards a successful life which is why each and every individual builds their career in line with their personal interest and ambition (Kikon et al., 2018). Librarianship as a practice technically predates the discipline and it is not in any way a new profession but an age-long human endeavor that has become pronounced across various sectors especially the educational sector. Due to the proliferation of tertiary institutions and establishment of libraries to support their teaching, learning, and research needs in Nigeria (Egunjobi, Salisu, & Ogunkeye, 2013), there has been a spark in the increasing need for professional librarians. As a result of information explosion, there is need for libraries not just to acquire scholarly information resources but also, to facilitate the metamorphosis of librarians to become software developers, web developers, database designers, digital librarians, etc. (Kikon et al., 2018; Igbinsosa 2007, as cited in Damilola, Adetayo, & Ajayi, 2018), has also brought about changing roles for librarians and the way libraries carryout their housekeeping functions, accounting for provision of library services beyond its four walls.

The transformation of libraries and librarians is evident in the robust and vigorous application of Information and Communication Technology to library management as several automation and digitization project is witnessed in all types of libraries (Onuoha & Obialor, 2015). This brought about the acquisition and provision of huge amounts of reliable and up-to-date information resources through subscription to online databases and setting up of institutional repositories especially in academic libraries. Despite the proliferation of tertiary institutions and their attendant libraries, the huge availability of information resources, development of libraries and library technology as well as the

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advancement of librarians, the library profession remains the last resort for intending applicants in contrast with other disciplines like architecture, engineering, law, medicine, etc. However, it does not enjoy the glitz and glamour the aforementioned professions are adjudged (Uwaifo, David, & Nsirim, 2018). It is surprising to know that people are still oblivious of the fact that librarians are the superheroes behind every successful output emanating from research scholars, scientists, doctors etc. (Marshall et al. as cited in Kikon et al., 2018).

Many students enroll in library, archival, and information studies programs only by chance not by choice, as Sibiya and Shongwe (2021) rightly noted that Library and Information Science (LIS) was not the preferred program of choice for most of the students studying in three South African library schools. Information and communication technologies have brought about monumental changes in library and information science (LIS) courses (KALIPER Advisory Committee, 2000). LIS profession and education even though currently experiencing a flux, still battles with absence of understanding and awareness beclouding the sense of judgement of intending young applicants thereby facilitating an avoidance of the field (Sibiya & Shongwe, 2021).

While exploring the perceptions towards a career in librarianship, Kikon et al. (2018) observed that there is greater awareness of the profession despite being rated low among other profession which has discouraged people from nursing the ambitions towards becoming librarians. Various literature is explored and reviewed on the state of library and information science profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well as perceptions about librarianship as a profession.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Library and Information Science Profession in the 21<sup>st</sup> century***

Library and information science is an evolving profession which deals with the management of information including generation, acquisition, processing, organization, retrieval, dissemination and utilization as it relates to information users. Library and information science profession often regarded as Librarianship involves the management of information resources to serve the needs of its users. Dakhole (2004) propels Library and information science is considered a distinct and distinguished profession in modern society with the industrial revolution and universalization of education, increased in knowledge production have all transformed the traditional librarianship. Librarianship today is termed as “Library and Information Profession” since the concept of librarianship has changed in view of the changing information needs of the society (Rubin, 2017).

Librarianship has witnessed dynamism and lots of technological advancements in meeting the demands of the twenty-first century users. Sturges (2015) while describing the development in librarianship as a profession, stated that “computerization of library functions during the 1970s and ’80s and responses to the availability of information via the internet during the 1990s and 2000s demand a very different profession from that of the previous decades of the twentieth century”.

The 1<sup>st</sup> decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century experience the growing online access to information resources; the implementation of web 2.0 technologies; the increase use of mobile technologies; the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; social media and networking; mobile devices and applications; e-readers and tablets etc. This shows that librarianship is keeping pace with the increasing change in technologies. Issa (2007) reiterated that Librarianship responds to changes in the society in which it exists and the changes, which affect it especially in the last few decades, have been phenomenal. Twenty-One (21<sup>st</sup>) century is characterized with the explosion of information and knowledge. As a profession, Library and information science is becoming more relevant in managing myriad of information sources available through acquisition, organization, retrieval, dissemination and preservation using technological tools. In predicting the imminent growth in information as cited in (Issa, 2007), Joseph Henri of Smithsonian Institute, opined that the progress of mankind is based on research, study, and investigation which, in turn, generate wisdom, knowledge or, simply, information. He contended that for practically every item of interest, there is some record of knowledge pertinent to it and that unless this mass of information is properly arranged, and the means furnished by which its content may be ascertained, literature as well as science will be overwhelmed by their own unwieldy bulk (Favero & Taruhn, 2000). In spite of the development in the profession, many still hold a flimsy and myopic perceptions about the profession.

### ***Students Perceptions of LIS Profession and Programs***

A close observation with newly admitted students in some Nigerian universities offering Library and Information Science unearthed their preference for other courses other than librarianship. Egunjobi, Salisu, and Ogunkeye (2013) observed that only a few of LIS students in Nigeria usually apply to read LIS as a first-choice course, Sibiya and Shongwe (2021) also noted that LIS was not the first choice of majority of LIS students even in South Africa, this justifies the reason why an ample number of newly admitted choose librarianship as a last resort because of rejection by the departments they prefer (Uwaifo, David, & Nsirim, 2018). This could be attributed majorly to low perception of LIS as a course and librarianship as a profession. Even though undergraduates studying LIS are beginning to perceive LIS as a professional course (Egunjobi et al., 2013), this good perception of LIS seems to remain within the field. The experience with fresh applicants continuously show that the choice of LIS as a course of study goes in a round circle where students always accept LIS after they must have been rejected by other departments.

Contrary to the perception that most students apply to study library and information due to their inability to meet the requirements for other courses and their ability to effortlessly meet the requirements for library and information science. Uwaifo et al. (2018) also noted that all the respondents in their study gained admission through the Joint Matriculation Examination Board (JAMB) after having met all the competitive requirements for admission.

### ***Social Perceptions of LIS Profession***

According to Issa (2007), the term “profession implies essentially a unique type of job which the general populace distinguishes from other occupations, by conferring on it an unrivaled status which often comes with a high class and honor. This can also be related to selected recruitment, prolonged training, standings of competence subject to qualification, and some degree of control over members of the profession<sup>2</sup>. Thus, society plays a significant role in influencing the status of every profession with its different perceptions towards that profession. Issa (2007) recognized the “three major dimensions of the societal image of any human endeavor as the public dimension, the self-dimension and ideal dimension. The public dimension means how various individuals mirror a profession, the self-dimension addresses self-worth and self-esteem of professionals in the field, and the ideal dimension being the actual picture or representation of any given profession and their professionals. Negative representation of librarianship has been emphasized as people generally under value it and are therefore, oblivious of librarianship having the same relevance and similitude with professionals in other fields who possess academic qualifications like librarians (Issa, 2007). Contrary to the general perceptions about librarianship, it is a dynamic profession built on knowledge skills and techniques that continually keep up with latest trends.

Despite the unprecedented transformation being experienced by Library and Information Science (LIS) profession, the profession is still in flux, with low perception and recognition which resulted in truncated patronage especially at undergraduate level. Though LIS education has been in transformation for quite a long time. It is no doubt that the profession is experiencing transformation and the change requires making strategic decisions across the discipline and LIS profession as a whole. Therefore, strategic decisions are to be taken based on data collected from research results. The aim of this paper is to explore (different perceptions about LIS profession) including societal perceptions, LIS students’ awareness, perceptions of LIS profession and their chosen course of study, as well as their motivations for enrolling in program, their career plans and expectations.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What is the level of awareness of librarianship as a choice of career among LIS students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma?
2. How do LIS students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma perceive librarianship as a profession?
3. In which establishments do LIS students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma believe that librarians are gainfully employed?
4. What do LIS students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma think concerning working as librarians after graduation?

## Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study which provided an avenue for gathering accurate information using a questionnaire. The survey research design was preferred because it aided in reaching out to a large number of respondents that participated in the research. The location of the study was Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State, Nigeria and the study population comprised two hundred and seventy-four (274), one hundred level (100 level) LIS students in Federal University Dutsin-Ma that successfully completed their registration. Simple random sampling, a probabilistic sampling technique was employed to select the respondents for the study considering the fact that the population of study is determinate owing to the sampling frame gotten from the students' registration portal for the 2019/2020 academic session. Deducing from slovin's formula,  $n = N/(1+Ne^2)$  where n is size of sample, N is the total population and e is the error margin, a sample size of 163 was arrived at since  $n = 274/(1+274 \times 0.05^2)$ ,  $n = 162.6$ . A validated structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for the study. The questionnaire was divided into five (5) major sections as follows:

**Section A:** This elicited information about the demographic characteristics of respondents such as Gender, Age, and Marital status.

**Section B:** This section elicited information on respondents' level of awareness of librarianship as career choice.

**Section C:** This section elicited information on respondents' perception of librarianship as a profession.

**Section D:** This section elicited information on respondents believe concerning institutions that librarians are gainfully employed.

**Section E:** This section elicited information on respondents' thoughts towards working as librarians after graduation.

The items in Section B on level of awareness were structured on a 5-point Likert scale of Fully Aware (FA), Aware (A), Undecided (U), Moderately Aware (MA) and Not Aware (NA). Items in Section C on students' perception of librarianship as a profession was also structured on 5-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The items in Section D on Institutions where librarians are employed were structured using twelve (12) options allowing respondents to tick multiple options and items in Section E on respondents' thoughts to working as librarians in the future were structured on two options of yes or no with reasons why respondents pick either of the options. Respondents were guided on how to answer the questions without influencing their choices.

Of the 163 copies of questionnaire administered, 134 copies were retrieved and 130 were found useful for the analysis accounting for 80% response rate. Data collected from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency, percentages, mean, and crosstabs.

## Findings

Demographic characteristics of respondents are appended below.

Table 1. Demographics (n= 130)

Variable	Measurement	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	87	66.9
	Female	43	33.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
Age	11- 15 years	1	0.8
	16-20	49	37.7
	21 and above	80	61.5
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>
Marital status	Married	13	10
	Single	117	90
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 indicates that of the 130 respondents, 87 (67%) are males and 43 (33%) are females, majority of the respondents are above the age of 21, 80 (62%), and 117 (90%) are single.

Table 2. Level of Awareness of Librarianship as a Career Choice (n= 130)

Awareness rating		FA	A	UD	MA	NA	Total	X	SD	Decision
How aware are you about librarianship as a choice of career	Frequency	57	58	7	7	1	130	4.25	.847	Aware
	Percent	43.8	44.6	5.4	5.4	0.8	100			

Table 2 shows that majority of the respondents are very much aware of librarianship as a career choice with a decision mean of 4.25.

Table 3. Students' Perception of Librarianship as a Profession (n=130)

Perception rating		SA	A	UD	D	SD	Total	X	SD	Decision
Librarianship is a profession like others	Frequency	94	29	0	3	4	130	4.58	.870	Agreed
	Percent	72.3	22.3	0	2.3	3.1	100			
Librarianship is interdisciplinary	Frequency	91	30	3	6	0	130	4.58	.755	Agreed
	Percent	70	23.1	2.3	4.6	0	100			
Librarianship is IT intensive	Frequency	84	32	9	5	0	130	4.50	.790	Agreed
	Percent	64.6	24.6	6.9	3.8	0	100			
Librarianship has a positive public image and enjoys high prestige in public	Frequency	86	34	2	7	1	130	4.52	.837	Agreed
	Percent	66.2	26.2	1.5	5.4	0.8	100			
Librarianship has tight connections with education	Frequency	92	31	3	2	2	130	4.61	.752	Agreed
	Percent	70.8	23.8	2.3	1.5	1.5	100			
Contributes significantly to information economy	Frequency	82	37	7	4	0	130	4.52	.739	Agreed
	Percent	63.1	28.5	5.4	3	0	100			
LIS profession is relevant to national development	Frequency	90	36	3	1	0	130	4.65	.567	Agreed
	Percent	69.2	27.7	2.3	0.8	0	100			
<b>Overall Mean</b>								<b>4.57</b>		

Results in Table 3 shows that respondents generally have a very good perception of librarianship as a profession with majority of the respondents strongly agreeing to all the items which is reflective in the overall mean of 4.57 and the item "LIS profession is relevant to national development" having the highest mean (4.65).

Table 4. Institutions' Respondents Believe Librarians are Employed (n=130)

Institution	Frequency		Percent		Decision
	Yes	No	Yes	No	
Schools	Yes	88	Yes	67.7	Accepted
	No	42	No	32.3	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Hospitals	Yes	64	Yes	49.2	Not Accepted
	No	66	No	50.8	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Universities	Yes	117	Yes	90.0	Accepted
	No	13	No	10.0	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Museums	Yes	74	Yes	56.9	Accepted
	No	56	No	43.1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Private enterprises	Yes	62	Yes	47.7	Not Accepted
	No	68	No	52.3	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Archives	Yes	67	Yes	51.5	Accepted
	No	63	No	48.5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Accounting firms	Yes	47	Yes	36.2	Not Accepted
	No	83	No	63.8	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Courts	Yes	66	Yes	50.8	Accepted
	No	64	No	49.2	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Local government	Yes	63	Yes	48.5	Not Accepted
	No	67	No	51.5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Newspaper press	Yes	76	Yes	58.5	Accepted
	No	54	No	41.5	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Banks	Yes	64	Yes	49.2	Not Accepted
	No	66	No	50.8	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	
Government agencies	Yes	74	Yes	56.9	Accepted
	No	56	No	43.1	
<b>Total</b>		<b>130</b>		<b>100</b>	

Result in Table 4 reveals that majority of the respondents believe that librarians are employed in institutions such as university (90%), schools (88%), newspaper press (76%), government agencies and museums (74%), archives (67%), and courts (66%). Generally, respondents believe that librarians are employable across various institutions.

Findings from Table 5 in the appendix reveals that of the 130 respondents, 125 (96%) indicated that they will give thought to working as librarians while 5 (4%) answered in the negative. Of the 125 (96%) that selected they will give thought to working as librarians, majority of the respondents indicated their reasons as follows, I like working with computer and new technology 117 (94%), It demands continuous updating of knowledge and skills 116 (93%), Good experience with libraries/librarians 116 (93%), It has a good job market 112 (90%), I like helping people 110 (88%), I like reading and /or books 108 (86%), I like organizing things 103 (82%), I like the environment 99 (79%), and I like the pay/salary 97 (82%).

## **Discussion of Findings**

The study found out that the level of awareness of librarianship as a career choice displayed by first year LIS students of Federal University Dutsin-Ma is satisfactory. This implies that majority of the respondents have adequate background knowledge of librarianship which informed their decision of choosing to study Library and Information Science thereby creating a pathway for a career in the field. This finding is corroborated by that of Uwaifo et al. (2018) who reported that lack of awareness posed a major challenge to LIS students and this can negatively affect their choice of librarianship as a career. Lack of awareness can also lead to loss of interest in the course which can equally translate to low grades and by the time students get to understand the career prospects of the course and begin to develop interest, the damage to their cumulative grade point average (C.G.P.A.) might have been done hence, remedying the situation might be difficult at that point, leading students to graduate with low grades which can thwart their chances of getting a good job placement. Also in corroboration of this finding is the study of Egunjobi et al. (2013) and Damilola et al. (2018) who reported that personal interest which arises as a result of awareness of Library and Information Science Program as a pathway to a career in librarianship ranked highest among the factors that influenced students to choose the course.

The study also revealed that first year LIS students have a good perception of librarianship as a profession and this is evident in the high response rate received by all the variables in the measurement scale. Respondents' perception of LIS profession as being germane to national development ranked highest (4.65) with the lowest mean score being 4.50 and the overall mean score being 4.57 which is far above the decision mean of 2.5. This can loosely be understood to mean that librarians working in different sectors are key players, contributing significantly to the development of the nation and LIS first year students are looking forward to becoming active participants in nation building. This finding is in line with that of Egunjobi et al. (2013), Damilola et al. (2018), and Uwaifo et al. (2018). They observed that the respondents positively perceived LIS implying a high level of awareness of the course which informed students choice of studying LIS based on personal conviction devoid of persuasion or influence from all quarters demystifying the general perception of LIS being a dump ground for academically handicapped students as the respondents in their study demonstrated high aptitude qualifying them for the course. The employability believes of respondents regarding institutions librarians are employed is above average considering the fact that respondents selected seven (7) out of the twelve (12) institutions listed in the options.

Even though librarians are gainfully employed in all the institutions listed in the measurement scale, the above average rating scored by respondents is indicative of the fact that they are in the know of the job prospects in the field. And while majority of the respondents (96%) affirmed that they will give thought to working as librarians in the future, several reasons supporting their choice in order of their preference include their love for working with computer and new technology (94%), continuous updating of knowledge and skills (93%), and good job market envisaged (90%) among other reasons. This goes to show that respondents are not oblivious of information and communication technology as the chief driver of information service delivery in libraries and as such, LIS curriculum should rise beyond theories and embrace technological progress to position students for ICT related library roles befitting of a 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian (Egunjobi, Salisu, & Ogunkeye, 2013). Also, respondents' affirmation that librarianship requires individuals to continuously embark on personal development programs to further build competency and skill that will position them to effectively and efficiently keep up with modern trends and deliver innovative services also justifies their consideration for becoming librarians in the near future.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Conclusively, awareness and perception are two variables that are very vital ingredients in every decision-making process without which conscious and wise decisions devoid of possible future regrets cannot be made. This study has shown that students are becoming increasingly aware of LIS as a profession and their perceptions about LIS is laced with good understanding of the future potentialities and benefits studying LIS holds. They are also well informed that the course is very marketable and the opportunities and chances of being gainfully employed in several institutions is high. Respondents professed their intention to take up employment as full time librarians because they hope to work in a dynamic library environment that offers opportunity for becoming ICT compliant and also an avenue

for continuous professional development which promises sustained relevance in the scheme of affairs in today's technologically driven world.

Arising from the findings of the study, it is recommended that Library and Information Science schools review their curriculum to integrate sufficient ICT courses that will adequately cater for the requisite skills needed to function in today's library environment as respondents in this study have clearly indicated the love for computer and new technology as the major reason for their choice of LIS implying that librarianship is an ICT driven field.

### Future Research

1. A similar study should be conducted on Library and Information Science postgraduate students who do not possess an undergraduate degree in Library and Information Science.
2. A similar study should also be conducted to find out the factors that influence professional librarians (those working in the library and those teaching in Library and Information Science schools) whose first degree is not in Library and Information Science to pursue a full-time career as LIS professionals.

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