

The Neglected Corner Stone: A Critique of the Role of Professional Library and Information Associations (Lipas) in the Development of LIS Education in the Scecsal Region.

Professor Isaac. M. N. Kigongo-Bukenya (PhD)

Abstract

Since the establishment of the American Library Association (ALA) in 1876 and the then British Library Association (LA) now CILIP in 1877, the professional association was to be corner stone in the education and training of library professionals. Both the Ibadan Seminar in 1953 and the Enugu Seminar in 1962 resolved that Library Associations be established in Africa. Among the cardinal responsibilities should be education and training to create educated and trained corps, among other responsibilities. To-day despite the fact that there are many library and information education institutions in the SCECSAL region the visibility and commitment of professional library and information associations is but cosmetic. The rare exception in the SCECSAL region is LIASA in the Republic of South Africa. With that background and in particular reference to ALA Seminar in the professional associations in measuring to the cardinal functions of their establishment. The way forward will also be advanced.

Methodology: literature review of relevant ALA, CILIP and LIASA programmes in the context of education and training; supplemented by the author's and colleagues experiences at the East African School of Library and Information Science, the LIS Programme , Uganda Christian University and the Department of Library and Information Science, Kenyatta University.

Beneficiaries should include the LIS Associations' administrators, LIS educators, students and governments.

Keywords: *neglected corner stone; LIS professional associations - ALA, CILIP, LIASA, critique*

Prelude

The cornerstone (or foundation stone) concept is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation, important since all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position of the entire structure (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. March, 2015).

Introduction

This paper posts that the stagnation in the Library & Information Science (LIS) education could be attributed to the neglect or lukewarm recognition and support of the role of the Professional Library Associations. The paper rewinds history and unfolds that the establishment of the American Library Association and the British Library Association in 1877 and 1878 respectively was to ensure dynamic library associations as the foundation of the library profession. The growth in Africa of the West African Library Association (WALA) and the East African Library Association (EALA) offspring of the UNESCO Ibadan Seminar in 1953 and others in Africa, grew on the same premises that the stronger the Professional Library Association, the more dynamic the library profession could be. Indeed, the catalyst of a powerful professional association should revolve around the education and training of the professionals - the engine behind the LIS profession.

The equation is simple: get a strong professional association then you could be assured of effective LIS education whose products should be effective professionals to guarantee the perpetuation of the LIS profession. This paper argues that this is the “Neglected Cornerstone” and further that, all negative consequences partly derive thereof.

Advent of the Standing Conference of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa Librarians (Scecsal)

SCECSAL was established at the dissolution of the East African Library Association (EALA) in 1972. EALA, among other reasons, had lost relevance and effectiveness in the wake of national independence that had swept East Africa in the 1960s. Library services development was thought a service better managed at national level to reflect national needs. Consequently, there was need for National Associations. Notwithstanding, it was resolved to establish a regional body that could biannually gather the information workers from Eastern, Central and Southern Africa to discuss common problems of development in the region. Membership was left open to other Library and Information Associations (LIPAs) in the region. The SCECSAL conferences are hosted by member associations bi-annually.

SCECSAL active LIPAs include: Botswana Library Association (BLA); Kenya Library Association (KLA) ; Lesotho Library Association (LLA); Namibia Library Association (NLA); Library and information Association of South Africa (LIASA); Swaziland Library Association (SLA); Tanzania Library Association (TLA); Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA); Zambia Library Association (ZLA) and Zimbabwe Library Association (ZIMLA).

Potential SCECSAL members are: Angola, Congo Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Seychelles, and Somali

Of the most active LIPAS in the region are the Library and Information Association of South Africa (LIASA) - 10 branches and 10 interest groups that serve as platform for members' discussion covering areas of interest and specialization; Kenya Library Association (KLA) - four chapters - librarians, archivists, IT and documentalists. These adopted the federated model based on branches, interest groups and chapters. The advantage of the federated model is that it decentralizes the responsibilities to chapters/groups - organs which take more interest in developing the discipline and have direct feedback from the service consumers.

Judging from website analysis of Library Associations?, other LIPAs in the SCECSAL region adopted centralized/mono model - centralizing the management of the LIPAs and constituents. These associations' structures are still evolving. The disadvantages of the centralized/mono model is too much work at the center resulting into inefficiency and delays in action; and deprivation of authority from chapters, groups/or special interests. This could degenerate into disinterest, and negligible emphasis on core local needs.

LIPAs in the SCECSAL region as elsewhere in the world have core roles they should play. Unfortunately, because of one reason or the other, they have not effectively played these roles. It seems, LIPAS in the SCECSAL region have played only the basic roles - holding general meetings, elections, organizing short courses, seminars, workshops, clinics and conferences.

It is high time due attention was paid more to higher level of responsibility. LIPA's Core role should focus mainly on governance, education and training.

Governance

Governance involves setting the administrative structures for managing different aspects of the LIPA; highlighting LIPA overall philosophy (Vision); specifying strategic objectives (mission); and setting LIPA what... which is equivalent to core values (core values) - commitment, transparency, integrity; innovativeness, and transparency of the leadership and membership. Governance is crucial to the success of LIPAs because its foresight and accuracy of the implementation and evaluation plans should make the difference between success and failure.

This paper predominantly dwells on LIPAs role in LIS education and training. This is pivotal because the success or failure of the profession could depend on how well educated and trained or not the LIS professionals and support staff were.

The following paragraphs summarily discuss LIPA Education and training role.

Establishing the Library and Information Legal Framework

The LIPA should mobilize government, politicians and civil society to adopt Library and Information Acts to set up structures, to regulate library and information services through supervision, bye laws, rules and regulations. In this aspect legal deposit laws, copyright, documentation acts, National library acts, etc. are in the statutory queue. However, the contribution of LIPAs to the promulgation could not with certainty be a consequence of LIPAs' sole struggle. The following are a few bye laws important to effective functioning of LIPAs:

1. The Ethics Code of Conduct - mechanism to ensure ethical and professional behavior by the LIS professionals
2. Professional Register – a legal record of the library and information professionals legible to take professional responsibilities according to their specialty in the information fields.
3. Disciplinary rules and regulations to enforce discipline and professionalism among the members of the library and information fraternity

Curriculum Design Issues

1. Curriculum content - what is to be taught? – Is it Information Science, Records and Archives Management, Library Science, Book-trade and Publishing, etc.?
2. At what level: Certificate, Bachelors, Master, Postgraduate, PhD and Post PhD
3. To whom – students at which level/qualifications and experience
4. Methodology – lectures, seminars, attachments
5. Facilitators- Deans, professors, senior lecturers, lecturers, Assistant Lecturers
6. Programme duration - months, years
7. Assessment – course work, tests, attachments, field work, etc.
8. Costs – per semester, term or module

Continuing Education

The library and information scenario is ever changing. Therefore, there should be provisions for LIS professionals to update their knowledge, techniques and competencies. Two strategies could be adopted:

I. Short courses

Review changes in the fields and set strategies to equip the library and information professionals with modern knowledge, techniques and competencies. This should call for organization of short courses, seminars, workshops, clinics, etc.

II. Upgrading programmes

Students via the ladder system could upgrade from Certificate to Diploma, Bachelors, Masters, PhD and Post Doctoral qualifications.

Accreditation

Authority to regularly determine which institutions qualify to participate in the education and training process; qualifications and experience of facilitators; the curriculum design and review process; teaching/lecturing; library and information and ICT infrastructures; etc.

Research

This would involve undertaking basic, operational, and evaluative, and other types of research and making publications thereof.

Advocacy

Includes PRO/marketing, fundraising, creating civil society positive attitude to LIPAs and their role.

Promotion of Information Use Habit

This is a vital role for LIPA to spread positive gospel of the use of library and information services as an engine to political, economic, scientific and technological development of the nation and its people.

Lipas' Lis Education Related Activities in the Scecsal Region

Name	LIS Education Institutions	Library Laws	Code of Ethics	Professional Register	Continuing Education	Accreditation	Curriculum Design Issues	Advocacy	Research	Promotion of Library Use
BLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	X	√
KLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	√
LLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√
NLA	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√
LIASA	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√
SLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√
TLA										
ULIA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√
ZLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√
ZIMLA	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X

Source: Kigongo-Bukenya, 2015

Key

BLA - Botswana Library Association

KLA-Kenya Library Association

LLA-Lesotho Library Association

NLA-Namibia Library Association

LIASA-Library and Information Association of South Africa

SLA-Swaziland Library Association

TLA-Tanzania Library Association

ULA- Uganda Library and Information Association

ZLA- Zambia Library Association

ZIMLA- Zimbabwe Library Association

Challenges

Weak national library and information associations

Most of the LIPAS in the SCECSAL region are not legally established and therefore, not legally binding to the members. Furthermore, LIPAs are managed on part-time basis and voluntary basis. This is not a strong basis for running a progressive professional association.

Apathy

The mother of all challenges for the LIPAs in the SCECSAL region is general apathy towards library and information affairs. It runs right from the family/ homes, education systems, political, commercial and other national institutions. The reading culture has not been properly natured that many users who chance to use libraries have to do so for utility purposes - passing examinations, preparing a speech or writing an assignment or business proposal, etc. Once such objective was answered the library is dumped.

Open market syndrome

The LIPAs in the SCECSAL region are still running an “open market policy” where anybody with inadequate or without professional qualifications at all masquerade as LIS professionals. This is mainly attributed to lack of Professional Register or Code of Ethics. This has led to the open market syndrome of problems: LIS services provided by pretenders, causing disrespect to the profession, the professionals and the services; unethical behavior which cannot be legally handled; attracting lukewarm support, among others.

Strategic planning

The pioneer LIPAs in the world - ALA, CILIP, have strategic plans documenting the short and long plans to achieve their goals and objectives. Financial, human, information and physical resources are planned and mobilized according to pre-discussed and adopted plans - no jumping in the dark or management by crisis. Such plans meet the LIPAs objectives easily and on schedule. It is LIASA that has successfully tackled this strategy. For the other LIPAs in the region it is not clear whether they have SPs or not. Others for example ULIA, etc. have SPs on paper, not yet implemented.

Poverty

Poverty adversely infiltrates all the challenges discussed above. It affects all aspects of planning, the services, the human resources, the information resource, and the physical resources for storage, administrative and processing space and preservation of resources. The deteriorating world economy has dwindled financial and technical aid, the national budget which are already small are reduced. The LIPAs which have never been a priority even in good times now jump from the flying pan into fire!!

The mono/evolutionary model

According to web metrics analysis, with the exception of LIASA and KLA, LIPAs in the SCECSAL region operate mono-evolutionary model structure - a mechanism in developing stages, where the authority and power is centralized and commandeered by the center without decentralized mechanism to the grassroots. The result has been constipated participation by stakeholders at the grassroots causing excessive work and inefficiency at the center while services do not effectively reach the grassroots

Lack of visibility

Visibility is the attractive and favorable impression an institution/organization gives to its external world. It portrays the vision, mission, objectives, strategies and achievement. It is more of a PR programme than a marketing programme. It informs the current clients and attracts potential clients. One of the modern visibility techniques in the digital environment is webometrics. Websites access and examination has become the gateway into institutions exposure to its outside world. Unfortunately of the potential LIPAS in the SCECSAL region only 35% have websites; information on them could be accessed electronically

Solutions to the Challenges

In proposing the solutions below we were fully aware that in management there is never a solution that is perfect; all solutions have limitations; sometimes solutions create new problems calling for new solutions and the vicious circle continues. Notwithstanding the following solutions are proposed to the aforementioned challenges facing LIPAs in the SCECSAL region

Enhancement of LIS education and training

LIS education institutions should attune their curriculum and shift education and training to online/digital environment.

Fully fledged associations

LIPAs in the SCECSAL region should be legally constituted and mandated to control the practitioners in the LIS profession. The Charters should incorporate provide for mandatory adoption of Code of Ethics and Professional Register to control LIS professionals.

Research development agenda

LIPAs in the SCECSAL region should have a strong research/development agenda to investigate and find solutions about issues relevant to LIS effective provision in the digital environment.

Government support

Governments in the region should give strong support to library and information associations and related services such as publishing, authorship, printing, etc. Not only through financial support for infrastructure, ICT application, etc. but support for enactment, amendment of laws for example the Copyright and Neighbouring rights, records and archives services, freedom of access to information, legal deposit laws, etc. One handicap to legal provision is the lack of machinery to ensure they are applied. This should also be addressed by putting implementation mechanisms in place. The government should financially support LIS development and such support must be specified in the library acts/laws.

Strategic planning

There is no short cut to strategic planning. It is the answer to holistic and accurate setting of goals and objectives, implementation, and evaluation of library and information plans. The development cycle or phases will be forecast in terms of financial, human, information and physical resources. Such plans should be convincing to funders for bailing out of financial famine of the developing countries.

Decentralized LIPA structure

The LIPAs in the SCECSAL region should bring Associations' administration to the grassroots. The approach should leave the Centre (Council) free to concentrate on core matters concerning the whole association. The nifty gritty of professionalism should be decentralized to Chapters, Groups, Specialist groups or Affiliated Associations with a coordinating role by the Center.

Enhance marketing/pro campaigns

There should be vigorous campaign to inform LIS stakeholders about which services and where such services are available and the advantages of the services to those who would consume them. Furthermore, there should be a systematic public relations drive to make stakeholders more friendly and sympathetic to library and information projects.

Fight poverty

Fighting poverty in the context of LIPAs in the SCECSAL region means that the associations should generate income through strategies such as writing fundable projects, establish Friends of the Associations groups; fund raising activities, income generation projects for example sale of selected LIS services, invest in different commercial ventures and convincing the governments for more financial support through Heads of States and influential political figures.

Visibility-webometrics

In the modern era communication/publicity is mostly on line. Not only marketing and PR campaigns are on line, but also teaching, teleconferencing etc. Searches about ALA or

CLIP on the Internet communicate information on them in the twinkle of the eye. Webometrics have now become a sure way of collection and dissemination of information/knowledge about other LIPAs. LIPAs in the SCECSAL region should create and maintain websites as a communication strategy.

Conclusion

The LIPAs' role in the political, economic, scientific and technological development of any nation cannot be over emphasized in the SCECSAL region. Development is ushered to the citizens of a nation through provision of information. Consequently, LIS education is central to providing expertise to manage the information transfer process. No stone should be left unturned to the production of Information Professionals (IPs) who should shoulder the responsibility of information dissemination and utilization geared for development.

References

- Abbot, A. (1988). *The Information Professionals*. In: *The System of Professionals: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labor*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Abbot, A. and Wilensky, H.L. (1991). "The Order of Professionalisation". *Work and Organisation* 18.
- Aina, L.O. and Moahi, K. (1998). *A study of the Appropriateness of Curriculum to Professional Practice: A Tracer Study of the Botswana Library School Products*.
- American Library Association Website www.ala.org retrieved (Date)
- Birungi, P. (1985). *Manpower Analysis and Training Needs in Uganda*. In: *Manpower Needs. Proceedings and Papers of the Information Experts Meeting, 18-21 March 1985* edited by Lutz Huttermann Bonn.
- Britain, Michael (2000). 'Implications for Education and Training'. In: *Curriculum development in information science to meet the needs of the information industries in the 1990s* (Library and Information Science Report No. 70, 153-203).
- Innovations at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal
<http://www.innovation.ukzn.ac.za/innovationPdgfs/No31pp29-36Batambuze.pdf>
- Information Science School website <http://ischool.umd.edu/content/professional-organizations>
- International Federation of Library Association node 5714 <http://www.ifla.org/node/5714>
- Library & Information Association of South Africa <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LIASA>
(retrieved 11/02/2015)

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professional

<http://www.clip.org.uk/pages/default.aspx>

Tanzania Library Association <http://www.tla> (retrieved 11/02/2015)

Kenya Library Association <http://www.klas> (retrieved 15/02/2015)

Chartered Institute of Library & Information Professional

<http://www.cilip.org.uk/pages/default.aspx> (retrieved 15/02/2015)

Kigongo-Bukenya, I.M.N. (1997). “Strategies for Education and Training of Information Professionals in Uganda for the 21st Century”. *COMLA Bulletin No. 94*.

Kigongo-Bukenya I.M.N. Face to face interview with Chairperson and Secretary General ULIA - April 2012, Makerere Uganda.

Kigongo-Bukenya I.M.N. Interview with Koehler Wallace, Chair MLIS Programme, Valdosta State University, USA May, 2012

Kigongo-Bukenya I.M.N. Interview with Okello-Obura, C. Dean, EASLIS, College of Computing and Information Sciences, Makerere University April, 2012

Kigongo-Bukenya I.M.N. Interview with Sarah Kaddu Coordinator, Programmes of Library and Information Studies, Uganda Christian University, March, 2012

Layzell-Ward, P. (1998). Response on African Libraries Listserve. In: Thapisa (1998). *Developing Lasting Competencies for a 21st Century Information Economy Workforce in Africa*. Paper delivered at SCECSAL 13, Nairobi, Kenya.

Sherwood, C.L. (2000). Follow-up Study of Information and Library Studies Graduates from the M.Sc. Econ Course at The University of Wales, Aberystwyth. M.Sc Econ. Thesis. The University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

Standards for Library Schools (1978). *IFLA Journal 2*.

Underwood, P. and Hevi, K.M.B. (1998). Response to African Libraries Listserve. In: Thapisa (1998). *Developing Lasting Competences for the 21st Century. Information Economy Workforce in Africa*. Paper delivered at SCECSAL 13, Nairobi, Kenya.