

**DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE,  
AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY,ZARIA: PAST, PRESENT AND  
FUTURE**

**BY**

**UMAR IBRAHIM BLS, MLS PhD (ABU, Zaria)  
LECTURER 1**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is only courteous to start discussion on the development of Department of Library and Information Science Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria with first and foremost paying glorying tribute to two outstanding scholars. The first is no other scholar than Mr. F.A. Sharr, who not only recommended in his report on the library needs of Northern Nigeria the establishment of a central training library school at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, but went further to propose the types of programme to be run in the library school. A foundation well laid.

The second is Dr Edward Anthony Olden, who, as noted by Bengt (1982: xviii) has involved with the foundation of the Department more importantly is the fact that with great care Olden has assembled and systematically organised a great deal of information which provides an insight into the origin, and growth of the Department, of its courses, students and staff, its impact on Libraries and Librarianship in Nigeria and its implications for the planning and development of library education programme elsewhere in English-speaking Black Africa. To the best of this presenter's knowledge there is yet any department in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria that can boast of comprehensive recorded history than the Department of Library and Information Science. Indeed! These scholars are worthy of being praised.

## 2.0 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT

Following the acceptance of Sharr's report and an approval granted by the Nigerian University Commission (NUC), the Department of library science was established at the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria in 1968. The department was right from the beginning established with a broad vision, according to Grey-Theriot (1982), the establishment of the

department was based on the needs, firstly, Northern Nigeria; secondly Nigeria; thirdly West Africa and lastly Africa.

Accordingly, the urge to satisfy the long-standing need for library staff in the Northern Region as exacerbated in 1967 by the creation of six states out of the region, with each having its library board, the lack of librarians in schools in the region and the need for the university to train enough library staff for the various ministries, were according to Oluwo et al (1989:103) the first set of objectives the department set out to achieve.

A very significant feature of the department is that it is the first library school in the country to provide a professional qualification in librarianship at first degree level. Indeed, it is a significant feature because according to Olden (1982:3) the first degree is the best basic professional programme for producing librarians in African, especially in countries where the profession is expanding rapidly.

### 3.0 THE DEPARTMENT PROGRAMMES

The Department started with two programmes, namely:

#### 3.1 BACHELOR OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

This programme is a three-year degree programme leading to the award of Bachelor of Library Science (BLS). The Entrance requirements for this programme were as follows:

- (a) GCE with passes in 5 subjects of which 2 must be at 'A' level. Or GCE with passes in 4 subjects of which 3 must be at 'A' level. Or a pass in the final examinations of the School of Basic Studies of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria
- (b) Grade II Teacher's Certificate with merit or credit in relevant subjects; WASC with credit in relevant subjects; HSC with subsidiary pass
- (c) Diploma in Library Science with 60% mark in the final examinations.

In addition to all these, candidates must also satisfy the university's general requirements in English.

In each year of the 3 year programme students were expected to offer library science subjects and 2 subsidiary subject drawn from the faculties of Education and Arts and Social Sciences. The courses offered by students were as follows:

First Year - Organization and Management of Libraries:

- Cataloguing and Classification

+ 1 subsidiary course

Second Year - Organization and Management of Libraries:

- Cataloguing and Classification

- Bibliography

+ a course from each of the same subsidiaries

Third year - Organization and Management of Libraries

- Cataloguing and classification

- Bibliography

- Documentation

- Another course as subsidiary, which will lead to the award of Graduate Certificate in Education (optional)

- Transliteration

Subsidiary subjects whom BLS students took within this period include Education, Sociology, Political Science, Economics, English, History, Geography and French. French was a compulsory subject for all BLS students from 1968/69 - 1972/73 sessions.

With the rapid expansion of the department and increase in the number of staff, the department had course to increase the number of courses offered. This was done mainly through subdividing and reorganizing large courses and the introduction of new courses. Among the courses introduced were reference service, children literature, administration of various

libraries, book production, research method and project (an independent research work conducted by students under the supervision of a staff member).

### 3.2 DIPLOMA IN LIBRARY SCIENCE

This is a 2-year programme leading to the award of Diploma in Library Science (D.L.S). The entrance requirements are as follows:

- GCE with passes in 5 subjects at 'O' level d
- WASC with credit or distinction in 5 subjects
- Grade II Teacher's Certificate with merit or credit in 5 subjects other than teaching practice
- + a credit in English.

The courses offered in each of the 2-year programmes are as follows:

First Year:

- Library organization
- Cataloguing and Classification
- Library routines

Second Year:

- Cataloguing and classification
- Bibliography and documentation

Just like the degree programme, the Diploma Programme also expanded, which led to the creation of new courses such as technical service, reference service, library for young people and practical work in libraries.

### 3.3 MASTER OF LIBRARY SCIENCE

No sooner than the B.L.S programme began than the M.L.S programme came on board. On 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1969 the faculty Board of Education approved the introduction of Master of Library Science (M.L.S) degree. The programme was designed as full-and part-time and involved course

work and a thesis. The Entrance requirement was imply BLS degree or a degree in any other field of study. The courses under this programme were divided into two, viz

a) For those with BLS, the courses offered are as follows:

- i) Research Methodology
- ii) And 3 courses from
  - Advance reference service
  - Comparative librarianship
  - Achieves administration
  - Communication studies
  - Library administration of either university, public or special libraries
  - Bibliography and literature of either humanities, social sciences, or science and technology
  - Documentation/information science

b) Non-BLS

- i) Research Methodology
- ii) Organization of knowledge
- iii) Library and the community
- iv) Reference service
- v) Administration of libraries
- vi) *And either documentation or book production and history of the book, bibliography and literature of specific field, archives administration.*

In addition to the above lists courses for both BLS and non-BLS, all students must offer two faculty base courses – Educational statistics and Educational Research Methodology and complete a thesis.

However, to ensure specialization, a new M.L.S programme was mounted in 1973 in the following areas:

- Library and Information Science
- Archives Administration

- Communication Studies

#### 3.4 THE PH.D PROGRAMME

The programme was established in the 1980/81 sessions. The programme is a combination of taught courses and theses in the American pattern. It is specifically designed at providing an advanced education leading to specialization and leadership in the field of Librarianship, and at promoting independent and in-depth research resulting in a substantial contribution to knowledge. The entrance requirements was an M.L.S degree. The courses run were as follows:

- Library and Information Science
- Administration in Higher Education
- Archives Administration
- Communication Studies
- The publishing industry and the Book Trade plus 3 faculty base courses -- Advance statistics, Advance Research Methodology and Advance Educational Thought, a Dissertation.

#### 4.0 STAFFING

Just like its counterpart in Belfast, Ghana, etc, the department of library science's first set of staff, 4 in number came from the university library. J.M.M. Grey-Theriot, Librarian Ahmadu Bello University was appointed 1<sup>st</sup> Head of Department. All the staffs were on part-time. However, the first full-time staff, 2 in number took up appointment at the start of the 1969/70 session, one of the staff employed was the first Nigerian Lecturer. The number of staff employed in this period continued to increase from 4 in the first year to a peak of 17 staff in 1978/1989 sessions.

Although Nigerians were quite substantial, the bulk of the staff still remain foreigners. The staff list had scholars from Britain, Pakistan, America and Irish. Surprisingly, it was not until 1976/1977 sessions when the department had an African (Uganda) as its staff.

## 5.0 STUDENT

It is interesting to note that even at the inception of the programme the number of application for places on the department programme has always been far in excess of the number of students who could be accepted. Olden (1982:60). In the first year of the programme 1968/69 8 students were admitted, after which the number increased each session, with the exception of 1970/71 up to 1975/76, when it reached a peak of over 100. Majority of the students admitted into the programme had worked as teachers before embarking on the programme. The students came from various state of the country and only a few as non-Nigerians.

## 6.0 FACILITIES

The department had enough staff offices and two lecture rooms. The department tried to secure a separate library to serve as the departmental library as well as laboratory for students practical. This could not be achieved. However, instead the faculty's library was used.

## THE PRESENT SITUATION

It is often very difficult in history to demarcate between periods. Today, the department of library and information science is exactly 35 years. Though the years seem too short but it means a lot to a department, which its historical, significant is correctly appreciated.

For the purpose of this paper, the presenter has chosen the year 1985 as the beginning of the present situation. It is chosen not only because the year has divided the 35-year of its existence almost equally, but because the year represent a radical departure from the old trend. Although the same entry requirement was maintained for all the programmes and the same

arrangement for courses offer i.e. library science subjects and subsidiary subject. However, the subsidiary subjects were expanded to include Arabic, Hausa, Physical and health education and Vocational and Technical Education. The Graduate certificate of Education was discontinued. One of the significant departures from the old programme was the formal introduction of the Course Credit System (CCS) in the 1988/89 sessions in compliance with the National University Commission (NUC) Minimum standard. The CCS is an American System of Education in which subject areas are broken down into course units that are weighted accordingly. The system is an open one that allows effective measurement and evaluation by all stakeholders students, lecturers, examination officers etc. The system according to Ibrahim (2003) also allows students to effectively and efficiently learn according to their capacity, capability and in their own paces. Under this new dispensation, the BLS programme was expanded to 4 years degree programme. This programme allows students with different qualifications to gain admission at different entry levels. While students with qualifications mentioned earlier start at 200 level their counterpart with 5 passes in 'O' level and an acceptable pass in the university matriculation examination (UME) start at 100 levels.

Apart from specifying minimum entry requirement, this programme on the other hand has also specified minimum credit requirements for graduation. Students admitted at 100 levels are required to earn a minimum of 120 credits while those entering at 200 level need a minimum of 90 Credit units.

Courses for the Bachelor degree in Library and Information Science are categorized into core/compulsory, cognate, restricted elective, unrestricted elective, concurrent and pre-requisite courses. It is a combination of these categories of courses that earn the student minimum credit

unit for graduation. Accordingly, students from both levels are expected to earn credit units as per below before graduation.

	100 level	200 levels
Core course	54	50
Cognate	= 44	=20
Gens Courses	- 07	- 07
Restrictive Electives	07	07
Unrestrictive Electives	08	06
Total:	120	90

All the university students are expected to offer the following core/compulsory university base courses before graduation. These are Nationalism, English and Communication Skill, History of Scientific Ideas and Moral Philosophy.

In order to produce high skill and quality manpower the department created a variety of new courses. For instance courses designated as core/compulsory alone are up to 17, ranging from Introduction Library and Information Resources, Reference and Information Service, Automation in Library and Information Centers, to organization of Knowledge, Introduction to Information Science etc.

To further meet up with the rapid expansion in the national economy and produce librarians and information specialist who are not only good in the collection, organization... retrieval and dissemination of all forms of recorded, knowledge and information irrespective of the format and medium/channel of delivery, but also who could design, develop, operate and apply total quality management and information resource management technique using the information and communication technologies to cope with the intensity of the complex

information needs and demands in the emerging information age, the department created new courses that will be in tune with the digital age. Some of the courses created are as follows:

L.IBS 211: Introduction to Telecommunication

L.IBS 216: Operating Systems

L.IBS 218: Media Resources and Services in Information Work

L.IBS 303: Information and Communication Technology

L.IBS 309: Social Science Information System and Services

L.IBS 313: Science and Technology Information Sources and Services

L.IBS 323: Introduction to Application Packages

The creation and introduction of the above mentioned courses clearly indicate a move away from library science to information science. Because of this and other curriculum development, the department's name was changed in 1990 to department of library and information science and the diploma and bachelor degree nomenclature changed to Diploma in Library and Information Science (DLIS) and Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS)

Admission into DLIS and BLIS programmes increased tremendously as a result of more demand for Librarians at both lower and middle cadres. By this time according to Mohammed (2003) more Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Research Institutions were established. Similarly, more Public, Special and School Libraries came on board. This means more intakes. The yearly increase in the admission of Diploma and degree students is a clear testimony that the Department is equal to the task. For instance, the yearly intake from 1980 to date has increased, with an average of 56 candidates and a highest of 157 students in 2003

The M.L.S programme also received a boost in this period under review. Those B.L.S graduates who successfully got employed realised that they needed additional qualification, hence the urge to undertake the M.L.S programme. Another reason why the M.L.S programme got a boost was the idea of admitting those with first degree in any field other than the B.L.S. Since inception of the programme to date, the Department has produced a total number of 128 candidates.

Although well conceived and designed, unfortunately, the Ph.D Programme is the only programme that has not fared well. This is not surprising because a lot of debates and disagreements besieged its inception. The issue of qualified staff to teach on the programme was raised. At this time also, the staff strength reduced because some went on study leave to acquire Ph.D. The issue of applicants was another problem because only very few that are teaching in Library schools and who could not get sponsorship outside the country could apply into the programme. Until recently, Ph D was not part of the requirement for the attainment of University Librarian, so no candidates from Libraries are willing to partake on the programme. The number of candidates that graduated from the programme since inception will buttress the above mentioned points. As at this time; a period of 23 years only 7 candidates, the Department produced.

In terms of the staffing situation under this period, it is observed that although the increase in the number of staff has stopped from a peak of 17 staff in 1978/1979 sessions, by early 1980, the quality of staff has improved remarkably. Four of those on study leave have acquired their Ph.D and already back in the department. The period also witnesses the promotion of many staff to various senior cadres.

The present level of staffing is 10. An interesting aspect of the staffing is the diversity of staff's qualifications. All the staff possessed qualifications and skills that will help in pursuing the new curriculum, which has been reviewed to march the current, derive towards a Digitalized Information age. For instance, most of the staffs are not only computer literate but also acquired one certificate or the other in computer. Two staffs were employed with first degree in Computer Science and Textile Technology respectively; two other staffs have Master in Business Administration (MBA) and one other staff with additional certificate in Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

With regards to facilities, it is note worthy to mention here that this period also witnessed a remarkable increase in both infrastructure and facilities. It is in this period that the long waged battle for securing a library for the dept was won. Subsequently, a library was established to serve as a public library to the community surrounding the University, as well as a laboratory for students' practical. The library is funded by the main library of the University and through an annual donation of books via British Book Aid International (BAI). Also more working tools such as Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), Library of Congress Classification Scheme (LCC), Sear's Lists of Subject Headings (SLSH), and e.t.c are acquired.

A more break through in terms of infrastructure and facilities development was recorded when the department acquired its first set of computers. Immediately that was done, the department got hooked to the Internet. Additionally, 6 computers and other facilities were acquired through a link programme with Emporia University in the United States of America. Two of the department's staffs have just returned from four weeks visits from the University.

As a result of the above development, the Vice Chancellor approved and established a computer laboratory for the department. And in addition gave the department 9 sets of

computers. The computer laboratory is now fully equipped with 21 computers, 2 printers and Internet connectivity.

#### POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT (PGDIM)

In response to the growing Information Industry and future needs of Information workers the department has phased out its Diploma programme and in its place, the above mentioned programme is created. It is designed specifically for those graduate Librarians who want to update their knowledge in this ever changing Information World and those with Higher National Diploma (HND), and graduate non-librarians working or having interest in Information work already plan to mount the above named programme

#### **THE FUTURE**

From the above developments, it is evidently clear that, without any reservation, the future of the department of library and Information Science Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria is very bright. There is no doubt to the fact that with the constant review of its curriculum, qualified staff and the emerging laboratory, and more importantly the linkage programmes with Emporia University, School of African Oriental Studies (SOAS) and many more to come, the department will be very much ready to produce Librarians and Information specialist who would successfully sail in the Information Super Highway to reach any where in the Global village-The virtual Librarian.

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