

**CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF FINAL YEAR DIPLOMA IN LIBRARIANSHIP
STUDENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

V. K. Fosu

*Senior Assistant Librarian, Balme Library,
University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, Ghana.*

ABSTRACT

This study examines career aspirations of final year diploma in librarianship students at the University of Ghana, Legon. The questionnaire administered covered the demographic factors, educational background, work experience, career aspirations and further education plans of the respondents. The findings of the study indicate that majority of the students are interested in the information profession but the number of students not interested in the profession is quite significant; they are rather interested in areas like banking, public relations, computer engineering, home science, military service among others. It has been suggested that students who are not interested in information management and related fields should be weeded out through a rigorous interviewing session since the mandate of the Department of Information Studies is to train information professionals.

**KEYWORDS: PROFESSIONAL AMBITION, INFORMATION
SCIENCE STUDENTS, JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

Introduction

The Department of Information Studies of the University of Ghana, Legon is Ghana's only educational institution for the training and grooming of information professionals. This Department has evolved from very humble beginnings to become a symbol of academic progress, enlightenment and pragmatic development (Narh, 2002).

The Department of Information Studies started in 1961 as the Ghana Library School located in Accra. In October 1965, the Library School moved to the University of Ghana, Legon and was named the Department of Library Studies (Akussah, 2003). The mandate of the new department was to run a programme of professional library education at university level that would satisfy Ghanaian conditions/needs and provide trained manpower for the gradually developing national library service.

The programme for the Department of Library Studies originally comprised a 3-year undergraduate course leading to the Bachelor of Arts in Library Studies (Amekuedee, 2002). In the 1967/68

academic year, the degree course was changed to a 2-year graduate diploma course and further reduced to a one-year course in 1969 in keeping with other universities.

A new certificate course in Librarianship was added to the courses ran by the Department in 1970. In 1972, the Master of Arts programme by research, in Library studies was also introduced.

In 1975, UNESCO with financial assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) decided to establish a Regional Training Centre for Archivists to serve the countries of English-speaking Africa just as the Dakar Centre serves those of French-speaking Africa. The course was designed so that the trainees would be able to effectively acquire, manage and conserve documents and explore information contained therein to guide users in making the best use of archival resources. The course was also designed to assist record creating agencies including government, private and other public bodies to establish and operate efficient records management systems. The Regional Training Centre was mounted at the University of Ghana and affiliated to the already flourishing Department of Library Studies. The Department was thus renamed Department of Library and Archival Studies.

In the 1977/78 academic year, the University approved the establishment of one-year non-degree diploma courses in Librarianship and Archives Administration to upgrade the qualifications of persons holding the certificate in both fields.

The straight two-year non-degree diploma courses in Librarianship and Archives Administration were introduced in the 1993/94 academic year to replace the one-year certificate courses and the one-year diploma courses in both fields.

During the 1997/98 academic year, the Department of Library and Archival Studies upgraded the existing M.A. Course to M. Phil. and introduced two M.A. Degree courses in Library and Archives Studies and Doctorial programmes also in Library and Archival Studies.

The re-designation of the Department of Library and Archival Studies to Department of Information Studies took place in 2001 with the re-introduction of the degree programme. The mandate of the Department is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to enable them follow careers in information management and its applications.

Based on the above mandate, the present work looks at the non-degree diploma students who are currently at the Department of Information Studies and have the undergraduate level to traverse before doing a postgraduate programme. This study on this level could bring out interesting findings.

Literature Review

A number of studies have been done on some aspects of the curriculum and students of the Department of Information Studies of the University of Ghana. The present work focuses on non-degree diploma students who are currently at school and have the undergraduate level to pursue before undertaking a postgraduate programme.

In a study of the 1970/71 to 1980/81 graduate students of the then Department of Library and Archival Studies, Kisiedu (1993) came out with some findings on the library work experience of the students prior to their enrolment for the course. She found out that about half the students had had library work experiences as teacher-librarians or library assistants. Library work experience could be the motivation for pursuing the course in librarianship.

Alemna (1991) also discovered that most of the graduates of the Department of Library and Archival Studies first considered librarianship as a career only after their secondary school education, most likely after having tried other options. He further stated that majority of the graduates who were pursuing the course had worked as teachers and in other non-library settings before embarking on the programme and that they were not motivated by job security, good salary and attractive work environment but were motivated more by intellectual development and further education.

Alemna (1993) again observed that a good number of the graduates from the Department of Library and Archival Studies ended up with jobs not directly related to library work.

The studies of Kisiedu and Alemna were done on respondents who pursued higher levels of the information studies programme and covered older students who had completed their programmes and were out of the Department.

In a study by Akussah, Tackie and Tiarniyu (1999), they examined the extent to which students' perception and motivation were influenced by the different programmes they took in the University of Ghana. They looked at these variables at four programme levels namely; two Master of Arts degrees in Archives and Library Studies and two non-degree diploma programmes in Archives and Library Studies in the Department of Library and Archival Studies (DLAS). One of the findings by Akussah and others was that new entrants to the Archives programme at the diploma level were more confident about prospects in the Archives profession and careers than the library students were of their programmes, professions and careers. They were also less inclined than their library counterparts to consider switching programmes and careers. Another finding of this study was that male students and students with prior professional experience also favoured archives over libraries as compared to their female or professionally inexperienced counterparts. The study also revealed that entrants to the archives and library programmes were heavily biased towards the Arts and Social Sciences than to the Sciences. The two-year Diploma in Librarianship students were also found to have enrolled for the diploma course so that they could use their results to enroll later for a degree programme in other subjects. The main focus of that study was to examine entry level perceptions and motivation at four programme levels. The present work is quite different from that study because this mainly looks at career aspirations of only the final year Diploma in Library Studies students.

In a follow-up study to the work by Akussah, Tackie and Tiarniyu (1999), the authors studied changes in perceptions and motivation of Archives and Library Students at the same four programme levels. Students' responses to items in a structured questionnaire at the start of their programmes were compared to their responses to the same items a year later using paired t-test methods. One of the key findings of the study was that both Archives and Library students improved their perceptions of the library profession and careers significantly. Library students improved from an initially much lower perception of their profession and careers compared to what Archives students thought of theirs. They also concluded that archives students improved their perception of the library profession and careers most probably because of the joint courses of the parallel archives and library programmes. They recommended that the DLAS should consider introducing some flexibility into the curricula of its two-year diploma programmes in archives and library studies to enable students who so desire to switch from archives to library specialization or vice versa after the first year.

Boye (1996) discovered that the problem in our part of the world (Africa), is how to implement curricula for producing skilled information professionals who can serve in all types of environments. She further stated that at DLAS, various programmes have been tried, modified or dropped in the past all aimed at producing a skilful information professional, capable of providing both low and high level information service human resource personnel for the Ghanaian information market where both the illiterate and highly information – sophisticated live. But as to whether all the trained personnel would remain in the information field was not covered by Boye.

Dewey (1985) in a study found out that previous exposure or ties to the library profession or contacts with practitioners or sponsorship for courses in the library field were key factors that could determine whether a person would prefer to train and remain with the profession.

Detlefson and Olson (1991) reported in a study of graduates from the University of Pittsburg's Master in Library Science programme that women tended to remain in the librarianship profession than their male counterparts.

Genoni and Greeve (1997) believe that the negative attitudes about librarianship and related disciplines linger on even in developed countries. They concluded that most young and ambitious Australian school leavers would not select librarianship as first choice but more likely as a fall back profession.

The literature review shows that the present work is quite different from previous works carried out on the Department of Information Studies, its curricular and students. However, there are some threads of similarities that can be found between the present work and previous studies. Other studies done in other environments which have been reviewed offer some food for thought.

Aim of the Study

The mandate of the Department of Information Studies is to train people to enable them follow careers in information management. The aim of this study is to find out whether all the trainees are interested in the field of information management or they are just using the course to catapult themselves into other professions. Based on the findings, the Department of Information Studies would know whether to restructure its courses to accommodate "outsiders" or reorganize the admission procedures to weed out "outsiders".

Limitations of the Study

The study covered only the final year Diploma students of the Department of Information Studies. In the second year of the Diploma in Librarianship course, students' career aspirations would have crystallized. Therefore studies on first year Diploma in Librarianship students were not included or covered since they were new and less fixed in their career aspirations.

Significance of the Study

The aim of this research is to introduce ideas to solve problems. A major significance of this work is to ensure that findings are implemented to offer solutions to the problems that may be unearthed by the study as far as the running of the Diploma in Librarianship Course is concerned. It is

expected that the findings will help the Department of Information Studies to re-examine the programmes run by the Department so that it will focus on its main mandate.

Methodology

Scope of Study

The Diploma in Librarianship programme of the Department of Information Studies is a two-year (four semesters) course. Students who pass the entrance examination are admitted to the two-year course. However, qualification/requirements to write the entrance examination is based on obtaining good passes at the Senior Secondary School Certificate Examinations (SSSCE) or the West African Secondary School Certificate (WAEC) examination or other equivalent examinations.

Population

Final year students pursuing the Diploma in Librarianship programme were covered by the study. The population for the study included all students who registered for the second year diploma programme in 2006/2007 academic year. The total number of registered students was 50. This population was made up of 60% females and 40% males. Out of the total of 50 students, a sample size of 40 students was selected from the class list arranged by index numbers using the simple random sampling technique. The researcher administered questionnaire to the sample size of 40 students on 9th February, 2007.

Instruments

The questionnaire was made up of both close and open-ended questions. The questionnaire had five sections. The first two sections covered information on demographic factors and educational background. The rest of the sections elicited information on work experience, career aspirations and plans for further education.

Students were allowed to complete the questionnaire at their own time. Out of 40 questionnaires sent out, 36 were completed and duly returned by 16th February, 2007. The response rate was 90%.

Findings

Demographic Data

Often, surveys on demographic information help one to place the research work in its right perspective. In view of this, the age and gender of the respondents were collated.

Table 1 gives the age distribution of the respondents.

Table 1: Age of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20 and below	3	8.3
21-30	28	77.8
31-40	5	13.9
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

The above table shows that 3 (8.3%) students were 20 years or below. Majority of the respondents (28) were between 21 and 30 years of age. Five (5) of the students were between 31 and 40 years. The age distribution shows that majority of the respondents were matured and would be aware of the careers they would want to pursue.

Gender of Respondents

The study revealed that 26 (72.2%) of the respondents were female while 14 (27.8%) were male. In developed countries, according to Harris (1985), majority of the staff who work in libraries are women and Delferson and Olson (1991) say women tend to stay longer in the library profession than their male counterparts.

Educational Background

Respondents were asked to state their educational status prior to the commencement of the programme at the University of Ghana. As shown in Table 2, 25 (69.4%) of the respondents possessed the Senior Secondary School Certificate; 6 (16.4%) held the G.C.E 'O' Level Certificate, 3 (8.3%) had Post-Secondary Teacher Training Certificate and 2 (5.6%) had G.C.E 'A' Level Certificate.

Table 2: Educational level before the Diploma Course

Education Level	Frequency	Percentage
Senior Secondary School	25	69.4
'O' Level	6	16.7
Post-Secondary	3	8.3
'A' Level	2	5.6
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

The educational background of the respondents shows that they all qualified to pursue the Diploma in Librarianship course.

The courses some people study at the secondary school level influence their choice of careers. The researcher therefore wanted to know the subject bias of the respondents at the secondary school level and Table 3 shows this very clearly.

Table 3: Programme of Study in Secondary School

Programme	Frequency	Percentage
Agriculture	4	11.1
Business	9	25.0
General Arts	15	41.6
General Science	2	5.6
Home Economics	4	11.1
Visual Arts	2	5.6
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

The study revealed that the respondents studied subjects that cut across all the subjects taught at the secondary school level. However, majority of the students did General Arts as shown in Table 3. In all, a total of 15 (41.6%) of the respondents did General Arts. Nine respondents (25.0%) took Business subjects, while 4 (11.1%) also did Home Economics. Two (5.6%) students took General Science and another 2 (5.6%) did Visual Arts. Students who take the Diploma course in Librarianship are not restricted by the subjects they do at the secondary school level. However, students who do General Arts have always outnumbered students who take other courses as revealed by student records in the Department of Information Studies.

Work Experience

The study shows that some of the respondents were working before undertaking the course. In all, nineteen (52.8%) of the students were in gainful employment, while 17 (47.2%) were not working. Being in gainful employment before entering the university to do further studies puts one in a very good position to make informed choices about careers. Such an experience will help one to decide whether to change careers or to remain within the same job. Table 4 shows the type of work the respondents were doing prior to their enrolment for the diploma course.

Table 4: Type of Work Engaged in before enrolling for the course

Type of Work	Frequency	Percentage
Librarianship	10	27.8
Teaching	4	11.2
Banking	1	2.8
Cosmetology work	1	2.8
Internet Café attendant	1	2.8
Receptionist	1	2.8
Working at the Harbour	1	2.8
Unemployed	17	47.2
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

As captured in Table 4, with the exception of librarianship and teaching which have 10 and 4 respectively, the rest shows an even distribution of single respondents.

Career Aspirations

People have varying interests. They have preferences to certain careers. In the light of the above, students were asked to state their career choices before embarking on the Diploma in Librarianship course. Table 5 shows the career choices of the students prior to enrolment.

Table 5: Career aspirations before the Diploma Course

Type of Work	Number	Percentage
Librarian	12	33.3
Banker	4	11.1
Accountant	2	5.5
Journalist	2	5.5
Nutritionist	2	5.5
Dietician	1	2.8
Air Hostess	1	2.8
Computer Analyst	1	2.8
Graphic Designer	1	2.8
Information Scientist	1	2.8
Legal Officer (Lawyer)	1	2.8
Marketing Executive	1	2.8
Physician	1	2.8
Public Relations Officer	1	2.8
Army Officer	1	2.8
Translator	1	2.8
Nurse	1	2.8
Veterinary Officer	1	2.8
No Response	1	2.8
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

The above table shows very interesting career aspirations by the respondents. With the exception of Librarianship which has a very good representation, the career choices for the majority were diverse. For students who wanted the information profession as a career, doing the diploma course was a matter of following their career aspirations or trying to achieve their career ambition.

It is quite interesting to realize that students who wanted to become physicians, nurses, graphic designers, dieticians, nutritionists and veterinary officers found themselves pursuing a course in librarianship. It would be equally interesting to know whether such students after the course in librarianship would still like to opt for their preferred careers. Based on this, the respondents were asked whether they would like to work in libraries or any of the information professions since they were doing a course in librarianship. The responses show that 23 (63.9%) stated that they would like to work in libraries and 13 (36.1%) said that they were not interested in working in libraries.

For students who were not interested in working in libraries after the diploma course, they were asked to state the career options they were interested in and the Table 6 below shows their preferences.

Table 6: Non-library work of some respondents

Career	Number
Banker	2
Further Education	2
Public Relations Officer	2
Computer Analyst	1
Accountant	1
Journalist	1
Any other work apart from library work	1
Army Officer	1
Nutritionist	1
Non-Response	1
Total	13

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Table 6 above shows that 13 of the respondents were not interested in working in a library even after obtaining the diploma in librarianship certificate. This category of students has thus blocked the chances of students who are interested in the course as well as in the information profession. However, since there is no screening process to detect such students it would be very difficult to prevent them from access into the diploma in librarianship course.

Out of the total number of 36 respondents, 8 (22.2%) said they were sponsored to do the course while 28 (77.8%) stated that they were not sponsored.

In all, 11 (30.6%) respondents said they were pursuing the course to enhance their chances of being promoted. In most organizations in Ghana, a diploma certificate from a recognized university qualifies one for promotion to the next grade or to a higher level or into the officer cadre.

Further Education

On the issue of further studies at the degree level, all the respondents indicated that they hoped to do courses at that level.

A good performance at the diploma level at the University of Ghana can qualify one to be admitted to Level 200 of the degree programme of that subject in combination with two other subjects. Based on the above, students can complete degree courses in subjects of their choice. Table 7 shows the courses the respondents were interested in as subjects of choice that they would like to major in at the degree level.

Table 7: Majoring subjects at the degree level

Subject	Number
Information Studies	28
Psychology	2
Computer Science	1
Home Science	1
Information Studies and Psychology	1
Information Studies and Statistics	1
Sociology	1
Sociology and Political Science	1
Total	36

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Table 7 shows that students interested in Information Studies far outnumber those interested in other courses. However, from hindsight we know that not all of them are interested in the information profession though they are interested in doing the degree course in Information Studies.

Out of the total number of 36 respondents, 33 (91.6%) of them were interested in post-graduate studies. Two (5.6%) were not keen on postgraduate studies while one (2.8%) did not respond. Table 8 shows the courses respondents were keen on doing at the post-graduate level.

Table 8: Field of Study at the Post-graduate Level

Subject	Frequency	Percentage
Information Studies	21	58.3
Business Administration	5	13.9
Communication Studies	4	11.1
Home Science	1	2.8
International Relations	1	2.8
Non-Response	4	11.1
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Though the respondents who were interested in the field of information studies far outnumber the others, the number not interested in the information profession is quite significant. The careers of respondents after their post-graduate studies bring out very interesting findings as portrayed in Table 9.

Table 9: Career Aspirations after Postgraduate Studies

Career	Frequency	Percentage
Information Professional/ Librarian	19	52.7
Banker	3	8.3
Public Relations Officer	3	8.3
Computer Analyst	2	5.6
Computer Engineer	1	2.8
Diplomat	1	2.8
Home Scientist	1	2.8
Journalist	1	2.8
Army Officer	1	2.8
Non-response	4	11.1
Total	36	100

Source: Field Survey, 2007

Out of the total number of respondents, 19 (52.7%) were interested in the information profession after their postgraduate studies in Information Studies. Quite a significant number of the respondents that is 17, ($P < 0.001$) were not interested in careers in the information profession. This means that close to half of the respondents were not interested in the field.

Looking at Table 9, one realizes that 21 (58.3%) respondents were interested in postgraduate studies in the field of Information Studies but when it comes to careers after the postgraduate studies, 19 (52.7%) showed interest in the field. This has been the trend. Students are interested in doing courses in Information Studies but some of them are not interested in careers in the field.

Discussion

The study has revealed that majority of the students covered were adults who knew the reasons why they enrolled for the course and who were old enough to take matured decisions concerning their future and careers.

The respondents in this study brought out the fact that women outnumbered the men. Research by Detlefson and Olson (1991) has shown that women tended to stay in the information profession longer than men and that the women have a high sense of service to society. By contrast the men tended to leave the profession and they appeared interested in higher paying jobs (Detlefson and Olson, 1991; Harris, 1986). It stands to reason therefore that if the women who far outnumbered the men in this study would work in the information profession, it would be very good for the profession in Ghana.

The educational background of the respondents shows that they were all well qualified for the diploma course in librarianship. It is at the secondary school level that some students start planning their future careers and the courses done at this level are expected to impact on the choice of career.

Respondents who read courses in the non-science subjects far outnumbered those with science background. It appears students with backgrounds in the humanities tend to be more interested in the diploma in librarianship course than their science counterparts. However, trends in the profession is towards the increased use of Information Technology (IT) and this means there is the need to attract more science students who can easily meet the challenges required in the use of Information Technology (IT) to help push the profession forward in Ghana.

The study also shows that majority of the respondents were working prior to their enrolment for the course. The diploma qualification would therefore boost their promotion at work. Ten (27.8%) of the respondents were already working in libraries. For this group of respondents, the diploma course could anchor them more firmly in the information profession. Dewey (1985) discovered that previous exposure or ties to the librarianship profession such as actual work experiences, sponsorship for the profession among others were key factors in determining whether a person would opt for the profession or not.

It has always been the ambition of every student to find a good job in life. However, while some prefer jobs that are very lucrative but stressful others prefer less lucrative and less demanding but quiet jobs. Prior to their enrolment for the diploma in librarianship course, the students in this study showed a variety of preferences for all types of careers that they were interested in as shown in Table 6. This ranges from librarianship, nursing, serving as air hostesses, banking, doing cosmetologist work to military service among others. Librarianship is the more preferred choice for the respondents. It is however worthy to note that a significant number of respondents as shown in Table 9 (that is 17 out of 30) were not interested in Librarianship or the information profession. This is very worrying because within the University of Ghana where the Diploma course in Librarianship is taught there are currently a good number of libraries in the Faculty of Science without any library staff.

The situation could be the same in most government departments and ministries which have libraries. Meanwhile, the study has revealed that 17 places were taken up by students who were not interested in the information field. Genoni and Greeve (1997) noted that though the information society has been creating a challenging and rewarding employment, the negative attitudes about librarianship still existed in some areas. Their survey of Australian school leavers showed that librarians were neither interesting nor creative and that educational requirements, earning capacity, career prospects and community status of librarians were very low. Their conclusion was that young and ambitious school leavers will not select librarianship and related professions as first choice. It is thus not surprising that though some students were doing the course they were not interested in a career in librarianship. Alemna (1993) also reported in a study that a good number of graduates from the then Department of Library and Archival Studies ended up with jobs not directly related to library work.

The findings in Table 9 also show the type of work the respondents who were not interested in librarianship would like to do after completing their courses. These they found to be careers of first choice. This category of students have blocked the opportunities of students who were genuinely interested in the information profession as first choice but who could not gain admission.

Out of the total of 36 respondents covered in the study, 8 (22.2%) of them were sponsored for the course. Sponsorship for an archive or library programme by an employer or professional body, according to Akussah, Tackie and Tiamiyu (1999) should motivate the beneficiaries. Their study showed that fully sponsored students were of the opinion that they enrolled in their programmes in order to ensure promotion at work. Sponsored students needed the qualification or the higher certificate to consolidate their careers or positions or status with sponsoring employers. The present study shows that 11 (30.6%) of the respondents said they were doing the course at their own expense to enhance their promotion. This shows that some of them were sponsoring their education because their employers could not or refused to sponsor them.

For the majority of the students who were not being sponsored and also for those not pursuing the course for purposes of promotion, other considerations might be the motivating factor for taking the course. This came out later when all the 36 respondents indicated that they were doing the course so that they could enroll later for degree programmes using the results of the diploma course. Tiamiyu, Akussah and Tackie (1999) stated that "second year diploma students in both Archives and Library exhibited greater inclination than first year diploma students towards using the diploma to gain admission to undergraduate degrees". Akussah, Tackie and Tiamiyu (1999) also found out that some diploma students in both archives and library enrolled for the course so as to enroll later for a degree in a different subject.

The subjects of choice are shown in Table 7. Though Information Studies dominates the choice of subjects, the Table shows that some respondents were interested in other subjects. It could be said that these students were ambitious to further their education but in other subject areas and they used the diploma in librarianship course as a launching pad into other disciplines or professions.

The findings also show that 33 out of the 36 respondents were interested in postgraduate studies. In all, 21 out of the 36 respondents were interested in pursuing post graduate courses in Information Studies. As regards the type of career the respondents would pursue after the postgraduate studies, the study shows that 19 were interested in the information profession. The rest were just not interested in the profession. The trend found in this work is that there were quite a number of students who enrolled for the diploma course in librarianship but were not interested in the information profession. Their motive was to enroll for the course and then use that channel to further their education in other subject areas and to pursue careers in other fields.

Conclusion

From this study, it can be concluded that quite a significant number of students (that is 17 out of 30) were not interested in librarianship or the information profession. This is not very good for the information profession in Ghana because there are quite a number of libraries without library staff. It is also not proper for the only institution for the training of information professionals to train students who are not interested in working in libraries or as information professionals. It is believed that if the recommendations offered by this study are implemented it would help improve the information profession in Ghana.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this research.

That women form a larger proportion of the sample for this research as such, there is the need to attract and retain them in the information profession because research elsewhere shows that they tend to stay in the profession longer than men.

That we need to build up a core of science-conversant information managers in order to create a balance between them and the Arts-oriented ones to boost better services in the profession.

That we need to attract, motivate and keep science-oriented youth in the information profession because they have the background to be able to cope with the immense technology learning requirements demanded by the new technologies in the information environment.

That the Department of Information Studies of the University of Ghana should put in place strategies to weed out students who are not interested in the information professions by interviewing the applicants thoroughly to find out their career preferences, since its mandate is to train information managers.

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