

ATTITUDE OF LIBRARIANS IN NORTH-EASTERN NIGERIA TOWARDS THE NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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ABSTRACT

The study surveyed the attitude of Librarians in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria towards the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). Six objectives guided the study. A questionnaire was used for data collection. One hundred and ninety two (192) copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents; one hundred and sixty two (162) copies were returned and used. Descriptive statistics was employed to analyze data and are presented in frequencies and percentages. The results showed that the attitude of Librarians was not encouraging in terms of participation in the activities of the NLA. The results further revealed that the NLA is virtually dormant in almost all the chapters in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria in organising activities and programmes for the development of the profession and its members generally, largely due to apathy among members and officials of the NLA in projecting the image of the association. Recommendations were then made with a view to encouraging Librarians to have a more positive attitude towards the NLA.

KEYWORDS: PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS,
LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

Introduction.

The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) is an off-shoot of the West African Library Association (WALA) which was dissolved in 1962 largely due to forces of nationalism and lack of funds to run it. The NLA was inaugurated in 1962, at a conference held in Ibadan, Nigeria. (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002). Membership of the Association is open to practicing Librarians and all those interested in the profession. According to Okiy (1998), the NLA has a hierarchical structure, which helps to promote the smooth running of the Association nation wide. The National Council of the NLA, its supreme organ, is the highest policy making and implementation body of the Association. Currently, the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) boasts of over 4000 members (Aina, 2004).

The essence of having State Chapters of the NLA is to provide opportunity for grass-root participation. The Nigerian Library Association Constitution (1989) states that, "a chapter shall include all members of the association working in one of the states of the Federal Republic of Nigeria." The purpose of a chapter shall be to further the general objectives of the Association within its area and unite members by means of meetings, conferences, seminars, workshops and publication of journals. The Borno State Chapter of the NLA (now Borno and Yobe States) was formed in 1980; Bauchi State Chapter (now Bauchi and Gombe States) was formed in 1981; and Gongola State Chapter (now Adamawa and Taraba States) was formed in 1982. Membership of the state chapters means automatic membership of the national body. The state chapters are the spring-boards on which the success story of the NLA depends. Naturally, there is an urgent need for a genuine and responsible leadership from Librarians to enable the Association articulate and pursue its objectives. Thus, the support of members in empowering the Association cannot be over emphasised. Ochogwu (1986) aptly stated that, it is the individuals that make up the professional body. The success of the latter will depend largely on the former. The attitude of Librarians in the North-Eastern State Chapters towards the Association appears unsatisfactory. Banjo (1997) rightly observed that, the NLA's overall health condition is unsatisfactory. Its financial state is precarious due to late and inadequate payment of membership subscriptions by state chapters, most chapters and sections are in a state of partial or complete paralysis, NLA publications are sporadic and members' morale is low generally. Certainly, these observations are inferences from the attitude of Librarians towards their professional association and require some study if the Association is to continue to be relevant in contributing and improving on the unity, professional interests and growth of its members and the profession as a whole. It is against this background that the study attempts to survey the attitude of Librarians in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria towards the NLA. The North-Eastern Region of Nigeria consists of: Borno, Yobe, Bauchi, Gombe, Adamawa and Taraba states.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to determine the attitude of Librarians in the North-Eastern Region towards the Nigerian Library Association's activities for:

1. uniting all persons interested in libraries and librarianship;
2. safeguarding and promoting the professional interests of members;
3. establishing standards for the education and certification of members;
4. encouraging legislation for the establishment, regulation and maintenance of libraries;
5. promoting bibliographical studies and research; and
6. promoting membership, registration and payment of annual check-off dues to the Association.

Literature Review

The attitude of librarians towards library associations in Africa appears to be low compared to their counterparts in developed countries, notably the United States of America, Canada and the United Kingdom, where both the membership and officials of the associations are committed to promoting the interests and values of library and information services as well as the professional growth of its members. Yeboah (2007) on an exploratory study on the performance of the Ghana

Library Association during 2003-2006, reported apathy towards payment of dues and participation in the activities of the Association by its members, largely due to management deficiencies in the Ghana Library Association. Also, Molefe (2005) assessing attitudes of Librarians towards Botswana Library Association observed apathy towards the association by membership, simply because not all librarians understand the importance of the association, and called for advocacy to reposition the Botswana Library Association.

Studies on Nigerian Library Association seem to have largely concentrated on the history of its development. Attitude of librarians towards the NLA has not generated much research. However, few studies have attempted to examine librarians' attitudes towards the profession and its professional association. Agaja (1998) observed that Librarianship in Nigeria is still battling with wrong societal perception of its image with its attendant sagging morale of practitioners. Also, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) noted that societal misconception of the role of libraries in the social, educational, cultural and national development as a whole is an inhibiting factor in the path to full professional growth of librarianship. Perhaps, this wrong societal perception of librarianship appears to have some adverse effect on the psyche of librarians, hence many of them appear uninterested in the profession and the professional association.

Lawal (2002) stressed that the lukewarm attitude of librarians to local and national activities of the professional association requires some study if the profession is to continue to enjoy the privileges of the community. Similarly, Ojo-Igbinoba (1984) and Okiy (1998) lamented about the lukewarm and sporadic attitude of librarians towards the association especially in fulfilling their financial obligations and promoting the image of the profession through the association generally. Banjo (1997) on the other hand, blamed the leadership of the association for relatively few numbers of subscribing members, late and unimpressive financial contribution to the national coffers and low morale among members towards the activities of the association.

Methodology

The research design for this study was the survey method. This design was used because it was appropriate in eliciting attitudes, opinions and perceptions of librarians towards the Nigerian Library Association (NLA). The target population for this study included all the 192 Librarians in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire, which was designed using a modified Likert type scale, based on Agree (A), Undecided (U) and Disagree (D). One hundred and ninety two (192) copies of questionnaire were administered and 162 copies were returned, representing 84.4 percent. The administration of the questionnaire was carried out in 2005 by the researchers with the assistance of trained research assistants. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Demographic Characteristics.

Demographic Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Qualifications			
a.	Bachelor of Library Science (BLS)	103	63.6
b.	Master of Library Science (MLS)	48	29.6
c.	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	11	6.8
Total		162	100
Age-Groups			
a.	25-35 years	25	15.4
b.	36-45 years	92	56.8
c.	46-55 years	39	24.1
d.	56 and above years	6	3.7
Total		162	100
Gender			
a.	Male	107	66.0
b.	Female	55	34.0
Total		162	100
NLA State Chapters			
a.	Adamawa State	38	23.5
b.	Bauchi State	29	17.9
c.	Borno State	59	36.4
d.	Gombe State	11	6.8
e.	Taraba State	10	6.1
f.	Yobe State	15	9.3
Total		162	100
Type Of Library			
a.	Academic Library	93	57.3
b.	Public Library	28	17.3
c.	National Library	5	3.1
d.	Special Library	11	6.8
e.	School Library	13	8.0
f.	Others	12	7.4
Total		162	100

Source: Field Study, 2005

Table 1 presents demographic information of the respondents. The analysis shows that majority of the respondents (63.4%) hold Bachelor of Library Science (BLS), 26% hold Master of Library Science (MLS), while 6.8% hold Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees. The table further shows that 15.4% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 25-35, majority (56.8%) of the respondents were between 36 and 45 years, 24.1% were between 46 and 55 years, while 3.7%, were above 55 years. An analysis of the sex of the respondents shows that majority of the respondents (66%) were male, while 34% were female. As regards membership of the State Chapters of the NLA in the North-Eastern Region, the figures show that 23.5% of the respondents were from Adamawa, 17.9% from Bauchi, 36.4% from the Borno, 6.8% from the Gombe, 6.1% from the Taraba, and 9.3% were from the Yobe State Chapters. Information was sought on the type of libraries the respondents work in. The results indicate that majority (57.4%) of the respondents work in academic libraries, 17.9% in public libraries, 3.1% in national libraries, while 7.4% work in special libraries. About 8% were school/teacher librarians, while 7.4% were lecturers in schools offering Library Science as a programme.

Table 2: NLA Activities for Promoting Unity and Professional Interests of Librarians

Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Librarians' attitude towards attending NLA meetings	159	98.2	2	1.2	1	0.6	162
Librarians' attitude towards attending NLA Conferences, Seminars and Workshops in your chapter.	133	82.1	5	3.1	24	14.8	162
Librarians' attitude towards attending NLA Library week, and exhibitions.	155	95.7	3	1.9	4	2.5	162
Librarians' attitude towards paying courtesy visits to relevant establishments and personalities.	94	58	23	14.2	45	27.8	162

Source: Field Study, 2005

Table 2 presents activities of NLA for promoting unity and professional interests of librarians. The results in Table 2 show that majority (98.2%) of the respondents agreed that their attitude towards attending NLA meetings was not encouraging. Only 0.6% disagreed, while 1.2% respondents were undecided.

Similarly, majority (82.1%) of the respondents agreed that librarians were not interested in attending NLA conferences, seminars and workshops in their chapters. A low response of 14.8% was recorded for those who disagreed, while 3.1% respondents were undecided.

On librarians' attitude towards attending NLA library week activities and exhibitions, majority (95.7%) of the respondents agreed that librarians in the state chapters were not interested in attending NLA Library weeks and exhibitions. Only a few respondents 2.5% disagreed, while 1.9% of the respondents were undecided.

The table further shows that majority (58%) of the respondents agreed that paying courtesies visits to relevant establishments and personalities by NLA members was unimpressive in their chapters; only 27.8% of the respondents disagreed, while 14.2% of the respondents were undecided.

Additionally, the results in Table 2 show that the attitude of librarians towards participation in the activities of the NLA as fora for promoting unity and safeguarding professional interest and growth of its members was negative. Ochogwu (1986) submitted that the success of any professional association largely depended on the individual members of the association. Hence, without collective support of librarians for the NLA, promoting unity, safeguarding professional interest and growth of librarians through the NLA would not be achieved.

Table 3: Participation in Education and Legislation

Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Librarians' attitude towards organising continuing education programmes	88	54.3	19	11.7	55	33.9	162
Librarians' attitude towards participation in legislation for establishment of libraries	131	80.9	7	4.3	24	14.8	162

Source: Field Study, 2005

Table 3 shows the level of participation of librarians in the education and legislation for establishment of libraries. The results show that majority (54.3%) of the respondents agreed that the attitude of librarians towards organising continuing education programmes was not satisfactory in their chapters; 33.9% disagreed, while 11.7% were undecided in their opinions.

In the same vein, majority (80.9%) of the respondents agreed that the attitude of librarians towards participation in legislation for establishment of libraries was not encouraging in their chapters. Few respondents, 14.8% disagreed, while 4.3% were undecided.

The results show that the attitude of librarians towards participation in the education and legislation for the establishment of libraries was not encouraging. Though, the role of librarians in this

activity was not encouraging, the NLA, in collaboration with two state chapters (Borno and Gombe) organises continuing education programmes for para-professional staff in their respective states. This finding corroborates Lawal's (2002) study on the library profession in Nigeria, where he identified education, training and certification as areas requiring improvement.

Table 4: Promoting Bibliographical Studies and Research

Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Participation of Librarians in Publishing NLA Journals	154	95	3	1.9	5	4.1	162
Participation of Librarians in publishing NLA bulletins and newsletters	144	88.9	8	4.9	10	6.1	162
Participation of Librarians in Compilation of bibliographies	119	73.5	13	8	30	18.5	162
Participation in Professional and Scholarly activities.	118	72.8	17	10.5	27	16.7	162

Source: Field Study, 2005

Table 4 presents results of activities of NLA for promoting bibliographical studies and research. The results show that majority (95%) of the respondents agreed that participation of librarians in writing articles to NLA journals is unimpressive in their chapters. Few respondents (4.1%) disagreed, while 1.9% of the respondents were undecided.

Similarly, most of the respondents (88.9%) agreed that participation of librarians in publishing NLA bulletins and newsletters is not encouraging in their chapters. About 6.1% of the respondents disagreed and 4.9% of the sample was undecided in their opinions.

Table 4 further shows that majority (73.5%) of the respondents agreed that participation of librarians in the compilation of bibliographies through NLA is low, 18.5% of the respondents disagreed, while 8.1% of the respondents were undecided.

Again, majority (72.8%) of the respondents agreed that the attitude of librarians in the participation in professional and scholarly activities of the NLA is not impressive in their chapters. Some of the respondents (16.7%) disagreed, while 10.5% of the respondents were undecided.

These results show that librarians in the North-Eastern Region do not participate very much in activities such as publication of journals, monographs, newsletters and compilation of bibliographies. The inability of the state chapters in organising these activities largely due to lack of funds, might be responsible for the indifferent attitude of librarians to these activities. The study further reveals, that out of the six state chapters of NLA in the North-Eastern region, only the Bauchi and Borno State Chapters publish journals through which bibliographical studies and

research are promoted. These results are, however, at variance with that of Nzotta (1980) who reported that librarians in Nigeria have made reasonable contributions to professional literature in Librarianship, especially through writing journal articles and active interest in bibliographical activities through the professional association.

Table 5: Attitude towards membership Registration and Payments of Check-off Dues.

Statement	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Librarians attitude towards joining the membership of the NLA.	62	38.3	13	8	87	53.7	162
Librarians' attitude towards payment of check-off dues.	119	73.5	11	6.8	32	19.7	162
Attitude of NLA officials towards soliciting and collecting check-off dues from the members.	102	63	1	0.6	59	36.4	162
Showing evidence of membership to NLA as a requirement for employment and promotion of Librarians.	127	78.4	11	6.8	24	14.8	162

Source: Field Study, 2005

The responses to the attitude of librarians towards membership registration and payment of check-off dues are presented in Table 5. The results show that 38.3% of the respondents agreed that librarians are not interested in joining the NLA because it is open not only to qualified librarians but also to all persons interested in libraries and librarianship. Majority (53.7%) of the respondents, however, disagreed while 8% of the respondents were undecided.

Also, majority (73.5%) of those sampled agreed that the NLA is inactive because librarians do not pay their check-off dues and the association depended largely on the membership subscriptions to carry out its activities. Only 19.7% of the respondents disagreed, while 6.8% of the respondents were undecided.

The table further shows that majority (63%) of the librarians agreed that the NLA is not financially sound because officials of the association do not go round to solicit for the check-off dues from members. About 36.4% of the respondents disagreed, only one member (0.6%) was undecided. Again, majority (78.4%) of the respondents agreed that showing evidence of membership to NLA as a requirement for employment and promotion of librarians would improve their attitude towards the NLA. Only 14.8% of the respondents disagreed, while 6.8% of the respondents were undecided in their opinions.

The results in Table 5 show that there is general apathy towards the voluntary membership to the association as well as laxity among the officials of the NLA towards soliciting for check-off dues from members. The NLA depends largely on the check-off dues from its members for carrying out activities and programmes but the majority of those in the North-Eastern Region are not paid up members. Interviews conducted with the Chairpersons of NLA state chapters in the North-Eastern Region revealed that less than twenty of its members pay their check-off dues to the NLA.

The results of the study can be summarised thus:

- (i) The attitude of librarians towards participation in NLA activities for uniting all persons interested in libraries and Librarianship is not encouraging;
- (ii) The attitude of librarians towards participation in NLA activities for safeguarding and promoting the professional interests of members is unimpressive;
- (iii) The attitude of librarians towards participation in NLA activities for establishing standards for education and certification of members is not satisfactory;
- (iv) The attitude of Librarians towards participation in NLA activities for encouraging legislation for establishment, regulations and maintenance of Libraries is unsatisfactory;
- (v) The attitude of Librarians towards participation in NLA activities for promoting bibliographical studies and research is not satisfactory; and
- (vi) The attitude of Librarians towards NLA membership registration and payment of annual check-off dues to the association is not encouraging.

Implications of the Findings

The results of the study have far reaching implications for the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN).

Firstly, the desired unity through the NLA activities may not be achieved in a situation where members of the NLA are not committed to its activities in the state chapters. This might not be unconnected to lack of interest of some librarians to the profession in the North-Eastern Region. As established by Alhassan (2005), many librarians in Nigeria are into the profession due to one factor or the other; a lot have found it interesting and many are still showing a negative attitude to it. Consequently, some librarians are not proud of the profession and the NLA. As long as many librarians exhibit a negative attitude towards the NLA, it will be difficult to instil that pride into them as in other professionals.

Secondly, the negative attitude of majority of librarians in the North-Eastern Region towards the NLA will deny many librarians the opportunity to contribute to and participate in activities that affect the interest of members and the NLA as contained in its constitution. The national headquarters of the NLA and LRCN must view this negative attitude revealed in this study seriously because the state chapters of the NLA covered by this study might not be able to monitor and regulate the establishment of libraries, education, training and certification of librarians and appointment of quacks as librarians.

Thirdly, since majority of members of the NLA in the North-Eastern Region show apathy towards its activities, the image of the profession will continue to fade.

Conclusion

This study has shown that the attitude of librarians in the North-Eastern Nigeria is not encouraging in terms of participation in the activities of the NLA as fora for promoting and encouraging unity, safeguarding professional interests and growth of members, education and certification of librarians, legislations for the establishment and management of libraries, bibliographical studies and research, and payment of annual check-off dues. This implied that the apathy towards the association has rendered it inactive in all the six state chapters in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

The NLA national headquarters should ensure that payment of check-off dues is not voluntary. Since state chapters depend on the dues for the execution of their activities, the national headquarters of the NLA should make it mandatory for members' dues to be deducted at source in various establishments. This will encourage members to participate in activities organised with the dues deducted from salaries.

The NLA national headquarters should also liaise with the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) so that in addition to existing requirements for registration as a Chartered Librarian, evidence of payment of membership dues is added. This will improve the poor financial situation of the state chapters.

The NLA National headquarters should liaise with relevant government bodies to ensure that appointments to professional positions in libraries and information centres in the North-Eastern Region are based on active membership.

Heads of libraries and information centres in the North-Eastern Region should be directed by the NLA headquarters to encourage qualified librarians in their establishments to register and pay their dues regularly.

Promotions in libraries and information centres in the North-Eastern region should be based on evidence of active membership.

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