# BORNO LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL
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## BORNO STATE CHAPTER

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# CHANGING ROLES BETWEEN THE PROFESSIONALS AND PARAPROFESSIONAL LIBRARIANS AND JOB SATISFACTION IN SIX LIBRARIES IN LAGOS STATE: A SURVEY

## BY

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*The line between professionals and paraprofessionals have continued to [blur?] for a long time and evidence suggests that this trend will continue due to [technological?], educational and technological forces with library users becoming [more diverse?] and having more immediate needs for information. This paper tries [to investigate?] the effects of the changing roles between the professional and [paraprofessional?] librarians in terms of reward, benefits, recognition, and values [brought?] about by the overlapping nature of job-related relationships; and [significant?] differences in level of job satisfactions in several areas of job [environment?], appreciation, promotion and development in six libraries in Lagos [State?].*

## Introduction

The library personnel issue between professional and paraprofessional [library?] employees has been given attention in the literature. Indeed, the changing [dynamic?] between the groups has been one of the defining issues of librarianship in [the past?] 20 years, Murray (1999). In the past, the division of labour between the [two?] groups was clear. Support staff performed those tasks considered clerical, [while?] professional librarians did the more complex and intellectually rigorous [jobs?]. Research lately, however have seen a significant blurring of the line between [the?] two groups, now the overlap is such that it is difficult to identify a library staff [in sight?] as professional or paraprofessional.

Many changes in library services jobs that are occurring now and predicted for the future are attributable to the advent of electronic technology and the so called "virtual library", beginning with the introduction of computerized catalogue in the 1980s.

The increase in computer use and the advent of new library technology are at least partly responsible for shifting tasks and responsibilities between professionals and paraprofessionals in the library occupation. As professional librarians come under increasing pressure to become knowledgeable in new information storage retrieval and distribution technologies, new methods in preservation and intricacies of copyright law, tasks they traditionally performed have shifted to support staff as indicated by Kutzit, (1997).

Organizations today face the task of creating a positive and motivating work environment for their employees. The library world is certainly not different in this aspect. The techniques used from organization to organization are somewhat similar. Since the role of the paraprofessional in the library is changing to a more service-oriented assistants, in some ways very similar to that of the librarian, then the training of such individuals must change as well. Training programmes and professional staff development contributed heavily to job satisfaction and are integral elements of a well-functioning library organization.

To accommodate these changes, time and efforts must be spent in learning, creating and enhancing skills, which were found to be the primary determinants of job satisfaction.

## Objectives of the Study

(1)    The major goal of this study is to examine the blurring of professional and paraprofessionals' responsibilities that are causing resentment in the library especially where similar or identical tasks are being    performed without recognition/compensation.

(2)    To   examine the importance of information literacy to the change which must be tailored toward time and effort to be spent for learning, creating

and enhancing skills which will benefit both the organization and every worker who may be looking for advancement or new challenges.

To see the possibilities of how libraries can concentrate more time on their human resources without turning into musty book depositories run by unhappy turn-out people with no creative desire and even less public service attitude.

## Literature Review

As early as 1923, Charles C. Williamson challenged librarians to distinguish unambiguously between professional and clerical tasks in his Carnegie Corporation-sponsored report. "Training for library service." In 1927, the American Library Association's "Proposed classification and compensation plans for library Positions" marked the beginning of a long series of efforts to separate library tasks into discrete professional and clerical streams. By 1970, the ALA Council had approved the "Library Education and Personnel Utilization" policy statement which proposed formal educational requirements for all library staff.

Professional librarians perform services such as selecting, acquiring, cataloguing, classifying, circulating and maintaining library materials. Paraprofessionals, on the other hand, assist librarians by furnishing the public with information on library services, facilities and rules.

The activities performed by each group used to be quite distinct, but not so anymore. Over the past two decades, one of the more significant personnel trends in libraries has been the growth both in numbers and work role of paraprofessional library assistants. Sandler (1996) noted that library have always been labor-intensive organizations with a high demand for clerical support functions related to acquisitions, cataloging, circulation record keeping, shelf management, and correspondence. In the traditional library setting of 1950s and 1960s, these clerical tasks were readily distinguished from the professional roles of librarians. Today, however, the boundaries have become increasingly blurred with growing areas of functional overlap.

In order to gain perspective on how professional and paraprofessional roles have changed in relation to each other, it is useful to consider a starting point for when the roles began to shift. Johnson (1996) notes that prior to the early to mid 1970s, librarian handled nearly all professional duties, however with the advent of the bibliographic utilities and shared, machine-readable records, the process has become more routine and is a part of the paraprofessional's skill set. She adds that a second tier of paraprofessionals has emerged since then. One that includes unit managers and individuals who can contribute to library planning initiatives. She posits that paraprofessionals' familiarity with the automated system makes them well-equipped to contribute to decision-making in the library.

Eskoz's survey (1990) of academic libraries conducted from 1983-84 and 1986-87 shows a gradual increase in higher level cataloging among paraprofessionals. Benaud (1992) finds that literature from 1981 identifies the most significant trend in research about paraprofessionals as the tendency for large libraries to assign more tasks to paraprofessionals than small libraries.

The changing role of the professional is what Sherbini and Klim (1997) reported on as observed in librarians taking on priorities such as staff education training, product quality control, and work-flow management. While these job descriptions may seem relatively straight forward, they mask a significant job overlap that has occurred in the library service occupations over the past several years. As technology changes library operations, library support staff - or "paraprofessionals" - have taken on a growing number of tasks that once were the domain of librarians, and the job responsibilities and content for professional librarians has been dramatically altered, Kutzik, 1997.

Beginning with the introduction of computerized card catalogs in the 1980s, computer technology has dramatically changed the work done by both library professionals and paraprofessionals. The most obvious example is the availability of books and journals on-line, which raises questions about the role of

as researchers, scholars and facilitators library users, as well as challenges traditional library itself.

In a recent survey of their role, status, and working conditions, Oberg found out that paraprofessionals constitute a vital, growing force within our Few traditional or newly created tasks are off-limits, and professionals are assigned complex duties that a generation ago characterized work of librarians. Today, paraprofessionals administer major functional areas our libraries, are assigned reference and information desk duties, perform a of systems work, and catalog most of the books that are added to our collections.

The consequential effects of this trend is that paraprofessionals now have a impact upon technical services. In the brief period since the advent of Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), they have come to dominate this force. This goes further to make the support staff to be used increasingly in new and reconfigured roles, in many cases performing tasks previously considered to be the exclusive province of librarians. In addition to increased responsibility for the direct provision of information to patrons, support staff will assume increased supervisory responsibility, including the hiring, training and evaluation of staff; complex support roles in computer technology and applications. It is likely that eventually support staff will be granted primary responsibility for the day-to-day operations of our libraries.

The areas where professional Librarians still largely serve in their traditional roles and are the primary workforce, are in the public services departments, where they continue to provide references, instruction services, and collection development. Although, these units also have seen a number of significant changes recently, the primary functions will continue and our clientele still need well-trained information specialists with an appropriate public service orientation, and the ability to instruct users in the use of a growing network of online systems, databases and other specialized research tools.

There is no doubt that the rapidly changing library workplace has creat[ed] tension, even resentment, among support staff. Paraprofessionals see themselv[es] performing the tasks they have watched librarians perform for years, as well as t[he] challenging new tasks created by automation, but for less money and lower statu[s].

The best solution to the implications of this change of roles is to search f[or] common theoretical and methodological frameworks as Pritchard (1995) as [a] reminder that librarianship is the study of all forms of recorded informati[on] independent of place or package. She forecasted that new roles will emerge, n[ot] from a study of today's changing tools and procedures but, rather, from [an] understanding of the field's structure, content and services.

Job design according to Slack (2004) should also take into account [the] desire of individuals to fulfill their need for self-esteem and personal developm[ent] which serve as instrument in achieving better performance in terms of both [the] quality and quantity of output

## Methodology

The primary source of data analysed in this paper was a questio[nnaire] designed to collect information from the libra[ry] (Professionals/Paraprofessionals) on various aspects of the subject of this pap[er]. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: Section (A) - Gen[eral] Information Section (B) - Job Satisfaction Section (C) - Benefits alloca[tion] Section (D) - Employee Recognition.

## Population of Study

The target population in this study focused on paraprofessio[nal] a[nd] professional librarians of six academic libraries in Lagos State.

- University of Lagos Library (Unilag Library)

- Yaba College of Technology (Yaba Tech. Library)

- Nigerian Institute of Advance Legal Studies Library ([NIALS] Library)

- University of Lagos Medical Library

- Lagos State University Library (LASU Library)

- Federal College of Education (FCE Library)

10 Professionals and 10 paraprofessionals were selected from each of the libraries forming a population of 120, given a response rate of 85%. The break down of questionnaire administration and retrieval is presented below.

**Questionnaire Administration & Retrieval**

| LIBRARIES | NUMBERS SAMPLED | RESPONDED | PERCENTAGE |
|-----------|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Unilag | 20 | 18 | 90% |
| Yaba Tech. | 20 | 16 | 80% |
| NAILS | 20 | 18 | 90% |
| LUTH | 20 | 17 | 85% |
| LASU | 20 | 17 | 85% |
| FCE | 20 | 16 | 80% |
| Total | 120 | 108 | 85% |

**Table 1**

**General Information: Designation**

| Libraries | Professionals Staff | | Para Professional Staff | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|  | Respondents | Percentage | Respondents | Percentage |
| Unilag | 11 | 10.2 | 12 | 11.0 |
| Yaba Tech. | 8 | 7.4 | 10 | 9.5 |
| NAILS | 8 | 7.4 | 8 | 7.4 |
| LUTH | 10 | 9.5 | 8 | 7.4 |
| LASU | 7 | 6.5 | 9 | 8.3 |
| FCE | 6 | 5.5 | 11 | 10.2 |
| Total | 50 | 46.3 | 58 | 53.8 |

Concerning the designation of the 108 respondent the survey revealed that 50 (46.3%) of them were professional librarians, while 58 (53.8%) were paraprofessional librarians. The study showed that 60 (55.6%) respondents were males and 48 (44.4%) were females. The ages of the respondents ranged between 20 - 60 years. In addition the study also found that out of 108 respondents, 31

## Job Satisfaction

(28.7%) HND, 22 (20.4%) were B.A holders, 17 (15.7%) were MLS holders, 5
(4.6%) Ph.D, 4. (37%) were stipulated as any other.

## Table II

## Job Satisfaction and Role Changes between the Professionals and Paraprofessional Librarians

| Variables | Libraries | Not | S | VS | Total | Perce |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Regular payment of basic salary/allowance | Unilag | 14 | 67 | 70 | 151 | 15. |
| Mobility/Housing | Yaba Tech | 34 | 59 | 68 | 161 | 17. |
| Conferences/Seminars and Training | NAILS | 11 | 55 | 69 | 135 | 14. |
| Payment of allowance | LUTH | 13 | 93 | 82 | 188 | 19. |
| Promotion/Career advancement | LASU | 11 | 46 | 83 | 140 | 14. |
| General Welfare | FCE | 13 | 84 | 78 | 175 | 18. |
| | Total | 96 | 404 | 450 | 950 | 10 |

Key:  *Very Satisfactory*  -  *VS*

   *Not Satisfactory*  -  *NS*

   *Satisfactory*  -  *S*

Table II summarized job satisfaction mean scores for both groups in all the six
institutions under review. 450 (47.4%) respondents were very satisfied with the
variables under table II. 404(42.6%) were rated under satisfaction, while 96
(10.1% were not satisfied with the total variable's packages. Promotion and career
advancement were the least satisfying areas. Followed by attending
conference/Seminars and training opportunities. Some specific causes of
dissatisfaction were perceived as "Class distinction" between professionals and
paraprofessionals with majorities of respondents identify a kind of apartheid based
on library qualifications. The gap between library paraprofessional and
professional staff is huge and totally unjust as verbalized by one paraprofessional

complained that an overlap of tasks between professional and paraprofessional's resulted in a feeling that paraprofessionals were doing essentially the same work for less compensation and respect. Rodergs (1999) was of the opinion that within the library setting there are artificially wide distinction between "academic and " non-academic" staff which is reflected neither in personal qualifications nor in the demands of the job. This aspect of dissatisfaction was the real cause of discontent and resentment; less antagonistic relations would improve satisfaction for everyone involved.

However 40 (69%) respondents from the paraprofessionals were not happy with their current/recent changing roles in their libraries based on the fact that a significant overlapping responsibilies has been in place, which also resulted in blurring of duties which were not paid for. This resentment manifested itself in strong feelings of dissatisfaction in the area of remuneration and promotion. 18 (31%) perceived the role changes as a professional enhancement for their development.

## Section C
### Benefits:

Section C showed mean scores for respondents in the area of contingent benefit allocations of the Library such as insurance, vacation and other fringe benefits. 909 respondents recorded, 89 (9.8%) agreed that they were aware of all benefits to which they were entitled to. Results in the areas of insurance 30 (3.3%), vacation 40 (4.4%), promotion 20 (2.2%), Career Advancement 545 (5%) indicated that respondents were overwhelmingly disagreed with the above listed items and their low score was an evidence of a strong disagreement to the satisfaction enjoyed or experienced from those fringe benefits. Dissatisfaction in the area of opportunities for promotion is likely proof to the fact that they were aware of the limited opportunities for paraprofessional staff in the university

system.   Reason being that the lack of MLS prevents paraprofessional from climbing any higher than the level of library assistant.

## Section D

## Employee Recognition

The components here were on open-ended questions.  In all there was 1923 respondents in which 1340 (69.7%) answered positively while 583 (30.3%) were negatively affected.   Appreciation and employee recognition cost nothing, all employee regardless of type of level within the organization need to feel that others appreciate their efforts, by taking steps to improve job satisfaction of all employees.  Libraries will be able to augment staff morale, increase organizational citizenship behaviour, and hopefully improve staff performance.

The results also revealed that most support staff are dissatisfied with opportunities for positive feedback, exclusion from decision making and policy developm ent that even affected them.  This may inadvertently send negative message about the status and value of support staff.  Librarians need to see that support staff feel valued and that they are involved in decision-making.  Turner (1995) lend some contributions by saying that paraprofessionals and few unrewarded professionals are the people left running the library when the professionals are at conferences.  Paraprofessionals make significant contributions to the library profession and should have right as professionals do to enhance their skills.  This is in the interest of the library because paraprofessionals are the ones that added continuity to their libraries because many stay in their positions long after the professionals have moved on.

## Conclusion/Recommendation

Change is ever present with us in libraries, due to technological advance which have added values to librarianship and enrichment to the library environment.  Managing the changing roles requires recognizing how each

changing and the causes, then planning, clarifying and articulating those changes and differences.

Negative reactions expressed by respondents in the areas of salary, promotion, career advancement, seminars and training opportunities should be looked into and taking care of. If the management is not in a position to increase salaries, a sincere effort should be made to look for ego rewards by giving credit to performances, notice and recognition of a good work. According to Neslon (1997), we may not be able to pay the paraprofessionals what they deserve for the level of work they are doing, but we can make work rewarding in other ways:

(1) providing interesting work        (2) sharing information

(3) encouraging involvement        (4) allowing independence

(5) increasing visibility through recognition.

None of this costs much if anything, and it creates a positive atmosphere that may be worth more to than monetary compensation.

Finally, communications between staff at different levels leave much to be desired and as libraries embracing the technological changes they have moved into team work and have gained a new sense of community. Integrated work stations have given each person the ability to perform different tasks without moving to another one. It is very important to communicate fully the organization model to the staff so that they learn to understand and appreciate what everyone else does to contribute to the organization's success. That is a great first step in tearing down walls and building a collective sense of being part part of a team. Servan (2002)

It is now left for the management to develop an effective managerial style and philosophy so that everyone's role in the organization is properly understood and utilized with clear divisions of labour and clear expectations for performance which can help to make each employee a winner.

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