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African Librarians and the Future of Learning: Reflections from the 5th AfLIA Conference and 7th African Library Summit in Accra, Ghana

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Magnus Igbinovia is currently the Head of Electronic Library at Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma. He is also an Adjunct Lecturer at the Department of Library and Information Science, Ambrose Alli University. He is currently undertaking a PhD program at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The author has written over fifty (50) scholarly articles published in reputable international and local journals. He has co-edited a book entitled "Global Perspectives on Sustainable Library Practices" published by IGI Global. He has also presented papers on Library and Information Science related conferences. He is a member of a few professional bodies like the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Library Advocacy Group (LAG) and certified by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). He is the recipient of the 2016 Young Library and Information Professionals (yLIPs) award by the Nigerian Library Association. He also received the award of 'Best Paper Presenter at the 55th National conference / AGM, Nigerian Library Association (NLA)' in 2017. Google scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=7C_Br5QAAAAJ

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Keywords: AfLIA; African Libraries; Learning; Open Educational Resources; Sustainable Development

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Abstract: Innovations in the 21st century have reshaped learning among people of different age, educational qualification, race, gender and geographical location. As a lifelong behaviour, it is predicted that the future of learning will transcend the conventional learning pattern and walls of the classroom with the introduction of open practices (such as the open educational resources) and the decolonization of educational content for both formal and informal learning. This discussion and many more characterized the 5th AfLIA conference and 7th African Library Summit in Accra, Ghana, as Librarians in Africa gathered to discuss the future of learning, libraries and sustainable development in Africa. The conference provided opportunity for Librarians in Africa to re-think their place in the future of learning and help achieve sustainable development. This paper, therefore, highlights the key activities and issues discussed during the 5th AfLIA Conference and 7th African Library Summit held in Accra, Ghana, from 22nd to 26th May, 2023.

Introduction

It is well established that membership in professional associations is one of the attributes of every profession. As such, professional associations exist to cater to the professional needs of their members within the ambit of specified mission and vision, guided by certain conduct known as professional ethics. In this light, Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals have instituted professional associations across local, national, regional and international levels. While the associations at various levels have their specific scope of coverage and extent of operations, the goal is usually similar, with the professional at the core of its existence. At the international level, the International Federation of library and Information Associations (IFLA) exist with the mandate to inspire, engage, enable and connect the global library field (IFLA, 2023). At the regional level, the African

Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) exist to empower, lead and serve as a platform for the library and information community to actively advance and drive the development agenda through cutting-edge services that will enhance Africans' quality of life (AfLIA, 2020). In achieving this, AfLIA organises bi-annual African Library Summit and Conference to strength capacity of African professionals toward the realization of the association's vision and mission.

The 5th AfLIA Conference and 7th African Library Summit was held in Accra, the capital city of Ghana, in the Western part of Africa from 22nd to 26th May, 2023. The theme of the event was "Future of Learning, Libraries and Sustainable Development in Africa". The conference, attracted participants from different countries in Africa, Europe and North America; and also featured a pre-conference Workshop on Wikidata and a Post-conference Workshop on Library Publishing organised in conjunction with Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), Africa.

The pre-conference workshop on Wikidata was organised to train African Librarians to open up knowledge and improve the discoverability of their library collections in a linked data environment using Wikidata. During the pre-conference Workshop, participants were taught to create their Wikidata usernames, Wikidata items and how to work in the Wikidata environment and improve the global knowledge-base of linked open data. Through the workshop, participants were able to increase visibility, connectivity and accessibility to African data. In addition to the Workshop on Wikidata, the pre-conference event also featured a virtual Webinar on "AfLIA LIS Education and Training Section – The IFLA Guidelines for Professional LIS Education Programmes: Consideration and Application in Africa". The event was organised using Zoom platform, and participants joined from different parts of the World.

The main conference began on the 23rd May 2023 with an opening ceremony. The chairperson's opening remark was delivered by Alhaji Alim Garga, the president of AfLIA, while a welcome address was delivered by Dr. Nkem Osuigwe, the Director, Human Capacity Development and Training, AfLIA. The welcome address focused on fitting African Librarians for the future of learning with the help of the professional continental body (AfLIA). The welcome address recognised the challenge that a good number of young people in Africa lack the requisite skills for economic sustenance largely due to the structure of formal education in the continent and the fact that some of these young people do not complete formal education. This poses a serious challenge to living in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). The address recommended the democratisation of access to information and skills that will enable asynchronous learning in libraries of all types. In fact, Dr. Osuigwe noted that the future of learning in Africa could combine 'fluid options' in the form of formal, informal and sustainable lifelong learning. Furthermore, the keynote address for the opening ceremony was delivered by Hayford Siaw, the Chief Executive Officer, Ghana Library Authority; while John Ntim Fordjour, the

Deputy Minister of Education, Republic of Ghana; representing Dr. Yaw Osei Adutwum, the Minister of Education of Ghana, declared the conference open.

Libraries, Open Ecosystem and the Future of Learning in Africa

The second session of the day 1 event featured intellectually stimulating discussion and paper presentation around the open knowledge ecosystem. Ify Evangel Obim, Victor Wagwu and Eruchi Brown Akpelu presented their findings on the impact of open science in educational institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria, while Prince Kay-Takrama and James Njuguna Kimani shared ideas on how libraries can keep the power of reading going when schools are closed. Similarly, Dr. Tony Lelliott from Open Educational Resources (OER) Africa made a case for openness in academic libraries in Africa and explained why academic librarians in Africa should embrace open education. Tony's presentation addressed open licences, OER, open access publications, open knowledge, open data and open science. The discussion reinforced the need for academic librarians to equip themselves with knowledge of open practices so as to help build an open knowledge ecosystem within the African continent. The framework for continuous professional development in the area of OER in Africa was also presented.

The third session of the day witnessed the 10th anniversary celebration of AfLIA and the launch of the book published in honour of Dr. Helena Asamoah-Hassan, the Executive Director, AfLIA. During the 10th anniversary celebration, Dr. John Tsebe, the 1st Elected President of AfLIA, traced the history of the association and also some of the challenges faced during the developmental phase of the association. The high point of the celebration was the presentation of awards to notable librarians in the African continent who were instrumental in the development of Library and Information Association and Institutions in Africa. Among the recipients of the award were Dr. Victoria Okojie and Dr. Helena Asamoah-Hassan. They were recognised for their contributions to AfLIA and the Librarianship profession in Africa.

The Day 2 of the main conference witnessed more paper presentations under the sub-theme of 'Modern curricula, pedagogy, African libraries and sustainable development.' Abdurrahman Bello Onifade and Juliet C. Alex-Nmecha presented a paper on Modern Curricula in African Library Schools: Setting the agenda for Sustainable Development. Maria Cotera and Joy Owango's presentation focused on Supporting the decolonisation of Learning in Africa – The TCC Africa and Digital Science Partnership. Other presentations during the session included Decolonising children's literature through the African storybook digital tools (Mimi Werna), Kids coding in Nakaseke Public Library: from Idea to reality through peer learning (Peter Balaba), amongst others. All presenters were allowed to make their presentation in 15 minutes.

OER for Quality and Inclusive Education: Revisiting the UNESCO OER's Recommendation

During the conference, a twenty-five minute breakout session was dedicated to the discussion of OER for quality and inclusive education, with specific focus on the role of UNESCO OER recommendation. During the breakout session, the conference participants were divided into six groups. The groups included group A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. The question for groups A1 and A2 was "what do African Librarians need to know to lead OER implementation?" The discussion-points under this question are:

1. More knowledge about OER?
2. Skills on identifying OER?
3. Where do we store OER?
4. The connection between OER and quality, inclusive education?
5. The licenses for OER?
6. The 5Rs of OER?

Groups B1 and B2, on the other hand, were asked to discuss on "Who can librarians work with in driving OER implementation?" In this session, the following sub-questions were asked:

1. Who can be said to be stakeholders in the OER implementation (students, lecturers/teachers, library users, administration department)?
2. Can publishers and vendors be stakeholders in the implementation of OER in your different institutions?
3. Can colleagues who are not here be considered as stakeholders that we need to convince?
4. Can regulatory body of education at different levels be part of the stakeholders?
5. How do we engage these regulatory agencies so that OER can be built into the curriculum?
6. How best can librarians approach these stakeholders, create awareness and get a buy-in from them concerning OER?

Furthermore, the remaining groups (Groups C1 and C2) were asked: "What challenges could African librarians face in taking charge of OER implementation?" The sub-items under this group were:

1. Policy? Quality assurance process by librarians? A community of practice to help build up and maintain best practices?
2. Will librarians be willing to join a communication channel set up solely for discussion on how OER is being implemented in their libraries – success stories, smart failures? Etc.
3. Not sure how to be an OER champion in your institution?

4. Opposition from other stakeholders in education?
5. Lack of skills on how to identify OERs?

Informal Education, Vocational Training and Skill Acquisition through Libraries

The third session of day 2 of the main conference was moderated by Professor Chinwe Anunobi, the National Librarian of Nigeria. The session ushered in several thought-provoking discussions and knowledge around Wikimedia projects and libraries. The theme for the presentations included Wikipedia 1Lib1Ref Campaign, AfLIA and Librarians role in promoting Wikipedia in Africa tertiary institutions, Wikipedia use by academic librarians as well as Art+Feminism edit-a-thon for African Libraries. A notable discussion during this session was “establishing authority controls with Wikidata external identifiers”. Other presentations in Day 2 focused on AfLIA Leadership, Yesterday, Today and the Future, the role of libraries in promoting peace and conflict resolution in Zimbabwe, amongst others.

African Libraries as Digital Classrooms and E-learning Hubs

The first session of Day 3 witnessed paper presentations and ignited talks around libraries as spaces for learning. The papers presented examined the efficacy of academic libraries in supporting e-learning in a University setting; user experience and satisfaction of using the commons as a digital learning hub in academic libraries in Ghana, e-learning for human resource development in Academic libraries in Nigeria. The ignited talks focused on Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education and libraries; as well as bridging digital divide through public and community libraries. Other activities carried out during the conference were poster presentation, a visit to the exhibition and IFLA Session.

Indigenous Knowledge, the Future of Learning and Sustainable Development in Africa

Following Africa’s rich but poorly documented indigenous knowledge, several conversations and presentations were made around the theme. Chidi Onuoha Kalu and Mafe Titilola Abigail presented a paper on the place of indigenous knowledge in the future of learning and sustainable development in Africa. Victor Wagwu, Adaora Obuezie and Kelechi Onyema examined indigenous knowledge, data literacy and sustainable development in Nigeria. Similarly, a discussion was held on digital skills of African librarians for e-Learning and for the future of learning.

Poster Presentations

During the course of the conference, interesting and captivating posters were presented by different scholars to help create awareness and enlighten conference participants on novel and important issues. For example, Cotera Maria presented a poster titled Future-proofing South African Education & Research libraries: TENET and Figshare. Obuezie Adaora Chigozie and Ihuoma Sandra Babatope's poster focused on visibility and accessibility: the prodigy of Wikimedia to library resources. Other posters presented include financial empowerment programmes for rural women in Enugu State, Nigeria (Chijioke Okwuoma Chidumebi); Digital skills for electronic information service delivery: Preparedness of support service staff in three of Ghana's premier university libraries (Baidoo Dinah Kotelkor and Nwagwu Williams Ezinwa); Building the learning potentials of youths and adults in Kaduna State through innovative services for sustainable development (Egwuibe Martina Ekwuchi); Literacy, Numeracy and entrepreneurship skills for women in the grassroots: An outreach in Amangwu Edda, Ebonyi State, Nigeria (Ogochukwu Eseni Nwando); Urgent leadership support for librarians in electronic resource management in Nigeria (Okonkwo Ifeyinwa Nkechi and Osuchukwu Ngozi Perpetua).

AfLIA Section Meeting for Key Outcomes based on Session outcomes/other issues

During the AfLIA conference in Accra, the different sections within AfLIA met to discuss issues bothering them and the way forward to driving advancement in the sections. Sections such as the Academic and Research Library Section, Library Education and Training Institutions Section, National Libraries Section, Parliamentary Library Section, Special Library Section, Community and Public Library Section and the National Library Association Section, met to review their activities and how to improve on them going forward. The presentation from the sections shows that membership drive, training and capacity building programs for members, and strengthening of the channel of communication among section members, were among the key issues discussed by all sections. These are pertinent issues, because the success or failure of library and information establishment will be greatly influenced by the capacity of their staff (Arua, 2019), participation in professional associations (Imam, et al., 2020) and effective communication (Wakimoto, 2021).

However, there were also section specific issues discussed during the meeting. For example, the issue of harmonisation of LIS curriculum and placement of LIS department within a faculty/college/school in universities in Africa was discussed extensively by the Library Education and Training Institutions' section, while the Academic and Research Library Section discussed the issue of place-

ment of academic librarians within their respective institution, as some institution/country designate librarians in academic libraries as non-academic staff. As such, they are unable to rise to the status of a professor while working in the library. This is the case of some institutions in Ghana. However, some institutions/countries within the continent recognised Librarians in academic libraries as academic staff; hence, they are able to rise to the status of a professor while working in the library. Notable examples of academic libraries with this kind of structure are the Nimbe Adedipe University Library, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria and the University of Lagos Library in South-western Nigeria. The study of Onifade, Okoro and Boakye (2018) using Ghana and Nigeria as a case study, revealed the inconsistency in the status, nomenclature and career progression between African librarians.

On the issue of capacity building for librarians on the continent, members of the sections identified areas of focus for training and development. These areas include building librarians' skill in digital storytelling, OER development and implementation in their institutions, scholarly publishing and research writing skills, grant proposal writing, skills for setting up Library Management Software (LMS) within the library amongst others.

Changing Of Guards: AfLIA Swears in New Officers

The 5thAfLIA Conference and 7th African Library Summit witnessed the swearing in of new officers to pilot the activities of the Association within the next two years (2023-2025). The officers sworn in included the executives of the different sections in AfLIA and the elected Governing Council members. It is, however, worthy to mention that the swearing-in ushered in the first female president of the Association, in the person of Professor Rosemary Shafack from Cameroon. The full list of council members to drive the association until 2025 is presented below:

Name	Position	Country
Prof. Rosemary Shafack	President	Cameroon
Sarah Iyaloo Negumbo	Vice President	Namibia
Mr. Alim Garga	Immediate Past President	Cameroon
Dr. Helena Asamoah-Hassan	Executive Director	Ghana
Mr. Kepi Madumo	Chairperson: National Libraries Section	South Africa
Dr Mac-Anthony Coblah	Chairperson: Academic Libraries & Library Consortia Section	Ghana

Andrew Mankone	Chairperson: Parliamentary Libraries Section	Kenya
Lynn Jibril	Chairperson: National Library Association Section	Botswana
Antonnetta Madziva	Chairperson: Public and Community Libraries Section	Zimbabwe
Dr. Sarah Kaddu	Chairperson: Library Education and Training Institutions (LETIS) Section	Uganda
Richard Fodjour	Chairperson: Special Libraries Section	Ghana
Velly Koumba Landry	Central Africa representative	Gabon
Eric Nelson Haumba	Eastern Africa representative	Uganda
Maha Abbas	North Africa representative	Egypt
Kepi Madumo	Southern Africa representative	South Africa
Mrs. Neemat Abdulrahim	West Africa representative	Nigeria
Sulemana Sogoba	French Speaking West Africa rep	Mali
Tendayi Madziga	Portuguese Speaking Africa rep	Mozambique
Doreen Appiah	Secretary (AfLIA Staff)	Ghana
	CO-OPTED MEMBER	
Dr. Nem Osuigwe	Director of Human Capacity Development & Training	Nigeria

Source: AfLIA (2023)

Concluding Remark

In ensuring sustainable development across Africa, AfLIA as a major professional Association in the continent is inspiring their members towards reshaping the future of learning through educational innovations. The Association is pushing the frontiers of open educational practices. It is believed that librarians of the 21st Century are equipped with the knowledge and skills to reshape the future of learning towards openness. As such, AfLIA in its 5th AfLIA Conference and 7th African Library Summit have 'set the ball rolling' through enhanced capacity, effective communication and unwavering dedication among members to revamp education in Africa and invariably stimulate sustainable development across the continent.

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naukowych opublikowanych w renomowanych czasopismach międzynarodowych i lokalnych. Jest współredaktorem książki „Global Perspectives on Sustainable Library Practices” wydanej przez IGI Global. Wygłaszał również referaty na konferencjach związanych z bibliotekoznawstwem i informacją. Jest członkiem kilku organizacji zawodowych, takich jak Nigerian Library Association (NLA), Library Advocacy Group (LAG) i został certyfikowany przez Librarians’ Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). Jest laureatem nagrody Young Library and Information Professionals (yLIPs) przyznanej w 2016 roku przez Nigeryjskie Stowarzyszenie Bibliotek. Otrzymał również nagrodę “Best Paper Presenter na 55th National Conference/AGM, Nigerian Library Association (NLA)” w 2017 roku. Google scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=7C_Br5QAAAAJ

Słowa kluczowe: AfLIA; African Libraries; Nauka; otwarte zasoby edukacyjne; zrównoważony rozwój

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Afrikanische Bibliothekare und die Zukunft des Lernens: Überlegungen aus der 5. Konferenz der African Library and Information Associations (AfLIA) sowie dem 7. African Library Summit in Accra, Ghana

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Magnus Igbinovia ist derzeit der Leiter der Digitalen Bibliothek an der Ambrose Alli Universität in Ekpoma. Er ist auch Dozent am Lehrstuhl für Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaft dieser Universität. Derzeit promoviert er an der Ibadan Universität in Nigeria. Er ist Autor von über fünfzig (50) wissenschaftlichen Artikeln, die in renommierten internationalen und lokalen Zeitschriften veröffentlicht wurden. Er war Mitherausgeber des Buches „Global Perspectives on Sustainable Library Practices“ („Globale Perspektiven nachhaltiger Bibliothekspraktiken“), das von IGI Global veröffentlicht wurde. Er hat auch Vorträge auf Konferenzen im Bereich Bibliotheks- und Informationswissenschaft gehalten. Er ist Mitglied mehrerer Berufsorganisationen wie des Nigerianischen Bibliotheksverbands (Nigerian Library Association – NLA), der Interessengemeinschaft für Bibliotheken (Library Advocacy Group – LAG) und ist vom Registrierungsrat der Bibliothekare Nigerias (Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria – LRCN) zertifiziert. Er wurde mit dem Preis „Junge Bibliothekare und Informationsfachleute“ („Young Library and Information Professionals – yLIPs“) für das Jahr 2016 der NLA ausgezeichnet. Im Jahr 2017 erhielt er auch den Preis des „Besten Vortragenden“ auf der 55. Nationalen Tagung und Jahreshauptversammlung des NLA. Google Scholar: https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=7C_Br5QAAAAJ

Schlüsselworte: Afrikanische Vereinigung für Bibliotheken und Information (African Library and Information Associations – AfLIA); afrikanische Bibliotheken; Lernen; Open Educational Resources (OER); nachhaltige Entwicklung

Zusammenfassung: Die Innovationen des 21. Jahrhunderts haben die Art und Weise, wie Menschen unterschiedlichen Alters, Bildungsstandes, unterschiedlicher Rasse, Geschlechts und geografischer Lage lernen, verändert. Es wird geschätzt, dass die Zukunft des lebenslangen Lernens über das herkömmliche Lernschema und die Klassenzimmer hinausgehen wird, indem offene Praktiken (wie Open Educational Resources) und die Entkolonialisierung von Bildungsinhalten sowohl im formellen als auch im informellen Lernen eingeführt werden. Diese Diskussion und viele andere Themen kennzeichneten die 5. Konferenz der Afrikanischen Vereinigung für Bibliotheken und Information (African Library and Information Associations – AfLIA) und den 7. Afrikanischen Bibliotheks-Gipfel in Accra (7. African Library Summit in Accra), Ghana, bei denen sich Bibliothekare in Afrika versammelten, um die Zukunft des Lernens, der Bibliotheken und der nachhaltigen Entwicklung in Afrika zu erörtern. Die Tagung bot den Bibliothekaren in Afrika die Gelegenheit, ihren Platz in der Zukunft des Lernens neu zu überdenken und zur nachhaltigen Entwicklung beizutragen. In diesem Artikel werden daher die wichtigsten Maßnahmen und Diskussionsthemen während der 5. AfLIA-Konferenz und des 7. Afrikanischen Bibliotheks-Gipfel in Accra, Ghana, vom 22. bis 26. Mai 2023 vorgestellt.