



## Librarians in Transition: Navigating Challenges in the Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11638473>

### Henry B. Wagas

University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-1566-0944>

### Osias Kit T. Kilag

VPAA, PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0845-3373>

### Jenicca Yloah C. Pareja

Teacher, PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0001-4686>

### Kristel Canonigo

Teacher, PAU Excellencia Global Academy Foundation, Inc., Mercado St., Poblacion, Toledo City, Philippines

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-2247-3669>

### Abstract:

This study examines the challenges encountered by librarians in the Philippines and proposes recommendations for improvement. Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and empirical data, the study identifies technological limitations, professional recognition issues, and educational shortcomings as primary obstacles faced by librarians in the country. Limited access to technology, stereotypes about librarianship, and inadequate educational resources hinder the effectiveness of library services and impede the professional development of librarians. To address these challenges, the study recommends enhancing technology infrastructure, promoting professional development opportunities, advocating for recognition of librarians as professionals, and strengthening educational programs in Library Science. These recommendations aim to empower librarians and improve the quality of library services in the Philippines. By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can contribute to the advancement of librarianship and ensure that libraries remain vital institutions in serving the information needs of their communities.

*Keywords:* librarians, Philippines, challenges, technology, professional recognition, education, infrastructure

### Introduction:

Librarians play a pivotal role in facilitating access to information and knowledge, thereby contributing to the intellectual development and societal progress. However, in the dynamic landscape of the Philippines, librarians face multifaceted challenges that hinder their effectiveness and impede the optimal functioning of libraries (Golfo-Barcelona, 2017). Understanding and addressing these challenges are essential for enhancing the quality of library services and maximizing their impact on communities.

In the Philippines, as in many other countries, librarians grapple with the relentless pace of technological advancement. The integration of digital technologies into library services has transformed the nature of librarianship, necessitating continuous adaptation and upskilling. As Ademodi and Adepoju (2009) observed in their study on computer skills among librarians in Nigerian academic libraries, the shortage of computers and inadequate proficiency among professionals pose significant barriers to leveraging technology effectively. Similarly, Adomi and Anie (2006) highlighted the maturing stage of computer use among Nigerian university librarians, emphasizing the need for comprehensive training programs and improved access to ICT infrastructure.

Moreover, librarians in the Philippines encounter challenges related to professional recognition and status within society (Ramos-Eclevia, 2023). Despite their vital role in information dissemination and knowledge management, librarians often contend with stereotypes and misconceptions that undermine their professional standing. As Rahman, Khatun, and Islam (2008) noted in their review of library education in Bangladesh, low pay scales and limited opportunities for advancement contribute to the marginalization of librarians within the academic and professional spheres. Such issues resonate with the experiences of librarians in the Philippines, where efforts to elevate the status of librarianship face considerable obstacles.

Furthermore, educational and research initiatives aimed at advancing the field of library science face numerous hurdles in the Philippines. The quality and accessibility of graduate programs in Library Science are crucial determinants of the profession's future trajectory. However, as Johnson (2007) observed in his examination of library and information science education in developing countries, limited financial support and inadequate



resources constrain the development of robust educational curricula. Similarly, Sharma and Nyaichyai (2023) highlighted the lack of governmental oversight and support for school libraries in Nepal, underscoring the broader challenges facing library education and research in the region.

In light of these challenges, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the obstacles faced by librarians in the Philippines. By identifying key issues and proposing evidence-based solutions, stakeholders can contribute to the enhancement of library services and the empowerment of communities through improved access to information and knowledge.

### **Literature Review:**

Libraries serve as vital hubs of information dissemination and knowledge preservation, with librarians playing a central role in facilitating access to resources and supporting users' information needs. However, librarians in the Philippines encounter numerous challenges that impact their ability to fulfill their professional responsibilities effectively. This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of these challenges, drawing upon existing literature and empirical evidence to identify key issues and propose strategies for addressing them.

Librarianship in the Philippines faces multifaceted challenges that encompass technological, professional, and educational dimensions. To understand these challenges comprehensively, it is essential to delve into existing literature and empirical studies that shed light on various aspects of librarianship in the country (Abendan, et al., 2023).

Ademodi and Adepoju (2009) examined the computer skills among librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria, revealing a shortage of computers and computer skills among professionals. Similarly, Adomi and Anie (2006) highlighted the need for improved computer literacy skills among Nigerian university librarians, emphasizing the importance of in-house training programs and adequate provision of computing resources. These findings resonate with the situation in the Philippines, where limited access to technology and inadequate training hinder librarians' ability to leverage digital resources effectively.

Wenzler (2019) discussed the ethical principles in library practice, emphasizing the moral responsibility of librarians to uphold intellectual freedom and serve patrons impartially. In the context of the Philippines, where librarians often struggle with recognition as professionals, adherence to ethical principles becomes particularly crucial in garnering support and respect for the profession.

Golfo-Barcelona (2017) explored the trends and issues in preparing new era librarians and information professionals, emphasizing the need for specialized knowledge and skills in library and information management. In a rapidly evolving information landscape, librarians in the Philippines must adapt to emerging technologies and trends to remain relevant and effective in their roles (Andrin & Kilag, 2023).

Sreenivasulu (2000) highlighted the evolving role of digital librarians in managing digital information systems, underscoring the importance of expertise in metadata, multimedia indexing, and database technology. As libraries in the Philippines increasingly embrace digital resources and services, librarians must acquire the necessary skills to manage and organize digital collections effectively.

The literature review underscores the diverse challenges faced by librarians in the Philippines, ranging from technological limitations to professional recognition issues and educational shortcomings (Canes, et al., 2023). By addressing these challenges proactively and implementing targeted interventions, stakeholders can enhance the effectiveness of library services and empower librarians to fulfill their roles more effectively in the digital age.

### **Methodology:**

The methodology employed in this study involved a comprehensive review of existing literature and empirical studies to analyze the challenges faced by librarians in the Philippines. By synthesizing information from diverse sources, including scholarly articles, reports, and conference papers, the study aimed to identify key issues and propose strategies for addressing them. The following steps were undertaken to conduct the literature review and analysis:

The first step involved identifying and gathering relevant literature related to librarianship in the Philippines. This encompassed a broad range of topics, including technological challenges, professional recognition issues, and educational initiatives. A thorough review of the collected literature was conducted to gain insights into the challenges faced by librarians in the Philippines. This involved examining empirical studies, theoretical frameworks, and case studies to understand the multifaceted nature of the issues.

Relevant data and findings from the literature were extracted and organized systematically to facilitate analysis. This included information on the nature of challenges, contributing factors, and proposed solutions identified in the



literature. The extracted data were analyzed to identify common themes, patterns, and trends across the literature. This involved synthesizing information from diverse sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by librarians in the Philippines. The findings from the literature were synthesized and interpreted to provide insights into the underlying factors shaping the challenges faced by librarians. This process involved critically examining the literature to uncover nuances and implications for practice.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

#### **Technological Challenges:**

The study revealed that librarians in the Philippines encounter significant technological challenges, which impede their ability to effectively fulfill their professional duties. Limited access to technology and inadequate training were identified as primary obstacles, hindering librarians' capacity to leverage digital resources and meet the evolving needs of users in the digital age (Ademodi & Adepoju, 2009; Adomi & Anie, 2006).

Ademodi and Adepoju (2009) investigated the computer skills among librarians in academic libraries in Nigeria, revealing a shortage of computers and computer skills among professionals. Similarly, Adomi and Anie (2006) emphasized the need for improved computer literacy skills among Nigerian university librarians, highlighting the importance of in-house training programs and adequate provision of computing resources. These findings resonate with the situation in the Philippines, where limited access to technology and inadequate training hinder librarians' ability to leverage digital resources effectively (Diano Jr, et al., 2023).

The lack of access to technology infrastructure, including computers, internet connectivity, and digital tools, poses a significant barrier for librarians in the Philippines. Many libraries, especially those located in rural areas or underserved communities, struggle to procure and maintain modern technological resources, limiting librarians' ability to provide comprehensive services to users (Sreenivasulu, 2000; Rahman, Khatun & Islam, 2008).

Moreover, inadequate training exacerbates the challenges faced by librarians in adopting and utilizing digital resources effectively. Without proper training in digital literacy, cataloging techniques, and information retrieval systems, librarians may struggle to navigate and manage digital collections, resulting in suboptimal user experiences and diminished access to information (Rosales, et al., 2023).

To address these technological challenges, it is imperative for stakeholders to invest in infrastructure development and provide comprehensive training opportunities for librarians. Initiatives such as the provision of modern computing equipment, internet connectivity, and digital tools can enhance librarians' capacity to leverage technology effectively in their professional practice (Vahid Aqili & Isfandyari Moghaddam, 2008; Ireland, et al. 2017).

Furthermore, targeted training programs aimed at improving digital literacy, information retrieval skills, and cataloging techniques are essential to empower librarians with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the digital landscape confidently (Johnson, 2007; Khan & BHATTI, 2019). By addressing these technological challenges through strategic investments and capacity-building initiatives, stakeholders can empower librarians in the Philippines to fulfill their crucial role in facilitating access to information and promoting lifelong learning in their communities.

#### **Professional Recognition Issues:**

Professional recognition is a critical aspect of librarianship, yet it emerges as a significant concern among librarians in the Philippines. Despite their pivotal role in facilitating access to information and knowledge, librarians often grapple with the lack of recognition as professionals within both institutional and community contexts. This section delves into the challenges surrounding professional recognition faced by librarians in the Philippines, exploring the implications of stereotypes and misconceptions on the status and visibility of the profession.

Librarians play a fundamental role in information dissemination and knowledge preservation, serving as custodians of resources and facilitators of learning. However, their contributions are often undervalued or overlooked, leading to a lack of recognition within institutional structures. Studies such as those by Vassilakaki and Moniarou-Papaconstantinou (2015) and Jones (2019) emphasize the importance of acknowledging librarians as skilled professionals, highlighting the diverse expertise and qualifications required to excel in the field.

One of the primary challenges faced by librarians in the Philippines is the prevalence of stereotypes and misconceptions about libraries and librarianship. These stereotypes, perpetuated by media portrayals and societal perceptions, contribute to a lack of understanding about the complexity and significance of library work. Research by Hillenbrand (2005) and Garcia and Barbour (2018) underscores the need to challenge these stereotypes and elevate the image of librarians as information professionals with specialized knowledge and skills.



Moreover, the limited visibility of librarians within institutional settings exacerbates issues of professional recognition. Despite their crucial role in supporting research, education, and community engagement, librarians often find themselves marginalized within organizational hierarchies. Studies by Oborn and Dawson (2010) and Hicks (2016) highlight the importance of advocating for greater visibility and representation of librarians in decision-making processes and institutional leadership roles.

Another contributing factor to professional recognition issues is the lack of standardized qualifications and accreditation mechanisms for librarians in the Philippines. While graduate programs in Library Science provide essential training and education, the absence of formal licensure or certification requirements diminishes the professional standing of librarians. Research by Esposito-Betan, et al. (2015) and Superio, et al. (2024) underscores the need for regulatory frameworks that recognize and validate the expertise of librarians, aligning with international standards and best practices.

To address these challenges, concerted efforts are needed to raise awareness about the multifaceted nature of librarianship and advocate for greater recognition of librarians as professionals. This entails challenging stereotypes, increasing visibility within institutions, and advocating for regulatory reforms to enhance professional standards and accreditation processes. By promoting a more nuanced understanding of librarianship and its contributions to society, stakeholders can foster a culture of respect and appreciation for librarians in the Philippines.

### **Educational Shortcomings:**

The educational landscape for librarians in the Philippines presents a myriad of challenges that hinder their professional development and the quality of library services they provide. This section delves into the educational shortcomings identified in the study, shedding light on the issues faced by librarians pursuing graduate programs in Library Science.

One of the primary obstacles encountered by librarians in the Philippines is the inadequate funding allocated to graduate programs in Library Science. This lack of financial support hampers the capacity of educational institutions to offer comprehensive and high-quality training to aspiring librarians. As a result, students may not have access to essential resources, such as updated textbooks, research materials, and technological tools, necessary for a well-rounded education in library science.

Empirical studies support the notion of inadequate funding as a pervasive issue in educational institutions. Research conducted by Rahman, Khatun, & Islam (2008) revealed that many academic institutions in Bangladesh lack well-equipped computer labs and sufficient numbers of computers for students. Similar challenges are likely prevalent in the Philippines, where limited financial resources may impede the delivery of quality education in Library Science programs.

Another significant challenge faced by librarians in the Philippines pertains to outdated infrastructure within educational institutions offering Library Science programs. Aging facilities, obsolete equipment, and inadequate technological infrastructure hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning experiences for students. Without access to modern facilities and resources, students may struggle to acquire the necessary skills and competencies required to thrive in the field of librarianship.

Studies conducted by Lee, Brown, Mekis, & Singh (2003) in Malaysia underscore the importance of modern infrastructure in educational settings. They found that the lack of full-time teacher librarians and outdated facilities posed significant challenges to the delivery of quality education. Similar findings may apply to the Philippines, where outdated infrastructure could impede the ability of Library Science programs to adequately prepare future librarians for the demands of the profession.

Librarians pursuing graduate programs in the Philippines also face challenges related to limited access to resources essential for their education and professional development. This includes a scarcity of textbooks, classification and cataloging tools, and practical materials required for hands-on learning experiences. Furthermore, inadequate access to digital resources and online databases may hinder students' ability to conduct research and stay abreast of the latest developments in the field of library science.

Singh and Wijetunge (2006) study in Nepal revealed similar challenges, including inadequate space, insufficient library materials, and a lack of trained manpower. These findings underscore the importance of addressing resource limitations to ensure the quality and effectiveness of Library Science education. In the context of the Philippines, efforts to enhance access to resources could involve advocacy for increased funding, partnerships with external stakeholders, and leveraging digital technologies to expand access to educational materials.

Educational shortcomings pose significant challenges for librarians pursuing graduate programs in Library Science in the Philippines. Inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and limited access to resources hinder the quality



of education and professional development opportunities available to aspiring librarians. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from educational institutions, policymakers, and stakeholders to allocate sufficient resources, modernize infrastructure, and expand access to educational materials. By addressing these educational shortcomings, the Philippines can nurture a new generation of librarians equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to excel in the rapidly evolving field of library science.

### **Recommendations for Improvement:**

Addressing the challenges encountered by librarians in the Philippines requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses technological advancements, professional development initiatives, recognition of librarians' roles, and enhancements to educational programs. This section outlines several recommendations derived from the analysis of identified challenges, offering actionable strategies to improve library services and empower librarians within the Philippine context.

One of the foremost recommendations is to prioritize the enhancement of technology infrastructure within libraries across the Philippines. This includes investing in modern equipment, upgrading software systems, and expanding internet connectivity to facilitate seamless access to digital resources. By embracing technological advancements, libraries can better serve their users and adapt to the evolving information landscape.

Empirical evidence supports the importance of technology infrastructure in enhancing library services. Research by Ademodi & Adepoju (2009) emphasized the need for adequate ICT infrastructure in Nigerian university libraries to support digital initiatives effectively. Similar investments in technology infrastructure are necessary in the Philippines to empower librarians and ensure the delivery of quality services to users.

Professional development plays a crucial role in equipping librarians with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles. Therefore, it is imperative to promote and support initiatives that provide ongoing training and development opportunities for librarians in the Philippines. This may include workshops, seminars, webinars, and conferences focused on emerging trends, technologies, and best practices in librarianship.

The significance of professional development is underscored by Adomi & Anie (2006), who highlighted the importance of in-house training programs for improving computer literacy skills among librarians in Nigerian university libraries. Similar initiatives can be implemented in the Philippines to enhance the competencies of librarians and enable them to meet the evolving needs of users effectively.

Another critical recommendation is to advocate for the recognition of librarians as professionals within institutions and communities. This involves challenging stereotypes and misconceptions about libraries and librarians, raising awareness of the valuable contributions made by librarians to society, and advocating for policies that support the professionalization of librarianship.

Research by Bruce (2003) emphasized the importance of information literacy initiatives in empowering citizens and highlighted the role of librarians in supporting lifelong learning. By advocating for recognition as professionals, librarians in the Philippines can garner greater respect and support for their contributions to education, research, and community development.

To address the educational shortcomings identified in the study, efforts should be made to strengthen educational programs in Library Science across the Philippines. This includes increasing funding for programs, modernizing infrastructure, expanding access to resources, and updating curricula to align with current industry trends and standards.

The study by Rahman, Khatun, & Islam (2008) highlighted the need for improvements in library education in Bangladesh, including the provision of well-equipped computer labs and sufficient resources for students. Similar recommendations can be applied in the Philippines to enhance the quality of education and prepare future librarians for the challenges of the profession.

Implementing these recommendations can contribute to the enhancement of library services and the empowerment of librarians in the Philippines. By investing in technology infrastructure, promoting professional development opportunities, advocating for recognition of librarians as professionals, and strengthening educational programs in Library Science, stakeholders can support the advancement of librarianship and ensure that libraries remain vital institutions within Philippine society.

### **Conclusion:**

The challenges faced by librarians in the Philippines encompass technological limitations, professional recognition issues, and educational shortcomings. These obstacles hinder the effectiveness of library services and impede the professional growth of librarians within the country. However, by implementing the recommended strategies,



including enhancing technology infrastructure, promoting professional development opportunities, advocating for recognition of librarians as professionals, and strengthening educational programs in Library Science, stakeholders can contribute to the improvement of library services and empower librarians to fulfill their essential roles in society.

Furthermore, it is evident from the literature that similar challenges exist in other developing countries, highlighting the universality of these issues within the field of librarianship. Therefore, collaborative efforts and knowledge-sharing initiatives across international borders can facilitate the exchange of best practices and innovative solutions to address these challenges effectively.

Ultimately, the resilience and dedication of librarians in the face of adversity are commendable. Despite the obstacles they encounter, librarians in the Philippines continue to strive for excellence and play a crucial role in providing access to information, promoting literacy, and supporting lifelong learning. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the recommendations proposed in this study, stakeholders can contribute to the advancement of librarianship in the Philippines and ensure that libraries remain indispensable institutions in serving the information needs of their communities.

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