

The Voice of the Young: Attitudes and Perceptions of LIS Students and Young Professionals towards Professional Library Associations

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ABSTRACT

Professional library associations promote lifelong learning through the conduct of continuing professional development (CPD) programs. Membership in professional associations influences one's professional identification. In anticipating the upcoming ASEAN integration, how confident are the professional library associations in the Philippines in engaging its young professionals to actively participate and involve in its activities and programs? This paper would like to: a) know the level of awareness of the senior undergraduate students taking-up Library and Information Science (LIS) and those young career professionals' ages 20-30 towards the numerous professional library associations established in the country; and b) gauge the perceptions and attitudes of the young professionals in choosing which professional library association they would like to affiliate themselves.

Keywords: young professionals, students, LIS, professional library associations, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Librarianship as a profession is grounded on substantive and distinctive body of knowledge which has to be continuously updated and developed. Fisher (1997) has identified this characteristic of profession to be supported by assiduous efforts of professional associations through promotion and conduct of research / scholastic pursuits to nurture the profession's knowledge. Furthermore, he attributed professionals to have constant quest for career development which may be provided by the associations where they are affiliated. Joining professional associations would definitely expand the individual's occupational development (Markova, Ford, Dickson & Bohn, 2013).

Considering professional associations provide a wide array of opportunities to its members (Goldman, 2014; Merriam and Brockett, 2007; Thomas, 2012; Fisher, 1997), this study embarks on identifying what the young professionals and library and information science (LIS) students have to say with regard to professional associations. This draws us to questions: "do the subjects see these values?" or "what value do the subjects see from professional associations?"

On board for the beginning of their early career, graduates of Library and Information Science do know professional associations exist. However, a question arises as to whether they are aware of its value into their career. "The student has listened to comments about professional associations, but the comments are more theoretical than meaningful. Context and perspective are missing" (Frank, 1997).

Librarians new to the field may puzzle over the variety of choices in professional organizations and their educational and committee work opportunities (Glendenning and Gordon, 1997). Diverse and large number of options on where to join in the future influences the choices of LIS students as they venture in this profession and who will soon become part of the professional clan. As McChesney (1984) suggested, membership in professional associations is a prerequisite for professional growth and development.

OBJECTIVES

This paper would like to: a) know the level of awareness of the senior undergraduate students taking-up Library and Information Science (LIS) and those young career professionals' ages 20-30 towards the numerous professional library associations established in the country; and b) gauge the perceptions and attitudes of the young professionals in choosing which professional library association they would like to affiliate themselves.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Virgo (1991) defined associations as “body of people who collectively have a tremendous wealth of experiences to draw upon in a common field”.

According to Pemberton (1994), “professional association focuses on three areas: the interest of its individual members (e.g. education, information, compensation), the needs of the profession itself (e.g. definition, image, boundaries with other fields, performance standards, research, recruitment to the field), and to the larger society (e.g. protection of the needs of citizens within the profession's domain; relations with governments, universities, local communities; and relations with other similar fields)”.

In the development and advancement of any profession, including records and information management, the role of the professional association is unquestionably a primary force (Pemberton, 1994). Furthermore, Bhatti and Chohan (2012) expressed that library associations play an important role in the promotion of librarianship as a profession vital to an informed and knowledgeable society. Studies affirm values arising from membership to professional library associations:

- Goldman (2014) found many practical benefits to be gained from involvement in local and regional conferences and organizations. Professional associations offer greater opportunities for leadership, mentoring and networking with professionals.
- Merriam and Brockett (2007) described professional associations to play a variety of roles in the development of the field, including, but not limited to, providing informal or formal leadership for the field, creating and shaping professional development, advocating for the adult educator and their learners, and providing resources to the field.
- Library associations have a key role for making the LIS community true research oriented (Bhatti and Chohan, 2012). They added, “Library associations serve as the primary voice for the profession of librarianship as it the only platform that leads towards development, promotion, and improvement of library services for supporting research at any level.”
- Association involvement for library professionals provides opportunities such as conference, webinars, educational sessions, valued conduits for advocacy, and professional networking (Thomas, 2012).

However, Berger (2014) found difficulty in sustaining and growing the number of association's members. He stressed funding for professional development caused fewer members to join or renew their membership in professional associations. Goldman (2014) adds that in tight fiscal times, one may seem to not attend conferences and continue his professional development.

Library Education and Professional Associations in the Philippines

Library education in the Philippines started in 1914 when the University of the Philippines, a state university, offered courses in library science (Santos, 2003). LIS graduates have not been acknowledged as professionals in the country before the enactment of RA 6966 otherwise known as the *Philippine Librarianship Act of 1990*. Through the law, the State recognized the essential role of librarianship and assured the professional status of Filipino Librarians.

Under Sec. 30, Art. IV of the modernization Act of the aforementioned Law, *Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003* or RA 9246, states that all registered librarians shall be integrated under a single organization recognized and accredited by the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians (PRBFL), and approved by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI) is the only nationally accredited professional organization of librarians to date and serving as the umbrella organization for all library groups in the country. Echiverri (2010) noted that PLAI is the only national association of librarians in the country that was accredited by the PRC as the Accredited Professional Organization (APO) pursuant to Resolution No. 6, series of 1993.

Santos (2003) presented PLAI to have been founded on October 23, 1923 by Dr. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera who was then Director of the Philippine Library Museum. He mentioned it was incorporated originally as Philippine Libraries Association, Inc. as a non-stock corporation on October 9, 1925 and on May 5, 1989, it was renamed Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. for purposes of the Professionalization Law.

There are many library professional associations in the country specifically founded based on their subject orientation. This study has identified four associations which corresponds to four specializations in the profession namely Academic, Special, Public and School Librarianship.

A. Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians (PAARL)

Lapuz (2009) presented a narrative of PAARL from its conception to its significant highlights. She introduced the association's foundation was a result of PAASCU (Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities) Conference held on September 18-19, 1972. Majority of the members are those librarians currently working in an academic or research library. Associate members who are either no longer connected from the aforementioned library type (e.g. retired) or not licensed are also recognized as members of the organization. PAARL conducts programs and activities for continuing professional education and sponsors scholarships or grants to qualified librarians.

B. Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines (ASLP)

Established in 1954 and considered as the second oldest professional library association in the Philippines, ASLP is a national association of librarians and information professionals in various specialized fields of research – government and private sectors as well as business

community and the academes (Ingles-Cruz, 2012). She added that it has been organized upon the initiative of Concordia Sanchez, Librarian of the University of the Philippines Public Administration (UP-PA) during the signing of an agreement between the Philippine Council for United States AID (PHILCUSA) and UP-PA for the Supervision of the Inter-Departmental Reference Service (IDRS) by the UP-PA on October 16, 1953.

Other professional associations which fall under Special Librarianship include, but not limited to:

- Agricultural Librarians Association of the Philippines (ALAP);
- Court Librarians Association of the Philippines (CLAPHIL);
- Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP);
- Philippine Group of Law Librarians (PGLL);
- Philippine Theological Librarians Associations (PTLA);

Other associations which target two other types of librarianship include *Philippine Association of School Librarians, Inc. (PASLI)* for school librarianship and *Association of Librarians in the Public Sector, Inc. (ALPSI)* for public librarianship.

Villaflor (2011) introduced the following activities and services of the different library associations in the Philippines:

- Holding of conferences, seminar-workshops, forums and symposia for Continuing Professional Education (CPE) program;
- Publication of bulletins and newsletters;
- Handles the awarding of different service awards for Librarians;
- Research activities and collaborative research projects such as directories and union lists;
- Participation in the annual Philippine Book Fair and other book fairs;
- Memberships in international library associations;
- Networking activities among institutional member-libraries;
- Granting of scholarships and financial assistance to librarians; and
- Outreach programs such as storytelling activities; promote reading habits and the use of library resources.

Librarians in the Philippines

Librarian Licensure Examination (LLE) is a prerequisite in obtaining professional status of Librarians in the country. According to RA 9246, a librarian refers to an individual who is a bona fide holder of a Certificate of Registration and Professional Identification Card issued by the Professional Regulatory Board for Librarians (PRBFL) and by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). Pursuant to Sec. 12 of same law, PRBFL has conducted 23 examinations to date since 1992. With 14, 005 LLE Examinees (1992 – 2014), only **5, 542** examinees have passed and awarded with professional librarian status through examination (Santos, 2003; Totanes, 2008; Philippine Regulation Commission) (See Table 1). This count does not include registered librarians under grandfather's clause or registration without examination.

The subject of this study focuses on young librarians whose age ranges from 20 to 30 years old. Given the data on Table 1 and considering majority of examinees are fresh graduates of BLIS, **2, 654** librarians have successfully passed the examination for the past ten years (2005-

2014). This count may include librarians who were repeaters when they took the examination or holders of the following degrees (Sec. 15, Art. III, RA 9246):

- Bachelor of Science in Education or Elementary Education; or Bachelor of Arts with a major or specialization in Library Science;
- Master of Arts in Library Science or Library and Information Science; or
- Any Masters degree with concentration in Library Science.

Holders of the aforementioned degrees are only allowed to take the examination within five (5) years from the effectivity of the Act which is until March 16, 2009.

The count also includes graduates of Master’s degree in Library and Information Science who may no longer be within the age bracket of the study.

Exam Date	No. of Examinees	Passers	Failed	Passing Rate %
Dec. 1992	342	124	218	36.26
Dec. 1993	28	14	14	50
Dec. 1994	200	101	99	50.5
Dec. 1995	263	136	127	51.71
Dec. 1996	419	186	233	44.39
Dec. 1997	451	245	206	54.32
Dec. 1998	431	217	214	50.35
Dec. 1999	536	295	241	55.04
Nov. 2000	621	331	290	53.3
Nov. 2001	688	351	337	51.02
Nov. 2002	656	344	312	52.439
Nov. 2003	724	370	354	51.105
Nov. 2004	599	174	425	29.048
Nov. 2005	762	240	522	31.496
Nov. 2006	825	303	522	36.727
Nov. 2007	868	278	590	32.028
Nov. 2008	1003	237	766	23.629
Nov. 2009	947	284	663	29.989
Nov. 2010	699	191	508	27.325
Nov. 2011	764	211	553	27.618
Nov. 2012	812	379	433	46.675
Nov. 2013	834	382	452	45.803
Apr. 2014	533	149	384	27.955
TOTAL	14,005	5,542		

Table 1. Librarian Licensure Examination (LLE) Results (1992-2014)

METHODOLOGY

An online survey using Google Forms was used as the instrument to gather data. Over the course of four weeks from December 10, 2014 – January 12, 2015, 82 responses have been recorded. The survey contains preliminary questions (i.e. age, sex and region), and is divided into two parts. Items 1-9 are for undergraduate students only and items 10-23 are for young

professional librarians. Young professionals are those licensed and are between 20 and 30 years old.

Social media sites particularly the presence of Facebook was very useful in gathering data. Since the focus of the study are *millennials* and are moving towards becoming *iGeneration* users, it is better to collect data using this platform. Student organizations and professional associations with Facebook accounts are supportive to the researchers by allowing them to post the online survey form. The online survey form was then shared by the librarians themselves to meet a desirable number of participants from the different regions of the country.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

A total of 82 respondents participated online. 33% (27 respondents) represented the students while 73% (60 respondents) represented the young professionals. 40% were males and 60% were females.

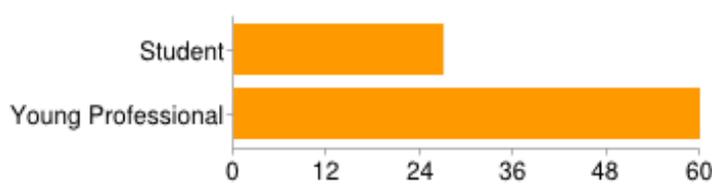


Figure 1. Number of respondents

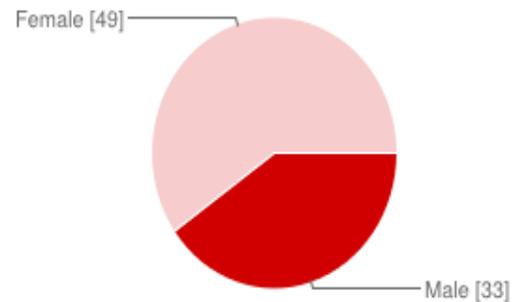


Figure 2. Number of males and females

Based from the table below, three regions were not represented: Regions IV-B, VIII and XIII. The most number of participants came from the National Capital Region (NCR) with 51%, followed by Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) with 10% and Region II (Cagayan Valley) with 10%.

REGION	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
CAR	8	10%
Region I	3	4%
Region II	8	10%
Region III	2	2%
Region IVA	6	7%
Region IVB	0	0%
Region V	2	2%
Region VI	1	1%
Region VII	1	1%
Region VIII	0	0%
Region IX	1	1%

Region X	3	4%
Region XI	2	2%
Region XII	2	2%
Region XIII	0	0%
NCR	42	51%
ARMM	1	1%

Table 2. Representation by Region

Awareness and Perceptions from the Students

Out of the 27 students, only 17% had a course/subject related to Philippine librarianship. From this amount, they may have discussed about professional library associations in one of their classes. The table below indicates the extent of their awareness towards existing professional associations.

Since most of the students have Facebook accounts, learning more about these organizations were a lot easier. Professional library associations have their own Facebook and Twitter accounts too that makes them more reachable to students and professionals. Communication is no more a hindrance. Based from the table below, the top three professional organizations they recognize are the following: Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (40%), Philippine Academic and Research Librarians (39%) and Philippine Association of Teachers of Library Science (33%).

Library Association	Count	Percentage
Agricultural Librarians Association of the Philippines (ALAP)	15	18%
Association of Librarians in the Public Sector, Inc. (ALPSI)	3	4%
Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines (ASLP)	25	30%
Children's Literature Association of the Philippines, Inc. (CLAPI)	11	13%
Court Librarians Association of the Philippines (CLAPHIL)	6	7%
Medical and Health Librarians Association of the Philippines (MAHLAP)	20	24%
Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians (PAARL)	32	39%
Philippine Association of School Librarians Inc (PASLI)	21	26%
Philippine Association of Teachers of Library Science (PATLS)	27	33%
Philippine Group of Law Librarians (PGLL)	9	11%
Philippine Librarians Association Inc (PLAI)	33	40%
Philippine Theological Librarians Association (PTLA)	6	7%
Philippine Society of Librarians and Information Specialists (PSLIS)	3	4%
Society of Filipino Archivists (SFA)	10	12%

Other/s	1	1%
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Table 3. Recognition of Library Associations by the Students (Note: Multiple responses)

Students were also asked about the possible reasons in joining a professional library association. Based from their responses, majority of the students felt that professional development (38%) is the most important aspect they will gain if they join a professional association.

Reasons for joining a professional association	Count	Percentage
Professional development	31	38%
Self-improvement	21	26%
Career assistance	20	25%
Continuing education programs	20	25%
Cooperation and consortia	21	26%
Creates a forum for important issues in the field	18	22%
Promotes library services and programs	18	22%
Sets and sustains values, ethics and standards	17	21%
Stay connected to the field	23	28%
Encourages research and publication	18	22%
Other	0	0%

Table 4. Reasons for joining a professional association (Note: multiple responses)

Awareness and Perceptions of Young Professionals

From the 60 young professionals surveyed, only a few of them could recognize existing professional library associations. The most popular among the associations are the following: Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (27%), Philippine Association of Academic and Research Librarians (21%) and the Association of Special Libraries of the Philippines (11%).

Similarly, they were asked about the reasons for joining a professional association. Just like the students, professional development is the top answer (58%) followed by staying connected to the field (48%).

The young professionals stated their reasons for not joining or renewing their membership with the association. The table below illustrates their answers.

Reasons for not renewing	Count	Percentage
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Expensive membership fees	8	10%
Expensive seminar fees	5	6%
No new ideas	4	5%
Same and repeating programs	7	9%
Unorganized	10	12%
No member benefits	5	6%
Unfamiliar officers	5	6%
Other	8	10%

Table 5. Reasons for not joining / renewing membership (Note: multiple responses)

Unorganized association (12%) would definitely not a good factor when choosing which organization to join. An association charging exorbitant fees is also not worth attending especially when you do not get anything in return as a member (10%). Professional associations with repeating programs (9%) are also not a recommended affair to invest in.

CONCLUSIONS

Certainly, professional associations protect the interest of its members. Professional development is the main reason why prospective LIS practitioners and the practicing young professional librarians chose to be a member of a professional organization. As Goldman (2014) mentioned, professional associations offer greater opportunities for leadership, mentoring and networking with professionals.

Students and young professionals recognize the Philippine Librarian’s Association, Inc. (PLAI) as their main affiliation in the field. This should be the case since it is regarded as the nationally accredited professional organization of librarians to date and serving as the umbrella organization for all library groups in the country.

As highlighted by Berger (2014), professional librarians, whether young or old, would not join an association if the membership and seminar fees are high. However, they will find a suitable professional association for them to keep-up with the times whether this is for self-improvement or professional development.

Fisher (1997) quotes, “membership organizations thrive on the input of their members”. Indeed, the members are the lifeblood of an organization. This imbues a challenge to professional associations to constantly and assiduously communicate and inspire its value to its constituents. This will keep the members active and supportive, and will propel the association’s movement towards its goals and objectives.

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