

What's in librarianship?

Dr Sasekea Harris/Contributor

THIS ARTICLE provides a simplified overview of what is involved in librarianship for the purpose of awareness. As such, it begins with an uncomplicated definition of librarianship, illustrated by a matrix of typical activities of the profession; broad categories of practice and a non-exhaustive list of specialisations for librarians follow; the article ends with a straightforward hierarchy of the profession.

Librarianship is an interdisciplinary profession centred on using universal standards to organise/record the literature of a specific community, for the purpose of posterity, access, management, and use.

SOME BROAD CATEGORIES OF PRACTICE FOR LIBRARIANS INCLUDE:

- University/academic librarian: Tertiary level
- School librarian: Primary/preparatory and secondary levels
- Public library/community librarian: Community level
- National librarian: Country/nationwide level
- Corporate/special librarian: Industry/business/organisations

Within the aforementioned broad categorisations, the following enumerates a non-exhaustive list of specialisations for librarians:

- Teacher librarian/instructional librarian
- User experience (UX) librarian
- Metadata and discovery services librarian (cataloguer)
- Rare books and special collections librarian
- Systems librarian
- Online/web services librarian
- Digital resources librarian
- Acquisitions/collection

- development librarian
- Medical/health librarian
- Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) librarian
- Law librarian
- Humanities and social sciences librarian
- Outreach and engagement librarian
- Entrepreneurial/intrapreneurial librarian
- Data manager/leader
- Library administrator/manager
- EDI engagement librarian
- Digital humanities librarian
- Children/youth/tween/adult services librarian
- Research librarian
- Open scholarship librarian
- Reference librarian
- Genealogy services librarian
- Knowledge service manager

Not everyone working in a library is a librarian. Librarians usually have a bachelor's degree in library & information studies (LIS). University librarians typically hold a master's degree in LIS.

Within the Caribbean, the Department of Library & Information Studies, The UWI, Mona, is the chief recognised/accredited trainer of librarians, from the baccalaureate through to doctoral level. Librarianship is a clandestinely rewarding profession on many levels.

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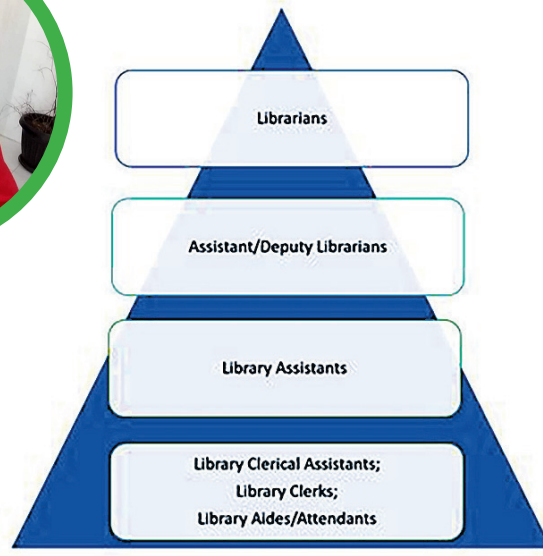


Fig 2. Librarianship Hierarchy (Simplified)

Public Service	Technical Service	Administration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource/information discovery & access • information / knowledge management • research support • literature search/reviews • research document preparation/review • bibliometrics • reference (citation) management • exhibition/displays • customer service • events planning • social media management • public relations management • networking • marketing and promotion • advocacy • outreach and engagement • scholarly communication • public speaking • presentations • scholarship and publishing • teaching and training • information literacy • digital literacy • readers advisory • Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) • Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resource description using metadata standards • subject analysis and assignment of subject headings using cataloging standards/codes • data entry using bibliographic framework & standards • assignment of classification number using a classification scheme • abstracting & indexing • ICT: automation, manual/digital preservation, web development, digital access • digitization, digitalization & digital transformation • Digital Humanities (DH) • digital rights management • licensing and access management • graphic design • collection assessment and development • Open Educational Resource (OER) management • electronic resources management • conservation and preservation • disaster management • procurement • reprographics • IP & copyright advisory/management • data curation • data management • records management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • human resource management: evaluation & assessment • business administration • operations management • property management • strategic planning • space planning/design • financial literacy, planning & management • entrepreneurship/intrapreneurship • fundraising • change management • sustainable development • writing: minute taking, report writing, proposal writing, grant writing, editorial • project management • conflict management • team building

Table 1 What's in Librarianship (Simplified & Non-exhaustive)

Transforming libraries: The impact of AI

LIBRARIES HAVE been an enduring symbol of knowledge preservation and dissemination, but the landscape of these institutions is evolving rapidly. In the digital age, libraries are embracing artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance their services, streamline operations, and offer an enriched user experience. This transformation is a testament to the adaptability and resilience of libraries, ensuring they remain relevant in an ever-changing world.

One of the most significant applications of AI in libraries is in cataloguing and data management. AI-powered algorithms can efficiently categorise and tag materials, making it easier for librarians and patrons to locate resources. This reduces the burden on library staff, allowing them to focus on more complex tasks such as curating collections or providing personalised assistance to patrons.

AI-driven recommendation systems have also become invaluable tools. These systems analyse user preferences, borrowing history, and reading patterns to offer tailored suggestions, much like popular streaming services. For librarians, this means offering a more personalised service, fostering engagement, and helping patrons discover hidden gems within the library's vast collection.

Moreover, chatbots and virtual assistants have revolutionised patron interactions. AI-driven chatbots can answer routine inquiries, guide users in using digital resources, and provide assistance around the clock. This not only enhances user satisfaction but also enables librarians to dedicate more time to assisting with research and complex information needs.

The integration of AI in libraries also extends to data analytics. AI tools can mine vast amounts of data to identify trends, usage patterns, and areas for improvement. This data-driven decision-making empowers librarians to allocate resources more effectively, curate collections based on user demand, and improve services.

In conclusion, AI is reshaping libraries in fundamental ways, offering librarians powerful tools to enhance user experiences and streamline library operations. By embracing artificial intelligence, libraries are not just preserving their legacy, but they are also ensuring their continued relevance in an increasingly digital and data-centric world. Librarians, as the gatekeepers of knowledge, play a pivotal role in harnessing the potential of AI to create the libraries of the future.

Ruth Baker-Gardner

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