Chapter 8

Educating Caribbean Librarians to Provide Library Education in a Dynamic Information Environment

Ruth Baker-Gardner
University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Paulette Stewart
University of the West Indies, Jamaica

ABSTRACT

The dynamism of the information sector driven by ICT and the resulting impact on library and information science professionals have resulted in significant changes in how teaching librarians in the Caribbean are educated. This research was conducted to: describe the education of teaching librarians; examine the changes in education; and investigate how teaching librarians develop and hone their teaching competencies. A mixed-method approach was used to garner quantitative data from 45 librarians and qualitative data from relevant documents in two library schools. The findings show there were significant changes as new courses and programs were developed, online programs were implemented and faculty qualifications upgraded. These changes were somewhat effective, however, teacher-librarians, who developed teaching skills mainly from teacher training, expressed a need for additional technology skills to make them more effective. It was recommended that LIS schools need to diversify their programs to make the content and the activities more aligned to the day to day practices of these teacher librarians.
INTRODUCTION

There are a variety of tertiary level institutions in the Caribbean offering various types of professional and technical education and training including two which provide library education. Standing at the peak of this structure is The University of the West Indies (The UWI), a regional institution with three physical campuses located in Trinidad, Jamaica, and Barbados and an open or virtual campus. The UWI is partially funded by government allocations from “contributing countries.” These are Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago (The University of the West Indies, 2016). This institution provides undergraduate and graduate degrees in Library and Information Science (LIS) education for the region and over the years has trained personnel from all the territories mentioned previously. The Mico University College, with almost two centuries of teacher training expertise provides specialised training at both the undergraduate and graduate level to personnel for the education section, including teacher-librarians.

The rigors of tertiary education require that institutions provide their students with access to resources and this is usually accomplished through institutional libraries. Librarians are a very important part of this education landscape as they are the individuals who assist learners at all levels to locate, identify, select, and obtain the resources that are critical to their educational success. Caribbean librarians, like their counterparts worldwide, are faced with the challenge of remaining relevant in a shifting information environment where other information workers such as information technology personnel seem capable of performing some tasks normally associated with this profession. One way of ensuring that librarians remain relevant is to provide them with the education that will ensure that they understand their roles and possess the skills necessary to execute these roles effectively. Systems also need to be in place to ensure that library training institutions and library associations offer these individuals ongoing professional development that will help them to continue to remain relevant in this dynamic information environment. Teaching librarians, known as the teacher-librarians at the primary and secondary levels and instruction librarians in the academic setting, occupy a very privileged position as they have the potential to impact a number of individuals. This chapter therefore sets out to:

- Describe the training provided to teaching librarians by library training institutions;
- Examine the changes that have occurred in the content, methods of delivery, and qualifications for library educators in the region;
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