

Uganda Library and Information Association

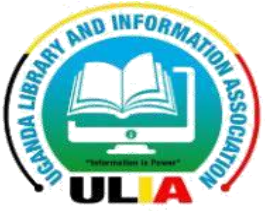
Libraries as Academic & Scientific Pillars of Higher Education

The Transformative Role of Academic Libraries and the Case for Recognizing Librarians as Academic Staff

A Call for Collaboration, Innovation, and Equity

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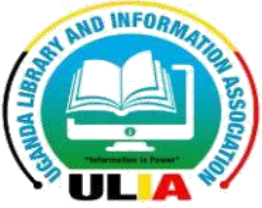


Introduction

Libraries are not just repositories of books—they are dynamic hubs of knowledge creation, curation, and dissemination. Today, we explore their historical roots, scientific legitimacy, and indispensable role in academia

Structure:

- a) Historical Evolution of Libraries
- b) Library Associations: A Global and Local Perspective
- c) ULIA's Mission and Vision
- d) LIS as a Science and Discipline
- e) Challenges and Solutions
- f) Call to Action



Historical Evolution of Libraries

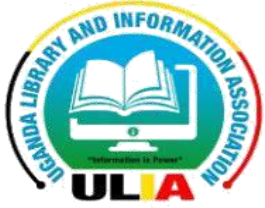
Ancient to Modern:

- 3000 BCE: Clay tablets in Mesopotamia.
- 300 BCE: Library of Alexandria as a prototype for academic libraries.
- 19th Century: Rise of university libraries supporting research (e.g., Harvard, Oxford).
- 21st Century: Digital repositories, AI-driven cataloging, and open-access platforms.

Academic Libraries in Uganda:

- Makerere University Library (1922): A cornerstone of East African scholarship.
- Modern Trends: E-resources, research data management, and institutional repositories, & now open -access/ science

“Libraries are the DNA of academia—they encode the past, present, and future of knowledge.”

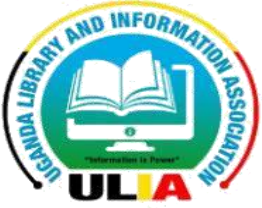


ULIA's Mission and Vision

Founded in 1973, ULIA has served as the unifying voice for library professionals for over five decades.

Vision: A dynamic and innovative library and information group that drives Uganda's development agenda.

Mission: To unite, advocate for, and empower professionals and institutions to deliver transformative services through collaboration, education, and innovation.

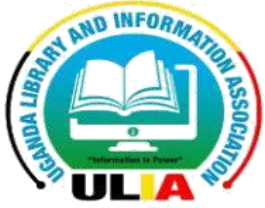


LIS as a Science and Discipline

Why Librarians Are Academic/Scientific Staff:

- Scientific Inquiry: LIS applies research, experimentation, and peer-reviewed methodologies (Buckland, 2012). Example: S.R. Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science underpin modern cataloging.
- Multidisciplinary Rigor: Integrates computer science, education, and social sciences (Saracevic, 1992).
- Societal Impact: Libraries address literacy, misinformation, and digital equity (IFLA, 2023).

“LIS is not a tool—it is a discipline defined by its object of study: information in service of humanity.” (Capurro & Hjørland, 2003)”



Role of Librarians in Curriculum Development, Revision, and Delivery

1. Curriculum Design:

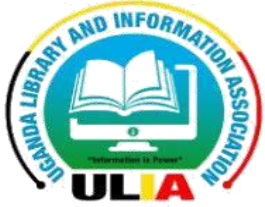
- Librarians co-develop programmes – disciplinary-based information literacy.
- **Example:** Busitema University - <https://library.busitema.ac.ug/library-services/information-literacy-instruction>

2. Resource Alignment:

- Curate Open Educational Resources (OERs) to reduce textbook costs.

3. Quality Assurance:

- Ensure alignment of library collections with evolving academic programs (NCHE standards).



Librarian-Lecturer Collaborations

1. Co-Creation of Teaching Materials:

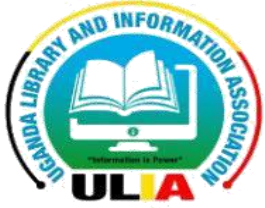
- Joint development of e-learning modules and interactive subject guides.
<http://researchguides.busitema.ac.ug/subjects/index.php>

2. Subject Guides & E-Reserves:

- Customized guides for courses
<https://researchguides.busitema.ac.ug/subjects/section-Course-Guide.php>
- Electronic reserves streamline access to high-demand articles
<https://libcat.busitema.ac.ug/cgi-bin/koha/opac-course-reserves.pl>

3. Tools and handouts – and IF Assignments

- Tools and handouts/ Manuals: <https://library.busitema.ac.ug/library-services/information-literacy-instruction/tools-and-handouts>
- IF Assignments: <https://library.busitema.ac.ug/library-services/information-literacy-instruction/assignments>



Digital Tools Enhancing Teaching

1. Library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalog)

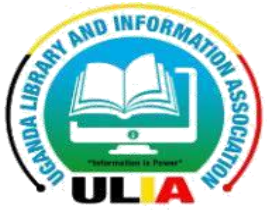
- AI-driven search algorithms improve resource discovery – **Chat Ref.**
- 24/7 access to digital collections boosts remote learning - **SemperTool.**

2. Institutional Repositories and DataCites' Dols:

- Host faculty publications, theses, and datasets - BU.
<https://bdears.busitema.ac.ug/home>

3. Contribution to Webometrics:

- Librarians enhance university rankings through metadata optimization and open-access compliance..



Challenges Facing the LIS Profession

1. Limited recognition see libraries sidelined in budgets, undermining their role in education and research;

2. Underfunding:

- Libraries receive <1% of university budgets (NCHE, 2023);
- Under-resourced digital infrastructure (e.g., outdated OPAC systems).

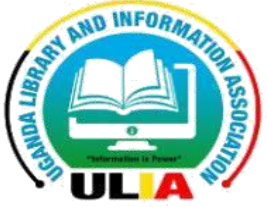
3. Employment Concerns:

- Job ads requiring non-LIS qualifications (e.g., IT degrees for librarian roles).
- Lack of academic recognition (misclassification as “support staff” Vs Participatory).
- Workforce gaps persist due to delayed career development at PhD level and this has left a very big gap for positions of University Librarians;

4. Workforce Shortages:

- Experiencing the challenge of aging professionals and insufficient succession plans, risking institutional memory loss – LIS Schools;

Data: 100% of Ugandan university libraries lack dedicated digital archivists (ULIA, 2024).



Distinction Between LIS and Computer Science

Key Differences:

Library & Information Science

Computer Science

Focus: Content curation, metadata, and ethical access.

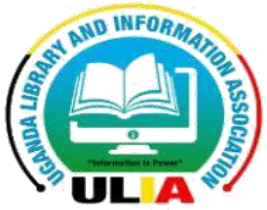
Focus: System design, coding, and algorithms.

Example: Designing a taxonomy for indigenous knowledge.

Example: Building a database management system.

“LIS answers ‘what’ and ‘why’” – Buckland (2012)

CS answers ‘how’.” – Buckland (2012)



Emerging Technologies and Librarians' Role

Key Technologies:

1. AI & Machine Learning:

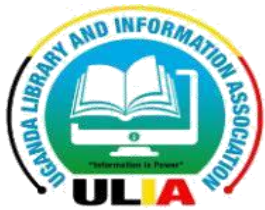
- Automate cataloging and predictive analytics for collection development;

1. Blockchain:

- Secure digital rights management for e-resources.
- Example: BU reduced textbook costs by over 60% using AI-driven OER platforms
- BU use of Gen-AI for Chat Reference/ Ask a Librarian

3. IoT in Libraries:

- Smart shelves and RFID for inventory management.
- BU & Mak use of RFID for security gates and Book Security



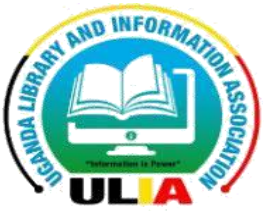
Librarians as Active Academic Participants

Teaching & Learning:

- Information Literacy: Librarians train students in critical thinking and research ethics.
- Disciplinary-based information literacy – BU
- Curriculum development and Review
- Curriculum Support & delivery: E-resources and OERs reduce textbook costs (ALA, 2022).
- Deliver credit-bearing courses on information literacy e.g. Mak's Info Competence

Research & Innovation:

- Data Management: Librarians curate datasets for reproducibility (AARL Report, 2021).
- Open Access: Institutional repositories increase citations by 40% (EiFL, 2024).
- Co-author studies, manage meta-search, Datasets repositories, IRs



Librarians as Active Academic Participants

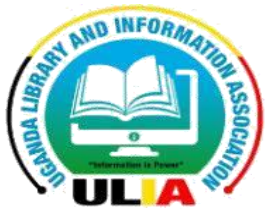
Innovation & Commercialization:

- Support patent searches, registration, policy formulation (OA & IR - for BU) and industry partnerships

Case Study:

- Busitema University: IR records stand at over 5,000 records
- Research in Africa: Librarians co-authored 15% of 2023 research outputs.
- Institutional Repositories: Only 6 Universities have active IRs

“Librarians are the Swiss Army knives of academia—versatile, indispensable, and always sharp.”



Digitalization as a Solution to Staff Shortages

Key Strategies:

1. Automate Routine Tasks:

- Self-checkout systems, Gen-AI for FAQs via Chat Reference.
- Electronic reserves – Rare books & increased access
- Subject/ Course guides – increased access to subject-specific collections
- Online public access catalogue – self-service info retrieval

2. Centralized Digital Repositories:

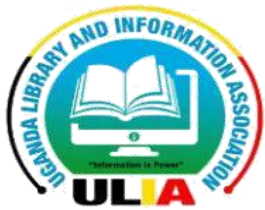
- Reduce duplication of effort across departments.
- Visibility and webometrics

3. Virtual Collaboration:

- Cross-institutional resource sharing – Union catalogue for reciprocal borrowing
- Collective collection development and management – shared cataloguing – OCLC U.S.
- Interlibrary loaning – similar to collective e-resources financing – CUUL
- Cost effectiveness – training and continuous education – mentorship

Impact:

- 40% reduction in manual workloads at Busitema University (Survey, 2024).

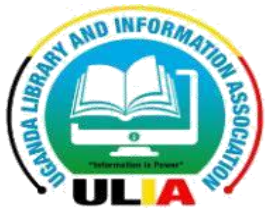


ULIA's Proposal

Need to adhere to:

- a) Professional Standards in Job Advertisements
- b) Promote Awareness of Library and Information Science as a Distinct Discipline
- c) Strengthen the Academic Status of Library Professionals
- d) Implement the Single-Spine Career Growth Model
- e) Engage in Dialogue with Stakeholders
- f) Advocate for Policy Revisions
- g) Support Continuous Professional Development
- h) Raise the Profile of Libraries in Academic Institutions

By implementing these recommendations, Universities shall strengthen the role of library and information professionals, improve the status of the profession, and enhance the overall quality of library services in Uganda.



Our Prayer

1. Advocate for vital policy changes
2. Align qualification requirements for library positions with the standards of library and information science
3. VCs should be champions of the proposed changes
4. Brokerage audience with Senate and Council for information sharing