



Uganda Library and Information Association

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Office of the ULIA President

Speech by the President of the Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA) Delivered at the 24th Consortium of Uganda University Libraries Annual General Meeting, Uganda Management Institute (UMI), Kampala | February 14, 2025

Greetings and Acknowledgments

Heads Librarians, dedicated library staff, colleagues, and partners,

Good morning!

It is an honor to stand before you today at this gathering as the ULIA President – at the last CUUL AGM, I was here with you as a Colleague – I thank you for entrusting this very important office to me.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries for hosting us and to each of you for your unwavering commitment to advancing our noble profession. Together, we are custodians of knowledge, and today, we reaffirm our shared mission to elevate libraries as pillars of Uganda’s development.

Background: ULIA’s Vision and Mission

Founded in 1973, the Uganda Library and Information Association (ULIA) has served as the unifying voice for library professionals for over five decades. We strive to be **“A dynamic and innovative library and information group that drives Uganda’s development agenda.”** This we shall achieve through **uniting, advocating for, and empowering professionals and institutions to deliver transformative services through collaboration, education, and innovation.**

ULIA's journey mirrors global trends. Like the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), which champions libraries as engines of sustainable development, ULIA aligns with global standards while addressing Uganda's unique needs. We draw inspiration from the African Library and Information Associations (AfLIA), which emphasizes Pan-African collaboration, and the Ghana Library Association, whose membership drives have grown through grassroots advocacy.

II. The Distinct Nature of Library and Information Science (LIS)

LIS is not merely a profession—it is a discipline rooted in curation, access, and preservation. Unlike IT, which focuses on systems, LIS bridges knowledge and community. As the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP-UK) notes, our work demands expertise in metadata, ethical stewardship, and intellectual freedom.

Consider the Kenya Library Association, which partners with universities – specifically LIS Schools to **align LIS curricula with digital trends**. Similarly, ULIA advocates for curriculum reforms in Ugandan LIS schools. We must integrate emerging fields like data science/ governance, open-access, AI literacy, and indigenous knowledge preservation to prepare professionals for 21st-century challenges. [*Internships/ mentorships at the information centers – the only place to get hands-on experiences*]

III. Growing ULIA Membership: Libraries as Catalysts

Libraries, archives, and registries are not just institutions—they are the heartbeat of ULIA's membership. **Examples** - The Library and Information Association of **South Africa** (LIASA) grew its base by engaging rural libraries and archives. Let us emulate this!

Heads of Libraries, you are ULIA's ambassadors. Promote membership in your libraries, and collaborate with registries & archival institutions like the National Archives of Uganda & Local Governments in our regions to showcase ULIA's value. Let us build a network as robust as the Consortium of Uganda University Libraries (CUUL), which connects over 100 institutions for resource sharing.

IV. Advocacy: Libraries as Change Agents

Advocacy begins with us. The American Library Association (ALA) transformed U.S. libraries into community hubs through relentless lobbying. Likewise, head librarians must champion our cause to policymakers [*Top managers – VCs, University Council, Ministries, all management positions*], aligning with Uganda's National Development Plan IV, which prioritizes education and ICT.

V. Upholding Ethics and Integrity

Professionalism is our compass. The IFLA Code of Ethics urges transparency, equity, and intellectual freedom. In Uganda, ULIA's Ethical Guidelines align with these principles. Let us learn from the Nigerian Library Association, which combats misinformation through librarian-led media literacy workshops.

Heads of Libraries, lead by example. Mentor junior staff, enforce anti-plagiarism policies, and advocate for fair copyright laws – and this is our profession. As the **Catholic Library Association** emphasizes, **ethics are the bedrock of trust in our institutions**.

VI. Current Challenges and Collective Solutions

A. Challenges

The library profession in Uganda faces three critical hurdles:

- i) Outdated curricula in Library and Information Science (LIS) programs fail to address digital trends like AI and data governance, leaving graduates unprepared for modern demands.
- ii) Limited recognition sees libraries in Uganda sidelined in national budgets, undermining their role in education and research.
- iii) Workforce gaps persist due to delayed career development at PhD level and this has left a very big gap for positions of University Librarians – as well we are soon experiencing the challenge of aging professionals and insufficient succession plans, risking institutional memory loss – *lets pay attention to our LIS schools*.

These challenges mirror global issues:

- The Botswana Library Association similarly struggled with curriculum relevance, while
- Zimbabwe's libraries faced underfunding.

Addressing these challenges requires urgent collaboration to align LIS training, advocacy, and youth engagement with 21st-century needs.

B. Solutions

To counter these challenges, ULIA proposes actionable strategies.

- a) Curriculum reform, inspired by Botswana's integration of AI and open-access publishing, will modernize LIS education. We need to rethink all LIS curricular to introduce a course on **Professional Skills in Information Science**

Professional Skills in Information Science - the course will provide in-depth career exploration and skill development; focusing on connecting students with various speakers and concepts, the topics aim to help students build a strong foundation of essential skills and knowledge in information science. This course will help prepare students for experiential learning courses and internships, including building a strong foundation of LIS history

- b) Advocacy coalitions, modeled after Zimbabwe's successful lobbying for budget increases - which lobbied for a 20% budget increase through parliamentary engagement, can amplify our voice in policymaking – **Identifying ULIA Patron.**
- c) LIS students' engagement programs, akin to the Private Sector Foundation Uganda's Work Readiness Programme SG+ mentorship initiatives, will attract Gen-Z talent through internships and leadership pathways.
- d) I urge Heads of libraries to allocate staff time for ULIA activities, host skill-building workshops, and nominate emerging leaders – **I wish to recongnise the Visionary of Prof. Maria GN Musoke, the Late Prof. IMG Kigongo-Bukenya, Prof Abidi, Prof. Ikonja Odongo, and many others.** These steps, combined with global best practices, will foster a resilient, future-ready workforce and secure libraries' relevance in Uganda's development agenda.

1. Heads of Libraries: Key Roles - Actions for Heads of Libraries

Library leaders are pivotal in driving ULIA's agenda – [**Head Librarians – how you can support ULIA moving forward**].

1. Allocating staff time for ULIA activities, institutions can foster professional collaboration and knowledge exchange. For example,
 - Hosting ULIA workshops on advocacy and digital skills - like metadata management or AI tools—equips teams to innovate and align with global standards.
 - Nominating rising stars for ULIA leadership roles ensures fresh perspectives and sustainable succession planning. For example, the Consortium of European Research Libraries thrives by empowering young professionals. Such efforts mirror Kenya's mentorship programs, which revitalized library services. Proactive leadership will bridge workforce gaps, amplify advocacy, and position libraries as dynamic partners in national development.

2. ULIA's Resources for Collaboration and Growth - ULIA's Offerings

- a) ULIA empowers members through strategic resources – we are working on the ULIA Framework for Strategic Action 2025- 2026 – **thankful to all those that participated in our concluded information gathering sessions.**
- b) Training grants, funded via partnerships with IFLA and AfLIA, enable access to global workshops.
- c) Research fellowships to support Ugandan librarians in publishing impactful studies. We are working on a New digital portal, to facilitate resource sharing, connecting rural and urban libraries. These initiatives, aim to strengthen capacity, innovation, and inclusivity across Uganda's library sector.

3. Global Lessons, Local Action - Global Inspiration

International peers demonstrate how boldness drives progress.

- i. The Australian Library and Information Association champions climate advocacy, curating eco-resources and hosting community dialogues.
- ii. Sweden's libraries lead in **Inclusivity and Diversity**, creating safe spaces and diverse collections.
- iii. Similarly, the Seminar on Latin American Library Materials (SALALM) reshaped libraries as active social movements.

