

FIFTY YEARS OF LIBRARY LITERATURE ON GHANA: A BIBLIOMETRIC STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of the structure and bibliographic control of the literature on librarianship in Ghana during the period 1950-2000. Areas covered include number of publications by decade; format of publications; the major subjects covered; the most popular journals of publication; and the extent of usage of non-library science journals. The findings indicate among others, that the Ghana Library Journal has contributed immensely to library literature on Ghana. Implications of the study are also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

According to Afolabi (1976), the only way in which a better understanding of a subject field can be gained is through a detailed analysis of its elements. A thorough study of the literature of a subject enables a deeper understanding and insight to be gained into that subject. This is commonly referred to as Bibliometrics.

Bibliometric research has proved useful in guiding library practice in several ways. Particularly valuable have been the implications of bibliometric studies on the research and publication patterns of library and information science researchers.

Bibliometric studies have helped in identifying areas of weakness and providing new insights in research and publications, so as to build on a solid foundation of past research (White and McCain, 1989). When properly used, bibliometrics can also contribute greatly to collection development activities of various libraries.

Librarianship in Ghana is barely fifty years now. Ghana has come a long way since the UNESCO Seminar on the Development of Library Services in 1953. Since then, several libraries have been established in the country and a number of librarians have been trained locally and overseas. This in turn, also means that a lot of publications on librarianship in Ghana have been produced. Yet there has never been a comprehensive study on the literature of librarianship in Ghana. This paper aims at bridging this gap.

METHODOLOGY

The method adopted in analysing the cumulative literary output on librarianship in Ghana is similar to that used by Afolabi (1976), in his investigation. It involves the use of bibliographies on library literature in

Ghana covering the periods 1950-2000. These bibliographies have been published separately by Alemna (1992a); (1992b); (1993); (1998); and (2001).

In all, there were 367 publications during the period. The entries were analysed by year and then cumulated into a decade. The analysis took the form of number of publications; format of publications; subjects covered; most popular journals; and the extent of usage of non-library science journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Number of Publications

The analysis revealed that during the fifty-year period, a total of 367 publications were produced by librarians in Ghana. As shown in Table 1, the number of publications increased progressively from one decade to the other. The least number of publications (28) was recorded in 1950-1959, and the highest (126) recorded in 1990-2000.

The increase in the number of publications may simply be attributed to the increase in the number of libraries and librarians in the country. The Ghana Library Association which started in 1962 with a membership of about twenty librarians, can now boast of about one hundred professional members. Also, the "publish or perish" syndrome especially with regards to those in the Library School and the Academic Libraries has contributed to the increase in research and publications.

TABLE 1
Number of Publications

<i>Decade</i>	<i>Number of Publications</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
1950-1959	28	7.6
1960-1969	45	12.3
1970-1979	80	21.8
1980-1989	88	24.0
1990-2000	126	34.3
Total	367	100.0

FORMAT OF PUBLICATIONS

The study also shows that authors of Ghana's library literature make use of varied forms of publications (Table 2). As is the case in other bibliometric studies on library and information literature, serials accounted for more than half of the total number of formats with 61.3%. This was followed by thesis, which constituted 16.9% and books making up 10.9%. It is interesting to note that there were more thesis on library and information studies by Ghanaians from overseas universities than those produced in the country.

MAJOR SUBJECTS COVERED

Using the subject categorisation method, the writers divided the various titles into broad subject groups in order to determine the major subjects covered in the literature on librarianship in Ghana during the period 1950-2000. Each publication was classified under only one topic. An article dealing with more than one topic was classified only under the main topic. As indicated in Table 3, General Librarianship was the most

TABLE 2
Format of Publications

Format	Number Recorded	Percentage
Serial Literature	225	61.3
Thesis	62	16.9
Books	40	10.9
Proceedings	32	8.7
Occasional Papers	5	1.4
Reports	3	0.8
Total	367	100.0

widely discussed topic. This was followed by Academic Librarianship and Library Education respectively.

However, the results of the study also show that for the past decade (1990-2000), more librarians in Ghana are getting interested in publishing papers in newer areas such as Information Technology and Interlending and Document Supply.

TABLE 3
Major Subjects Covered

Rank	Subject
1	General Librarianship
2	Academic Libraries
3	Library Education
4	Collection Development
5	Library Cooperation
6	Bibliographies
7	School Libraries
8	Information Technology
9	Publishing and the Booktrade
10	Special Libraries

MOST POPULAR JOURNALS

An attempt to find out which journals were most popular with librarians in

Ghana during the fifty years under study, revealed some interesting developments. For example, it was clear that despite the irregular publication of the *Ghana Library Journal*, it recorded the highest number of publications (Table 4).

Another noteworthy observation was the predominance of *WALA News* and *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*, during the first decade - 1950-1959. It might be presumed that but for the fact that these journals are no longer in circulation, they would have recorded more papers from Ghana.

Then also is the impact of *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science* on librarianship in Ghana. This journal was established in 1991. To be listed among the top ten most popular journals, despite its tender age, is therefore commendable.

NON-LIBRARY SCIENCE JOURNALS

The writers also set out to investigate which non-library science journals attracted papers from librarians in Ghana. As indicated in Table 5 below, *Ghana Book World* was highest on the list, followed by the *Journal of University of Science and Technology*, and *Ghana Teachers Journal*.

It may be pertinent to mention here that while the period 1975-1985 was very unfavourable for the *Ghana Library Journal*, this incidentally was the peak period for the *Ghana Book World*. Several issues of the journal were produced at this time. Therefore librarians in Ghana who had papers

TABLE 4
Top Ten Most Popular Journals

Rank	Journal	No. of papers	Country
1	Ghana Library Journal	48	Ghana
2	Int. Info. and Lib. Review	13	U.K
3	Aslib Proceedings	13	U.K
4	Libri	11	Denmark
5	WALA News	10	Nigeria
6	Information Development	9	U.K.
7	Unesco Bulletin for Libraries	8	France
8	African Journal of Lib. Arch. & Inf. Sci.	8	Nigeria
9	African Res. and Documentatio	7	U.K.
10	Education for Information	6	Netherlands

relating to the book industry found an easy outlet for publication.

With regards to the *Journal of University of Science and Technology*, its multidisciplinary nature makes it attractive to research papers in library and information science.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study offers various implications to the cumulative knowledge of library literature on Ghana. These may be summarised as follows:

1. The Ghana Library Association should endeavour to continuously sustain the production of the *Ghana Library Journal*. The journal must also be

indexed and abstracted by various international indexing and abstracting services.

2. The low number of thesis produced in Ghana should be a cause for concern by the Department of Information Studies, University of Ghana.
3. The ranked list of journals analysed for this study should be a useful selection tool in journal acquisition on librarianship in Ghana.
4. Librarians in Ghana have to move from issues on general librarianship into newer areas such as marketing of library services and products; and information

TABLE 5
Top Five Non-Library Science Journals

Rank	Journal	No. of papers	Country
1	Ghana Book World	9	Ghana
2	Jnl. of Univ. of Science & Technology	5	Ghana
3	Ghana Teachers Journal	4	Ghana
4	Greenhill Journal of Administration	3	Ghana
5	The LECIA Bulletin	2	Ghana

repackaging.

5. Efforts should be made to publish conference proceedings, as evidence from the study shows a limited use of this format by librarians in Ghana.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the growth of library literature on Ghana is related to the increasing growth of libraries and librarianship in Ghana. Literature production in a subject field is thus a useful parameter for measuring the growth of that subject. It is therefore hoped that as more librarians are produced in the country, there would be more research and publications in library literature on Ghana.

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