

# Continuing Professional Development and Institutional Support for Academic Librarians in Botswana

**Neo Patricia Mooko and Olugbade Oladokun**

*Department of Library and Information Studies  
University of Botswana  
mookonp@ub.ac.bw  
oladokun@ub.ac.bw*

## Abstract

*Among other benefits, continuing professional development (CPD) is an adventure to keep current with developments in the profession and be reskilled for challenges that may rear up in the industry. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the kinds of CPD activities that academic librarians in Botswana are involved in; examine different ways in which academic institutions support CPD activities; investigate the perceived impact of CPD activities and challenges faced by the academic librarians in their endeavor to keep abreast with developments in the profession. A survey design with a questionnaire was used to assess continuing professional development (CPD) and institutional support amongst academic librarians in both public and private tertiary institutions in Botswana. A total of 188 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 116 copies were returned. Responses point to an environment with minimal management support for CPD. The findings revealed that academic librarians mainly participate in conferences (52.9%), workshops and in-house training. There is very limited external training. A total of 43 (37%) respondents stated that their employers support them in terms of 'paid time to attend' to attend training or conferences. This means that respondents are paid their usual salary while attending training. Twenty-nine (25%) respondents stated that they received support in*

*terms of travel expenses being paid by the employer. Whilst librarians decry a lack of mentoring and funding for CPD, management is of the view that the staff did not make the best use of CPD opportunities availed to them. The paper provide some useful recommendations.*

**Keywords:** *Continuing Professional Development, Botswana, Academic Librarians, Lifelong Learning*

## Introduction

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) can be viewed as a lifelong process of active participation by professionals in learning activities. It can be offered in order for staff to acquire new skills that are needed for a particular workplace, and to keep abreast with workplace developments or changes in job descriptions. According to Maesaroh and Genoni (2010), CPD is of importance in developing countries because of rapid workplace change due to higher rate of uptake of new technologies and the need to close the development and technology gap. Maesaroh and Genoni (2010) also argued that the developing concept of "professionalism" as library and information workers view their occupation as a career rather than a job portend CPD as significant.

CPD is essential for developing and maintaining continuing competence, enhancing professional practice and supporting achievement of career goals. CPD therefore can be viewed as a further study undertaken during employment by a trained librarian sometimes at the initiative of the employer or on a voluntary basis. It benefits both the employees and the organisations in various ways in the bid to attain organisational goals. CPD is important in the sense that it prepares librarians for new developments and challenges that may befall the organisations and end

users they support.

In view of the fact that higher education institutions (HEIs) play an important role in the socio-economic development of their country by producing doctors, engineers, lawyers, religious scholars and economists to serve the country through greater knowledge creation and implementation (Blass and Hayword, 2014), they are expected to be alive to global developments. Libraries in these institutions, otherwise known as academic libraries, especially in developing countries like Botswana make significant contribution to attaining the goals of the parent institutions. Unfortunately, most, if not all, of these libraries face the challenge of planning for CPD in terms of development of policy and budget allocation. The foregoing will usher in an environment where by the CPD is implemented in a planned approach as opposed to informal tactic. Anwar and Al-Ansari (2002) investigated the continuing professional development practices of 15 publicly funded academic libraries in the Gulf States. They reported that there was a “general lack of a systematic programme for CPD in the participating libraries to the extent that 12 of the 13 libraries do not have a written staff development policy”. The presence of CPD policy is an indication of the institution’s commitment to continuing staff development. The need for planning for CPD by higher education institutions, including their libraries cannot therefore be over emphasised.

Lamptey and Corletey (2011) see CPD as the means by which members of professional associations maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge and skills and develop the personal qualities required in their professional lives. By participating in the programmes and activities of the professional association, one is taking a conscious step in updating professional knowledge and improving professional competencies in their working lifetime. As one participates in the CPD scheme or plan, one is showing a commitment to his professional growth and the need for the individual librarians to upskill themselves of new development. Keeping one’s professional skills up to date and being abreast of new and changing technologies not only benefits professionals, but also gives the employer a staff member with expansive skills and experience (Broady-Preston 2009).

## The Problem

Investment in learning and development for academic librarians has a positive impact on the academic institutions, the learners, the teaching staff and the quality of services rendered. One view is that the responsibility for CPD lies with the professional association (Wood, 1999). Another view is that the organisation for which the academic librarians works for must take the responsibility for CPD. A third view is that the academic librarians themselves must individually take responsibility for CPD (Blair 2000) and the last view pushes for a co-operation between the different stakeholders in the pursuit of CPD. The sentiment that librarians need to be encouraged to enhance their educational and professional qualifications is shared by Kont and Jantson (2015).

It appears it is not smooth sailing for respondents. At the individual level, the key factors appear to be awareness and understanding of CPD, conflicting demands on time, the availability of funding, and access to CPD resources (Hemmington, 2000; Corcoran and McGuinness, 2014;; Moonsar and Underwood, 2018). At the level of the organisation, CPD is affected by organisational strategy and the commitment of top management.

The study therefore sought to investigate whether the academic librarians in Botswana are in an enabling environment that would lend itself easily to CPD and workplace learning. Furthermore, the study also attempts to ascertain librarians’ individual role in participating in CPD initiatives.

## Objectives

The study aimed to:

1. Ascertain the kinds of continuing professional development activities that academic librarians in Botswana are involved in
2. Examine different ways in which academic institutions support academic librarians in Botswana
3. Investigate the perceived impact of the provided continuing professional development activities by academic librarians
4. Establish Challenges faced by the academic

librarians in their endeavour to keep abreast with developments in their profession.

### Literature Review

Continuing professional development activities vary across organisations. This is because institutions tend to participate in activities that are considered to be within their mandate and are essential to them (Alawadhi, 2015). Continuing professional development activities can probably be perceived in formal and informal activities. Formal activities include publications of papers, taking of formal courses, attending meetings, conferences and having professional talks. On the other hand, informal activities include networking, reading online information, online communication and group discussions (München, 2005). Similar to the above perception, Namaganda, (2019) opines that there are traditional and non-traditional CPD activities. In his study in Uganda public libraries, evidence shows that librarians participated in traditional activities such as workshops and conferences which are the most dominant. Others participated in non-traditional activities such as taking online courses, and self-paced learning (Namaganda, 2018). He criticises the reluctance of librarians in taking up technology related training.

Saliu, Igiamah and Hamsetu, (2014) found out that most library professionals in Nigeria participate in CPD activities, reporting over 90% of professionals participating in conferences and workshops. Other activities they participate in include networking (21%), group meetings (35%) and mentoring (21%). Similar results are also reflected through a survey of Uganda public libraries by Namaganda, (2019) who agrees that professionals participate in workshops and conferences in large numbers compared to all other activities.

Furthermore Aslam (2019) also shares that professionals participate in CPD activities through social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. It is through these platforms that professionals meet each other and in the process exchange knowledge and skills aligned to their professions. These findings are consistent with Chang and Hosein, (2019) who claim that participation in CPD activities is much easier because technology has made it interesting and easy.

Be that as it may, the literature has documented cases in which librarians do not fully participate in CPD activities despite having said that management is supportive of CPD. For instance, in the study undertaken at the Durban University by Moonsar and Underwood (2018), it was interestingly observed that 50% of the respondents felt that CPD should be enforced in order for librarians to keep up-to-date within their profession. A study undertaken in Kuwait by Alawadhi (2015) criticised professionals who have not been able to take advantage of the available CPD activities. This was against 60% of professionals who attended CPD activities such as specialised conferences, workshops, short courses and networking with peers. Mentoring is considered a crucial CPD activity that professionals participate in. In their study, Ritchie and Genomi (1999), describe mentorship as a tool or instrument that can be used to achieve desirable benefits. This is in line with Chang and Hosein, (2019) who, in their findings, also identified mentorship as an important CPD activity that academic libraries take seriously.

Compared to years ago and before the devastating effect of COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important now than ever for academic librarians to align their skills with technology innovations. Higher Education Institutions world-wide are on the impetus to offer programmes online and teach remotely. Academic libraries seem to have no choice but to move with their respective institutions. Extant literature reveals that librarians and information professionals acquire and gain new skill sets through participation in CPD activities. CPD widens the scope of professional activities in institutions as employees acquire new skill sets. This is also reflected in a survey by Alawadhi, (2015) who contends that CPD makes it easier for professionals to get a better understanding of issues from the field. He affirms that academic libraries that participate in CPD activities are likely to perform their functions effectively, asserting that they can easily locate information and respond to users' queries because they have the knowledge acquired through CPD activities (Alawadhi, 2015).

A survey by Venturella and Breland (2019) established that CPD improves personal growth in an institution. This is possible as acquiring new skills means that a professional grows in terms of skill sets. München (2007) agrees that through CPD, personal

growth can be achieved, and that CPD produces a new generation of leaders as professionals are able to develop through these activities. On the other hand Cossham (2007) claims that CPD can motivate professionals in an organisation and in the process improve their self-esteem and confidence which are important in the information profession. A survey by Chang and Hosein (2019) to explore CPD in an academic library speculates that organisations which actively participate in CPD activities have desirable benefits for the organisation as well as the professionals themselves. These benefits include, building self-confidence, achievement of career goals, improving employability, self-development as well as enhancing skill sets. These findings are consistent with the findings of Venturella and Breland (2019), Cossham (2011) and Munchen (2007).

Adanu (2007) also admits that participation in CPD activities is a key enabler of career development, competency as well as improved job satisfaction. These benefits are reflected in his study among professional libraries in five state-owned universities in Ghana. The study revealed that a majority of professionals had improved job performance because of the newly acquired skills, highlighting that the above benefits are the main reason they participate in CPD activities. These findings are supported by Ukachi and Onuoha, (2013) who agree that CPD participation is important in acquiring new skills such as networking skills and information searching skills.

It is crucial that employers recognise the benefits of CPD to their employees and for the overall performance of the organisation. It is worth mentioning that the success of CPD can only be achieved with organisational or institutional support. Through institutional support, employees are able to participate and thrive in CPD activities. In a survey by Cossham and Fields (2007) it was established that employees participate in CPD activities through encouragement and support they receive from the employer. The survey reported that over 70% of employees received support in form of paid time and sponsorship for courses. Alawadhi (2015) also admitted that staff members are supported by giving them time off work functions so that they can participate in CPD activities such as workshops and seminars for free.

Institutions such as libraries often have positive

intentions when it comes to CPD activities. This is underscored in a survey of Nigerian libraries by Adanu (2007). The survey findings indicated that the library environment was supportive to a greater extent of CPD. He emphasises that participation in CPD activities is a collective task which requires both employees and employers to be actively involved. The survey indicates that employees receive book allowances and others are given the opportunity to be allowed a paid study leave, conference sponsorships and free subscriptions to professional bodies. Adanu's (2007) findings also revealed that there is informal and unofficial support which include the use of library resources such as stationery and computers. All these form part of the libraries support towards CPD activities.

Despite the numerous benefits of CPD activities, a number of extant literature reveals that information professionals cannot participate in CPD activities as a result of multiple contributing factors. A study by Robinson (2019) in Jamaica indicated that over 65% of employees do not have adequate funding to engage in CPD activities. This challenge is also reflected in other related studies (Namaganda (2019); Moonasar and Underwood 2018; Saliu, Igiamah and Hamsetu, 2014). These studies concur that CPD activities cannot be implemented when funds are not available. In some cases, Saliu, Igiamah and Hamsetu (2014), argue that libraries end up selecting a few professionals to participate in CPD activities as a way to meet the budget. Additionally, the study suggested that lack of funds brings about other challenges such as favoritism which measured 27% among library professionals. Respondents were of the view that some professionals end up being selected over others to participate in CPD activities. In South Africa, a survey that explored CPD at the Durban University of Technology, indicated that five professions cannot participate in their professional associations due to high costs of membership registration. Hence, they cannot receive any professional advice and knowledge from the association (Moonasar and Underwood, 2018).

Maesarah and Genoni, (2010) also agree that financial constraints are a problem in academic libraries because CPD activities are often given less priority. In a survey of libraries in Indonesia, it was found that seven libraries did not have a budget allocation for training, hence, affecting their

involvement and participation in CPD activities. Moonasar and Underwood (2018) further highlights that CPD activities fees are high making it difficult for most librarians, especially in developing countries to participate because limited budgets cannot accommodate them. Moreover, the survey revealed that over 40% of libraries do not have a staff development plan that is inclusive of CPD activities.

On the other hand, Chang and Hosein, (2019) recognise lack of time, lack of knowledge of CPD opportunities, absence of rewards and family commitments as barriers that affect CPD activities. In their study in Trinidad and Tobago academic libraries, they mention that organisations need to start implementing time management strategies for improved CPD participation. Some of their findings concur with a similar study by Namaganda, (2019) in Uganda. Findings revealed that CPD participation is affected by lack of organisational support, lack of time, limited CPD activities, lack of motivation and lack of a staff development policy (Namaganda, 2019). Namaganda argues that these challenges are common in most countries. Another study in Nigerian libraries by Saliu, Igiamah and Hamsetu (2014), indicates that between 58% and 66% employees lack the support of the institution and motivation to participate in continuing professional development activities. Similarly, most studies argue that employees often find it difficult to keep a balance between their daily work and involvement in CPD activities. This then means they begin to prioritise their jobs rather than engaging in CPD activities. Hence, this justifies their limited participation in CPD activities.

## Methodology

The study adopted a positivist paradigm and survey research design. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data, where survey questions were developed based on existing, tested and verified instruments (Dulle and Minishi-Majanja, 2011). NeXus1 and neXus2 survey questionnaires developed in Australia by Hallam (2008) under the auspices of the Australian Library and Information Association were adopted for this study after permission was granted. The survey questionnaire had also been used by Maesaroh (2012) in a similar study in Indonesia. It largely consisted of closed-

ended questions formed on a five-point Likert scale to measure the level of agreement and disagreement of the respondents and was self-administered and also distributed by e-mail to the academic librarians in Botswana. The sampling method used was census. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version IBM 24 was used for data analysis. The data collected for the study were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation (SD). Furthermore, interviews were held with the heads of five libraries. The responses from the interviews have been analysed thematically to bring out their views on continuing professional development.

## Findings

### Demographic Information

A total of 188 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, 116 copies were returned, which provided a 61.7 percent response rate. The participating libraries, number of copies of the questionnaire administered (being the first number in the parenthesis), number of copies returned (being the second number in the parenthesis), are as reflected below. The participating libraries comprised of all the four public university libraries, including, University of Botswana (102, 52), Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (17, 8), Botswana International University of Science and Technology (16, 12) and Botswana Open University (6, 4); three degree awarding private institutions comprising Ba Isago University (2, 2), ABM University College (3, 3) and Botho University (4, 3); two other public degree awarding institutions including Botswana Accountancy College (6, 5), and Institute of Development Management (7, 6). Others include three Colleges of Education in Molepolole (3, 2), Tlokweng (5, 5) and Serowe (2, 1); five Institutes of Health Sciences in Gaborone (3, 2), Kanye (2, 2), Francistown (4, 3), Molepolole (2, 2) and Serowe (2, 2); as well as one degree awarding Vocational Technical College in Francistown (2, 2).

Out of the 116 respondents, 76 (65.5%) were females, 36 (31%) were males while 4 (3.5%) respondents did not indicate their gender. Interviews were conducted with five head librarians of the institutions, teaching department and professional association. The interviewees hold varying qualifications from Master in Library and Information Studies to Doctor of Philosophy.

**Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by age range**

Age range (years)	Frequently	Percentage
21-25 years	3	2.6
26-35 years	38	33.3
36-45 years	28	24.6
46-55 years	33	29
56-65 years	11	9.6
66 years and above	1	0.9
Missing	2	1.7
Total	116	

The mode for the age of the academic librarians' is the 26-35 years age range. This range holds 38 or (33.3%) of the respondents. This age range is followed by 36-45 years category with 28 or 24.6% respondents. Only 11 (9.6%) fall within the 56 -65 years range. It appears the profession is attracting more young people to work in the academic libraries

than the elderly. This is very good for the growth of the profession.

### Work Experience

The participants were asked to state their library work experience. The responses have been captured in Table 2.

**Table 2: Distribution of the Work Experience**

Work Experience (years)	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	25	22.3
6-10 years	24	21.4
11-15 years	18	16.1
16-20 years	12	10.7
21-25 years	11	9.8
26 years and above	22	19.6

The above Table indicates that most of the librarians are new entrants to the profession. Most of the respondents were in the category of 1-5 years in terms of their on-the-job experience. Those who hold above 20 years' experience constitute about 29.4% of the total number of the respondents. Other details are as indicated in Table 2.

### Educational Background

In terms of the educational background, the distribution is as shown in Table 3 with Bachelor in Library Studies or Bachelor of Arts in Library and Information Studies degree holders in the lead and only one with a PhD degree coming last in the Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Qualification.

Current Highest Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Certificate	5	4.8
Diploma	28	26.7
BLS/BALIS	41	39.0
MLIS	30	28.6
PhD	1	1.0

Academic librarians were asked to state the highest qualification they had attained regardless of discipline. Most of the respondents (n=41, 39%) had a bachelor's degree in Library and Information Studies followed by 30 (28.6%) who had a Master in Library and Information Studies. The least attained qualifications were Certificate in Library and Information Studies and Doctor of Philosophy with 5(4.85) and 1(1%) respectively. The data suggests

that most of the academic librarians had professional qualifications.

### **Distribution according to Discipline**

The respondents were further asked to state the discipline in which they attained their undergraduate qualification. This question was asked to assess the multidisciplinary of academic librarians.

**Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Discipline**

<b>Discipline</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
LIS	81	75.9
Law	3	2.8
Education	1	0.9
Arts	5	4.6
Science	1	0.9
Business	3	2.8
Information Technology	6	5.6
Other	7	6.5

The above suggests that most of the academic librarians obtained a Library and Information Studies qualification. It also suggests that there is interest in joining the profession from other disciplines such as Information Technology, 6 (5.6%), the Arts 5 (4.6%) and Law 3(2.8%).

Respondents were further asked to indicate if they were currently involved in formal education. Majority of the respondents 66 (58.9%) said they were not currently involved in continuing their education while 46 (41.1%) stated that they were still involved in an education programme. None of those who were currently studying enrolled in a Master in Library and Information studies. The respondents mainly enrolled in various non-LIS Masters Programmes (Business Administration (10.9%); Public Policy (2.2%); Master of Archives and Records Management (26.1%). The findings seem to suggest that MLIS is no longer attractive among academic librarians who were still interested

in further studies. It is possible that the respondents who previously have LIS qualification, are currently undertaking non-LIS programmes are in search of opportunities to use a higher qualification as a means of getting a new employment.

### **Continuing Professional Development of Academic Librarians**

In line with the first objective of study, the purpose of this section was to establish different kinds of continuing development activities which academic librarians take the initiative to be active players in. Respondents were asked whether they had attended any professional association meetings. Out of the 114 responses, 108 respondents answered this question. Fifty-six (51.8 %) responded in the affirmative while 52 (48.2%) stated that they had never attended a professional association meeting.

**Table 5: Attendance at professional development activities**

CPD Activity	Frequency	Percent
Conference	54	52.9
Seminar	5	4.9
Workshop	22	21.6
External training	3	2.9
Workplace training	12	11.8
Self-placed learning through audio, video, CD, TV.	3	2.9
Mentoring	2	2.0
Total	102	100.0

In order to further understand the professional activities of academic librarians, participants were asked to state the kinds of literature they used to stay current with professional developments. Participants were provided with four options (journals, blogs, magazines, professional conferences and webcasts) and were asked to indicate as many options as may apply. Those who used journal and magazine articles were 73 (62.9 per cent). Use of blogs attracted 43 (37.1 percent) respondents and attendance of professional conferences came up with 42 (36.2 percent) respondents, while 29 (25.0 per cent) indicated they resorted to webcast or virtual

conferences. Those who opted for other literature not included in the list, constituted only 3 (2.6 percent) of the respondents.

A follow-up question was posed to respondents to state why they felt the need to keep up with professional literature. Four possible options were provided as captured in Table 6, and respondents could choose as many as may apply. They were also allowed to supply any additional reasons for the need to keep up with professional literature. The respondents chose three of the four options.

**Table 6: Distribution of respondents on keeping up with professional literature?**

Reason for need to keep up with professional literature?	Frequency	Percent
Promotion requirements	10	8.62
Stay current with developments the profession	104	89.66
To get publication ideas	17	14.66
I don't feel the need	0	0.00
Other	1	0.86

The need to stay current with developments in the profession was given the highest premium and, or most common reason for reading the literature by the majority of the respondents. A total of 104 (89.6%) respondents indicated keeping abreast with occurrences and happenings in the profession in terms of research and any new developments. Coming a distant second was a group of 17 (14.7%)

respondents who stated that they read professional literature with a view to getting ideas to support their own writing and publishing. The next category of respondents were those who indicated that they read professional literature in order to meet promotion requirements. None of the respondents stated that they did not feel the need to read professional literature. The responses to this particular item of



the questionnaire is worth noting because the respondents support the teaching and learning in their respective institutions and to be at the cutting edge of developments in their career is commendable. As academic librarians they also need to contribute to knowledge through research and publications which appear to be scant, if not lacking or nonexistent.

In spite of the positive and encouraging responses documented above, the respondents were asked to state some of the obstacles that came their way in keeping current with developments in the profession through the reading of professional literature. The responses are as captured in Table 7.

**Table 7: Factors limiting the respondents to keep up with professional literature and developments in the profession**

Limiting factor	N	Percent
No enough time to locate & read relevant literature	71	61.2
Do not have access to relevant literature	13	11.2
Overwhelmed by the amount of information available	29	25.0
Professional literature is not relevant to my job	3	2.6
Total	116	100

According to Table 7, respondents did not seem to find time to locate and read literature (71; 61.2%), trailing behind are 29 (25%) who indicated that they were overwhelmed by the amount of available literature. Only 13 (11.2%) respondents stated that they did not have access to relevant literature and lastly, 3 (2.6%) were of the view that 'professional literature is not relevant to my job'.

### **Employers' Involvement in Professional Development Activities**

In examining the second objective of the study, the researchers sought to ascertain the extent to which employers were involved in the continuing professional development of the academic librarians. Specifically, respondents were asked the kinds of support that the academic institutions accorded them. Respondents were further asked whether the employer subsidized or reimbursed any portion of the cost associated with attendance at the professional association meetings.

**Table 8: CPD support received from Employer**

Support offered by employer	Frequency	Percentage
Paid time to attend	43	55.8
Travel	29	37.7
Accommodation	2	2.6
Registration costs/fees	3	3.9

Table 8 depicts the kinds of formal institutional support for professional development activities of academic librarians. A total of 43 (55.8%) respondents stated that their employers supported them in terms of 'paid time to attend'. This means that respondents are paid their usual salary while attending training. Twenty-nine (37.7%) respondents stated that they received support in terms of travel expenses being paid by the employer. Only 3 (3.9%) respondents indicated their employers paid their registration fees while just 2 (2.6%) stated their accommodation was paid for. Going by the responses provided, it appears academic institutions did not offer much support in terms of accommodation and registration fees since only 5 respondents responded in the affirmative.

### Perceived Impact of Professional Development Activities by Academic Librarians

The third objective of the study was to elicit information on the perceived impact of professional development of the staff. In this regard, participants were asked to indicate the perceived impact of the on-the-job or workplace training from the options provided in Table 9. The essence of the question was to ascertain whether the workplace activities had improved their performance on the job in the last five years.. The options provided against the types or formats of training were "to no extent", "to some extent", to a great extent" and "have never participated". Respondents were asked to indicate as many options as may apply.

**Table 9: Perceived impact of workplace training/learning activities**

Type/format of training	To no extent	To some extent	To a great extent	Have never participated	Total
Job-oriented skills training (excluding tech.)	9 (8.41%)	48 (44.86%)	29 (27.1%)	21 (19.63%)	107
Technology skills training	15 (14.15)	44 (41.51)	23 (21.70)	24 (22.64)	106
Customer-service related training	11 (10.19)	34 (31.48)	31 (28.70)	32 (29.63)	108
Management training	25 (23.58)	34 (32.08)	17 (16.04)	30 (28.30)	106
Mentoring	36 (33.64)	35 (32.71)	7 (6.54)	29 (27.10)	107
Job rotation	38 (35.85)	22 (20.75)	12 (11.32)	34 (32.08)	106
Job swap	51 (49.51)	10 (9.71)	5 (4.85)	37 (35.92)	103
Job sharing	26 (25.00)	29 (27.88)	13 (12.50)	36 (34.62)	104

Most of the participants attempted this question. The total responses for each workplace professional development activity ranged between 103 and 107 out of the 116 participants who returned the questionnaire. Workplace job-oriented skills training other than technology skills, attracted the highest number of positive responses. A total of 77 (72%) out of 107 participants, stated that workplace job-oriented skills either impacted their job performance “to a great extent” or “to some extent”. Only 9 respondents claimed “to no extent”. In other words, job oriented skills training had not given any impact to only 9 respondents. Surprisingly, 21(19%) participants had not undertaken any workplace training in the last five years. In terms of technology skills training, 67 (63.2%) respondents believed it improved their performance on the job. This is supported by 23 (21.2%) who chose “to a great extent” followed by 44 (41.5%) who said technology skills training improved their job performance “to some extent”.

Job swap, job rotation and job sharing attracted the most negative responses. A total of 51 (49.5%) respondents, in spite of being given an opportunity on job swap, indicated minimal or no impact on the job performance. This constitutes almost half of the participants. Thirty-seven respondents (35.9%) stated that they had not participated in job swap. Only 5 (4.9%) respondents stated that job swap had a great impact on their job performance while 10 (9.7%) stated it impacted on them only ‘to some extent.’

Job rotation was one activity which attracted a lot of negative responses. Out of the 106 responses, 77 participants indicated they neither participated in job swap nor perceived the impact on the performance of the participants. Twelve respondents believed that job rotation had a great impact on their job performance while 22 stated “to some extent”.

About two-thirds (67; 60.7%) of the participants stated that they had “never participated” in a mentoring programme or perceived impact on the job performance of those who were enrolled. Only 7 out of 106 participants indicated that mentoring impacted their job performance “to a great extent”.

### **Skills Possessed by Academic Librarians**

Heads of the academic libraries held different views about the skills of academic librarians. Three out of five were of the view that, like in all other professions, academic librarians needed to be upskilled all the time. They affirmed that based on the evolving nature of the profession, academic librarians needed continuing professional education more frequently and more intensely and indeed, practical hands-on training. The remaining two out of five heads of academic libraries however felt that the library education appeared to be lagging behind in teaching the graduates what is needed on the ground.

### **Support and Workplace Learning Opportunities**

Heads of Libraries were asked to enumerate workplace learning opportunities accorded librarians. Two of the respondents stated that there were no workplace learning opportunities in place. Specifically, one respondent stated that “very little support, in most cases the individual should be self-motivated to even identify areas of self-development”. On the whole, the different kinds of learning opportunities listed include workshops, conferences, attachments, short training programmes

Heads of Libraries were asked to state the kinds of support that they offered their staff to develop them professionally. One of the Head Librarians stated that they had established a networking group within the library for information and knowledge sharing. The Head Librarian contributed to the network by sharing information received from personal professional networks. Another stated they undertook mentoring of staff and where possible, recommended them for further studies, attendance at workshop and conferences, adding that subject to availability of funds, those recommended were supported. As one of the Head Librarians deliberately stated training opportunities received through professional networks, an example was given of one member who seized the opportunity to attend a short course in Asia and others completed online training on open source.

### **Challenges faced by Libraries in Providing CPD**

Library leaders were asked to state some of the problems they faced in providing continuing professional development. Such problems stated include lack of funding, lack of regular well planned, and executed continuing professional development programmes, lack of commitment to CPD by institutional leadership, lack of funding for research, library staff not allowed to engage in activities that enrich their skills for reasons of no funds and lastly understaffing prevented library management from releasing librarians to undertake continuing professional development.

Turning to their staff, the academic library leaders wish that librarians could take CPD as a personal responsibility and go out of their way to grab the limited opportunities available to them. The lack of personal initiative levelled against the library staff also surfaced in terms of taking up membership and participation in professional bodies such as the Botswana Library Association.

### **Areas of Need for Continuing Professional Development**

The heads of academic libraries and Botswana Library Association were asked to state some of areas that they believed librarians needed training on. The areas listed had to do with capacity building on applications of information and communication technology, community engagement, change management and self-management. The need to instill personal responsibility in personal development was reiterated as another training need.

### **Discussion**

Academic librarians have a role in the teaching and learning of students by providing information to them timeously. As seen in Table 2, academic libraries in Botswana are staffed mostly by professionals who have undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications. This cohort constitutes 67.6% of the total number of respondents. The most common undergraduate qualification being a Bachelor in Library and Information Studies, whilst Diploma holders make only 28% of respondents. The minimum qualification for head librarians who participated in the study is a

Master degree in Library and Information Studies. The profession has managed to attract a sizeable young professionals aged from 26-30 years.

The profession makes use of various skills. The finding that the academic librarians should be trained in the use of various aspects of information and communication technologies (ICTs) concurs with Ondari-Okemwa (2000) on the training needs of professional librarians in the public university libraries in Kenya. The author emphasised the need to train the librarians on virtual librarianship. In the same vein, Burke and Millar (1998) stated that librarians need to develop their own professional skills in the areas of information technology

The participants in in some respect seem to understand the importance of taking the initiative to keep updated about new developments in the profession by subscribing to alerts, blogs, newsletters and various other tools within their professional interests. This finding concurs with Moonasar and Underwood (2018) as well as Ai-Ling (2009) in which the general finding resonates in being well-informed of developments by attending conferences, participating in workshops, reading professional literature, and by subscribing to various online tools.

The respondents appeared motivated to keep informed on the new trends in the profession and fulfilling promotion requirements. Such is achieved by reading professional literature. This sentiment is aligned with the findings of Robinson (2018) and Adanu (2006). Both studies undertaken among special librarians and state-owned university libraries in Ghana respectively found that academic librarians used similar channel to keep abreast of developments in the librarianship profession.

In terms of the kinds and forms of CPD activities attended, the respondents in this study stated that they mostly attended conferences (52%), workshops (21.6%), and workplace training (11.8%). This is in line with Corcorana and McGuinness (2014) as quoted in Robinson (2018). Corcorana and McGuinness (2014) reported that workshops and conferences were significant means of CPD. They noted that attending conferences presented an opportunity to learn about new developments and network with other librarians. Reading professional literature and participating in professional association activities was also mentioned as a major form of CPD for librarians.

In terms of support for participation in CPD, the respondents seem to suggest that it is a shared responsibility between the employers and themselves. Table 8 presents the kinds of support availed to respondents by the employers. There seems to be limited options, the most occurring form of support received was being given time to attend CPD, followed by travel expenses and accommodation funding received by a handful of them and other related fees. Funding appears to be limited. In a study by Lutaaya and Hoskins (2015), amongst others, lack of funding was cited as one of the hindrances in librarians' participation in training activities. It is this apparent lack of support that appears to be the main reason for limited or non-participation of librarians in various CPD activities. On the other hand, Heads of Libraries are of the view that librarians must demonstrate some degree of personal responsibility for their own professional development.

Even though funding seems to be the only type of support that respondents are eyeing, it has emerged that some of the head librarians offer non-monetary support. They support their staff with information on opportunities for further training from their networks and do undertake training themselves. This finding is supported by Chan and Auster (2005) quoted in Robinson (2019) who posits that a supportive manager and organisational climate that facilitates participation in CPD is a form of employer support.

One of the objectives was to establish the perceived impact of CPD on job performance in the last 5 years. Generally, 77 (72.6%) respondents believe that on the job training skills had an impact on their job performance by choosing option "to a great extent" and "to some extent". This sentiment was shared by librarians at the Durban University of Technology in 2015 in a study undertaken by Moonsar and Underwood. All the twenty

participants in the study unanimously agreed that CPD played a positive impact in their job performance.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

Participants in the study are aware of the importance of CPD for both career development and benefit of the organisations that they service. In terms of the level of involvement, respondents and head of libraries hold divergent views. The respondents are of the view that there is minimal support while library heads seem to believe that the staff lack the initiative to grab opportunities availed to them. All the head librarians differ in terms of skills possessed by librarians upon entry into the profession. In general the academic libraries are staffed by professionals who need to be equipped with up-to-date skills to cope with the challenges of the current era of information provision.

Arising from the results of the study, the following suggestions are offered:

- A workplace training should be implemented by library managements with the assistance of the parent institutions and professional associations in Botswana.
- A budget should be set aside for continuing development of library staff to be at par with their teaching counterparts and meet the ever evolving needs of learners and faculty.
- A mentoring policy be developed and implemented by the library management to ensure skills transfer.
- Research and publishing be made part of the job performance for academic librarians.
- Membership and participation in the activities of professional associations should be incorporated in the performance assessment schedule of academic librarians.

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**Neo Patricia Mooko** is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Library and Information Studies, University of Botswana, Gaborone. She holds MLIS degree of the University of Botswana and PhD, University of Pittsburgh, USA.

**Olugbade Oladokun** is Professor in Department of Library and Information Studies, University of Botswana, Gaborone. He holds MLS Degree of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria and PhD University of Botswana.