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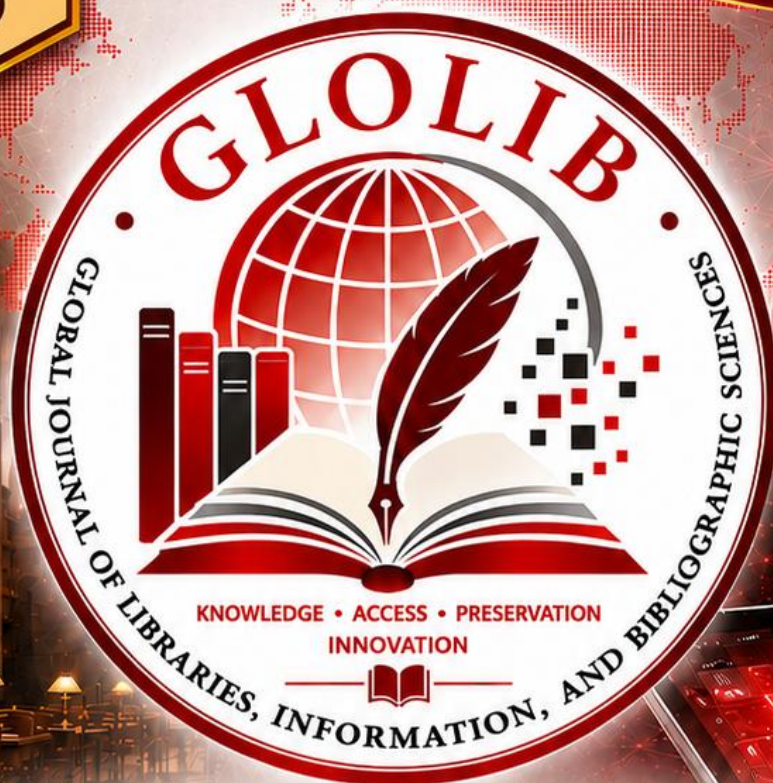
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The future of librarianship: Library and Information Science students' perspectives on career opportunities, professional challenges, and global possibilities

Susan R. Butac*¹, Richard D. Sanchez²¹ San Beda University, Mendiola, Manila, ² John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University (Arevalo), Inc., Iloilo City
Corresponding Author email: susanbutac01@gmail.com

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Abstract

Aim: This qualitative phenomenological study explored the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding career opportunities, professional challenges, global possibilities, and the support needed to prepare for the future of the profession.

Methodology: The study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design. Using purposive sampling, fifteen undergraduate LIS students from selected higher education institutions in the Philippines participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Moustakas' transcendental phenomenological approach.

Results: Six major themes emerged: (1) discovering librarianship beyond traditional stereotypes; (2) embracing a profession shaped by technology and innovation; (3) envisioning diverse local and global career pathways; (4) confronting misconceptions and professional challenges; (5) recognizing the competencies required for future-ready librarianship; and (6) aspiring to become globally competitive information professionals. The findings indicate that students increasingly perceive librarianship as a dynamic profession with expanding opportunities across education, government, healthcare, business, archives, museums, information technology, research, and international organizations, while recognizing the need for stronger institutional support and continuous professional development.

Conclusion: The study proposes the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF) as a practical guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, and library leaders in preparing globally competent and future-ready library and information professionals.

Keywords: *career aspirations; future librarians; global careers; librarianship; Library and Information Science; phenomenology; professional development.*

INTRODUCTION

The profession of librarianship has undergone remarkable transformation during the past several decades. Traditionally associated with organizing books, maintaining library collections, and assisting patrons in locating printed materials, librarians today perform significantly broader responsibilities within increasingly complex information environments. The rapid expansion of digital technologies, cloud computing, artificial intelligence (AI), big data, digital scholarship, Open Science, knowledge management, and data-driven information ecosystems has fundamentally redefined the nature of library and information services worldwide. Contemporary libraries increasingly utilize AI, Machine Learning (ML), integrated digital platforms, and advanced information systems to improve information discovery, research support, digital preservation, user engagement, and organizational decision-making. Likewise, global initiatives promoting Open Access (OA), Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs), Integrated Library Systems (ILS), and the Open Archives Initiative Protocol for Metadata Harvesting (OAI-PMH) continue to transform scholarly communication, digital repositories, metadata interoperability, and research visibility across countries. These developments align with Ahmed et al. (2025), who reported that AI research in academic libraries has become increasingly interdisciplinary and is exerting growing influence on library operations, resource discovery, and user experiences. Collectively, these international developments demonstrate that librarianship has evolved into a highly dynamic, technology-driven profession that extends well beyond traditional library services.



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Libraries themselves have likewise evolved. Modern libraries function as centers for digital learning, research support, innovation, community engagement, cultural preservation, data management, scholarly communication, and collaborative knowledge creation (Onunka et al., 2023). Consequently, librarians have assumed expanded professional roles extending beyond conventional library settings into education, healthcare, government, corporate organizations, museums, archives, legal institutions, media organizations, international agencies, research centers, and technology companies. Recent international developments likewise demonstrate increasing demand for information professionals with expertise in digital preservation, metadata management, research data services, artificial intelligence applications, open scholarship, information governance, and digital transformation, reinforcing the expanding global significance of Library and Information Science (LIS).

Within the Philippines, the Library and Information Science profession continues to play an increasingly important role in supporting educational quality, research productivity, digital transformation, cultural heritage preservation, lifelong learning, and equitable access to information. The enactment of the Philippine Librarianship Act of 2003 (Republic Act No. 9246) strengthened professional standards by requiring licensure for librarians and recognizing librarianship as a regulated profession. Philippine universities continue producing licensed librarians who serve in public libraries, academic institutions, school libraries, government agencies, private organizations, archives, museums, and specialized information centers while responding to the country's continuing digital transformation agenda.

Beyond national boundaries, globalization has created new opportunities for Filipino librarians. Their competencies in information organization, digital resource management, research support, records management, metadata creation, knowledge organization, instructional services, information literacy, and digital scholarship have become increasingly valuable within international organizations, multinational corporations, global universities, digital repositories, and remote information services. These developments are consistent with the findings of Tano (2024), who reported that librarians are assuming expanding responsibilities in digital resource management, research data services, technical innovation, and user-centered online information services. The study further emphasized the importance of continuous professional development and international collaboration in responding to rapidly evolving global information environments. Advances in virtual work environments, cloud-based information services, and international research collaboration likewise enable information professionals to contribute beyond geographical boundaries.

Despite these expanding opportunities, misconceptions regarding librarianship remain widespread. Many students continue associating the profession exclusively with shelving books, maintaining silence in libraries, or performing routine clerical tasks. Such perceptions frequently overshadow the intellectually demanding, technology-driven, interdisciplinary, and globally connected nature of contemporary librarianship. Consequently, Library and Information Science programs continue experiencing challenges in attracting prospective students despite increasing workforce demands and expanding employment opportunities across diverse sectors.

The future sustainability of the profession depends largely upon understanding how current Library and Information Science students perceive their chosen career. Their perspectives regarding professional identity, career opportunities, technological preparedness, anticipated challenges, and global possibilities provide valuable insights for educators, higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, employers, and industry leaders seeking to strengthen the profession and prepare graduates for rapidly evolving information ecosystems.

Although previous studies have examined job satisfaction, employability, technological competencies, leadership, and professional development among practicing librarians, relatively few qualitative investigations have explored how Library and Information Science students themselves envision the future of librarianship. Existing studies have largely concentrated on professional practice, institutional performance, workforce competencies, or technological adoption while giving comparatively limited attention to the lived experiences, aspirations, perceptions, and expectations of future information professionals. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how students interpret emerging career opportunities, global employment prospects, technological transformation, professional challenges, competency requirements, and career readiness within contemporary librarianship. Addressing this gap is particularly important because today's students represent the next generation of information professionals who will shape digital libraries, archives, research support services, scholarly communication, knowledge organizations, digital repositories, and artificial intelligence-enabled information environments.

In response to this gap, the primary purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and describe the perspectives of undergraduate Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship. Specifically, the study sought to understand students' career aspirations, perceptions of professional opportunities within the Philippines and abroad, anticipated professional challenges, desired competencies, and support needs as



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they prepare to enter an increasingly dynamic, technology-driven, and globally interconnected profession. Employing a transcendental phenomenological research design, the study involved fifteen purposively selected undergraduate Library and Information Science students enrolled in selected higher education institutions in the Philippines. The participants represented various year levels and possessed diverse academic and internship experiences, providing rich descriptions of how future information professionals perceive their evolving profession. As a qualitative phenomenological inquiry, the study focused exclusively on students' lived perspectives and did not include practicing librarians, employers, faculty members, or policymakers, nor did it quantitatively measure employability, career outcomes, or competency levels. Instead, it sought to generate in-depth and transferable insights into how future librarians construct their professional identities, perceive emerging opportunities and challenges, and envision their future roles within contemporary information environments.

Beyond addressing an important gap in Library and Information Science literature, the study contributes to the growing international discourse on future-ready librarianship, Library and Information Science education, workforce development, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence in libraries. By examining students' lived experiences, the study advances understanding of how future information professionals prepare for rapidly changing professional environments and culminates in the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The proposed framework offers an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, policymakers, library leaders, and curriculum developers in strengthening educational programs, career guidance, professional development initiatives, workforce planning, and policy formulation aimed at preparing globally competitive library and information professionals.

The findings likewise have practical significance for multiple stakeholders. For Library and Information Science students and prospective students, the study provides a broader understanding of the profession's expanding career opportunities while encouraging proactive career planning, continuous professional development, and lifelong learning. Higher education institutions and faculty members may utilize the findings to enhance curriculum design, strengthen industry partnerships, improve student support services, and develop learning experiences that respond to emerging professional competencies. Professional organizations, including the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI), may use the results to reinforce advocacy programs, mentoring initiatives, continuing professional development activities, and student engagement. Government agencies responsible for education, labor, culture, and information services may likewise benefit from the findings in developing policies that support library development, workforce sustainability, and professional advancement. Employers across libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, corporations, and other information organizations may gain a clearer understanding of the competencies, expectations, and career aspirations of future Library and Information Science professionals. Furthermore, the study provides a valuable foundation for future qualitative and quantitative investigations concerning professional identity, employability, leadership, workforce sustainability, and career development within the Library and Information Science discipline.

Ultimately, this study recognizes that the future of librarianship will not be determined solely by technological innovation but by the preparedness, adaptability, resilience, leadership, and global competencies of the students who choose to pursue the profession. By providing rich descriptions of students' lived perspectives and proposing the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), the study contributes to international Library and Information Science scholarship while supporting curriculum enhancement, professional practice, workforce development, and policy initiatives that prepare globally competent information professionals for the evolving knowledge society.

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Career Opportunities for Library and Information Science Graduates

Graduates of Library and Information Science (LIS) programs now pursue careers across a wide range of sectors that extend far beyond traditional library settings. As information becomes an increasingly valuable organizational asset, information professionals are needed in academic, public, school, medical, and legal libraries, as well as in government agencies, museums, archives, digital repositories, publishing, corporate organizations, and information technology firms. Their expertise in organizing, preserving, retrieving, and disseminating information supports teaching, research, evidence-based decision-making, cultural preservation, and lifelong learning. Digital transformation has further expanded career opportunities in records and archives management, corporate knowledge management, research support services, metadata and digital asset management, data stewardship, and information consulting, where professionals contribute to information governance, data quality, and organizational innovation. Hands (2024) emphasized that LIS graduates now have access to diverse career pathways reflecting the profession's evolution beyond conventional librarianship. Collectively, these developments demonstrate that contemporary



librarianship has become an interdisciplinary profession whose competencies are increasingly valued across knowledge-intensive industries.

Emerging Competencies for Future Librarians

The competencies expected of future librarians continue to evolve alongside rapid technological advancement and the increasing complexity of information environments. Contemporary information professionals are expected to integrate traditional librarianship with competencies in artificial intelligence, digital literacy, research data management, cybersecurity awareness, information ethics, digital preservation, scholarly communication, data analytics, instructional design, project management, leadership, and user experience design. These competencies enable librarians to manage digital resources effectively, support evidence-based decision-making, facilitate research dissemination, and deliver innovative user-centered information services. At the same time, librarians increasingly collaborate with educators, researchers, policymakers, and information technologists in addressing interdisciplinary information challenges, highlighting the profession's expanding strategic role in digital transformation and knowledge creation. Diseiye et al. (2024) similarly emphasized that emerging information technologies require librarians to continuously develop advanced digital competencies, while the *IFLA Trend Report* (2024) underscored the profession's growing responsibility in promoting equitable access to information, sustainable development, and innovation within rapidly changing information ecosystems. Consequently, future-ready librarians must combine technological proficiency with critical thinking, ethical judgment, adaptability, effective communication, interdisciplinary collaboration, and lifelong learning to remain responsive to evolving societal and organizational needs.

Challenges Facing the Profession

Despite expanding career opportunities and increasing professional relevance, librarianship continues to face significant challenges that influence its long-term sustainability and public recognition. Persistent misconceptions continue to portray librarians primarily as custodians of printed collections rather than as information professionals engaged in digital services, research support, knowledge organization, and technological innovation. Such misconceptions contribute to declining awareness of Library and Information Science programs and may adversely affect student recruitment and workforce development. At the same time, rapid technological change requires continuous professional development as librarians adapt to emerging digital tools, artificial intelligence, data-driven services, and evolving user expectations. Financial constraints, staffing shortages, and limited institutional resources further challenge many libraries in delivering high-quality and innovative services. According to the Public Library Association (2025), many libraries continue to experience recruitment and retention difficulties, workforce shortages, and budgetary pressures that affect service delivery and organizational capacity. Addressing these issues requires sustained investment in professional development, curriculum innovation, institutional support, technological infrastructure, and advocacy initiatives that strengthen the visibility, relevance, and global competitiveness of the profession while maintaining a balance between technological innovation and human-centered library services.

Conceptual Framework

The present study conceptualizes the future of librarianship as a dynamic process through which various educational, professional, technological, and environmental conditions shape the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding their future careers. Guided by Super's Life-Span, Life-Space Theory of Career Development and Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, the framework assumes that students' professional aspirations and career readiness develop through the interaction of personal experiences, educational preparation, social influences, and emerging opportunities within the rapidly evolving information landscape.

The conceptual paradigm consists of four interconnected components. The first component represents the conditions influencing students' perspectives regarding librarianship. These include Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, technological advancements, globalization, labor market opportunities, faculty mentoring, professional organizations, and family and peer influence. These contextual conditions serve as the foundational inputs that shape students' understanding of the profession and influence how they perceive librarianship as a future career.

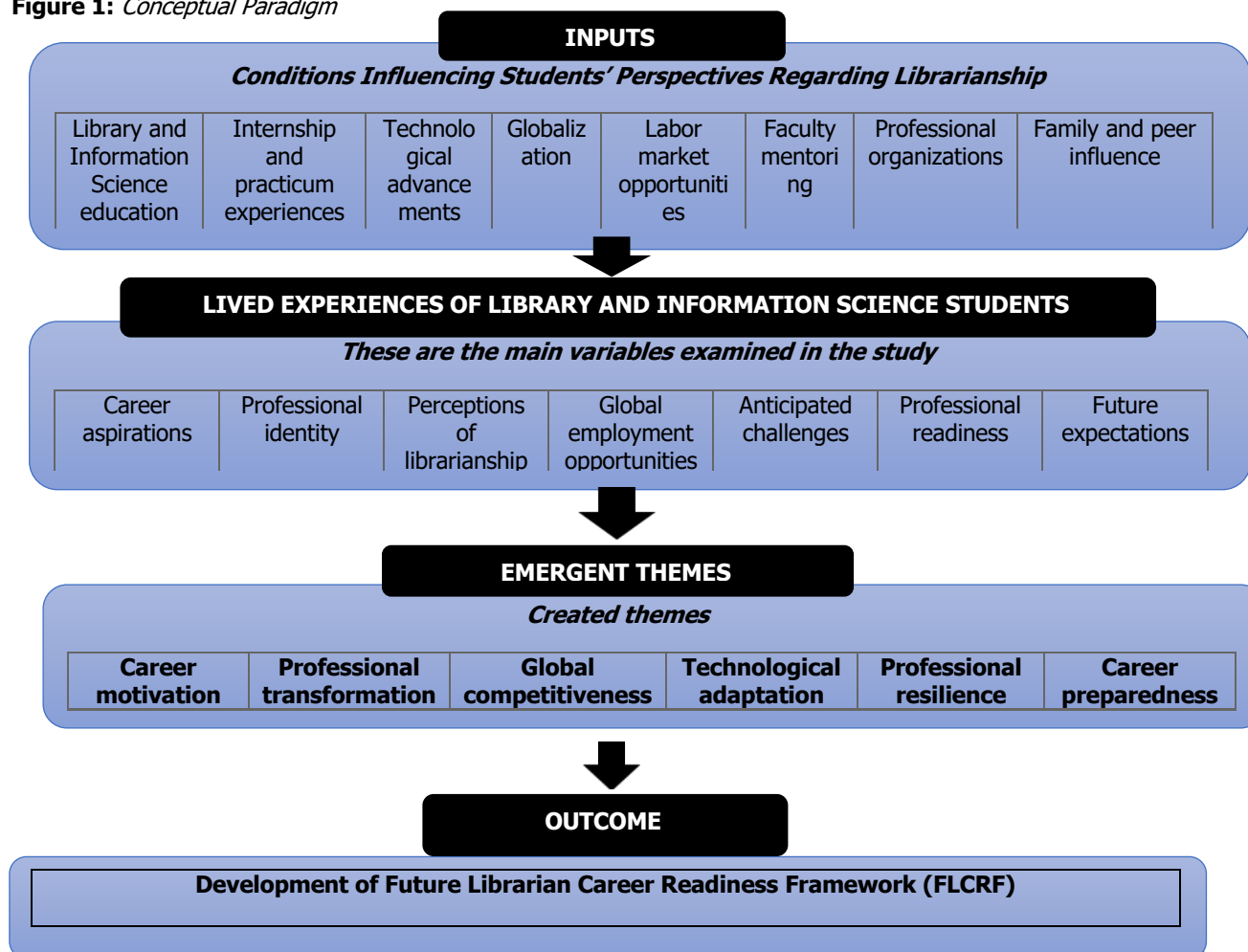
The second component represents the major variables examined in the study, namely students' career aspirations, professional identity, perceptions of librarianship, perceived global employment opportunities, anticipated professional challenges, professional readiness, and future expectations. These variables capture how students interpret and respond to the educational and professional conditions that influence their career development and future outlook.

The third component focuses on the lived experiences of Library and Information Science students, which constitute the central phenomenon explored through the transcendental phenomenological approach. Analysis of participants' narratives generates the emergent themes that describe how students experience and make sense of their future profession. These themes include career motivation, professional transformation, global competitiveness, technological adaptation, professional resilience, and career preparedness. Together, these themes provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship and explain how they construct their professional identities within rapidly changing information environments.

The fourth component represents the outcome of the study, which is the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework is derived from the synthesized lived experiences and emergent themes identified during the phenomenological analysis. It serves as an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, library leaders, and policymakers in designing educational strategies, professional development initiatives, and workforce policies that prepare globally competitive, technologically competent, and future-ready library and information professionals.

Figure 1 illustrates the sequential relationship among these four components. The conditions influencing students' perspectives shape the variables examined in the study, which are subsequently explored through the lived experiences of Library and Information Science students. The phenomenological analysis generates the emergent themes that ultimately inform the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework provides practical recommendations for strengthening Library and Information Science education and preparing graduates capable of succeeding in increasingly digital, technology-driven, and globally interconnected information environments.

Figure 1: *Conceptual Paradigm*





Statement of the Problem

The Library and Information Science profession continues to evolve rapidly in response to technological innovation, globalization, artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and changing societal information needs. While these developments have expanded career opportunities for librarians locally and internationally, misconceptions regarding the profession continue to influence students' career decisions and public understanding of librarianship. Moreover, limited research has explored how Library and Information Science students themselves perceive the future of their profession, including the opportunities, challenges, and support needed to prepare for successful careers. Understanding these perspectives is essential for strengthening Library and Information Science education, informing workforce development initiatives, improving professional advocacy, and preparing globally competitive information professionals capable of responding to rapidly evolving information environments.

General Objective

To explore the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship.

Specific Objectives

The study specifically sought:

1. To describe the reasons students choose Library and Information Science as their academic program.
2. To examine students' perceptions of the evolving roles of librarians in contemporary society.
3. To identify students' perceived career opportunities within the Philippines.
4. To determine students' perceptions of global employment opportunities for future librarians.
5. To explore the professional challenges students anticipate encountering after graduation.
6. To identify the competencies students believe future librarians should develop to remain globally competitive.
7. To determine the institutional, professional, and governmental support students believe is necessary for future librarians.
8. To describe the essence of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study sought to explore the perspectives of Library and Information Science students regarding the future of librarianship. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

Central Research Question: How do Library and Information Science students perceive the future of librarianship in terms of career opportunities, professional challenges, and global possibilities?

Sub-questions

1. How do students describe their reasons for choosing Library and Information Science as their academic program?
2. How do students perceive the evolving roles of librarians in contemporary society?
3. What career opportunities do students believe are available within the Philippines?
4. What global employment opportunities do students envision for future librarians?
5. What professional challenges do students anticipate encountering after graduation?
6. What competencies do students believe future librarians should develop to remain globally competitive?
7. What forms of institutional, professional, and governmental support do students believe are necessary for future librarians?
8. What is the essence of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative transcendental phenomenological research design to explore and describe the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship. A transcendental phenomenological approach is appropriate when the objective is to understand how individuals experience and interpret a particular phenomenon from their own lived perspectives rather than to measure variables or test hypotheses (Moustakas, 1994). In the present study, the phenomenon centered on students' perceptions of



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career opportunities, professional challenges, global employment possibilities, evolving competencies, and the support systems needed to become future-ready library and information professionals. Consistent with Moustakas' (1994) approach, the researchers practiced *epoche* (bracketing) by consciously setting aside personal assumptions throughout the investigation to ensure that the findings authentically reflected the participants' lived experiences. The transcendental phenomenological design therefore provided a rigorous framework for describing the shared meanings and essential structure of students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Locale

The study was conducted among selected higher education institutions in the Philippines offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program. To obtain diverse and information-rich perspectives, participants were purposively selected from public universities, private higher education institutions, state universities and colleges, and institutions with established library internship programs. These institutions maintain active Library and Information Science programs recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and prepare students for the Philippine Librarians Licensure Examination. The diversity of institutional settings enabled the study to capture a broad range of educational experiences, professional aspirations, and perspectives regarding the future of librarianship while strengthening the richness and transferability of the findings.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of fifteen (15) purposively selected undergraduate Bachelor of Library and Information Science students who possessed rich experiences and informed perspectives regarding their chosen profession. The study included second-year, third-year, fourth-year, and graduating students undergoing internship or practicum experiences. To ensure that participants could provide meaningful insights into the phenomenon under investigation, they were required to be officially enrolled in a BLIS program, have completed at least one major professional librarianship course, voluntarily agree to participate, and demonstrate the ability to articulate their experiences and perspectives regarding the profession. Students with internship experiences were particularly valuable because of their direct exposure to professional library environments. Participant recruitment continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicating that subsequent interviews no longer generated substantially new insights.

Sampling Technique

The study employed purposive sampling, specifically maximum variation sampling, to obtain rich and diverse descriptions of the phenomenon. This non-probability sampling strategy enabled the researchers to intentionally select participants representing different academic year levels, institutional affiliations, internship experiences, career aspirations, leadership involvement, and academic performance. Such diversity enhanced the breadth of perspectives while preserving the depth of inquiry required in transcendental phenomenological research, thereby facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of Library and Information Science students' perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide designed to explore participants' lived experiences and perspectives regarding the future of librarianship. The interview protocol consisted of four interrelated sections. The first gathered participants' demographic and academic profiles, including their year level, institution, internship experiences, leadership involvement, and career interests. The second explored the motivations that influenced their decision to pursue Library and Information Science, together with their experiences of public perceptions and misconceptions about the profession. The third examined participants' perspectives on the future of librarianship, including emerging career opportunities, technological developments, global employment prospects, artificial intelligence, and the competencies required of future librarians. The final section explored anticipated professional challenges, institutional and governmental support, recommendations for improving Library and Information Science education, and advice for future students. The semi-structured format allowed participants to freely narrate their experiences while ensuring consistency across all interviews.

Validation of the Research Instrument

To establish content validity, the interview guide underwent expert evaluation by a qualitative research specialist, a senior professor in Library and Information Science, and a licensed librarian with expertise in library administration. The validators assessed the instrument for clarity, appropriateness, alignment with the research



questions, comprehensiveness, and logical sequencing of interview questions. Their recommendations resulted in the refinement of interview questions, simplification of wording, inclusion of additional probing questions, and removal of redundant items. A pilot interview involving two Bachelor of Library and Information Science students who were not included in the final sample further confirmed the clarity, organization, and flow of the interview protocol before the actual data collection commenced.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic and ethically guided process. Institutional approval and ethical clearance were obtained prior to participant recruitment. Eligible participants were invited to participate and were informed about the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, confidentiality measures, expected interview duration, and their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. Written informed consent was secured before conducting individual interviews, which were held either face-to-face or through secure online platforms and lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. Participants were assigned pseudonyms (P1–P15) to ensure anonymity and protect confidentiality. To enhance the credibility of the findings, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review the interview summaries for accuracy, completeness, and intended meaning before the commencement of data analysis.

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed using Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological method. The analysis began with *epoche* (bracketing), during which the researcher consciously identified and suspended personal assumptions regarding librarianship to minimize interpretive bias. This was followed by horizontalization, wherein every significant statement related to the phenomenon was treated with equal importance before being clustered into meaningful units through phenomenological reduction. These meaning units were synthesized into broader themes representing the shared experiences of the participants. Subsequently, textural descriptions were developed to explain what participants experienced, while structural descriptions examined how they experienced the phenomenon within their educational, technological, and social contexts. Finally, the integration of these textural and structural descriptions produced the essential structure of Library and Information Science students' lived perspectives regarding the future of librarianship.

Trustworthiness of the Study

The trustworthiness of the study was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for qualitative rigor. Credibility was enhanced through prolonged engagement, member checking, peer debriefing, and the inclusion of participants from diverse educational backgrounds. Transferability was supported by providing rich contextual descriptions that enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational settings. Dependability was strengthened through a comprehensive audit trail documenting interview procedures, coding decisions, analytical memos, and theme development, while confirmability was reinforced through reflexive journaling, audit documentation, and peer examination to ensure that the findings accurately reflected participants' lived experiences rather than researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to accepted ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Institutional approval was obtained prior to data collection, and all participants received complete information regarding the objectives of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality and anonymity measures, their right to withdraw at any time, and the procedures implemented to protect their personal information. Written informed consent was obtained before the interviews commenced. Participants' identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms, while all digital recordings and interview transcripts were securely stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the researchers. Throughout the investigation, every effort was made to ensure that participation posed no psychological, social, academic, or professional harm. In addition, the researchers practiced reflexivity throughout the study by maintaining reflective journals and applying the process of *epoche* to minimize personal assumptions and allow participants' perspectives to emerge authentically. Regular consultation with qualitative research experts and peer reviewers further strengthened the credibility and objectivity of the interpretive process.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Profile

Fifteen undergraduate Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) students participated in this transcendental phenomenological study. The participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, academic year levels, internship experiences, leadership involvement, and career interests, providing a broad range of perspectives regarding the future of librarianship. They were between 19 and 24 years old and had completed internships in academic, public, school, and special libraries. Their career aspirations extended beyond traditional library settings to include digital librarianship, archives, museums, research support services, corporate knowledge management, and international organizations. Despite differences in educational experiences and professional interests, the participants consistently expressed optimism regarding the expanding opportunities within librarianship while recognizing the importance of continuous professional development, technological adaptability, and lifelong learning in preparing for the evolving information landscape.

Following Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological approach, analysis of the interview transcripts generated six interrelated themes that collectively describe how Library and Information Science students envision the future of librarianship. These themes reveal participants' evolving professional identities, perceptions of career opportunities, technological preparedness, anticipated challenges, desired competencies, and long-term aspirations as future information professionals.

Theme 1. Rediscovering Librarianship Beyond Traditional Stereotypes

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the participants' narratives was the transformation of their understanding of librarianship from a traditionally perceived occupation centered on books and libraries into a dynamic, multidisciplinary profession that supports education, research, technology, and community development. Most participants admitted that before entering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program, their understanding of librarianship was largely influenced by common societal stereotypes portraying librarians as individuals who merely organize books, maintain silence in libraries, or perform routine clerical work. However, their perspectives gradually evolved through formal coursework, interactions with faculty members and practicing librarians, and authentic internship experiences that exposed them to the diverse responsibilities of contemporary information professionals.

Participants consistently described librarians as educators, technology facilitators, digital information managers, researchers, knowledge stewards, advocates of information literacy, and leaders who contribute to lifelong learning and community development. One participant reflected:

"When I entered the program, I thought librarians simply arranged books and helped people find references. After studying Library and Information Science, I realized that librarians manage knowledge, teach information literacy, preserve history, support research, and even contribute to digital innovation. The profession is much bigger than what many people imagine." (P3)

Similarly, another participant explained:

"Many people still joke that librarians only stamp books or tell people to keep quiet. They do not realize how much planning, technology, research, and management are involved. I now feel proud explaining what librarians really do." (P7)

Internship experiences played a particularly important role in reshaping participants' professional identities by allowing them to experience librarianship beyond classroom instruction. As one graduating student explained:

"During my internship, I assisted in managing institutional repositories, digitizing collections, helping faculty with research databases, and teaching students how to search scholarly resources. Those experiences completely changed my view of librarianship." (P12)

Despite these positive experiences, participants acknowledged that persistent public misconceptions continue to discourage many prospective students from pursuing Library and Information Science. As one participant observed:

"Many students simply do not know what librarians actually do. If they understood the profession better, I believe more students would choose Library and Information Science." (P5)

Collectively, these narratives suggest that professional identity develops through sustained educational experiences, authentic workplace exposure, and mentorship. Rather than reinforcing traditional stereotypes, these experiences enabled participants to reconstruct their understanding of librarianship as an intellectually demanding, socially significant, and technology-driven profession. The findings highlight the importance of experiential learning in



cultivating positive professional identities while reinforcing the profession's evolving role in promoting equitable access to information, digital innovation, lifelong learning, and knowledge creation.

Theme 2. Seeing Unlimited Career Opportunities in the Philippines and Beyond

Participants consistently perceived librarianship as a profession offering diverse and expanding career opportunities both within the Philippines and internationally. Contrary to the common perception that librarians are confined to traditional library environments, the participants envisioned a profession that extends across multiple educational, cultural, governmental, technological, healthcare, legal, and corporate sectors. Their narratives reflected an increasingly sophisticated understanding of librarianship as an interdisciplinary profession whose expertise in information organization, digital resource management, research support, and knowledge management is applicable across a wide range of organizations. These findings support the observations of White et al. (2023), who emphasized that contemporary librarians require competencies in database development, digital communication, information and communication technologies, digital content management, and online library services to meet the evolving demands of modern information environments.

Participants identified career opportunities in academic, public, school, and special libraries while also recognizing employment possibilities in government agencies, museums, archives, records management, publishing, corporate knowledge management, digital repositories, healthcare institutions, law firms, research organizations, technology companies, and international organizations. Several participants were particularly enthusiastic about careers beyond traditional libraries. One participant remarked:

"I was surprised that librarians can work in multinational companies managing knowledge systems. We are not limited to libraries anymore." (P10)

Another participant expressed aspirations for international employment by stating:

"I dream of working for an international university or research institute someday. Filipino librarians are respected because we are hardworking and adaptable." (P8)

The participants also recognized the increasing availability of remote work opportunities made possible by digital technologies. One participant explained:

"With digital technologies, librarians can now work remotely as metadata specialists, information consultants, digital archivists, or research assistants for international clients." (P14)

Others envisioned contributing to international organizations involved in education, cultural preservation, and digital knowledge management. As one participant shared:

"I hope someday Filipino librarians can work for UNESCO, the United Nations, or international digital preservation projects because our profession contributes to education and cultural heritage." (P6)

Participants' descriptions of local career opportunities likewise extended beyond conventional librarianship to include positions such as digital librarian, institutional repository manager, research support librarian, records manager, archivist, museum curator, government information officer, knowledge management specialist, digital preservation specialist, information literacy educator, academic publishing specialist, and data management officer. These perspectives demonstrate students' growing awareness that librarianship has become an interdisciplinary profession supporting digital transformation, research productivity, information governance, and organizational knowledge management across numerous sectors.

Their perspectives became even more expansive when discussing global employment opportunities. Participants envisioned careers as digital archivists, metadata librarians, data curators, research data managers, scholarly communication librarians, Open Science specialists, information architects, knowledge consultants, corporate knowledge managers, artificial intelligence information trainers, international university librarians, and remote information consultants. These aspirations reflect students' recognition of the increasing international demand for professionals capable of managing digital information, supporting research, facilitating knowledge exchange, and navigating rapidly evolving information ecosystems. These findings are consistent with Dezuanni and Osman (2024), who argued that librarians and information professionals are increasingly positioned as key contributors within global information ecosystems shaped by artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and emerging knowledge practices.

Overall, the findings indicate that Library and Information Science students no longer perceive librarianship as a profession confined to physical libraries. Instead, they envision a globally connected, technology-enabled, and multidisciplinary profession that offers meaningful opportunities across education, research, government, business, healthcare, culture, and international development. Their narratives reflect an evolving professional identity grounded in adaptability, innovation, and lifelong learning while demonstrating confidence that the competencies developed



through Library and Information Science education remain relevant within both local and global information environments.

Theme 3. Preparing for a Technology-Driven and Artificial Intelligence-Enabled Profession

Participants unanimously acknowledged that technological innovation will continue to shape the future of librarianship. Rather than viewing artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and digital transformation as threats to the profession, they consistently perceived these developments as opportunities to redefine and expand librarians' professional roles. Their narratives demonstrated a clear understanding that future librarians must embrace technological change while preserving the profession's human-centered values, ethical responsibilities, and commitment to information literacy and lifelong learning.

Several participants emphasized that artificial intelligence should complement rather than replace librarians' expertise. One participant observed:

"Artificial intelligence can organize information faster than humans, but it cannot replace librarians' judgment, ethics, empathy, and ability to teach people how to evaluate reliable information." (P2)

Similarly, another participant highlighted the importance of adapting to technological change rather than resisting it:

"Instead of competing with AI, librarians should learn how to use AI responsibly. It will become another tool that helps us serve people better." (P11)

Participants consistently identified technological competence as a fundamental requirement for future librarianship. They emphasized the importance of developing expertise in artificial intelligence literacy, digital repository management, metadata standards, information systems, research data management, digital preservation, cybersecurity awareness, cloud-based information systems, information visualization, data analytics, digital scholarship, and user experience design. Rather than viewing these competencies as isolated technical skills, participants regarded them as essential capabilities that would enable librarians to manage digital resources effectively, support research, improve access to information, and deliver innovative user-centered services within increasingly technology-driven information environments.

The integration of technological competence with human-centered service emerged as a defining characteristic of participants' vision of future librarianship. As one participant explained:

"The future librarian should know both technology and people. Technology helps organize information, but librarians help people understand and use that information wisely." (P9)

Collectively, these findings suggest that Library and Information Science students perceive technological advancement as complementary to, rather than a replacement for, professional librarianship. Their perspectives reflect an emerging understanding that the future librarian must balance technological expertise with ethical decision-making, critical evaluation of information, instructional leadership, and meaningful engagement with diverse communities. This balance demonstrates students' recognition that successful librarianship in the digital era depends not only on technological proficiency but also on preserving the profession's enduring commitment to equitable access to information, education, and human-centered service.

Theme 4. Overcoming Misconceptions and Professional Challenges

Although participants expressed considerable optimism regarding the future of librarianship, they likewise recognized numerous challenges that may influence their professional development and long-term career success. Persistent misconceptions regarding the profession, limited public awareness of Library and Information Science, rapid technological change, increasing interdisciplinary competition, unequal employment opportunities, and limited institutional resources emerged as the most frequently discussed concerns. Despite these challenges, participants consistently interpreted them as opportunities for professional growth, innovation, advocacy, and lifelong learning rather than as barriers to career development.

Many participants recalled experiencing discouraging reactions from family members, friends, and acquaintances after choosing the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program. These experiences reflected persistent misconceptions that librarianship offers limited career opportunities or has become obsolete because of technological advancement. One participant recounted:

"Some people asked me, 'Why study librarianship when everything is already on Google?' At first, it made me question my decision, but now I understand that information professionals are needed more than ever because people need guidance in finding credible information." (P4)

Another participant similarly described the need to continually explain the true nature of the profession:



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"Whenever someone asks about my course, they usually say, 'So you'll just arrange books?' I always explain that librarians manage information, support researchers, teach digital literacy, preserve cultural heritage, and even work in technology-related fields." (P13)

Participants further recognized that rapid technological advancement creates both opportunities and professional pressures. They emphasized that future librarians must continuously update their knowledge and skills to remain relevant within increasingly digital and interdisciplinary information environments. As one participant remarked:

"Technology changes so fast that we need to keep learning throughout our careers. Graduation is only the beginning of our education." (P6)

Others highlighted the growing competition among professionals working within information-intensive sectors. One participant observed:

"Future librarians will compete not only with other librarians but also with professionals from information technology, computer science, and business. We need to continuously improve ourselves." (P1)

Participants also discussed institutional challenges affecting the continuing development of libraries in the Philippines, including inadequate funding for library modernization, limited digital infrastructure, restricted access to emerging technologies, insufficient specialized training opportunities, varying levels of technological readiness across institutions, and limited public promotion of librarianship as a profession. Nevertheless, they remained optimistic that sustained technological innovation, professional development initiatives, and stronger public advocacy would continue expanding opportunities for librarians within both local and international information environments. These perspectives are consistent with Dezuanni and Osman (2024), who emphasized that artificial intelligence, digital transformation, and increasingly complex information ecosystems are creating greater demand for professionals possessing advanced competencies in digital literacy, information management, knowledge organization, data stewardship, and technology-mediated information services.

This sense of optimism was summarized by one participant who stated:

"Every profession has challenges. What matters is whether we continue learning and show society why librarians are still important." (P8)

Overall, the findings demonstrate that participants view librarianship as a profession undergoing continuous transformation. Rather than allowing misconceptions, technological disruption, or institutional constraints to discourage them, students regarded these realities as catalysts for professional innovation, advocacy, resilience, and lifelong learning. Their narratives reveal an emerging professional identity characterized by adaptability, perseverance, and a commitment to strengthening the relevance of librarianship within an increasingly complex global information society.

Theme 5. Developing Competencies for Future-Ready Librarianship

Participants consistently emphasized that the future of librarianship depends on continuous professional growth and the acquisition of competencies that extend beyond traditional library practices. They recognized that technological expertise alone would be insufficient for future success and that librarians must likewise develop leadership, communication, critical thinking, ethical decision-making, adaptability, collaboration, research capabilities, and lifelong learning habits. These competencies were viewed as essential for responding effectively to rapidly evolving information environments and the increasingly interdisciplinary nature of the profession.

Digital competence emerged as one of the most frequently discussed areas of professional development. Participants stressed the importance of mastering artificial intelligence applications, digital repositories, metadata management, research data services, information systems, cybersecurity awareness, digital preservation, information literacy instruction, and scholarly communication. At the same time, they believed that future librarians must retain the profession's human-centered values by demonstrating empathy, ethical responsibility, sound professional judgment, and effective communication when assisting diverse information users.

One participant explained:

"Technology will continue changing, but librarians must continue learning. If we stop learning, we cannot serve our users effectively." (P5)

Another participant highlighted the importance of balancing technical and interpersonal competencies:

"A future librarian should be technologically skilled but also approachable, ethical, and able to communicate with different kinds of people." (P10)

Participants likewise recognized leadership as an increasingly important competency. They viewed librarians as educators, advocates, collaborators, project managers, and institutional leaders who facilitate access to information and promote evidence-based decision-making. These perspectives are consistent with Brodsky and Chapman Tripp (2025), who emphasized that librarians' expanding responsibilities require continuous professional learning, leadership



development, and interdisciplinary collaboration to respond effectively to technological and organizational change. Collectively, the findings suggest that participants perceive professional competence as an integration of technological expertise, ethical practice, leadership, adaptability, and lifelong learning that enables librarians to remain relevant in rapidly changing information environments.

Theme 6. Strengthening Institutional and Professional Support for Future Librarians

Participants consistently acknowledged that individual commitment alone is insufficient to prepare future librarians for the profession's evolving demands. They emphasized that meaningful professional development requires sustained support from higher education institutions, faculty members, professional organizations, government agencies, and employers. Such collaborative support was viewed as essential for strengthening students' competencies, professional confidence, and readiness for increasingly competitive local and international employment opportunities.

Many participants recommended continuous curriculum enhancement to ensure that Library and Information Science programs remain responsive to technological advancements and emerging professional roles. They advocated for stronger integration of artificial intelligence, digital librarianship, research data management, digital preservation, information technologies, leadership development, and international librarianship into undergraduate education. Internship experiences were likewise identified as indispensable opportunities for bridging classroom learning with authentic professional practice.

Participants also emphasized the importance of mentoring and professional engagement. One participant remarked:

"Faculty members and practicing librarians should continue mentoring students because they help us understand what the profession is really like." (P15)

Another participant highlighted the role of professional organizations:

"Professional organizations should involve students more in conferences, seminars, and networking because these experiences help us prepare for our future careers." (P7)

Participants likewise recognized the important role of government agencies in strengthening library development through increased investment in technological infrastructure, professional training, scholarship opportunities, and public advocacy for librarianship. They believed that stronger collaboration among educational institutions, professional organizations, government agencies, and employers would significantly improve workforce preparation and elevate the visibility of the profession. Mentoring, professional networking, international collaboration, and continuing professional development contribute substantially to career advancement and professional sustainability.

Overall, participants viewed institutional and professional support as a shared responsibility that extends beyond formal education. Their narratives suggest that preparing globally competitive librarians requires coordinated efforts among academic institutions, professional associations, employers, and policymakers to create supportive learning environments that foster continuous growth, innovation, and professional excellence.

Textural Description

The participants described librarianship as a dynamic profession that has expanded far beyond its traditional association with managing printed collections. Their experiences reflected increasing awareness of the profession's contributions to education, research, digital transformation, information management, and community development. They expressed optimism regarding expanding career opportunities while recognizing the need to continuously develop technological competencies, leadership abilities, ethical decision-making, and adaptability to remain effective in rapidly evolving information environments. At the same time, they acknowledged persistent misconceptions about librarianship and emphasized the importance of stronger institutional support, public advocacy, and professional collaboration in preparing future librarians for local and global practice.

Structural Description

Participants' perspectives were shaped by the interaction of formal Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, faculty mentoring, technological developments, professional organizations, family support, and exposure to evolving workplace expectations. These contextual influences enabled students to move beyond traditional stereotypes and develop a broader understanding of librarianship as an interdisciplinary profession requiring continuous learning, technological adaptability, and professional resilience. Their experiences demonstrated that career aspirations and professional identity develop through sustained educational preparation and authentic engagement with contemporary information environments.



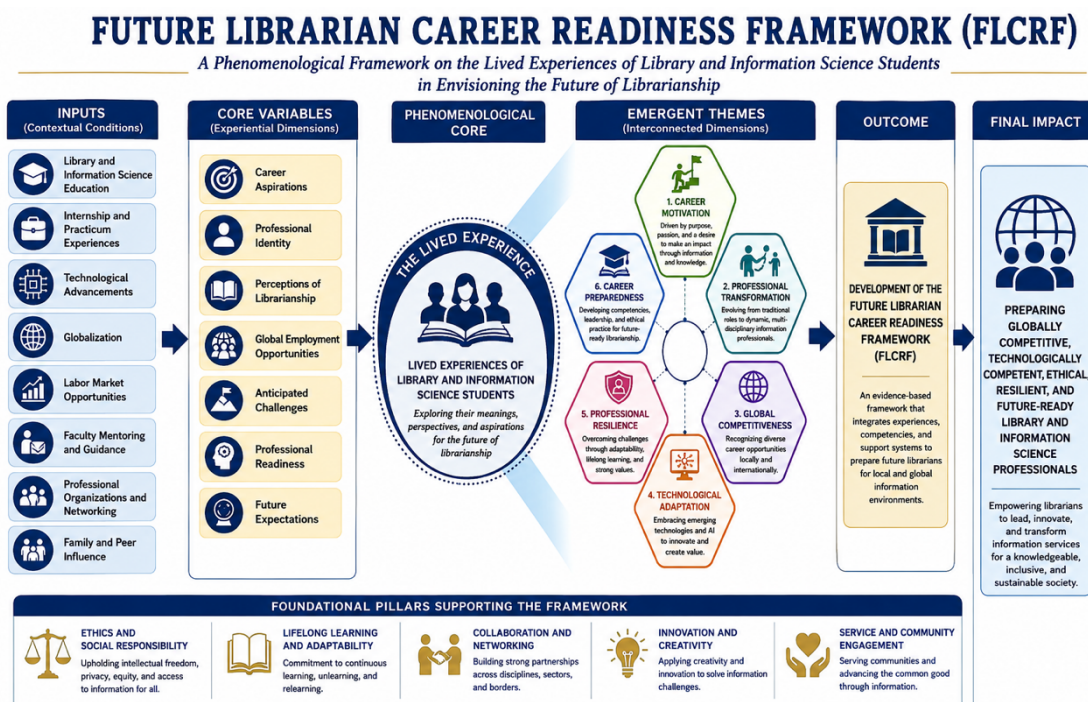
Composite Description of the Phenomenon

The integration of participants' textual and structural descriptions reveals that the future of librarianship is understood as a profession characterized by continuous transformation, expanding opportunities, technological innovation, and lifelong professional growth. Participants viewed librarians not only as custodians of information but also as educators, technology facilitators, researchers, digital information specialists, knowledge managers, and advocates for equitable access to information. Although they anticipated challenges associated with rapid technological change, public misconceptions, and increasing professional demands, they consistently expressed confidence that continuous learning, institutional support, ethical leadership, and technological competence would enable future librarians to thrive within increasingly interconnected global information environments.

Essence of the Phenomenon

The essence of Library and Information Science students' lived perspectives regarding the future of librarianship lies in their recognition that the profession is no longer defined by traditional library functions but by its expanding role in managing knowledge, facilitating learning, supporting research, preserving cultural heritage, promoting digital transformation, and advancing equitable access to information. Participants perceived themselves as future professionals who must continuously adapt to technological innovation while preserving the ethical, educational, and service-oriented foundations of librarianship. Their lived experiences reveal that future-ready librarianship is grounded in technological competence, professional resilience, global competitiveness, lifelong learning, collaborative leadership, and meaningful institutional support. Collectively, these perspectives formed the empirical foundation for the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), which serves as an evidence-based guide for preparing globally competent library and information professionals capable of responding to the evolving demands of contemporary information societies.

Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF)



The FLCRF envisions librarians as transformation leaders in the global information society—empowered by competence, guided by ethics, and committed to lifelong learning and meaningful service.

Figure 2. Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF)



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The Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), as shown in Figure 2, illustrates how the perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship are shaped through the interaction of contextual conditions, personal and professional variables, and their lived educational experiences. The framework posits that factors such as Library and Information Science education, internship and practicum experiences, technological advancements, globalization, labor market opportunities, faculty mentoring, professional organizations, and family and peer influence collectively shape students' career aspirations, professional identity, perceptions of librarianship, global employment outlook, anticipated challenges, professional readiness, and future expectations. Through transcendental phenomenological analysis, these experiences converge into six interconnected themes—career motivation, professional transformation, global competitiveness, technological adaptation, professional resilience, and career preparedness—which collectively form the empirical foundation for the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF). The framework proposes that preparing globally competitive Library and Information Science professionals requires a holistic approach that integrates technological competence, ethical practice, lifelong learning, leadership, collaboration, adaptability, and institutional support. Consequently, the FLCRF serves as an evidence-based guide for higher education institutions, professional organizations, library leaders, employers, and policymakers in strengthening curriculum development, professional preparation, workforce planning, and continuing professional development to ensure that future librarians are equipped to thrive in increasingly digital, interdisciplinary, and globally interconnected information environments.

Conclusions

This transcendental phenomenological study explored the lived perspectives of Library and Information Science (LIS) students regarding the future of librarianship. The findings demonstrate that participants perceive librarianship as a dynamic, technology-driven, and globally relevant profession whose responsibilities now extend far beyond the traditional management of library collections. Through their educational experiences, internship exposures, and interactions with practicing professionals, participants developed a broader understanding of librarianship as a profession that supports education, research, knowledge management, digital transformation, scholarly communication, and equitable access to information. Their narratives reveal that professional identity is continuously shaped by formal education, experiential learning, technological developments, and meaningful engagement with contemporary information environments.

The participants recognized the expanding career opportunities available to future librarians across academic institutions, public libraries, government agencies, archives, museums, research organizations, corporate knowledge management, digital repositories, healthcare institutions, technology companies, and international organizations. They likewise viewed globalization and technological advancement as creating new opportunities for Filipino librarians to contribute within increasingly interconnected information ecosystems. Rather than perceiving artificial intelligence and digital transformation as threats, participants regarded these developments as catalysts for innovation that require librarians to continuously strengthen their technological competence while preserving the profession's ethical, educational, and human-centered foundations.

The study further revealed that future-ready librarianship requires an integration of technological expertise, critical thinking, communication, leadership, adaptability, ethical decision-making, collaboration, and lifelong learning. Participants emphasized that professional success depends not only on individual commitment but also on sustained institutional support through responsive curricula, meaningful internship experiences, faculty mentoring, professional networking, continuing professional development, and supportive government policies. Their lived experiences likewise underscored the continuing need to address persistent misconceptions regarding librarianship through stronger public advocacy and professional visibility.

The integration of participants' lived experiences culminated in the development of the Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF), which provides an evidence-based framework for preparing globally competitive Library and Information Science graduates. The framework emphasizes that the future of librarianship will be shaped not only by technological innovation but also by the preparedness, resilience, adaptability, leadership, and global competencies of future information professionals. By providing deeper insights into students' aspirations, challenges, competency needs, and support systems, the study contributes to the growing international discourse on future-ready librarianship, Library and Information Science education, workforce development, digital transformation, and artificial intelligence-enabled information services.



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Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications for strengthening Library and Information Science education and preparing future-ready information professionals. Higher education institutions offering Library and Information Science programs are encouraged to regularly review and enhance their curricula to ensure alignment with emerging developments in artificial intelligence, digital librarianship, research data management, digital preservation, information technologies, scholarly communication, and global information services. Experiential learning opportunities, particularly internships and practicum programs, should likewise be strengthened to provide students with meaningful exposure to diverse professional environments and emerging career pathways.

Faculty members are encouraged to continue serving as mentors who foster students' professional identity, leadership potential, ethical responsibility, technological competence, and lifelong commitment to learning. Likewise, professional organizations, particularly the Philippine Librarians Association, Inc. (PLAI), may strengthen mentoring programs, student engagement initiatives, continuing professional development activities, international collaborations, and advocacy campaigns that increase public awareness of the evolving roles and societal contributions of librarians and information professionals.

Government agencies responsible for education, labor, culture, science, technology, and information services may consider strengthening policies and investments that support library modernization, digital infrastructure, workforce development, research initiatives, scholarship opportunities, and continuing professional education. Increased institutional support for technological innovation and professional advancement may further enhance the global competitiveness of Filipino librarians and expand employment opportunities within local and international information environments.

Employers across libraries, archives, museums, educational institutions, government agencies, corporations, and information organizations are likewise encouraged to establish collaborative partnerships with higher education institutions to facilitate internship opportunities, competency development, professional mentoring, and workforce preparation. Such partnerships may help ensure that graduates possess the competencies required by rapidly evolving information environments while supporting a smoother transition from academic preparation to professional practice.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to extend the present investigation by exploring the perspectives of practicing librarians, employers, faculty members, policymakers, and other stakeholders involved in Library and Information Science education and professional practice. Comparative studies involving multiple countries, longitudinal investigations of career development, and mixed-methods research examining professional competencies, employability, leadership, workforce sustainability, and artificial intelligence integration would further enrich the growing body of knowledge on future-ready librarianship. The Future Librarian Career Readiness Framework (FLCRF) proposed in this study may likewise be validated, refined, and applied across diverse educational and professional contexts to assess its effectiveness in guiding curriculum enhancement, professional development, and workforce planning for Library and Information Science education.

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