

---

# **Educating school librarians in the English-speaking Caribbean: The case of the department of library and information studies at the University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica**

**Paulette Stewart**

*The University of the West Indies, Jamaica*

---

*School library education in the English-Speaking Caribbean is offered at the undergraduate level at the Department of Library and Information Studies (DLIS), University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica. This research describes the programme and the challenges faced by the Department in its delivery. A survey was conducted during the 2011 academic year and the results indicated that the DLIS needs to restructure its undergraduate B.Ed. School Librarianship programme to include recent trends in school library education. It was recommended that the DLIS develop a two tiered programme to be delivered using the blended-learning mode in order to increase its student in take. In addition to this, DLIS needs to include courses that will allow its graduates to possess the necessary knowledge and competencies to function effectively in school libraries in this Information Age.*

## **Introduction**

This paper describes school library education in the English-speaking Caribbean within the context of current trends. It highlights the nature of the problem in the delivery of the programme at the DLIS. The main problem experienced by the Department is the decline in enrolment in the B.Ed. programme which arises from the failure of potential students to meet the matriculation requirement of the university and the deficiency of the full-time face-to-face only delivery mode to meet the demands of present day students. The paper also presents the findings from a brief survey done in the present academic year by graduates assessing the Department's B.Ed. (School Librarianship) and one of the past Heads of Department (HOD). It concludes with recommendations for improving the programme. This research is significant in that DLIS is the institution that trains school librarians in the Caribbean and there needs to be empirical evidence to support anecdotal evidences and observations in order to effect changes in order to preserve the B.Ed. programme.

## **Library Education in the Caribbean**

Library education was first available within the Caribbean at the Eastern Caribbean Regional Library School in Trinidad which closed its doors in 1962 and it was not until 1971 that a library school was established at The University of the West Indies, Mona Campus. At present UWI serves 15 English-speaking countries through three physical campuses in Barbados (Cave Hill), Jamaica (Mona), and Trinidad and Tobago (St. Augustine), and its centres located in twelve other English-Speaking Caribbean islands and its Open Campus. (McIntosh, 2008, p. 1). The DLIS was established to educate information professionals in the English-speaking Caribbean with funding

---

Copyright of works published in School Libraries Worldwide is jointly held by the author(s) and by the International Association of School Librarianship. The author(s) retain copyright of their works, but give permission to the International Association of School Librarianship to reprint their works in collections or other such documents published by or on behalf of the International Association of School Librarianship. Author(s) who give permission for their works to be reprinted elsewhere should inform the Editor of School Libraries Worldwide and should ensure that the following appears with the article: Reprinted, with permission, from School Libraries Worldwide, Volume 18, Number 2, July 2012 pages 21-34.

from UNESCO. The Department is located within the Faculty of Humanities and Education and its mission is to "... provide the highest standard of teaching and research to produce library and information professionals well equipped to face the challenges of the dynamic information environment and capable of managing the information needs of the Caribbean for the twenty-first century and beyond." It sets out to do this by delivering library and information studies (LIS) courses in keeping with international standards that is firmly rooted within the Caribbean context (DLIS Quality Assessment Report, 2012, p. 4)

Initially, the Department offered a single three year undergraduate degree in library studies based on the British model since this has been the pattern for the university, which was once a college of the University of London. Over the years other programmes were added such as the postgraduate diploma in 1974 which was converted to the Master in Library Studies in 1987, and is intended for persons without prior knowledge of LIS and based broadly on the typical entry level graduate degree found in North America. In 1998 the Master of Art Library and Information Studies was added as an advanced degree for students who had done the Bachelor of Library and Information Studies. The Bachelor of Education in School Librarianship was developed in 1997. Prior to this there was no university programme geared specifically toward the education of school librarians. However there was only a diploma programme offered by teachers' colleges that sought to provide dually trained personnel in the area. The Bachelor of Education in School Librarianship therefore began in response to an initiative by the Jamaican Ministry of Education in 1997 that set out to place qualified school librarians in 98 selected primary schools. Hence, the objective was to increase the number of school librarians to meet this demand. This degree is still being offered in conjunction with the School of Education.

The B. Ed. (School Librarianship) is offered to graduates of teachers' colleges who are given one year's credit for their teacher certification and so they are expected to complete the full 69 credit programme over a two year period. Since it is a joint degree programme students are expected to do at least 36 credits in LIS, 24 in Education, 6 from the Faculty of Humanities and a research linked course from either education or the Faculty of Humanities. Students are permitted fewer credits from the Education component because they have already done courses in this area while attending teacher's college. The core knowledge and competencies of a standard library and information professional are covered and include courses on the introduction to LIS, management of school libraries, reference services, cataloguing and classification, children's literature, information literacy and various IT courses. In actuality, these B.Ed. students only do three or four courses less than their BA Library and Information Studies counterparts.

In terms of the Education courses, core courses are offered that instruct students in the pedagogy of teaching and classroom management. They are also taught reflective teaching and educational psychology. To equip these students to cope with the technology advanced age and to use technology in the classroom the education department offers courses such as integrating Computer Teaching into the Curriculum. Among their many courses are the compulsory university courses expected at each year level. All this makes for a very intensive programme of study for the two year period and has been a source of some of the complaints from students about the programme. Another essential component of the degree is the mandatory six week field work/practicum done during the first summer in order to provide students with first-hand experience in the management and operation of a typical school library.

As the only library school in the English-speaking Caribbean that offers bachelor and masters programmes in the field of librarianship, the concept of regional education is intended to provide a programme that is suitable for students across the region. The courses are therefore designed so as to incorporate the realities of the Caribbean and this is further reinforced through their internship experience, most of which usually takes place in various types of libraries within the region. This regional educational concept is very important as it is The University of the West Indies' vision to develop graduates who are regionally responsive and globally attuned (STRIDE, p. 9).

### ***Maintaining Quality Assurance***

The University of the West Indies [DLIS] uses various mechanisms to ensure that its programmes meet international standards. One way of doing this is by having external examiners for courses, especially at the graduate level. These individuals are experts in their field, and are usually selected from among faculty members from universities in North America and Britain. Their prime responsibility is to comment on the appropriateness of the course contents, evaluate the quality of

students' performance in course work and on examinations, and to assist with the marking of research papers. Their comments are then used to improve the course offerings.

Another very important practice adopted by the University to ensure the maintenance of programmes of a high academic standard is the once every five years mandatory review of each Department which is carried out by a team of experts who assesses the programme contents, the teaching, learning and research activities, staffing and physical infrastructure, among other things. Members of the review team usually consist of representatives from library schools in North America or Britain with a few library and information professionals from the Caribbean. The last assessment of the Department was done in February 2012 and some of the recommendations focused on the Bachelor of Education (School Librarianship) programme which has shown some decline in enrolment over the years due to several factors, some of which will be discussed in this paper.

## **Review of the Literature**

### ***Challenges in delivering the Bachelor of Education (School Librarianship) Programme***

The major challenge facing the B.Ed. (School Librarianship) programme is the gradual decrease in number of applicants over the years. It was projected that this programme would attract approximately 20 students per year and this was exceeded in the early years of the programme but since then there is a steady decline in numbers. There are a number of factors responsible for this decline including the fact that the Ministry of Education is no longer pursuing its initiative that gave rise to the programme. There is also a lack of a formal policy on the part of the Ministry with regard to the employment and working conditions for school librarians. In addition, prospective students experience difficulty getting leave from their teaching jobs because since the course is only available only full-time for a period of two years. The teachers are only given one year's study leave with pay, which means, some have to give up their jobs in order to study. The fact that the programme is only offered face-to-face and full-time no doubt is also contributory factors, along with the recent availability of another undergraduate degree programme in school librarianship offered by another local institution/university. For a regional university, the student body consists mainly of Jamaicans and as such is not representative of the many other countries making up the English-speaking areas served by The University of the West Indies. This situation is due in part largely to the underdeveloped state of school libraries in many of these places and the tendency for some of the countries with established school libraries to send their staff to library schools in North America or Britain.

Similarly, Ocholla and Bothma (2009) pointed out the problem of decrease in the number of students in library schools in South Africa. They discovered that library and information studies programmes with diverse qualification programmes, incorporating broader information orientation or specialized information qualification programmes such as Records Management, Publishing, Multimedia, Knowledge Management and Information Technology have in some cases increased or stabilized the number of students. This might be the indication of the direction DLIS needs to go when revising its programme.

### ***Trends in LIS Education***

Before commenting further on the DLIS B.Ed. programme and the way forward, the trends in education and school librarianship will be looked at and discussed, as this will aid in analysing the programme within this context. There is no standard requirement globally for individuals working as school librarians. This can be contentious, especially since it is the only form of librarianship that requires certification in some countries. The challenge of determining the most appropriate education for school librarians arises mainly from the multi-faceted role of the school librarian who ideally should be dually qualified to operate effectively in an educational environment. Furthermore, the field of LIS is rapidly changing and any attempts to educate library and information professionals to work in any type of information unit must take this into consideration.

An investigation of the current trends in school library education by Oberg (2011) showed the effectiveness of online teaching in increasing student numbers when she conducted a study on

"Selected Online Programs in School Library Education from three Countries" (p.4 ). She discovered that Program 1, which used face-to-face instruction, had only 15 students, mostly part-time, per year from the local community. This programme was replaced by an online programme in 1998, due to reduction in student enrolment caused mainly by the economic recession. With the change in method of delivery, an increase in enrolment was observed with as many as 80 students registering yearly and who continue to be mostly part-time, coming from across the country and around the world.

Aina (2005) in focusing on the trends of LIS education in Africa mentioned that it was expected that the LIS curriculum would be market or demand driven to ensure that graduates are employable (p.173). The curriculum Aina (2005) recommended is one that "needs to balance the requirements for the global trends with the immediate environment" (p. 168). She explained that this means that the curriculum is usually designed with the involvement of faculty members in a department, employers of labour and possibly students. She suggested that in order to develop a relevant and holistic curriculum, tracer studies can be used as well as job advertisements in newspapers and interaction with employers in library and information related jobs. By doing this the library school would ensure that the curriculum would be adaptable and feasible and responsive to the immediate environment (p. 168).

### ***School Library Education in Developed Countries and the Caribbean***

There are some obvious differences in the approach to the education of school librarians in developed societies when compared to the Caribbean. An examination of websites at a number of university library schools in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia during the second quarter of 2012 shows that these schools seem to be training school librarians only at the masters' level. Raju (2007) supported this observation by stating that library school were mainly awarding bachelor degrees but in the 1960s these started to be replaced by masters' level degrees. Raju (2007) mentioned that the idea of having a dual route degree (undergraduate and a postgraduate degree) has endured over the years in South Africa. He mentioned that it is relevant as the option of undergraduates LIS studies is convenient for the many LIS service staff undertaking part-time studies to attain professional LIS qualifications (p. 181).

At the Florida State University, for example, there is only a Master of Science in Library and Information Studies that shows a curriculum that covers general librarianship. This curriculum prepares students to work in information organizations including libraries, archives, network services, and agencies. The programme includes the training of school librarians in its Youth Information Needs and Services courses which prepare students to meet the information needs of children and young adults in various settings, including libraries and school media centres. It also includes specializations in Youth Services and School Media (Florida State University Library School). The University of Washington has a Masters in Library and Information Degree Programme for teacher librarians. However, students must first hold a teacher certificate and must acquire a Library Media Endorsement by completing specific course work within the Master of Library and Information Programme or enrol in the certificate programme for the school Library Professional (Information School University of Washington).

At the Charles Sturt University in Australia, school library education is offered only at the master's level. The Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship) is targeted to meet the needs of teachers who wish to become teacher librarians and practicing teacher librarians without a full specialist qualification in teacher librarianship. The programme includes courses such as Digital Citizenship in Schools and Social Networking for Information Professionals (Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship)). In addition to this the CSU offers a Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship. This is a specialized course that is designed for permanent teachers who are appointed as teacher librarians who do not have a qualification in teacher librarianship. This programme consists of courses such as The Teacher Librarian as Leader and Information Environment (Graduate certificate in Teacher Librarianship, 2012 (n.p. ). The courses offered by these universities address the needs of these countries and it would appear that while the courses offered by DLIS are necessary there are other courses required that will meet the need of the Information Age we are living in.

This information is relevant in that DLIS could consider implementing a Masters of Education in School Librarianship degree for teacher librarians who have already gained a B.Ed. (School Librarianship) and would want to pursue a higher degree in this field. These graduates could become adjunct staff in DLIS where they would teach courses in this programme. Another

reason this information is relevant is that if these students migrate to countries like the United States of America and Canada with a Masters in LIS, they would be considered as school librarians as only graduates with a Master's degree in LIS are termed librarians.

The continuous decrease in the number of applicants to the programme is the biggest challenge faced by the DLIS. The present courses offered within the programme are valuable to students, however, it is apparent from examining the literature so far that there is a need for new courses to be offered and old ones upgraded to ensure that graduates are competent to function effectively in a school library environment.

## **Methodology**

### ***Survey of graduates***

The researcher decided to survey DLIS past and present students who pursued or are pursuing the B.Ed. (School Librarianship) programme as to their own assessment of the effectiveness of the programme in meeting its major objective of preparing dually qualified school librarians for the Caribbean region. The rationale for this is to obtain a wider perspective on the nature of the challenges facing the current B.Ed. programme. The DLIS student records, were used to identify and contact the suggested sample of 103 graduates from the 137 who have completed the programme from 1998-2011. There was a challenge to locate them since many have migrated or had left the profession. As a result only twenty one students participated in the survey. Two current students consented to participate in the survey, making a total of twenty-three participants. The data gathered from the questionnaires complemented those obtained from an interview with one of the past heads of department, as well as observations and the personal knowledge of the researcher.

Graduates of the DLIS B.Ed. (School Librarianship) programme completed a newly developed twenty-three item questionnaire consisting of open and closed ended questions and a statement of confidentiality. These were e-mailed to graduates and they were asked to complete the instrument within a week and to return them by e-mail.

The questions on the instrument were constructed based on the research questions which also guided the literature review. It consisted of five sections, the first section sought to find out the participants' demographic data. The second set sought feedback regarding possible changes in matriculation to accommodate students without a diploma in teaching. The questions in the third segment asked for comments about the usefulness of the courses participants had pursued, the fourth section sought participants' opinion on why DLIS was experiencing various challenges in its delivery of the programme and how they think the programme should be restructured. The fifth segment of the questionnaire asked for suggestions as to how DLIS can re-structure the programme in keeping with recent trends and developments. Despite the small size of the sample there were important ideas gained that proved useful in assessing the programme.

An interview was conducted with one of the former Heads of Department (HOD) who is presently working as a part-time lecturer in the department. Being HOD means that she supervised the activities of the department and attended various meetings on the campus on behalf of the department as well as the leading role she has played in developing the B.Ed. in School Librarianship Programme in 1997. Questions were asked to get a feedback on the B.Ed. programme including the challenges faced in delivering the programme as well as on the trend the B.Ed. programme should adopt.

The results were analysed based on the themes that were reflected by the research questions which also guided the literature review and determined the questions on the data collection instruments. The responses to the questions were incorporated with the observations made by the researcher, the data gathered from the interview with the former HOD, which should provide a sounder basis for making more meaningful recommendations for improving the degree programme.

## **Findings**

### ***Demographic data***

At the time of the survey, 59% of the graduates were employed as teacher librarians, two were teachers, two were librarians in academic libraries, while the others were community relations officers.

### ***Change in matriculation of the DLIS B.Ed. (School Librarianship) programme***

Sixty five percent of the participants agreed that the university matriculation requirements should be changed to admit students who did not have a diploma in teaching as a means of increasing the student intake.

In response to what adjustments would be needed thirty-six percent indicated that the length of programme would have to be increased. Sixty-four percent mentioned that these students should be allowed to take pre-qualifying courses to gain an acceptable level of teaching skills while 20% commented that classroom teaching should be included in the practicum for these students. The past head of DLIS agreed that a change in the matriculation would help, "if students were admitted without prior education diploma but given the structure of the university programme this would mean a three year instead of two-year programme and the degree would also have to be offered jointly with the education department. She however recommended that, rather than replacing the present programme that both be offered as the two-year programme was still relevant for teachers already in the system who wished to become librarians.

### ***Usefulness of the DLIS School Librarianship Courses***

The following is a table showing the ranking of the usefulness of the current DLIS courses. Participants were asked to select the courses that they found to be useful or not useful to the programme. The courses that were selected by three or more participants indicate the usefulness of the courses that make up the programme.

***Table 1: Ranking of the Usefulness of the LIS B.Ed. in School Librarianship Courses***

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Useful courses</b>	<b>Courses not useful</b>
LIBS3602 Information Literacy	7	
LIBS3701 Audio Visual in Information Works II	5	1
LIBS Reference Work in Information Studies	5	
LIBS3207 Literature for Children and Young Adults	5	
LIBS2101 Cataloguing and Classification	4	
LIBS1501 Computer Literacy for Information Specialists	4	
LIBS2501 Automation in Information Work I	4	
LIBS2301 Research Methods for Information Specialists	3	2
LIBS1001 Information and Society	3	2

Table 1 shows that the majority of the LIS courses were seen as useful and only three courses were mentioned as not useful by participants. Information Literacy was rated highly as useful while Literature for Children and Young Adults, Cataloguing and Classification and all the Information Technology Courses were also rated as useful. On the other hand the courses that were viewed as not useful were: Information and Society which was seen as focusing too much on the history of libraries rather than teaching skills which could help to improve library operations; Research Methods for Information Specialists because it was seen as not applicable in the job situation as research was not a part of the job description for teacher librarians and Audio Visual in Information Work II because the content learned which covered areas such as video recording, digital video was now outdated.

The education courses that were offered in the programme were also ranked. The education course that was mentioned by 30% of the participant as highly valuable was Guidance and Counselling. The course rated least useful was the ED30C Education in Technology because it was similar to the following courses offered by DLIS: LIBS1501 Computer Literacy for Information Specialists, LIBS2701 and LIBS2702 Audio Visual Information Work 1 and 2.

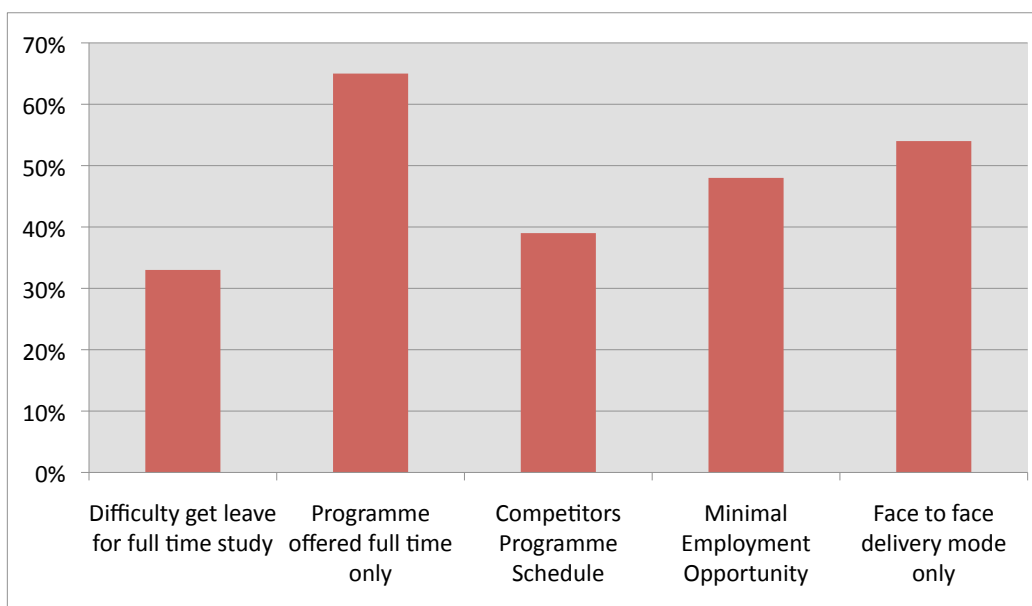
### ***Suggestions for the Implementation of New Courses***

Thirty-one per cent of the participants indicated that they were not exposed to certain technology that they have to use in their school libraries. The technologies are Smartboard, Smartboard Document camera, Moodle software, Blogs, iPod, RenWeb School Management Software, Web 2.0 Tools, and Interactive whiteboard. One graduate of 2004 went on to elaborate that the content learned in LIBS3701 Audio Visual Librarianship was now outdated, for example, the use of Video recorders.

The past HOD that was interviewed “would like to see an expansion of courses the students take, especially in the area of Education to be more streamlined and in keeping with some kind of subject specialization within the area of education - at present the students tend to choose courses in an adhoc fashion”. Without any omission of the present courses, the HOD suggested that the new education courses should be curriculum development, educational administration and information technology in education.” She also felt that “In LIS there needs to be some more depth in general library management before specializing in school library management”.

### ***Possible Reasons for Decrease in Applicants to DLIS***

Figure 1 indicates that 65% participants believe that there is a decrease in the number of applicants because the programme is offered full-time only. Fifty-four per cent indicated that the face-to-face only delivery mode is also a factor. Forty-eight per cent cited lack of employment opportunities, 33% indicated difficulty getting Study Leave and 8% pointed out that the competitor's programme schedule is more convenient. A summary of the other reasons given by participants show that 16% commented that the Ministry of Education does not recognise the importance of librarianship and as such they do not promote the profession. The Ministry of Education also did not have a salary scale for teacher librarians and there was no official in the Ministry responsible for the salary and working conditions of school librarians. Other comments were that the Ministry of Education and some school administrators needed to show respect for librarian and the library programme and that the B.Ed. programme was not properly marketed. The past HOD mentioned that the inability to attract students from other Caribbean countries was due to the lack of a defined national school library service in all but one of these territories as well as the distance and cost of education, since they would need to come to Jamaica.



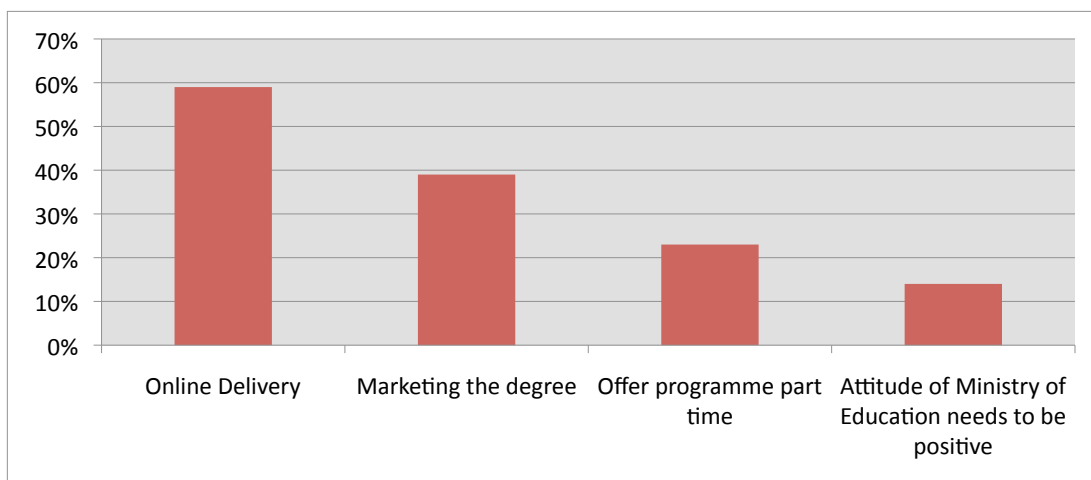
**Figure 1: Possible Reasons for Decrease in Student in take in DLIS B.Ed. Programme**

### ***Strategies to Improve the Number of Applicants***

Fifty-nine percent indicated that DLIS should offer the programme online. The past HOD supports this idea but cautioned that much consideration has to be given to staffing, other resource issues and the sustainability of the programme before embarking on such a move. A preferred approach suggested by the past HOD seems to be the blended-learning approach. Thirty-nine per cent believe that if the programme was effectively marketed there would be an improvement in the number of students. Only 23% indicated that this increase would happen if the programme was offered both as part time and full time.

One participant bemoaned that the programme was not the cause for the poor intake of students but the treatment meted out to librarians at the workplace. This participant mentioned the heavy workload which was supported by the past HOD. In addition to this is the fact that school librarians are not paid as senior teachers. This participant went on to state that the enrolment would not increase until these issues were addressed as people were of the view that teacher librarians were not important.

To overcome the decrease in applicants to the DLIS the past HOD proposed massive promotions at teachers colleges, schools and other places to attract recent graduate teachers and those already in the school system. However the low morale, overwork, discrepancy in remuneration of the present teacher librarians would also need to be addressed if the promotional campaign and marketing of the programme were to be effective.



**Figure 2: Strategies to Attract Students to Pursue the B.Ed. Programme**

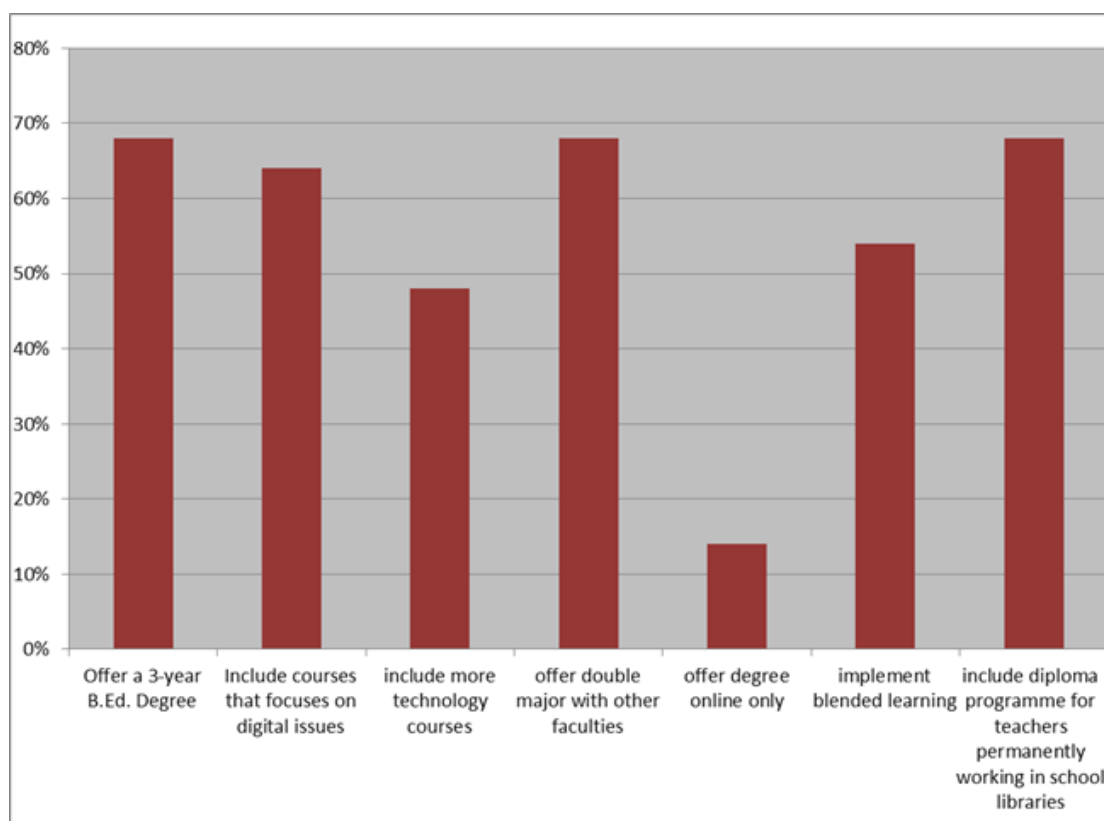
### ***The Way Forward for the Department***

In seeking suggestions from participants on the way forward, 68% of them proposed that DLIS should offer a three-year B.Ed. degree which includes a double major so that students' employment possibilities would be widened as indicated by Aina (2005) in the literature review. Sixty-eight percent also mentioned that DLIS should offer a dual degree in conjunction with other faculties for example Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC). Fifty-four percent of the participants indicated that blended learning should be implemented to increase the number of students. Sixty-four percent confirmed that in order to keep on the cutting edge, courses that focus on digital issues should now be included in the programme while 48% would like to see more technology courses included in the programme. Only 14% agreed that the degree should be online only.

Sixty-eight percent of the participants noted that a restructuring of the DLIS B.Ed. programme should take into consideration a diploma programme for teachers who are permanently placed in school libraries. The past HOD was opposed to this idea as diploma programme might seem feasible but it would confuse the issue as the trend in education is moving



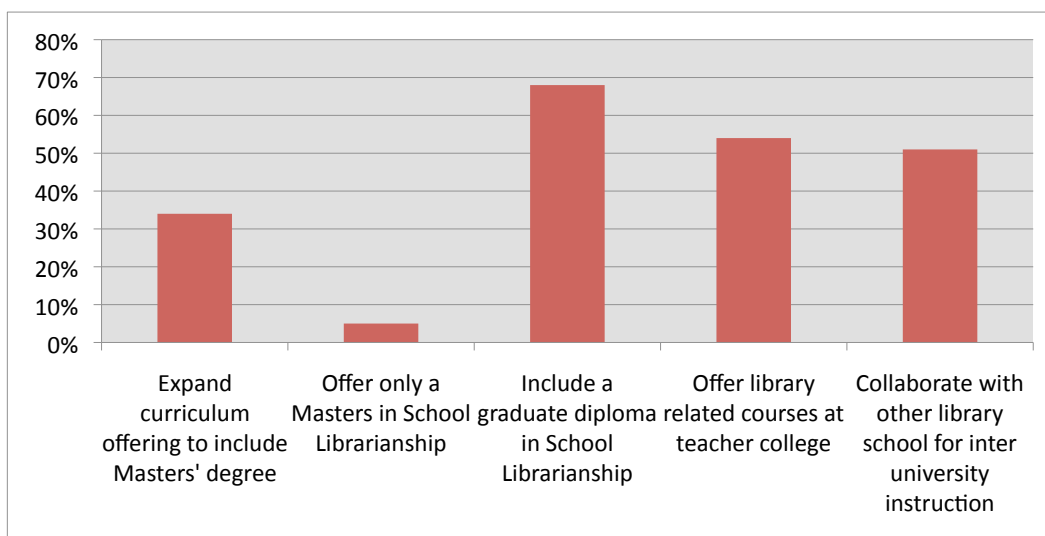
more and more toward teachers having degrees so a diploma might further downgrade the standing of the school librarian before their peers. It was suggested that what might be more meaningful is the same degree programme offered online during the summer.



**Figure 3: Trends that DLIS should Adopt**

Fifty-four percent of the participants proposed that when the B.Ed. programme is being restructured DLIS should offer library related courses to teachers' colleges that have no library courses while 51% indicated that the restructuring should include collaboration with other library schools in other countries for inter-university instruction. Thirty-four per cent suggested that a Masters degree in school Librarianship be implemented while only 5% suggested that DLIS should offer School Librarianship only at the masters' level. The past HOD carefully pointed out that for DLIS to offer a Masters' degree in School Librarianship persons need to be adequately qualified in LIS and Education so that they can pursue advanced studies in either.

The past HOD also stated that there were quite a few rational reasons for the introduction of an undergraduate LIS programme at the inception of the department. The main one being, that when the prospective students from the Caribbean were surveyed, it was found that the majority had only high school certification and so would not qualify for entry into a postgraduate programme. She further pointed out that in any restructuring of the curriculum DLIS needs to look at staffing and resources, the career path for the school librarians, the knowledge and competencies they need to function effectively in today's learning environment and also take into consideration the changes occurring in the education field as teachers are now being required to have certification. Recommendations made by the past HOD include starting with blended learning and then long term online delivery of courses; and the development of a more specialized curriculum that meets the demand of the profession; that DLIS consider also developing a three year dual qualification Bachelor programme for newcomers with no previous training in education.



**Figure 4: Suggested Restructuring of the B.Ed. Programme**

## Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The analyses of the findings were discussed in regards to the responses given. The responses for each research question were collated and summarised in terms of percentage or in the case of worded responses, a summary was made that represented the responses of all the participants.

### ***Change in Matriculation***

Based on the data collected the majority of participants along with the former HOD interviewed agreed that the matriculation requirement should be revised to admit students who did not have a diploma in teaching. The researcher has over the past three years assisted with the selection of applicants to the department and during this process observed that many applicants to the B.Ed. programme had no diploma in education and as such were not accepted. Over time this observation has led the researcher to believe that if the matriculation requirement and the B.Ed. in School Librarianship could be adjusted the number of students in the department would increase significantly.

The suggestion that the programme should be lengthened to accommodate the additional courses is a reasonable one. The DLIS would not have a problem in making this adjustment because it works closely with the School of Education which has a practicum component for its education students. The students who would have matriculated to DLIS without a diploma in teaching would be expected to do the relevant courses and the practicum in this department. After the practicum is completed in the School of Education students would then do another practicum in a school library or both practicums could happen concurrently but over a longer period of time.

### ***Usefulness of the DLIS School Librarianship Courses***

The course LIBS1001 Information and Society was considered least useful by students because of the history component. It is obvious that these participants are not aware that there needs to be an understanding of the development of libraries in order to appreciate them and manage them effectively and efficiently. It could also mean that these students do not have a liking for history.

Having looked at the description of this course, the researcher believes that participants who indicated that this course is useful could have gained an understanding and appreciation of the historical foundation of libraries and that would have helped to guide them in their roles and responsibilities and appreciation for their users.

School librarians in the Caribbean do not work in a "publish or perish" environment, therefore if they are not conducting research they would not see the usefulness of having research skills that they gained from the LIBS2301 Research Methods for Information Specialists course. Participants who recognized that the research methods course is useful are those who have

pursued a master's degree which include those working in academic libraries. In this case these librarians who do not see the course as useful should be made aware that librarians need to generate their own research in whatever institution they are employed and also can support classroom teachers who guide students in conducting research for school based assessments and other areas.

The lack of usefulness of the LIBS3701 Audio Visual in Information Works<sup>11</sup> could stem from the fact that the researcher is aware that not many technologies are used or are available in some school libraries, therefore this computer course was seen as least useful because participants were not able to use the skills learned. In addition to this, librarians working in school libraries with technologies would find that the content learned which covered areas such as video recording, digital video was now outdated.

By virtue of managing a school library, the researcher is aware that the courses that were rated as highly useful (Literature for Children and Young Adults, Cataloguing and Classification and all the information technology courses are those that represent areas of compulsory knowledge that is required in administering a typical school library. Students who rated Guidance and Counselling as highly valuable might have done so because currently children are having more behavioural problems and so these teacher/librarians find this knowledge useful in helping them to cope in this high-pressure environment.

It is apparent that the DLIS computer courses overlap in content with the ED30C Education in Computers that is currently offered in the School of the Education. This was detected by DLIS previously. However, if students are guided in their course selection then this overlap could be avoided.

### ***Suggestions for the Implementation of New Courses***

An analysis of the data collected shows that it is apparent that LIS courses were still valuable. This finding is an indication that the teaching staffs continue to upgrade the courses each academic year to ensure that current issues and concepts are included to remain relevant. However, there seems to be a gap in the technology courses. Participants have made reasonable suggestions with regards to the implementation of new technology courses/adding new content areas to technology courses. This conclusion comes against the background that they are using software and technologies in their school libraries as indicated by their responses to which they are not exposed in the relevant library courses. An audit of the technology used in the schools and their libraries needs to be done continuously so that this area is addressed in a timely manner if graduates are going to see the library school as relevant.

The concept of having students pursue a subject specialization in Education is a worthwhile notion, because students would graduate not only being qualified as a school librarian who pursued some courses in Education but also teachers who are qualified to be for example literacy specialists. This would widen their scope for employment. The researcher agrees with the past HOD that a more in-depth library management course should be introduced. The recent feedback from the Quality Assurance Review, as well as the Department's recently completed review confirm that graduates are expected to perform as managers.

### ***Reasons for the decrease in applicants to DLIS***

It is evident that offering the programme full-time and face-to-face only are the two main factors that have contributed to the steady decrease in applicants. This also becomes evident when applicants indicate on their application form, that they would prefer to do the programme part-time although this is not given as an option. When they discover that the programme is not offered part-time, some of them opt to do other degree programmes that are offered part-time. This is a clear indication that DLIS needs to now offer the programme part-time.

The researcher believes that when the programme takes the blended learning or online format there will be an increase in the number of students as was evident in Oberg (2011) study. This belief is stemmed from the fact that quite a number of would be applicants have telephoned or asked openly about the implementation of an online B.Ed. programme.

Based on the recently completed departmental review, the faculty was aware of this and were in the process of devising various strategies for restructuring the programme. The tendency

is more toward a blended approach which can be facilitated by the UWI's already existing Information Technology infrastructure being used by the UWI Open Campus.

With regards to the decreased number of applicants, the Department collaborates with the efforts organized by the Campus annually to promote its programme. However, this does not appear to be very successful because many of these promotional visits target high schools but as the past HOD mentioned the teachers and community colleges are the more suitable groups to focus on, since the majority of library school applicants tend not to enter the programme directly from high school.

### ***Strategies to Attract Students to Pursue the B.Ed. Programme***

The Department needs to carefully plan a series of promotions that will attract persons to the Department. The promotion should be packaged so that school librarians can be seen as meaningful both personally and career-wise to those DLIS are desirous of attracting. The promotions which should include more than print media would have to take into consideration their working conditions and the study leave allowances that are given by the Ministry of Education. These promotional efforts should include rationale for becoming a school librarian as prospective students will need to be convinced as to why they need to do a degree in the field of librarianship rather than in another field.

### ***Trends that DLIS should Adopt***

The response from 68% of the participants is indicating that during the restructuring of this programme the length of time students would take to complete the degree would have to be lengthened so that students can comfortably pursue a double major. The present students in this programme have also voiced this concern in meetings with faculty. It is their opinion that they will be more marketable after graduation as suggested by Aina (2005). If they are unable to get a job as a teacher librarian, then they can also seek a job as a literacy specialist or a science teacher. With the present tight job market in the Caribbean and in particular Jamaica this suggestion would help these graduates to be more marketable.

It should not be a problem to offer a double major as these students are allowed to pursue out of faculty/department courses. In addition to this some of the courses offered by some of these faculties would complement the librarianship course. Participants suggested the Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication (CARIMAC) where degree programmes are offered in Digital Media Production and Media and Communication.

Teachers who are presently operating school libraries and are not trained in school librarianship could be encouraged to pursue courses over the summer as the programme could be restructured so as to include a summer school component. This is a more acceptable suggestion as the Ministry of Education in Jamaica is insisting that all teachers should have at least a first degree. Note should be taken of the 14% who indicated that the programme should be delivered using only the online mode. It is likely that these participants are aware that students in the UWI Open campus are doing all their programmes online. However, DLIS is not at the stage where they can offer all courses online. One course that would need careful planning if it is to be offered online is the Cataloguing and Classification Course.

The past HOD stated that there were quite a few rational reasons for the introduction of an undergraduate LIS programme when the department began. The main one being, that when the prospective students from the Caribbean were surveyed it was found that the majority had only high school certification and so would not qualify for entry into a postgraduate programme. This meant that the only sensible thing to do was to opt for an undergraduate programme. This continues to be the pattern even today where the majority of students entering the programme are undergraduates. Therefore, the B.Ed. (School Librarianship) is still viable and necessary. Additionally, partnering with another university would be difficult because not many universities offer a B. Ed. in school librarianship. Adopting the graduate level trend would be going against hard evidence. The DLIS would attract very few applicants as is evident by the small number of Masters students who choose to do the courses on school libraries and children's literature over the years, as well as very few of these graduates who are employed in school libraries.

### ***Recommendations***

There is a constant demand for school librarians because of their importance in the education process. The B.Ed. (School Librarianship) programme that serves the entire Caribbean should not be discontinued. However, present trends in LIS education and the findings from this survey would suggest the need for serious overhauling of the existing programme to better reflect the trends in school library education and the social and personal circumstances of the prospective students. Based on the information garnered from the survey, the interview with a former head of department, the trends in school library education, and the researcher's own involvement in the programme, the following recommendations are being made:

- Accepting students without a diploma in teaching is obviously one way in which DLIS could get more students. It is logical to conclude that the time frame of the degree would have to be lengthened to three years to include the additional courses that would be required for these students to learn the theory and practice of teaching. This comes against the background that teacher librarians in the Caribbean are often times required to teach other subjects other than information skills.
- The Department should develop a two-tiered programme, continue the present two-year programme for persons with teacher certification and implement a three year programme for those without teacher certification so as to increase the intake of students. The programme should also have two practicum periods – one for teaching experience and the other for working in a library. This should lead to a more rounded experience.
- After the reorganization of the present B.Ed. School Librarianship programme, DLIS should consider implementing a Masters in School Library Education to provide a programme for graduates who want to continue higher education in this field.
- To make the programme more marketable and attractive and to provide greater employment opportunities the programme should be so designed to allow students to pursue a minor in another subject area.
- For greater flexibility the programmes should be offered online and during summer so that working teachers can continue to hold their jobs and study. This would, in part, solve the study leave problem. The blended approach might be more feasible in light of the fact the infrastructure is already in place for online teaching and learning.
- Another way of making the course more flexible would be summer offerings which would facilitate teacher attendance during their holiday period. It would also allow persons in the two year programme to lessen the time it takes to complete the programme. Care and thought would have to be exercised so that this approach will not reduce the number of face-to-face students in the BA programme which offer similar courses and are taken by students who have their Diploma in teaching. This mode of delivery would strengthen the regional concept and the possibility of attracting students from other Caribbean countries is very high.
- The Web 2.0 and Web 3.0 tools have brought about an innovative way of collaborating, editing and sharing information in libraries and in the field of education. To have our graduates master and use these tools effectively, DLIS needs to upgrade the contents of the existing technology courses to include the Web 2.0 and 3.0 tools. In order to encourage graduates to constantly upgrade their technological skills DLIS should develop a technology course for graduates who have graduated from the Department for a specific number of years and invite them to return at specific intervals to pursue this course.
- The restructuring of the B.Ed. programme is likely to increase the number of courses offered. In light of this, DLIS should consider offering some courses during the summer as other departments do, so as to provide the opportunity for students who want to complete their studies at an earlier time and also to facilitate re-sits.
- Although only two participants indicated that the research course is not useful, DLIS should encourage these graduates to become part of the research agenda that is now being organized. This would provide an avenue for them to utilize the research skills that they have learned. DLIS could further create DLIS journal for the publication of research by its graduates. This could serve as a useful resource for persons who are seeking research reports in the Caribbean context.
- Of importance, DLIS needs to organize a well-planned marketing strategy for the Department to ensure that prospective students are made fully aware of what is being

offered, what their employment opportunities are and what they will be able to offer to those whom they will serve.

## References

- Aina, L. O. (2005). Towards an ideal library and information studies (LIS) curriculum for Africa: Some preliminary thought. *Education for Information*, 23, 165-185.
- Charles Sturt University. (1999). Master of Education (Teacher Librarianship): Become a Teacher Librarian. Retrieved from [http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/teacher\\_librarianship\\_education/course-overview](http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/teacher_librarianship_education/course-overview)
- Charles Sturt University. (2010, June 26). Graduate Certificate in Teacher Librarianship. Retrieved from [http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/teacher\\_librarianship\\_gc/course-overview](http://www.csu.edu.au/courses/postgraduate/teacher_librarianship_gc/course-overview)
- The Florida State University School of Library and Information Studies. (2011, August 9). Master of Science in Library and Information Studies. Retrieved from <http://slis.fsu.edu/Graduate-Program/Master-of-Science-Degree>
- Information School, University of Washington. (2012). Department of Library and Information Studies. Quality Assurance Assessment Report. 4. Retrieved from <http://ischool.uw.edu/sites/default/files/mlis/MLIS%20brochure2010-11%20web.pdf>
- Oberg, D. (2012, June 21). Replacing a face-to-face programme with an online programme. Retrieved from <http://conference.ifla.org/past/ifla77/143-oberg-en.pdf>
- Ocholla, D., & Bothma, T.J.D. (2009). Library and information education and training in South Africa. In *Libraries for the Future: Progress and Development of South African Libraries*, 11, 149-168.
- Raju, J., & Arsenault, C. (2007). First-level LIS education and training: A comparison between South Africa and Canada. *Education for Information*, 25, 179-193.
- The University of the West Indies. (2012). Strategic transformation for relevance impact, distinctiveness and excellence (STRIDE). Retrieved from <http://www.uwi.edu/Files/PlanningOffice/StrategicPlan/STRIDE.pdf>

## Author Note

**Paulette Stewart** is a lecturer at The University of the West Indies (UWI), Mona in the Department of Library and Information Studies. She earned a Masters in Library Studies at The UWI and earned a PhD in Educational Administration at the Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Dr. Stewart received the Ken Haycock Leadership Award in 2006 for her outstanding contribution to the field of librarianship in Jamaica and the IASL Takeshi Murofushi Research Award in 2010 to conduct research on "IASL Conferences: An Evaluation of the Attendance Pattern of Participants 1998-2010". She was elected Librarian of the Year in 2009 by the Library and Information Association of Jamaica and served as the President of this Association in 2010. She has presented research and position papers at IASL Conferences and her research interests include information literacy and school libraries, school library education, and cooperative learning and multiple intelligences.