



Open Pathways to Professional Development: A Survey of the Continuing Professional Development Activities of Special Librarians in Jamaica

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Abstract

Librarians are operating in a constantly evolving environment, wherein there are new and emerging technologies and changing user needs and expectations. In order to keep pace with these changes, it is essential that librarians engage in continuous professional development. Special librarians, whether they operate within government or private entities play a significant role in national development, fostering good governance and research and development. The special library environment however presents a number of challenges to professional development such as time constraints, limited resources and declining budgets. In light of these challenges, special librarians can benefit from a variety of continuing professional development opportunities available via open access resources.

A survey of special librarians currently employed in Jamaica was conducted. This paper provides an overview of the challenges and barriers faced by special librarians in pursuing continuing professional development and their attitude towards pursuing such activities. It also provides some insight into the formats and types of continuing professional activities undertaken by special librarians and areas of interest for additional training.

Continuing professional development is covered widely in library literature; however, very few focus on special librarians and there are even fewer focusing on the Caribbean. The findings from this study will inform special librarians themselves, the professional associations and the library training institutions of the needs and aspirations of special librarians and to assess whether open access resources have been widely used for professional development.