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Exploring the Viability of Offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science Program at Central Luzon State University, Philippines

Camia Abergos Lasig
Central Luzon State University, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, cma_lasig@clsu.edu.ph

Nuelah San Juan Reyes
Central Luzon State University, nuelahsj@clsu.edu.ph

Nemesio A. Macabale Jr.
Central Luzon State University, namacabale@clsu.edu.ph

Julius L. Ragasa
Central Luzon State University, ragasajulius@clsu.edu.ph

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By

Camia A. Lasig
College Librarian
Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
cma_lasig@clsu.edu.ph

Nuelah SJ. Reyes
University Librarian
Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
nuelahsj@clsu.edu.ph

Nemesio A. Macabale Jr.
Professor IV
Department of Information Technology,
Central Luzon State University, Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
namacabale@clsu.edu.ph

Julius Weldon L. Ragasa
Library Assistant
Central Luzon State University Science City of Muñoz, Nueva Ecija
ragasajulius@clsu.edu.ph

Abstract

The Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program in the Philippines provides excellent employability due to its high demand in academia and other sectors. This study aimed to determine the viability of offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program at Central Luzon State University. The survey specifically sought to determine grade 11 students' interest in enrolling in the program as well as its market employability in the academic sector in the region. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire from three public and three private neighboring high schools of Central Luzon State University as well as Google forms for higher education institutions. The data were described using the frequency count and percentage. SWOT analysis was also used to evaluate the institution's advantage and capability to offer the program, as well as the program's potential and direction. Findings present that the program is viable and the institution can sustain it. However, there are areas that should be strengthened and improved, as well as potential threats to the program's continuation, such as a lack of awareness and poor performance on board examinations.

Introduction

The Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) is the study of the development, deployment, and management of information resources in print, non-print, electronic, and digital formats and services. Graduates of this program are being prepared to apply information technology to basic library operations and functions. Moreover, they are trained to harness a range of bibliographical and online tools to support teaching, research, and other services (Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No.24, Series of 2015). At present, offering this program in a higher institution is a response to the demand for library and information science professionals due to the shortage in industry, academe, and other sectors. In January 2014, the Department of Labor and Employment released the "Skills Occupational Shortage List" and a licensed librarian was included. Moreover, there are 1,963 Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in the country as of August 2019 (CHED, Higher Education Indicators 2019) and only 88 are offering library and information science courses (David, 2021). At the moment, only one state university in the region offers the program. As a result, the country's shortage of practicing professional librarians can be attributed to a lack of graduates produced by the limited number of HEIs offering the course. This is reflected in the current total number of licensed librarians in the country. According to Board for Librarians member Lourdes David, there are currently only 10,067 licensed librarians registered with the Professional Regulatory Commission (PRC), but only 7,321 of them are active because this includes the retired, the deceased, and those who moved from other professions.

Similarly, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) included Library and Information Science as one of the priority courses for its scholarship program starting Academic Year 2021-2022 (CMO no. 10, s2021). Because of its name and curriculum, Library and Information Science has been clustered with "Technology" by CHED Technical Working Groups along with Information Technology, Computer Science, and Information Systems under the courses aligned with global innovation platforms of Science, Technology, Engineering, Agri-Fisheries, and Math (STEAM).

The BLIS program adheres to CMO 24, Series of 2015, which aims to attain the level of quality desired for the education and training of library and information science professionals. To make LIS education responsive to the challenges of society's changing information needs brought about by rapid technological changes, and in keeping with the need to make LIS professional globally competitive. It supports the university's mission by

offering a program that prepares students for their unique role in gathering, organizing, and coordinating access to the best information sources for the knowledge-based organizations to which they belong, as well as implementing ethical and appropriate information use standards. Librarianship has been one of the 43 professions that was formally recognized and regulated by the state since 1990. Graduates of the course can work in libraries, information centers, computer companies as librarians, indexers, documentation officer, computer file librarians, LIS faculty, programmers, system analysts, records manager, archivist, etc. Hence, the potential employment of its graduates is very promising. Despite these benefits, few schools in the country offer LIS, whether in graduate or undergraduate programs (Obille, 2017). As a result, the researchers would like to explore the possibility of offering the BLIS program at CLSU in order to contribute to the profession's dire needs as well as the country's labor demands.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the viability of offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program at Central Luzon State University, specifically:

1. To determine the interest of Grade 11 students in enrolling BLIS program at Central Luzon State University ;
2. To determine the market employability of BLIS graduates in the academic sector within the region ;
3. To identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the program based on the data gathered.

Research Questions

1. Do students in Grade 11 want to enroll in the BLIS program? Why?
2. What is the market employability of the program's prospective graduates in the region?
3. What are the BLIS program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?

Significance of the Study

The study's findings would be beneficial to higher education institutions considering offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) program. The findings will be used to develop and improve library and information science curricula not only to meet CHED standards, but also to support and contribute to the Philippines' National Economic

Agenda. Furthermore, the study may raise awareness and motivation among students that the BLIS program is an excellent course to take in college because it will provide them with high employability.

Methodology

The descriptive research method was used in the study; this type of research aims to describe a situation, problem, or phenomenon systematically, factually, accurately, and objectively (Garcia, 2017). A survey questionnaire was distributed to 795 grade 11 students from three public and three private schools in San Jose City, Science City of Muñoz, and Talavera. These are the Central Luzon State University's neighboring high schools. These student groups were purposively chosen as respondents because they were expected to enroll at CLSU the following school year. Purposive sampling is a type of sampling based on selecting the individuals as samples according to the purposes of the researcher as his control wherein an individual is selected as part of the sample due to good evidence that he is a representative of the total population (Paler-Calmorin & Calmorin, 2007). The data were described using the frequency count and percentage. Google Forms were also sent to the different higher education institutions in the province and in the region to determine the demand of librarians. SWOT analysis and literature reviews were also used to evaluate the institution's advantage and capability to offer the program, as well as the program's potential and direction.

Data Gathering Procedure

The authors sought permission from the various high schools to collect data for this study by sending a communication letter to the division superintendent for public schools and the school principal for private schools. Anonymity and confidentiality were both guaranteed. The authors also worked with class advisers to help them distribute survey questionnaires inside classrooms to students who wanted to participate in the survey. However, before the students answered the questions, the authors provided an overview of the BLIS program's key features. The questionnaires were collected immediately after the task was completed. Another survey via Google Form was sent via electronic mail and Facebook Messenger to different higher institutions in Nueva Ecija and state universities in Region 3. The completed Google forms were returned to the authors. The raw quantitative data were transferred to an

Excel spreadsheet for further data filtering and pivoting for analysis and interpretation. Descriptive analysis of the data was conducted to summarize the findings.

Results and Discussions

RQ 1: Do students in Grade 11 want to enroll in the BLIS program? Why?

The respondents were asked if they would be interested in enrolling in the BLIS program if it was offered at Central Luzon State University (CLSU) and why. The results show that 46.16 percent of respondents expressed an interest in enrolling in the BLIS program once the course is offered. This implies that there are enough applicants to begin the program given that one class section is estimated to have fifty students. A majority (60.06%) of the respondents want this program to be opened because of its high employability opportunity. Likewise, those who are inclined to take this course may not need to go to other provinces. (See tables 1 & 2 below).

Table 1. Number of respondents indicated interest in enrolment in the BLIS program.

If Bachelor of Library in Information Science (BLIS) course will be offered, would you be interested to enrol?	YES		NO	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	367	46.16%	428	53.84%

n=795

Table 2. Respondents reason in taking the BLIS course

I am interested to enrol Bachelor of Library in Information Science course because…	It is in my field of interest		It offers great opportunity/ employability		It is important to broaden knowledge in modern aspects of librarianship	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
	25	6.89%	218	60.06%	120	33.06%

n=363

RQ 2: What is the market employability of the program's prospective graduates in the region?

The authors conducted another survey via Google Forms to know the market employability in academic institutions within the province of Nueva Ecija and for the State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in Region 3. Of the 11 state universities, 10 have responded to the survey. Findings revealed that there are 68 licensed librarians employed in the said SUCs, but they still need 163 librarians to comply with the CHED standard. Findings also revealed that only half of respondents have Library and Information Science (LIS) graduate support staff and that 288 LIS graduates are still needed, despite the fact that the majority of SUCs indicated a willingness to hire LIS graduates (See Table 3).Though it is not mandatory to employ LIS graduates as support staff, the hiring of library and information science graduates in the library and information centers is advantageous because the Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges (AACCUP) is also looking at the qualifications of the library support staff. As for the private institutions in Nueva Ecija, nine institutions were chosen as respondents for the survey. Findings revealed that out of the 21,963 enrolled, only 14 librarians are available. There are also institutions that do not have professional librarians (see Table 4). These findings indicate a demand for the profession.

Table 3. Number of Needed LIS professional and Graduates among SUCs in Region 3

Region 3 SUCs	Employed of licensed librarians	Employed LIS graduate support staff	Number of Enrollees (AY 2021-2022)	*Interest in hiring LIS graduates (1=Yes,2=No,3=Maybe)	Required number of librarians set by CHED	Number for Additional Librarians	Required number of LIS graduate Support Staff set by CHED	Number for Additional LIS graduate support staff needed
Aurora State College of Technology	2	0	4,300	1	5	3	10	10
Bataan Peninsula State University	9	5	15,000	1	16	7	31	26
Bulacan Agricultural State College	2	2	4,000	1	5	3	9	7
Bulacan State University	25	25	45,000	1	46	21	91	66
Don Honorio Ventura State Univeristy	4	5	32,000	1	33	29	65	60
Nueva Ecija University of Science & Technology	7	0	20,000	3	21	14	41	41
Philippine Merchant Marine Academy	1	0	900	1	1	0	3	3
Tarlac Agricultural University	4	0	6,000	1	7	3	13	13
Tarlac State University	9	0	20,000	3	21	12	41	41
Central Luzon State University	5	1	11,000	1	12	7	23	22
Grand Total	**68**	**38**	**158,200**		**163**	**95**	**326**	**288**

Table 4. Number of Needed LIS professional and Graduates among Institutions in Nueva Ecija

Higher Institutions in Nueva Ecija	Employed Licensed librarians	Employed LIS graduate support staff	Number of Enrollees (AY 2021-2022)	*Interest in hiring LIS graduates (1=Yes,2=No,3=Maybe)	Required number of librarians set by CHED	Number for Additional Librarians	Required number of LIS graduate Support Staff set by CHED	Number for Additional LIS graduate support staff needed
College of the Immaculate Conception	4	4	3,740	1	4	0	8	4
Core Gateway colleges	0	0	2,054	1	3	3	5	5
Divina Pastora College	1	0	1,090	1	2	1	3	3
Dr. Gloria Lacson Foundation	1	0	2,197	1	3	2	5	5
Good Samaritan Colleges	0	1	1,500	1	2	2	4	3
Manuel V. Gallego Foundation Colleges, Inc.	2	0	1,000	1	2	0	3	3

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart College	2	0	3,412	1	4	2	8	8
St John Nepomuceno Parochial School	1	2	700	1	1	0	2	0
Wesleyan University-Philippines	3	5	6,000	1	7	4	13	8
Grand Total	**14**	**12**	**21,693**		**28**	**14**	**51**	**39**

RQ 3 : What are the BLIS program's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats?

SWOT Analysis

The authors interviewed faculty and used study findings for the SWOT analysis. This serves as the foundation for assessing internal potential and limitations, as well as potential or likely external opportunities and threats of the BLIS program. It considers all positive and negative factors both inside and outside the institution that influence its success. Moreover, the SWOT analysis could help in foreseeing changing trends, as well as incorporating them into the institution decision-making process should the program be offered.

As for the **strengths**, the following were identified: First, the BLIS program is one of the priority courses of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Students will not only be able to receive financial aid from CHED and DOST, but they will also be able to contribute to the country's development because priority courses were identified based on national development plans, manpower demands, and a study conducted by the Department of Labor and Employment that determined the in-demand and hard-to-fill courses, skills, and careers that match the projected employment requirements. Second, librarian is in- demand occupation. According to the JobsFit 2022 labor market information report in the Philippines, the librarian occupation is one of the most in-demand and hard to fill occupations from 2017 to 2022. (http://www.ble.dole.gov.ph). Because few institutions offer the program, there is a high demand for the profession. There is also a high percentage of employability, as evidenced by a tracer study of universities with strong BLIS programs and data from the Board for Librarians.

According to a tracer study of universities with Bachelor of Library and Information Science (BLIS) curricular programs, Philippine Normal University has 97.53 percent of employed LIS graduates, the University of the East (UE) has 94.3 percent, and Adventist University of the Philippines has 93.61 percent. These findings corroborate with the statement of Lourdes T. David, member of the PRC-Board for Librarians, that all licensed librarians are employed unless they choose not to for personal reasons like motherhood. Nera

(2014) affirmed the demands of graduates since the Department of Education, Higher Education Institutions, Corporations, and Local Government Units are in need of librarians.

As of 2013, there were 61,581 educational institutions in the Philippines, according to Ramos, Ananoria, and Nera (2014)'s findings in "The Road Map of the Philippine Library Profession." These include elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools. The Department of Education order no. 56, S 11, titled "standards for Philippine libraries," has begun to be implemented. One requirement of this policy is that each elementary and secondary school have a functional library, as well as a librarian. CHED mandates one professional librarian for the first 500 students and an additional librarian for every 1,000 students in higher education institutions. As a result, the current number of licensed librarians is insufficient for academic libraries alone.

RA no. 774 is also an enabling law that requires LGUs to establish and maintain libraries for public use. As of 2014, there are 42,028 local government units in the country that need to establish libraries or reading centers. This would result in the need for at least one librarian (Ramos, Ananoria, Nera 2014).

From 2016 to 2021, the average passing percentage in the Librarians Licensure Examination (LLE) was only 485 (55.38 percent) out of an average of 851 examinees. Though the passing rate is high compared to other professions in the country, there are only few graduates of BLIS or MLIS and examinees and the supply cannot keep up with the demand with such a low examinees. This observation was also documented by several studies, (Ramos, 2012; Obille, 2017).

Licensure Examination for Librarians result for the last Five years

Year	Number of Takers	Number of Passers	Percentage of Passers
2021	237	113	48%
2019	1,024	565	55%
2018	951	466	49%
2017	904	545	60%
2016	1,140	738	65%

(Source: Professional Regulation Commission)

The graduates work in various types of libraries (Academic, Special, School, Public), in information centers, computer companies and publishing companies, as librarians,

Bibliographers, library applications developer, indexers, Abstractors, Cataloger, documentation officer, library assistant, computer file librarians, LIS Faculty, programmers, system analysts, records manager, archivist, geographic information systems librarian. (CMO 24,2015). Because graduates of information and library science degree programs are putting their skills to use in their communities, businesses, and other organizations, it demonstrates the breadth and diversity of opportunities available in the librarian's career. Aside from the careers specified in the CMO, the graduates of BLIS can work as Web Archivists as more libraries have begun the process of establishing a website presence, which involves archiving digitized documents onto the website for access by employees or possibly the public. They can also work as data officers who do data processing, data mining, and analysis. Some graduates build their own integrated systems, while others work as researchers and data curators, assigning appropriate metadata and archiving data sets in digital repositories. There are librarians who are called information specialists, like in the Department of Science and Technology or Knowledge Management Specialist at the Department of Trade and Industry. Working with information is so adaptable in library and information science careers that it can open doors into almost any type of work setting one can imagine.

Third, the salaries of LIS professionals are comparable to those of other professions. Librarian salaries in the government range from Salary Grade 10 to Salary Grade 24, or from 21,205 pesos to 86,742 pesos. (based on SSLV 2021). According to (https://www.payscale.com) and interviews with private-sector librarians, the average entry level is between 15, 000 pesos and 20, 000 pesos. Because of the information included in the course, the item "information system analyst" or "information officer" are also given to librarians' professionals with an entry level of SG 11 or 12.

Fourth, facilities and equipment are available. Classrooms are equipped with instructional technology and are conducive to learning. The university library is available for on-campus training. It has an Integrated Library System, which improves students' ability to use library technologies. Book titles relevant to the program are available and continues acquisition of information sources in various format are carried out. The college has internet access as well as computer laboratories and a reading room.

Fifth, faculty are qualified. The faculty who will teach BLIS courses all have master's degrees, are educationally prepared, have relevant experience, and are in compliance with CHED requirements. Another seven strong faculty members of the Information Technology department who would handle ICT courses are all masters' degree holders. Some of them

have doctorate degrees. Faculty members who would handle general education courses and other required subjects are available.

Lastly, the curriculum is well- designed. There are 24 ICT units in the BLIS program. The addition of IT courses enhances the program by keeping it up to date with rapid technological advancements. Entrepreneur librarianship is added to prepare graduates for business, to engage in library and information science entrepreneurial ventures to create jobs, to nurture and build enterprises for self-employment, job creation, and the employment of others, and to sustain the business to contribute to the nation's economic growth. The curriculum includes a Comparative Librarianship course. Students will be exposed to various university libraries' innovative methods, with an emphasis on ASEAN and Japan libraries. The Foreign Language subject will prepare students for their practicum in ASEAN countries and in Japan. Similarly, the Information Resources and Services II course will focus on teaching students how to identify, evaluate, and index keywords and information sources in agriculture, both print and electronic. These are the distinct components of CLSU's BLIS curriculum that support the university's mission and vision.

Weaknesses were also identified. First, there is a lack of faculty to teach LIS courses. There are librarians available in CLSU to teach LIS major courses. However, to accommodate the anticipated increase in enrollment, an additional faculty member should be hired. There aren't enough librarians and information science professionals. As stated, there are 10,067 licensed librarians as of 2020, but only 7,321 are active due to the retired, deceased, and those who transitioned from other professions. Other librarians work abroad as well. Another weakness is that librarianship is not known profession. Many people are unaware of the profession, despite the fact that it is in high demand. Lascano (2021) found in her study that respondents indicated that they would not enroll in the LIS program because it is not popular and they already have plans for what to study in college. Some people are aware of the program, but they are unaware of the significance of the profession.

Opportunities for this program are increasing as there is a greater demand for technologically aligned courses. The integration of 24 units ICT subjects are advantageous to prospective graduates. Computer skills are necessary in every field of life. The demand for people who can manage information is growing as the world grows increasingly reliant on rapidly communicated information for decision-making. The potential for competent workers appears infinite, ranging from classic professional employment in libraries to evolving positions in information centers. Another is the concept of internationalization of the

program. Because the Central Luzon State University has strong ties with universities abroad, students in the BLIS program may have the chance to do their On-Job Training overseas. This has a number of educational benefits, including allowing staff and students from both sides to study and conduct research overseas, travel abroad, learn about other cultures, and enhance collaboration with partner institutions.

The financial viability of the program is also considered. Assuming an average of 50 student enrolment per year level, the program will generate at least P467,000.00 in net income from tuition and other fees per year level, for a total of P1.7M. Because the program's facilities and equipment are already available for shared use, the program's initial investment will be lower. Central Luzon State University, as one of the state universities in the country, is funded by the national government. Faculty hiring will not be charged to CLSU. This implies that the program's offering is expected to generate a positive net value.

Projected net income for BLIS program offering

Year of Offering	Students	Income from Tuition and other Fees	Share in the Lab Maintenance	OJT Visitation	Estimated Net Income
1	1st year	487,000.00	20,000.00	0	**467,000.00**
2	1st & 2nd	991,925.00	60,000.00	0	**931,925.00**
3	1st, 2nd, & 3rd	1,628,800.00	100,000.00	40,000.00	**1,488,800.00**
4	1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th	1,804,175.00	100,000.00	40,000.00	**1,664,175.00**
5	1st, 2nd, 3rd, & 4th	1,804,175.00	100,000.00	40,000.00	**1,664,175.00**

Finally, faculty can study abroad. There is no doctoral program in library science available in the country. Faculty can earn their doctoral degree abroad. According to research, studying in foreign country increases creativity, improves language learning, and allows for collaborative research and teaching.

Threats are based on board exam performance**.** From 2016 through 2021, the average national passing percentage for the Librarians Licensure Examination was only 55.38 percent, or 490 out of an average of 851 examinees. Despite the fact that the passing rate is higher than the national passing rate for other professions, the Philippine Regulation Commission records show that some institutions had no passers or had very low passing rates.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine the viability of offering the Bachelor of Library and Information Science program at Central Luzon State University. The study found that there are enough students who have expressed an interest in enrolling in the program once it becomes available. The high employability was the main reason for enrolling in this course. The study also revealed that there is a current demand for librarians in the academic sector in the region. Various works of literature indicated and established the region's demand for its graduates. Throughout the assessment areas, there are weak points that should be strengthened and improved, as well as possible threats to the continuity of the program. For the identified weaknesses of the program, it is suggested that marketing and information dissemination to potential students, in particular, be considered. This could include participation in career fairs and/or tours to existing high-quality library and information services in the Philippines and abroad within various types of organizations, possibly as part of informal career introductions. The BLIS program can also be promoted through online and social media platforms as well as used as a career orientation for incoming college students.

As for the threat to the program, CLSU has a long-standing tradition of academic excellence, which must be instilled in students from the commencement of the program. The Integrated Course Review is a feature of the BLIS curriculum that students must complete as one of their last academic courses in their fourth year. Other than review centers, professors for board exam subjects should provide reviews for graduating students. Students might benefit from practice tests similar to those utilized in board exams. It's also necessary to provide free review-enhancing services to students.

The BLIS program is viable in Central Luzon because the university has sufficient human resources, technology, and other resources. The authors believed that the CLSU Department of Information Technology, which will oversee the program, will be able to sustain and maintain it once it is launched. Furthermore, the university will also support the National Economic Agenda by producing graduates who meet the needs and demands of the labor sector, thereby promoting national development and economic growth.

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