International Journal of Information Resource Management (IJIRM)
Volume 3, Number 4 (October, 2026)
E- ISSN: 1118-7786

BUILDING KNOWLEDGE WARRIORS: THE CASE FOR A DEDICATED MILITARY LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROGRAMME IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the training gap in Nigeria's Defence library workforce, with particular focus on the absence of a dedicated military Library and Information Science (LIS) programme. The study was motivated by the fact that Nigeria's Defence institutions hold classified archives, doctrine repositories, and intelligence documentation, yet the librarians who staff them are trained through the same civilian LIS pipeline used for public, academic, and special libraries, a pipeline never built with that kind of material in mind. An opinion-based, conceptual and analytical approach was adopted, relying on the review and synthesis of literature on Defence librarianship, LIS education in Nigeria, and the role of libraries in national security, together with a comparative review of how other countries at very different resource levels have built military library and information training. Findings revealed that nothing comparable exists in the National Universities Commission (NUC) and Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) regulated curriculum about classified-document handling, Defence archives management, or doctrine-support research, leaving a largely unexamined vulnerability in Nigeria's Defence knowledge infrastructure. The paper further identified strategies for improvement, including a tiered military LIS programme designed jointly across the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), and the Nigerian Army University, Biu (NAUB). The study concluded that the gap lies in the curriculum itself and not in the capability of individual librarians, and that it can be closed incrementally without new regulatory bodies or Western-scale budgets.

Keywords: Defence Libraries, Knowledge Infrastructure, Library and Information Science Education, Military Librarianship, Nigerian Military Institutions.

Introduction

Modern warfare is fought as much with information as with firepower. Command decisions now depend on the speed and accuracy with which intelligence, doctrine, historical precedent, and

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technical data can be retrieved, verified, and placed in front of the people who need them (Sloan, 2008). Hasanov, Tahirov, and Iskandarov (2024), in their article titled "The Future of Warfare," stated that whoever controls the flow, integrity, and retrievability of information holds a decisive advantage before a single shot is fired. The modern battlefield, in other words, is as much an information environment as a physical one, and information environments do not manage themselves; they are built, curated, and defended by trained professionals working within deliberately designed systems.

Nigeria's Defence institutions have not yet organised themselves around that reality. The librarians who staff institutions such as the Nigerian Defence Academy (NDA), the Air Force Institute of Technology (AFIT), and the Nigerian Army University, Biu (NAUB) are capable professionals, but they are trained through Nigeria's generic, civilian Library and Information Science (LIS) pipeline, which was built for public, academic, and special libraries operating in ordinary, unclassified environments. Ossai-Ugbah (2013) implied that nowhere in the pipeline is a librarian taught how to manage a classified archive, structure a doctrine repository, or support intelligence documentation. Nsirim, Clement-Abraham, and Ajie (2024) make a strong recent case for libraries as active partners in Nigeria's national security architecture, yet whatever competence exists in the specialised areas of Defence information work is improvised on the job, acquired informally, or simply absent.

The absence of a military LIS programme in Nigeria is not hard to demonstrate. Every librarian in the country comes through a curriculum approved by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and guided by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN). Okeji and Mayowa-Adebara (2021), for example, examined 31 approved library schools on whether they

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teach digital libraries, and none of the curriculum literature consulted for this paper points to a defence or military librarianship course, option, or programme in any Nigerian university. The military institutions have libraries of their own, but not the training to staff them. Research on military libraries, such as Adepegba and Adedokun (2022) on library use at 2 Mechanized Division and Katamba and Alih (2025) on libraries and the education of army personnel, has focused on what the libraries offer their users and not on how the librarians running them are prepared.

As Nigeria grapples with significant security challenges that unsettle not only the general populace but also those in positions of authority and the security forces entrusted with safeguarding lives and property (Madueke, 2026), the need for libraries and librarians with knowledge of Defence and security librarianship becomes evident. Without a training pathway, the knowledge infrastructure of Nigeria's Defence institutions will keep depending on individual initiative when it needs professional standards. It is within this context that this paper examined the absence of a dedicated military library and information science training capability in Nigeria and explored practical strategies for closing the gap.

Statement of Problem

A Defence institution depends on accurate, timely, organised, and appropriately protected information. Its library and documentation services therefore form part of the institution's knowledge infrastructure. Military libraries may have to preserve operational histories, support doctrine and research, manage technical documentation, and control access to restricted materials. These responsibilities differ in important respects from those normally encountered in public or academic libraries.

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The problem in Nigeria is that the formal LIS education system does not appear to provide a dedicated pathway for these specialised requirements. Nigerian LIS programmes are designed to produce professionals who can work across conventional library and information environments. Research on LIS curricula has identified continuing concerns about curriculum relevance, digital competencies, infrastructure, and the extent to which programmes prepare graduates for changing professional demands (Onwueme, Horsfall, and Azubuike, 2019). Okeji and Mayowa-Adebara (2021), for example, found that digital-library education had become part of many Nigerian LIS curricula but also identified gaps in facilities and implementation. These studies illustrate a broader curriculum-development issue: professional education must change as information environments change.

For Defence institutions, the additional question is whether the existing curriculum adequately prepares graduates for military information work. The literature reviewed for this paper did not identify an accredited Nigerian LIS programme specifically designed around Defence librarianship. There is consequently a distinction between having military libraries and having a formal professional education pathway for military library and information work. In practice, Defence librarians can acquire specialised knowledge through experience, institutional orientation, short courses, and individual professional development. Such routes are valuable, but they do not substitute for a coherent curriculum when specialised competencies are required across several institutions.

This is the gap the study addresses. Existing work on libraries and national security, and on military libraries and their users, does not address how a librarian would be trained to manage classified material or support a Defence institution's documentation needs, and there is no

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framework for building such training across the three degree-awarding military institutions together. This study therefore documents the absence of Defence-specific LIS training in Nigeria, draws lessons from countries that have built it, and proposes a tiered framework for a dedicated military library and information science programme developed jointly by the NDA, AFIT, and NAUB.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a qualitative, desk-based design that combines documentary analysis with comparative case review. It is conceptual and argumentative, consistent with the nature of an opinion-based scholarly paper, and it does not collect primary field data. Instead, it builds its case by examining what already exists, setting it beside international practice, and developing a framework from the gaps it finds.

Three kinds of publicly available material were used: peer-reviewed and professional literature on Defence librarianship, LIS education in Nigeria, and the role of libraries in national security; regulatory and institutional documents on how LIS education is governed in Nigeria, including material on the NUC, the LRCN, and the Nigerian Library Association (NLA), and on the NDA, AFIT, and NAUB and their libraries; and published information from foreign comparators, namely the Combined Arms Research Library in the United States, the Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre in India, and the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) Documentation Centre. The literature was synthesised thematically into the conceptual areas discussed below.

Because the study relies on public documents, it cannot draw on classified or internal material, and its picture of foreign institutions reflects what they choose to publish. It offers no

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empirical test, as it incorporates the author's perspective in interpreting existing findings, in line with an opinion based scholarly work. Since no human participants were involved, no ethical clearance was needed.

Literature Review

Concept of Defence Libraries and Information Professionals

Defence libraries are the libraries attached to armed forces institutions, such as military academies, staff colleges, and service establishments, which organise and provide information for the training, research, and operational needs of the armed forces. They are staffed by information professionals whose work is closely tied to the decision-making and educational functions of the institutions they serve.

In a paper by Onifade, Oyelude, and Uthman (2023), the authors examined knowledge management practices in Nigerian university libraries, and the same logic positions a Defence library as knowledge management and decision-support infrastructure. It captures institutional memory, organises it so it can be found again, and puts it in front of people when they need it. Done well, a staff officer chasing precedent or a commander reconstructing an earlier decision reaches the answer faster; done badly, each rebuilds that knowledge from scratch, informally and unevenly.

Military libraries also take on duties that a civilian public or academic library has no real parallel for. Itsekor, Jegbefume, and Fagbohun (2017) suggested that they must control access to classified and restricted material, so that sensitive documents reach cleared readers and stay closed to everyone else. They are also the natural home for historical and operational archives, they hold the doctrine a fighting force relies on, and they support intelligence documentation.

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Taken together, these duties determine how well a Defence institution remembers what it has learned and how well it applies that memory to current decisions.

Concept of Library and Information Science Education in Nigeria

LIS education in Nigeria is mature but under strain. The NLA was established in 1962 in Ibadan, growing out of the West African Library Association (Goshie, Jimada, and Habiba, 2022). It is the recognised professional body for librarians and LIS educators across the country, and it works with the NUC and the LRCN to regulate the profession. Goshie et al. (2022) explained that the NUC approves academic programmes and oversees quality assurance in Nigerian universities, while the LRCN decides who qualifies as a librarian, sets the required standard of knowledge and skills, and issues accreditation guidelines and minimum standards.

On paper, that is a reasonably sturdy regulatory structure. In practice, LIS programmes run in only 26 of Nigeria's 124 universities (13 federal, 9 state, and 4 private), so the discipline remains a minority offering even within higher education (Simisaye, 2014). Among the newer programmes, many sit inside a university's existing library or consultancy unit and not in a standalone academic department, often lack dedicated laboratories and workshops, and are frequently led by outgoing university librarians rather than trained LIS academics (Onwueme et al., 2019).

Nigerian LIS training is built around the civilian academic, public, and special library setting, which are cataloguing, reference services, collection development, and general information management. Every librarian in the country, including those who later serve in military institutions, passes through this same pipeline, which studies such as Okeji and Mayowa-Adebara's (2021) measure against general guidelines.

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Concept of Nigeria's Degree-Awarding Military Institutions

Nigeria's armed forces run three NUC-accredited institutions that award first degrees, and in some cases postgraduate qualifications, to serving personnel and civilians alike. The NDA in Kaduna produces officer cadets for the Army, Navy, and Air Force, and it has an academic library but no Department of Library and Information Science. The AFIT, also in Kaduna, grew from a technical training school into a full Nigerian Air Force university, and NAUB in Borno State is the Nigerian Army's own university. Both offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in engineering, computing, and management sciences through their own faculties and schools of postgraduate studies and, just like the NDA, neither has a Department of Library and Information Science.

Each of the three has its own academic library, and each library has the same training gap. Their librarians all come through the same civilian pipeline, and none has any more formal exposure to classified-document handling, Defence-records management, or doctrine-support research than the others. Postgraduate institutions such as the National Defence College and the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, add another layer of demand, since their strategic-studies and doctrine work relies on exactly the documentation support this paper argues for. A programme at only one institution would leave the others where they began, so the framework proposed below covers all three.

Concept of Military Library and Information Training: Global Precedents

A dedicated military information science capability is hardly an experiment. It is standard practice among the most professionalised armed forces in the world, and Nigeria can adapt lessons that have already been tested elsewhere.

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The U.S. military treats its libraries as strategic assets. A good example is the Combined Arms Research Library (CARL) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, which supports the Army Command and General Staff College. Its collection runs past 300,000 books and its archives and special collections add more than 200,000 items, while its reference staff answer roughly 30,000 queries a year from soldiers, faculty, and staff. This is a library acting as an active knowledge-support command rather than a passive store of documents (Combined Arms Research Library, 2026).

The UK offers a different model, built around communications and information systems more than traditional library science. Its Defence School of Communications and Information Systems treats information management, records handling, and communications competence as career-track military disciplines with their own training establishment, and not as a side duty handed to personnel trained in something else.

India may be the most useful comparison for Nigeria, since it faces similar resource constraints. The Defence Scientific Information and Documentation Centre (DESIDOC), part of India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has operated since 1970 as a self-accounting DRDO laboratory that collects, processes, and disseminates technical information for Defence scientists. Its Defence Science Library holds roughly 75,000 books and one hundred thousand technical reports, and every year it runs short-term training programmes and workshops for DRDO personnel on library automation, internet use, and related skills. It even publishes its own peer-reviewed outlet, the DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, and it was built by a country that, like Nigeria, had to grow its Defence information capacity under budget pressure (Defence Research and Development Organisation & LIS Academy, 2026).

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South Africa shows that a dedicated military documentation institution can come through political transition with its core function intact. When the Military Information Bureau was disestablished in 1986, its main functions, including the SADF Archives and the Central Library, were kept together, and after the 1994 integration that created the SANDF they became today's Documentation Centre, which holds the archival records of the SANDF and its predecessors. For Nigeria, the lesson is continuity: a well-designed military documentation and library structure can outlast changes of government and force restructuring, as long as its mandate and staffing are protected in law and policy (National Archives of South Africa, 1999).

The pattern holds in a global superpower, a former colonial power, and a fellow developing nation alike. Information management inside Defence institutions is specialised enough to justify purpose-built training pathways, dedicated facilities, and continuing professional development.

Challenges of Military Library and Information Training in Nigeria

The challenges arise from the interaction between a generalist civilian LIS education system and the specialised information demands of a military institution.

One of the most prominent challenges is the absence of Defence specific content in the national curriculum, which has nothing to say about handling classified or restricted-access material, managing operational and historical archives, supporting doctrine development, or building information systems that can withstand the security threats a Defence institution faces. As a result, librarians serving at the NDA, AFIT, NAUB, and comparable institutions arrive with a solid grounding in the fundamentals of librarianship and no formal preparation for the military side of the job. Whatever competence develops is picked up informally, on the job, through individual initiative and not through institutional design.

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Another challenge is that this gap is shared across institutions and has no joint response. Nigeria already has three Defence academic institutions with existing infrastructure and libraries that serve real military-academic communities. It is my suggestion that the first step should be the establishment of a Department of Library and Information Science in each of these institutions, which could contribute directly to a shared curriculum. What is still missing is a deliberate decision to build that curriculum around Defence realities, in place of importing a civilian one unchanged, and a mechanism through which the NDA, AFIT, and NAUB can build it together and not separately.

In addition, there is a genuine tension between the openness that accreditation and academic scrutiny require and the confidentiality a Defence institution must protect. An accredited programme needs published curricula and reviewable student work, but some of what military information officers need to know, such as specific classification protocols, may be too sensitive to teach in an open academic setting. Resistance to change in a traditionally conservative sector further complicates matters, since the proposal asks Nigeria's LIS establishment and its Defence establishment to jointly build something neither has built before. Resistance is likely from both directions: LIS educators may be wary of a specialisation partly outside civilian oversight, and Defence leadership of external academic accreditation.

From a broader perspective, these challenges highlight the stakes for the wider armed forces. A Defence force can preserve institutional memory, support doctrine development, and protect sensitive information only as well as the information professionals who maintain its knowledge infrastructure. Addressing these challenges is therefore essential for professionalising knowledge management across the armed forces.

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Strategies for Establishing a Military Library and Information Science Programme in Nigeria

Addressing the challenges associated with the absence of Defence-specific LIS training requires a combination of institutional, curricular, and partnership strategies. NDA, AFIT, and NAUB leadership should formally explore, together with the LRCN and the NLA, jointly establishing a military library and information science programme, delivered through each institution's own academic structures rather than housed exclusively at any single one of them.

One of the most important strategies is to build on existing institutional anchors. Nigeria does not need to build a new institution to house this initiative, and it does not need to choose a single existing one either. The NDA, AFIT, and NAUB are all NUC-accredited, degree-awarding military institutions, each already running an active academic library. Because none of them yet has a Department of Library and Information Science, establishing one in each is the logical first step, and it would give the programme an academic home within each institution. This mirrors the international precedents: CARL sits inside the Army Command and General Staff College and DESIDOC sits inside DRDO, each built into an existing Defence-academic institution rather than created as a freestanding outside body. The practical question for the NUC, LRCN, and NLA process is not which single institution should own the programme, but how a jointly developed curriculum can be delivered through all three, whether as a common curriculum each runs independently, a shared set of cross-taught modules, or a combination of both.

Building directly on the gaps identified, the programme should rest on five curriculum pillars. The first is core LIS foundations (cataloguing and classification, reference and user services, collection development, and information organisation), which keeps graduates

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recognisable within the accredited profession. The second is military records and archives management, covering the lifecycle of Defence records from creation and classification to retention scheduling, preservation, and controlled disposal. The third is information security and classified-document handling, including access control, handling protocols for restricted material, and the legal and procedural framework governing Defence information in Nigeria. This is the pillar most conspicuously absent from current civilian LIS curricula and the one with the highest institutional risk if left untrained. The fourth is digital libraries and AI assisted knowledge retrieval, which extends AI in libraries research already under way for Nigerian libraries generally to Defence-scale document volumes and security constraints (Adewojo, 2026). The fifth is Defence research and intelligence documentation support for doctrine development and operational research, modelled loosely on DESIDOC's service to DRDO's scientists.

Three delivery tracks would let the programme serve different populations, a postgraduate diploma for LIS graduates entering Defence sector library roles, a shorter modular certificate programme for serving librarians and records officers, and a full degree track integrated into the academic offerings of the NDA, AFIT, or NAUB. Starting with the low cost certificate track would let the pioneering institutions prove the model at low cost and institutional risk, and build support for larger investment, before moving to the diploma and eventually the degree.

Accreditation and partnership must be worked out from the beginning with the LRCN and NLA, so that the specialisation stays inside the recognised professional framework. The NDA, AFIT, and NAUB should act as joint developers and adopters; the National Defence College and the Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Jaji, can contribute doctrine expertise, and sister service academies can serve as future adopting sites. Faculty capacity will have to be built

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deliberately, through serving or retired Defence personnel as adjunct instructors and train-the-trainer exchanges with institutions such as DESIDOC. Finally, a hybrid structure can reconcile academic openness with Defence confidentiality; core LIS and general information security principles can be taught openly and accredited in the normal way, while the most sensitive, protocol-specific content is delivered through restricted-access modules.

From a broader perspective, these strategies highlight the need for a holistic approach. None of the obstacles identified rules the idea out; they are the reason to start small and to start collaboratively.

Conclusion

This paper examined the absence of a dedicated military library and information science programme in Nigeria, with a focus on its implications for the Defence institutions' knowledge infrastructure. The modern battlefield is as much an information environment as a physical one, and what has been missing in Nigeria is the recognition that this principle has a concrete institutional home: the library, and the professionals trained to run it.

The case made across this paper is not that Nigeria lacks capable librarians. It is that even the most capable librarian, trained through Nigeria's existing NUC/LRCN pipeline, has never been taught the specific skills a Defence institution needs: military archives management, classified-information handling, and Defence-specific research support. That gap sits in the curriculum itself, not in any individual librarian's shortcoming, and other countries have closed it at very different resource levels.

The tiered programme proposed here, developed jointly by the NDA, AFIT, and NAUB, built on five curriculum pillars, and developed in partnership with the NLA, LRCN, and sister service

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institutions, offers Nigeria a realistic, incremental path to closing that gap without new regulatory bodies, imported infrastructure, or Western-scale budgets. Information superiority begins long before the first shot is fired, or the first cyber intrusion is detected; it begins with how well an institution manages what it already knows.

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