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Promoting Library Collaboration
in a Changing World.***

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PREFACE

The rapid development in information and communication technology coupled with the everchanging information needs of library users, the multiplicity of varieties of information resources in different format, the complex nature of the information environment and the desire of librarians to meet the needs of their library users, have compelled libraries to rethink their focus and strategies, and embrace library collaboration as a survival strategy. This is evidently clear considering the incessant outcry of budget cuts and perennial underfunding of libraries at all levels. Through strategic collaboration in form of alliances, partnership and consortium building, libraries can always work together to share their resources, facilities, experiences, ideas, abilities and capabilities in support of their various communities. On this note, the Nigerian Library Association, held her 61st National Conference at Akure, Ondo State from 2nd – 7th July, 2023 with the theme “**Promoting Library Collaboration in a Changing World**”. This theme could not have come at a better time than now, taking note of the condition and financial standing of our libraries in Nigeria.

The conference, tagged **AKURE 2023** attracted 77 papers, highlighting the fundamental works on many facets of library collaboration. Each submission was reviewed by experts in the relevant areas. According to the review results, 51 of the papers were selected and presented at the conference. Moreover, further review was conducted after the papers were presented at the conference and selected papers are collected in this book of proceedings. It comprises chosen papers according to the theme of the conference and their novel contributions. The papers in this book provide detailed overview of the key concepts and issues underlying the imperative of library collaboration in a more challenging and dynamic world with a focus on knowledge sharing, collaborative technologies, library consortium, open access initiatives, and artificial intelligence.

In a nutshell, the book will provide insights on library collaboration practices and innovations that are now being used in Library and information service delivery. We thank the participants of the 61st NLA National conference, 2023 for their unwavering support and contributions. We hope that, you will find the proceedings interesting and stimulating.

Prof. Ahmad A. Balarabe
Editor-in-Chief

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PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION BETWEEN LIBRARIANS AND ACADEMIC STAFF IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: LITERATURE SURVEY AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

By

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Abstract

This paper examined literature and personal experience in relation to professional collaboration as they affect and exist in Nigerian universities. The overall objective of this paper is to identify collaborative teaching, research, publication, training, mentoring and supervision between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian universities. Documentary sources mainly empirical literature, and personal experience in Nigerian universities in relation to collaboration were used. Results showed low level of the spirit of collaborative research and publication among academic staff in some Nigerian universities though collaborative teaching, mentoring, professional networking, and project supervision exist among academic staff. Based on literature survey and personal experience, there are challenges to professional collaboration in the areas of: indifference among collaborators and government, facilities and funding among others. Paper concluded that the national development or otherwise depend on effective collaboration among professionals (librarians and academic staff) in Nigerian universities. It was recommended among others: spirit of collaboration among academic staff be high, implementation of the recommendations to research findings by the concerned authorities.

Keywords: *Academic staff, Collaboration, Librarians, Nigeria, Professionals, Universities.*

Introduction

In life, one cannot assumed or claim to be hero or expert in one's field of knowledge or execute tasks alone more especially in this era of information and knowledge economy. Imuewo and Roy (2020) were of the opinion that nobody on earth is neither monopoly of knowledge, skills nor perfect in profession or discipline. There is the need for professionals or experts from same or related or different field(s) of knowledge to come together (with mutual understanding) and share ideas or knowledge in a reciprocal way. This call for collaboration. The concept of collaboration is concerned with professionals coming together either physically or virtually with a view to achieving specific objectives of the organization (Obiamalu and Ogungbomi, 2020). Collaboration is a kind of working practice whereby individuals work together for a common purpose to achieve business benefit. At conceptual level, collaboration involves awareness, motivation, participation, mediation, reciprocity, reflection and engagement. Various types of collaboration working include but not limited to: team, community, network and cloud collaboration (www.aiim.org/what_is_collaboration). Librarian is any person that has undergo professional training leading to the award of Bachelor and/or higher degree(s) in librarianship. Librarian may choose to teach/lecture in the department of LIS or its unit thus called LIS educator, Librarian may choose to practice

i.e work in any library and teach use of library in any tertiary institution, thus called LIS practitioner. In a situation that both LIS educator and practitioner work in an institution of higher learning like university, he/she is regarded as a academic staff, thus enjoying equal academic status like their counterparts (faculty members) in various departments such as LIS, Chemistry, Public Administration, Arts, Social and physical Sciences, Education, etc. In this case academic librarians or LIS educators fulfill the cardinal objectives of establishing university i.e. teaching, research and community services. By this trend, the academic librarians are expected to publish or perish i.e. be promoted or remain stagnant in a particular position/rank. As academic staff, they are expected to conduct research, teach, supervise SIWES and research projects, and embark on community services either individually or through collaboration (Saka, Musa & Usman, 2014).

Professional collaboration has to do with trained individuals or personalities of the same or related but different fields of professions coming together (physically or virtually) to contribute, share, exchange ideas or work together in a reciprocal manner. Although genuine professional collaboration is concerned about forming reciprocal working relationship as well as contributing to shared goals. Every profession has codes and ethics of practicing and are usually guided by the professional bodies thus LIS profession is guided by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN, 2005). Professional collaboration in LIS can occur between LIS educators and practitioners; librarians and faculty members in the field of education, arts, ICT, physical and life sciences, social and management sciences and other fields in terms of collaborative teaching, research and publication, SIWES and project supervision, mentoring, training and staff exchange. The fundamental principle behind professional collaboration is the reciprocal manner whereby there is cross-fertilization or exchange of ideas or knowledge so that individuals in the group benefit from one another. By this, we mean that the collaboration should not be one-way traffic even though Saka (2020) classify the concept of mentoring into two groups' i.e. collaboration and capacity building by which collaboration is looked upon in terms of teaching and learning, research, publication, community services and exchange program while capacity building in perceived as provision of skills to enable personnel perform efficient job.

Professional collaboration among librarians and academic staff especially at university level is inevitable due to equal academic status accorded to librarians like their counterparts in academic departments which according to Omekwu (2021) classify equal rank as "Graduate Assistant/ Graduate Librarian, Assistant Lecturer, Assistant Librarian, Lecturer II/Librarian II, Lecturer I /Librarian I, Senior Lecturer/ Senior Librarian, Associate Professor/ Deputy University Librarian and Professor/ University Librarian".

Statement of the Problem

The cardinal objectives of establishing universities are for teaching, research and community services librarians like their faculty counterpart enjoy equal academic status such as promotion, academic allowances, e t.c and as such they are expected, conduct researches and publish, and render community services and above all collaborate with each other within the same university or with professional colleagues from other universities. Unfortunately, librarians and faculty members do not engage much in collaborative teaching, research, training, supervision and publication as this misnomer can negatively affect the attainment of objectives of establishing Universities thereby affecting national development as this problem can negatively affect the attainment of the set objectives of establishing universities which would consequently affect national development.

As reported by Bubba and Kabir (2002), Aliyu and Isah (2006), Anyanwu (2013) and Saka and Abubakar (2018) discovered little or no collaborative research publication among librarians; between librarian (an academic staff) and faculty members in Nigerian

Universities. It is possible that this problem can occur in the area of teaching, supervision, mentoring, training and community services. This paper therefore intends to investigate (through literature research and personal experience) whether librarians and academic staff collaborate in the area of teaching, research, publication, training and community services in Nigeria Universities.

Aim and Objectives of this Paper

This paper aimed at exploring issues affecting professional collaboration between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities. The specific objectives are to explore issue on professional collaboration in the areas of:

- a. Find out collaborative teaching between Librarians (LIS educators and practitioners) and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- b. Determine collaborative research among Librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- c. Determine collaborative research and publication between Librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- d. Identify collaborative training programme between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- e. Find out collaborative mentoring among librarians, academic staff and peers in Nigerian Universities.
- f. Identify areas of collaborative supervision between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- g. Identify areas of community services between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- h. Determine professional networking between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.
- i. Find out the challenges to professional collaboration between librarians and academic staff in Nigerian Universities.

Methodology

Methodology adopted for this paper include documentary sources and experiences from some Nigeria Universities. Documentary sources mainly journals, textbooks and empirical literatures relating to collaboration were used to support argument raise in terms of teaching, research and publication, supervision, training, mentoring and community services as they affect professional collaboration between librarians and academic staff. In some cases, experiences obtained from sister institutions were also used. As such both empirical and opinion but related sources as well as personal experience were used in this write-up in a succinctly manner. Based on the documentary analysis, findings are generated and conclusion made and possible recommendations forwarded to appropriate authority (ies).

Collaborative Teaching

Librarians in an academic environment (whether educators or practitioners) especially in university are academic staff and are charged with the responsibilities of teaching, research and community service. Therefore librarians in university systems need to engage in collaboration particularly in teaching either the use of library or in LIS School or related course in education or ICT with their colleagues i.e. faculty members in the academic departments. Collaborative teaching has to do with curriculum design, planning, implementation and evaluation. Although collaborative teaching can occur among LIS educators or between librarians and academic staff or vice-versa. Considering the concept of team teaching, Offorma, Ikonta and Ogunleye (2019) perceive it as procedure that involves

two or more teachers teaching the same group of student, in such a way that each of the teaching member teaches an aspect related to his/her area of specialization. Collaborative teaching can also takes place in a library school where librarians (LIS Educators) teaches core LIS courses and faculty counterpart from related department teaches elated courses such as computer science and other ICT courses (Saka, Madaki and Tauheed, 2022).

Professional Networking

This simply means connecting people that are within the same profession with a view of exchange or shaving ideas in order to grow and develop in the profession and above all career development. Imuero and Roy (2022) perceive professional networking as cross-fertilization of information and ideas among individuals within a profession usually in an informal setting. Professional networking is characterized by the exchange of ideas and information which can be through face-to-face contact, virtual or online which can be way of social networking such as WhatsApp, Twitter e.t.c. In a study conducted to determine the use of academic social media on research activities of LIS educators in universities in Nigeria, Salami (2023) reported among the findings moderate level of the use of ASM in research collaborative activities in terms of connecting people with similar research interest, co-authorship with colleagues within Nigerian, seek advice from fellow colleagues, sharp research findings and participating in group discussions.

Collaborative Research

This is the type of collaboration whereby two or more professional from the same, related or different discipline jointly embarked/carry out a study/ies in a particular field. The researchers might not necessary be in the same fields but a related field. For example, lecturer in statistics department can embark on collaborative research(es) from professional(s) in LIS discipline provided the statistician can use the knowledge of statistics to analysis data. Also collaborative research can occur among academic librarian, and LIS educators and lecturers from statistics and science education in related discipline or aspect e.g. bibliographic analysis of higher degree research works in science education discipline. Here the academic librarian can use the professional knowledge of bibliography, LIS educator use the knowledge of librarianship and research, while lecturer from science education use the knowledge of science and education (Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry and Education) and lecturer from Statistics can use knowledge of statistics to analyze data.

Collaborative Publication

Collaborative research can lead to collaborative publication hence research and output/productivity. In some cases, collaborative publication may arises from joint conceptual paper write-up. Whichever one that comes, collaborative publication is a situation whereby academic librarian jointly publish an article with faculty member (be it an LIS educator(s) or faculty member or both. For example, one of the writers of this paper is currently engage in publishing an article with lecturer in science education department which shares the title of classroom teaching/education and an aspect of librarianship and ICT i.e. partly ICT, librarianship and partly education. Although the spirit of collaboration among academic staff in a particular field may not be high in some universities or among universities as Bubba and Kadiri (2002), Aliyu and Isah (2006), Saka and Bitagi (2009) reported that there was no spirit of collaboration among science lecturers and lecturers in University of Maiduguri and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria respectively. However Omekwu (2021) reported that librarians like their faculty counterparts are expected to exhibit leadership in research and academics by co-authoring publication. This was demonstrated by one of the writer of this paper – a librarian / library educator who co-author with faculty member – science education

lecturer in a paper titled: "perception, access, and use of electronic resources for instructional practices among education lecturers in public universities in Niger State, Nigeria". This collaborative publication exhibited the elements of librarianship (electronic resources) and education (instructional practices) – thus authored by Yaki, Saka & Sarki (2023) in *Journal of ICT Development, Applications and Research*, Volume 5 Number 2, Pages 11-20.

Collaborative Supervision

By this we mean collaborative supervision in terms of SIWES and project supervision. As for Student Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES), it is a common practice whereby academic staff within a faculty/school in Federal University of Technology (FUT), Minna, Nigeria jointly supervise students on training regardless of department(s) in which the supervisor/lecturer comes from. For example in School of Science and Technology Education in FUT, Minna, there are four departments: Industrial Technology Education (ITE), Science Education, Education Technology and Library Information Science. Academic staff from any of these academic departments can be posted out to supervise student(s) on SIWES in any of these departments, e.g. lecturer from LIS can supervise students in other departments with SSTE on SIWES. This is because all these departments are related to one another.

As for research project supervision especially at postgraduate level in FUT Minna, academic librarians, lecturers from General Studies (GST)/Communication Education are now incorporated into Postgraduate project supervision in LIS department as co-supervisors. The university management encourages lecturers to go outside their departments and supervise masters and/or doctoral students to enable them meet criteria for promotion to professorial cadre.

Collaborative Training

This is a kind of professional collaboration among university libraries, library schools and faculties in SIWES and project supervision and organizing conferences and workshops. For example, Federal University, Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA) Katsina state, Nigeria, organized an international conference between 5th and 8th June, 2023 which was jointly organized by the university library, LIS Department, and Government Divisional library, India and organizers were drawn from the various library schools, university library including the University Librarian, while editorial board members were drawn from FUDMA and sister university-based library schools respectively. All these units collaborate thereby making training a huge success. Toward effective service delivery through collaborative capacity building practices for librarian in south east and south west Nigeria Igbokwe (2021) reported among others the cooperation between library and faculties, team work among staff and creation of platforms for the exchange of ideas as well as contribution to effective service delivery though there are challenges in terms of funding. Power supply, poor working environment, etc

Collaborative Mentoring

Mentoring has to do with methods or process by which the highly experienced person(s) provide skills; coach, train, direct or supervised the less experienced person(s) so as to excel in their daily or future jobs or duties. In librarianship, mentoring involves senior librarian or professor in LIS providing skills; teach, guide or supervise the para-professionals or graduate assistant/librarian so as to improve, develop or grow in the LIS practices or education. In collaborative mentoring, it is possible that professional colleagues mentoring one-another in a reciprocal manner in terms of teaching, research and community development.

Collaborative mentoring through can be achieved team work whereby colleagues of the same cadre mentor each other (peer mentoring or where experienced LIS educator mentor the less experienced educator in the area of teaching, research, supervision, publication (academic

mentoring). In an investigation on mentoring and teamwork as factors of work performance among personnel working in cataloging unit of academic libraries in south-west, Nigeria Popoola, Iyoro and Ogungbo (2022) reported the excellent job performance as a result of high level of effective teamwork and satisfactory mentoring practice among personnel working in cataloging unit of academic libraries in the geopolitical zone.

Collaborative Community Service

One of the cardinal objectives of establishing universities is community services and academic staff tends to ignore this vital area/objective and concentrate more on teaching and research. Librarians and faculty members in the same university or from other universities can collaborate in community development by way of building block(s) of classrooms and libraries, donation of library materials and books to host community; primary schools as well as professional development (Saka, 2020).

Challenges to Professional Collaboration

Arising from the issues raised, there are series of challenges to professional collaboration lecturer librarians and academic staff notably in the following area:-

1. **Indifference among collaborators:** When two or more individuals meet to collaborate in terms teaching, research, monitoring, supervision, publication and training, uncooperative attitude is bound to exist as some collaborators tends to be over-worked at the expense of some that are idle or lazy, while some are in disagreement with other party in terms of decision-taken, share opinions in terms of research, monitoring, teaching, e.t.c. thereby impeding the progress of collaboration. It is also common among collaborators that few may tend to dominate the group work claiming to know more than other collaborators. This discourage others from making intellectual and meaningful contribution, hence spirit of collaborative publications is not common among librarians and faculty members in some Nigerian Universities. Literature search revealed little or no collaborative research and publication output among academic staff in Nigerian Universities as being documented by Bubba and Kadiri (2002), Aliyu and Isah (2006), Anyanwu (2013) and Saka and Abubakar (2018) respectively.
2. **Indifference of government, concerned authorities/stakeholders:** Researches are conducted and being back-up with findings and recommendations be proffered to the concerned authority. It is surprising that reasonable number of researches conducted together with recommendations are not implemented by government and concerned authority as they end-up in paper resulting to earning awards, certificates, promotion or fulfill academic requirement but are not meant for national development (Saka, Bida and Majinson, 2015). By this trend we mean that even when collaborative researches are conducted and recommendations proffered, not all are implemented for national development thus discouraging collaboration.
3. **Signing of MoU:-** Universities enter collaborations and linkages with polytechnics, monotechnics, colleges of education, research institutes and industries. This require signing of memorandum of understanding (MoU) whereby important issues are legally tendered, agree upon and need to be signed by both parties. It is a problem where issues signed are not being implemented by one or both parties.
4. **Facilities Issues:** Collaborative research, teaching, mentoring, training, community service and supervision require facilities/resources to support the collaboration. Absence or inadequate facilities can lead to ineffective collaborative venture or may fail completely. Resources and facilities are needed for demonstration and to support the collaborative activities.

5. Funding: Funding is a topical issues in the scheme of affairs in Nigeria. Virtually inadequate funding to research, training, teaching, conference workshop and seminar directly or indirectly impedes national development. For example inadequate funding to education can result to producing graduates that cannot withstand the challenges in the modern labour market (Saka, Aliero and Ibrahim, 2022).

Conclusion

Professional collaboration among librarians and academic staff especially at university level would help fulfill the objectives of establishing university in fact leading to effective teaching, research and community services and consequently lead to national development. The spirit of collaboration among academic staff whether high or low would have a corresponding effect on national development.

Recommendations

Based on the enumerated obstacles and conclusion reach, the paper proffer possible recommendations which if adopted would go a long in contributing to overall national development.

1. There should be high level of the spirit of collaboration among librarians and academic staff in Nigerian universities.
2. Adequate financial and infrastructural resources should be provided to enable collaborators work efficient.
3. Research findings and recommendations be forwarded to the concerned authorities and those recommendations be adequately implemented by the government.
4. MoU signed be adequately implemented by both parties involved so that all aspects within the collaboration be well represented and implemented.
5. Adequate funding to research and education be given priority by government and professional collaboration be the focus of the universities.

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