

The Dichotomy in Book Selection between Faculty and Librarians in Academic Libraries: an investigative study

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Abstract

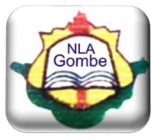
This study explored the dichotomy in book selection between faculty and librarians in academic libraries. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample comprising of 75 professional librarians and 75 faculty staff (teaching staff) were sampled using multistage sampling technique of simple random and proportionate sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data was arranged in frequency and percentage tables, and descriptive statistics of mean scores was used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that teaching staff are important in book selection as their experience count so much in selection process, and it is also noted that this is the professional function of a faculty librarian where one is available. The study concluded that it is the professional job of the librarians to carry out book selection but not without accommodating the assistance of the faculty. It was therefore, recommended that faculty librarians should be appointed such librarians will act as a link between the library and the teaching staff (faculty) in various faculties, this will go a long way in bridging the communication gap between the faculty and the library. Libraries should develop a good working relationship with the faculty as it will allow for exchange of ideas between the librarians and faculty.

Keywords: academic libraries, librarians, faculty, book selection.

Introduction

Provision of adequate information sources (print and electronic) and other related information bearing materials are the *raison d'être* for the continuum existence of academic libraries. Academic libraries are libraries that are established and attached to academic institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges, etc. The essences of establishing academic libraries are to facilitate teaching, learning and research in their parent institutions. Adewuyi and Ajayi in Aliu (2013) remarked that the objectives of the university are to a very large extent the objectives of library through the provision of information bearing materials capable of meeting the tripartite functions (which had been identified as teaching, learning and research) of the university. This assertion shows that there is a great nexus between the university and its library.

In a bid to achieve the purpose of establishing them, they continue to struggle to acquire materials both printed and other forms of recorded knowledge for the interest of the faculty and students. Following the unprecedented growth of information sources across the globe, without comprehensive bibliographical control of what are been published. It will be absolutely difficulty, no matter how rich a library could be to purchase all that have been published in all disciplines, hence the need for selection.



Ozioko and Ekere (2011) described selection to mean an intellectual process of choosing from two or more things, based on the quality and need. The authors further maintained that, the library collections should contain the best literatures for it to meet up with the high expectations of the community and also justifies the high sum of money vested in the library development. It determines the quality of the entire collection, which is the function of collection development policy.

The objective of collection development policy is the provision of guidance on the types of information resources that will be selected, including how to select, who and when to select, Obinyan, Adetona and Obinyan (2019). At this juncture what comes into focus is whose responsibility is it to make selection of books/journals for academic libraries.

There have been controversy among scholars whose responsibility is it to make selection of books and journals for the academic libraries. Some have argued that selection of library materials should be a statutory duty of professional librarians while some were of the opinion that selection of library materials should be joint responsibility of professional librarians and the faculty (teaching staff in the faculty). It is this argument that has led to the dichotomy between the librarians and the faculty in the selection of books for academic libraries.

Hornby (2017) defined “dichotomy” as the separation that exists between the two groups or things that are completely opposite to and different from each other. The divide between the groups, stem from the fact that they have different knowledge and specialties. It is on account of this that Shen (2012) remarked that both faculty and librarians have different perspectives on the priority of collection development reflecting rather specific and narrow areas of research and teaching focus. The author further maintained that faculty members do not trust librarians to make effective acquisition choices and librarians do not trust faculty to be responsible to make suggestions in the best interest of the university.

Arising from this Chu in Shen (2012) documented that such lack of trust highlights the importance of being aware and of understanding the roles and needs of each other. From the foregoing the unhealthy situation between the librarians and faculty in book selection demands that, necessary steps should be taken to create a cordial relationship for them to enhance sound collection development. Having laid the background for this work, this research shall proceed to review of literature on the subject under consideration.

Objectives of the study

The objective of this study is to examine the dichotomy in book selection between faculty and librarians in academic libraries in University of Port Harcourt, and Rivers State University, both in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

The specific objectives are to;

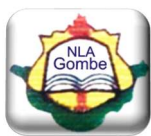
1. Examine the dichotomy between the faculty and librarians in book selection.
2. Find out if book selection should be joint responsibility between the librarians and faculty.
3. Ascertain the implications of involving faculty in book selection.

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions;

1. What is the dichotomy between the faculty and librarians in book selection?
2. Should the book selection be joint responsibility between the librarians and faculty?
3. What are the implications of involving faculty in book selection?

Review of Literature



There have been divergent views among librarians in literature whether faculty should be involved in book selection for libraries, since they are experts in their own disciplines or should selection of books be solely the responsibility of librarians who have the skills and training in the art of selection or should it be a joint responsibility of librarians and faculty.

Kennedy (2006) was of the view that selection is a high profile duty of librarianship. That book selection should be conducted by professional librarians, with the addition of staff outside of the library making suggestions for possible selection. This means that faculty should only make input when their expertises are needed.

Shen (2012) presents that inefficient communication and resulting frustration brought about as librarians wait for faculty recommendations on new acquisitions when patrons may have already asked for the items. The author further maintained that this also creates tension between the faculty expertise that is needed and the mandate of the library to collect what in fact the patrons really want and a wide scope of acquisition requests need to be considered, not only those of faculty.

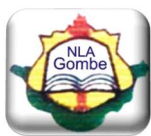
Chu in Shen (2012) recorded that problems occurs when it becomes apparent that faculty make recommendations on past publications and a retrospective view of the literature in a subject area, while librarian tend to make decisions based on future needs of borrowers. Munro and Philips (2013) advocated that even though faculty members have a specialized knowledge in their subject areas, reliance on academics for collection development can result in a narrow focus in collection building leading to gaps in the collection. The impact of this statement is that relying on librarians as selectors will ensure balance resources in the library collections.

It is against this background that Futas in Munro and Philips (2013) expressed that reliance on librarians as selectors would ensure that the collection has a balance range of resources. The study further maintained that the main weakness of collection development by faculty members is that, although academics may have detailed knowledge of their subject areas, they view the library within the limits of their subject focus, resulting in gaps in subject areas and, particularly, in inter-discipline areas.

Allard (2007) documented that there is also the tendency for a collection development by academics to lack cohesion overtime, because of academic staff turnover and for material of a general nature to be overlooked. In a study by Leonard also in Munro and Philips (2013) revealed that selection was left in the hands of the academics, as they had the required knowledge for their specific fields, unfortunately students' needs were being overlooked, as resources were based on the new technologies. The study concluded that the librarians should have the primary role in selection within an environment of collaboration between the library and the faculties.

The unhealthy relationship between the librarians and the teaching staff in the selection of book has created acrimony between them. Selection of book is supposed to be collaborative exercise between the librarians and faculty as partners in collection development but the reverse is the case. The lack of trust and unfriendly relationship between the faculty and librarians demands for measures that could be put in place to unite them.

It is against this background that Kiilu and Kiilu (2014) reported in their study that the Commission for University Education (CUE) in Kenya has given university libraries



mandates to provide for all academic programmes information resources that are varied, authoritative and up-to-date in order to effectively facilitate teaching, learning, research and community service. The study further added that the critical role of the library in universities by demanding that each university management should fully integrate its respective libraries into academic world through building close partnership between the librarians and teaching staff.

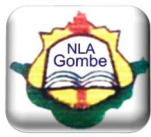
It is amazing to note that according to Kiilu and Kiilu (2014) acquisition of information resources in Egerton University in Kenya is primarily guided by recommendations made by the faculty, or the university administration; relevance to the curriculum, relevance to the social and cultural environment, ease of procurement, and cost. Kiilu and Kiilu further maintained that the librarians are called upon to ensure that the balancing act of selecting books and other literally materials of different formats are judiciously made.

The authors further suggested that subject librarians need to be employed in the library, that these cadre of staff need to have a university degree or post graduate qualification from a different field in addition to having one in library and information science. This has the support of Muuro and Philips (2013) who documented the benefits attributed to subject librarians include the ability to apply subject knowledge as well as their professional library skills to collection development, to recognized gaps and provide a broader collection focus, and to assist in the formulation and implementation of collection development policies.

The views of scholars published in journals were examined on the course of the divide between librarians and faculty and its effects on the selection and acquisition of information resources. Hence the need for the study to explore means of creating cordial relationship between the librarians and faculty for collaborative exercise in selection and acquisition of information resources for academic libraries.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The sample comprising of 75 professional librarians and 75 faculty staff (teaching staff) were sampled using multistage sampling technique of simple random and proportionate sampling. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The data was arranged in frequency and percentage tables, and descriptive statistics of mean scores was used to analyze the data.



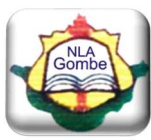
Result and Discussions

What is the dichotomy between the faculty and librarians in book selection for the library?

Table 1.The dichotomy between the faculty and librarians in book selection for the library.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Faculty helps identify specific information need than librarians	32(21.3)	90(60.0)	17(11.3)	11(7.3)	2.95	Accepted
2	Faculty decides the needed information resources	30(20.0)	78(52.0)	20(13.3)	22(14.7)	2.77	Accepted
3	Faculty are professional producers of resources for their respective disciplines	23(15.3)	69(46.0)	32(21.3)	26(17.3)	2.59	Accepted
4	Faculties have direct access to students and have knowledge of their ability.	20(13.3)	30(20.0)	62(41.3)	38(25.3)	2.21	Rejected
5	Faculty knows the best teaching resources	11(7.3)	40(26.7)	69(46.0)	30(20.0)	2.21	Rejected
Weighted mean						2.55	Accepted

Table 1 shows the responses from the respondents on the dichotomy between the faculty and the librarians in book selection. From the responses, items 1 to 3 was accepted (Faculty helps identify specific information need, Faculty decides the needed information resources, and Faculty are professional producers of resources for their respective disciplines), while items 4 and 5 were rejected (With direct access to students and have knowledge of their ability, and the level of resources suitably important for them and Faculty knows the best teaching resources). The items obtained a weighted mean score of 2.55 which is above the criterion mean of 2.50 ($2.55 > 2.50$). Consequently, the realization justified the involvement of faculty in book selection. Accordingly, Kiilu and Kiilu (2014) averred that acquisition of information resources in Egerton University in Kenya is primarily guided by recommendations made by the faculty relevance to the curriculum, relevance to the social and cultural environment. This means that lecturers with their daily experience on the job have necessary input to make in the process of book selection, as they are the end users of the selected materials.

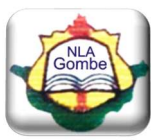


Should book selection be joint responsibility between the librarians and faculty?

Table 2. Responsibility of book selection.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Faculty is needed in section to contribute professional opinion	43	58	21	28	2.77	Accepted
2	Book selection can only be adequate when faculty is involved	15	75	28	32	2.49	Rejected
3	Collaboration between faculty and librarians makes improved selection	21	80	29	20	2.68	Accepted
4	Librarians are better position to make selection	30	100	1	19	2.94	Accepted
5	Subject librarians eliminate the need for faculty	11	74	52	13	2.55	Accepted
						Weighted mean 2.69	Accepted

The study assessed the joint responsibility of book selection (Table 2). The findings show that the respondents accepted items 1, 3-5 (Faculty is needed in selection to contribute professional opinion, Collaboration between faculty and librarians makes improved selection, Librarians are better position to make selection and Subject librarians eliminate the need for faculty), while item 2 (Book selection can only adequate when faculty is involved). The findings show that, faculty make meaningful contributions in book selection; however, their presence in book selection does not assume sine-qua-non when professional librarians are available. This may account for the reason librarians are assigned to faculty as Faculty librarians to attend faculty board meetings, collaborate with faculty, to ensure that their specific information needs are accommodated during selection. It is on this note that Kiilu and Kiilu (2014) suggested that subject librarians need to be employed in the library. This is in agreement with Munro and Philips (2013) who remarked that the benefits attributed to subject librarians include the ability to apply subject knowledge as well as their professional library skills to collect development, to recognize gaps and provide a broader collection focus, and to assist in the formulation and implementation of collection development policies. The library, in this sense has made provision to cater for the needs of the faculty, such that the process of selection will be handled by professionally trained individuals – librarians. However, from the weighted mean ($2.69 > 2.50$) the joint responsibility of librarians and faculty in book selection produces improved selection.



What are the implications of involving faculty in book selection?

Table 3. Implications of involving faculty in book selection.

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Decision
1	Improved collection	33	62	33	22	2.71	Accepted
2	Avoidance of conflict of interest from faculty	15	36	51	48	2.12	Rejected
3	Accounts for information need	22	65	50	13	2.64	Accepted
4	Eliminates lack of teaching resources	18	85	42	5	2.77	Accepted
5	Accommodates opinions of both faculty and librarians in selected resources	25	69	46	10	2.73	Accepted
		Weighted mean		2.55	Accepted		

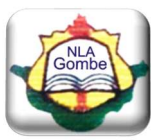
The analysis on Table 3 shows that the respondents accepted items 1, 3-5 (Improved collection, accounts for information need, eliminates lack of teaching resources, and accommodates opinions of both faculty and librarians in selected resources) and rejected item 2 (Avoidance of conflict of interest from faculty). This shows that the implication of the involvement of faculty in book selection leads to positive outcome. Muuro and Philips (2013) remarked that despite the fact faculty members have a specialized knowledge in their subject areas, Leonard in Muuron and Philips (2013) advocated that librarians should have the primary role in selection within an environment of collaboration between the library and faculty.

Conclusion

The academic library is the hub of academic activities. Academic libraries exist for the provision of adequate information sources to the university community. Therefore, the justification of the existence of every academic library is judged by the quality of information resources in its stock.

It is as a result of this that Munro and Philips(2013) asserted that academic libraries are required to meet the needs of their users, fulfilling their intuition's mission statement and achieving its goals, as well as satisfying the budgetary constraints of their parent institution

Consequently, book selection in libraries bears very significant roles as their existence depends on it. This study assessed the dichotomy in book selection between faculty and librarians in academic libraries. The findings support empirical literature which shows that faculty is important in book selection as they bring their on-the-field experience to the table for the selection process. Consequently, it is concluded that, it is the professional job of the librarian to carry out selection but not without accommodating the need of the faculty as it is a very vital tool for consideration during selection process. Thus, librarians should be employed in every university to do the professional job they are trained to do. It is imperative therefore, that with the absence of a faculty librarian, experts in faculty of their specialization should be involved to make good selection, but where has a subject background, and he/she can without faculty make a selection.



Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. Faculty librarians should be appointed; such librarians will act as a link between the library and faculty in various faculties. This will go a long way in bridging the communication gap between the faculty and the library.
2. The library should try as much as possible to encourage faculty participation in book selection by making available publishers catalogues, to select titles of information materials in support of their courses and their research interest and return same to the library as quickly as possible to avoid endless waiting that could lead to frustration in acquisition of books/journals.
3. The library should develop a good working relationship with the faculty as it will allow for exchange of ideas between the faculties and librarians.

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