

# Readiness of Academic Librarians to Form Sustainable Partnership Activities among the Federal Universities Libraries in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The study investigated the readiness of academic librarians for sustainable partnership activities among the federal universities libraries in Nigeria. A cross-sectional survey design was used, and the study was carried out in the Forty (40) federal universities in Nigeria. Considering the complexity of the population, the federal universities were divided into strata according to six (6) geopolitical zones, and a stratified sampling technique was applied, and 50% were selected from each stratum as a sample. This gave a total population of 18 federal universities, and the (18) federal universities have a total of 480 academic librarians, which serve as a primary population of the study. The instrument used for the data collection was a questionnaire administered, and 433 were returned and found usable for the study. A draft copy of the questionnaire was given to an expert for scrutiny to determine the instrument's validity. The Data collected were coded into Microsoft excel, Statistical Packages of Social Science (SPSS), descriptive statistics of percentage, mean score, and standard deviation to analyze the data collected from the respondents. The findings revealed that The academic librarians, as a required qualification to work at federal universities, that have enough working experiences, their level of computer literacy was very encouraging, and they are ready to form sustainable partnership activities. The study recommended that there should be training and retraining among the librarians for the modern technique of forming partnership activities, the federal university libraries and their academic librarians should offer rewards and incentives to encourage them to maintain their readiness towards forming sustainable partnership activities, and there should be proper budgetary allocation and implementation in the libraries.*

**Keywords:** Readiness, Sustainable Partnership, Academic Librarians

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## Introduction

Academic libraries are the libraries found in colleges of education, polytechnic, universities, and other related institutions of higher learning. The basic function and significance of the academic library are to support and render effective services to their patron community to access the required resources and services for their teaching, learning, research, and other academic activities with ease. It is of paramount importance

to tertiary institutions and universities, in particular, because of the role they play in the provision of resources and services to the users. However, the literature review indicated that libraries in Nigeria are in a sorry state, as they have become the custodian of inadequate resources and services because of the government's negligence in funding education. Furthermore, libraries are faced with numerous challenges in terms of inadequate and irrelevant resources and services for their users' communities. This is caused by inadequate funding, poor budgetary allocation/implementation, and a lack of attention by policymakers (Onifade, 2015).

The presence of these problems has made academic libraries in Nigeria unable to support their users with adequate, up-to-date, and relevant resources and services. In a similar view, Onwuchekwa (2014) noted that the quality of every university education is also measured by the support and services rendered by its library. For academic libraries in Nigeria, the reverse is the case because they are in a deplorable condition due to neglect, though the intervention of the Nigerian government as a result of several agitations by concerned citizens has started to yield positive developmental through the support given by the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TetFund) and other donor agencies. Despite all the efforts made, academic libraries in Nigeria need to re-strategize and find lasting solutions to the perennial problems thus highlighted to satisfy the teaching, learning, and research needs of the faculty members, students, and other researchers are meant to serve. One of such ways is through their engagement in partnership activities, library cooperation, library consortium, interlibrary loan, and partnership activities, as the case may be. By engaging in these relationship activities, academic libraries would benefit from one another through partnership, interlibrary loan, staff exchange, gift, and exchange of resources and services, to mention but a few. It is important to note that there are various benefits that libraries derive from partnership activities. If properly practiced, these activities could serve as a panacea for the inadequacies of resources, services, and weaknesses of one library in comparison to others.

### **ProblemStatement**

Partnership activities among libraries entail the process of coming together of two or more libraries for the exchange and sharing of resources and services for the benefit of their library users. The activities are practiced with the sole aim of coming together of the libraries to pull their resources and services to satisfy the needs of library users, as it becomes a wise path to overcome the libraries' weakness in the area of resources and services provided. Tanko (2012). Given the above assertions, it is evident that the readiness of academic librarians to form partnership activities in libraries is enormous. However, evidence from the review of related literature, such as Obasola (2015), Adam and Usman (2013), Heloisa (2013), Nwegbu, Etebu (2010), has shown that there is little empirical evidence ascertaining the readiness of academic librarians towards forming partnership activities in Nigeria. The readiness of librarians towards

forming partnership activities is crucial in the planning, implementation, and enhancement of the activities, and it is essential in any implementation. It is against this that this study investigated the readiness of academic librarians towards forming sustainable partnership activities.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study include:

1. To find out the educational qualification of the academic librarians studied
2. To find out the working experiences of the academic librarians
3. To find out the level of computer literacy among the academic librarians
4. To determine the readiness of academic librarians towards partnership activities.

### **Literature Review**

The readiness of academic librarians is essential for achieving and maintaining partnerships for establishment activities. Readiness for this study has to do with academic librarians' willingness and ability to discharge and carry out the duties assigned to them for sustaining the partnership entered by their library management for partnership activities. However, collaboration activities between academic libraries and external organizations on campus and in the community increased in popularity in recent years and are likely here to stay if libraries want to remain relevant and useful to their patrons. A good place to start is to examine the library's mission and vision statements and perhaps the goals from its strategic plan. From there, the library can define the kinds of partnerships it wishes to create. Library staff and administrators should identify research and reach out to these potential partners in the community. When they find individuals willing to represent their organizations, all parties should discuss potential collaborations, establish parameters and criteria and evaluate the partnerships before, during, and after the project or goal is complete. Libraries may also recruit expertise or assistance from other campus departments or off-campus organizations for projects that are being planned or may even be ongoing. Staff and administrators should use their networks on and off-campus when they see opportunities to collaborate. Adopting the Wilder Research Centre's Collaboration Factors Inventory is a simple and comprehensive way to evaluate these partnerships activities, although thorough evaluation for the partnership activities among members through interviews or focus groups might reveal more nuanced and meaningful feedback.

Encouragingly, librarians need to adopt new approaches in as much as they want to satisfy the need of their library users, which allows them to show their commitment and readiness towards supporting the user community for the utilization of IT tools to facilitate the dissemination of resources and services to their respective users through partnership activities. This will enhance their day-to-day operations as well as the vision of partnership activities among the participating members.

In addition to directly serving their patrons, academic libraries and librarians can form partnership activities to achieve economic development in their serving communities. They often do not think outside of the university boundaries since their patrons are primarily students and faculty. Seeler (2011), however, argued that academic libraries could help communities become more liveable and sustainable by creating partnerships activities with the greater community in addition to the university community through commitment and willingness of academic librarians. They recommended asserting a library presence "wherever the institution extends its services," including outreach that brings university classes to the community, hospitals, and medical areas, for example. The authors also recommended the library use its website to serve the community at large, but they argued that there was no better substitute for library presence than "making regular visits to learning spaces outside of the library and often in the surrounding community." Other recommendations included attending city council meetings, joining local organizations, contacting community members to offer training, hosting an open house, working with businesses and professors to host lectures, and giving tutorials to legislators and other local/state officials on library resources. These suggestions may be carried out more often in public libraries than in academic libraries, but as the authors argued and as Oakleaf (2010) indicated in her report on the value of academic libraries and their librarians, the more visible libraries are, the greater perceived value the library will have in its community in joining partnership activities through the attitude and willingness of the librarians towards resource activities for realizing the dream of the library accordingly.

Engle (2011) approached criteria for academic librarians' readiness in partnership activities from her experience as an academic librarian at Texas University. In her article, "Hitching Your Wagon to the Right Star: A Case Study in Collaboration," The author and her colleagues collaborated with a freshman orientation program to introduce college freshmen to the library. This article is important for organizations that do not have a history of the roles academic librarians play in partnership activities. From the library's initial approach to, and eventual long-term partnership activities with, the orientation program, Engle took away the following lessons and roles academic librarians will play in their readiness for partnership activities: Partnership activities should approach each other with a clear statement of purpose of engaging in the activities by the libraries and academic librarians; Partnership activities should have a clearly defined target group in mind; partnership activities members should consider their options, given what resources and services they have to work with among members; and Partnership activities members of the initiating organization should learn and understand more about the potential partnership activities as well as their goals, missions, and objectives before approaching them.

Therefore, there is also the need for academic librarians to intensify more strategies and readiness for the fulfillment of all promises and hopes to take the burden or

responsibility of supporting and rendering effective services to other library users. In the process of subscription to manual, electronic resources and services by academic libraries, there is the need for librarians to clearly show their commitment, relevance, and the importance of such subscriptions to the government and other top management of the concerned institutions. As librarians understand the confusion associated with information overload and its limitation, it is their responsibility to devise the means to keep lecturers, students, and other researchers aware of the shortcomings of resource and unevaluated internet information. To alleviate some of the consequences of ICT facilities resulting in the underutilization of academic libraries, effort directed at promoting and creating the awareness of library services is imperative. Librarians can promote resources and services through other means, such as marketing library services through practicing partnership activities to its user.

The above existing studies proved that college librarians had a readiness towards resource sharing networks; resource sharing initiatives, strategies and require skilled librarians using best practices and technology (Posner and Evan, 2011); librarians are assigned to departments based on their academic background, if possible (Nowrouzi-Chakoli 2012); human factor contributed in whether partnerships activities succeed or fail (Marszalek, 2015). Furthermore, Engle (2011) recommended that: partnership activities approach each other with a clear statement of purpose of engaging in the activities by academic librarians. Partnership activities should have a clearly defined target group in mind; partnership members should consider their options, given what resources and services they have to work with among members and partnership members of the initiating organization should research and learn and understand more.

## **Methodology**

A cross-sectional survey design was used to carry out the study in the Forty (40) federal universities in Nigeria. Considering the complexity of the population, the federal universities were divided into strata according to six (6) geopolitical zones, and a stratified sampling technique was applied, and 50% were selected from each stratum as a sample. This gave a total population of 18 federal universities, which have a total of 480 academic librarians. These serve as the primary population of the study. The instrument used for the data collection was a questionnaire administered, and 433 were returned and used for the study. In determining the instrument's validity, a draft copy of the questionnaire was given to an expert for scrutiny. The Data collected were coded into Microsoft excel, Statistical Packages of Social Science (SPSS), descriptive statistics of percentage, mean score, and standard deviation to analyze the data collected from the respondents.

## Discussion of findings

The respondents from the university libraries under study were asked to indicate their years of working experiences as librarians, as shown in Table 2:

**Table 1 Working Experiences of the Respondents**

S/N	Years of Experiences	Freq/Percentage
1	1-10 years	48(11.1%)
2	11-29 years	86(19.9%)
3	21-30 years	120(27.7%)
4	31-40 years	101(23.3%)
5	41-50 years	58(13.4%)
6	51 years and above	20(4.6%)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>433(100%)</b>

Table 1 shows the work experience of the respondents in the libraries. Less than half 120(27.7%) had between 21-30 years of experience, followed by 103(23.3%) with 31-40 years, next is 86(19.9%) with 11-29 years. Others are 58(13.4%) with 41-50 years, 48(11.1%) 1-10 years, and lastly, 20(4.6%) with 51 and above years of work experience.

### 1. The Educational Qualification of the Respondents

The respondents were asked to indicate their highest educational qualifications as academic librarians in the libraries under study.

**Table 1 Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

S/N	Qualification	Percentage
1	BLIS	217(50.1%)
2	MLIS	196(45.3%)
3	Mphil	8(1.8%)
4	PhD	12(2.8%)
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>433(100%)</b>

Table 1 shows that exactly half 217(50.1%) of the respondents have Bachelor's Degree in Library and Information Science/Studies followed by 196(45.3%) with a Masters, while 12(2.8%) had Ph.D. and only 8(1.8%) had Phil.

### 2. Level of Computer Literacy

In the 21<sup>st</sup>-century library operations and partnership activities, ICT facilities play a great role because librarians need to be literate to match with the current trend in information handling to enable them to render better and efficient services to their users.

**Table 2 Level of Computer Literacy**

S/N	Computer Literacy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Typing and text formatting	433	100
2.	Internet uses	340	78.5
3.	Windows basic (e.g., folder creation)	433	100
4.	Library software uses	250	57.7
5.	Library software installation	193	44.6
6.	Printing, scanning, and photocopying	433	100

Table 6 shows that all 433 (100%) respondents have typing and text formatting computer proficiency. Windows basic (e.g., folder creation) and printing, scanning, and



photocopying. This is followed by 340(78.5%) and 250 (57.7%) with computer literacy in the area of library software use and library software installation proficiency, and lastly, 193(44.6%) indicated their literacy on library software installation.

### 3. Readiness of Librarians towards Partnership activities

The respondents from libraries under study were asked to rate their readiness towards partnership activities using a five (5)-point Likert scale of Very High, High, Moderate, Very Low, and Low. The scale was collapsed into three (3), that is: High, Moderate, and Low because of the low scores and similarity of some of the scored data:

Table 3 Readiness of Librarians towards Partnership activities

S/N	Readiness of Academic Librarians	Score	Percentage
1	High	280	64.7
2	Moderate	100	23.1
3	Low	53	12.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>433</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 indicates that more than half 280(64.7%) of the respondents are high while 100(23.1%) are moderately ready, and lastly, only 53(12.2%) are low and very low in terms of their readiness towards partnership activities. Based on the result, it shows that almost all 280(64.7%) were ready for a partnership activity in libraries under study.

### 4. Agreement on Readiness of Academic Librarians for Partnership activities

The respondents from the libraries under study were asked to rate their readiness towards partnership activities using five (5) point Likert scale:

**Table 4 Agreement on Readiness of Academic Librarians towards partnership activities**

S/N	Statements	A	UD	D	MEAN	SD
1	My university is creating awareness among librarians on the importance of partnership.	304(70.2)	55(12.7)	74(17.1)	4.26	0.85
2	Individual university library should create a knowledge repository among members for partnership activities.	320(73.9)	47(10.9)	66(15.2)	4.38	0.88
3	Some librarians do not have the basic knowledge to initiate a partnership.	341(78.8)	26(6)	66(15.2)	4.58	0.91
4	My university sponsors many librarians to attend seminars, workshops, and training to be familiar with the activities	310(71.6)	33(7.6)	90(20.8)	4.41	0.88
5	We acquire skills and knowledge through seminars and trainings to enhance partnership activities	333(76.9)	49(11.3)	51(11.8)	4.43	0.89
6	We provide ICT facilities for partnership activities.	317(73.2)	33(7.6)	83(19.2)	4.44	0.89
7	We do attend ICT training which will acquaint us for practicing the activities.	310(71.6)	40(9.2)	83(19.2)	4.37	0.87
8	Academic librarians prepare to practice partnership				4.44	0.89

	activities as it adds their potentiality and familiarity.	327(75.5)	41(9.5)	65(15)		
9	Partnership activities take more time as such; some librarians have a negative perception of it.	350(80.8)	22(5.1)	61(14.1)	4.64	0.92
10	We do hold seminars and workshops to acquaint academic librarians with the necessity and importance of the activities.	337(77.8)	28(6.5)	68(15.7)	4.51	0.90
11	There is incentive to the overall libraries who adhere to the resource sharing activities	335(77.4)	36(8.3)	62(14.3)	4.49	0.90
12	All participating libraries will be responsible for success/failure in the activities.	350(80.8)	35(8.1)	48(11.1)	4.55	0.91

Table 8 shows that majority 350(80.8%), 350(80.8%), 341(78.8%), 337(77.8%), 335(77.4%), 333(76.9%), 327(75.5%), 320(73.9%), 317(73.2%), 310(71.6%), 310(71.6%) and 304(70.2%) had agreement with the following statements: partnership activities take more time. As such, some librarians have negative perceptions on it, the academic librarians do not have the basic skill or knowledge for infrastructure to initiate the activities, we do hold seminar and workshop so as to acquaint academic librarians about the necessity of practicing partnership activities, there is an incentive to be given to the libraries who become overall best in adhering to the activities, we do acquire skills and knowledge through seminars, training and retraining to enhance the activities, academic librarians prepared for the activities as it adds their potentiality and familiarity with the users community, individual university should create knowledge repository among members for resource sharing activities which will be influenced through the job commitment, We provide ICT facilities in the practice of resource sharing activities, My university sponsor many academic librarians to attend seminars, workshop and training so as to be familiar with partnership, We do attend ICT training, so as to be acquainted with them in the practicing of partnership activities and my university is creating awareness among some librarians on the importance of the activities on collection development of the libraries as the readiness of academic librarians towards practicing the partnership activities. This can also be seen from the above analysis of the agreement for the measure of central tendency in Table 9:

**Table 5 Summary of the Agreement on Readiness of Librarians towards partnership**

Responses	Total		Mean		Std. Dev	Remark	Decision
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree			
16752	15038	676	4.49	0.76	0.98	<b>4.49&gt;3.0</b>	<b>Agree</b>

Table 5 indicates a summary of agreement on the readiness of librarians towards partnership activities. The majority indicated their agreement that they are readily available to the practice of partnership activities. From the analysis, it can be seen that the means score of agreement was 4.49, with a standard deviation of 0.98. This shows



that the mean score of agreement is greater than that of the index means score of 3 (4.49>3.0).

### Findings

Based on the data collected from the respondents, the following findings were realized:

1. The academic librarians have the required qualification to work at Federal University Libraries.
2. The academic librarians have enough working experiences
3. Their levels of computer literacy are enough to form a sustainable partnership.
4. Academic librarians are ready to form sustainable partnership activities.

### Conclusion

It is concluded that partnership activities are essential to the existence of libraries; in as much, they want to meet the endless need of their library users to access resources and services for teaching, learning, and other research activities accordingly. At the same time, the readiness of academic librarians toward partnership activities has an influence in the practicing of sustainable partnership activities among the libraries in the federal in Nigeria. This forms the basis of the partnership activities in the libraries because those academic librarians are at the centre upon which all the daily activities as the readiness of the academic librarians from a good aspect in satisfying the need of their users.

### Recommendations

Based on the finding of the studied the following recommendation was raised.

1. Every academic librarian, apart from minimum qualification of a bachelor degree, must attain a certain level of training on the library ethics and users demand.
2. In other to maintain standards and meet up with current challenges, special training has to be introduced to keep them up-to-date on the current demand of the users.
3. Computer training should be enforced on the academic librarian to meet up with the 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.
4. The library should provide the librarian with the conducive avenue and necessary equipment that will help him partnering with other sister's libraries within and outside the community.

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