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**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES AMONG  
LIBRARIANS IN NIGERIA**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the positioning of Nigerian libraries in collaboration for library and information science development in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design*

*was adopted, using cluster sampling technique at the 2014 Annual General Meeting of the Nigerian Library Association held at Owerri, Nigeria. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of the questionnaire were given to librarians from academic, public, special, national and school libraries, 144 copies of the questionnaire were returned out of the 150 copies distributed, interview was also conducted as instrument for collection of data. Recommendations were made towards improving the positioning of Nigerian librarians in collaborations for library and information science development in Nigeria based on the responses received from the various librarians.*

**Key words:** Positioning, Librarians, Collaboration, assessment, collaborative activities, Nigeria, Academic, Public, libraries, associations.

## **Introduction**

Positioning is the activity and process of identifying a problem or opportunity and developing a solution based on research findings and supporting data. Positioning may refer to the position, a group of professionals have chosen to carry out their professional objectives. Positioning relates to strategy on the specific or tactical development phases of carrying out an objective to achieve their professional goals. Positioning is also defined as the way by which the librarians attempt to create a distinct impression in the library user's mind and Nigeria at large. Also, positioning means place, occupy, attitude, disposition, the ground taken over an issue, place/post that one occupied in the society.

Collaboration is working with each other to do a task and to achieve shared goals. It is a recursive process where two or more people or organization work together to realize shared goals, which is the collective determination to reach an identical objective for example, an endeavour that is creative in nature by sharing knowledge, learning buildings consensus. Library and Information Science (LIS) education plays an important role in the training and production of high quality information science professionals who occupy a unique position in national development. LIS professionals are gate keepers and brokers of information which is essential for knowledge acquisition decision making and national development (Source?). The West African Library Association (WALA) played major role in the establishment of the first LIS school in Nigeria in 1956. The report of

the study, popularly known as the Lacier Report established training needs and recommended the establishment of a library school at the then University College Ibadan. The first LIS School in Nigeria was established in October 1959 with a grant from Carriage Corporations. As at today in Nigeria, the list of accredited university LIS school is twenty five schools in number. In view of the fact that challenges are better addressed through concerted efforts - collaboration. American librarians have become a potent strategy for overcoming some of the problems associated with the development of library and information science in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Librarians are faced with several challenges which are better tackled through collaboration. Collaboration is known to have been well developed among librarians in the developed countries of Europe and North America but collaboration is not common among librarians in developing countries especially in West Africa e.g. Nigeria. Librarians in Nigeria are expected to be models in collaboration for library and information science development but little seems to be known about collaborative initiatives among them. What then is the nature and extent of collaboration among librarians in Nigeria towards the development of library and information science in Nigeria? This is the focus of this study.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of the study was to investigate collaboration activities between librarians of different libraries in Nigeria towards the promotion and development of Library and Information Studies (LIS) the study set out to:

- 1 determine the extent of collaboration between libraries and their colleagues at their libraries and outside their libraries;
- 2 identify what stimulate librarians in collaboration;
- 3 ascertain the areas or nature and extent of collaboration between librarians from different types of libraries;
- 4 find out the barriers to collaboration among librarians in Nigeria; and

5 suggest future trends in collaboration in LIS in Nigeria

## **Literature Review**

Collaboration is important among librarians in national, academic, school, special, public or private libraries. Harvey (2012) emphasizes that it is not enough to just co-exist in the same community, but to ensure that communication is on-going every day, he explained further that exposure to another perspective or outlook can lead to strong thought provoking discussions, ideas and activities. Harvey submits further that by working together as librarians it will be possible to learn from each other, He said there is a need to create a culture where collaboration is the foundation for how our libraries work and operate. He explained further that Nigeria librarians can help take a lead by modeling this behavior as they work with each other not minding the type of library where they are working to ensure communication is going on among the Nigeria librarians toward the development of library and information science.

Kajberg (2009) explained that collaboration is, therefore, a strategic means of tackling problems like skill incompetence, funding shortage of manpower etc facing the development of LIS. He explained further that the dawn of the digital age and the constantly changing global outlook make collaboration inevitable. Lin (2004) defined co-operation to include networks, collaboration and consortium. Al-suqri (2010) described collaboration as “co-operation”. Ochalla (2007) described collaboration as co-operation, partnership, networking and alliance; he explained further that the reason for collaboration is to jointly tackle the problems and challenges of LIS. Sacchanand (2012) mentioned three key strategies for successful collaboration as: policy, people, process and communication, commitment.

Johnson (2009) enumerated the success actions to collaboration which include the following: evaluating the potentials for collaboration before entering into a commitment; understanding the prospective partner capacity, environment with incentive and resources to collaboration and the sense of shared purpose; recognizing political and other realities; creating and enabling environment with incentives and resources to collaborate; creating trust in the partnership and developing mutual respect and a shared culture; and

identifying the key individuals that are expected to champion the collaborative efforts.

Collaborating is joining hands to accomplish a task individual libraries gain required strength to achieve results when they collaborate. Numerous advantages exist when there is collaboration. One may collaborate to achieve personal goals, professional attainments and corporate/institutional objectives. It is important to collaborate for the following reasons: many libraries encourage staff to participate in opportunities for the library to actively engage in the community outside library hall; collaboration can enhance the library's ability to serve your community and make library services more visible and valued; opens up possibilities and enables libraries to share and conserve resources, and expand services and programmes.

Collaboration has become a twenty-first-century trend. The need in society to think and work together on issues of critical concern has increased (Austin 2000a; Welch 1998) shifting the emphasis from individual efforts to group work, from independence to community (Leonard and Leonard 2001b)

Libraries have devised several means of going into collaboration. Some of the 'hows' can be answered via the following activities and programmes : sharing technology skills and technology costs; collaboration in developing programmes and promotion; sharing expenses of adopting a technology; partnership in training and funding; partnering to build and change audiences; factoring political alliances; working with local and state agencies to provide for developed workshop and research; providing career centers for locating and applying for employment opportunities; and cross promoting of events.

So many relevant stakeholders that can initiate or embrace collaboration from librarians include: National/International organizations, museums, schools, healthcare organizations, community groups, literacy councils, businesses/chambers of commerce, and economic development organizations.

Following are some of the key benefits of collaboration in library and information-related industries. Some of these benefits can perfectly fit into any other similar or related profession. Mention should be made of the following ones like brand and maintaining reputation; information clearing house; service orientation; promotion of lifelong learning; economic development; infrastructure; staff involvement; as well as strong skill

base and many more. These benefits would usher in a new lease of life for the LIS business in Nigeria. There will also be value for the investment deployed into the information service processing and provision.

## Methodology

The sample population of this study is 144 respondents consisting of librarians, library officers were drawn from 2014 Annual General Meetings of the Nigerian Library Association held in Owerri, Nigeria. Survey research design was used to collect data needed on different variables of the study using cluster sampling technique; 150 questionnaire were distributed and 144 were used. The instrument consists of four sections. Section A deals with the demographic information of the respondents. Section B deals with perception on collaboration. Section C deals with relevant statements on collaboration among librarians. Section D deals with challenges facing collaboration among libraries.

One hundred and fifty copies of the questionnaire were administered on over 300 library personnel who were at the annual event of the Nigerian Library Association. One hundred and forty four copies were returned, found suitable for analysis using descriptive statistics - frequency counts, percentage and mean. These respondents cut across four types of libraries - academic, public, special and school. Age range of respondents was put at 21years and above. Other details about respondents can be seen on Table 1.

**Table 1 Respondent Details**

Type of Library	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Public	19	13.2	2.11
Academic	93	64.6	
Special	29	20.1	
School	3	2.1	
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100	
<b>Age (Years)</b>			3.45

Less than 20	4	2.8	
21-30	18	12.5	
31-40	53	36.8	
41-50	47	32.6	
50 above	22	15.3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100	1.51
<b>Sex</b>			
Male	71	49.3	
Female	73	50.7	
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100	1.84
<b>Marital Status</b>			
Single	23	16.0	3.56
Married	121	84.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100	
<b>Educational Qualifications</b>			
NCE/OND/Diplo	4	2.8	
ma	11	7.6	
HND	40	27.8	
BSc	77	53.5	
MSc	12	8.3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	144	100	

## Results and Discussion

Based on the outcome of the data analysis, the following results were generated and presented for discussion as appropriate.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**

Type of Library	Frequency	Percentage	Mean
Public	19	13.2	2.11
Academic	93	64.6	
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BSc	77	53.5	
MSc	12	8.3	
PhD			

As shown in Table 1, the study population comprised male, and female library personnel and librarians from various types of libraries like public libraries 19 (13.2%), academic 93 (64.6%), special 29 (20.1%) and school libraries amounted to 3 (2.1%) respectively. Males were 71 (49.3%) while females were 73 (50.7%). Twenty-three (16.0%) were single while married respondents were 121 (84.0%). The educational qualification of the respondents ranges from NCE/OND/Diploma 4 (2.8%), HND 11 (7.6%), B.Sc. 40 (27.8%), M.Sc. 77 (53.5%) and Ph.D holders were 12 (8.3%). The age distribution of study population indicates that 21-30 years = 18 (12.5%); 31-40 years = 53 (36.8%), 41-50 years = 47 (32.6%), 50 years and above = 22 (15.3%).

It may not be wrong to submit that scholars and academic librarians attend professional gatherings more than librarians working in research, public and school libraries. In fact, school librarians cannot be said to be visible at joint national conference of the Nigerian Library Association. This may not be unconnected to poor pay and lack of awareness and drive to update self for higher responsibilities and complex professional challenges.

**Table 2: Perception on Collaboration**

Perception collaboration		Frequency			Mean
S	Perception	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	Mean

/ N					
1	Libraries can collaborate on relevant resources irrespective of type of users	127 (88%)	10(6.9%)	7(4.9%)	1.17
2	The type of library would affect the collaboration between libraries	104(72.2%)	33(22.9%)	7(4.9%)	1.33
3	Inter-library loan is the same as resources collaboration	95(66%)	41(28.5%)	8(5.6%)	1.40
4	Resources collaboration do not mean only same library relationship	116(80.6%)	19(13.2%)	9(6.2%)	1.26
5	Collaboration should include sharing of knowledge among all librarians	132(91.7%)	9(6.2%)	3(2.1%)	1.10
6	Knowledge sharing tends to the LIS profession in Nigeria	129(89.6%)	9(9%)	3(1.4%)	1.12
7	Innovative collaboration among LIS profession has not increased over the years	100(69.4%)	27(18.8%)	17(11.8%)	1.42
8	Type of library should not hinder sharing of knowledge as collaboration	117(81.2%)	22(15.3%)	5(3.5%)	1.22
9	Library to actively engage itself outside library walls	115(79.9%)	18(12.5%)	11(7.6%)	1.28
10	Collaboration can enhance the library's ability to serve and make	138(95.8%)	4(2.8%)	2(1.4%)	1.06

	services more visible and valued				
11	It opens possibilities, enables libraries and librarians to share and conserve resources, reach new audience and expand services	132(91.7%)	6(4.2%)	6(4.2%)	1.12

From the Table 2, 127 (88.2%) respondents agreed that libraries can collaborate on relevant resources irrespective of type of users which shows that they believe in collaboration. one hundred and four respondents believe that the type of library would affect the collaboration between libraries. One may need to find out whether or not the academic librarians are willing to work with public librarians and librarians at national level ready to collaborate with special libraries librarians. Sixty-six per cent respondents believed that inter library loan is the same as resource collaboration. This opinion suggests that the majority still believe in collaboration. One hundred and twenty-nine respondents (89.6%) acknowledge that collaboration include sharing of knowledge among librarians which means that this will bring development to the profession if different ideas can be exchanged through collaboration irrespective of the type of libraries where affected librarians are affiliated. One hundred (100) respondents representing 69.4% agreed that innovative collaboration among LIS profession has not increased over the years, hence there may be need to look into the factors responsible for this. One hundred and thirty-eight (138) representing (95.8%) respondents agreed that collaboration can enhance the library's ability to serve and make services more visible and valuable. Consequently, it is necessary to create awareness about collaboration among the librarians as indicated by the majority, that is, 132 respondents (91.7%). Same percentage of respondents further opined that awareness opens possibilities among librarians, enables libraries and librarians to share and conserve resources, reach new audiences and expand services which make it expedient to know what each library provides as open possibilities for its staff.

It must be stressed that behaving like a jejune researcher would ultimately defeat the essence of collaboration which is to make the effort public. Librarians prefer to share their work with other colleagues in diverse fields of endeavour. Services are better appreciated and valued when collaboration is involved. Collaboration in LIS profession goes beyond inter-library services so, innovative collaboration should be encouraged in the field of LIS. Collaboration efforts benefit users more hence libraries and librarians should do more than go into inter-library loan services.

**Table 3: Areas of Collaboration among Librarians**

S / N	Areas of Collaboration	Frequency		Mean
		Yes	No	Mean
1	Have you thought of carrying out a research work/writing book?	120(83.3%)	24(16.7%)	1.17
2	If yes, will you prefer to share the work with other colleagues?	125(86.8%)	19(13.2%)	1.13
3	Has your library ever collaborated on resources sharing with library(ies) aside your type of library	64(44.4%)	79(54.9%)	1.56
4	Do you think technology/infrastructural collaboration is possible in LIS in Nigeria?	126(87.5%)	18(12.5%)	1.12

In Table 3, majority of the respondents, 120 (83.3%) acknowledge that they have the mind of carrying out a research work or write a book and this would involve collaboration. One hundred and twenty-five (125) respondents also submitted that they prefer to share the work with other colleagues, despite this opinion it is amazing to

discover that majority 79 (54.9%) respondents agreed that library has never collaborated on resources sharing with library(s) aside their type of library while 64 (44.4%) said they have collaborated on resources sharing with library(s) aside their types of library(ies). Greater number of the respondents, 126 (87.5%) agreed that technological/infrastructural collaboration is possible in LIS in Nigeria. All these call for librarians to look into the reason why the level of collaboration is still low among librarians and library(ies) despite all these encouraging responses.

Technological/infrastructural facilities collaboration is attainable in Nigeria. Although, writing on the viability of this collaborative effort suggests that nothing much has been achieved on this in recent past. This may be traceable to the non-uniformity of level of adoption of technology in performing traditional library functions.

**Table 4: Collaboration Prospects among Librarians**

Collaboration Prospects		Frequency Distribution			Mean
S / N		Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Mean
1	Engage in lecture	58(40.3%)	58(40.3%)	28(19.4%)	1.79
2	Discussion	89(61.8%)	46(31.9%)	9(6.2%)	1.44
3	Demonstration	43(29.9%)	66(45%)	35(24.3%)	1.94
4	Problem solving	89(61.8%)	44(30%)	11(7.6%)	1.46
5	Discovery	51(35.4%)	65(45%)	28(19.4%)	1.84
6	Field Work	50(34.7%)	51(35%)	43(29.9%)	1.95
7	Investigation	57(39.6%)	49(34%)	38(26.4%)	1.87
8	Games	20(13.9%)	44(30%)	80(55%)	2.42

9	Assignment/Project	62(43.1%)	57(39%)	25(17.4%)	1.74
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From Table 4, it was discovered that 58 (40.3%) respondents engage in lecture among themselves frequently while a total of 58 (40.3%) do so occasionally. Also of note was the fact that 89 (61.8%) respondents involved selves in frequent discussion and 43 (31.9%) occasionally engaged in discussion. Demonstration was achieved by a good number of the respondents. At least, 43 representing 29.9% respondents engage in frequent demonstration and 66 respondents do so occasionally. Eighty-nine (89) 61.8% respondents were involved in problem solving frequently and 44 (30.6%) do same occasionally. Only fifty-one (35.4%) respondents engage themselves frequently in discovery of new ideas and 65 (45.1%) attained this height occasionally. It was further observed that 50 (34.7%) respondents frequently go on field work and 51 (35.5%) occasionally do so during collaboration. Fifty-seven (57;39.6%) respondents do carry out investigation frequently and 49 do same occasionally during collaboration. Games cannot be seen to have contributed significantly towards attainment of collaboration among librarians. Findings revealed that only twenty (20) 13.9% respondents indicated this option while 80 (55.6%) of them rarely involved in collaboration during games but 44 (30.6%) occasionally do so. Since about thirty-one percent respondents engaged themselves in occasionally, it may not be wrong to state that there is nothing preventing librarians from achieving collaboration using games as an option. Lots of potential exist there-in. Finally 62 (43.1%) respondents frequently share their assignments/projects, 57 (39.6%) do so occasionally and 25 (17.4%) rarely have assignments/projects.

Collaboration among LIS professionals has strengthened the discussion of these professionals. In fact, quality discussions tangential to problem solving have engaged the LIS experts meaningfully and productively too. Consequently, problems are being solved and frontiers of knowledge are being advanced to the next dispensation. New things are being learnt occasionally due to conscious and deliberate attempts made to demonstrate during collaboration, latest inventions and discoveries.

**Table 5: Challenges Librarians face during Collaboration**

S N	Challenges	Frequency			Mean
		Agree	Disagree	Not Sure	
1	Authorship in paper writing	113(78.5%)	24(16.7%)	7(4.9%)	1.26
2	Issue of security in resource sharing	106(73.6%)	29(20.1%)	9(6.2%)	1.33
3	Incompatibility in technology/skills sharing	111(77.1%)	24(16.7%)	9(6.2%)	1.29
4	Issues of Confidentiality among colleagues	107(74.3%)	32(22.2%)	5(3.5%)	1.29
5	Poor effort on the part of stakeholders (e.g professional associations, libraries, etc) in encouraging librarians	101(70.1%)	33(22.9%)	10(6.9%)	1.37
6	Lack of mentoring and training on collaboration	106(73.6%)	37(25.7%)	1(0.7%)	1.27
7	Poor individual's social relationship between colleagues	105(72.9%)	34(23.6%)	5(3.5%)	1.31
8	Poor skills of librarians on importance of collaboration	96(66.7%)	43(29.9%)	5(3.5%)	1.37
9	Poor financial/training support among librarians in some libraries	124(86.1%)	18(12.5%)	2(1.4%)	1.15

10	Poor relevant and innovative (e.g web 3.0 technologies) resources use and ideas in LIS in Nigeria	116(80.6%)	14(9.7%)	14(9.7%)	1.29
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In Table 5, 113 (78.5%) agreed; 24 (16.7%) disagreed and 7 (4.9%) were not sure whether or not there was a problem of authorship in paper writing whereas 106 (73.6%) agreed that issue of security in resource sharing was a challenge to collaboration. Also, 111 respondents (77.1%) were not sure that incompatibility in technology/skills sharing was also a challenge while 107 respondents 74.3% agreed that issues of confidentiality among colleagues constitutes a big challenge to collaboration. Furthermore, 101 (70.1%) agreed that poor efforts on the part of stakeholders such as professional associations, parent libraries et cetera) in encouraging librarians was also part of the problems of collaboration. One hundred and six (73.6%) agreed that lack of mentoring and training on collaboration was one of the problems faced during collaboration. Also, 105 (72.9%) agreed that poor individual's social relationship between colleagues was one of the challenges/problems of collaboration. Moreover, 96 (66.7%) agreed that poor skill of librarians or libraries on importance of collaboration is a problem to collaboration although a total of 43 (29.9%) respondents disagreed. Poor financial/training support was seen as a challenge during collaboration by 124 (86.1%) respondents though 13.9% had a contrary view. One hundred and sixteen (116) 80.6% respondents agreed that poor relevant and innovative technologies/resources such as web 3.0, its use and generation of ideas in LIS in Nigeria constitute a major challenge.

Funding is still a major challenge to LIS experts due to inability of many to set priorities right; plan career progression and lack of clear cut purpose. Many LIS professionals are not aware of training support programmes in form of conferences/seminars/workshops and other training supports. Some organizations found it difficult to release their staff for training due to their misconception about the professional status of LIS personnel and the need to update their professional skills and competence. One must not forget that



librarianship must be learned since it has a body of knowledge. Librarians have been able to significantly improve their hitherto poor skills due to periodic and/or regular training programmes.

## **Conclusion**

Based on above results and discussions, it could be concluded that librarians and library officers embrace library collaboration because several of the respondents agreed that collaboration in LIS profession has increased over the years and it has enhanced the library ability to serve and make services more visible and valued. Some librarians submit that collaboration can be in diverse areas in library and information science in as much as it promotes development in the profession. Also, there is need for the professional associations, parent organizations to educate, collaborate, and incorporate the need for both intra and inter-library collaborations in areas like infrastructure, staff involvement, skills and technological sharing, thereby achieving development and benchmarking in the library and information sector.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- 1 librarians/libraries to acquire skill on importance of collaboration because it is not possible to go after what you did not value/appreciate;
- 2 management of various libraries to support their librarians financially, so as to meet the demands of collaborations;
- 3 all librarians and library officers should develop their level of ICT knowledge;
- 4 LIS professionals should develop and enhance the level of networking and social relationship with professional and non-professional colleagues within and outside their “walls” as this tends to facilitate collaboration;
- 5 heads of libraries should train young librarians collaboration and encourage them to do it, and they should open their arms wider to receive younger

- librarians when they need them as mentors;
- 6 library and information organization should look out for chances of collaborating with other related organizations within and outside its walls for effective services and development;
  - 7 advocacy of LIS stakeholders in the area of security in resource sharing should be strengthened; and
  - 8 authorship in paper writing should not become a problem to the people collaborating, there should be concrete understanding from the beginning of such effort.

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