

## Investigating Faculty-librarian Collaboration at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu State.

By

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### Abstract

*This study investigated faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. It considered the strategies, benefits, and challenges of faculty-librarian collaboration. The study employed a descriptive survey design. One hundred and eighty-eight (188) respondents participated, comprising eight (8) academic librarians and one hundred and eighty (180) faculty members. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. Descriptive statistical tools: frequency counts, percentages, mean scores and standard deviation, were employed for analysis. The study identified the strategies and benefits of faculty-librarian collaboration; it also x-rayed significant challenges of faculty-librarians collaboration: inadequate institutional support, time constraints, and limited recognition of librarians' research expertise. The study concludes that sustained and institutionalized faculty-librarian collaborations are indispensable to achieving quality teaching, learning, and research outcomes in Nigerian universities. It recommends the development of formal collaboration frameworks, policy level support, periodic joint professional development programmes, and the formal/institutional recognition of librarians as academic partners in research and curriculum development.*

**Keywords:** Faculty members, Academic librarians, Collaboration, Universities, Godfrey Okoye University Library

## Introduction

Collaboration is an essential element for the accomplishment of tasks in many fields of human endeavor. In medical practice for instance, medical doctors work closely with nurses, pharmacists, radiographers, medical laboratory scientists, dentists, physiotherapists and health information managers to achieve a common goal of delivering quality health care services. Faculty–librarian collaboration has become essential in universities as it strengthens the core missions and objectives of higher education: teaching, research, and community service. The integration of expertise from faculty members and academic librarians creates a synergistic partnership that strengthens teaching, research, and scholarly communication within the university system. Faculty members contribute deep disciplinary knowledge, subject specialization, and research experience, while academic librarians provide expertise in information organization, research methodologies, scholarly publishing, digital literacy, and knowledge management. Combining the strengths’ of faculty members and academic librarians is beneficial to all parties involved including students who stand to gain structured guidance in locating, evaluating, and ethically using information, which in turn improves academic performance and critical thinking skills (Kamau & Adika, 2018; Junisbai, Lowe & Tagge, 2016)

Research shows that collaboration between faculty and librarians enhances curriculum design, supports student-centered learning, and embeds information literacy into disciplinary contexts, thereby fostering lifelong learning competencies (Dlamini, Mlambo, & Masenya, 2021). Academic librarianship in today's higher education environment has moved considerably away from traditional custodial libraries to collaborative partnerships in support of teaching, learning and research. Ultimately, the collaborative relationship between faculty members and librarians transforms the library from a passive information repository into an active academic partner, contributing significantly to institutional development, research productivity, and knowledge advancement in higher education.

Olukemi & Onaade (2019) observed that despite the outlined benefits of faculty librarian collaboration, these benefits seems to be overlooked in many institutional environments especially those in developing countries. They posited that the degree to which librarians and faculty members collaborate effectively differs among institutions They went further to

recommend that librarian-faculty area of collaboration in the universities should be thoroughly investigated. This necessitated the present study on faculty–librarian collaboration at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. As a private university with a strong academic orientation, the institution provides a relevant context for examining the dynamics of collaboration between faculty members and librarians. It offers an opportunity to explore the strategies employed in fostering collaboration, the perceived benefits arising from such partnerships, and the challenges that may hinder their effectiveness.

Accordingly, this study investigates faculty–librarian collaboration at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu, with particular emphasis on collaboration strategies, perceived benefits, and the prevailing challenges affecting its implementation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite the strategic role of academic libraries in knowledge production, collaboration between faculty and librarians remains limited in many higher institutions. Faculty members frequently perceive librarians as support staff rather than academic partners. This could be because faculty members have a perception that the librarians have no major contribution in academic activities. Most recently, Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) has eliminated the course: use of library, from the university curriculum. This has moved the librarians far from the classroom and farther from the faculty members. This confirms the position of the study carried out by Olukemi & Onaade (2019) that there were gaps between academic librarians and faculty members in Nigerian universities that require a close up. This disconnect contributes to weak information literacy integration, poor research ethics compliance, and reduced scholarly output.

Given the situation, it is imperative to close the existing gaps in order to achieve quality academic activities in terms of teaching, learning and research. Olukemi & Onaade (2019) recommended the need for investigation in the area of faculty-librarian collaboration in Nigerian universities to be carried out. There is therefore a need for empirical evidence to inform policy and practice regarding collaborative academic relationships. It is against this background that this paper is designed to investigate faculty-librarian collaboration at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu.

## Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate faculty-librarian collaboration at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu.

Specifically, the study is focused on the achievement of the following objectives:

1. To find out, strategies of achieving faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu.
2. To find out, the perceived benefits of faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu.
3. To find out, the perceived challenges facing faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu.

## Research Questions

The following are the guiding research questions for this study:

1. What are the strategies of achieving faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu?
2. What are the perceived benefits of faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu?
3. What are the perceived challenges facing faculty-librarian collaborations at Godfrey Okoye University Enugu?

## Review of Literature

Collaboration was defined by Kvellestad, Stana, & Vatn, (2021) as a partnership that involves two or more people working together towards achieving common goals by sharing knowledge. It was explained by Nezami, de Bruijne, Hertogh, & Bakker, (2022), to mean the pooling of resources by two or more stakeholders or partners to solve a problem that neither party can solve individually. In other words, faculty-librarian collaboration in universities simply implies lecturers and librarians developing a strategic partnership whereby each party will contribute their knowledge resources, skills and expertise aimed at achieving a common goal in research, teaching and

communication of Knowledge as a university. Fadehan & Ojo (2021) defined faculty-librarian collaboration as a jointly developed arrangement with clearly defined interrelated roles and responsibilities, a symbiotic relationship which benefits the parties involved and a necessity which offers numerous advantages in an academic environment.

Faculty-librarian collaboration is becoming a characteristic feature in universities. It is one of the many types of professional collaborations that has developed in the universities and has proven to be a strategic partnership that can help improve the level of research, the quality of instructional process, and the level of information literacy of students. (Lan, & Tuamsuk, 2018).

University libraries have a vital role to play in the growth of their parent institutions to achieve their objectives effectively. While faculty members are directly involved in teaching students in the classrooms, librarians are engaged in the bridging the gap between appropriate information resources and the academic productivity of students as well as the Faculty members themselves. Collaboration between faculty and librarians is essential to enhance students' learning and research process, and help them develop their information competencies (Yousef, 2010).

The strategies that drive effective collaboration has been discussed widely in the literature. These strategies not only enable the creation of meaningful partnerships but also help sustain collaboration over time by fostering mutual respect, understanding, and shared objectives between faculty and librarians (Andres & Usova, 2024)..

The concept of research data management (RDM) has become an increasingly important dimension of faculty–librarian collaboration. Research has become more data-intensive to the extent that funding agencies are imposing stricter data management and sharing requirements. Academic librarians now have a strategic role in assisting faculty with organizing, documenting, preserving, and disseminating research data. the training and expertise of the academic librarian in metadata standards, information organization, digital preservation, and repository management positions them as valuable partners in ensuring that faculty develop data management plans (DMPs), structure datasets according to best practices, applying standardized metadata schemas, assigning persistent identifiers (such as DOIs), and ensuring ethical considerations related to data privacy and confidentiality are addressed and comply with funder mandates that increasingly require open data sharing (Corrall, Kennan, & Afzal, 2013).

One of the strategies for faculty-librarian collaboration is the shared responsibility in research ethics and academic integrity training, faculty-librarians collaboration in this regard, encompasses training students on how to identify and properly use information sources. A phenomena often referred to as information literacy. Kumar & Heathcock, (2014) defined information literacy as the ability to find, evaluate, organize, use and communicate information in all its formats. In a nutshell, it is all about having the skill to search, find and use information effectively. There is an increasing need for information literacy among students in universities in order to make quality research and acquire impeccable knowledge (Douglas & Rabinowitz, 2016). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, no one can claim to be literate without being information literate

One of the ways that librarians imparted information literacy was through the compulsory course called: “Use of Library” offered in all Nigerian universities. But, with the scrapping of BMAS and introduction of CCMAS, the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC) has scrapped the “use of library” as a general course which hitherto accounted for information literacy instruction among the students. It has become imperative that in line with Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) faculty members should develop information literacy courses that are cognate to their discipline in collaboration with library and information professionals. This will not just compensate for “use of library” which has been discarded but will go a long way to inculcate information literacy skills in the students. In addition, some faculty members may need information literacy skills to develop their course contents, conduct their research and teach in this age of technological advancement. Faculty-librarian collaboration will lead to the development and implementation of a coherent and strategic approach to improving learner competency in information literacy.

Another strategy or mode of faculty-librarian collaboration is collaborative collection development. This is one of the strategies which ensures that academic library collections are more responsive to curricular requirements, research areas and new scholarly disciplines. This concept advocates that librarians should actively seek the opinion and feedback of the faculty members on subject-specific materials, expert journals, databases, and other digital resources that are essential in teaching and research and thereby increase the relevance and accessibility of library collections (Benny, 2015). This collaboration will not only allow faculty members to contribute their subject knowledge, but also permit the academic librarians to use professional knowledge of resource

assessment in acquisition processes to create a balanced, well stocked, even-handed and varied library collection that reflects learner needs, teaching goals as well as research needs. Where such collaboration exists, academic libraries collections will be robust and specific to real academic requirements and of course result in better utilization of scarce university funds (Ashilungu, & Onyancha, 2024). Collaboration in collection development does not only ensure a robust library collections but it also ensures that library collections remain compliant in the face of the changing academic priorities, interdisciplinary complexities etc. However, despite the advantages of faculty-librarian collaboration in terms of collection development, some librarians view collection development as their sole responsibility and do not appreciate any external interference (Shen, 2012; Tuamsuk, & Nguyen, 2022).

In terms of doing research, faculty-librarian collaboration positions the librarian as a partner in the core research process, the librarian becomes an active research collaborator and not just an individual who is meant to provide only support (Borrego, 2018; Rabasa and Abrizah, 2021). There are varying degrees of research collaboration between faculty and academic librarian across the world especially in research universities and in professional communities that place a premium on shared scholarship (Olukemi and Onaade, 2019).

In ethical research, faculty-librarian collaboration encompasses working together to inculcate academic integrity in students. This will ensure that ethical and quality research emanates in the university. The outcome of faculty-librarian collaboration is that students and researchers are trained on ethical research conduct, appropriate citation, and dangers of plagiarism develop a more responsible approach to researchers (Chigwada, 2020)

In the process of curriculum design, faculty-librarian involves shaping courses, such that they are content-rich. Librarians in this process help to map out relevant resources to that can boost learning outcomes, they suggest multimedia tools, and embed critical thinking into assignments. This will in turn result in a curriculum that is academically solid and information-savvy (Dlamini, Mlambo & Masenya, 2021).

Like other forms of collaborations, faculty-librarian collaboration are faced with challenges too. Some of these challenges include:

**Absence of Institutional Policy Framework:** The lack of a clear institutional policy framework which formally recognizes such collaboration: Successful faculty-librarian collaboration will only happen when universities are committed to designing policies conducive for such collaborations. If faculty members coauthor and publish a research in a library science journal, the faculty member may face challenges trying to use such article during a promotion exercise. There would be questions as to why the person chose to publish in a library science journal when he is not a librarian. This may disqualify the use of that article by the faculty member and vice-versa. The legitimacy of faculty-librarian collaboration might be short-lived and have no tangible effect without leadership and organizational support in higher institutions. Without support, interdisciplinary research involving librarians and faculty members, curriculum design planning etc. will not be effective or even rewarded (Chaddha (2009).

**Time Constraints:** Complains about workload is popular among faculty and even librarians, this can prove to be another operational challenge to meaningful faculty-librarian collaboration. Faculty members often experience significant time constraints arising from teaching loads, research productivity expectations, and administrative duties, which may limit their capacity to actively engage in sustained collaboration with academic librarians. In the same vein, librarians likewise manage multiple professional responsibilities that limit sustained collaborative engagement. These engagements include: reference services, instructional responsibilities, collection management, digital resource administration, and research output requirements. These competing obligations often constrain the time available for sustained and strategic collaboration with faculty. (Anasi, 2020).

**Low Awareness of Librarian Competencies:** There are insinuations that faculty members might not be as aware of the research expertise of academic librarians. Academic librarians are viewed more as supporters than intellectual partners in education and research. This was confirmed by Alabi (2018) who found that in many institutions of higher learning, there is usually little or no interaction between librarians and faculty and that faculty members do not understand the role of librarians, they are mostly unaware of what librarians do, as the majority see librarians as mere custodians of books and related resources. Meanwhile, librarians engage in research, publishing, administration and teaching. It has been reported in literature that faculty members hardly view librarians as their academic counterparts or as vital entities in the academic scenery. This great

divide between librarians and faculty has been associated with a culture of seclusion among faculty, especially in light of the perception that librarians only provide information services. A major reason for this image problem is that many faculty members have not felt the impact of librarians (Pham & Tanner, 2014). To overcome this anomaly, Matthies (2004) suggests that academic libraries need to collaborate more actively with faculty so as to improve the understanding of the roles of librarians and make them more visible.

**Professional Hierarchy Perception:** There are librarians in some academic institutions who do not have the same standing as their faculty counterpart. They are not regarded as faculty and this may lead to a lack of respect, collaborative decision-making, and ownership of academic projects (Donkor, Asimah, & Nwagwu, 2024). Those kinds of hierarchical perceptions can make librarians less active members in their institutions. Faculty might overlook librarians' skills in research, information literacy, and resource curation. A perceived power gap can make librarians hesitant to share ideas or assert their role. Hence, it is essential to break down these hierarchical walls to enable both sides see each other as equal partners, boosting teamwork.

### **Method of the Study**

A descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The population comprised eight (8) professional librarians at Godfrey Okoye University Library and 380 faculty members across departments and academic ranks. A total enumeration approach was used to include all librarians, while 180 faculty members were selected through simple random sampling, resulting in a total sample size of 188 respondents. This combined sampling strategy ensured adequate representation of both groups.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed on a four-point Likert scale. The instrument consisted of two sections: Section A elicited demographic information, while Section B contained fifteen items organized into three clusters: forms of faculty–librarian collaboration, perceived benefits, and associated challenges within the university. The instrument was subjected to reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency.

Of the 188 questionnaires administered, 180 were properly completed and found valid for analysis, representing a high response rate. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. A criterion mean of 2.50 (computed as  $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 \div 4 = 2.50$ ) was established as the benchmark for decision-making.

**Table 1: Distribution of the population of the study**

Rank	Librarians (n = 8)	Faculty Members (n = 180)
University Librarian	1	—
Principal Librarian	1	—
Senior Librarian	1	—
Librarian I	1	—
Librarian II	3	—
Assistant Librarian	1	—
Professor	—	18
Associate Professor	—	20
Senior Lecturer	—	26
Lecturer I	—	31
Lecturer II	—	43
Assistant Lecturer	—	36
Graduate Assistant	—	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>180</b>

**Decision Rule:** based on the mean of 2.5 the decision was that any item with a mean of 2.5 and above was accepted while any item with a mean below 2.49 was rejected.

**Analysis and Discussion of Result**

**Table 2: Mean Rating on the Strategies of Faculty-Librarian Collaboration**

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision Mean	Remark
1	Joint research projects between faculty and librarians	92	60	22	14	188	3.22	2.50	Accepted

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision Mean	Remark
2	Collaborative collection development	80	70	25	13	188	3.15	2.50	Accepted
3	Research Data Management Support	76	65	30	17	188	3.06	2.50	Accepted
4	Ethical research support (plagiarism testing & citation guidance)	110	55	15	8	188	3.42	2.50	Accepted
5	Information literacy coteaching	85	68	23	12	188	3.20	2.50	Accepted
6	Curriculum design collaboration	70	75	28	15	188	3.07	2.50	Accepted

Notably, ethical research support ( $\bar{x}=3.42$ ), particularly plagiarism testing and citation guidance, emerged as one of the most strongly endorsed strategies. This supports the findings of Chigwada, (2020) and this underscores the growing awareness of academic integrity within higher education institutions and the pivotal role librarians play in ensuring compliance with scholarly standards. Joint research projects recorded high agreement ( $\bar{x}=3.22$ ), suggesting that both faculty and librarians increasingly recognize the value of shared scholarly inquiry in improving research quality and visibility. Collaboration in research data management ( $\bar{x}=3.06$ ) and information literacy co-teaching ( $\bar{x}=3.20$ ) further demonstrate a gradual shift from transactional interactions toward intellectual partnership shows a strong agreement among respondents regarding viable strategies for strengthening faculty–librarian collaboration. Collaborative collection development also received substantial support ( $\bar{x}=3.15$ ), reflecting the need for library resources to align closely with departmental teaching and research priorities.

**Table 3: Mean Rating on the Benefits of Faculty-Librarian Collaboration**

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision Mean	Remark
1	Reduces plagiarism and unethical practices Improves research output and visibility	105	60	15	8	188	3.39	2.50	Accepted
2	Enhances teaching effectiveness	90	70	18	10	188	3.28	2.50	Accepted
3	improves research output and visibility	112	50	16	10	188	3.41	2.50	Accepted
4	contribute to curriculum design	88	72	18	10	188	3.27	2.50	Accepted
5	Strengthens information literacy skills	95	65	18	10	188	3.30	2.50	Accepted

Table 3 indicates a strong agreement among respondents that faculty-librarian collaboration is a mechanism that can enhance research output and visibility. This aligns with the research findings of Iwu-James & Haliso, (2023) and Higgins, DeVito, Stieglitz, Tolliver, & Tran, (2017), which show that collaborative publishing between librarians and faculty increases productivity and article quality. The respondents also agreed that collaboration helps reduce plagiarism and unethical Practices ( $\bar{x} = 3.39$ ). This is in line with the study of Alabi (2018) which found that the involvement of Librarians in educating students about *responsible information use, citation practices, and academic integrity* help students understand ethical research behavior and reduce instances of plagiarism. This collaboration also helps faculty to integrate instruction that *cultivates academic integrity* into the course of student projects. The result implies that strengthening collaboration between faculty members and academic librarians could be an effective institutional strategy to: reduce academic misconduct, promote responsible scholarship and even improve students’ research competencies. The table also reveal that faculty-librarian collaboration enhances teaching effectiveness ( $\bar{x} = 3.28$ ) and contributes to curriculum design ( $\bar{x} = 3.27$ ). This agrees with the findings of the findings of Fundator (2024) which reveal that embedding librarians into faculty teaching activities, help faculty *design assignments that align with learning goals* that require students to engage actively with information within disciplinary contexts, thereby strengthening instruction and outcomes.

The findings imply that collaboration contributes to a holistic academic ecosystem in which librarians support curriculum delivery, research dissemination, and ethical scholarship simultaneously.

**Table 4: Mean Rating on the Challenges Facing Faculty-Librarian Collaboration**

S/N	Questionnaire Item	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{x}$	Decision Mean	Remark
1	Lack of institutional policy framework	98	62	18	10	188	3.32	2.50	Accepted
2	Time constraints among faculty	90	70	18	10	188	3.28	2.50	Accepted
3	Limited awareness of librarian competencies	82	75	20	11	188	3.21	2.50	Accepted
4	Professional hierarchy perception	65	72	32	19	188	2.97	2.50	Accepted

Lack of Institutional Policy Framework with a mean of  $\bar{x} = 3.32$ , show that the respondents strongly agree that an absence of formal institutional policy frameworks significantly hampers faculty-librarian collaboration. The lack of an institutional policy framework emerged as the most prominent challenge, indicating that collaboration is frequently informal and dependent on individual initiative rather than organizational mandate. This finding is supported by Lan, & Tuamsuk, (2018) which reported that organizational support structures is essential for sustainable faculty-librarian collaboration

The respondents agree that time constraints among faculty with a mean of  $\bar{x} = 3.28$  is a major challenge impeding faculty-librarian collaboration. This is corroborated by findings of Alabi (2018) which reported that faculty members often have heavy workloads (teaching, research, administrative duties, mentorship and service commitments) leaving limited time to engage meaningfully with librarians.

Although professional hierarchy perception recorded comparatively lower agreement with a mean score of 2.97, than other challenges, its presence still signifies an underlying problem that can discourage collaboration. Respondents agreed that limited awareness among faculty of librarians' professional competencies ( $\bar{x} = 3.21$ ) is a significant challenge. This aligns with the findings of Williams (2023) who revealed that faculty members perceived professional hierarchies and lack of mutual recognition as a major barrier in research collaboration.

Overall, it can be inferred that addressing these barriers would likely enhance faculty-librarian collaboration.

## Conclusion

This study clearly demonstrate that faculty-librarian collaboration significantly contributes to improved research output, enhanced information literacy delivery, improved library services, and the promotion of ethical academic practices such as proper citation and plagiarism detection. The evidence from the study shows that when faculty members and academic librarians work together through joint research, co-authorship, cooperative collection development, and shared academic integrity initiatives, the overall quality of teaching and research is strengthened. Students, in particular, benefit from this collaboration through improved research skills, critical thinking abilities, and greater awareness of responsible scholarly conduct.

However, the study also reveals that collaboration is not yet fully institutionalized. Challenges such as limited institutional support, time constraints, insufficient awareness of librarians' research capabilities, and communication gaps continue to hinder optimal partnership. These constraints suggest that collaboration often depends on individual initiative rather than structured institutional policy.

In view of these findings, the study concludes that faculty–librarian collaboration is strategic to achieving the goals of the university and the advancement of higher education in Nigeria. For universities seeking to improve their research productivity, academic integrity, student learning outcomes and the attainment of and institutional excellence, it is essential for them to encourage, and ensure that collaboration between faculty members and academic librarians is sustained.

## Recommendations

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

1. **Institutional Policy Framework:** Universities should develop clear policies that formally recognize and promote faculty–librarian collaboration. Collaboration should be embedded within institutional strategic plans rather than left to informal arrangements.
2. **Recognition of Librarians as Academic Partners:** Librarians should be acknowledged as academic collaborators in research and curriculum development. Their expertise in information management, research tools, and scholarly communication should be integrated into departmental activities.
3. **Regular Joint Workshops and Seminars:** Institutions should organize periodic training sessions, seminars, and colloquia where faculty and librarians can share expertise, discuss research trends, and strengthen professional relationships.
4. **Incentives for Collaborative Research:** Universities may consider recognizing and rewarding joint publications and research initiatives between faculty and librarians as part of performance appraisal and promotion criteria.
5. **Improved Communication Channels:** Structured communication platforms, such as liaison librarian systems or departmental representation in library committees, should be strengthened to bridge existing gaps.
6. **Awareness and Sensitization Programmes:** academic librarians should advertise themselves, they should sensitize the faculty members in their university community about their research competencies, particularly in areas such as bibliometrics, citation management data management, systematic reviews, and mastery of plagiarism detection tools.

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