

Factors Influencing the Collaboration between Faculty and Librarian at the Universities: A Literature Review

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to elucidate the findings from the literature relating to the factors having effects on the collaborative partnerships between faculty and librarian at the institutions of higher education. The authors used the qualitative methodology by using the content analysis method of peer-reviewed articles and research papers. The outcome of this method indicates the four main factor groups becoming the enablers or barriers of the success or failure of the collaborative process: (1) integrating structure, (2) technology, (3) social and cultural factors, and (4) individual dimensions, in which every factor group includes interrelated sub-factors. The findings of this study will be useful for leaders, administrators, faculties, and librarians to have a richer understanding of elements influencing the collaboration at the universities, then find ways in order to initiate and maintain effective partnerships in accordance with university's context, as well as increase the advantages and reduce the risk from these factors during the collaborative process.

Keywords: Academic Librarians, University Faculty, University Libraries, Faculty-librarian Collaboration

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Introduction

The crucial benefit of information and communication technology in transforming the role of libraries and librarians in the twenty-first century, as well as enhancing and promoting the academic services is generally acknowledged. Anunobi (2008) indicated that university libraries are striving to position themselves as the primary and trusted source of information to provide users in the digital era; support the core tasks of higher education in learning, teaching and research (Crow, 2002); provide academic information, especially regarding to collection development; collaborate with stakeholders to agree and develop a research data sharing policy (Steinhart, 2006); manage, store and provide research data (Brown, Wolski, & Richardson, 2015). Many innovative and useful services have been developed at university libraries. In addition, the rapidly increasing of information resources, especially online resources, and open educational resources has enabled users to access the valuable resources and remote access to these resources (Johnson et al., 2012; Teng & Hung, 2013; White & Crawford, 1997). However, to ensure competition in the provision of qualitative information resources, university libraries are constantly seeking, complementing, and creating good information resources as well as learning and research support services for users. Many academic libraries have focused on developing information resources and learning and research support activities (Du & Evans, 2011; Richardson et al., 2013; Zhao, 2014). Similarly, the changes from traditional roles to carrying out more active and various duties of academic librarians has changed the academics' perspective, perception and attitude in the university (Bennett & Simning, 2010; Tumbleson, 2016).

Interestingly, becoming a research university is the emerging trend of many universities around the world. Research universities are the heart of a world-class higher education system and must be equipped adequately and the highest level of working conditions, facilities, infrastructure, management, and libraries (Altbach & Salmi, 2011; Mohrmana, Meb, & Bakerc, 2008). The spirit of a research university is open-minded, willing to challenge with new circumstances and enhance academic performance and research capacities. The faculty is the heart of the research university, with a good foundation of education to carry out teaching and research at the highest level. They must make a lot of contributions in scholarly through publishing articles and books. Meanwhile, students are the central element in the soul of the university and must commit to high academic achievement and improve research competence (Altbach & Salmi, 2011). To achieve its goal of becoming a research university, academic library plays a crucial role in providing quality library and information products and services for research; besides, information resources are always willing to be accessed (Courant, 2017).

Therefore, all of the reasons suggested above lead to demands for a faculty-librarian collaboration to boost educational effectiveness, university's reputation, and gain organization's mission. However, collaboration is a complicated process and is influenced by different factors. Thus, this paper presents the findings throughout reviewing the literature relating to the factors influencing the faculty-librarian collaboration.

The Findings

There are many factors influencing the faculty-librarian collaboration, include integrating structure, technology, social and cultural factors, and individual dimensions.

Integrating Structure

Organizational Structure

Studies stated that organizational structure has strong impact on the collaboration. In which determining the responsibilities of each department, level of autonomy, goals, the size and type of the university could promote or limit the collaborative process.

According to the findings from Hue (2016), the structure of the Australian university was complicated, highly focused on research, and various level of administration, this system was dynamic and had common involvement of librarians on the management board and faculty committees. As a result, library staff has more opportunities to communicate and establish relationships with faculty. Another prominent finding of this research also noted that the organizational structure at a Vietnamese university was rigid and bureaucratic, in which libraries and faculties had no autonomy. Therefore, it is necessary to change organizational structure by allowing librarians join in senior management committees, the science council or teaching and research boards to contribute the universities' vision, making a decision and become equal partnerships with faculty. This finding is supported by the survey of Diep (2011), the lack of institutional support for librarians, the rigid and bureaucratic structure and power gap between the leadership committee, faculty, departments, and library did not allow the library to participate in university committees or faculties' board. This reduced chances of librarians to communicate and collaborate with academic members. Thus, Jumonville (2014) recommended that the autonomy of faculty and librarian in organizational structure was an important factor in boosting the success of collaborative partnerships.

Regarding the units' responsibility, the Bury's findings (2011) revealed that faculty strongly supported collaboration in teaching information literacy, but it was limited involvement of faculty in integrating this course into the curriculum, and the teaching was done primarily by librarians. However, in order to obtain the support for information literacy instruction, the library needs to lobby with leaders at meetings to "arranging courses and seminars for teachers, meetings with students, teachers, administrators and various committees". It is worth emphasizing that if there have not specific regulations between collaborators and stakeholders, teaching information literacy would be conducted independently between individuals (Overn, 2014). Similarly, while library staff has actively established balanced relationships with faculty by developing library resources, building liaison staffs, focusing on teaching and research, as well as using communication technology and social networks for promotion, faculty members just focused on teaching and research activities to fulfill their roles rather than collaboration with librarians (Hue, 2016). In light of this, Overn (2014) suggested that for

greater collaboration in teaching information literacy, there need to have a clear organizational structure and regulate specific responsibilities of each department.

In terms of the university's size and type, Wijayasundara (2008) showed large universities have administrative tasks and other jobs more often than smaller universities and are difficult to initiate and maintain collaborative relationships. Therefore, "effective communication is possible in small organizations as there are many channels for communication even on a personal basis".

Roles and Resources

The literature presented interesting results about the distinctive constraints upon collaboration caused by the multiple roles between library staff and faculty.

An example of Bell and Shank (2004) stated the constraints in pedagogical knowledge, theoretical background, limited experience in teaching design and lack of mutual trust about roles of collaborators (Shen, 2012) impacted the process of moving toward and sustaining a collaborative partnership. In a different example, Scales et al. (2005) found that misunderstanding and disruption in the collaborative process are not only due to lack of teaching language and sharing terms, but also caused by the differences about stereotypes of librarians in society (Walter, 2008) and the negative effects of culture and system structure of a university (Welch, 2000). However, transforming of librarians' roles in library technical processes and collection management to performing diverse duties in teaching and research activities lead to changing their public image and academics' perceptions.

Taking a broader view, it is noted that the continuous development of technology, dramatic changes in educational systems, user needs and improvements in academic communication changed library staff roles (Jain, 2013). Especially, embedded librarian is an emerging trend in university extended their roles in organizing learning activities (Drewes & Hoffman, 2010; Tumbleson, 2016); provide multimedia resources and engage in online research with scholars (Kesselman & Watstein, 2009). In terms of research, librarians implemented integrating academic resources into research programs and publications, data management, bibliometric, research and publication communications, and warrants research infrastructure (Corall, Kennan & Afzal, 2013; Given & Julien, 2005; Jain, 2013;). Regarding teaching and learning perspectives, they directly involve in integrating information literacy into the interdisciplinary curriculum (Dewey, 2004). As a result, in a study conducted with 82 librarians by Bewick & Corral (2010) indicated that librarians felt more self-confident in the teaching process and combining information literacy in the curriculum. In light of this, librarians should improve knowledge and expertise in specific areas, as well as enhance teaching and research capacity (Hue, 2016); creativity and capacity development to contact to academic parties and customers (Rodwell & Fairbairn, 2008).

A case study at two Australian and Vietnam universities by Hue (2016) indicated that participating in teaching and research projects, training sessions, and workshops have enhanced professional

knowledge, teaching and research capacities, self-confidence of librarians (Bell & Shank, 2004; Bewick & Corral, 2010; Peacock, 1999); besides, librarians were viewed as equal partners with faculty in collaborative practices. On the other hand, librarians implemented information literacy teaching activities in different classes, library, and administrative tasks, while faculty were quite busy with teaching, research, publishing and various administrative work. Thus, work pressures have limited their efforts to build strategies and create opportunities to develop sustainable collaborative relationships.

Further evidence of Hue's research (2016) revealed universities faced the challenges of the imbalance in the structure of resources between faculties and libraries. "For the libraries, there has been evidence of a considerable effort in resourcing activities for collaboration, i.e., development of particular staffing structures, allocation of time, or staff development. On the other hand, very few faculties have provided functional and financial support for academics and library staff involved in collaborative activities".

Relating to the financial issues, it is imperative to see that limited finance also inhibits the collaborative endeavors. At the Australian and Vietnamese universities, there was cut back on their budgets from the government and limited funding great impacted activities of both universities. Shen (2012) mentioned that "in light of budget constraints, it is understandable that librarians and faculty often have to compete for a share of the financial pie". Therefore, "faculties often preferred spending their budgets on activities that were directly profitable, as opposed to more intangible activities such as collaboration between academic and library staff" (Hue, 2016). Furthermore, another adding finding is supported by Diep (2011) at four universities in Vietnam also emphasized the limited financial support from the government influencing the establishment of collaborative relationships among stakeholders in information literacy instruction and integrating knowledge into the curriculum.

Technology

Studies indicated that technology influenced academic libraries and faculty-librarian collaboration.

Relating to using technology for creating and promoting library and information services, Mahmood & Richardson (2013) stated that popular technologies, for example, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), blogs, social networks regularly used in academic libraries to promote library and information services and connected to users and partners. A survey was conducted by Harinarayana & Raju (2010) at 57 university library websites from the top 200 universities in the world reported that Facebook was the most widely used social networking tool in libraries for communicating and libraries' interrelated activities. Similarly, librarian at the California State University also used Facebook and Twitter for marketing and created online videos on the library's YouTube channel to promote library resources and services.

Along with using social media in promoting libraries and attracting users, technology plays a pivotal role in collaborative relationships to support learning and research. These findings support the work of Xiao

(2010) showed faculty and library participants at the City University of New York collaborated to “integrating information literacy into Blackboard to help nursing students develop information literacy and successfully complete a cultural research paper”. Further evidence of the significance of technology for collaboration was shown by Hue (2016) by integrating research skills into online learning management systems, guiding libraries’ using, information literacy instruction, designing curriculum, promoting libraries, instructing methods and research skills to avoid plagiarism by using Turnitin plagiarism detection software. In this research, she also mentioned various technologies, such as “emails or Google applications for teamwork, to a “sharing space” in a learning management system, and the advanced application of technology to create interactive materials and to explore new opportunities for collaboration”. Besides, another prominent finding of Hue’s study (2016) noted that social technology plays a crucial role in social interaction and integration, and facilitates to relationship building and expertise sharing among individuals. Integrated systems yielded benefits to connecting and improving faculty-librarian collaboration.

The positive effects of technology in building personal and professional relationships are indispensable; however, in some cases, it also impedes the beginning of partnerships. There were some drawbacks amongst collaborators in setting up relationships because it is difficult to determine when action would be taken place (Raspa & Ward, 2000). Besides, librarian and faculty worked on different technology platforms because of the varying nature of work could cause misunderstanding of the partners’ roles, leading to conflicts and collaborative constraints. Findings from the work of Wijayasundara (2008) added new evidence of library staff need to find out communicative methods in accordance with lecturers’ preference since a lot of faculty keen on electronic communication; nevertheless, there was no face-to-face communication reduced opportunities to initiate and establish an effective collaboration.

Additionally, one of the next important factors influences the collaboration is “technology use at the Vietnamese university was also dependent on faculty culture and the culture of the faculty leaders. If the faculty leaders were in favor of technology and used technology as the main means of communication, faculty members were more likely to accept and use technology as part of their day-to-day work practices” (Hue, 2016).

Social and Cultural Factors

Power Asymmetry, Culture and Norms

The first reason in social and cultural dynamics hindered the effective collaborative partnerships relating to the imbalance of power amongst academic staff and librarian. The cause of power asymmetry came from traditional perceptions about the librarian’s role, the limitation of the workforce, professional and knowledge difference, rights and priorities of work.

McGuinness (2006) provided evidence that faculty did not highly appreciate librarian’s knowledge and formal training experience, as well as their teaching ability and expertise (Ivey, 2003); besides,

Haynes (1996) also said that the perceptions and attitudes of lecturer about a librarian were negative. The reason of misunderstanding was the consequence of asymmetric relationship among faculty and library members (Christiansen, Stomblor, & Thaxton, 2004; Julien & Pecoskie, 2009); "the differences in goals, status, knowledge and expertise" (Shen, 2012). As a result, librarians said that faculty viewed them as subordinates rather than equal partners in the collaborative relationship by underestimating their ability in handling knowledge content (Given & Julien, 2005; Phelps & Campbell, 2012); and only working with machines relating to library collections (Given & Julien, 2005; Walter, 2008).

One notable cause showed that social attitudes perceived lacking respect for the stereotypes of librarian and viewed them as books' archivists and preservers, and dominated by women. Thus, "power asymmetry has caused personal conflicts, confusion as to the scope of practice, changes in professional identity, dissatisfaction about unequal relationships, and perceived barriers between participants aiming to form a partnership or move toward further collaboration" (Hue, 2016). Another example of McGuinness (2006) also certified that students could develop good information skills without the assistance of library staff. However, Wolff, Rod, & Schonfeld (2016) concluded that the roles of the library have significantly altered, particularly the development of research skills for students. Therefore, continuing to support the teaching and research activities are an important task to enhance the librarian's position for faculty.

Furthermore, the difference between academic and library culture led to the barriers of collaboration. The findings from studies presented that faculty had autonomous and independent style, flexible time and space, freedom in decision-making, and resistance to change; meanwhile, library culture was fast, enthusiastic, cooperative, structured and focused on detail and team spirit (Christiansen, Stomblor, & Thaxton, 2004; Hardesty, 1995). Likewise, according to Manuel et al. (2005), the teaching style of librarian was very organized and formal; "encourage a culture of sharing, cooperation, and collaboration, for the ultimate purpose of assisting students in their educational pursuits", while "faculty culture is generally more isolated and proprietary" (Christiansen, Stomblor, & Thaxton, 2004). Other cultural factors of academic staff, such as independence, rigid ownership of teaching subjects, research areas, inflexibility and lack of respect in the librarians' capacity also inhibited collaborative partnership (Saunders, 2012).

Time and Space

Literature concerning temporal and spatial dimensions revealed the benefits and drawbacks in initiating and maintaining sustainable partnerships.

According to Sanborn (2005), it took a long time to build and develop a collaborative relationship and realize its benefits, since it is mentioned in the power asymmetry sub-factor, the librarian and faculty need time to realize the partners' roles and create the mutual understanding and trust. Diep (2011), by way of example, said that a librarian would spend a lot of time and energy to form relationships with faculty in

the information literacy instruction since the faculty believed that teaching was their mission in many years and don't need to collaborate with a librarian in teaching. These findings support Christiansen, Stombler, & Thaxton (2004) argued that a librarian mainly worked with fixed working hours, while faculty had more flexibility in terms of work time and places led to the limited opportunities for interaction and mutual understanding.

The influence of time and space on collaboration has been one of the most interesting findings in the investigation by Hue (2016). Faculty were faced with limited time by the volume of teaching, research, publications and administrative tasks (De Zilwa, 2010; Ferman, 2011; Ryan, 2009, as cited in Hue, (2016)); meanwhile, limited human resources caused difficulties for librarian to work on time. Besides, the faculty was more autonomous and flexible in managing work time and places in comparison with library staff. This required a librarian to arrange their work habits in accordance with the lecturers' context (Christiansen, Stombler, & Thaxton, 2004).

Interactive and shared space for face-to-face meetings also facilitated for interaction and establishing relationships. Members worked on a small campus have more opportunities to set up close relationships with their partners than at large universities (Hue, 2016). In addition, convenient work conditions and adequate equipment greatly assisted in developing collaborative environment. According to Mulligan & Kuban (2015), the explicit administrative support was one of the most important conditions to facilitate in communicating to form ideas, strategic planning, delegation and discussing the ongoing tasks. The arrangement of independent space for exchanging, available infrastructure in providing necessary equipment, conference room, classroom space and clerical support were necessary for collaborative work (Wijayasundara, 2008; Winner, 1998).

Individual dimensions

Personal dimensions (e.g., trust, personal relationship, perceptions, personality, knowledge, skills, etc.) were found as one of the factors influence the effective and sustainable collaboration.

Hue (2016) identified four sub-factors in personal dimensions influenced successful collaboration. In light of this, "personal relationships were developed through social communication and personal team building interactions with elements of trust and mutual understanding of each other's roles and the nature of their work". The perception was influenced by "the social and governance systems, power asymmetries, professional culture and the awareness of the roles that partners played in a collaboration"; "personality relates to the social power relations, particular work culture, and organizational environments". Building trust relationships based on sharing knowledge, resources, expertise and mutual respect.

Furthermore, Mulligan & Kuban (2015) noted collaborative results among faculty and librarian sometimes occurred by finding common emotional qualities, cooperative behavior and compromise, respect and fair treatment, trust, enthusiasm, openness, honesty, and eagerness to learn; trust and commitment (Phelps & Campbell, 2012); positive attitudes, the enthusiasm of partners, mutual respect

and trust, integrity (Wijayasundara, 2008). In addition, Ivey (2003) also mentioned four factors to get the sustainable collaborative partnerships, such as “shared understood goals, mutual respect, tolerance and trust, competence for the task at hand by each of the partners and ongoing communication”; “sharing understood goals, understanding each other’s tasks and responsibilities, trust, and respect” (Diep, 2011).

In addition, to develop effective collaborative relationship with academic staff, Raspa & Ward (2000) suggested a librarian need to interest in faculty’s research, promote new products services and acquisitions, willing to attend faculty meetings, meet students’ needs, as well as friendly, good listener, committed, courteous and respectful. Wijayasundara (2008) also suggested a librarian have to consider the faculty’s attitudes on collaboration, share successful collaboration cases with colleagues, clarify views on how to collaborate with faculty, as well as take general responsibility for students’ learning achievement; be active in connecting, collaborating; be prepared to promote and share experiences to support educational mission.

The final important aspect of individual dimensions that influenced the outcome of a collaborative relationship was the knowledge and skills of participants. Wijayasundara (2008) indicated “the collaborative process is based on joint creation, sharing and transformation of information into a mix of knowledge and products”. Faculty and librarians must have the capacity to initiate and sustain successful collaborative efforts, knowledge of teaching techniques, technology skills, actively, open and clear communication. At the same times, individuals have to express their ideas and emotions, provide or exchange information and have the listening ability.

Another challenge to the endeavors of librarians to raise collaborative relationships was teaching techniques (Fliss, 2005). Thus, “they should have an understanding of learning theories, current teaching techniques, strategies and evaluation methods while having the skills in team building and public relations and the practice to use them”, Winner (1998) suggested.

Conclusion

Based on the peer-reviewed articles and research papers, it can be argued that the faculty-librarian collaboration is a complex and time-consuming process and need efforts to initiate and maintain relationships. Besides, the success or failure of partnerships depend on various elements, by way of example, integrating structure (includes sub-factors, such as organizational structure, information technology and communication, roles and resources), social and cultural factors (power, culture and norms, time and space) and individual dimensions (knowledge and skills, personal traits), in which each factor has different impact on collaboration activity at the institutions of higher education. Therefore, this paper helps university’s leaders, managers, academics and library staff have the in-depth understanding of essential factors for establishing collaborative relationships on the campus.

Recommendations

There are some recommendations to establish and develop collaborative initiatives at universities:

- This paper helps review elements affecting a collaborative partnership from different case studies, then sufficiently identify intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing an organization;
- Finding appropriate ways to overcome the barriers, as well as continue to promote the facilitators in a collaborative process;
- Building a collaborative strategy, and re-organize various components an organization to maximize the elements supporting the collaboration relationships;
- Providing necessary conditions in an organization (i.e. resources, facilities, finance, information technology infrastructure, etc.) to support to collaboration.

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