



**EMBEDDING LIBRARIANSHIP PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF FACULTY OF
PHARMACY EMBEDDED LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY OF MAIDUGURI**

SAMAILA INUWA

*Ramat Library,
University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri,
Borno State, Nigeria.
inuwasamaila24@gmail.com*

EMMANUEL CAMBLE

*Department of library and Information Science,
University of Maiduguri, Borno State, Nigeria.
emmanuelcamble2@gmail.com*

ABSTRACT

It is essential for academic libraries to continue to change their roles and establish deep contacts through the University to uphold and advocate their importance to all patrons. Embedded roles in research and teaching, and an embedded librarian's existence in the faculties/departments will strengthen the academic library's presence within its parent institution. The focus of this paper is to reflect on Embedding Librarianship Practices at the Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. The authors employed face to face interview with the Faculty embedded librarian. The findings of the study indicated that the role of the embedded librarian include teaching information literacy to undergraduate students, offer research assistance, promoting current, new and innovative library services to users, providing information at the point of needs, serve on faculty committee, and strengthening collaboration between faculty and the central library. The research has shown that in order for librarians to be effective in the learning community, this study point to the continued need for collaboration between librarians and teaching faculties.

KEYWORDS: *University libraries, Collaboration, Embedded librarianship, Embedded librarians, Information literacy*

Introduction

As customer groups and information users are changing, library services must also change. Meeting the needs of users and expectations is a priority within the academic library experience. Implementing a proactive approach to library service is necessary in order to be successful and relevant in the academic setting. Academic library's embedded librarian program can offer insight targeting the campus, department, and classroom. Kesselman and Watstein (2009) indicated various ways librarians have been embedded, among which are course integrated instruction, participation in research teams, collaborations in scholarly communication initiatives, and physical location of librarians in academic departments.

Educational institutions begin to establish an embedded librarian program as they envision their futures and consider the evolving roles of librarians as evidenced by the variety of activities and degrees of embeddedness described in the literature. The benefit of multidisciplinary teams and the addition of a librarian as a peer with yet another unique skill set seems to make perfect sense, especially in the age of practicing embedded librarianship. (EL). Similarly, Wu, Betts, Jacob, Nollan, and Norris (2013) maintained that the librarian's role and value are realized and ascertained through evidence of student learning outcomes and faculty research productivity, many steps can be taken to embed librarians fully into faculties, courses, and programs. Furthermore, Wu et al. (2013) stated that the following are examples of strategies and steps that can be taken to achieve a high level of embedded librarianship: develop a presence physically in the faculty and be fully integrated into a



specific academic unit, or department, to connect the librarians' work to their important customers, build close relationships with faculty members, to improve the quality of teaching and learning; collaborate with faculty and students to develop a more relevant collections and resources that meet curricular, course, instructional, and research needs. The practice of embedding librarianship indicate that a successful rapport in encouraging research as an embedded librarian can be realized by working together with a research group, whereby the expertise and understandings of those from a variety of backgrounds can be shared i.e. embedded (Schulte, 2012).

The embedded librarianship program has been introduced in the Faculty by the Library to support students' information needs in carrying out their research and other scholarly activities. However, it appears as if there are issues confronting embedded librarianship program at the Faculty among which are: declining of interest by the Faculty embedded librarian, disparity in academic benefits, overload responsibilities, and low awareness of the program. These issues are considered worthy of investigation.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to examine the practices of embedded librarianship program and to identify those that are openly participating in the practice of embedded services at the faculty.

Review of Related Literature

Historically, embedded librarianship can be drawn back to departmental libraries, where librarians provided services and collections within the confines of the department itself (Schulte, 2012). The academic libraries and librarians all over the world are facing strong competition from commercial information providers and other online information services such as google, google scholars, YouTube, sci-hub, Twitter and extra. The Librarians in various academic institutions are left with no option than to strongly advocate for embedded services and encourage the formation of embedded programs to meet the changing needs of users and its practice areas. Talwar (2014) highlights that practice of embedded librarianship is attainable and achievable. In approach, it focuses on reaching to the users and catering for them according to their needs. It has wider scope in near future for those academic institutions, which are already practicing librarianship. Embedded librarianship would encourage cohesive engagement between teachers/ librarians and help them to develop strong partnership in learning environment. With the help of embedded librarianship practice, trustworthiness could be achieved and developed among the library and the faculty. Embedded librarian engagement with students and faculty may serve as a best practice influencing guide use.

Sharma, Kumar, and Babbar (2014), holds the opinion that there is no one formula for practicing a successful faculty-embedded librarian collaboration but certain practices can help one develop. The key to a successful embedded course experience lies in the strength of the faculty-embedded librarian partnership. A robust faculty-embedded librarian partnership can enhance instruction to improve students' critical thinking and information skills. Another useful practice suggests that embedded librarians should strive to become immersed in the culture and spaces of users and offer convenient and user-friendly services outside library settings. It is part of the practices of embedded librarians to identify the needs of the faculty and students, and because each librarian brings different strengths and strategies, there is no wrong way to embed (Sharma et al., 2014). Some studies have indicated that the embedded practice appeared to have a positive influence on students' performance in learning (Horn, Maddox, Hagel, Currie, & Owen, 2013). Satisfaction of students on this question reflected, at least in part, their positive experiences resulting from the embedded practice (Horn et al., 2013). In summary, students reported positive gains in their awareness of embedded library program; the ease of use they experienced from embedded librarians in using library resources and services and the confidence in doing so. The embedded practice provided a space in the curriculum for conversations and learning about information literacy. The management's targets for improving student outcomes and the research underpinning the practice enabled the library to gain a level of access and collaboration through the library management system and the curriculum which librarians, in isolation, often find difficult to achieve.



According to Talwar (2014), the concept of embedded librarianship includes the practice to move librarian out of the traditional library setting whether physically or virtually. It involves developing a new framework for providing library service. It is a unique advance strategies that takes out the librarians out of libraries and forms an innovative library services and information work, which were absent in old practice of librarianship. It creates an environment in which research requests are answered; identify users' needs and providing effective results. This helps in building a relationship between the users and embedded librarians. Concisely, the constituents of embedded librarianship are: (a) Developing relationship with the users (b) identifying and understanding their information needs (c) Sharing their needs (i.e., goals) (d) Providing adequate information for achievements of those needs. (e) Customized, active and high value contribution towards achievement of their needs, (f) becoming an integral part of information seeker group. Similarly,

There is substantial change in the work of librarians from ordinary custodian of information sources and services to embedded librarian, who is repositioning the work of librarians by reactively answering research requests, increasing a distinctive understanding of users' demands and providing positive results. Embedded librarianship is one step forward towards modern librarianship (Shumaker & Talley, 2009). Librarianship is concerned with fulfilling need of the users coming to the library but embedded librarianship involves better catering to the needs of the user groups via outreach programs and initiatives organized and hosts by them. Embedded librarianship encourages libraries to design strategies to develop partnership with its users. It is more prevalent in academic libraries, where it deals with a strong partnership of libraries with faculty and students. Based on the literature reviewed, it can be seen that most of the research conducted so far focused on embedding librarianship practices in Europe. There is limited or no study conducted on embedding librarianship in Nigeria. Therefore there is need to conduct research on embedding librarianship practices in Nigeria and University of Maiduguri in particular where embedding librarianship has already been established.

Methodology

Buildings on findings from the interview, which examined the embedded librarianship program, responses obtained from the respondent were established to indicate the practices of embedding librarianship roles. The researchers met with the Faculty embedded librarian to identify the practices/role of the faculty embedded librarian. This is a qualitative study that used interview for data collection. An interview was carried out in order to find out the activities of embedded librarianship program at the faculty and to identify those that are openly participating in the practice of embedded services at the faculty. Standard is the condition in which the practice of embedded librarianship may be confirmed. The criteria used in this study are: serious commitment; involvement; collaboration/partnerships; and the understanding of curriculum, which the authors believe are important in offering students with the information aids to which they are allowed so that they can perform their studies efficiently in the information world. These criteria also emanate to serve as existing standards of judgement as they surface through practice (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006). The findings of this study were based on the analysis of the responses from the faculty embedded librarian.

Results

Practices of embedding librarianship

The themes that emerged under practices are information literacy, identifying needs of the users, answering research request, providing information at the point of needs, providing research request, providing information at the point of needs, providing training on information resources, and collaboration. The outcome of the dialogue with the faculty embedded librarian indicated that he is saddled with a lot of responsibilities in the faculty among which are teaching information literacy (Library instructions and study skills) to undergraduate students, which is a compulsory two credit unit course. Based on the interview, the faculty embedded librarian stated that identifying information needs of the clients are some of his responsibilities as far as embedding librarianship practices is concerned. This, according to him, is done by meeting the staff and the students of the faculty to discuss with them on their information needs in order to provide them with the information.

Furthermore, it has also been reported that the faculty embedded librarian is saddled with the duty of answering research request from students and staff as well as providing information at the point of needs. Students and staff who engaged in research approached the embedded librarian at the faculty for assistance, it is his responsibility to ensure that their research needs are adequately addressed. The embedded librarian also reported that he is charged with the responsibilities of providing training on information resources to students in the faculty and select useful information resources for the faculty. Another responsibility is to strengthen collaboration between the faculty and the central library. In his words “I have a successful teaching responsibility, coordination of academic activities between the faculty and the library, strong responsive and excellent representation of library matters in the faculty, and successful genuine coordination of faculty library during the accreditation of programs by the Pharmacy Council of Nigeria (PCN) and National Universities Commission”. However, the embedded librarian raised an alarm of being overloaded with responsibilities and less motivation from the library management.

Table 1: Embedding Librarianship Practices

Practice	Task	Description of responsibilities
Embedding Librarianship Practices	Faculty Embedded Librarian	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching information literacy• Identify information needs of the users• Answering research request• Providing information at the point of needs• Providing training on information resources• Selecting useful resources for the Faculty• Promote collaboration between the faculty and the central library.

Discussion of the Findings

The essence of conducting this study is to find out the practices of an embedded librarianship in the Faculty of Pharmacy at the University of Maiduguri, Nigeria. Practice of embedding librarianship is found by mapping data from interviews. Responding to the issue of job responsibilities of the faculty embedded librarian (EL), it was reported that at the faculty, the embedded librarian's responsibilities include teaching information literacy, identifying information needs of the users and answering research request. This is in conformity with the study of Feng and Zhao (2015), McCluskey (2013), Shumaker and Talley (2010), Greyson, Surette, Dennett, and Chatterley (2013) and Abrizah, Inuwa, and Afiqah-Izzati (2016) that the embedded librarians have a lot to provide in the research field, they could assist researchers through collaboration and partnership in searching relevant



materials, analysing technological trends, identifying valuable materials and tracking new emerging information. It has been established that some of the duties of the embedded librarians is to collaborate with user group on their information needs, supporting improved, better and advance library work to user group, giving library instruction, consider subject coverage and choice correct resources to make sure that the subject areas are up-to-date and successfully obtainable to meet the information demands of the faculty, staff and students, offer research assistance to students. The embedded librarian works cooperatively with faculty members to ensure that all students receive a library orientation.

The embedded librarian plays an important role in the scholarly activities of the faculty more especially in terms of research and teaching of information literacy. The embedded librarian holds the view that the embedded librarianship program has a significant impact on the scholarly activities to the faculty members by building confidence into them towards achieving academic excellence in terms of enlightening the beneficiaries/users on the appropriate guide as to the choice of information resources. The embedded librarianship program played an important role in the sense that it promote collaboration between faculty and the library, provides library instructions. This is congruent with the study of Butera, Gomes, and Kakar (2014) that an embedded librarian teaches information literacy course for first and second year to medical students, the EL become part of a team, collaborating with medical faculty to assist in revising curricular, incorporating innovative teaching techniques, and creating effective simulated patient case scenarios. The program enables students and researchers to be familiar with research trends and other scholarly activities.

The EL maintained that the academic librarians contribute to information literacy, ensure that researchers receive adequate information literacy training, give support to researchers and build new knowledge, especially in the research field, provide information at the points of needs and identify the information needs of the users. This is in line with the findings of Bezet (2013), and Edwards, Kumar, and Ochoa (2010) that the embedded librarians performed the work of producing course specific library resources, provide in class instruction, provide training on information resources and providing information at the point of needs. According to (Abrizah et al. (2016)), promoting information literacy programme is a reason for the emergence of EL. In order to promote information literacy programs to students, librarians accepted a positive role in providing information resources to courses, improving students' research skills and providing assistance at point of need.

The goal of embedded librarianship program is to reach out to clients outside the library building and identified their needs, to impact knowledge and to provide accurate information to the right people at the right time and at the right place, to educate students on research and data searching strategies. This is similar to the study conducted by Edwards et al. (2010) that EL provides rigorous library training to new students, they are trained in information literacy and library research skills. This will assist the students in looking for information and sharpen their behavior throughout their program. However the study revealed some challenges embedded librarian. These include overload responsibilities, no motivation from the library management and disparity in allowance with other members of staff. Other challenges are lack of proper awareness and advocacy of the program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study established that embedding librarianship practices in the University of Maiduguri include teaching information literacy, providing information at the point of needs, identifying information needs of the users, providing training on information resources, selecting useful resources to the faculty and promoting collaboration between the faculty and the central library. The study revealed that students and staff of the faculty of Pharmacy are mostly the patrons of the embedded librarian. However the study found that the embedding librarianship practices is faced with the challenges of low awareness and poor advocacy, the faculty embedded librarian is over loaded with a lot of responsibilities, there is disparity in academic allowances with his fellow academic colleague and there is no motivation for the embedded librarians by the library management.

Therefore the following strategies are recommended to overcome the challenges:



1. All should support the embedded librarianship services. Encouraging not only the embedded librarian but the University that this is a program to be promoted and encouraged and will certainly ensure a bright beginning for the library of the future.
2. The library management should engage in advocating the program to the University community to increase awareness on the program.
3. The library management should increase the number of embedded librarians to reduce the over loaded responsibilities.
4. The embedded librarian should be motivated to enhance positive productivity.

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