



**COLLABORATION OPPORTUNITIES: ENGAGING NGOs IN DRIVING BEST PRACTICES  
IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIES**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This paper highlighted the significance of fostering synergy between libraries and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); as both are interconnected in improving and developing our society, through essential services that revolve around creation, dissemination, and storage of information. This study was conducted in Anambra State purposely to identify NGOs and their activities, find out libraries that have collaborated with NGOs, establish whether NGOs and librarians can actually work together and find out challenges involved in collaboration. The population was 42 respondents made up of 29 NGOs officials and 13 librarians. These are NGO personnel partnering with the researcher's information center and the public librarians in Anambra State Library Board. Interview and focused group discussions were used in data collection. The study was a quantitative research and as such, the design was analyzed using calibrated formulae. Tables were used to show the findings which indicated that there are wide opportunities and great need for librarians to collaborate with NGOs. The findings further showed that only public library and its librarians have real collaboration with NGOs, although other librarians are willing to collaborate, depending on their areas of needs. Thus, one of the recommendations is that librarians should get focused with the collaboration trend so as to offer qualitative services to their users. This is because NGO interactions can integrate librarians more into project management and create space for the dynamic interplay between the libraries and their clients.*



**Keywords:** Collaboration, library and information services, librarians, NGO, service delivery

### **Introduction**

Collaboration is working with other organizations, individuals, groups, etc in doing a task in order to achieve shared goals. It is a process where two or more people or [organizations](#) come together to organize a joint program for their organizational benefits (Marinez-Moyano, 2006). This is the reason it coordinates different ideas from different people or groups to address issues, add values and achieve desired goals, thereby, integrating the statement by Mill (2015) that it has become a prevalent theme which is at the heart of innovative institution techniques. Hence, libraries and librarians need collaboration because this is an era where service providers need improved specialization and so need other's help to get things done through fast access to information networks and shared learning. The emphasis is to succeed in today's highly dynamic and networked world (Vicker, 2010) which every library requires in improving users' needs.

Collaboration is not a new concept. What is rather new is its increasing adoption and integration into library services because it has been known to show positive impact, performance and innovative outcomes. For instance, Hossain (2013) confirmed that numerous libraries are built and patronized by NGOs or NPOs all over the world by providing links to sources of information, hence, collaboration in Vietnam provides essential services that revolve around the creation, dissemination, and storage of information (Witt, 2012). This must be why the Vietnamese government drafted a law on issuing rights to foreign individuals and organizations to establish libraries in their country, which has created a milestone in the history of library development in Vietnam, resulting in the existence of thousands of communities and private libraries, reading rooms and book stacks.

This aptly underscores the Witt (2012) interjection that activities of NGOs and libraries should continue to increase on the intersection at these organizations and should attempt to provide essential services to support scholarly and social program. Even the different government of the world has discovered that without the other peoples' involvement in the solution of problems, such nation may deteriorate to the point of disintegration, emphasizing the essence of partnering with organizations in meeting the current needs of service deliveries. In view of this, the United States of America in her wisdom embraced the NGO program and established good rapport with several of them and this has impacted heavily on the implementation of objectives of this all-important world body of nations through funding projects, engaging in service provision, capacity building, awareness program and promotion of various groups (Baccaro, 2001).

Now, collaboration is not just for a particular sector of library and information services. The fact remains that every library and librarian is in a continual stage of development for sustainability. Thus, to effectively sustain this notion, accessing opportunities for collaboration must become critical and be embraced by proactive librarians. This is the reason innovative library management should be focused on scouting for knowledgeable personnel in achieving the institutional goals. The drive should be made to get a forward thinking leader who is knowledgeable about the changing nature of scholarship and the implications for special collections in the 21st century where traditional and innovative practices will come together for best practices. These types of enriching collaboration made Miller and Pellen (2006) and Gregory (2006) to remark that "we are no longer contented in offering services to those who show up at the doorsteps. Instead, information professionals should actively seek partners and develop projects to reach out to new groups".

Hence, the statuesque of "arm chair librarian" can be erased with exciting information activities through meaningful collaboration that aims to ignite interest in exploring external cooperation beyond participation. Srivastava and Lucknow (2015) called this transformation of the traditional setting of "arm-chair librarianship" to fresh perspective of harrowing outside the standard library or academic groups to secular organizations. With lots of organizations willing to partner, collaborate, network and share with others in achieving greater activities, librarians must cooperate with non-library entities outside their own



institutions to facilitate output and structure indicators so that the input will generate the end result which is rich information resources. These are physical/online special resources that should not have been easily generated from individual library activities or from group of libraries outside the NGO formation (Cisco Systems, 2015).

Certainly, collaboration is crucial but do not come easy. It also does not guarantee happy ending as it can lead to conflict and disagreement. Turner (2013) asserted that the inherent tensions and risks in implementing new technologies can cause disruptive challenges during integration into the information air wave. There are also bureaucratic tangles, departmental conflicts and snail-paced decision making during collaboration. However, collaboration can be a powerful tool towards higher achievement and increased productivity since joint program can significantly boost groups' aspirations, motivational investment, morale and resilience to challenges. As a matter of fact, libraries and librarians should embrace collaboration for optimal information service delivery since it is a good platform for them to advocate and project their roles in providing relevant information services to clients' specific needs.

### **Non-Governmental Organizations and Information Services**

Non Governmental Organizations are autonomous voluntary associations that are motivated by mission, vision and values set out solely for development of marginalized, poor and underserved people. These are referred to as voluntary non-state, non-profit, non-religious, and non-military associations (Iriye, 2004). They are usually set on the premise of humanitarian social services, partnering with international agencies for improvement of livelihood and the empowerment of the people for functional existence. They are bereft of government control and sustain themselves through funded projects and charity contributions. According to Hossain (2013) NGOs are high-profile actors in the field of international development, both as providers of services to vulnerable individuals and communities and as campaigning policy advocates. NGOs are not limited to geographical boundaries and human development index. They are "go-getters", working with passion and unalloyed commitment to service to humanity.

There are so many organizations libraries can partner with, for maximum output and impact. These organizations include:

1. Civil Society Organization (CSOs): These are organizations that are formed by different intellectual groups and are driven by professionals from wide arrays of human disciplines.
2. Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs): is a non-profit, voluntary citizens' group that can be organized locally, nationally or internationally. It is driven by people with common interest that basically perform services in various human and empowerment activities for common good through advocacy and provision of information. An NGO can also build its vision and mission on specific areas like human rights, social justice, governance, environment, etc for improvement of standard of living.
3. International Organizations/Agencies: These are foreign organizations/agencies that show outstanding information and technological innovative skills (The Royale Society, 2014).
4. Corporate Organizations: These are banks, companies, industries and other corporate institutions that have budget to carry out events for social corporate responsibilities.
5. Individuals/Philanthropists: These are well meaning individuals who establish foundations and provide certain amount of their finances for development.

In furtherance to achieving the goals of collaborative opportunities, this study aims at identifying the NGOs and their activities, finding out the NGOs that libraries have collaborated with, establishing whether NGOs and librarians can actually work together as well as finding out the challenges involved in collaboration. The need for this study was necessitated by the fact that libraries in Nigeria can develop and build strong information society if collaborations and partnerships can be enhanced but it is not certain how this can be achieved and which of the NGOs are accessible for collaboration. This is the gap this study needs to fill.



## Literature Review

Interestingly, there are many NGOs, which libraries have neither noticed nor approached. According to Maisonet (2013) many libraries in Ukraine are unaware of the existing opportunities to collaborate with NGOs, and others lack the experience to develop new projects through out-of-sector partnerships. These organizations can really open up wide varieties of avenues for library development and services through engagement platforms. Some of them engage in community information, governance, public enlightenment, holistic empowerment, health, education, youth, women and other social and political issues. Their focus on information dissemination (Duke University, 2015) and development are great benefits to the libraries since the shared learning and joint activities yield resounding outcomes. Since 2006, Elsevier Foundations (2015) has been extending innovative libraries grants and collaborations with libraries on consumer health literacy in African public libraries, repository for academic and research institutions, enhancing information training and outreach center, implementation of evidence based healthcare among others. In the same vein, Cochrane (2015) has partnered with individuals and institutions in using high-quality information to make health decisions, enhancing healthcare knowledge and decision making while Partners in Information Access for the Public Health Workforce (2015) has collaborated with libraries in creating opportunities for fellowships, grants and other awards, supporting health care librarians and information specialists. There is also the Library Project (2015) that is focused on China's rural communities which have established more than 350 libraries in rural areas, providing more than 100,000 young minds with access to educational materials.

Evidently, the reports of Hossain (2013), Tokwe (2013) and Library Project (2015) on the libraries that benefitted from NGOs showed that libraries expanded their services and greater visibility in the communities and people they serve. It further stressed that NGOs constantly promote valued activity for educators, librarians and social service professionals with full access to all people, including those with disabilities, who live in rural or remote regions, or who have an economic disadvantage. Clearly, librarians and libraries need to collaborate with these groups for joint activity on information and library development services. It has been established that NGOs and libraries can actually work together. This has created the needed platforms for the libraries to navigate and engage in information networking from all over the world without any geographical barriers (Josee, Karemu, Kanchori & Okibo, 2014). The result is the super collaborative activities with different organizations that should offer open access to information, which is crucial to democratic information society development. Since libraries have a distinctive function of acquiring, organizing, offering for use and preserve publicly available materials irrespective of the form in which it is packaged, it can and should collaborate with various NGOs whose activities cover all range of information dissemination. Just as no one knows it all, no library has it all.

Despite the gains of collaboration with NGOs, there are draw backs that can affect this trendy strategy. In the hypotheses drawn by Hond, Bakker and Doh (2015) on predicting a range of factors that influence firms to collaborate with NGOs, the authors noted that the level of trust the firm has in NGOs, the frequency of contact with NGOs, prior level and perception of experience with NGOs, and the level of pressure exerted by NGOs could cause challenges. Besides, Learningpool (2015, p.1) listed five challenges of collaboration which include:

- a) Not everyone starts from the same place, thus, a flexible implementation strategy will be needed
- b) Decision making can become more complex and sometimes more protracted
- c) Savings can take time to materialize and delays can be frustrating
- d) Return on investment can be difficult to measure empirically
- e) A perception of a partner being more unique can certainly create challenges

## Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative research design and the area of the study was Anambra State. NGOs under the umbrella of CSOMPAN (Civil Society Organization and Media Policy Advocacy Network in Anambra State) were used for the study. This group was used because it has the membership

of non-governmental organizations in the state as well as the fact that they render information and enlightenment programs in all the communities without much affiliation with libraries and other professional bodies. Using this group will explore their activities and create spaces for librarians to connect with them in areas of their libraries interests. Other NGOs from Delta state which have links with Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Onitsha were also accessed in the study. The population of the study was 42 which consisted of twenty nine (29) NGOs officials and thirteen (13) librarians made up of five (5) librarians from academic library, six (6) from public libraries and two (2) from school libraries. Interview and focus group discussions (FGD) were used to generate data for the study which took place at the review meeting of NGOs partnering with JDPC Onitsha on Voice to the People Project (V2P) at Shanahan Hall, Onitsha in May, 2015. There was also focused group discussion (FGD) with 13 librarians at Prof Kenneth Dike E-library during an executive council meeting of Anambra State Chapter of Nigerian Library Association (NLA) in September 2015. This discussion was important because only the heads of libraries can really give plausible answer on the actual collaboration taking place since it must be approved and coordinated from their offices. The results are shown in the tables below.

**Findings**

**Table 1: Identification of NGOs and their activities in Anambra State**

<b>Names of Organizations</b>	<b>Established</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Official location</b>	<b>Working Areas</b>
Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC)	1990	Community information and engagement in health, education, agriculture, governance, social justice issues and holistic empowerment	Onitsha	Riverrine communities, rural communities and state level engagement
Development in Practice (DiP)	2009	Gender development engagement and empowerment, governance	Awka, Abuja	Rural communities and state level engagement
Women Action Committee (WAC)	1993	Gender development engagement, women inclusion and empowerment	Awka	Rural communities and state level engagement
Aguata Diocesan Community Human Services (ADCHUS)		Health information/enlightenment and human development	Ekwuluobia	rural communities engagement
INTACOM Africa	2009	Human rights, anti-abuses and human trafficking, public enlightenment	Awka	State level engagement
Community Engagement Network (COMEN)	2014	Community information engagement and development, governance	Local Government Headquarters in Anambra State	Community level engagement
Center for Gender and Sustainable Development (CGSD)	2008	Health and gender development	Awka	rural communities engagement
Center for Leadership, Strategy and Development (C-LSD)	2010	Research, trainings, facilitation, development and publications	Asaba, Abuja	State and Federal level engagements
Vanguard for change	2004	Governance and human empowerment	Asaba	Riverrine communities, rural communities and state engagement

Hope Givers Initiative	2011	Governance, women development and empowerment	Enugu, Umuunnachi	Rural and state level engagement
Catholic Missionary Care Organisation (CCO)	2002	Child development, education and welfare	Nkpor	Rural communities and state level engagement
Care for the Physically Challenged and Destitute Foundation (CAPCADF)	2011	Disability welfare enlightenment, empowerment and development	Awka	Rural communities and state level engagement
Civil Rights Concern	2010	Governance, rights based approaches and public enlightenment	Awka, Enugu	State level engagement
Joint Association of persons with Disabilities(JONAPWD)	2008	Disability welfare enlightenment, empowerment and development	Awka	Rural communities and state level engagement
Civil Resources development and Documentation center (CIRDDOC)	1996	Governance, human development and empowerment	Awka, Enugu	State level engagement
International Federation of Female lawyers, Anambra State Chapter (FIDA)	1995	Human rights issues, women, girls and children protection enlightenment	Awka	Rural communities, state and federal level engagement

Table 1 shows the various NGOs and their activities together with their locations and areas of operation. So many of them are located in Awka, Anambra State and work in sectors that cover all basic information areas like health, education, agriculture, governance and human development.

**Table 2: NGOs Collaborating with Libraries**

Libraries	NGOs and organizations	Results of collaboration
Public library in Anambra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I-REX</li> <li>NDLEA</li> <li>Teaching hospital, Amaku-Awka</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity building for all public library staff Training of youths and children is on-going now every Thursday and Friday - morning and evening sessions Public library provided desktops, spaces, target population, facilitation NGO provided manpower</li> <li>NDLEA provided Books, Trees for planting for aesthetic Public library provided space for their training program activities</li> <li>Public library provided space and population Teaching hospital medical personnel, drugs, free treatment and free health information.</li> </ul>
Medical library	-	-
Academic library	-	-
School library	-	-
Information center at JDPC Onitsha	NGOs, Media, Ministries Departments and agencies (MDAs), Financial institutions, community organizations and stakeholders, individuals, etc	Capacity building on advocacy, lobbying, ICT skills, Monitoring and evaluation, visibility, resources, publications. Joint monitoring of schools, hospitals and engagement with community stakeholders.



This table shows that only public library and the corporate library/information center have real collaboration with NGOs. Other libraries have not experienced collaboration with NGOs as shown in the study carried out in Anambra state.

*Can librarians/libraries actually partner with NGOs?*

This question was asked to ascertain if collaborations will be possible between NGOs and libraries during the FGD. They both affirmed their willingness to work with each other. An NGO official answered that:

Libraries can help disseminate information to more people  
And provide some useful resources for our work.  
They have spaces that can be used for training.  
Why not? We can work together.

In the same vein, a public librarian stated:

We can actually visit those communities without libraries with the NGOs.  
I have always wanted to go out to these communities and see these things.

The interview section with the Director, State Library Board disclosed that the public library has actually carried out collaboration activities with NGOs in the past and it is a regular process which has added value to the library in terms of staff development and giving visibility to the state public library. She also stated that the public library will collaborate with NGOs that work in the communities for rural information dissemination and literacy activities. She stated that joint activities will be welcomed as long as the groups are targeting the same objectives. From the heads of different sections in academic libraries (Prof Festus, Aghagbo Library, UNIZIK Awka and Paul University, Awka), they revealed that they would love to collaborate with NGOs when they know their activities and how they relate to their information services. They admitted that they could partner, especially in information areas that meet the various needs of their users and academic community. They also want joint activities, visibility and wholesome information navigation.

**Challenges of Collaboration**

The following responses arose from the discussion with the NGO officials:

1. Some organizations do not like signing MOU before collaborating
2. Some clauses in the MOU may cause clash of interest, thus, preventing effective collaboration
3. Non commitment and dedication from collaborative partners
4. Dissatisfaction on implementation of activities by a collaborative partner may cause friction
5. Leverages and superiority of organization over the other creates withdrawal and uneasiness
6. Some organizational beliefs may affect collaboration's achievement of goal. For instance, the government workers may not speak out on government's disservice to community dwellers or on issues of social justice, etc.

**Discussion of the Findings**

The results of the findings based on responses made by participants revealed that NGOs meet greater needs of the people, especially those in the remote rural communities. The indication is that they can carry libraries and librarians along, especially in the areas and locations that seem to be underserved with information services. This buttresses the study of Mill (2015) that collaboration is now common innovative institutional technique among organizations, emphasizing today's highly dynamic and networked world (Vicker, 2010) which libraries can embrace. The revelation that only the public library collaborates with NGOs indicates that librarians in the academic sectors in the state have not gotten involved with NGOs in the current trend of library collaboration with non-library institutions. This must be the reason Witt (2012) advised strongly that activities of NGOs and libraries should continue to

increase on the intersection in attempting to provide essential services to support scholarly and social program. It will also remove the status quo of arm chair librarian which Srivastova and Lucknow (2015) and Miller and Pellen (2006) recommended that should be erased from the language of librarianship.

It shows that the strategies and initiatives of NGOs can be integrated into library service delivery which Josee, Karemu, Kanchori and Okibo (2014) commended as the needed platforms for the libraries to navigate and engage in information networking from all over the world without any geographical barrier. The benefits will create space for sharing and learning from other organizations that will impact on utilization of open access to information and knowledge dissemination which is crucial to democratic information society. It is a call to improve broader understanding of the bigger picture of library activities and insight into the world of amazing information precision (Learningpool, 2015). This has already been demonstrated by the public library in Anambra state.

This brings the consensus of every librarian and NGOs personnel that working together will support each other's needs with the concept that collaboration can enhance the society and build strong information networks. This affirms the response from group discussion on the willingness to work from both parties in support of Miller and Pellen (2006) who expressed that information professionals actively seek partners and develop projects to reach out to new groups. Conversely, the disclosure that challenges can affect collaboration pointed out at Hond, Bakker and Doh (2015) reports related to the findings of this study where clash of interest, non-commitment and dissatisfaction among others could emerge. The indication is that collaboration is not without hitches but careful setting of objectives can produce high level joint activity that everyone will benefit from.

### **Conclusion**

The study has x-rayed numerous collaboration opportunities, strategies and needs for incorporating non-governmental organizations in enhancing library services for the purpose of information delivery in Nigerian libraries. Over the years, libraries have been “doing it on their own”, limiting their scope and reach, both in content and service delivery. Partnering and or collaboration with different organizations are considered one of the most essential instruments for promoting operation excellence, not just in libraries but in every organization. It is on this premise that this study enlisted the non-governmental organizations and agencies, specifying their activities and relating them to how they can be of help to the libraries. This study has shown from findings that the two libraries that attempted collaborations gained capacity building and joint program which developed their information dissemination and visibility. There are more to come as the relation has been built for mutual benefits of the partners. Library is a service-oriented institution whose stock-in-trade is ensuring that users are duly satisfied. In order to maximize this user-friendly effective service delivery, it is important that this partnership should be cultivated by libraries and librarians along with the NGOs.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. Libraries and librarians should design a collaborative policy in their management strategies and in everyday activities.
2. Non-Governmental Organizations should see information service delivery as part of nation building and so, provide viable means of partnering with libraries in this regard.
3. Through the collaborative process, library users should endeavor to maximize the use of library resources as are enhanced by the collaborative efforts.
- 4 The challenges should be surmounted by both the NGOs and librarians through mutual understanding of each party and the mission they intend to achieve.





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