

## Subject Librarianship Programme Initiatives in Academic Library: the Case of the University of Ghana Library System

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### **Abstract**

*The paper describes the initiatives of the University of Ghana Library System (UGLS) in the development of subject librarianship programme in the University of Ghana in the context of roles, competencies/skills, communication, training, collaboration, time and information and communication technologies. The goal of the programme is to provide information or communication link to and between academic departments/units about library services, collection development and instruction and any other developmental issues relevant to the academic departments in the course of their teaching, learning, and research. The paper is largely based on the programme's development and the preparations that have been made to launch the programme. Lessons to be learnt are derived from literature to ensure the success and sustainability of the project. The indications are that a lot of fruitful preparations were undertaken and the literature has also thrown more light on issues that can be adopted in furtherance and sustenance of the programme. The paper presents information on issues to be considered as this concept is being implemented in the developing world.*

**Keywords:** Subject librarian, librarian-faculty relations, Library liaison, academic libraries, and University of Ghana.

### **Introduction**

The concept, subject librarianship is not a new one. According to Hardy and Corral (2007) it was introduced in the United Kingdom in the 1940s and about the same time in the United States. It is however, not as old in the developing countries. Bakar (2009) for example, indicated that the International Islamic University in Malaysia began its liaison programme in 2000 and it is believed many universities will follow suit and start the programme at different times.

Several reasons have been given in the literature on the need for subject librarians. Thull and Hansen (2009) argued that when subject librarians become close to faculty and students, subject librarians will encourage patrons to use academic materials and it will become easier to interact with them to identify what they want. In effect the information needs of these patrons will be better catered for and trainings will be provided where necessary. Another issue is that since users can source information from other places because of digital

technologies and communications, coming to the library to use its resources may not be so important to them. This is to emphasise that subject librarians have to promote the library's resources to their patrons and even train them on how to access these resources. The overall purpose of subject librarianship programme, therefore, is to enhance communication, to promote public relations and marketing, to ensure effective resource development and user services, to facilitate access to resources and to effect job enrichment for library staff (Ogbo, Nwosu and Asogwa, 2012). Bakar (2009) shared the same view and added that having the programme will create awareness about products and services available in the library.

The outcomes of adopting this programme are that there will be increased communication about library resources and services which will lead to increase in awareness of library resources. Another outcome is that there will be teamwork between faculty and librarians leading to better understanding of services and resources available to students, faculty and researchers. Further, library clients are assured of availability of a trusted contact person in the library to provide effective assistance to them which in turn promote better harmonious and mutual benefits and lifelong relationships between librarians and faculty (Thull and Hansen, 2009).

In spite of the benefits of subject librarianship enumerated above, somewhere along the line, this concept had been subjected to controversies where some authorities predicted the demise of the concept. The reasons put forward were that because of ICT developments users have alternative sources of information and need not depend on the librarians. But other authorities like (Hardy and Corral, 2007; Pinfield, 2001; and Martin, 1996) pointed out that subject librarians are now more than ever significant and have expanded roles to play in contemporary higher education especially with the growing awareness of the importance of information literacy in the information society. Pan and Lan, (2008) for example, pointed out that 50 academic libraries in China provide subject services to their users. In like manner, Attebury and Finnell (2009) reported that in a survey by Association of Research Libraries in 2007, of 63 academic libraries in the USA, 94% of these libraries provide liaison services to academic departments on campus. Subject librarianship programme has thus become an integral part of many academic libraries' organisational and service delivery model and many academic libraries.

In Ghana, according to Agyen-Gyasi (2008), no academic library was practising subject librarianship and that it would not be adopted in the next few years. He mentioned that even though some libraries may have collections in particular subject areas, for example, the Law library and the Business School, all in the University of Ghana, the staffs manning these libraries cannot be called subject librarians, according to the definition of the term. He made a number of recommendations including admonishing academic libraries to consider subject librarian programme.

Before starting the writing of the paper, a quick inquiry was made from other public university libraries in Ghana - Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), University of Cape Coast (UCC), University of Development Studies (UDS) and University of Education, Winneba (UEW) - to know whether they were/are implementing subject librarianship in their libraries. The response from all of them was, no. What this paper therefore seeks to do is to describe the developmental processes to effect the programme so that when the other academic libraries decide to adopt the programme, they will learn from it. Some documents (minutes of meetings and letters) and literature were searched to get information that have guided the implementation.

#### *Who is a subject librarian?*

A subject librarian is defined as “a librarian with special knowledge of, and responsibility for, a particular subject or subjects” (Feather and Sturges, 2003, p.624). This definition, Hardy and Corral (2007) pointed out that it conveys a narrow view of the role of a subject librarian. They suggested that any definition of the concept should be a more comprehensive description of the concept which should highlight the liaison and communication aspects which is often stressed and reflected in the use of the title “liaison librarian”. One cannot agree more with this assertion since according to Rodwell and Fairbairn (2008) the concept - liaison librarian - evolved from the traditional subject librarianship modeled on university branch library role. They stated that designating subject librarians in large, central academic libraries was partly an attempt to provide client groups specialist attention and services that other groups received from smaller branch libraries, which usually have a discipline focus.

According to Miller (1977), quoted by Rodwell and Fairbairn (2008, p.117) liaison work is “a formal structured activity in which professional library staff systematically meet with teaching faculty to discuss strategies for directly supporting their instructional needs and those of their students.” Ryans et al (1995, p.14) defined the term as “assigning librarians to

work with specific departments in a systematic and structured way to create a channel of communication that allows the faculty's needs to be understood by the library and the library to be interpreted to the faculty".

From the literature other terms or concepts used to connote subject librarian or at times used interchangeably are: faculty team librarian, liaison librarian, learning advisor, link librarian, subject specialist, information librarian, subject support officer among others (Pinfield, 2001; Agyen-Gyasi, 2008). For Pinfield (2001) it does not matter what the subject librarian is called, what matters is the emphasis on connecting with users. McAbee and Graham (2005) on the other hand argued that subject expertise is not merely knowledge of a subject but a mixture of subject knowledge and knowledge of the client community, which allows the librarian to mediate between available resources and the client.

From the above submissions and for the purposes of this article, a subject librarian, simply, is a professional librarian who has been formally appointed or assigned to be the primary contact person between the university library and a particular academic group – department, faculty, college, school, institute, centre or programme.

### **Background Information**

University of Ghana is the first public university in Ghana established in 1948 with the vision and mission of training required manpower for the country. The population of student as at 2011/2012 is approximately 38,000. The university has about 1300 teaching and research senior members in the various academic units. It has the state-of-the-art information and technology systems with broadbandwidth of 310 MB to support learning, teaching, research, knowledge dissemination and administration and also to enhance internet access, e-mail subscription and other world wide web transactions. As at now, there are three campuses - the Legon Campus, housing the central administration of the university; Korle Bu Campus, housing the College of Health Sciences; and Accra City Campus, located in the heart of the city. There are research centres scattered over the country. Many new programs have been introduced and new faculties, institutes, schools, and centres have also been established and are still being created. Coupled with these developments, there have been the establishment of sandwich and distance learning programmes to provide access to tertiary education for many more people.

### *The Library system*

The University of Ghana Library System (UGLS) is made up of the central library – the Balme Library, - and about 59 satellite libraries (departmental and hall libraries). The Balme Library has a collection of over 400,000 volumes, about 80 journal titles, and about 79 electronic academic databases consisting of subscribed, free, and open access ones in all the subject areas taught in the university. The UGLS uses the Innovative Millenium library software in automating the management of their collections. The Balme Library has automated its cataloguing, acquisition and circulation services using the Innovative Millenium Library Software. The other libraries, however, have automated only their cataloguing processes, though not all the satellite libraries. Out of the 59 satellite libraries, about 35 have automated their cataloguing process using the Millenium Library Software. The library system therefore has an integrated online catalogue consisting of the collection of all those libraries that have automated their cataloguing process. The online public access catalogue (OPAC) known as UGcat was launched in March 2009. Consequently, the university community can access the libraries' catalogue from anywhere with internet connectivity. There are 20 professional librarians in the library system, 15 in the Balme library and five in the satellite libraries. It is the 20 professionals that are taking part in the subject librarianship programme. Most of the satellite libraries are being manned by para-professionals.

A lot of other developments have taken place in the libraries particularly in the Balme Library, in terms of physical and organizational structures, the format and availability of information resources. The Central library, Balme Library, has had physical extensions to its building to provide more sitting capacity and space for additional services. In November 2011, a 24 hour reading room and Knowledge Commons facilities were opened in the Balme Library. Furthermore, another two IT facilities - Ghana-Korea Information Access Centre and Research Commons were also opened in March and October 2012 respectively. Coupled with these developments, many students and faculty now possess varied forms of IT equipment. From hand held ones, (sophisticated mobile phones, ipads, ipods) to desk tops. Many students have benefited from the free laptop project initiated by the late President, Professor Atta Mills. Wireless networks facility has been made available at selected areas on the university campus, halls and libraries. The university constituents have thus become instant consumers of information anywhere and at anytime. They can easily obtain information from other providers (the web) than the libraries. These have affected methods

of access to and delivery of those resources, as well as the rapidly changing needs and expectations of students and faculty because of the technological developments.

These significant developments in the library system and availability of information resources, in various formats pose huge challenges for the libraries. Information about these developments has to be communicated to all academic units/constituents so that they become aware of their availability. In addition, users – students and faculty – need to be adequately trained in using these resources.

#### *User education*

The only formal contact programme that the library system has with its constituents is providing library orientation for newly enrolled students (diplomates, undergraduates and postgraduates) known locally as “freshers”. During the first three weeks of the first semester of each academic year, the Balme library organises orientation for the newly enrolled students. The students report at the library and are taken through processes of finding materials in the library, introduced to the services available, and they are taken on tour the library to show them the various sections of the library. Available evidence suggests that less than half of the students make themselves available for the programme. This means that after the end of the officially allocated period for the library orientation, those who could not make it lost the opportunity forever. This one time/touch kind of orientation, from anecdotal information sources does not benefit the students much. There is no such library orientation programme for newly appointed faculty. Faculty use the reference desk just like the students to know their whereabouts.

It is therefore, a laudable idea when the Balme library in consultation with other professional librarians in the satellite libraries decided to implement the subject librarianship programme so that there can be a formal relationship between the library and its constituents. Thus, assigning professional librarians to the various academic units of the university has come at the right time so that close relationship will be developed between the library and its users. This will in turn enhance flow of information between the library and academic units resulting in effective and efficient services delivery.

### **Literature Review**

#### *Roles of Subject Librarians*

In the early stages of subject librarianship, subject librarians were employed on the basis of their subject specialist knowledge so that they would be able to effectively engage in

collection development, reference enquiries, user education and compilation of bibliographies among others. But as time went on, with university expansion and academic diversification, coupled with development in information technology (IT) resulting in availability of information in numerous formats, web sites, and databases, the roles of the subject librarian also seem to change (Sun et al 2011; Feldmann, 2006). Glynn and Wu (2003) provided an overview of these new roles from 1991 to 2001 at Rutgers University and (Rodwell & Fairbairn 2008; and Pinfield 2001) also discussed extensively these changing roles.

These individual roles may seem to have changed but the primary role of providing support to academic constituents remain the same. What actually has changed is the way in which the support is delivered. It should be noted that as the information environment and user demands evolve so also are the roles of the librarian. In the light of all these, Feldmann (2006) and Pinfield (2001) suggested that subject librarians should concentrate on developing specialist services and resources for researchers, such as: a research induction service, selecting electronic library materials, carrying out more information skills training, and greater involvement in the implementation of educational technology, a tailored program of workshops, a bibliometrics service, and a suite of specialist tools such as a series of libguides and online workshops.

It is not likely that all the numerous roles that have evolved will be adopted. As such, the number and types of roles played, and the emphasis placed on them may vary from librarian to librarian, from institution to institution, from place to place, and from stakeholder to stakeholder. Some roles will be preferred to others. These preferences were observed in the study of Hardy and Corral (2007) in UK universities; McAbee and Graham's (2005) study on the expectations, realities, and perceptions of subject specialist librarians' duties in medium-sized academic libraries in Jacksonville State University, USA; and Bakar's study (2009) at a Malaysian University.

#### *Competencies/Skills*

As the roles of subject librarians are changing, it also means that new skills must be acquired. It was for this reason that Pinfield (2001), stated that with the emergence of new roles for the subject librarian, newly adapted skills or competencies must equally be implemented. These new skills and attributes are necessary to enhance liaison role and also to promote the sustainability and effectiveness of the programme (Rodwell and Fairbairn, 2008). Auckland (2012) argued that new skills help accommodate new and future responsibilities. Skills needed



may be many and it may not be practicable to adapt all. Auckland (2012) identified 32 skills but emphasised nine which he termed core skills. In addition to the traditional professional skills, the subject librarian is also expected to develop subject expertise; relationship; communication skills; technical/IT skills; presentation and teaching skills; financial management skills; analytical and evaluative skills; team-working and team-building skills; project management skills; flexibility; ability to learn quickly; promotion and marketing skills; negotiation, persuasion and influencing skills; technical knowledge in publishing; information searching and retrieval; excellent knowledge of content available in the subject; skills to develop metadata schema, and advise on discipline standards and practices, for individual research projects; among others (Mamtora, 2013; Attebury and Finnell, 2009; Rodwell and Fairbairn, 2008; Hardy and Corral, 2007; White, 2004; Glynn and Wu, 2003; Rockman, 2002; Pinfield, 2001).

In addition to the above skills Thull and Hansen (2009) also pointed out that Liaisons should strive to stay current on new faculty in their liaison departments, as well as new programs, courses and department related events.

Just as roles vary from situation to situation, so also are skills. Bakar (2009) in his study found out that the skills proficiency in communication, and information literacy were ranked by 100% of the respondents as the most required skills by a subject librarian as opposed to subject expertise, and research ability, indicated by (29%). Further, in contrast to Bakar's study, Cooke et al (2011) reported that 93.1% of academic faculty indicated subject knowledge as the most required skill a subject librarian should have was rated lowest in Bakar's study.

### *Training*

Training is a very important part of subject librarianship. As stated earlier on, the traditional services have not changed but the mode of delivery because of factors such as ICT development. Additional skills will continue to be required in order to provide tailored services based on user needs. Subject librarians themselves therefore need to know and understand these developmental trends to be able to support the needs of their respective communities. Attebury and Finnell (2009) argued that lack of systematic training may lead to: librarians not being sure of how to proceed; lack ideas of how to communicate; and may even lower confidence levels of librarians.



It was therefore recommended that subject librarians should learn to attend workshops as part of their own upskilling process, as well as online workshops. The U. S. Embassy, Ghana, in collaboration with the American Corner, sited in Legon Centre for International Relations and Diplomacy, (LECIAD) University of Ghana, for example, at times organizes training in Social Media and other information subjects. For example, using facebook and linkedin, google customization, twitter and twitter tools, how to create netvibes dashboard, open access databases and textbooks etc. Librarians can periodically visit this facility to inquire about pending programmes and attend.

### *Communication*

The extent of interaction between the library and its main constituents will strongly influence the success of the subject librarianship. The librarians must consistently communicate with faculty and students concerning their needs and services available. It is therefore important that the most effective ways of communication are adopted. The different ways of communication identified in the literature include: personal e-mail, mailing list, sometimes video conferencing, telephone conversations, face-to-face personal contacts, workshops, campus newsletter, twitter and facebook accounts, etc (Pinfield, 2001; Hardy and Corral, 2007; Andrade and Zaghloul, 2010). Hardy and Corral's (2007) study, for example, revealed that almost all the respondents indicated e-mail as the most used mode to communicate with academic staff. Bakar's (2009) study corroborated this finding as 86% of the respondents ranked e-mail as the most used channel of communication between librarians and clients. The least cited mode of communication by Bakar was individual meeting with faculty indicated 15% .

With technological developments, electronic resources have become part of libraries' collections. Virtual learning environment is thus one area which is being used by subject librarians to reach diverse groups of clients. Corral and Keates (2011) in their study of UK Universities, reported that subject librarians are using the Virtual Library Environments (VLEs) to: deliver subject resources; teach information skills; and maintain library websites. VLEs are used to create links to online tools and other information skills resources which are integrated into the library website.

Pan and Lan (2009) described the VLEs as one-stop-shop for accessing and obtaining needed library resources and services. They therefore advised that for a subject librarianship to be effective, there is the need to build a virtual community platform for subject services.

This platform will centralise specific subject resources and will provide a one- stop services for users, which will encourage communication sharing and co-ordination among all members. One technology, however, which was not used by many subject librarians to promote discussion with students was e-conferencing.

### *Collaboration*

The importance of collaboration and partnership between the library and academic units in fulfilling their missions cannot be overemphasised. According to Sun et al (2011, p. 327) “active collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty on better integration of library resources with course content is important. Such collaboration tends to feed on itself, promoting a sense of community and providing opportunities for further collaboration.”

This collaboration can take various forms. The most common one is where the subject librarians take the initiative to partner with faculty to support student learning. Bennet and Gilbert (2009) described how faculty and the library in the Department of Occupational Therapy in Eastern Kentucky University partnered to plan, guide and implemented a project. The library provided instruction in techniques for efficient, complex searches whilst faculty played the facilitator and coach roles on the project. The benefits from this partnership were that, the students became knowledgeable consumers of library resources and information literate, and strong collaborative relationship developed between faculty and librarians even long after the project period. A rare situation is where faculty takes the initiative to partner with librarians as described by Yu (2009).

Another kind of partnership that can promote the course of subject librarianship programme is team work effort among the librarians, recommended Hendrix (2000). He recommended that departmental heads in the library should develop a “liaison script”, that is, providing information about their various sections to be shared with other various departmental heads of the library so that the subject librarians can in turn share the right information with their clients. This recommendation was made based on the fact that, since subject librarians assigned are from different sections or departments of the library, but have to communicate developments in the library as a whole to faculty, students and researchers, it is appropriate to have such an arrangement. Similar view was expressed by Tucci (2012) where he emphasised that such collaboration enable colleagues learn from one another, enhance assistance to students and builds bridges across disciplines.

Doskatsch (2003) and Connolly and James (2006) pointed out that relations are built on mutual trust and respect for each others' expertise and territory. They therefore advised that both parties must submit their egos and agree to work together .

### *Time*

Subject librarians, perform multiple tasks in academic libraries. A librarian may be cataloguer or acquisition librarian but also as an assignee to an academic unit, has to provide some other services. This means that the librarian must manage his time well to be able to provide effective service. One might ask, what is the typical time commitment for the role and how can this be incorporated into the current workload? It is difficult to answer this question because each situation may be different from another. Time allocated to roles to be played, therefore, may be influenced by the librarians' judgement and importance attached to it.

In comments gathered from respondents by McAbee and Graham (2009) indicated that a librarian may not get enough time to keep up with changes; there are always more activities than the time allows; and some tasks may not be attended to at all in a week. They thus found that majority of the respondents spent averagely 11 hours per week on reference service at a reference desk; 78% spent 0-5 hours per week on reference assistance in office as a consultant; 4.34 hours per week on bibliographic instruction; and 1.14 hours on publishing and scholarly activity. Balancing work load will therefore depend on the individual.

### **Subject Librarianship in Africa**

In Africa the concept may not be as old as it is in the developed world but a number of discussions took place favouring the use of subject specialists in services to library users. Avafia (1983) took a general overview of subject specialisation in some African university libraries and reported the wish of many university libraries to implement subject librarianship. But the main challenge was the non-availability of subject specialists. Similar observation was made by Oliobi (1994) in the University of Port Harcourt. Avafia reported that with a few subject librarians interviewed, all of them agreed on five basic roles that a subject librarian should play. These included collection development, reference and bibliographic services, liaison with faculty, user education, and supervision of staff and other routine duties.

Time spent on the various roles varied from person to person. While some spent about 70% of their time on collection development, others spent as low as 20%. On liaison with faculty, they visited their faculties on the average 1.5 times in a 5-day working week. One thing noted in this study was that, not all the roles were enjoyed by the librarians. From example, whilst about 83% enjoyed collection development, reference and bibliographic services, and user education, only 40% liked cataloguing. In spite of the challenges, the positive aspects of the programme was emphasised.

In 2012, Ogbo, Nwosu and Asogwa explored the need to establish a library liaison programme in the Federal College of Education in Eha-Amufu in the Enugu State of Nigeria. Views of 120 academic staff were sought to determine the need for library liaisons in academic libraries. The study revealed the reasons, functions, merits and envisaged problems associated with the programme. The reasons cited by the respondents for the need to establish the programme in order of importance were: the ability of saving users' time; that many researchers lack the skills for information search; the programme can alert users to the existing resources and services in the library; information quickly goes out; can alert users to new services and resources in the library; and the potential to complement other sources of information available to users.

In spite of the functions and merits of the programme, the following challenges were envisaged:

- Lack of fund to acquire enough library resources;
- Inadequate knowledge on available sources on the part of librarians;
- Pressure of work experienced by the librarians;
- Difficulty in determining the needs of users;
- Lack of ICT culture in some libraries; and
- Lack of ICT infrastructure.

In view of above challenges they recommended that adequate funding should be made available to acquire information sources; more staff should be employed to reduce pressure of work; there should be training and retraining of staff; curriculum should be reviewed to accomodate more ICT skills; and government-private partnership should be sought in the provision of ICT infrastructure.

### **Initiatives**

The idea of implementing subject librarianship programme by the Balme Library in the University of Ghana started in the 1980s, according to one of the retired Senoir Assistant Librarians consulted during the study. The consideration could not materialise because upon

further deliberations, it was realised that, virtually all the Librarians were social science and humanities oriented. Getting personnel to take up positions in the science faculty discouraged them since librarians who were science oriented were not available. They therefore abandoned the idea.

However, the urge to establish a kind of relationship with the library's users became stronger because of the expansion and developments taking place in the University. Thus in the early part of 2007, the idea of Balme Library liaising with academic faculty was mooted. The proposal was presented to the University Library Board and was accepted. Assistant Librarians were therefore assigned to faculties and departments to start the programme. But for unexplained reasons, after the assignment, for about three years nothing went on.

In the later part of 2010, the idea was revisited and a three member committee was set up in November, 2010 to revisit the issue of subject librarians in the university. The committee submitted its report in May, 2011 with a number of recommendations covering the following: importance of the subject librarian; responsibilities of the subject librarians, expertise/competencies that they should have; benefits; and the strategy of implementing the programme and when the programme should take off.

The committee suggested that "Liaison Librarian" should be the title for the librarian. The responsibilities of the librarian suggested include:

- Representing the library to the department, and the department to the library administration;
- Communicating regularly and actively with faculty and students, taking initiatives to inform them of developments regarding library collections and services;
- Learning about the needs and concerns of faculty and students;
- Conducting bibliographic instruction sessions in their subject areas, and working with faculty to develop appropriate sessions;
- Providing specialist guidance for faculty and students, one to help appreciate what the library has.
- Identifying courses and programmes in assigned departments that require information resources to support research.
- Working with faculty members to identify department expectations for students competencies and the role the library might play in achieving them.

- Facilitating current awareness services for both faculty and students through appropriate activities.
- Participating in needs assessment activities such as conducting focus group sessions or surveys.
- Consulting with students and faculty and provides advanced research assistance.
- Participating in offering course-specific instruction to appropriate groups.
- Participating in mediated database search, either as the primary searcher or as a consultant in the subject in cooperation with an experienced searcher.
- Sitting in faculty/departmental meetings.
- Being present at faculty/departmental academic functions such as colloquium, graduate and faculty research seminars etc., and keeps records of these functions.
- Drawing a work schedule and apportions time to ensure that responsibilities are carried out.

#### *Competencies/Skills*

In order to be able to carry out these responsibilities effectively, the committee suggested that the liaison librarian should have/develop the following competencies among others.

- Should be able to see issues from faculty and students perspectives.
- Should be reliable and follow through on expressed concerns.
- Should be committed to acquiring and continues to acquire subject expertise and knowledge at the collections in his/her respective subject area.
- Should be willing to suggest/try new techniques to enhance quality and productivity of work.
- Should be aware of trends in scholarly communication, especially in respective subject areas.
- Should be able to network with other bibliographers/subject librarians at other universities/colleges.
- Should have knowledge of research skills.
- Should have knowledge of and be familiar with library collection and databases in a particular subject area.
- Should be familiar with the UGcat (the online catalogue of the library system).

- Should be open-minded in approach – a willingness to lend a hand at all times, not to be defensive.
- Should be knowledgeable about the department/faculty and new courses introduced.

### *Benefits*

The outcome of the activity of Liaison Librarian is to:

- Enhance team-building, and constant flow of ideas between professional librarians and the faculty.
- Bring about open discussions.
- Build harmonious and mutually beneficial and lifelong relationships between librarians and the faculty.
- Facilitate the efficient use of professional staff in order to maximize the utilization of staff expertise and qualities.

### *Discussion of the report*

The report was discussed at Senior Members' meeting on May 6, 2011 and members agreed to adopt the title Subject Librarian instead of Liaison Librarian. This was because the librarians were to be assigned to particular subject academic units and they are to be responsible for the information needs of the unit. Other decisions arrived at were that at least two academic units should be assigned to one librarian, and the University Librarian should write letters to the various academic units informing them about the programme and introducing the librarians to the administration of the academic units.

### *Training*

A workshop was organised for the librarians from 1-3 August 2012 in preparation for the take off of the programme. The resource person was from University of Wits, South Africa. Topics treated were on libguides, plagiarism, and introduction to some open access e-resources. Three other workshops were held (in October and November, 2012 and February, 2013, as revisions to the first workshop. The resource persons for these workshops were staff of the electronic support unit (ESU) of the Balme Library. The trainings were not for the librarians only. Few of the subject librarians have organised trainings for their subject students on the electronic resources available and how to search the databases. Some of the libguides have published.



## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Many developments have taken place and are still taking place in the academic environment of the University of Ghana which present an excellent opportunity for the libraries to form partnerships with faculty to increase and expand services to students and other users and also market itself. Even though the Balme Library has taken the initiative to implement the subject librarianship programme, it is clear that a more concerted effort and commitment is needed from all librarians to firmly institutionalise the programme. It has been established in the literature that, a basic ingredient in any liaison programme is communication and must be given priority. Exploring and strengthening the numerous communication strategies available can help build better relationship and cordiality between the library on one hand and faculty and the authorities on the other hand to support any liaison activity in the university which will also lead to better and enhanced service by the library to its user community.

### *Recommendations*

Based on the literature review, experience of the UGLS, minutes held, anecdotal evidence from conversations with colleague subject librarians, personal experiences and observation, the following recommendations are made.

First, part of the preparations is to ensure that we have up-to-date, well organised and easily accessible collection. As stated earlier, only 35 out of the 60 libraries have automated their cataloguing process. In addition, those libraries that are in the system have not completed their retrospective conversion. The observation is that some libraries do not have the infrastructure (computers, internet connectivity, the millennium software installed, trained staff, barcodes, etc) to effect the automation. The subject librarians should therefore impress it upon the heads of the academic units to get their library collections into the University of Ghana online catalogue (UGcat). In addition, they need to know what online resources are available in the subject areas to meet the needs of the various disciplines.

Second, the subject librarians must recognise the many other roles they will be playing under the programme and braise themselves up to the task. This training will help them re-skilled and in turn impart it to faculty and students. Since they will not be able to perform all the roles that may be involved, they must focus on the most important ones from their own judgements in consultation with other colleagues.

As demonstrated in the literature, it is important that librarians employ effective communication channels in presenting their course to faculty and other stakeholders. Having communication skills would give them confidence in their interactions with liaison constituents. The Librarians therefore need skills and attributes such as creativity; communication skills; public relations; ability to handle difficult clientele; teaching skill; confidence; negotiating skills, persuasion and influencing skills; risk taking skills; ability to influence policy; skill in forging strategic alliances and diplomacy; promotion and marketing skills among others. These skills and attributes are important for the success of the programme. The librarians must take initiative. They should not wait for formal invitation from the faculty before proceeding to contact them.

Librarians should pursue quality relationships with faculty from which students can benefit by enhancing their learning and research. This relationship enhances collaboration with faculty. Collaboration was found to be an essential feature of the most successful stories. Teaching students and faculty to use new information technologies may have become one of the major roles of librarians. Active collaboration between librarians and teaching faculty on better integration of library resources with course content is important. Such collaboration tends to promote a sense of community and providing opportunities for further collaboration.

Librarians must be committed to the implementation of the programme and wait for no one before taking initiative. They must be proactive and aggressive in convincing all the stakeholders that the programme is necessary and beneficial. In the words of Moore (2004, p.83), as an admonition to librarians, he stated, “market yourself and your library; go after teaching faculty with zeal and purpose. Tell them all the things you can do for them and their students, and then do it well.”

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