

# Faculty–librarian cooperation in collection development at the University of Namibia library, with special reference to electronic resources

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study was to determine the extent to which teaching staff cooperated with librarians in collection development, specifically in relation to electronic resources, and to identify barriers they encountered while performing collection development activities.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A mixed methods approach was adopted for the study. Quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. Data were gathered through a self-administered questionnaire and interviews. A total of 149 faculty members completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 51.2%, while 16 library staff members were interviewed to obtain qualitative data.

**Findings** – The majority of the teaching staff who participated in the study affirmed that they had cooperated with subject librarians in collection development. A high percentage (62.4%) of the faculty members had collaborated with subject librarians in collection development activities. Only 37.6% of the faculty members had not participated in collection development activities with subject librarians to acquire library electronic resources. According to faculty members, some of the main challenges affecting collection development at the University of Namibia were a lack of catalogues for electronic resources and a lack of lists of titles from vendors. Moreover, librarians were not always available to assist faculty members. It is recommended that faculty members be part of the process of selecting materials and that a good relationship be fostered between librarians and faculty members to bring value to collection development activities.

**Originality/value** – Collection development in respect of electronic resources is a complex process to be undertaken by a single entity and, therefore, requires the collaboration of all stakeholders involved. In the case of institutions of higher learning, these stakeholders include faculty, librarians and vendors. The emergence of a variety of e-resources demands a meticulous strategy on the part of libraries to ensure they can offer a wide range of up-to-date and accurate resources that meet the evolving needs of their users. To the best of the authors' knowledge, studies that are similar to this one have not been conducted in Namibia before. This case study presents useful findings and lessons on faculty–librarian cooperation for effective collection development, not only at the University of Namibia library but also at other academic libraries in economies with similar characteristics.

**Keywords** Faculty cooperation, Subject librarian, Collection development, Electronic resources/e-resources, University of Namibia, Academic library

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

The 21st century has witnessed a proliferation of information and communications technology (ICT), which has resulted in an explosion of knowledge and information (Oche and Ogbu, 2020; Jharotia and Bansal, 2012). The explosion of knowledge and information manifests itself in many forms, including the amount of data and information generated. The world of big data and information generates massive amounts of data in the

form of tweets, emails, Facebook posts, connected devices and WhatsApp messages [World Economic Forum (WEF), 2021]. It is projected that by the year 2025, 463 exabytes of data will

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be created globally every day (World Economic Forum, 2021). As far as scholarly publishing is concerned, the scientific community agrees that the number of scholarly journals has continued to grow over time (Cheek *et al.*, 2006), although the exact number of journals published in each country is unclear (Singh and Mahajan, 2022). Online and Web platforms have estimated the number of journals to be around 30,000, and the list of scholarly journals is estimated to grow by approximately 5% to 7% every year. Seglen estimated the number of journals to be 126,000 in 1997 (Seglen, 1997). An examination of the Web of Science (one of the largest bibliographic and citation databases) shows that the number of journals indexed in the database has grown from just 3,000 in 1972 to over 23,000. In acknowledging that too much research is being published in the world, Altbach and de Wit (2018) contend that:

there is a crisis in academic publishing – too much pressure on top journals, too many books of marginal quality, the rise of predatory journals and publishers that publish low or marginal quality research and tremendous pressure on academics worldwide to publish.

There has been a surge in the availability and the use of electronic resources over the past few decades, leading to the transformation of libraries and the way they operate. Consequently, collection development in respect of electronic resources in libraries is essential for meeting the ever-evolving needs of library users and is a topic that deserves attention (Brown *et al.*, 2017).

Collection development is crucial for electronic resources since these materials are frequently updated and their content can rapidly become outdated (Gaur and Tripathi, 2012). Nevertheless, e-resources have advantages, such as less storage space, large information capacity, time and location independence, a strong sharing ability and a large collection development potential (Zhang *et al.*, 2011). Given the rapid pace of change in technological advancements and research, library users have come to expect electronic resources that are up to date, accurate and reliable. Libraries need to meet these expectations by investing in a wide range of electronic materials, including books, journals, databases and multimedia resources that cater to the various information needs of their users. However, collection development in respect of electronic resources comes with challenges, such as licensing restrictions (Albitz and Shelburne, 2008), vendor relationships (Chen, 2017) and budgetary constraints (Ndungu, 2016), among other things. Libraries rely on a plethora of funding sources, and budget shortfalls are a common occurrence when it comes to collection development. Consequently, libraries must prioritise the acquisition of those electronic resources that are most relevant to their users. In addition, libraries have to target technology-savvy users who expect on-demand access to digital materials. Librarians have to be aware of the collective needs of their users and use creative solutions to enhance the user experience. These and many other challenges make collection development in respect of electronic resources a complex issue, hence, the need to adopt specific strategies, such as collaboration, assessment, the evaluation of existing collections and user feedback. Collaboration involves cooperation between stakeholders to determine the best way to provide electronic resources that are most relevant to users. The faculty members of universities constitute the key stakeholders with whom the

universities' libraries can collaborate to develop collections of electronic resources.

Librarians and teaching faculties in academic institutions have long collaborated with one another in developing collections of library resources (Kiilu and Kiilu, 2014; Tuamsuk and Nguyen, 2022). The teaching faculty of a university plays an important role in collection development, specifically in respect of selecting materials, evaluating collections and weeding/deselecting library materials for purposes of supporting teaching, learning and research needs, and by evaluating library resources and trialling online databases. Alabi (2018) states that collaboration between librarians and faculty members is the most important aspect of balancing library collection development, effective library instruction and research literacy competency. Likewise, Singh and Mahajan (2022) state that the input of faculty members is considered essential for collection development in libraries since they know the needs of their students and programmes. These authors advise library staff on the resources they have to deposit in the libraries to build strong collections for students. Faculty members play a major role in selecting library materials in every university library. Teaching staff are thought to have superior subject expertise and to be generally more effective, efficient and cost-effective in selecting what is needed in a library (Jenkins, 2005).

### Problem statement

It is essential that a university's faculty members and librarians cooperate in developing high-quality library collections that will attract students, teaching staff, administrators and researchers, as well as provide support for the university's teaching, learning and research programmes. Despite concerted efforts and initiatives to develop e-resource collections for the University of Namibia (UNAM) library, the library faces challenges in respect of faculty members' cooperation with librarians to build such collections. Some of these challenges include weak library-faculty relations with regard to collection development; a lack of experience on the part of faculty member; a lack of catalogues; a lack of knowledge about which publishers offer e-resources; and a lack of lists of titles from vendors. Furthermore, librarians are not always available to assist faculty members. Kamau and Elegwa (2021) found in their study that a lack of adequate publisher catalogues to aid in the selection of materials affected the process of collection development; faculty members were hesitant to select library resources; and the process of communicating selected items to the library staff was prolonged. Other challenges they identified were internet access that was insufficient for conducting online searches and discovering resources as well as a lack of skills in using electronic tools to select e-resources. As a result, the collection development process at the UNAM library was not going smoothly. At the time of the current study, no research had been conducted on the extent to which academics collaborated with librarians in collection development activities at the UNAM library, with specific reference to e-resources.

### Purpose and objectives of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the extent to which teaching staff cooperated with librarians in respect of collection

development at the UNAM library, with specific reference to e-resources, with a view to suggesting a framework for effective cooperation between faculty and librarians in the development of e-resource collections. Specifically, the objectives of the study were as follows:

- determine the level of faculty members' awareness of subject or collection development librarians;
- determine the respective roles of librarians and faculty members in collection development;
- determine the level of importance placed on the role of faculty members in collection development;
- determine the frequency of communication between librarians and faculty members regarding collection development; and
- identify the challenges encountered in librarian–faculty cooperation in collection development.

### Literature review and conceptual setting

This section contains a review of the relevant literature and provides a conceptual setting for the study in relation to the collection development process; related studies on faculty–librarian collaboration in collection development, with specific reference to the respective roles of faculty and librarians; and challenges encountered in collection development partnerships.

#### Collection development process: respective roles of faculty and librarians in partnerships

Collection development is regarded as an “essential element of the information life cycle” (Khan and Bhatti, 2016). According to Evans and Saponaro (2005), it is a process that comprises six major components, namely, assessment needs, policies, selection, acquisition, evaluation of collections in whatever formats and deselection (weeding). Collection development facilitates the acquisition, maintenance and management of library resources to meet the diverse information and educational needs of library users (Gregory, 2019). It involves the identification of relevant resources and the effective selection and appropriate procurement of resources based on various criteria, including information needs, quality, availability, usage and cost (Johnson *et al.*, 2012). Massis (2012) argues that the collection development process has always been a critical component of providing appropriate resources for each course offered at a university, and the explosion of electronic resources has made collaboration between faculty and librarians more important than ever before. According to Tsakomas *et al.* (as cited in Gakibayo *et al.*, 2013, p. 3), electronic information resources are sources that are provided in an electronic format, such as e-books, e-journals, online databases, CD-ROM databases and other computer-based electronic networks. The need for, and the importance of, collaboration between librarians and faculty members in academic institutions such as universities cannot be overemphasised – it has become vital in the development of university library collections (van Zijl, 2005; Singh and Mahajan, 2022). Kamau and Elegwa (2021) highlight the importance of cooperative work between library staff and other stakeholders to avoid delays and to ensure timely service delivery. Blummer and Kenton (2012) state that teachers and students should remain the driving force in all e-book acquisitions.

### Faculty–librarian collaboration in collection development

Several studies that have been conducted regarding faculty–librarian collaboration in respect of the development of collections of library materials were identified in the review of relevant literature. For example, Pfohl (2018) conducted a study at the University of Namibia and observed that subject librarians at the UNAM library were heavily reliant on faculty members for title suggestions. Similarly, White (2004, p. 177) notes in his review of literature on collaborative collection building of e-resources that university librarians rely on teaching staff's input for building collections to make provision for research needs, curricular content and changing and emerging disciplines. White's argument is validated by the situation at the UNAM library, where each faculty or department has a subject librarian who collaborates closely with the faculty library contact person in respect of collection development activities. The heads of department and deans of faculties at universities should inform the librarians about future academic directions, programmatic needs and curriculum changes that may have an influence on library collections and services in order for the librarians to accomplish their tasks. Likewise, Jenkins (2005) points out that teaching staff possess more knowledge about their subject areas and are generally more effective, efficient and economical in their selection of what is required in a library; therefore, there is a need for cooperation between librarians and faculty members. Yet, as subject librarians become more experienced and knowledgeable about existing collections, they selectively add relevant titles to the collections. A study conducted in Nigeria by Alabi (2018) showed that librarians regarded faculty board meetings and library committee activities as some of the most successful forums for increasing librarian–faculty collaboration in collection development. Furthermore, when librarians become acquainted with the faculty, they learn more about the faculty's particular publications and scholarly achievements. Librarians' familiarity with individual faculty members may aid in developing balanced collections that stock those persons' scholarly works.

Tausif and Mushtaq (2020) examined the collection management process of the engineering college libraries in Aligarh, India. Their study revealed that all six engineering colleges had library committees, and these committees were responsible for recommending e-resources and guiding librarians in making subscription-related decisions in respect of e-resources. This finding supports Khan and Bhatti's (2016) assertion that the final decision on collection selection should rest with faculty members because they are well-versed in their subject areas and they know the requirements of their students. Kiilu and Kiilu (2014) highlight that the collection development process followed at Egerton University involves various participants, including the faculty (book selection), the library department (budget making and coordination of the book selection process), the university management (budgetary allocations), the procurement department (facilitation of actual procurement) and book suppliers and publishers.

Rahman and Darus (2004) investigated faculty members' awareness of collection development. They found that only 25% of the respondents were knowledgeable about the library liaison programme of the university in question; the majority

(75%) of the respondents did not know about the existence of the programme, even though they had been teaching at the university for more than five years. [Kamau and Elegwa \(2021\)](#) conducted a study on the factors that influence the collection development process at the University of Nairobi Library. They found that the library had a written collection development policy, which had been revised in 2014 and was adhered to strictly. However, the policy had a gap in respect of the role of faculty members as stakeholders in the selection of library materials. Furthermore, the selection criteria were not explicitly stated in the policy. [Knight \(2013\)](#) points out that librarians must make policy changes that may promote faculty involvement in collection development and book selection.

### Challenges encountered in collection development partnerships

Although remarkable results have been obtained in collection development as a result of faculty-librarian cooperation, collection development partnerships are faced with some challenges. For example, [Mabhiza et al. \(2012, p. 96\)](#) concluded in their study that there were some weaknesses in library-faculty relations with regard to collection development, collection evaluation and the weeding out of irrelevant or outdated materials. They recommended that the improvement of library-faculty relations continue. A study conducted by [Ashilungu \(2017\)](#) revealed a number of challenges affecting collection development activities at the UNAM library, including a lack of experience of faculty members; a lack of catalogues; a lack of knowledge on which publishers offered e-resources; a lack of lists of titles from vendors; librarians not always being available to assist faculty members; slow intranet or internet access; insufficient time to surf the internet; and a lack of knowledge/skills to use e-resources. Poor internet connectivity and insufficient time to conduct searches were highlighted as additional challenges. Other challenges mentioned were the absence of a policy on collection development, inadequate funds to cater for the increasing costs of e-resources in various subject fields and a lack of selection of e-resources by the teaching staff. It was noted that faculty members were too slow to select library resources (especially e-resources), thus, delaying the communication of selected materials to the library staff. These findings corroborate [Khan and Bhatti's \(2016\)](#) observation that academic libraries are faced with challenges caused by high inflation, which eats into the budgets allocated to libraries, the high demand from users and declining funding from the parent institutions.

In another study, [Kasalu and Ojimbo \(2012\)](#) identified several challenges and constraints that private universities encounter in relation to the collection development process, namely, slowness in the selection process; slow internet connectivity; the use of print selection tools that cause delays in the selection of materials; and the slow delivery of orders. Other challenges include prepayment associated with online ordering, which goes against the policies of most private universities; a lack of cooperation from teaching staff in selecting materials; and a shortage of staff who can carry out the collection development process. Regarding challenges encountered in the selection of information materials, the study conducted by [Kamau and Elegwa \(2021\)](#) revealed that a lack of cooperation from teaching staff in the selection of materials to purchase was

a major challenge. This aspect may be attributed to the absence of an explicit policy on the role of faculty in the selection process. This finding concurs with

[Khan and Bhatti's \(2016\)](#) finding that a lack of proper and timely responses from faculty members greatly affects the timely ordering and supply of materials during the acquisition process. [Khan and Bhatti \(2016\)](#) stress that the major role of faculty members in the process of selecting library materials creates serious problems since faculty members remain busy in their educational and administrative engagements and do not consider building a collection as their main responsibility; therefore, they take long to make selection decisions.

[Kaur and Waila's \(2016\)](#) study revealed that management libraries in India also experience challenges such as inadequate funds in respect of e-resource collection building. [Khan and Bhatti \(2016\)](#) found that the factors that affect collection development at university libraries in Pakistan include dwindling budgets; the absence of standards; the absence of collection development policies; a lack of assessments of users and collections; insufficient coordination between faculty and library and information science professionals; the fast growth of e-resources; a lack of application of ICT; the inactive role of the library association in the formulation of standards; and the absence of consortia plans and alternative plans. [Adekanmbi and Boadi's \(2008\)](#) study on the challenges encountered by librarians in charge of collection development at the Botswana College of Education found that 100% departments lacked adequate staff and had time constraints, and 83.3% had budget constraints, insufficient space for library materials, cumbersome procurement processes and a lack of facilities and equipment, such as DVD players and computers. [Ameen \(2008\)](#), in a study conducted in 2007, identified the primary challenges that university libraries in Pakistan faced in respect of collection management, including the hybrid nature of collections, service to users, the training of collection management staff, collection evaluation and resource sharing and preservation, among other things.

[Evans and Saponaro \(2005, p. 82\)](#) noted that everyone involved in collection development plays an important part in identifying the bibliographies and the review sources needed to build a library collection. Selection aids can provide an overview of the output of publishers and media producers. It is, therefore, critically important that libraries develop criteria and procedures for the selection of e-resources. When e-resources are selected, the selectors should take the following criteria into consideration:

- copyright;
- the intellectual nature of the source materials;
- current and potential users;
- the actual and anticipated nature of use;
- the format;
- the costs; and
- the benefits ([Haneefa, 2007](#)).

[Johnson \(2009, p. 20\)](#) asserts that if libraries continue to consider the criteria for selecting e-resources, they will have to deal with the question of how to move the materials that are available on the internet by incorporating these materials in the collection development agenda.

## Research methodology

A mixed methods approach was adopted for the study. Quantitative and qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic. A convergent mixed methods research design was applied, whereby quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analysed concurrently and thereafter integrated, as advised by Creswell and Creswell (2018). This design was deemed appropriate for the study since the opinions and the experiences of faculty members and librarians who were located in diverse and sparse locations were sought, and the library staff were considered conveniently located to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. Furthermore, the target population was not homogenous, thus, necessitating a dual approach to data collection. The target population of the study consisted of 1,200 academic staff members at UNAM and 22 subject librarians. For the purpose of conducting the study, a total of 291 academic staff members from UNAM's eight faculties were sampled using random sampling. Of this sample, 149 faculty members completed a questionnaire (yielding a response rate of 51.2%) and 16 library staff members were interviewed. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the faculty members, while interviews were used to collect qualitative data from the library staff. The data obtained from the interviews were integrated with the data obtained from the survey to provide a complete picture of faculty–librarian collaboration at UNAM. A thematic content analysis was performed to examine the qualitative data, while SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data.

## Research findings and discussion

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the study participants. A total of 149 respondents participated in the study, of whom 88 (59.1%) were male and 61 (40.9%) female. The age of the respondents ranged from under 30–60 years. The majority of the respondents fell in the age group of 41–50 years (39.9%), followed by those in the age group of 31–40 years (33.1%) and 51–60 years (18.2%). The remaining 8.8% of respondents were under 30 years old. None of the respondents were over the age of 60 years. In respect of job rank, most of the respondents were either lecturers (42.3%) or senior lecturers (22.1%). The majority of the respondents were male and middle-aged and held academic positions in teaching and research.

In respect of the number of years that the teaching staff who responded to the questionnaire had worked at UNAM, the results of the survey showed that 92 (61.7%) had worked at UNAM for 1–10 years, 47 (31.5%) had worked at UNAM for 11–20 years and 10 (6.7%) had worked at UNAM for less than a year. None of the respondents had worked at a university for more than 40 years. The respondents were asked to provide information about their job title or rank. According to the findings, the majority of the respondents (63, or 42.3%) were lecturers, while 33 (22.1%) were senior lecturers, 24 (16.1%) were assistant lecturers, 16 (10.7%) were associate professors and 7 (4.7%) had other job titles or ranks. Professors made up the minority of the respondents at 6 (4%). The survey did not provide information on the total number of teaching staff members in each job title or rank category at UNAM, which makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the representativeness of the survey respondents. Nonetheless, the

Table 1 Respondents' socio-demographic characteristics ( $N = 149$ )

Demographic characteristics	Frequency	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	88	59.1
Female	61	40.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age group</b>		
Under 30 years	13	8.8
31–40 years	49	33.1
41–50 years	59	39.9
51–60 years	27	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Years of experience</b>		
Less than 1 year	10	6.7
1–10 years	92	61.7
11–20 years	47	31.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Job rank</b>		
Professor	6	4.0
Associate professor	16	10.7
Senior lecturer	33	22.1
Lecturer	63	42.3
Assistant lecturer	24	16.1
Researcher	1	0.7
Assistant researcher	2	1.3
Tutor	2	1.3
Senior technologist	1	0.7
Staff development fellow	1	0.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Table by authors

data indicate that the majority of the respondents were lecturers from various faculties of UNAM.

In respect of the UNAM campuses where the respondents worked, the Windhoek main campus had the highest number of respondents (i.e. 32.89%), followed by the School of Medicine (12.75%), Neudamm (8.72%), Jose Eduardo Dos Santos (7.38%), the Southern campus (6.71%) and the Khomasdal campus (4.7%). Other respondents worked at the Northern campus (4.7%), Katima Mulilo (4.7%), Ogongo (4.7%), the Sam Nujoma campus (4.7%), the Rundu campus (4%) and Hifikepunye Pohamba (4%).

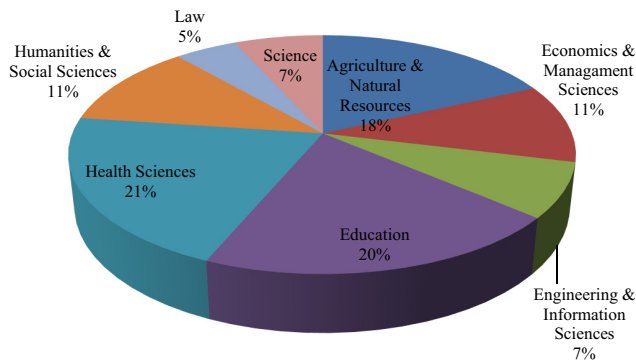
Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents according to the faculties at which they worked.

According to the results, the Faculty of Health Sciences had the most respondents (21%), followed by the Faculty of Education (20%), the Faculty of Agriculture and Natural Resources (18%), the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (11%), the Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences (11%), the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (7%), the Faculty of Science (7%) and the Faculty of Law (5%).

### Subject librarians' collaboration with faculty members

The researchers asked the participating librarians whether they collaborated with faculty members with respect to collection development activities. All the participants reported that they

**Figure 1** Distribution of respondents by faculty



Source: Figure by authors

collaborated with faculty members in collection development activities at the university, especially in respect of budget allocations to the faculties and the distribution of book catalogues. One of the participants stated that he collaborated with faculty members in collection development on a strategic level, and subject librarians engaged directly with faculties and academic departments.

A follow-up question was asked to determine which faculty members worked with the participants on collection development, upon which nine (60%) of the participants indicated that they worked with heads of department and deans of faculties and six (40%) participants stated that they worked with individual faculty members from their respective faculties. The university librarian mentioned that he mostly worked with deans and heads of department on a strategic level.

**Faculty members’ level of satisfaction with their involvement in collection development activities**

The faculty members’ level of satisfaction with their involvement in collection development may improve the selection and procurement of relevant and up-to-date electronic information resources for the library. Therefore, this part of the study reflects the faculty members’ level of satisfaction with

their involvement in collection development. The results are shown in Figure 2.

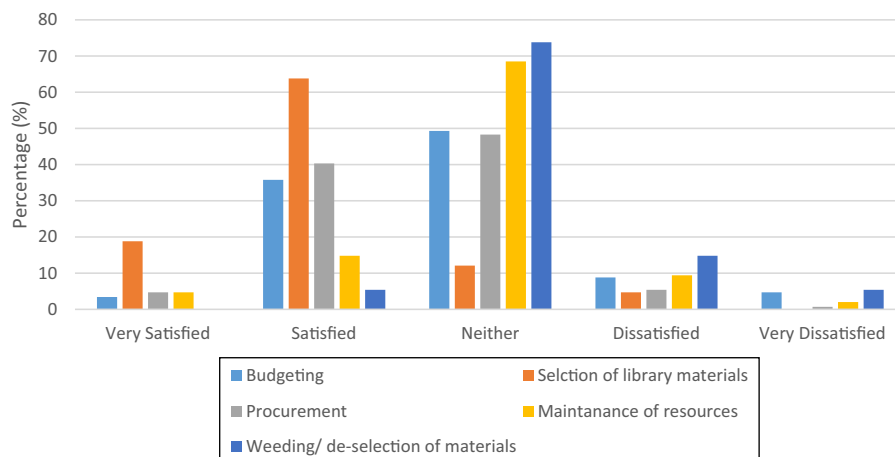
The respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their involvement in several collection development activities, including budgeting, library material selection, procurement, resource maintenance and weeding/deselection. Given that the budget is one of the most significant parts or resources of any university library, the respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their engagement in collection development activities. Of the 149 participating faculty members, 5 (3.4%) were very satisfied, 53 (35.6%) were satisfied and 73 (49%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. However, 13 (8.7%) respondents were dissatisfied and 4 (2.7%) were extremely dissatisfied with their involvement in collection development activities. Furthermore, 28 (18.8%) of the 149 faculty members were very satisfied, 95 (63.8%) were satisfied, 18 (12.1%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied and 7 (4.7%) were dissatisfied with their involvement in the selection of library materials. None of the respondents expressed extreme dissatisfaction.

In respect of their level of satisfaction with their involvement in the procurement of library materials, 7 (4.7%) of the 149 faculty members were very satisfied, 80 (40.3%) were satisfied, 72 (48.3%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 8 (5.4%) were dissatisfied and 1 (0.7%) was very dissatisfied. Nearly all of the 149 respondents – totalling 102 (68.5%) – were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 22 (14.8%) were satisfied, 4 (9.4%) were dissatisfied, 7 (4.7%) were very satisfied and 3 (2%) were very dissatisfied with the maintenance of library resources. Figure 2 also shows that 110 (73.8%) of the respondents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 22 (14.8%) were dissatisfied, 8 (5.4%) were satisfied and 8 (5.4%) were very dissatisfied with the weeding of library materials. None of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the weeding of resources.

**Respective roles of faculty members and librarians in collection development**

The respondents were asked to indicate their role in collection development at the university. The majority of the respondents indicated that they played a part in selecting library materials to support their curricular and research needs. Others stated that

**Figure 2** Faculty members’ level of satisfaction with their involvement in collection development activities



Source: Figure by authors

they engaged with subject librarians on a regular basis, evaluated library resources and did trial evaluations of online databases. Other respondents stated that they advised the library on the resources that had to be deposited or donated, that they participated in library collection development activities and that they established solid collections for their students.

The respondents also noted that they submitted their subject course outlines to subject librarians so that they could order library materials, thus, enriching collections. Faculty members indicated that they were the experts in determining what materials were required for their programmes. Furthermore, they stated that they initiated requests for book orders and journals and gave these requests to the librarians who represented their faculties. Finally, several faculty members advocated their involvement in the selection of library resources.

The librarians were asked to state their role in collection development, particularly in respect of their cooperation with faculty and students. They stated that their role in collection development included the following activities:

- communicating regularly with faculty members regarding the acquisition of new books, and print and e-resources (e-books and e-journals);
- collaborating with the assigned departments to build and sustain appropriate collections based on the departments' needs and programmes;
- working more closely with faculty members to develop and strengthen the e-resources of the UNAM library;
- updating faculties on collection management and the evaluation of information resources;
- attending faculty board and departmental meetings;
- providing the library with feedback on new programmes with a view to acquiring more library materials;
- liaising with the teaching staff about placing prescribed texts on course reserve;
- engaging with faculties and academic departments to solicit relevant information resources for orders;
- alerting academic/research staff about new publications; and
- providing feedback about new arrivals.

### Importance of faculty members' involvement in collection development

The participating librarians were asked to rate the role of faculty members in collection development. The results are shown in Table 2.

Figure 3 shows that 57% of the respondents acknowledged that faculty members played an important role in budgeting and 48.3% reported that faculty members played a very

important role in respect of selecting relevant materials for the library. Another 51% of the respondents were unsure whether faculty members could play a part in maintaining library resources, 36% indicated that faculty members fulfilled a vital role in evaluating collections and the remaining 58.4% indicated that the weeding or deselection of materials was an important role of faculty members.

### Consideration of faculty members' suggestions regarding collection development

The respondents were further asked to indicate (on a scale of "never", "a few times", "many times" and "always") how often their suggestions on ways of improving collection development practices were considered.

Table 3 shows that 3 (7%) respondents reported that their suggestions were never considered, 33 (78.6%) indicated that their suggestions were considered sometimes, 3 (7.1%) indicated that their suggestions were considered many times and 2 (4.8%) indicated that their suggestions were always considered.

### Why some faculty members did not provide suggestions for the selection of library e-resources

The respondents who indicated that they never made any suggestions were asked a follow-up question. The aim of the question was for the respondents to state the reasons why they did not make any suggestions on how to improve collection development activities at the UNAM library. The respondents provided the following answers:

- There were no platforms where such issues could be discussed.
- They were not involved in the discussions.
- There was no information/awareness about such issues.
- The matters were resolved before the discussions.
- They had never experienced any challenges in collection development.
- There was no policy for such collection development activities.
- No consultation took place concerning the selection of electronic information resources.
- Librarians were not supportive enough.

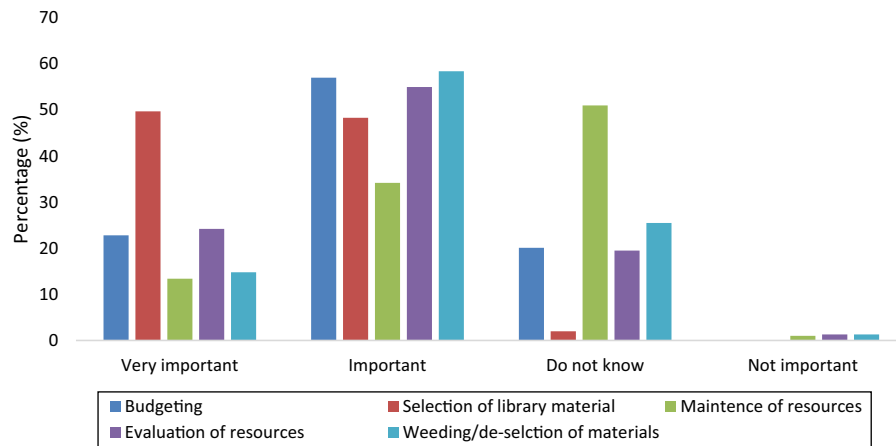
In response to the question on how often the librarians communicated with the faculty members about collection development matters, the participants gave the following responses:

- 62.5% of them indicated that they communicated daily;
- 31.25% indicated that they communicated regularly; and
- 25% indicated that they communicated at least three times a year when they provided feedback about new

Table 2 Rating the role of faculty members in collection development

Collection development activity	Very important	Important	Don't know	Not important
Budget	34 (22.8%)	85 (57%)	30 (20.1%)	0 (0%)
Selection of library materials	74 (49.7%)	72 (48.3%)	3 (2%)	0 (0%)
Maintenance of resources	20 (13.4%)	51 (34.2%)	76 (51%)	2 (1.3%)
Evaluation of resources	36 (24.2%)	82 (55%)	29 (19.5%)	2 (1.3%)
Weeding/deselection of materials	22 (14.8%)	87 (58.4%)	38 (25.5%)	2 (1.3%)

Source: Table by authors

**Figure 3** Role of faculty members in collection development

Source: Figure by authors

**Table 3** Consideration of suggestions ( $N = 42$ )

Consideration of suggestions	Frequency	%
Never	3	7.1
A few times	33	78.6
Many times	3	7.1
Always	2	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Table by authors

acquisitions of information resources to the Library and Information Technology Committee.

The participants were asked how the faculty members communicated their selection of library materials to the library. The participants gave the following responses:

- four (25%) of them indicated that they used emails;
- two (12.5%) indicated that they used a printed list;
- three (18.75%) indicated that they used a printed list and emails;
- four (25%) indicated that they used emails; and
- verbal communication and three (18.75%) indicated that they used emails and verbal communication such as face-to-face (visiting teaching staff offices) and telephonic communication.

### Challenges in collection development processes and activities

The researcher wanted to determine what obstacles the respondents encountered while choosing e-resources. According to the results, the most common challenge the respondents encountered was a lack of catalogues (79, or 53%). Furthermore, 66 (44.3%) of the respondents indicated that they were unsure which publisher offered e-resources, 53 (35.6%) indicated that they encountered difficulties owing to a lack of lists of titles from vendors and 28 (18.8%) indicated that they experienced difficulties because librarians were not always available to assist them. One of the major challenges that the library faced was that one could not sign for licensing agreements without

consulting the legal experts of the university and obtaining authorisation through the vice chancellor. Furthermore, it normally took about three to four months before licensing agreements were returned to the library. This made it difficult for the library to provide users with the materials they wanted on time. This finding concurs with Koehn and Hawamdeh's (2010, p. 165) observation that "libraries should find ways to negotiate contracts and licensing agreements to make electronic resources more favourable to libraries and their patrons". Finally, in response to the question of whether they had experienced any other challenges, the respondents listed the following: poor internet access, insufficient time to do online searches and to discover resources and a lack of skills in using electronic tools to select e-resources.

### Discussion of the findings

Most of the faculty members indicated that academics played a big role in collection development in respect of selecting library materials to support their curricular and research needs, evaluating library resources and doing trial evaluations of online databases. Faculty members advised the library staff on the resources they had to deposit in the library to build strong collections for their students. In addition, faculty members indicated that they provided the course outlines of their subjects to the subject librarians so that they could order library materials, thereby enriching collections. According to the faculty members, they were the experts in deciding what materials were required for their programmes. Faculty members further mentioned that they initiated order requests for books and journals and gave these requests to the faculty librarians. This finding is in agreement with Pfohl's (2018) finding that subject librarians at the UNAM library mostly relied on faculty members for title suggestions.

Collection development has been a shared responsibility of librarians and faculty members. The input of faculty members is regarded as critical for collection development in libraries because faculty members know the needs of the students in accordance with the curriculum (Singh and Mahajan, 2022). Gregory (2019, p. 64) states that:



bringing together a selection team with both subject and technical expertise is the most effective method for selection of any material that is expensive and requires equipment or software for use.

It is generally accepted that subject librarians should communicate regularly with academic staff regarding the selection and acquisition of new e-journals, new research or teaching tools, instructional support services and other new library activities to build quality collections. It is clear that faculty members play a crucial role in the selection of resources at a university library. Teaching staff have superior knowledge about their subject areas and are generally more effective, efficient and economical in their selection of what is required in the library (Jenkins, 2005).

It is evident from the analysis that the subject librarians of the UNAM library collaborated with faculty members in collection development activities at the university, especially in respect of budget allocations to the faculties, the distribution of book catalogues and so on. This finding is in agreement with Alabi's (2018) finding that librarians regarded faculty board meetings and library committees as some of the most successful forums for increasing librarian-faculty collaboration in collection development. In performing their roles, faculty members used several tools to aid in collection development. These tools included catalogues (online and print catalogues), the internet, publishers' websites and book exhibitions. This finding is in agreement with the finding of Kasalu and Ojimbo (2012) that electronic and print selection tools are used to select relevant information materials. However, the selection tools that are used the most are print publishers' catalogues, online publishers' catalogues, book lists, book reviews in magazines and newspapers, CD-ROM databases, online sites, book displays and user suggestions through library systems. This is a clear indication that online and print catalogues are the selection tools that are used the most at university libraries.

In response to the question about how the teaching staff communicated their selection of library materials to the librarians, the participating librarians indicated that the following means of communication were used: emails; letters on hard copies; letters; verbal communication; and a combination of emails, printouts and verbal communication. Emails and verbal communication were the most common modes of communication by which the subject librarians communicated with the teaching staff, and vice versa. Kasalu's (2010) study revealed that several methods were used to communicate information about the selection of library materials, and these included office visits by the teaching staff, emails and the manual submission of information through library representatives. Contemporary communication methods such as emails are used effectively by faculty members to communicate their selection of library materials to the library workers at UNAM. The major challenges that were identified in relation to collection development practices at the UNAM library were a lack of catalogues that offer e-resources; a lack of lists of titles from vendors; and difficulties that were encountered because librarians were not always available to help faculty members. Other challenges that were identified were slow intranet or internet access; limited sample books; insufficient time to surf the internet; and a lack of knowledge about how to use e-resources.

## Conclusion

The study was conducted to examine the extent of teaching staff's cooperation with librarians in collection development activities at the UNAM library, with specific reference to e-resources. The study confirmed that faculty members play a vital role in the collection development of library materials at the university. Faculty members select library materials to support their curricular and research needs, review the collection development policy and evaluate resources. The majority of the teaching staff affirmed that they cooperate with subject librarians in the collection development process. However, the study revealed that teaching staff and librarians face numerous challenges regarding collection development, and these challenges include a lack of catalogues that offer e-resources; a lack of lists of titles from vendors; librarians who are not always available to assist faculty members; slow intranet or internet access; limited books; limited sample books; insufficient time to surf the internet; and a lack of knowledge/skills to use e-resources. These findings contribute significantly to the existing body of literature by providing useful and reliable information on the extent of the teaching staff's cooperation with librarians in collection development activities at the UNAM library.

## Recommendations on how to improve collection development activities at the UNAM library

Based on the study's findings, recommendations are made on how to improve the extent of faculty cooperation with librarians in collection development at the UNAM library, with a focus on e-resources. In line with previous research (Kiilu and Kiilu, 2014), it is recommended that the library establish a close working relationship with the faculty and university management. Specifically, it is suggested that faculty members select information materials in support of the courses and the research programmes offered by the university to ensure that the library's collections are aligned with the needs of the academic community.

Moreover, it is recommended that the library involve academics in the selection of library materials, that communication between lecturers and librarians improve and that collection development awareness initiatives be undertaken. This recommendation corresponds with Kamau and Elegwa's (2021) assertion that faculty members of various schools and colleges should be compelled by the respective deans of schools and heads of department to participate in the selection of library materials, which should form part of the criteria according to which their performance is evaluated. It is also recommended that the university's collection development policy clearly state who the stakeholders are in the selection of library materials.

Based on the study's findings, recommendations are made on how to improve the amount of interaction between the faculty librarians in collection creation at the UNAM library, with a focus on e-resources. To promote an inclusive selection process, the library should involve academics in the selection of library materials, increase communication between lecturers and librarians and undertake awareness initiatives regarding collection development activities. The regular sharing of resources and information on new developments is essential to staying current. Furthermore, librarians should provide staff

and students with training on the selection of e-resource materials. In addition, subject librarians should be more visible, e-resource procedures should be streamlined and any delays in receiving requested books should be dealt with to enhance the library's efficiency and user experience. In line with Kamau and Elegwa's (2021) suggestion, the library could involve faculty members in the selection process by making it a criterion for evaluating their performance, thus, ensuring that the library's collections meet the needs and priorities of all users.

### Implications of the study

The authors acknowledge that the current study, which is based on data obtained from UNAM, cannot be generalised to other academic libraries. The findings are, therefore, limited to the situation at the UNAM library. However, the findings provide perspectives based on an academic library in a developing country and, as the reviewed literature has revealed, many academic libraries in developing countries face similar challenges in respect of collection development. The scenarios reported in developing countries such as Namibia could form the basis for a comparison of library services and operations to inform decisions and strategic points of action with a view to improving library management in academic libraries throughout the world. Library and information science students and teachers could find this study and its findings a rich source of information for their research endeavours on the same subject or topic.

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