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Importance of Networking and Strategies for Successful Networking in Libraries

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Abstract

The paper starts by defining networking. Some related literatures were reviewed on the strategies of successful networking. The authors also identified some important tools for networking and delved into the discussion of the importance of networking in academic libraries and every day activities in order to broaden our knowledge, learn new happenings, brainstorm through online conferencing with other colleagues. Some duties of the librarians that will facilitate networking processes were highlighted. Based on the work of previous researchers on the theme, a tree diagram was drawn by the authors to further explain the gains of networking in the libraries to knowledge managers (librarians). It was concluded that networking is the lifeblood of the professional librarian's career. It is recommended that trainings be organised for librarians on the use of various social media for effective networking, networking links established, and networking to be seen as 'crucial' in libraries.

Keywords: *Networking importance, Networking strategies, Academic libraries*

1.1 Introduction

Networking simply put is a system of trying to meet and talk to other people who may be useful to ones work, and to the individuals who networked. It is the construction, design, and use of a network, including the physical cabling, hub, bridge, switch, and router (searchnetworking.techtarget.com). Networking helps for greater success in the libraries and thus is given serious attention for the libraries to succeed in this digital age. The librarians are the drivers/agents to aid this relationship between networking and the success of the libraries. Networking has become a popular term in the day to day conversation and it's often considered to be related to job seeking and

personal advancement with an emphasis on self-promotion and trying to use others for one's own ends.

According to Neche (2015) the library or any other organisation cannot survive without strong network of information and referral sources, which would be easier through the use of strategies to a successful networking. The linking together of libraries and other information centres for the purpose of resource-sharing according to Imeremba (2005) is the central thing in networking. The crucial nature of networking in our libraries call for a detailed, high level plan, which is done carefully in other to achieve the stated goals and objectives.

The strategy of a successful

networking in our libraries in order to achieve set goals exposes the action to be taken which could lead to the evaluation of how well the plan is working and make changes where proper attention is not given. It was based on this background that this work was carried out to review the importance of networking and successful networking strategies in libraries.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Networking is valuable not simply because of the information gathered but because of the sense of cooperation or goodwill that is created. According to Ram (2014) networking is the building and maintaining of relationships with a wide range of individuals, groups or institution who share common interests, goals, or expertise which would be gained through careful strategies towards achievement of set goals supervised by the librarians. Networking to Ram is about sharing information, ideas, resources and opportunities. To Honigman (n.d), networking will forever be the lifeblood of a professional's career and that technology allows anyone to scale through networking efforts more successfully at greater speeds than ever before with the use of Meetups, LinkedIn, Blogging, Video, Twitter chats, Google+ hangouts and many more. All these he posits, are done through planned strategies. In planning for the success of networking in libraries, quality networking contacts are important and also the quantity which would make or enable the libraries and librarians gain competitiveness through the quality of contacts they make.

Morgan (n.d) defined strategies for networking as an act performed by people every day knowingly or unknowingly, when interacting with people who lead to exposing oneself to many connections as possible. These people to Morgan, represents possible opportunities. In networking, the strategies according to Morgan are to tell the people you meet or connected with what you are looking

for, follow up on calling them, accept their invitations, make use of social media to boost your connections, research relevant conferences in your area of specialization and attend, because new ideas are got from people (the attendees), volunteer and get involved in activities involving skills, training which enables one to compete favourably on networking tasks. Another strategy that keeps librarians away from networking is phobia of meeting with users, people or patrons that need assistance. It is better to respond to them and through trials and errors, perfection will set in by so doing the librarian is selling himself or herself. According to Nault (n.d) 'success as a librarian depends largely on the work relationships one forms, both with colleagues and the people being served. This shows that networking is very vital in today's technological driven environment. Alison (2013) states that users want to interact with people, not buildings and that librarians should act accordingly, librarians should act as authentically as possible with patrons when it has to do with networking.

Singh (n.d) states that in a successful networking, that there must be 'first things first', meaning that many others feel unprotected, and that in networking the one involved is not the only person feeling unsure, there are others who will be glad to be approached and talked to. He concluded by stating that in a successful networking, making it less about oneself and building relationship first implies that in an event like workshops, conferences, seminars etc., approach some peoples standing by themselves or introduce yourself to a small group of two for starters, better still share notes on the names of your libraries and what activities take place there.

Networking is about relationship building. These days having network of contacts, connections and people of like minds who partner with our libraries through the librarians as agents is more important than

ever, moreover in this digital era(naija exclusive. net/10-strategies-to-be-more-successful-at-networking/).

Wu, Kao & Liao (2015) posit that in any successful networking strategy the librarians should know the type of network that suits the work to be done for speedy cooperation. Imeremba (2005) in the same vein states that most libraries and information centres are similar to a certain extent while some are different in terms of users, personnel, resources, units and so the need for planning, visiting, knowing the target audience, the environment etcetera calls for a good strategy for a successful networking in various libraries.

2.1 Networking Tools

Networking in our various libraries work better, faster and successfully using tools like: Meet-up, LinkedIn, Blog, Videos, Twitter, Google + Hangouts, Pinterest, facebook and many more. (www.adknowledge.com/blog/best-ways-to-network).

Meet up: Meet up creates a channel for the libraries and librarians to meet with users and fellow librarians within and outside the locality of the library. Setting up meet up in libraries for networking is to revitalize local world and self-organization to make a difference (www.meetup.com/about). In creating a page for library meet up, the caption 'meet up' is typed at the top of the address bar, then underneath the colleagues are required to enter their names, addresses, names of libraries etc. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/meetup-\(website\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/meetup-(website))).

LinkedIn: This is another professional network for networking. In LinkedIn the professional identity of a librarian is built and managed. Professional colleagues are connected and are known in order to interact and share knowledge for a broader development and advancement. Latest news that will guide and assist professionals are

equally got from this networking type.

Blogging: Blogging is another way of networking. It is an online journal or diary which are updated frequently and regularly just like Facebook. Blog has area for people to comment or respond to any blog post. Blog is important as a networking tool because it focuses on a particular subject matter for clarity, and is more of conversation than content. Information sharing and interaction through this networking type is superb. Today most academic libraries make their voices heard in terms of what resources and happenings take place in their libraries.

Videos: This is the process of recording, reproducing or broadcasting of visual, especially televised images on magnetic tape so that they can be played back on a video cassette recorder and viewed on the screen. Libraries today video their libraries and activities that take place in them and send to other libraries or put them online. Other libraries view these activities and make amends where they are not getting it right. Same happens to the librarians. Through this activity, questions are raised and answered by linked colleagues for clarifications.

Twitter: Librarians register and join other registered professional colleagues to write and send short posts called tweets. This is important as it could be done using the hash tag along side an occasion for colleagues to follow updates of events. Librarians in this networking type can broadcast tweets and also follow others on their tweets.

Google Hangout: This is a communication platform instant messaging and videoconferencing where professionals like the librarians can join. They agree through messages sent to discuss on an issue on a given time and date, and every member join the hangout from their desktop, laptop, tablet, or phone. Google hangouts allow librarians to video chat, collaborate, and share with ease. The discussion can as well be anytime, anywhere. On how to use Google hangouts

visit: (www.google.com.ng/search?cli).

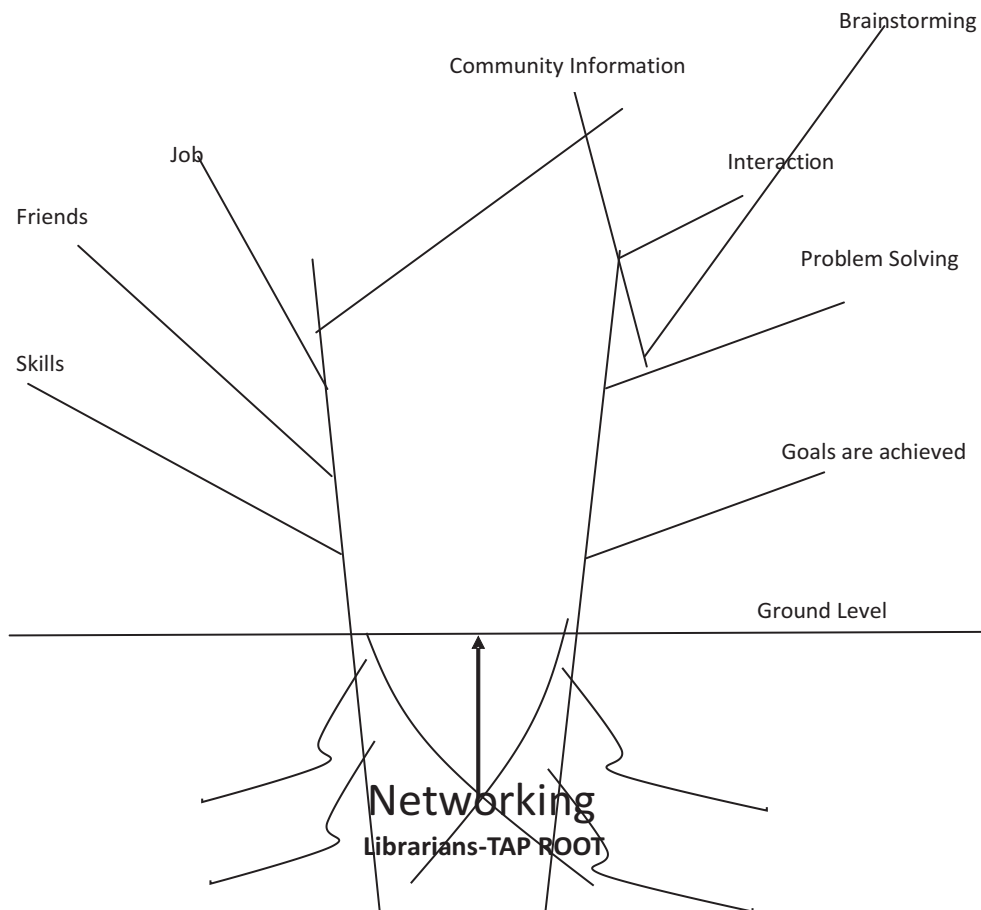
Pinterest: This is a social media networking website for sharing and categorizing images. Libraries categorize images found in their libraries and write short notes or brief descriptions concerning the images. Clicking on the image takes you to the original source of that image. As you read on the brief descriptions on the images, the librarian is educated on the information given, the librarian is at liberty to save the information and as well share the information.

Facebook: This is a free social networking website that allows registered users to create profile as an individual or as groups. As group is where various organisations belong including libraries/librarians e.g. Sustainability Development Goals (SDGs)

librarians group, Young librarian groups, etc. These groups network by sharing and sending uploaded photos of library events, videos, send messages and get on discussions on issues concerning the libraries both local and international.

2.3 Importance of Networking

Networking according to Barnes (2009) is what is intended to break information isolation. And in this task, people are involved. There is interaction, knowledge is shared, and there is exposure to the ideas unknown and so on. Therefore, after going through works by various authors on networking, the researcher came up with a tree diagram of the importance of networking.



Source: The Researchers Contribution

The librarian is the driver of the networking activities in the library. He (librarian) is referred to as the 'tap root' because the tap root is a long straight main nutrient-storing root of a plant that gives the plants life. And the librarian, pilots all that happens in the library and the life wire of the University. It is from the tap root that the smaller lateral roots (networking) develops, which allows growth (Robinson 2007). The growth as mentioned earlier on, are the branches that grow out of the trees.

The **community** as one of the fruit of networking is so important when established. Community of colleagues from different libraries is met and library issues are buttressed. Through these communities, **friends** are made. People meet with other colleagues and this metamorphoses to making new friends who will in turn link unemployed colleagues to **job** opportunities. According to Medjo (2009), networking leads to open doors, and opportunities which job is one of it. **Interaction** and **brainstorming** are some of the importance of networking. As librarians interact, and brainstorm, **skills** are learnt and developed, **problems** bordering individuals (librarians) and libraries at large are solved leading to preferment of solutions which would in turn lead to **achievement of goals**. The achievement of goals in any organisation is the target and happiness that keeps an organisation alive because results are delivered, networking breaks information isolation when people meet, and information are shared, goodwill and cooperation are created.

2.4 What will make the librarians to succeed in networking?

1. *Mindset* – Ram (2014) sees mindset as a critical factor in networking if somebody must succeed. The librarians' mindset will be such that will be focused and recognise networking as important, and not a waste of time.
2. *Sense of cooperation* – the librarians must have the sense of cooperation or goodwill to keep the group going.
3. *Participation* – there must be active participation for networking to be successful and fruitful, so as to yield goals on why it was formed.
4. *Targeting the challenges* – networking is the building and maintaining of relationships with a wide range of individuals, groups, or institutions who share common interest, goals, and expertise all to tackle challenges that border them. To meet these challenges successfully the librarians need to target the challenges through network of other colleagues.
5. *Respect* – respect for one another in a group is important. Members of a network look to each other for advice, tips, instructions, contributions and solutions for issues. Every individual is entitled to his or her own opinion or contribution, whether right or wrong should be welcomed with respect.

Conclusion

The paper has defined networking as trying to meet people who in one way or another are to affect one's life positively. The paper also discussed networking tools, which helps in linking up men and women of same profession like librarianship, to talk up issues concerning the libraries and their self-development. The paper argues further on the yardsticks to make the librarians to succeed in networking, which includes mindset, sense of cooperation and so on.

The paper also using a tree-like diagram described the importance of networking among which is brainstorming. However, the paper stressed that, should libraries and librarians take the strategies for networking seriously, we are sure to have good cooperation, interaction, and problem solving spirit and zeal for librarianship.

The paper recommends that:

1. Networking should be taken seriously by libraries and librarians because of the important outcomes involved.
2. Training should be organised by libraries to train librarians on the use of various social media to boost networking.
3. Libraries/ librarians can establish networking links for better cooperation and brainstorming.

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