Academic Library Management, Human Resources, and Staff Development: International Collaboration outside Traditional Boundaries

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Introduction

The 21st century ushered in a rapidly evolving environment in academic libraries with shifting user behaviors, expectations and needs. Dewey in 2010 summarizes the impact of this new environment where the library "must, in a global way, create, collaborate, and connect scholarship for and with users at a level never seen before to ensure lifelong learning and the ability to solve the world's continuing challenges inclusive of all cultures, time periods, and approaches."[1] The internationalization of higher education and the continuing expansion of technology as a means for learning and sharing information have radically changed the way in which academic and research libraries offer services and perform outreach. This evolution is exhibited in the physical environment as libraries move from places to seek information to spaces of learning and collaboration where cross-curricular synergies take root; in the services offered through a rapidly evolving digital information system; in the growing number of partnerships, regional, national, and increasingly global; and in the re-visioning and recent focus on metrics in terms of monitoring and measuring library success.

These realities indicate the need for new and vital competencies, flexible management styles, and creative recruitment strategies. "We have moved from an era of equilibrium to a new normal that is an era of constant dis-equilibrium"[2] where envisioning, learning new skills, creating, and implementing systems and procedures to respond to the rapidly changing academic environment require a vibrant, innovative, and flexible culture. Library directors, and human resource and organizational development professionals recognize the need to cultivate this new workforce through creative approaches to defining and organizing roles, hiring personnel and deploying and retraining existing staff that can conceive, build and implement changes to ensure the most effective engagement of the library in the academy.

Library associations offer opportunities for training, sharing expertise, engaging in joint ventures and collaborating to innovate and remain relevant. Management, human resources and staff development best practices and environmental scans are effectively shared among regional and national libraries through longstanding consortia and association relationships such as the Association of European Research Librar-

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ies (LIBER) Working Group on Leadership and Workforce Development and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Personnel Administrators & Staff Development Discussion Group. While a substantive body of literature addresses large and small-scale global collaborative efforts with regard to direct services, policy advocacy, resource sharing, licensing, and archiving, areas such as human resource, staff development and management topics have traditionally been addressed within the local, regional, and national contexts. What do we know about past international collaborative efforts and opportunities for dialog between library association members globally on these topics? Is there a need and desire for increased exposure to perspectives outside these traditional boundaries?

This paper reports findings from an international exploratory study entitled, "The Academic Library Management, Human Resources, and Staff Development Study of International Collaboration" that was conducted to create a better understanding of current and past international collaborative efforts, and to gauge interest in increased dialog between library associations in the areas of management, human resources, and professional development in the academic library. Using a survey and focus group the author collected quantitative and qualitative data to assess not only the level of engagement of library associations but also the perceived benefits and challenges of collaborating internationally.

Literature Review

Our professional associations provide some thoughtful insights on the demanding shifts taking place within academic libraries. The ACRL Environmental Scan 2013[3] found the future of the profession needed 'internal disruption' resulting in new service models and products that are unlike those used to date. "Demands for more advanced skills in searching, data visualization, and data mining and analysis"[4] are growing requiring "reorganization of staff and professional development opportunities."[5] This Environmental Scan also addressed the urgent need for "radical col-

laboration",[6] daring, bold, and innovative joint efforts. Research Libraries UK (RLUK) Strategy 2014-2017 called for "A Creative Community: Nurturing leadership, innovation and skills throughout the libraries"[7] to address the dramatic changes in how research and learning are conducted. Recognizing that the skills needed to lead libraries are changing, the Association of European Research Libraries (LIBER) launched an ambitious international Leadership Development Programme[8] in 2011. This program, which lasts two years and is led by the Leadership and Workforce Development working group, "features a combination of high-level workshops, training and individual mentors."[9] In 2010, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) released the 2030 Scenarios project,[10] a visioning tool that lays out four possible futures for academic libraries depending on a complex matrix of dynamics that might unfold. This provides a venue for discussing and anticipating long-range changes and fostering transformational thinking. These scenarios were used as a lens through which to anticipate workforce transformations and the results presented at the 2012 ARL/CNI (Coalition for Networked Information) Fall Form.[11] Key findings point to an academic library where dramatic retooling is required; the librarian "role will change to more of an 'informationist' (with focus on big data) and a 'collaborationist' (connecting researchers with other researchers, grant funding, etc.);"[12] where new skills and competencies include agility, IT expertise, dramatically enhanced cultural and linguistic diversity, and cultural sensitivities, innovation, as well as a capacity for supporting deep collaboration. The findings encourage academic libraries to "disrupt the organization", "selectively forget the past" and work towards a dramatically different future.[13]

It is evident from the literature and the deep discussions taking place in academic libraries and professional associations that retooling and developing new competencies are key factors in addressing radical change and shifting roles. Innovation is required and innovation is spurred by investigating, discovering, learning and thinking in different ways, expand-

ing perspectives, and experimenting with models and ideas outside traditional boundaries. One of the key factors propelling the transformation of the academic library is the internationalization of higher education spurred by advances in technology and an increasingly global society of learners. According to the International Association of Universities (IAU) "Irrespective of contextual differences within and between countries, nearly all higher education institutions worldwide are engaged in international activities and are seeking to expand them. Engaging with the world is now considered part of the very definition of quality in education and research."[14] The charge for internationalization has affected all aspects of the university mission and values. Developing and implementing strategies to address internationalization include expanding collaboration and research agendas, deepening international outreach, integrating new technologies, strengthening study abroad programs, broadening student and faculty recruitment practices, and creating strategic curriculum for an increasingly diverse population. According to the American Council on Education (ACE) Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (CIGE) Report "In the 21st century, higher education is explicitly, and fundamentally, a global enterprise."[15]

The benefits of engaging internationally and forging strong links globally are undeniable. According to Katherine Phillips, senior vice dean and professor of leadership and ethics at Columbia Business School and an expert in the field of the science of diversity, "if you want to build teams or organizations capable of innovating, you need diversity. Diversity enhances creativity. It encourages the search for novel information and perspectives, leading to better decision making and problem solving."[16] In his book *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools and Societies,* Page[17] provides strong though complex evidence for the value of diversity. He states that we implicitly understand that "People with different life experiences and training, people from different cultural backgrounds, likely see the world differently. And those differences—differences in per-

spectives—can be valuable when solving problems or making predictions."[18] While this isn't always an easy way of engaging in a project, if approached properly working outside traditional boundaries yields greater innovation and creative solutions.

The literature portrays a rich tapestry of themes related to internationalization and critical collaborative ventures in academic libraries to create "an open symposium for facilitating exploration and exchange within an academic community, a meta-library ecosystem for powerful collaborative capacity, and a knowledge trust for providing enduring, barrier-free access for all research inquiry."[19] This is exemplified by the global shift towards open access and the proliferation of institutional repositories with such collaborative efforts as Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) an international alliance of over 800 academic and research libraries from Australia, China, Europe, Japan and North America; the Confederation of Open Access Repositories (COAR) with institutions from 35 countries and 4 continents founded in 2009 "to facilitate the global repository community of practice and a world-wide virtual repository network";[20] and LAReferencia a network of repositories including nearly 100 institutions from nine countries in Latin America. We also witness the acceleration of cooperative digitization projects such as the Digital Library of Caribbean (dLOC), which is comprised of 38 partners from "educational, research, governmental and non-governmental institutions aligned for the purpose of facilitating efficient access to electronic collections about the Caribbean."[21] Equally significant is the growing number of national and international collaborative digital portal projects, which provide seamless access to archival resources on a certain topic or concerning a certain region. In Europe the Archives Portal Europe network of excellence (APEx), an ever-growing network of European archives, is a single online access point with over 850 contributing institutions.[22]

Large and small-scale collaborative efforts of the type mentioned above are the focus of a substantive body of literature, yet only a small proportion of this

research relates to library management, human resources and staff development. A few notable international collaborative projects are worth mentioning however. The Joint Task Force on Librarians' Competencies in Support of E-Research and Scholarly Communication is a collaborative effort between the Association of Research Libraries (ARL), the Canadian Association of Research Libraries (CARL), COAR, and LIBER. The purpose is to create a toolkit "that will help to build capacity in libraries for supporting new roles in the area of scholarly communication and e-research. The toolkit will allow library managers to identify skill gaps in their institution, form the basis of job descriptions, enable professionals to carry out self-assessments, and act as a foundation for the development of training programs for librarians and library professionals."[23] Many other studies have been conducted on library competencies but seldom do they compare competencies across countries or outside traditional boundaries. An exception to this is a recent survey of reference service competencies with over 2,400 respondents across 13 countries *Culture and Competencies: A Multi-Country Examination of Reference Service Competencies*. The results of this truly collaborative study, which brought together 20 global partners, highlight some important similarities and differences that "could help reference librarians to manage and meet the expectations of their international patrons."[24] These types of studies and tools might benefit from a connected international discussion to expand their scope and impact, and create more innovative solutions for an increasingly shifting academic library environment.

Research Design and Methodology

The Academic Library Management, Human Resources, and Staff Development Study of International Collaboration was conducted as an exploratory study of library associations and their affiliates serving academic and research libraries worldwide. The research team consisted of one human resources and staff development manager from the University of Florida, and one research assistant from Spain with experi-

ence in several European academic libraries. Two librarians, one from Canada and one from the West Indies agreed to be part of the research team but were then unable to participate. The study focused specifically on associations, and their committees, discussion groups, round tables, sections, and other groups/units within library associations serving academic and research library management, human resources and professional development functions. The goal of this study was to explore three research areas 1) past international collaborative initiatives; 2) the level of interest in increased collaboration and/or sharing of best practices internationally; and 3) perceived rewards and barriers to engaging internationally. An online survey, conducted in June 2014, was used as the primary research method. In addition, a focus group took place at the IFLA General Conference and Assembly in Lyon, France in August 2014. The Qualtrics online survey software was used to create the survey, which employed a "mixed methods" design in which both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to collect data.

Study Population and Response Rate

Considerable effort was made to identify leaders of library associations and their interest groups (sections, committees, round tables, discussion groups, and other groups/units) worldwide focused on academic and research library management, human resources and staff development. Representation was sought from all 10 IFLA Congress regions and international associations. IFLA has identified five general regions (Africa, Asia and Oceania, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America) which are further divided into10 sub-regions (Africa—Region 1: South, Central and East Africa; Region 2: North and West Africa. Asia and Oceania—Region 3: West and Central Asia; Region 4: South and East Asia; Region 5: South East Asia and Oceania. Europe—Region 6: North and East Europe; Region 7: West, South Europe and Balkans. Latin America and the Caribbean—Region 8: Caribbean and Central America; Region 9: South America. North America—Region 10.)[25]

Through online searches, and the use of Google Translate, a list of 84 target groups representing all 10 IFLA sub-regions was compiled and each group sent a preliminary e-mail to gauge interest in participating and identify the most appropriate person within the association. The e-mail was sent in English and Spanish explaining that the survey itself would be in English only. Of these 84 inquiries 43 responded positively to the invitation with a confirmed contact and were sent the survey link on June 9, 2014. Most contacts were the association group's key representative such as the chair, co-chair, president, vice-president, convener, or co-convener. The survey was open for three weeks and closed on June 30, 2014. Thirty-five entries were considered valid, equating to over 81 percent of the 43 confirmed contacts that were sent the survey link. All five large IFLA regions were represented in all three phases (Figure 1). The only sub-region not represented by survey respondents was region 9, South America.

Survey Results

This exploratory study was undertaken to understand better how both past and future efforts could enable international sharing of best practices, discussion of policy frameworks and strategies, and collaboration in the areas of management, human resources and staff development within the academic library. Throughout the survey the word 'group' was used to reflect the respondent's specific association committee or other affiliated interest group. Respondents were asked to respond to questions based on their role as leader within their association.
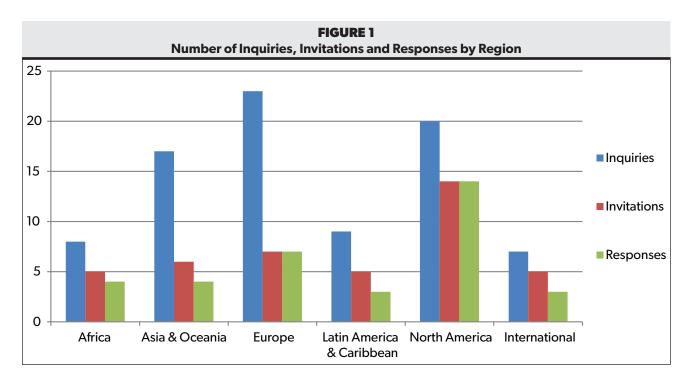
Research Area 1—Past International Collaborative Initiatives

The first research area includes five questions regarding collaborative efforts in the past 5 years.

The first question asked: 'To your knowledge, in the past 5 years, has your group collaborated or shared best practices with library associations or affiliates serving academic libraries from other countries or regions, in any of the following areas?

Answer choices: 'Library management; Human resources (HR); Staff development; Unsure; No.'

Fifty-five percent of respondents selected 'unsure' or 'no'. Staff development was the area selected most often (34%) while human resources was the least common (23%). Library management had a 29 percent response rate.

FIGURE 1
Number of Inquiries, Invitations and Responses by Region

When analyzing the data further by region (Figure 2) we notice that human resources was always among the least common response except in North America where it ranked second along with staff development. We also notice that all three international organizations responded 'no' to this question indicating that there had been no collaborative efforts or sharing of best practices in the areas indicated in the past five years.

When asked what types of activities were involved 81 percent of respondents that indicated activities in the past five years selected conference/symposium and 56 percent selected speakers. Other options were consultation, presentation, project, publication, research, and library fellowships. All of these had a response rate between 31 and 38 percent. Research was the least common response with 19 percent. The option to add other efforts included discussion groups, webinars, and staff attachment programs. Seventy-nine percent of respondents who indicated activities in these areas agreed or strongly agreed that the goals of these joint activities were met.
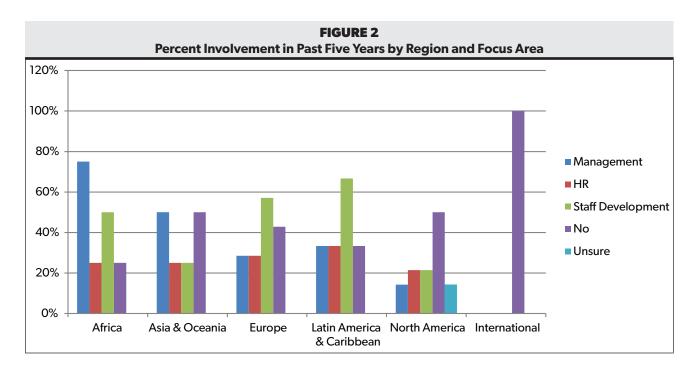
Aside from actual collaboration, a question was asked to determine what types of efforts were made to learn of the work, research, and projects of academic lib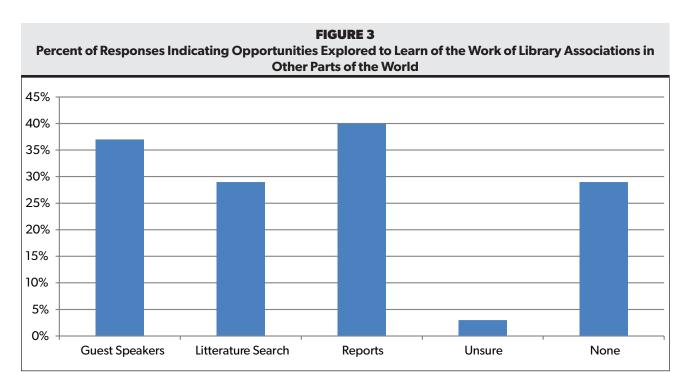rary associations and affiliates from other countries or parts of the world. Figure 3 demonstrates the results of the five options that were provided. Respondents also mentioned inviting guests from other associations to participate in discussions and referring to models of excellence and ideas from other associations that members of the group belonged to.

Research Area 2—Level of Interest In Increased Collaboration and/or Sharing of Best Practices Internationally

Six survey questions addressed the interest in future collaboration and/or sharing of information/best practices with library managers, and human resources and staff development professionals from other countries or parts of the world.
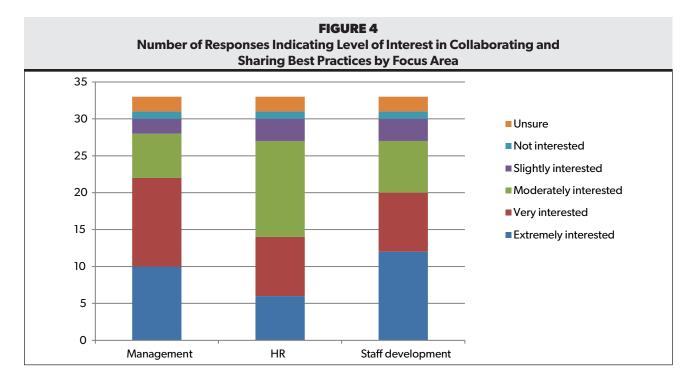
Thirty-three of the thirty-five (95%) survey participants responded to the general question: 'Members of my group would be interested in learning of the work of academic library managers and/or human resources and staff development professionals from other countries or parts of the world.' Seventy five percent either strongly agreed (41%) or agreed (34%) with this statement. Nineteen percent selected 'neither agree nor disagree' and six percent disagreed. No participants selected 'strongly disagree'.

FIGURE 2
Percent Involvement in Past Five Years by Region and Focus Area

FIGURE 3
Percent of Responses Indicating Opportunities Explored to Learn of the Work of Library Associations in Other Parts of the World

The next four survey questions explored more deeply specific areas of interest. First a general question asked participants to select a level of interest for collaboration in the three focus areas of the study: 1) management; 2) human resources; and, 3) staff development.

The data demonstrates (Figure 4) that there is interest in connecting with colleagues internationally in all three areas but that the greatest interest ('extremely interested' and 'very interested') lies in collaborating and sharing best practices on staff development and management efforts. Only one

FIGURE 4
Number of Responses Indicating Level of Interest in Collaborating and Sharing Best Practices by Focus Area

respondent indicated a lack of interest in all three areas.

Delving deeper into the content of each focus area, the survey asked participants to indicate specific topics of interest. Twelve topics were presented: four in the area of management (strategic planning, change management, organizational structure, succession planning); five in the area of human resources (competencies, compensation management, recruitment, employee relations, benefit package); and three in the training area (training practices, training resources, staff development). The topics selected by 20 or more respondents, were 'competencies'; 'training practices'; 'strategic planning'; 'training resources'; and 'staff development'. Selections with less than 20 but more than 10 were 'change management'; 'organizational structure'; 'succession planning'; and 'recruitment'. Topics selected by10 respondents or less were 'employee relations'; 'compensation management'; and 'benefit package'. The findings for these last three topics as the least popular were expected because these aspects of human resources are governed by country, regional, area and organizational specific rules and regulations and are consequently largely inflexible and though interesting, may have little practical application to other groups.
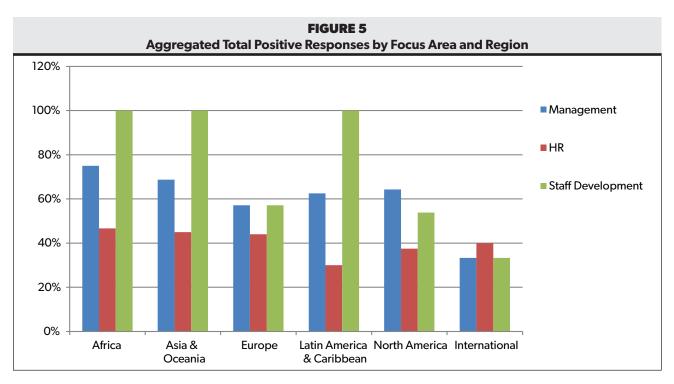
Overall human resources subjects were of least interest, except for competencies. One might argue that the topic of competencies rated high because it is so closely related to staff development, which is the area that held the most interest.

The number of positive responses for each of the 12 specific topics were aggregated into their respective focus areas (management, human resources, staff development) and the percentage for each region calculated (Figure 5).

In this graph we notice that 'staff development' held the highest ranking in Africa, Asia & Oceania, and Latin America & Caribbean. Also of interest is the fact that 'human resources' topics received the lowest percentage of interest in all five IFLA regions even with the high ratings of 'competencies' noted above. International groups reflect a different pattern being the only group where 'human resources' topics received the highest number of positive responses.

Research Area 3—Perceived Rewards and Barriers to Engaging Internationally

The third research area consisted of four questions with two focused on past activities and two on future efforts.

FIGURE 5
Aggregated Total Positive Responses by Focus Area and Region

The top three greatest rewards identified by respondents for past collaborative efforts were the exchange of practices (69%), sharing of expertise (69%), and the development of an international network (50%). A close runner-up was discussions with 44 percent. The greatest challenges identified were the cost (50%), technology (25%), and socio-cultural challenges (25%).
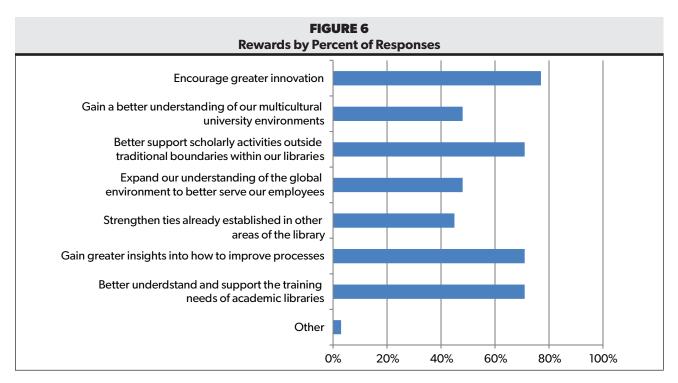
Two survey questions addressed the perceived disincentives and rewards of engaging at the international level in the future. The cost of international collaboration was indicated as a disincentive by over 76 percent of respondents, with 'complicated logistics' and 'lack of transferability of practices' as the second most commonly selected disincentive with a 48 percent response rate for each. 'Time commitment' was fourth with 10 responses (30%), while 'socio-cultural differences', 'increase of complexity of project management', and 'lack of sufficient technology' were all under 2 percent.

Eight options were given to indicate what participants felt would be the rewards of international collaboration and/or sharing of best practices for their group (Figure 6). All of the provided choices were selected by over 40 percent of respondents. Over 77 percent of respondents felt that by engaging with other associations and their affiliates internationally the most significant benefit would be greater innovation in the academic library. Respondents felt that by engaging more internationally managers, and human resources and staff development professionals would be better able to support the scholarly activities of the academic library, have greater insights into ways of improving internal processes, and strengthen their competence for providing responsive training opportunities.

Focus Group Results

On August 18, 2014, a focus group was held to present preliminary results of the survey in person and discuss the desirability for greater engagement of library associations and their affiliates in international collaboration and sharing of library management, human resources, and staff development practices. Seven people representing four library associations (ARL, the LIBER Leadership and Workforce Development Working Group, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), and the American Library Association (ALA) International Relations Roundtable) attended the session.

FIGURE 6
Rewards by Percent of Responses

Participants acknowledged the need to internationalize the management structure of the academic library in order to remain current and vibrant in the pervading internationalization of the academic institutions served. The open discussion indicated a clear and strong desire to increase opportunities for dialogue by creating stronger links internationally, collaborating, and learning from each other. Ideas included opening and encouraging applications from international participants to leadership training programs such as the LIBER Library Leadership Development Programme (LIBER), the ARL Leadership Fellows program (ARL), and the Leading Change Institute programs. Participants also felt there would be great benefits to sharing curriculum design concepts. While the discussion included the areas of academic library management and staff development, human resource concepts such as compensation management, recruitment, and benefits were conspicuously absent from the conversation.

When asked about the ways in which greater collaboration might take place, participants felt that starting on a small scale outside of any specific library association structure would be most productive. They speculated that this looser affiliation might make for a more dynamic interchange, exploration and innovation while creating strong international partnerships. Participants felt that the annual IFLA Conference and General Assembly could provide an opportunity for meeting in person, discussing collaborative efforts, and opening the opportunity to a greater number of library association leaders.

Findings and Discussion

This exploratory study provides an empirical snapshot of the extent of past initiatives and desirability for greater international dialogue among library associations in the areas of management, human resources, and staff development as they pertain to the academic library. The author considered the research successful in establishing a baseline of information and a foundation for generating further dialogue and exploring opportunities for collaboration and international engagement.

Although 55 percent of respondents indicated that they were unsure or not aware of international efforts in the past five years, 75 percent indicated that members of their group would be interested in networking with professionals from other countries or parts of the world. This signals a strong desire and need for increasing international dialogue. The areas of greatest interest were 'staff development' with 36 percent extremely interested, and 'library management' with 30 percent extremely interested where 'human resources' was only selected 18 percent of the time at the extremely interested level. This correlates with past efforts in favoring staff development and management over human resources operations.

Out of 12 specific choices respondents expressed the highest level of interest in 'competencies', 'training practices'; 'strategic planning'; 'training resources'; and 'staff development'. This again affirms the strong interest in topics that pertain to retooling, rethinking, and cultivating a workforce that is agile and responsive to rapidly changing priorities. When the 12 topic choices were aggregated into the three focus areas (management; human resources; staff development), 100 percent of respondents from Africa, Asia and Oceania, and Latin America and the Caribbean rated staff development as the highest priority for international collaboration and sharing of best practices. The topics with the least interest were 'employee relations'; 'compensation management'; and 'benefit package', all within the area of human resources.

The focus group also affirmed a fundamental desire and need to share curricular agendas and programs and begin collaborating on developing leaders and staff with a vision for reshaping the role of the library in the academy and the way it offers services. During the focus group discussions the areas of interest for international collaboration all applied to leadership development, training, and curricular design.

Questions regarding the rewards and challenges of international collaboration and dialogue included both past collaboration and future collaborative efforts. 'Exchange of practices' and 'sharing of expertise' were rated the highest rewards for past activities.

Participants felt that by working together, sharing expertise, and building partnerships and alliances their members would gain insights to improve processes and be better equipped to support the training needs and scholarly activities of academic libraries. It was 'fostering greater innovation' that was selected the most often as an outcome of working together internationally. This indicates the recognition among library association leaders, that innovation is indeed needed as the academic library continues to undergo radical transformative change and becomes increasingly global and cross-disciplinary. Learning from and working with a diverse group of international professionals would create a rich environment enhancing creativity and leading to better problem solving.

Library associations recognize the challenges of creating and nurturing an international dialogue regarding key support functions of the academic library. Barriers to international collaboration cannot be minimized. Learning, working, and collaborating across cultures require additional resources, time commitment, cross cultural skills, and creative use of technology. According to survey respondents, 'cost' was the greatest challenge for past activities (50% of respondents) and is anticipated to continue to be a challenge (76% of respondents). 'Complicated logistics' and 'lack of transferability of practices' were selected by nearly 50 percent of participants. While 'technology' was selected as a challenge by 25 percent of participants who had collaborated internationally in the past, only 18 percent thought a lack of sufficient technology would be a disincentive in future efforts.

In summary, participants in both the survey and focus group expressed an overwhelming interest in establishing greater synergy between library associations globally in the areas of staff development and management applications.

Conclusion

Overall, the author found that library associations and interest groups addressing academic library management, human resources and staff development expressed an interest in building partnerships inter-nationally to more effectively inform practices and meet new challenges. The study confirms the desire of library associations world-wide to share knowledge and expertise, cooperate in complex projects cross-culturally, and engage with professionals internationally. The perceived benefits are greater innovation and value added to the development of responsive training and management solutions. It is much less evident whether traditional human resources questions would benefit from such exchange given the lack of transferability of many practices.

In sum, this exploratory study offers data regarding a previously untapped desire for greater international collaboration between library associations and interest groups serving academic library management, human resources and staff development professionals. Its findings present opportunities for further research, creative dialogue and collaborative opportunities on a global scale to meet the needs of the radically evolving academic library world.

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