

# How the Botswana International University of Science and Technology Library Engages its Stakeholders in Connecting Information Resources, Services, and Space

Ayanda Agnes Lebele, Botswana International University of Science and Technology, Botswana

## Abstract

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In the quest to develop more innovative customer-focused library services, the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) Library embarked on the development of robust initiatives that involved the engagement of various stakeholders. The emerging consultative and engaging trend is premised on the key values of facilitating access to information and demand-driven inclusive library services.

The paper presents how the BIUST Library engages stakeholders in the development of multiple and flexible opportunities to access and use information. In doing so, it describes the recreation of internal library structures, space, and processes in a way that accommodates and demonstrates the categories and functional roles of different types of library stakeholders. The paper further points to how the stakeholders' cultures and systems create a divide or imbalance in the access and usage of library services. The paper also argues for a need to define library stakeholders and develop engagement strategies that are entity and initiative specific.

**Keywords:** BIUST; Botswana International University of Science and Technology; library community engagement; library stakeholders; library users

**Publication Type:** case study

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## Introduction

The shared global community operates in a way in which the actions of one entity have impact on others. Discrete players engage with each other in developing people-centred services. Libraries, the world over, have adopted practices and processes geared towards the development of flexible access to knowledge opportunities for the communities that they serve. The resultant customer-focused services anchor on the participation of faculties and other university directorates, researchers, students, library professional bodies, and vendors of different types of library information resources and equipment.

These partners can be described as entities with “interest; rights (legal or moral); ownership and contribution in the form of knowledge or support towards the activity of the library” (Harland et al., 2019, p. 319). They are what the United Nations (2015) describes as individuals or groups who are affected by the organisation and its activities. This definition basically implies that such entities influence the success or failures of projects and services.

Atkinson (2018) encourages libraries to engage stakeholders in crafting value-adding services that

relate to educational development, research management, and empowering societies with the needed information and literacy skills. In particular, Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2016) call for a collaboration of complementary engagement of professions that can support libraries to navigate financial hurdles and environmental politics. Such stakeholders also have to positively stir the services towards the broader organisational goals.

This paper is a descriptive analysis of how the Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) Library engages with different stakeholders in the development and delivery of its services. It does not present any systematic approach of selecting research participants, data collection tools, procedures, and analysis.

Despite these noted limitations, the paper heeds Eldredge's (2004) caution that even when reporting practical cases from the industry, library and information science professionals should strive towards maintaining a case study approach for easy discussion and/or comparison with case studies from other disciplines. It is from this advice that this paper presents a case study on how the BIUST Library engages with its stakeholders to facilitate access to multiple and flexible knowledge services. It does so by addressing the following research questions:

1. Who are the library stakeholders?
2. In which activities does the library engage its stakeholders?
3. How does the library engage with its stakeholders?
4. How can the library improve the stakeholders' engagement so as to provide a more flexible service?

The discussion starts with an introduction of BIUST and the role of its library. It then highlights some observations from the reviewed literature on the role of library stakeholders. A discussion on the experiences of the BIUST stakeholders follows this section. A note on the methodology is shared to show how the data was gathered and analysed. The paper also provides a conclusion and recommendations.

### **Library Services at BIUST**

BIUST started operating in 2012 following Presidential Directive CAB.33(B)/2004 for the establishment of a university that forges "strong linkages with business, industry, professions and public sector; to promote dialogue, information sharing, and knowledge/skill and technology transfer" (BIUST, 2015). As articulated in the BIUST's mission statement, the university aspires to be a premier research-based university of science, engineering, and technology, internationally recognised for the quality and excellence of its teaching and learning, research and innovation, and engagement (BIUST, 2015). Being a public university, there is a need for it to actively and strongly engage the community.

BIUST's student population is just over 2000; they are high science achievers who are predominantly sponsored by the Government of Botswana. The two Faculties of Engineering and Sciences boast a wide range of international experts who are engaged in teaching and research activities. The two faculties are the main library user categories.

The library plays a critical role in teaching, learning, and research through the provision of

services and products that enhance the skills needed to enable its users to be credible members of today's information society. It offers an environment that is intellectually stimulating through the provision of different services that aim at facilitating access to reliable and flexible information resources. A team of 17 members work round the clock to ensure effective library services and equip the users with the information literacy skills needed for participation in a knowledge-based economy.

Although the library engages its stakeholders in many service areas, this paper only focuses on a few activities to elaborate different thematic areas that are being discussed. This does not, in any way, elevate the importance of some activities over others. The decision to share experiences from multiple library activities supports Alpi and Evans's (2019) argument that a case study is constructed through data that emerges from multiple case reports. The conclusions and recommendations are drawn from experiences reported in this paper and observations from the literature.

### The Reviewed Literature

The literature reviewed for this paper aimed at contextualising the operations of BIUST Library, not to promote any emerging model or box the observations into any existing theoretical frameworks. Therefore, a comparison with cases found in the literature is purely for emphasis. The review shows a trend where data from stakeholder engagements is used to add value to the already existing models. It also demonstrates the different ways of gathering data about stakeholder engagement. According to the UN (2005) manual, these variations in data collection strategies are attributed to the reality that assessment of relationships cannot be standardised through a qualitative measure.

### Relating Experience to Existing Frameworks

The engagement of stakeholders is characterised by cyclic inter-related phases that have even more intrinsic overlaps. The stages may be broadly summed as stakeholder identification, engagement strategy formulation, and strategy implementation. The cycle goes through other stages of evaluation and redesigning of the strategies according to the scope, budget, and plan of the initiative at hand (Sucozhañay et al., 2014; UN, 2005).

There is a need for academic libraries to dialogue on the many themes that relate to the complex interactions of different stakeholders at various stages of the cycle. This is important because stakeholders continue to evolve as the projects or services go through different phases. As noted by Pinfield et al. (2017), an analysis of stakeholders in academic libraries will help in identifying their multiple attributes, documenting their experience and roles to strategically engage them when needed at different stages of the cycle. It thus emerges that the engagement of stakeholders has to be timely and strategic.

The UN Environmental Program (UN, 2005) developed *The Stakeholder Engagement Manual* using multiple existing stakeholder engagement standards and frameworks to gather and share experiences needed to inform sustainable engagement accountability in ecosystem programs. Similarly, other cyclic engagement strategies are presented by Pinfield et al. (2017) and Harland et al. (2019), who share their experiences from the library perspective. In both cases, they demonstrate the complex interconnection of the multi-layered customer-oriented library service. Such an inter-related relationship is demonstrated from the perspective of library

stakeholders by Pinfield et al. (2017). The case shared by Harland et al. (2019) presents the Model of Academic Library Strategic and Cultural Engagement with Academic Library Stakeholders from the library director's perspective.

Both models or approaches referred to above point to the cyclic nature of stakeholder engagement strategies and the efforts to be attentive to all types of stakeholders as and when their need or role emerges. The UN (2005) manual states that relationships cannot necessarily be built on strict adherence to procedures or quality standard. Stakeholder engagement is, in this case, seen as a multi-layered process that cannot fit into a single model with a definitive management strategy. It is, therefore, important to continually analyse the engagement process to reshape and re-position the interaction with stakeholders in both the internal and external environments.

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### **Categorisation of Stakeholders**

The assessment and resultant categorisation of stakeholders at the various phases of engagement is done from different perspectives. For example, the UN (2005) refers to categorising stakeholders according to responsibility, level of influence in driving service delivery, proximity or frequency of interaction, dependency on the service, and, at times, according to their representation in the organisation. The UN guide further cautions that no stakeholder should be counted out or ignored simply because they do not strictly adhere to the category they are deemed to belong to. The manual attributes this to the fact that the roles and relationships evolve throughout the project's life cycle. The report further observes that even at different phases of the projects, stakeholders may be brought in for different roles.

Harland et al. (2019) commend the continued analysis of both the role that stakeholders play and the adopted engagement strategy because such an assessment enables categorisation according to how they help the library attain its strategic goals. Congruent to that, Chellappandi and Vijayakumar (2018) demonstrate the continued analysis and categorisation of stakeholders as both play different roles in creating an agile library team that is needed for the delivery of the set goals. In both cases, stakeholders from the internal and external environments play roles that may be summarily categorised as supportive, consultative, funding, or sponsoring in the diverse library activities. It may further be deduced that the engagement strategies for these entities vary according to the desired impact or goal of the relationship. This affirms the assertion that there is no perfect fit stakeholder engagement strategy because relationships cannot be managed uniformly (Church-Duran, 2017; UN, 2005).

### **Assessing Experiences in Stakeholder Engagement**

This paper shows that there are various ways of capturing experiences in stakeholder

engagement. The reviewed literature also shows that data collection for different strategic activities is diverse and characterised by fluid processes that are highly influenced by multiple contextual factors of the relationship and desired goal. For example, the UN's (2005) Accountability Model was informed by the data gathered through an exploratory survey of engagement approaches of over two dozen leading corporations to demonstrate how to meaningfully dialogue with stakeholders. In another case study, Sucozhañay et al. (2014) share findings from qualitative data gathered through a six-year longitudinal case study to demonstrate the challenges of failing to engage stakeholders proactively and systematically. Both examples demonstrate an analysis of industry practice as observed over time. Similarly, Schoonover et al (2019) use experiences obtained from 12 case studies related to the engagement of stakeholders in ecosystem research projects in Europe.

Reporting on industry experiences to inform the existing stakeholder engagement models is particularly important for the library environment. As rightly pointed out by Sucozhañay et al. (2014), most engagement models, which are predominantly from business arenas, apply differently. Even in these noted business environments, there are readjustments of other existing models as data continues to emerge from practitioners' perspective and practical guidance (UN, 2005). It is, therefore, very important that in describing any stakeholder engagement approach, one elaborates on the type of stakeholders and contexts to help comprehension and appreciation of the emerging trends.

### **A Stakeholder Engaging Library Team**

Library services and the resultant workflows relate, in many ways, to the stakeholders within the organisation and those from the external environment. The value of the services is no longer pinned onto the content of the collection, but more on the quality and uniqueness of the service (Church-Duran, 2017).

The accounts of library leaders in 15 academic libraries in Pakistan by Ashiq et al. (2018) demonstrate how stakeholder engagement and poor professional development of team members pose challenges to transformational library management. A sustainable engagement of stakeholders calls for a proactively innovative and dynamic library team with critical skills for transformational knowledge sharing as per the needs of the specific stakeholders (Harland et al., 2019). The liaison librarian has to be assertive and proactive in proposing collaborative activities that address the users' needs (Church-Duran, 2017). The "agile team", as described by Harland et al. (2019, p. 5) should have enthusiasm and have the needed competences to work with stakeholders (Chellappandi & Vijayakumar, 2018).

A case study by Lefebvre (2018) demonstrates how the enthusiastic Ryerson University Library team worked with its stakeholders to embrace an entrepreneurial culture to creatively converge library services related to archives, special collections, and digital humanities. The activities called for what Sucozhañay et al. (2014) describe as transformational library management and leadership. Sucozhañay et al. document the experiences of three Latin American library managers observed through a six-year longitudinal qualitative study to demonstrate how a lack of stakeholder engagement can inhibit transformation in libraries. In advocating for transformational leadership, their case study presents a distinction between library management as having skills to direct adequate service performance, while leadership is about "setting, motivating and aligning people with a new direction" (p. 57). Seemingly in agreement with this distinction between leadership and management, Matarazzo and Pearlstein (2016) call for a

complementary application of managerial skills to direct the services, while sustaining the library staff's motivation towards the institutional goals. This inevitably calls for continued capacity building and team building activities. It further concurs with Harland et al.'s (2019) call for libraries to continue restructuring and re-positioning both staff and services through an entrepreneurial approach that is characterised by liaison librarians that have the needed skills to sustainably engage relationships with stakeholders. On the other hand, Ashiq et al. (2018) demonstrate how participating Pakistan academic libraries encountered challenges in ensuring a creative collaborative culture in cases where the teams were not that agile and eager to learn.

### Methodological Note

An assessment of the approaches in the literature shows a predominance of a qualitatively deduced data from stakeholders based on their lived experiences. Similarly, this paper presents stakeholders' engagement in activities and projects carried out by the BIUST Library.

All the stakeholders for the different projects and the library team are viewed as participants, who have been observed in their natural setting. The reporting is done by the author, who as part of the library leadership, had an inherent responsibility of observing, managing, and ensuring value-adding stakeholder engagement.

Despite the absence of a systematic research method, this paper gathered highly valued learning points from the reviewed literature. For example, it applauds Sucozhañay et al.'s (2014) approach of augmenting data collected through six-year long observations with that from interviews and an in-depth analysis of project-related documents. Similarly, Ashiq et al.'s (2018) qualitative study on common challenges in academic library leadership gathered data through structured in-depth and recorded interviews of 15 participants in Lahore city, in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Additionally, the study had a strength of collecting experiences from different types of university library leaders to demonstrate that "collaborations and establishments of mutually beneficial working relationships" (p. 31) was amongst the challenges faced by academic libraries in Pakistan. Church-Duran (2017) also surveys liaison approaches of 56 academic and research library members to demonstrate that engagement is essential to continued growth of the library services. The sharing of experiences from multiple activities supports Alpi and Evans's (2019) assertion that a case study is constructed through data that emerges from multiple case reports.

The present paper shares experiences from one university, BIUST. These experiences are shared through cross-referencing with the participants, other related incidents, and observations from the literature in no specific sequential order, but according to the relevance to a particular observation. The learning points emerge as the data or facts about different events unfold. Theory, as such, emerges from the multi-layered experiences of the players in their unique contexts. In the reviewed literature, Dobson (2002) and Maxwell (2013) commend such flexible interpretive construction of reality to understand the context and to find progressive service improvement solutions.

This paper does not list supportive documents like change process plans and reports because they do not exist. It also does not have any interview recordings nor formal observation map. It is, however, important to add that although the paper does not present any systematic research methodology, the shared experiences may be conveniently viewed as both the data collection and analysis phases. For example, later in the discussion on stakeholder engagement in library

space utility, it emerges that a successful usage of space for a specific library event helped in attracting other stakeholders for yet another library activity. This example demonstrates how the qualitative analysis of experiences and the findings from other events informed the progression of the next initiative.

The literature reviewed for this paper helped with thematic descriptions that can be used for the categorisation of both the library experiences and its stakeholders. Such categorisation of stakeholders and their experiences may be viewed as theoretical coding. This is a procedure also observed in the case of Ashiq et al. (2018), where the emerging challenges were coded and analysed through NVivo, a data analysis software.

The continued interpretation of the events in the present study may also be taken as an on-going analysis of data to deduce meaning. This supports Thornberg's (2012) contention that pre-existing research and theories help to enhance the theoretical sensitivity of the experiences that are being documented. As demonstrated by Church-Duran (2017), the existing library faculty liaison frameworks are analysed to demonstrate the emerging trend of relationship-centred library service delivery. The just noted author however, cautions the researchers to avoid forcing reality into the already existing codes.

### The BIUST Library Experiences

The BIUST Library engaged various stakeholders from both the internal and external environments to play different roles that can be generalised as supportive, consultative, funding, or sponsoring in line with the broad categories observed in the reviewed literature (UN, 2005; Chellappandi & Vijayakumar, 2018; Harland et al., 2019). The engagement strategies for these entities vary according to the desired impact or goal. In alignment with Harlan, et. al's (2019) definition, BIUST stakeholders include the university executive, the teaching and non-teaching staff, students, researchers, and various communities of practice that relate to the university in different ways. The ensuing discussion, however, is not guided by stakeholder categories, but by the experiences from the different library initiatives. The narrative shares experiences that demonstrate or accentuate thematic areas that have been noted from the reviewed literature.

### Purpose Drives the Stakeholder Engagement Approach

An introspective review of the BIUST Library activities shows that partnerships were forged to address a need that was brought on by the drive towards some set goal. Some stakeholders were engaged for consultative purposes. Others played an influential role as budget holders, while some became partners with equal interest in the success of the set initiative.

Internal stakeholders, like the university management and different directorates of the university, were mainly engaged for consultative purposes and approval of initiatives that included entities who were not necessarily what the UN (2005) refers to as proximity or frequency of interaction stakeholders. A good example of this is when the library sought authorisation and guidance from the Vice Chancellor's office on protocols for hosting Botswana's First Lady during the commemoration of the 2019 International Women's Day. Other stakeholders for this purpose were internal and external security service providers, different media houses, and the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs, who continued to give guidance in their respective fields.

The library also received some guidance from stakeholders when it solicited the support of the Association of African Universities (AAU) for capacity building in creating visibility of institutional research output. The university management was consulted for permission and sponsorship of the initiative. The working relationship with AAU grew to a stage where it collaborated with the library to host a training workshop for many other researchers and librarians. For the workshop, the AAU was no longer only a consultative stakeholder, but also a partner in realising the workshop's goals. The association also sponsored some workshop activities.

The process of crafting strategic initiatives for the 2018/2019 annual performance plan engaged internal stakeholders for their different complementary roles in achieving some of the library objectives. The internal ones, like the Directorate of Quality Assurance and the Directorate of Institutional Planning, supported and guided the processes through both formal and informal meetings. Delivering on the set initiatives also brought in many other stakeholders. For example, those in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) became partners in delivering different initiatives that aimed at enhancing access to e-resources and in developing Information Technology (IT) enabled learning platforms.

In some cases, working relationships that were developed for a set goal broaden the library's stakeholder base. For example, members of the civil society that participated at the library's commemoration of the 2019 International Women's Day advocated for the continued collaboration in efforts to support women in development. Through this event, the library also contributed towards the strategic efforts to shift the users' perception from a library as a place of discoveries and consumption of information, to the place of production and sharing of knowledge.

### **Purpose Influences Engagement Approaches**

The engagement of stakeholders took different forms and levels depending on the intended goal of the engagement. For example, in planning for the AAU workshop, internal stakeholders were engaged through the on-site meeting, while the Department of Immigration in the Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs gave guidance on visa arrangements for international delegations through e-mails and telephone calls. The engagement of AAU also transformed from online consultation to on-site workshop planning and delivery.

It is important to highlight that although the library did not have a defined stakeholder engagement strategy, the operations with stakeholders for visa processes were guided by the existing national immigration protocols, while for the workshop it drew from both the AAU and BIUST governing processes.

Although in the cited case, such pre-set organisational protocols were supportive, there were cases where the culture of stakeholders hampered the delivery of library services. A typical example is when the library sensed some form of resistance from stakeholders in embracing an initiative such as the commemoration of the International Woman's Day. The university had never hosted such an event. Some directorates were, therefore, slow to support it. Similarly, efforts to engage the non-teaching BIUST staff as library users proved to be difficult because of the general perception of viewing the library as a reading space for students. As observed by Ashiq et al. (2018), some existing cultures, especially when stakeholders do not appreciate the trends in librarianship, may hamper progressive library services.

Some stakeholder resistance was also experienced when the library did not allow the users to bring food into the library discussion rooms. This met opposition because these users, who were mainly BIUST staff, did not appreciate the library's view that food and beverages were harmful to the library collections. Another case of how poor uptake or engagement by one stakeholder influenced others may be seen in the fact that although the library teaches the student user community how to access and use the available electronic resources, uptake is relatively slow because most lecturers still prefer recommending and prescribing the print information resources.

Some purpose-driven stakeholder engagements were initiated and managed by the library, while others were managed at the institutional level. For example, a strong working relationship with the Botswana Defence Force (BDF) Library Services had the benefit of being managed by both the BDF and BIUST. Consequently, the two libraries shared experiences through meetings, benchmarking visits and tours, which were well sponsored by their institutions. The robust interaction was made possible through the existing memorandum of understanding between the two parent bodies. The BDF also became a partner in building a BIUST Library special collection section dubbed the Presidential Collection@BIUST. This is an initiative that triangulates a concept of libraries, museums, and archives to incubate the concept of a Presidential library in Botswana.

A contrasting example is where the library team that was tasked to develop both the Institutional Repository (IR) and the LibGuides sought guidance and support from local and international experts through emails, online tutorials, and Skype conversations, as the library could not afford engagement through physical meetings. In another example, different student groups were engaged through approaches that varied according to the intent of the relationship. For instance, a select group of students, who served as library ambassadors, had some responsibilities in promoting the use of library services. These students had scheduled meetings with a designated librarian and had a dedicated WhatsApp chat group. They also had tailor made user education programs that were arranged and delivered by e-resource service providers.

In some cases, the library proactively forged engagements with relevant stakeholders. For example, it created a forum of librarians in and around Palapye so they can serve as a link with the outer community. Some other relationships were, however, built as a reactive response. The dealings with the AAU came as a response to an observed need for capacity building in developing an institutional repository. The engagement of external stakeholders from the national libraries, museums, and archives to guide in the development of Presidential Collection@BIUST was also a reactive stakeholder engagement. The library had observed a need for engaging these entities as consultative stakeholders.

### Inter-Related Library Stakeholders

As observed by Lefebvre (2018), incremental success in one stakeholder engagement program provides leverage for further recognition by other partners. For example, the processes of collection development had the multiple layers of the user community, and the vendors of information resources interacting in different ways. At some stage, the library engaged the internal security personnel and Botswana Police Services as consultant stakeholders in building on library-related security issues. In the process, the library learnt about the Botswana Women Police Officers Group, which later became very valuable guests during the commemoration of the 2019 International Women's Day.

Bringing in new computers to the library also attracted the support from the Directorate of Physical Planning and Campus Facilities (PPCF) to revamp space that was designated to be used as the learning commons. Recognition of the noted space followed yet another successful hosting of a high-level cocktail party to launch 14 books published by BIUST teaching and research staff. This was a collaborative effort of the library, researchers or authors, and the university management. The event further improved visibility of library services to more sets of stakeholders like the university's Student Representative Council (SRC) and media. This resonates with observations from the case of the Ryerson University Library team, which demonstrates how enhancement and revitalisation of the library space gave it a good facelift and effectively promoted the virtues of a library as a learning organisation (Lefebvre, 2018).

The inter-related demand-driven collection development process is characterised by multiple stakeholders with different roles that are broadly guided by the Library Collection Development Policy. The BIUST's community drives the collection growth in line with learning, teaching, and research needs. The information resource vendors have also been seen to play multiple roles of training users, sponsoring some events, and even engaging with the library through other stakeholders like the Botswana Library Consortium. Other libraries can also assume different collection development stakeholder responsibilities. For example, the University of Botswana Library is a customer for inter-library Loans, while also serving as consultative stakeholders and a consortium partner for the collective acquisition of resources.

The library also engaged with alternative partners through strategies that were already set by other stakeholders. For example, all first year students were engaged through a pre-arranged timetable that was owned and managed by the Centre for Management, Entrepreneurship and General Education. In this case, the library reached out to the students, as stakeholders, through yet another level of stakeholder engagement. Although the library does not have a clear set engagement strategy, it seemingly keeps the inter-connectivity through an underlying desire to deliver the best library services to all.

## Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations, as drawn from the library's experiences and the reviewed literature, are shared to contribute data or experiences needed to inform the existing stakeholder engagement strategies, and, most importantly, help enhance the provision of library services. This is presented in line with the earlier adopted research questions.

### Question 1: Who are the library stakeholders?

The library has multiple stakeholders, who play inter-related roles in shaping the delivery of services. Despite the universal acknowledgment that there is neither a perfect fit strategy nor a water-tight categorisation approach, Church-Duran (2017) and the UN (2005) observe that stakeholders can be broadly categorised as coming from internal and external environments for different roles.

The assessment of the BIUST's Library stakeholder engagement has enabled a clearer understanding of its stakeholders, who can be broadly grouped into four general categories, as shown in Table 1: Categories of BIUST Library stakeholders.

Table 1. Categories of the BIUST Library stakeholders

Category of stakeholder	Example of activity	Example of stakeholder
Community Partners	Collection development	Academic staff; researchers, students, information resource supply agencies
Sponsor partners	Marketing library services	BDF and BIUST management Information resource vendors
Project partners	Developing Institutional Repository	Civil society guests and protocol offices
	Developing Presidential Collection@BIUST	Association of African Universities  The BDF and national libraries, museums and archives

These stakeholders are multi-layered and inter-related in a way that inevitably leads to a situation where the description of one category refers to another. For example, when sharing the experiences of engaging academic staff through the authorship awards ceremony, the discussion brings in the support of other stakeholders to creatively transform the event venue. As Alpi and Evans (2019) observe, data about one case helps to construct assessment of the role of another stakeholder. The presented BIUST case is, therefore, based on multiple case reports of stakeholder experiences. It further relates to the earlier observation on the methodological note of this paper that experiences are presented through cross-referencing stakeholders as participants, with events and observations from the literature.

### Question 2: In which activities does the library engage its stakeholders?

The shared experiences demonstrate the interaction of an agile library team with stakeholders that collectively add value towards the delivery of institutional aspiration of Academic Quality and Student Reputation, Research and Innovation Excellence, and Improving Institutional Capabilities (BIUST Strategic Goals 1, 2 and 7 respectively). The interrelated activities range from engagement of stakeholders in the improvement of services to the marketing of accessible information resources. This tallies with Church-Duran's (2017) call for libraries to engage with communities in a way that supports organisational strategy, structure, and culture.

### Question 3: How does the library engage with the identified stakeholders?

Different stakeholders were engaged in line with the role they play towards the goal that the library wishes to attain. The noted absence of a clearly defined stakeholder engagement strategy leads to a trend described by Sucozhañay et al. (2014) as being "reactive and unsystematic". An analysis of the BIUST Library case, therefore, shows that the engagements were not handled as a project with a well-articulated engagement problem or case to be addressed with clear milestones. There is also a paucity of a systematic stakeholder activity documentation. In most

cases, the existing operational frameworks or protocols guided the collaborations.

Meetings and communications with different stakeholders also varied with many factors ranging from the budget, proximity, and the purpose of the engagement. For instance, some working relationships have been characterised by physical meetings, while others relied on virtual communication through e-mails, telephone conversations, or any other form of electronic media of communication.

An effective stakeholder engagement demanded transformational leadership and a flexible library team with the ability to continually share knowledge in a way that ushered learning opportunities for all. This corroborates Harland et al.'s (2019) presentation of a library as a learning organisation that draws collective aspiration of library staff and stakeholders. The transformational approach further translated into a continued skills development and realignment of both the library team members and the stakeholders with functional roles.

#### **Question 4: How can the library improve the stakeholders' engagement to provide a more flexible service?**

The response to this question summarises the recommendations drawn from this paper. The paper neither prescribes any library stakeholder engagement strategy, nor any systematic method of researching the experiences of library stakeholder engagement. Practitioners are, instead, advised to use these concluding learning points for adding value to the existing models.

Recommendations are presented in bullet form below:

- The library has to familiarise itself with the existing stakeholder engagement frameworks to inform the development and operationalisation of one that would guide partnerships in line with the scope, budget of the planned initiative.
- There is a need for the analysis and categorisation of library stakeholders. Such an analysis should be attentive to stakeholder perspectives, and must also include what Lefebvre (2018) refers to as impact narrative that is characterised by qualitative and quantitative data.
- The library should consider having a projects liaison librarian or designate the responsibility to the library administrator.

### **Conclusion**

The introspective discussion of stakeholder engagement in this paper affirms that both the university and the library are community orientated. The engagement has to be systematically strengthened. It also has to be acknowledged that sharing these experiences also energises the library team that is eager to continually recreate itself so as to improve service provision.

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**Ayanda A. B. Lebele** ([lebelelea@biust.ac.bw](mailto:lebelelea@biust.ac.bw)) holds a PhD (Library and Information Science) from UNISA and has two master's degrees in Library and Information Science and another in Development Studies. She has made a professional footprint in school, public, special, and academic libraries of different sizes and administrative make up. She served as a subject librarian at the University of Botswana, where she was responsible for the coordination and teaching of information literacy skills and the library staff in-service programs. As a qualified and experienced teacher, both roles were a perfect fit for her.

Dr. Lebele's leadership style, especially in academic libraries, has been shaped by her experiences, qualifications, natural people skills, and most importantly, her passion for continued individual professional development.