

## Approaches to Security of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Niger State, Nigeria

By

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### Abstract

*This study examines approaches to security of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State. Three research objectives were framed for the study. The case study design was adopted for the study, and purposive sampling technique was used to select 35 respondents from a population of 297 staff in all the 12 academic libraries in Niger State. Semi structured interview guides were used to collect data from respondents, while field notes guide were used to record data in respect of participants' observation. The data collected were subjected to qualitative analysis. The findings revealed that: the common approaches adopted for the security of information resources included periodic random checks on users and staff, scheduled patrols, and checking of users IDs, while computers of some libraries had antivirus software installed, and passwords configured. However, surveillance cameras were functional in only one library. The prevalent threats in all the libraries included book theft, mutilation of information resources, and non return of borrowed library materials, impersonation, and computer virus attack. The 12 libraries had policies guiding the security of information resources, but they did not have insurance cover. It was concluded that although academic libraries in Niger State have adopted good approaches for securing their information resources. The fact that they paid more emphasis on printed materials, with less use of electronic security systems, it is obvious that the libraries were yet to embrace the opportunities offered by technological advancement for such activities. In view of the findings, it was recommended that libraries should endeavour to have written policies on all aspects of security of information resources, while efforts should be made to improve the qualities of such materials that have already been degraded or replace them if necessary. Finally, it would be necessary to enhance the manual methods of safeguarding library materials, while emphasis should gradually shift to the electronic methods.*

### Introduction

The history of academic libraries in Nigeria is intertwined with the history of development of higher education. According to the National Policy of Education (2004), higher education is that which 'covers the post-secondary section of national education system which is given in universities, polytechnics and colleges of technology'.

Niger State has twelve tertiary institutions made up of federal and state owned institutions which cut across Universities, Polytechnics, colleges of education and monotchnics. The aims and objectives of higher institutions is to acquire, develop and inculcate the proper value- orientation for the survival of the individual and the communities its meant to served, the

acquisition of both physical and intellectual skill which will enable individuals to develop into useful members of the community. The higher institution should be able to pursue these goals through; teaching, research, dissemination of existing and new information, and also being a storehouse of knowledge. In order to achieve these objectives each institution established its own library known as academic library. Academic libraries according to Lawal and Esther (2012) are those that cater for the needs of those engaged in academic pursuits in higher institutions like the universities, colleges of education, colleges of technologies and polytechnics. Therefore, for libraries to succeed in supporting to realize their missions, their information resources must be well secured so as to enable the libraries provide to their users, information resources over a period of time. Akor (2013) sees security of information resources as a process designed to protect library collections against un-authorized removal or loss. This involves protecting resources against disasters as well as thieves. Hence, the focus must look beyond physical security; it must address four critical issues: what we have, where each item is at any given time, how we preserve the items for this and future generations, and

how we protect the items physically. Approaches to preservation and security of library information resources are age long strategies that can be traced as far back as 539BC in Egypt when the library books were chain-locked to prevent them from theft (Maidabino, 2010).

Anunobi and Okoye (2008) also indicated that Nigerian academic libraries are faced with hybrid challenges of managing resources, one of which is the issue of security of library collection. They were of the opinion that book theft is a major security issue in the libraries; with special collections being the most targeted materials and that some library staff take materials from the library without checking them out. Vellani (2010) summarily opines that “early libraries were very conscious of security of their libraries as evidenced from the various security methods employed”. While some of these security methods continued to be adopted in present day libraries, others have been modernised, with technological advancement opening new frontiers for the security of information resources in the numerous academic libraries. Yet it could be observed that incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources and services continue to pose great challenges to

the sustainable development of academic libraries in Nigeria.

### **Problem Statement**

Preliminary observations of some tertiary institutions' libraries in Niger State by the researcher revealed that some of their resources were stolen, mutilated, and or subjected to treatments that could reduce the life span of these library resources. The ugly situation of some tertiary institutions' libraries suggests that there may be some lapses in their security activities. However, the scopes of previous research on this very important subject matter in Niger State were limited to few approaches and few academic libraries only. For instance, Garba (2007) covered Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT Minna), Federal College of Education Kontagora library, and Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru Library; while Oyedun et al (2014), surveyed the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT Minna) and the Yahaya Madaki Library (COE Minna). From the foregoing, it becomes obvious that there could exist some information gap in respect to the level of security of information resources in majority of the academic libraries in Niger State. What then could be the security situation in those libraries that have never been

surveyed, or even the general prevailing approaches adopted across the state? The answer to this question constitute a gap in knowledge which this research attempted to fill, in order to improve the approaches to security of information resources in the academic libraries in Niger State.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objectives of this research were to determine:

1. The approaches adopted for security of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State
2. The security threats to information resources in academic libraries in Niger State
3. The policies for security of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State

### **Literature Review**

There is dearth of literature on approaches to security of information resources in academic libraries. Majority of the past works reviewed agreed that security approaches encompass all the preventive and remedial actions that are aimed at enhancing the useful life of information resources in libraries. Akor (2013) found out that Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) and

security personnel moving around in the library are among the measures in use to reduce the act of theft and mutilation in the Benue State University library. Similarly, Maidabino (2010) identified the use of a combination of measures including electronic security systems such as alarms, surveillance cameras, etc., as capable of addressing security breaches in the library. The author also discovered that approaches such as monitoring users at the circulation desk, checking identity cards allowing access, and using security guards were used by libraries covered by the study. It could therefore, be submitted that the application of information and communication technology in libraries could increase security, and because it is obvious from the past works that the traditional manual methods of securing libraries' information resources were predominant approaches in the libraries studied. While some of these security methods continued to be adopted in present day libraries, others have been modernised, with technological advancement, opening new frontiers for preservation and security of information resources and services in the numerous academic libraries.

A large number of published literature on library security issues focuses on specific types of security breaches. Theft, mutilation and vandalism are highly covered by research articles. Issa, Aliyu, Adedeji, Rachel (2012) highlighted theft and arson as threats to collections and proposed that libraries formulate a planned security measure to protect their collections. Boss (1984) also identified physical weaknesses in libraries in terms of unsecured windows, faulty emergency exits, unstaffed computer rooms, poor policies and procedures, lack of security plans, poor security points (exits, loading areas, windows, special collections) inadequate loans and renewal periods, lack of security manuals and poor signage as some of the causes of security breaches. The study by Osayande (2011) indicated the different ways in which library materials are illegally taken away from the library to include out-right stealing of library books, and impersonation, among many security threats. The author concluded that the traditional ways of manually checking patron's bags are both inefficient and not user-friendly and therefore, recommended the installation of electronic security systems for effective security of library materials. Maidabino (2010) also submitted that book theft, non return of library

materials, and using someone else identification (ID) card to borrow, were among the common security threats to information resources of Malaysian academic libraries. The implication of these findings is that they bring to the fore, the ineffectiveness of manual methods of securing libraries information resources, negative attitudes of users and possibly inadequate punitive measures against defaulters; all of which could significantly affect the service delivery of the libraries, if the threats are not effectively mitigated, Security policies are the guiding covenants for the existence of any good library. Many literatures reviewed by the researcher revealed the claims by academic libraries about the existence of security policies, but careful examination of such claims have showed otherwise. There is therefore the need for an appropriate research instrument that will be effective in verifying certain claims by respondents when carrying out similar studies. The adoption of interview and observation methods by this researcher obviously served this purpose.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative research method using a case study design was adopted for this study. Green et al (2009) referred to qualitative

research as being characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which (in general) generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis. The population of the study was 297 library staff, eighty-six (86) professionals and two hundred and eleven (211) para-professionals. The sample of the study was 35 library staff which was purposively selected. The interview and observation instrument with which required data was gathered. Semi structured interview guide approach was also used for data collection. Therefore, field notes were used to collect data during the observation process. The instruments of this study were given to experts on security of information resources, to validate the contents and constructs. Data collected, was analysed qualitatively using the steps outlined by Russel (2014), who included documentation, conceptualization, coding and categorization, examining, relationships and displaying data; and authenticating conclusions in such a way as to bring out the prevailing situation in each of the libraries.

### **Findings**

Thirty out of the thirty-five respondents selected were successfully interviewed. The

inability of the researcher to interview the collection was due to their absence on remaining five staff at the time of data genuine reasons .

**Table 1: Approaches Adopted for Security of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Niger State**

S/N	Library	Security Approaches				
		Electronic Security Systems	ID Cards Checks	Patrols	Computer Virus Protection	Passwords for Workstations
1	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT, Minna).	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Abubakar Gimba Library (IBBU, Lapai)	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru Library	X	✓	✓	X	X
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora Lbrary	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Yahaya Madaki Library (COE, Minna)	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	X	✓	✓	X	X
8	J.N. Ndajiwo Library (Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna)	X	✓	✓	X	X
9	Niger State School of Nursing, Bida Library	X	✓	✓	X	X
10	Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna Library	X	✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Niger State School of Health Technology, Minna Library	X	✓	✓	X	X
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	X	✓	✓	X	X

✓ - Applicable

X – Not Applicable

Table 1 shows that Identity Cards Checks and Patrols were adopted by all the libraries

for securing their information resources. This means that manual methods of ensuring security of libraries information resources

were very popular, as reflected in the adoption of Identity Cards verification at entrances, and regular patrols of entire facility by library staff and Institutions' security operatives, to reduce incidence of

crime. However, the electronic systems were limited to installation of antivirus software and configuration password on computers of some of the libraries, while surveillance cameras were functional in only one library.

**Table 2: Security Threats to Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Niger State**

S N	Library	Security Threats					
		Book Theft	Mutilation	Non Return of Library materials	Impersonation	Computer Virus Attack	Database Hacking
1	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT, Minna).	X	✓	✓	X	X	X
2	Abubakar Gimba Library (IBBU, Lapai)	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
4	Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru Library	X	✓	✓	X	X	X
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora Lbrary	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
6	Yahaya Madaki Library (COE, Minna)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X
8	Justice J.N. Ndajiwo Library (Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna)	X	✓	X	X	X	X
9	Niger State School of Nursing, Bida Library	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
10	Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna Library	X	✓	✓	X	X	X
11	Niger State School of Health Technology, Minna Library	X	✓	X	X	X	X
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	X	✓	X	X	X	X

✓ - Applicable

X – Not Applicable

Table 2 shows that mutilation of information resources, no return of borrowed library materials; book theft, impersonation, and computer virus attack were prevalent threats

in the academic libraries in Niger State. While, database hacking was not an issue in any of the libraries, even where the libraries provide various degrees of e-library services

**Table 3: Availability of Security Policies in Academic Libraries in Niger State**

SN	Library	Available	Not Available
1	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT, Minna).	✓	
2	Abubakar Gimba Library (IBBU, Lapai)	✓	
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	
4	Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru Library	✓	
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora Library	✓	
6	Yahaya Madaki Library (COE, Minna)	✓	
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	✓	
8	Justice J.N. Ndajiwo Library (Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna)	✓	
9	Niger State School of Nursing, Bida Library	✓	
10	Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna Library	✓	
11	Niger State School of Health Technology, Minna Library	✓	
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	✓	

✓ - Available

X – Not Available

Table 3 shows that the respondents indicated the availability of security policies which in clear terms could not be cited in all the academic libraries. Only the Federal College of Education Kontagora had written policies

which were under review as at the time of data collection. What are obtained in most of the libraries were generic institutional guide lines or student handbook that specified the operations of such libraries.

**Table 4: Contents of Security Policies in Academic Libraries in Niger State**

SN	Library	Security Policies		
		Security Procedure	Loan Policy	Insurance Policy
1	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Library (FUT, Minna).	✓	✓	X
2	Abubakar Gimba Library (IBBU, Lapai)	✓	✓	X
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	✓	X
4	Niger State Polytechnic, Zungeru Library	✓	✓	X
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora Lbrary	✓	✓	X
6	Yahaya Madaki Library (COE, Minna)	✓	✓	X
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	✓	✓	X
8	Justice J.N. Ndajiwo Library (Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna)	✓	X	X
9	Niger State School of Nursing, Bida Library	✓	X	X
10	Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna Library	✓	✓	X
11	Niger State School of Health Technology, Minna Library	✓	✓	X
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	✓	✓	X

✓ - Available

X – Not Available

Table 4 shows that all the academic libraries in Niger State had security procedures and loan policies for security of their information resources but Fati Lami Abubakar College of General and Legal studies, and the Niger State School of Nursing Bida, did not have guidelines in place for loaning libraries materials, which will ensure that materials given out on loan are recovered as at when due. This is

because the two libraries above do not loan out books due to the small volume of materials held by them. On the other hand all the twelve academic libraries indicated that they do not have any kind of insurance cover.

## Findings

Based on analysis of data collected, the following are the major findings of the study:

1. The study revealed that the manual methods of securing libraries' information resources were the common approaches adopted by all the libraries. Such as periodic random checks on users and staff, scheduled patrols, and checking of users IDs, were all in use by academic libraries in Niger State.
2. Further results showed that though some of the libraries adopt and use some digital security approaches for securing their information resources they are still not effective. Two libraries adopted the use of CCTV cameras for security of their information resources. While the electronic security system at FUT Minna was functional, the system at the Federal Polytechnic Bida was significantly underutilized largely because of erratic power supply, coupled with the lack of functional standby electricity generator.
3. The academic libraries in Niger State therefore, are yet to embrace utilization of modern technology in securing their information resources. This is unhealthy for the provision of effective and

efficient services by the libraries to their clientele in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

4. There was strong evidence that a lot of the thefts may have been perpetrated in collaboration with some unscrupulous library staff. Cases of impersonation were reported in three libraries, where a student attempted to use other person's ID card or borrowing ticket to borrow books, with the intent of not returning such books.
5. It was however observed that while the libraries claimed they had policies on security, only the Federal College of Education Kontagora had written policies, which were under review at the time of data collection. What obtained in most of the remaining libraries were generic institutional guidelines or student handbooks that specified the operations of such libraries, and simplified notices about the dos and don'ts' of the libraries. On the other hand all the libraries indicated that they do not have any kind of insurance cover.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this case study, it can be concluded that although Academic libraries in Niger State have adopted good approaches for securing their information

resources for research and learning. However, they paid more emphasis on printed materials, with less use of electronic security systems. The libraries were therefore, yet to embrace the opportunities offered by technological advancement for security activities. The need to mitigate various threats using current technological innovations in order to stop any possible loss of materials cannot be overemphasized. This will enhance access by users to quality libraries information resources for research and learning in the tertiary institutions of Niger State.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made for improvement:

1. Efforts should be made to consolidate the manual methods of safeguarding libraries' materials, while emphasis should gradually shift to the electronic methods.
2. Efforts should be made to provide e-library information resources to enhance
3. The libraries should have written policies covering all aspects of information resources security,

which should be brought to the notice of all stakeholders.

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