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Preservation of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Niger State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated preservation of information of resources in academic libraries in Niger State, Nigeria. A case study design was adopted for the research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 35 respondents from a population of 297 library staff in all the twelve academic libraries in Niger State. Semi structured interview guides were used to collect data from respondents, while field notes guide was used to record data in respect of respondents responses. The instruments used for the study were questionnaire and interview. Data collected were tabulated and analysed using simple frequencies and percentages. Findings revealed that the common methods of preservation of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State included repairs, binding and environmental control. The findings also showed that there were policies guiding the operations of the academic libraries in Niger State, but they did not have insurance covers. In respect of effectiveness of the methods in use, the findings showed that repairs, binding, environmental control was effective in all the academic libraries. The fact that the academic libraries in Niger State paid more emphasis on printed materials, with less use of digital preservation methods and electronic systems, indicated 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 preservation of information resources, upgrade and maintain facilities such as binderies, air conditioning systems, fire prevention equipment etc. including the adoption of digital preservation methods.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, information Resources, Niger State, Preservation

Introduction

Academic libraries refer to those libraries established in tertiary institutions to support and strengthen the academic programmes of such tertiary institutions of learning. These include libraries of universities, colleges of education, polytechnics, and otherpost-secondary education institutions. Lawal and Opeola (2012) defined an academic library as any library that caters for the needs of those engaged in academic pursuits in higher institutions like the universities, colleges of education, colleges of technologies and polytechnics. Academic libraries have not only become instruments for national development but are today regarded as centres for academic research. They contain far more information than any person could imagine. Hence, the roles of academic libraries cannot be over-emphasized. This is why the quality of education received in any institution of higher learning is measured by the resources in its library and the extent of use of those resources by the students and faculty members.

Information resources are basically sources through which information can be gotten in order to meet the information needs of users. They are channels through which ideas, opinions, or feelings are stored or preserved. Information resources found in libraries can be classified into print, non-print, electronic and digital information resources. Print information resources include books, serials,

encyclopaedia, dictionaries, handbooks, almanacs, and directories. Non print information resources are items such as compact disk, audio-visuals, tapes, slides, microfilms, and microfiche, to mention but a few. Thus, academic libraries primarily build their collections to meet the information needs of the users. For users needs to be met, the resources must be well preserved by the academic libraries.

Walker (2013) defined preservation as 'all managerial, technical and financial considerations applied to retard deterioration and extend the useful life of materials to ensure their continued availability. Bessy, Abalaka, Dauda and Okikiri (2014)on the other hand defined preservation as activities which include all the managerial and financial considerations, including storage and accommodation provisions, staffing levels, policies, techniques, and methods involved in preserving library and archival materials and the information contained in them.

Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries in Niger State, like those in other parts of the country, were established primarily to meet the information needs of their parent institutions through the collection and preservation of information resources to support teaching, research and dissemination of knowledge. Preliminary observation of some academic libraries in Niger State by the researcher revealed that some of their resources were mutilated, and were subjected to treatments that could reduce their life spans. This ugly situation suggested that there might have been some lapses in their preservation activities. However, the scope of previous research on this very important subject matter in Niger State was limited to few methods and few academic libraries only. For instance, the work of Garba (2008) covered Federal University of Technology Minna Library, Federal College of Education, Kontagora Library and Niger

State Polytechnic, Zungeru, Library. On their part, Oyedum, Sani and Odoakang (2014) surveyed the security and crime challenges in Federal University of Technology Minna Library and the Niger State College of Education Minna Library.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that there exist some information gaps in respect of the status of preservation of information resources in majority of the academic libraries in Niger State. One wonders what could be the preservation situation in those libraries that have never been surveyed, or even the general prevailing methods / systems adopted across the State for preservation of information resources in all the academic libraries? The answer to these questions constitute a gap in knowledge which this research attempted to fill, in order to improve on the methods / systems of preservation of information resources in the academic libraries in Niger State.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of the study are to:
1. determine the availability of preservation policies in the academic libraries in Niger State;
2. investigate the available methods adopted by academic libraries in Niger State to preserve their information resources;
3. examine the contents of preservation policies available in the academic libraries in Niger State;
4. find out the effectiveness of the methods of preservation of information resources adopted by academic libraries in Niger State.

Research Questions
The study is guided by the following research questions:
1. What are the preservation policies available in the academic libraries in Niger State?

2. What are the available methods adopted for preservation of information resources in the academic libraries in Niger State?
3. What are the contents of preservation policies available in the academic libraries in Niger State?
4. How effective are the methods of preservation of information resources adopted by academic libraries in Niger State?

Literature Review

All information resources require a basic standard of care, but some require more attention and protection because they are difficult or impossible to replace. Information resources irrespective of medium and format require protection throughout their life, but issues of storage and handling are most urgent in the archival environment. Marisol (2004) observed that academic libraries in particular, assume a focal point where users' interests have to converge to utilise all the available resources that are relevant to their individual needs. As a result of this diverse use of the materials, these libraries stand to be vulnerable to all forms of crime from not only the users, but library staff as well.

Preservation is the means by which library information resources are protected for the use of present and future generations. It is a way in which library information resources are safeguarded and kept in good physical condition. This can be done through a variety of measures aimed both at minimising the risk of loss of library collections and slowing down as much as possible, the process of physical deterioration which affects most library information resources. The preservation policy lays down the criteria for the academic libraries to achieve optimum preservation standard. The policy should be flexible, subject to change to take account of future preservation demands

and development. The policy must help to ensure that every user of the library has equal opportunity to see and enjoy unique and important information resources because the university libraries are established to support this objective. The formulation of a preservation policy for the academic libraries in Niger State is therefore, an essential step in fulfilling all those responsibilities and gives the library direction it requires to initiate measures which are necessary for the protection of its information resources.

Developing a preservation policy will leverage efforts of academic libraries to achieve their preservation mission as it will stipulate the resources required to achieve the goal of preservation programme. It will also make library management to see preservation from a serious perspective and mobilise the necessary resources. Surprisingly, this aspect of library management is utterly neglected by libraries. Berry, Coad, Harris, Otley, and Stringer, (2009) posited that preservation planning and policy making is an essential but regrettably neglected area of the management of libraries and information centres and one which has implication for virtually all aspects of library operations.

Research Methodology
The qualitative research method using a case study design was adopted for this study. A total of two hundred and ninety-seven (297) library staff in the twelve academic libraries in Niger State were the respondents in this study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select sample size of 35 respondents. Questionnaire and interview were the instruments used in collecting data for the study. Data collected were tabulated and analysed using simple frequencies and percentages.

Results and Discussion
The data collected from the study are presented below.

Table1indicated that thirty library staff out of the thirty five selected for individual interviews in the academic libraries in Niger State were successfully interviewed. The remaining five staff at the time of data collection had gone on annual or study leave. The response rate is presented in Table.1:

Table 1: Response Rate

S/N	Academic Libraries	Unit	Sample Size	Response	Percentage (%)	Remarks
1	Federal University of Technology Minna Library	Circulation, System unit, Bindery	7	6	85.7	Federal
2	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai Library	Cataloguing and Classification, Computer, Bindery	4	4	100	State
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	Circulation, Bindery, Computer	3	3	100	Federal
4	Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru Library	Circulation, Bindery	2	2	100	State
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora Lbrary	Circulation, Computer Bindery	4	4	100	Federal
6	Niger State College of Education Minna	Circulation, Computer	3	3	100	State
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	Circulation	2	2	100	State
8	Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna Library	Circulation	2	1	50	State
9	Niger State School of Nursing, Bida Library	Circulation	2	1	50	State
10	Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna Library	Circulation, Computer	2	2	100	State
11	Niger State School of Health Technology, Minna Library	Circulation	2	1	50	State
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	Circulation	2	1	50	State
Total			35	30	85.7	

Table1 indicated the various response rates of interviewees in the academic libraries studied. The variation in the

response rates were because library staff population and the number of units or sections charged with preservation activities varied among the libraries. Libraries of five state owned institutions and two federal owned institutions had the highest response rate of 100.00%. Four libraries recorded the lowest response of 50.00% each. It can be seen clearly from Table 1 that the least response rates came from the state tertiary institutions that had small size libraries.

Table 2: Availability of Preservation Policies in Academic Libraries in Niger state

S/N	Academic Libraries	Preservation Policies	
		Available	Not Available
1	Federal University of Technology Minna Library	✓	-
2	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai	✓	-
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	-
4	Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru Library	✓	-
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora	✓	-
6	Niger State College of Education Minna Library	✓	-
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa	✓	-
8	Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna Library	✓	-
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	✓	-

Key: = Available, X = Not Available

Table 2 presents responses on the availability of the preservation policies in all the academic libraries in Niger State. The responses by the respondents shows that all the

academic libraries in Niger State have preservation policies.

Table3: Contents of Preservation Policies in Academic Libraries in Niger State

S/N	Academic Libraries	Preservation policies		
		Preservation plan	Food & Drink Policy	Insurance Policy
1	Federal University of Technology, Minna Library	✓	✓	X
2	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Library	✓	✓	X
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida, Library	✓	✓	X
4	Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru,	✓	✓	X
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora, Library	✓	✓	X
6	Niger State College of Education, Minna	✓	✓	X
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa Library	✓	✓	X
8	Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna Library	✓	✓	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 3 shows that all the academic libraries in Niger State had food and drink policies, while majority of them had preservation plans, and loan policies for preservation of their information resources. Only the Niger State School of

Nursing Bida Library did not have a preservation plan. Further, 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 library materials.

Table 4: Methods of Preservation of Information Resources Applicable in Academic Libraries in Niger State

S/N	Academic Libraries	Preservation Methods				
		Repairs	Binding	Digitising	Migration	Environmental Control
1	Federal University of Technology Minna	✓	✓	X	X	✓
2	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University	✓	✓	X	X	✓
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	✓	X	X	✓
4	Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru Library	✓	✓	X	X	✓
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora	✓	✓	X	X	✓
6	Niger State College of Education Minna	✓	✓	X	X	✓
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa	✓	✓	X	X	✓
8	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	✓	✓	X	X	✓
11	Niger State School of Health Technology,	✓	✓	X	X	✓
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	✓	✓	X	X	✓

✓ = Applicable, X = Not Applicable

Table 4 shows that all the academic libraries in Niger State had adopted repairs, binding and environmental control for the preservation of their information resources, while none of the academic libraries practice digitisation and migration for preservation of information resources.

Table 5: Effectiveness of Methods of Preservation of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Niger State

S/N	Academic Libraries	Preservation Methods Effectiveness		
		Repairs	Binding	Env Control
1	Federal University of Technology Minna	✓	✓	✓
2	Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University	✓	✓	✓
3	Federal Polytechnic Bida Library	✓	✓	✓
4	Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru Library	✓	✓	✓
5	Federal College of Education Kontagora	✓	✓	✓
6	Niger State College of Education Minna	✓	✓	✓
7	Niger State College of Agriculture, Mokwa	✓	✓	✓
8	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,	✓	✓	✓
12	Niger State School of Health Technology, Tungan Magajiya Library	✓	✓	✓

- Effective   X – Not Effctive / Not Applicable

Table 4it shows that repairs, binding and environmental control methods adopted by them are effective in all the academic libraries

Discussion of Findings

It was observed from the findings on availability of preservation policies in academic libraries in Niger State that, while the libraries claimed they had policies on preservation, only the Federal College of Education had written policies, which were under review at the time of data collection for this study. What obtained in most of the

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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. This finding agrees with Ovowoh and Iwhihu (2010), where 90% of respondents indicated the existence of policies on preservation, but interviews and observations revealed none.

The fact that respondents indicated the availability of preservation policies, which in clear term could not be cited brings to the fore, the need for good documentation of all the available policies which should be brought to the notice of all stakeholders. It is also important to carry them along in the implementation of all policies, as well as making efforts to review them periodically in order to align such policies with the evolving trends in preservation of libraries' information resources to serve their clients better. All the libraries indicated that they do not have any kind of insurance cover. This study confirms the findings of Olatokun (2008) that more than an average number of the institutional libraries have preservation polices which have really provided direction to library staff in carrying out their collection management responsibilities, and the contents or the provisions in the preservation policies are adequately in use and adhered to.

On the available methods adopted for preserving information resources in academic libraries in Niger State, the findings of the study reveals that repairs and binding were routinely carried out whenever damages to library materials, especially books were noticed. While good environmental control was also regularly ensured to provide suitable conditions for preservation of libraries information resources. Furthermore, it was observed that Federal University of Technology Minna Library, State

Polytechnic Zungeru Library, and Federal College of Education Kontagora Library, which all had functional Bindery Units are the most developed libraries and are incidentally the ones with the greatest need for binding of their materials, which could be because of the high usage of their information resources.

The level of environmental control varied amongst the libraries studied. The results showed that air-conditioning, fumigation, housekeeping, protection against water leakages, storage of materials away from sunlight, provision of fire extinguishers were used by the libraries to control their environments for effective preservation of information resources.

The result of the study was encouraging because a good number of the libraries had functional air conditioners, but respondents indicated that erratic power supply coupled with the institutions inability to provide adequate alternative source of power for the running of the libraries had negatively affected their performance. Observations further revealed that the libraries of Niger State College of Agriculture Mokwa, Niger State School of Nursing Bida, and the Schools of Health Technology at Minna and Tungan-Magajiya respectively, did not have air-conditioning systems. This meant that the temperature of the libraries were not appropriate for good storage of information resources especially in dry seasons and the libraries were un-conducive for learning and research, while leaving the windows open exposed the information resources to dust, which made housekeeping more cumbersome.

The study revealed that the libraries of Federal University of Technology Minna, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida

University Lapai, Federal Polytechnic Bida Library, Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru, and Federal College of Education Kontagora, Niger State College of Education Minna Library, College of Agriculture Mokwa and Fati Lami Abubakar College of Legal and General Studies Minna, fumigate their facilities periodically (two to three times every year) with the appropriate chemicals, in order to prevent deterioration of materials from various sources, particularly insects and rodents. Termites infestation were recalled by respondents in the libraries of the Federal University of Technology Minna, and Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru; where fumigation had helped to keep the ravaging termites off their book materials and most especially old newspapers that were archived.

However, a closer examination of the fire extinguishers installed in the libraries of Federal University of Technology Minna, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai, Federal Polytechnic Bida, Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru, and Federal College of Education Kontagora, Niger State College of Education Minna, Fati Lami Abubakar College for Legal and General Studies, Minna and Niger State School of Midwifery, Minna, showed that they might not have been serviced for a very long period, which meant that their functionality for reduction of damage by fire cannot be guaranteed.

On the preservation methods available in academic libraries in Niger State, the study showed that all the academic libraries have not adopted digitising and migration as preservation methods, except Federal University of Technology Minna that has just started the automation of the library information resources.

From the above findings, it could be concluded that repairs,

binding and environmental control were the common methods of preservation of the information resources in the libraries studied. However, digitizing and migration, which were not adopted for preservation, are electronic based methods that are gaining recognition in the present era of technological development. The findings of this study corroborate Ogbodo's (2011) and Alhassan and Abdulsalam's (2013) findings which discovered thatrepairs, air conditioning and binding were among the most used preservation methods, while digitization and microfilming were never used in the libraries studied by them.

In search of the effectiveness of the methods of preservation of information resources adopted by academic libraries in Niger State, the study showed that all the methods used in the preservation of information resources in academic libraries in Niger State were effective. The effectiveness of repairs was verified by physical observation of some repaired books, which showed that such books had maintained good quality. Effectiveness of environmental control approach differed amongst the libraries, because of the functionality of equipment such as air conditioners for regulating the temperature and humidity of the libraries. Therefore, preservation of library materials were more enhanced in the libraries that had functional equipment, which were normally boosted by alternative source of power supply, using stand by generating sets. However, computer virus protection was effective in only the libraries of the Federal University of Technology Minna, Federal Polytechnic Bida, Federal College of Education Kontagora, and the Niger State School of Midwifery Minna. This was due to the fact that the antivirus software installed on their computers was licensed/genuine products and they were regularly updated. In a few cases, such as in the libraries of the Niger State Schools of Health Technology at Minna and

Tungan-Magajiya, there were no computers, and therefore no need for antivirus software.

The findings of this research question corroborates that of Ogbodo (2011) and Alhassan and Abdulsalam (2013)whose findings on the effectiveness of repairs and air conditioning, were among the most used preservation methods in the libraries studied by them. However, the academic libraries need to embrace electronic preservation systems, in order to ensure effective preservation of library materials to reduce or slow deteriorating. The goal of every good approach to preservation of library information resources would be to lead to efficient and effective information service delivery and access in perpetuity.

In summary, the findings of this study had shown that academic libraries in Niger State have adopted good methods for preserving of information resources, but there is much disenchantment with the inadequacies in preservation of the libraries, especially as it affects the provision of appropriate tools, equipment and upgrading of critical infrastructure, as found out by the researcher during field observation. It becomes very pertinent therefore, for the various tertiary institutions to adequately address the deficiencies in order to continue to support teaching, learning and research activities

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it could be concluded that academic libraries in Niger State have good methods for preserving information resources for research and learning. However, they paid more emphasis on the preservation of printed materials, while digital preservation methods and electronic systems were not introduced by all libraries. It was therefore obvious that the libraries were yet to embrace

the opportunities offered by technological advancement for preservation of their information resources. Suffice to say that the need to mitigate various threats using current technological innovations such as digitization, migration, in order to stop any possible loss of materials can never be overemphasized. This will obviously enhance access by users to quality 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 are made for improvement:

1. The libraries should have written policies covering all aspects of information resources preservation which should be brought to the notice of all stakeholders in order to make them fully aware of the policies. Furthermore, the libraries should have comprehensive insurance policies which would serve to mitigate losses that could arise from disasters.

2. There is need for libraries to upgrade and maintain facilities such as binderies, air conditioning systems, fire prevention equipment etc, as well as the introduction of digital platforms and electronic equipment for vital preservation activities.

3. Efforts should be made by the academic libraries to integrate the manual methods of preserving library materials with the electronic methods which are gaining very fast recognition in the present technological age.

4. Periodic repairs, replacement and or creation of electronic backups of affected information resources should be done by the academic librarians

5. The antivirus software should be regularly updated and upgraded respectively by the libraries in order to be effective.

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