PRESERVATION OF RECORDS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN THE SOUTH- SOUTH ZONE OF NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to investigate the preservation of records in federal and state university libraries in South-South zone. The descriptive survey method using the expose facto design was employed. Eight-three (83) copies of questionnaire were administered but seventy-seven (77) copies were responded to using frequency count and simple percentages. Findings revealed that federal university libraries preserved records more by the use of proper storage and proper handling than state university libraries. From the findings, it was recommended that state university libraries should preserve their records by using proper storage and proper handling. This will go a long way to help extend the lives of records in state university libraries.

Keywords: Presentation of Records, Archives, Conservation of Records, University Libraries

Introduction

Preservation is an expensive venture but it is nothing compared to the amount that will be spent or repair and restoration due to neglect of rare and valuable records. The first statement of principles for the preservation and conservation of library and archival materials was published in the International Federation of Library Association and Institution (IFLA) Journals (1979). The principles is designed to encourage those responsible for preservation to realize the consequences of neglect and together with their scientific and technical experts, formulate a positive policy for the future of the materials in their collections.

Baker (1981) posits that preservation is the art of anticipating and preventing decay. By implication, records will naturally age, deteriorate and decay and whatever measure is taken to make them last longer will be of great importance. Boomgarden (1985) noted thatpreservation is the action taken to anticipate,

prevent, stop or retard deterioration. By this definition information, professional must be conscious of measures to employ so as to avoid or reduce deterioration.

The international Federation of library Association and Institutions (IFLA, 1986) defined preservation as to include all managerial and financial consideration including storage and accommodation provisions, staffing levels, policies, techniques and methods involved in preserving library and archival materials and the information contained in them. This also applies to records. Camble (1990) referred to it as the specific individual and collective measures taken for reprint, restoration, protection and maintenance of archives.

Rosenberg (1993) is convinced that everyday care of library books should be given a special emphasis in preservation efforts. This conviction is derived from the fact that the quality and care handling of books ultimately contributes to the longevity of the books. It also goes for the care and handling of records in university libraries especially in Nigeria. University libraries are great producers of records. For a university library to function effectively and carry on with its services, there is usually one form of record or the other, records, are synonymous with human activities and existence.

The term 'record' derives its origin from the Latin word 'recorderi' meaning to be mindful of, or to remember (Esse, 2000). It refers to recorded information, regardless of form or medium, received and maintained by an agency, institution, organization or individual in pursuance of its legal obligation or in the transaction of business of any kind (Charman, 1990). Morris (1992) identified four basic types of records that could be prepared and kept in a library. These include: financial records, organization records, service records and statistical records. Financial records refer to financial transactions for or on behalf of the library. Organization and service records, like manual are generated in the administration office. They are used for the day to day running of the university; statistical records are record gotten from the statistics taken in circulation, reference and serial section (Akporhonor, 2011)

This study sought to provide empirical data on how records are being preserved in Federal and State University Libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The records of a university library constitute her corporate memory. It supplements human memory and serves as guide for effective planning and decision making. Records are invaluable to University Libraries administration.

In order to take advantage of past experience, accurate and good record keeping are the bedrock for planning for the future in university libraries. As the library system and its institution expand, so do their problems of planning organization, preservation. Although a lot of records are generated daily from the activities of the administrative division of some of these university libraries, very few studies have focused on the extent to which these records are preserved. Accordingly, the study seeks to provide empirical data on how record are preservein Federal and State University libraries in the South –South Zone of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study is carried out to determine how records are maintained by Federal and State university libraries in the South-South of Nigeria. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to:

(i). Determine how records are preserved by the Federal and State University Libraries in South – South Zone of Nigeria.

Research Question

The research question below guided the study:

(i). How are records preserved in the federal and State University Libraries in the South -South Zone of Nigeria?

Literature Review

The importance of preserving university library records cannot be overemphasized. Before the advent of preservation techniques, documents were stored under conducive environmental conditions in order to safeguard them from deterioration. The preservation strategy advocated for the records serve them well because the paper that was used to create records did not contain seeds of their own destruction. The same preservation approach cannot be used with reasonable success with the paper produced during the late nineteenth and

twentieth centuries because they were faulty. From about 1849, paper manufacturers stopped using cotton and lignin in the production of paper in favour of the cheaper ground wood pulp (Foot, 1994) it resulted in the production of acidic paper with high lignin levels and a short live span. When paper made of wood pulp reacts to humidity and heat, it becomes brittle. According to Ogden (1999) scientific research has shown that wood pulp paper becomes brittle if stored in poor conditions.

Causes of paper deterioration are due to high acidity level, high temperatures, relative humidity, light, dust and biological agents and disaster (Akussah, 1991). Alegbeleye (1985) classified the factors responsible for paper deterioration broadly into three, namely: inherent, external or environmental and structural factors. Dareport (1982) and Obiku (1990) identified other problems of conservation as deterioration widely resulting from the effect of chemical, physical and biological agent due to the nature of information materials.

According to Ritzenthler (1993) the rate of deterioration of documents particularly paper documents is dependent upon the chemical stability of the materials making up the document and external influences such as the environment, storage conditions and handling procedures. In addition to abuse the mismanagement as well as disaster can also cause untold damage to document. Alegbeleye (1993) defined disaster from the perspective of records management as any event that result in the sudden removal of records and documents from accessibility and use. Akussah and Fosu (2001) grouped causes of disasters into two main categories. They are natural and man-made disaster. Man-made disaster are those induced by man, while natural disaster of library and archives include flood, fire, earthquakes, cyclone, terrorist, actions wars and explosion, theft and vandalism, biological agents, power failure and mishandling. If records are damaged, the university library simply cannot reconstruct the information they contain. Recent headlines prove that it is not necessary to wonder whether or not a disaster can destroy an organizations memory. The bombing of the world trade centre in 1992, Huricane Andrew 1993, the 1993 flood in Midwest, the 1989 San Francisco Earthquake are all events that underscore the Importance of planned protection for records (Brumm, 1996).

Marrelli (1996) added that a variety of methods exist to protect records physically and to ensure their stability and security. Environmental control and the use of

quality storage containers and good handling practices will help extent the life of records. The step available to protect and preserve records will vary depending on the availability of resources of different university libraries. The essential principle involved with ensuring the physical protection of records need not to be overly complex. Kenney (1993) emphasized that the subject of preservation can be highly technical and most trained conservators have a background in the science of chemistry. It is important to remember that remedial item-by-item conservation is an expensive service requiring the participation of skilled and trained conservation specialist. Apart from the control of environmental factors in storage areas, the most common methods of protecting federal and state university library records are dispersal, duplication and storage (Brumm, 1996)

Research methods

The study employed a descriptive survey method using *expost facto* design. The population for this study was made up of university Librarians, their deputies and all heads of division/section/units of the ten (10) Federal and State Universities in the South-South Zone. The choice of the categories of people is justified by the fact that only heads of division/section/units together with the universities librarians and deputies handle records. The population of this study is 83. The sample for the study is the same as the population of professional library staff in the ten (10) Federal and State Universities Libraries of the South-South Zone of Nigeria.

The choice of the researcher to use the entire population conforms with the view of Egbule and Okobia (2001) when they stated that the entire population can be studied or investigated when the population is not too large. The research instrument that was used for this study was the questionnaire. The research question was answered using frequency count and simple percentage.

Findings and Discussion Analysis of Response rate

A total of 83 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the four federal and Six State University Libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria, out of this number, 77(92.8%) as shown in table 1 were retrieved from the respondents.

University library	Status	Librarians /Head of Division/Sec/Unit	Number administered	Number of Completed and retrieved Questionnaire	Percentage
University of Port Harcourt Library, Port Harcourt	Fed	8	8	8	100
John Harris Library university of Benin, Benin	Fed	9	9	8	89
Universities Calabar library, Calabar	Fed	8	8	8	100
Universities of Uyo Library, Uyo	Fed	8	8	8	100
Ambrose Ali university Library, Ekpoma	State	8	8	8	100
Rivers State university of Science and Technology Library, Calabar	State	9	9	8	89
Cross River State university library, Calabar	State	8	8	8	100
Delta State University Library, Abraka	State	9	9	9	100
AkwaIbom State University of Technology Library, Awka-Ibom	State	8	8	6	75
Niger Delta University Library, Wilberforce island, Yenogoa	State	8	8	6	75
Total		83	83	77	92.8%

Source: field work (2009)
The 77 that were retrieved were used for the study
Table 2: Institutional Data

Table 2.0 Federal and State Universities used in the study

S/N	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Federal university libraries	4	40
2	State university libraries	6	60
	Total	10	100

Table 2.0 above shows that 10 university libraries were used for the study of which four were federal and six states. The percentage for federal is 40% and state is 60% bringing the total to 100%.

3.0.   Response to Research Question

This section gives the analysis of discussion of the research question

Research question

How are record preserved in the federal and state university libraries in the south-south zone of Nigeria

Table 3.0: Preservation of Records in the University Libraries

Preservation in University Libraries	Status of University	Agree/Strongly agreed		Disagree/strongly disagree		Total
		N	%		%	
Control of environment factors	Federal	29	87.87	4	12.13	100
	State	35	79.54	9	20.46	100
Proper Storage	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	36	81.82	8	18.18	100
Proper handling	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	36	81.82	8	18.18	100
Duplication	Federal	25	75.76	8	24.24	100
	State	41	93.18	3	6.82	100
Dispersal	Federal	21	63.64	12	36.36	100
	State	25	56.82	19	43.18	100
Regular Cleaning	Federal	25	75.75	8	24.25	100
	State	37	84.09	7	15.91	100

From table 3.0, more federal university libraries than state university libraries agree and strongly agree that proper storage and proper handling was undertaken with 31 (93.94%) as against 36 (81.82%) respectively. For dispersal of records as a form of preservation more federal university libraries agreed and strongly agreed with 21 (63.64%) as against 25(56.82%) for the state university libraries.

The finding in the table above revealed that federal university libraries undergo more preservation than state university libraries. This may be due to the fact that federal university libraries are relatively older than state university libraries. This finding agreed with that of Marrelli (1996) when he added that environmental

control a d the use of quality storage conditions and good handling practices will help extend the life of records.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The finding of the study revealed that federal and state university libraries preserve their records by proper storage and proper handling with federal university preserving more. In the light of the finding, the following recommendations were made:

a).   Adequate storage facilities should be provided for records maintenance in state university libraries, to help extend the life of their records.

b).   Proper handling and the use of disposal for records will also help extend the live of records in state university libraries.

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