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Library Staff's Awareness of Types of Preservation Programme and Activities in Selected University Libraries in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper focused on the types of preservation programme and activities in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. It was aimed at knowing library staff's awareness on preservation programme and the various preservation activities carried out in the university library. The survey research design was used for the study with a questionnaire for data collection. The study revealed that though there is no written preservation policy, library staff engage in some types of preservation activities in university libraries. There is no clear preservation programme and no library staff is saddled with the direct responsibility of supervising preservation activities, there is inadequate preservation facilities to store and manage information resources. Therefore, the information resources in university libraries may be at risks as no disaster management plan is in place as mitigating caution. The study recommends that library management should create more awareness on documentation of preservation activities in libraries so as to have a written policy that will provide guidance on preservation procedures. The need to provide adequate preservation facilities to make for proper storage and management of information resources in the university libraries are uppermost as well as the appointment of preservation librarian to pilot preservation activities.

Key words: *Preservation, Preservation Activities, University Libraries, Preservation Programme, Deterioration, Library Staff, Librarian, Awareness*

1.1 Introduction

Libraries have been known to contain unique accumulation of human knowledge and experiences in the form of books and non-book materials. The written and documentary heritage housed in libraries provides the raw materials that allow researchers to understand, explain and to enjoy the visible and invisible world around them. Access to the past enables one to understand and locate oneself in the

present and gives opportunity to inform the future. Soy (2000) stated that preservation keeps materials alive, whole, and available for future use so that they can be used for as long as possible, first to document our heritage and society, and to guide others who will come in the future. Therefore, ensuring the integrity of such human heritage for posterity is of great interest to information professionals.

Library staff members are key elements to the

successful preservation processes in university libraries. The success of library's preservation activities to a large extent depends on staff's understanding and observing good preservation practices. According to Udo-Anyanwu and Mezieobi (2020), most library managers fail to realize that preservation and conservation of information materials is an important issue they have to contend with; particularly in handling the issue of deterioration of information materials in the libraries.

They went further to state that there is a generally low awareness among library staff on preservation issues especially on the corruptible tendencies of information materials and what could be done to prevent their deterioration. Therefore the preservation and conservation of information resources cannot be carried out without the library staff. Hence, Udo-Anyanwu and Mezieobi (2020) advocated for the training of library staff in the techniques of preservation of library materials. Muya (1986) posit that there is need to expose librarians to preservation practices as well as awareness of preservation policy during training, in order to ease their job. Such awareness can be by making out time for training, funding for proper book repair materials, and improved containers for interlibrary loan.

1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out library staff's awareness of types of preservation programme and activities in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The study examined the following,

- i. To find out the level of library staff's awareness of preservation programme in the selected university libraries in South-south Nigeria
- ii. To know the types of preservation activities in the university libraries

2.1 Literature Review

Training as a form of preservation awareness is essential to get libraries involved even at the small programme level. Effective preservation awareness in libraries requires that librarians maintain appropriate developmental trends in keeping up to date with new trends in preservation issues. This is paramount because librarians contribute directly and indirectly to the preservation functions of libraries. However, the International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA, 2007) asserts that quite a number of libraries particularly the more specialized libraries with trained librarians have a minimal or small preservation awareness. Hence, Khan and Bhatti (2012) avers that to keep librarians up-to-date and well aware of the new trends in the profession, continuing education and development programme (CEDP) is necessary in the library associations.

Library and information resources, as a result of environmental factors, such as; high temperature, relative humidity, exposure to rays of sunlight, etc. makes the chemical component inherent in paper to wear off easily; also, is biological agents that destroy library books such as fungi, bacteria, insects, rodents, etc. attracted to the starch and glues used in book binding (Muhammad, 2006). These factors are crucial in the life of information resources and cannot be ignored. Hence, preservation programme is of importance in university libraries.

The New York University Library (NYUL, 2011) identified types of preservation activities to include: binding, reformatting, disaster preparedness, staff and patron education, programme to monitor climate control in the library, moving images and sound preservation, as well as digital conversion. In considering preservation activities, the entire library environment, ranging from its physical appearance and comfort level to its public service and collections need to be adequately

considered. A good preservation activity and programme could be expensive but essential in as much as it would ensure that the library accomplishes its ultimate goal (bringing library materials to library users). It is the responsibility of the library as well as library staff to maintain these materials in good physical condition so that they can be readily available for use at all times (Nwalo, 2003).

Preservation is one of the activities that help in taking care of books, journals, newspapers and other information materials in the library. Dictionary.com (2014) defined preservation as to keep alive or in existence. It is to keep safe from harm or injury. In other words, preservation is the use of passive measure for the protection of library materials. This is achieved by providing appropriate environmental conditions, storage facilities, employing safe methods of handling and suitable packaging of materials. It is only through preservation that continued availability and access to items in the collections can be maintained.

Soy (2000) described preservation activity as an integral part of collection management and in doing this; Brennan (1991) noted that a number of resources and guide from library associations, professional organizations and colleagues can assist in the initiation of a library preservation activities. Such resources can help a library to establish its priorities, select areas where its actions will have most impact, and budget accordingly. For every library preservation activity, advocacy for preservation is the starting point, followed by sound environmental control, and the practice of preservation tasks by knowledgeable and trained staff.

The goal of preservation activities is to ensure that the information resources in the library are appropriately preserved, making them available and to be used. As a matter of fact, preservation activity is designed to minimize the physical and chemical deterioration of information resources and to

prevent the loss of information materials (US National Archives, 2012). This is further makes imperative the functions of the university in support of high quality research, teaching and learning in all field of studies, which libraries exists fulfill by acquiring, developing and managing resources, promoting and providing access to the resources as widely and effectively as possible.

In order to enhance preservation activities in libraries, guidelines and principles underlining them is foremost (Madu, 2004). Libraries, no matter how simple or complex, there has to be laid down programme that will ensure adequate preservation of information materials for a balanced collection, and ensuring access to materials it contains for the current and incoming generation of library users. This spells out the responsibilities of all library staff. Milner Library (2010) outlined the following preservation programmes - shelf preparation, stack maintenance, staff and users education, environmental control, commercial binding, disaster preparedness, digital resources, conservation treatment, preservation administration etc.

Unfortunately in Nigeria, proper preservation of information resources is yet to take its rightful place in university libraries. Oluwanyi (2015) noted that preservation of both print and electronic resources, as a collection management strategy has been relegated if not totally neglected by librarians for a very long time in Africa, especially in Nigeria. Lack of adequate funding and the implementation of preservation policy has been major factors (Ikegune, 2016). The challenge in no small measure affects the effective preservation of library materials. Zaid and Abioye (2009), in their study pointed the challenges facing preservation as the general lack of preservation awareness and the absence of legal preservation policy. Alegbeleye (1999) in his IFLA conference

paper reported lack of qualified staff to implement preservation policy as well as the level of ignorance of many librarians on the existence of preservation policies in libraries. In addition, it has been observed by the Republic of Uganda, Ministry of Information and Communication Thematic Paper (2009:68) that libraries are still lacking a written policy on preservation activities and that there are currently no policies in place to regulate the management of preservation of library resources. Hence, the study investigated library staff's awareness of types of preservation programme and activities in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

3.1 Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey design to investigate library staff's

awareness of the types of preservation programme in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Nine (9) university libraries were selected for the study from Cross River, Delta and Edo states and the chosen universities are shown in Table 1 below. The choice of the states chosen was due to the proximity of location to the researcher. The main instrument used to gather data for the study is the questionnaire. It was distributed to 236 library staff (librarians and library officers) and 159 copies were retrieved making 67.4% response rate. Librarians and library officers selected as respondents for the study is due to their involvement in the preservation of library material. Data collected were analyzed using the descriptive statistical (mean) method done through SPSS-version 16.

4.1 Results and Discussion

The results and finding from the study are hereby presented.

Table 1: Response Rate of Respondents

University Libraries	Number Administered	Number Retrieved	Percentages (%)
Ambrose Alli University Library, Ekpoma	19	12	60
Benson Idahosa University Library, Benin	9	7	77.7
Cross River University of Technology Library, Calabar	21	15	71.4
Delta State University Library, Abraka	36	30	63.1
Federal University of Petroleum Resources Library, Ugbomro	9	8	88.8
Novena University Library, Ogume	6	5	83.3
John Harris Library, University of Benin, Benin City	75	45	83.3
University of Calabar Library, Calabar	55	31	56.4
Western Delta University Library, Oghara	6	6	100
Total	236	159	67.4%

The above table shows the response rate of the respondents from the various university libraries studied.

Table 2: Library Staff's Level of Awareness of preservation programme

Level of Awareness on these aspects of preservation programmes	\bar{x}
Shelf/information resources' surface cleaning	1.70
Pest inspection and control	1.45
Disaster preparedness and response plan	1.46
Storage conditions for information resources	1.63
Lamination of worn out documents	1.53
Repair of deteriorating information resources	1.68
Paper encapsulation	1.41
Book restoration	1.65
Massde-acidification of deteriorating books	1.39
Fire detecting system	1.50
Preservation photocopying	1.52
Microfilming of documents	1.40
Digitization of documents	1.56
Reformatting of information resources	1.47
Folded document recovery	1.42
Re-binding of worn out information resources	1.64
Humidification of storage area	1.36
Conservation treatment	1.40
Relaxing and flattening of paper	1.37
Stacks maintenance	1.60
Shelf preparation	1.57
Anoxic treatment	1.35
Staff/user's training on proper handling of information materials	1.62
Security for the collections (theft prevention)	1.75
Preventing and managing emergencies that threaten the collection	1.59
Environmental control	1.49
Weighted Mean	1.52

Criterion mean is $x = 1.50$

With a calculated mean of 1.52 shown in Table 2, it is revealed that library staff members are aware of the various preservation programmes in the selected university libraries studied. This is because the calculated mean of 1.52 is little higher than the criterion mean of 1.50. From the result, it can be deduced that though library staff are aware of some preservation programmes in the university libraries, they are really not aware

of most preservation programmes. For instance, reformatting of information resources ($X = 1.47$), disaster preparedness and response plan ($X = 1.46$), policy on pest inspection and control ($X = 1.45$), folded document recovery ($X = 1.42$), paper encapsulation ($X = 1.41$), microfilming of documents and conservation treatment ($X = 1.40$) respectively, de-acidification and deteriorating books ($X = 1.39$), relaxing and flattening of paper ($X = 1.37$), humidification

of storage area ($X = 1.36$), and anoxic treatment ($X = 1.35$) reveal major aspects of preservation activities, which library staff are not aware of in university libraries.

This finding is in agreement with Udo-Anyanwu and Mezieobi (2020) study

expressing low level of awareness of librarians on preservation issues and the need to provide training. This could also be applicable to library staff awareness of preservation programmes since its essence is for the security of information resources and making its contents available to users.

Table 3: Types of Preservation Activities Available in University Libraries

Types of preservation activities available	\bar{x}
Shelf/information resources' surface cleaning	3.32
Pest inspection	2.14
Disaster preparedness and response plan	2.46
Providing adequate storage conditions for information resources	3.08
Lamination of worn out documents	2.45
Repairing deteriorated information resources	2.83
Paper encapsulation	2.31
Book restoration	2.74
Mass de-acidification of deteriorating books	2.05
Air conditioned information storage area	2.52
Availability of fire detecting system	2.41
Preservation photocopying	2.53
Microfilming of documents	2.00
Digitization of documents	2.27
Reformatting of information resources	2.26
Folded document recovery	2.21
Re-binding of worn out information resources	2.78
Humidification of storage area	2.09
Conservation treatment	2.07
Relaxing and flattening of paper	2.23
Stacks maintenance	2.80
Shelf preparation	2.98
Anoxic treatment	1.95
Training staff/users on proper handling of information materials	2.72
Providing security for the collections (theft prevention)	3.26
Preventing and managing emergencies that threaten the collections	2.94
Environmental control	2.62
24/7 surveillance	2.55
Staff monitor information resources by supervising the use of resources on the shelves	3.15
Weighted Mean	2.54

Criterion mean is $\bar{x} = 2.50$

From the result presented in Table 3 with weighted mean of 2.54 exceeding the criterion mean, it reveals that library staff moderately engaged in various preservation activities in the university libraries studied. A critical examination shows that the aspect of disaster preparedness and response plan ($X = 2.46$), paper encapsulation ($X = 2.45$), availability of fire detecting system ($X = 2.41$) and lamination of worn out documents ($X = 2.31$), are not carried out while digitization of documents ($X = 2.27$), reformatting of information resources ($X = 2.26$), relaxing and flattening of paper ($X = 2.23$), folded document recovery ($X = 2.21$), pest inspection and control ($X = 2.14$), humidification of storage area ($X = 2.09$), conservation treatment ($X = 2.07$), de-acidification and deteriorating books ($X = 2.05$), microfilming of documents ($X = 2.00$) and anoxic treatment ($X = 1.95$) are not also carried out as part of preservation activities in the library studied.

The finding corroborates the study of Aina (2004) stating that libraries do not fully carry out preservation activities, which are the expected core functions of the library. The finding also agrees with the study of Clement (1991) that suggests watchful and good housekeeping practices as an effective preservation activity. Hence, Nwalo (2003) posit that libraries and librarians have the responsibility to maintain library materials in good physical condition so that they can be readily available for use at all times.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The availability of preservation programmes in university libraries cannot be overemphasized. It is essential for library staff to effectively carry out various preservation activities in university libraries for sustainable library services to all library users. It can be concluded that the university libraries studied lack proper knowledge of the various preservation programmes and activities to ensure the longevity of information resources

in the libraries. Hence, most times, university libraries do not adequately and effectively carry out preservation activities in the management of information resources.

The following recommendations are set forth in the light of the findings:

- i. The university libraries in South-South Nigeria should be involved in awareness advocacy on preservation programmes and activities in university libraries. This can be done through organizing training, workshops/conferences/seminars, orientation programmes, lectures, library week activities emphasizing the programme.
- ii. All federal, state and private university libraries should engage in all types of preservation activities as well as ensure the establishment of a preservation department/division/sections and or committee on preservation to be in place so as to adequately carry out preservation activities
- iii. The library management should ensure that adequate preservation facilities be provided to effectively carry out preservation activities as well as the appointment of preservation librarian and trained personnel in place to carry out preservation activities in libraries.

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