

Serial Management in Academic Libraries: Challenges and Prospects in A.I.F.C.E and F.U.T.O Libraries, Owerri, Imo state, Nigeria

¹Ubochi, Elvis Uchenna PhD (CLN), ²Ekwebelem, Leona Ebere PhD,

³Igbokwe, Nkechi A., ⁴Obialor, Obinna.

¹²³⁴College Library,

Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State.

Abstract

This study investigated the challenges and prospects of serials management in Alvan and Futo libraries Owerri. It was guided with three research questions. A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 10 Librarians. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data. The findings revealed that the serial section is stocked with more outdated journals, newspapers, bulletins, magazine, annual proceedings and monographs but, there are missing gaps. The finding also revealed that facilities and services are provided in serial sections of the libraries, but are inadequate. The paper therefore recommends that the authorities should provide adequate funds for the library to make available relevant, current and adequate serial, facilities and services so as to be able to meet the users' needs.

Keywords: *Serials, Management, Academic Library.*

Introduction

An academic library is an integral part of any tertiary educational institution. A well-stocked and organized library is a pride of any educational institution which will definitely help in promoting the teaching, learning and research needs through availability of contemporary serial publications alongside other library resources. The Serial section is a unit in library responsible for all functions related to obtaining and making serials available in the library. Serials constitute an important part of the library collections because, the information contained in them are more current than those published in books. Serials are useful because they are the most up-to-date resources in the library, the articles in serials are often written by experts in the field. Therefore, they are reliable and the articles are precise and not as cumbersome to read like the textbooks. Academic libraries must therefore provide the latest journal titles in all the subjects/courses covered by its parent institution and also, staff and students are expected to make use of the library most especially the serial section of the library to get current information in their chosen field of study.

In the words of Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi (2011), journals are accorded prominence in the library because they provide the latest information in a particular discipline and further make readers to be current in their field after using relevant journals or other serials material. Like other information resources in the library, serials are also meant to be used to the satisfaction of members of the community (readers). Hence effective management of serials is imperative and vital. How well serials resources are managed in academic libraries today, can be a pointer to the success of the library in meeting its objectives.

Serials management in the library has been described as the art of formulating and implementing serials and other continuing resources policy on the acquisition, collection, organization, dissemination and retrieval of serial materials for the benefit of users of libraries (Aghadiuno, Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2015). The problems and prospects of serial management could be found within the ambits of its staffing, selection policy, acquisition policy, policy on form of serials; print microform or electronic serials, maintenance policy, storage/organization, facilities and services. Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi (2011) clearly stated that having large stock of outdated and irrelevant serial materials has formed major problem in Nigeria libraries today. Serials collections require careful maintenance to ensure that the library holdings of any particular serials are properly arranged for the users. It is the responsibility of serial librarian(s) to ensure that serials are efficiently and effectively managed for easy accessibility and maximum utilization by the library users. Hence, serials librarian(s) can be in charge of serial publications: by acting as agent of change; exhibiting accountability; establishing strategies and identifying allies, educating the faculty, students and the entire users of serials collection.

Statement of problem

Despite the fact that serial publications form the backbone of any academic library because of the nature of their information value, it is a matter of concern to note that, a paltry number of them are acquired, organized, stored, retrieved and disseminated by academic and research libraries for her users. The desire by researchers, educators, students and others to get current information in their chosen field of study remain elusive. This is due to non-availability of current journals, professional articles on various disciplines, and the absence of proper management system of the serial resources (Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi, 2011). It is in the light of this that, this study intends to investigate serials management in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education Owerri and Federal University of Technology Owerri, Imo state.

Objectives of the study

The study aimed to examine the challenges and prospects of serials management in A.I.F.C.E and F.U.T.O Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. ascertaining the available serials in Alvan and Futo, Owerri Imo State, Nigeria.
2. identifying the problems affecting the management of serials in Alvan and Futo Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria.
3. suggesting strategies for enhancing the management and use of serials in Alvan and Futo, Owerri Imo State, Nigeria.

Literature review

Serials are publications issued in successive parts, at regular or irregular intervals and intended to be continued indefinitely. According to Priya and Majeed (2015), serials are very important information sources in Libraries and Information centers. The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science in Priya and Majeed defines serial as “a publication issued in successive parts, usually at regular intervals, and, as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals, annuals (reports, yearbooks, etc.) and memoirs, proceedings, and transactions of societies.” Where currency of information is of prime consideration, then serials have a distinct advantage over the book. There are many kinds of serials. These include; newspapers, magazines, newsletters, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports proceedings and transactions of societies etc. As reported by Akinbode & Nwalo (2016), serials constitute an important part of library collections because the information contained in them is more current

than those in published books. This claim went further clarify that ‘periodicals are useful because they are the most up-to-date resources in the library and that the articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field, therefore, they are reliable and the articles are precise and not as cumbersome to read as textbooks’. Where recency of information is of prime consideration, the serials have a distinct advantage over the book (Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi, 2011). Out of them all, journals are the most important to researchers because much of articles therein are products of research and may never appear in any other publications.

Madu and Adeniran (2011) gave characteristics of serials as, the publisher, the author, content differs, and the publication interval varies. Some are bi-annual, monthly, quarterly, fortnightly, weekly, and daily and, annually, no planned end to the sequence, they are current and up-to-date, they are more expensive than books, and they are subscribed to. It will be important to note that, serials management is “to serve, to accommodate, and to adjust” the resources in the department to the needs of its users.

Oguniye, Akerele and Afolabi (2011), wrote on the inherent problems of serials management which include: elusiveness, as most of them are not published by commercial organizations, the tendency of serials to change name, divide into two or three separate publications, die or lay dormant for several years, the difficulties in being aware of which issues have not yet been received, possible changes of publisher, the fact that some serial, especially in research libraries, are not bought but are gifts or exchange, the physical problems of storing and circulating individual issues, and being aware of when all the issues of a volume have been received and so ready to be sent to the binders. It is on such note, Priya and Majeed (2015) affirmed that serials require continuous management process. The management functions cover all aspects of serials like, publisher price, bibliographic details, design etc. When a print journal goes electronic, it presents additional possibilities which are expensive and not easy to control. New journals are emerging every time. It again poses questions before the scholarly community. The changes in collection formats have also changed the serial workflows and processes which has made the library to become more user –centered.

In another perspective, Hoskins and Stilwell in Priya and Majeed (2015) remarked that the libraries affected by the increase in price of journals, decided to cancel subscriptions. This has a major issue in the library system. Library authorities have resulted into individual and co-operate donations for the serial acquisitions. Cancellation of print journals with limited use and reliable electronic access and discarding the print collection which has secure e-access and archiving (Lauridsen, 2005). A serials management can adopt the strategy to cancel journals in order to meet with the problem of space shortage.

Aghadiuno, Agbo and. Onyekweodiri (2015) started by pointing out that management is concerned mainly with the human and material resources, activities and tasks of an organization devoted to the overall objective of users’ satisfaction. Serials management is an umbrella term that encompasses all the systems within an establishment for the creation and use of serials and other continuing resources (Aghadiuno, Agbo & Onyekweodiri, 2015). Acquisition, organization, use and maintenance form the major part of serial management in libraries.

Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) posited that serials should be properly managed in the Library for effective access and use by researchers. Elements of serials management to them include serials acquisition which involves selection, deselection and subscription; organization and use which involve processing and display on racks for users; and maintenance which involves updating, filling the gap, preservation, binding of back issues and repair of damaged ones. Others are provision of facilities such as finding aids, reading areas equipped with tables, chairs and air-conditioner; as well as provision of services such as current awareness service, photocopy, exhibition and translation from foreign language like German, French and Arabic to the language understood by the users.

Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) opined that the major concepts of serials management are check-in/receipt, claiming, routine, binding, and ordering and subscription renewal, financial control, management reports, union lists, online user access and circulation of serials. Library includes selection, order placement, delivery, processing, storage and retrieval of serials. Akinbode and Nwalo(2016) observed that serials are expensive and difficult to manage and that their management needs special skills and experience from the serials manager. He stated further that the type of managerial responses depend on the types of library while methods and styles differ among various academic libraries, the principles of management remain same worldwide.

Madu (2011) observed that difficult economic times often require that librarians make difficult decisions during a period of great stress. Declining budgets compete with rising expectations, along with ever changing licensing and service models from publishers and vendors. Serials librarians struggle to maintain and expand accessibility in an increasingly complex environment. Depending on the direness of the situation, the options can be threatening. During an economic downturn, the ideal of collection expansion can turn into a struggle to maintain current access along with the imperative to cancel important serial titles.

In the words of Aghadiuno,Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2015), serials management is the formulation of routines and procedures for administering serial collection. These routines includes such functions as selection and acquisition, recording of serials and other continuing resources, organizing serials resources (cataloguing and classification), dissemination of serials, handling of claims, renewals of subscriptions, weeding, filling gaps in the back runs, treatment of unbound issues Aghadiuno, Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2015), contends that serials management is probably the most important and the most challenging library function. He opines that interest in serials management has increased in recent years due to factors such as escalating cost of serials in the face of stagnant or decreasing library budget, the emergence of new electronic formats and an increased emphasis on access rather than ownership. Due to the proliferation of knowledge and scholarly writing, library users find it difficult to get all relevant information in time. The costs of serial publications are also rising and publishers as well as librarians are struggling to meet the user's varying needs for journals. All these factors pose problems in the management of serials acquisition and its access. (Priya and Majeed, 2015).

According to Ogunniyi, Akerele & Afolabi (2002), serial publications form the backbone of any academic library because of their nature of informational value. Academic and research libraries acquire, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information contained in journals for researchers, educators, students and other interested persons in their various disciplines.

Academic libraries must therefore provide the latest journal titles in all the subjects/courses covered by its parent institution and also, staff and students are expected to make use of the library most especially the serial section of the library to get current information in their chosen field of study.

In the words of Olanlokun and Salisu (2002), journals are accorded prominence in the library because they provide the latest information in a discipline and if people want to be current in their field, they have to read relevant journals. Serials collections require careful maintenance to ensure that the library’s holdings of any particular serials are properly arranged for the readers. Falaiye as cited by Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) posited that serials received late or not received at all are claimed by sending a note to the publisher or agent to inform and ask for the replacement of the missing issues. Woodward cited by Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) reported that most academic libraries restrict, at least, their current serials holdings and sometimes the whole collection to use in the library only so as to ensure that current issues are accessible and secure because missing issues are difficult to replace. This claim is supported by Nwalo cited by Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) that current awareness services are provided to ensure maximum exposure and utilisation of the library’s information resources.

Research Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 10 serials librarians from AIFCE and FUTO Owerri, Imo state forming the sample for the study. This comprises of six (6) professional librarians from FUTO serial unit and four (4) librarians from Alvan serial unit of the library. Census sampling was used in picking the ten (10) serials librarians. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data.

Data analysis and Interpretation of results

Research Question 1: What are the available serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries Owerri, Imo State?

Table 1: Table showing the rating of the available serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries.

S/N	available serials	SA	A	D	SD	Σ	\bar{X}
1	Journals	5(20)	5(18)	-	-	10(35)	3.5
2	Newspapers	10(40)	-	-	-	10(40)	4.0
3	Bulletins	4(16)	6(18)	-	-	10(34)	3.4
4	Magazines	3(12)	4(12)	2(-4)	1(1)	10(29)	2.9
5	Annuals	2(12)	5(15)	1(2)	1(/1)	10(30)	3.0
6	Proceedings	3(12)	3(9)	2(4)	2(2)	10(25)	2.5
7	Monographic	2(8)	6(18)	1(1)	-	10(27)	2.7

Table 1 shows available serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries. The result revealed that Newspapers recorded very high availability (4.0), journals and bulletins recorded high availability (3.5 & 3.4) while magazines, annuals, proceedings and monographic recorded above average (3.0, 2.9, 2.5 & 2.7). This result implies that there are adequate serial resources in

AIFCE and FUTO libraries for its users. Newspapers and journals and bulletins forms more of the resources for use in the libraries under study.

Research question 2: What are the challenges associated with the management of serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries?

T

Table 2: Table showing the rating of items on the challenges affecting the management of serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries.

S/N	Challenges	SA	A	D	SD	Σ	\bar{X}
1	Delay in processing	2(8)	5(15)	3(6)	-	10(29)	2.9
2	Poor maintenance	3(12)	4(12)	2(4)	1{1}	10(29)	2.9
3	Mutilation	1(4)	2(6)	4(8)	3(3)	10(21)	2.1
4	Broken link in serials publication	2(8)	5(15)	2(4)	1(1)	10(28)	2.8
5	Lack of up-to-date serials	5(20)	3(9)	2(4)	1(1)	10(34)	3.4
6	Delay in return of borrowed materials	3(12)	4(12)	2(4)	1(1)	10(29)	2.9
7	Poor subject heading	4(16)	4(12)	2(4)	-	10(32)	3.2
8	Insufficient funds	8(32)	2(6)	-	-	10(38)	3.8
9	Delay in release of funds	7(21)	3(9)	-	-	10(30)	3.0
10	Inadequate professional librarians	3(12)	3(9)	2(4)	2(2)	10(27)	2.7

Table 2 presented mean score for item 3 as 2.1. Implying that mutilation is not one the challenges of serials management in AIFCE and FUTO libraries. Items 1, 2, 4 – 10 had mean scores higher than 2.5 which implies that the challenges of Library serials management are delay in processing, poor maintenance, broke link in serials publication, lack of up to date serials, delay in return of borrowed materials, poor subject headings, insufficient funding, delay in release of funds and inadequate professional librarians in serials. This is in line with Hoskins and Stilwell in Priya and Majeed (2015) who remarked that the libraries, affected by the increase in price of journals, decided to cancel subscriptions.

Research question 3: What are the solutions to challenges of management of serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries Owerri, Imo State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Table showing the rating of items on the solutions to the challenges of management of serials in AIFCE and FUTO libraries, Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	SOLUTIONS	SA	A	D	SD	Σ	X
1	Acquisition of more research materials	5(20)	4(12)	1(12)	-	10(34)	3.4
2	Engaging adequate professionals	1(4)	5(15)	3(6)	1(1)	10(26)	2.6
3	Proper subject designation	5(20)	5(15)	3(6)	-	10(41)	4.1
4	Adequate security	6(24)	4(12)	-	-	10(36)	3.6
5	Use of current subject heading tools	9(36)	1(3)	-	-	10(39)	3.9
6	Proper regulation of serials borrowing system	6(24)	3(9)	1(2)	-	10(34)	3.4
7	Timely subscription of serials materials	10(40)	-	-	-	10(46)	4.0
8	Timely processing of new materials	9(36)	1(3)	-	-	10(39)	3.9

Table 3. The result revealed that the solutions to serial management in AIFCE and FUTO are acquisition of more reference materials, engaging adequate professional, proper subject designation, adequate security, use of current subject heading tools, proper regulation of serials borrowing system, timely, subscription of serials materials, and timely processing of new materials. This is in line with Woodward in Onaolapo, Akinbode, and Nwalo (2016) who opined that the major concepts of serials management are check-in/receipt, claiming, routine binding, and ordering and subscription renewal, financial control, management reports, union lists, online user access and circulation of serials.

Conclusion

AIFCE and FUTO libraries have remained the fore most academic institutions in South East with libraries that have vibrant serial units. The serials management has passed through thick and thin. This study revealed that the AIFCE and FUTO libraries serials management acquired, processed, maintained, organized, stored, preserved and made available various types and forms of serials for research activities. The serials management is however confronted with a number of challenges which if taken care of could attract adequate patronage to the library. AIFCE and FUTO serials management policies on closed-stock have really paid off in the aspect of security. This was proved where the respondents reacted that serials materials were not easily mutilated. Serials management in these institution libraries has risen to enviable fit but still have to measure up with the demand of the savvy new generation information seekers particularly in this competitive era of information proliferation which was triggered by the introduction of ICT. The

institutions provided serials, facilities and services but not adequate. Therefore, if these library authorities do not want to lose its value, appreciating the unique position of serials in research and information dissemination, some amendments and improvements have to be made to achieve the primary goal of the library.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. The institutions authorities should provide adequate fund for the library to make available relevant, current and adequate serials facilities and services in the library so as to be able to meet the users' needs.
2. The serials management should update their subject-heading scheme in order to give precise subject heading. This will help create easy access to information in serial resources.
3. Serial unit is one of the sensitive units in academic libraries. Therefore, to harness the potentials of these library's serials, the library management should engagement the services of adequate professional librarians in serials unit. This will take care of precise and timely subject headings and also improve the image / PR of the unit,
4. The serials management should re-examine their serial lending policy and make amendments where necessary. Such that could help them in timely recovery of borrowed serials.
5. The institution managements should encourage library staff particularly in serials unit for in-service training, seminars and workshops. This keep the librarians informed on the use of current tools indexing and subject-headings.

References

- Aghadiuno,C.P, Agbo A.D and Onyekweodiri N.E (2015) Availability and Management Challenges of Serials and other Continuing Resources in two Selected University Libraries in North-Central Zone of *Nigeria Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology*, 8 (1).
- Akinbode R. O. O and Nwalo K. I. N. (2016) Serials Management in University Libraries in Selected Universities in South-West Nigeria. *Information and Knowledge Management*.6(3) www.iiste.org,
- Falaiye, Z. M. (2016). Serials management in selected Nigerian higher education institutions. *The Information Manager*.4.(1&2),36-40. www.iiste.org
- Lauridsen, H. (2005). How to beat the serials crisis. *Serials*. 18(3),196-198
- Madu, E.C and Adeniran, T.N. (2011). *Information Technology Uses and Preservation of Resources in Libraries and Information Centres*. EVIColeman.
- Ogunniyi S.O, Akerele J. A and Afolabi A.F (2002) *Use of Serial Publications by the Academic Staff of School of Arts and Social Sciences*.
- Olanlokun, S.O & Salisu, T.M (2002).*Understanding the Library: A Handbook of Library Use*. Concept, 47pp
- Priya, T. K. and Majeed, C.K. (2015). Studies in serial management in libraries: A Review. 5(3),www.iiste.orgwww.ijodls