

ASSESSMENT OF RECORDS ARRANGEMENT AND UTILIZATION OF FINDING AIDS FOR INFORMATION RETRIEVAL IN FACULTY OF EDUCATION, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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Abstract

This study assessed records arrangement and utilization of Finding Aids for Information Retrieval in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Three (3) objectives guided this study to include types of records generated in departments; records arrangement patterns utilized in records offices in departments and finding aids utilized in retrieving records in departmental records offices. The research method adopted was survey. The population of this study comprised all the administrative staff handling records in departments in Faculty of Education, A.B.U, Zaria. The total numbers of the respondents were twenty nine (29). The data related to the research questions were analyzed using frequency and percentage. The findings revealed that alphabetic patterns were the records arrangement patterns utilized most in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. It also revealed that registers were the finding aids utilized in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria while inventories, ledger and indexes were not utilized. It was concluded that departments in faculty of education mostly use alphabetical pattern in arranging their records which make information retrieval easier. Similarly, the most highly utilized finding aid was registers. Inventories, ledgers, indexes and others were not judiciously utilized. The study recommend that emphasis should be laid on the utilization of the other records arrangement patterns (subjects, chronological, alphanumeric, etc) as they are also standard and recognized patterns of arranging records. Record officers should be encouraged to use indexes, inventories, ledgers as much as they can as they are also recommended finding aids.

Key words: Accessment, Records, Records Arrangement. Records Finding Aids. Information Retrieval, Ahmadu Bello University.

Introduction

The Nigerian Universities are characterized by multiple goals and objectives. These goals are pursued through their main functions and activities of learning, teaching, research and public service (Akinwumi, Isuku, & Nze, 2005 as cited in Nwaomah, 2014). Through its activities and functions, the University generates large volumes of records on a daily basis. According to Nwaomah, (2014) the task of Universities include Staff Recruitment, promotions , admission of students, management of students' profile, course administration, examination administration, Staff research activities and certification of studies etc. These tasks are documented as official records of Universities containing essential and crucial information of actions and events which are kept and preserved for easy retrieval and utilization when needed. Records are very essential resources of Universities.

According to Millar (2012), records are created in the course of the functions and activities of organizations and the personal lives of individuals, and are preserved

and maintained to support business and accountability and for cultural use. They provide evidence of, and information about, the actions of their creators and the environment in which those actions occurred. They extend and corroborate human and corporate memory and play a critical role in maintaining awareness of how the present is shaped by the past. David (2015) asserted that records are information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organization or person in pursuance of legal obligations or transaction.

Usman and Udensi (2013) posited that the loss of University's records, or even a part of them, could destroy the evidence of students' achievements, staff entitlements and jeopardize the University's rights and interests. A number of articles written on records management developments in Tertiary Institutions and surveys in some Organization have reported weaknesses in classification and filing systems; appraisal and disposal of records; development and implementation of records retention schedules (Ngoepe & Keakopa, 2011; Keakopa. 2007; Tshotlo & Mnjama, 2010; Ramokate & Moatlhodi, 2010). Generally, the literature reflects growing concerns on lack of records arrangement practice and utilization of finding aids which are essential in implementing records management strategies. This shows that records arrangement and use of finding aids to retrieve records in tertiary Institutions are still at infancy stage hence the need for organizations to be more aggressive in the development of records management strategies if they want to be accountable to the public.

Statement of the Problem

The type of institution and its activities determine the type of records it generates and receives from other sources. Universities by the nature of their functions generate a lot of records. Some of them are inclined to the students, some to the staff, and others to administrative functions and so on. Sapre-Obi (2014) holds that proper records arrangement and utilization of finding aids in retrieving records could help Universities to manage their information efficiently fulfill their mandate, protect them from litigations, preserve their corporate memory, and foster accountability and good governance. Records arrangement is essential in all organized offices especially those of academic institutions like Universities. It would, however, appear that most organizations have not developed the necessary policies and procedures for proper management of records and information. As further observed by Shepherd, Stevenson and Flinn (2011), most organizations have basic practices that only allow them to function in the different divisions without necessarily covering the whole scope in terms of the life cycle and all organizational offices. Some organizations that have managed to develop such policies and procedures are struggling to implement them as they lack capacity, management support and strategic direction in carrying out activities that would ensure proper management of records.

More so, preliminary investigation by the researcher in some departments in the Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, revealed that a lot of records are been tied without proper labeling, some records are disintegrated instead of being together, others are lying on the floor without proper inventory. The researcher heard students in the faculty of education complaining of delay in retrieval of their file records in records offices. It is against this backdrop that this research intends to "Assess Records Arrangement and Utilization of Finding Aids in retrieving information in departmental records offices in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria".

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What types of records are generated in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
2. What are the records arrangement patterns utilized in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?
3. What finding aids are utilized for Information Retrieval in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria?

Literature Review

The Nigerian Universities are characterized by multiple goals and objectives. These goals are pursued through their main functions and activities of learning, teaching, research and public service (Akinwumi, Isuku, & Nze, 2005). According to Freda (2014) any Institution that deal with records have the overall responsibility for records creation or receipt by their activities thus ensuring that records controlled within their units are managed in a way which meet aims of the Institution's Records Management policies. Tanimu (2017) posited that there are different types of records generated by Organizations. These include receipts, students records, minutes of meetings; contract agreement letters, staff transfer records, records of staff annual leave, maternity leave records to mention but few. Similarly, Abdulrahman (2015) submitted that University possesses huge amounts of records. Examples of records available in universities are: correspondences, accounting documents, personnel files, pay roll, minutes of meetings (senates, university council, faculty and departmental boards meetings) students' registration, students' admissions and examination records, inventory of facilities, budgetary information, list of courses offered, time-tables for lectures, speeches, legal documents, deeds, financial records, letters (appointment, confirma- tions, admissions, sick leave, queries) and so forth. Students' records, whether in paper or electronic format, are important resources for Universities and should be harnessed through effective records management practices. The smooth running of any higher institution depends on effective and efficient records management.

Records arrangement patterns are systematic way record practitioners adapted to organize their records in order to facilitate easy access and retrieval. It is sometime refers to as filling method or storing method or classification system as we do have in librarianship. While in librarianship there are standard classifications schemes, in records management, practitioners normally have to develop their own using indexing rules as established by ARMA international. According to Read & Ginn (2007) Records arrangement patterns can be categorized into alphabetic, subject, numeric, and geographic methods of storage and the most common filing method is alphabetic. Sharing similar view, Adarsha (2015) submitted that among the record arrangement methods that are available such as alphabetic, subject, numeric, and geographic methods of storage. However, the most common filing method used is alphabetic. According to Adarsha (2015) the alphabetic filing method is a method of storing records arranged according to the letters of the alphabet. However, consistently accurate alphabetic filing is not that simple. Procedures for storing records alphabetically vary among organizations and among departments within organizations. Therefore, the filing procedures to be used in any *one* office must be determined, recorded, approved, and followed with no deviation. Without written rules for storing records alphabetically, procedures will vary with time, changes in

personnel, and oral explanations. Unless those who maintain the records are consistent in following storage procedures, locating records will be difficult.

Finding aids are retrieval tools that help a user find information in a specific records group, collection or series of archival materials. They primarily help to accelerate access and quickly locate the materials. They should make research easy for the user from inquiry to discovery. The Nova Scotia Archives and Records Management Rules for Archival descriptions (2001) defined finding aids as a document containing detailed information about a specific collection of records within a records centre or archives. They are used by researchers to determine whether information within a collection is relevant to their researches. To Dawson (2013), finding aids are tools that describe unpublished collections of personal and organizational records. A typical finding aid contains basic identifying elements such as name of creator, title and date range. It also provide background information about the person or organization who created the records, a note on the content and format included in the collection, statement concerning copyright and other possible restrictions, and sometimes access points like names and sub-headings.

Research Methodology

The research method adopted for this study was quantitative approach and research design was survey method. The targeted populations for this study were the thirty two (32) administrative staff handling records excluding cleaners, messengers and drivers in departments in Faculty of Education, A.B.U., Zaria. Since the population was not large, the researcher used the entire population for the study in order to avoid under coverage of the population. Bernard (2012) opined that if the population of the study in research is less than two hundred (200), the entire members of that population can be used. The research instrument used in collecting data in this study was questionnaire. The instrument was presented to the research supervisors and experts to scrutinize from the facial point of view and also to ensure that the content correspond with the research questions, hence strengthening its appropriateness. The study made use of descriptive statistics for presentation and analysis of data. The analysis was done using percentages, frequency distributions and tables. 50% was the benchmark for the nominal responses for percentages. Any item below the said percentage was regarded as a negative response.

Findings and Discussions

Response Rate

A total of 32(100%) questionnaires were distributed to the record officers in each department in faculty of education covered in the study. A total of 29 questionnaires were returned which represents 29(90.6%). The response rates of the record officers are provided in Table 1, which shows the number of questionnaire administered, the number successfully filled and returned and the percentage of the returned questionnaire from each department selected for the study.

Table 1: Response Rate

S/N	Departments	Questionnaire Distributed	Questionnaire Returned	%
1.	Arts and Social Science Education	4	4	12.5
2.	Educational Psychology and Counseling	4	4	12.5
3.	Library and Information Science	6	5	15.6

4.	Human Kinetics and Health Education	5	4	12.5
5.	Science Education	4	4	12.5
6.	Vocational and Technical Education	5	4	12.5
7.	Home Economics	4	4	12.5
Total		32	29	90.6

Table 2: Types of records generated in faculty of education, ABU Zaria

Types of records generated	Frequency	Percentage
Staff records/file	26	89.7
Admission letters	22	75.9
Students payment receipts	13	44.8
purchase records	20	68.9
Students files	26	89.7
Examination records	24	82.7
UG Students projects	23	79.3
Thesis/Dissertations	22	75.9
Annual reports	20	68.9
Minutes of meetings	24	82.7
Incoming mails	21	72.4
Departmental journals	12	41.3
Transcripts	20	68.9
Transfers	14	48.2
Curriculum/teaching records	12	41.3

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2019

Table 2, shows that the most generated records in faculty of education ABU, Zaria with above 50 percent response rate were Staff records, Admission letters, purchase records, Students files, Examination records, UG Students projects, Thesis/Dissertations, Annual reports, Minutes of meetings, Incoming mails, Transcripts. While response rate with below 50 percent were Curriculum/teaching record, Transfers and Students payment receipts. This Align with Tanimu (2017) who posited that there are different types of records generated by Organizations. These include receipts, students' records, minutes of meetings; contract agreement letters, staff transfer records, records of staff annual leave, maternity leave records to mention but few. It can be deduced that Staff records, Admission letters, purchase records, Students files, Examination records, UG Students projects, Thesis/Dissertations, Annual reports, Minutes of meetings, Incoming mails, Transcripts were the types of records generated in faculty of education ABU, Zaria. This implied that records offices lack records on departmental journals, transfers and curriculum/teaching

records which will hinder smooth running of the departmental activities most especially when it comes to accreditation.

Table 3: Records Arrangement Patterns Utilized in Records Offices in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University

Records arrangement patterns	Frequency	Percentage
Alphabetic pattern	15	51.7
Numeric pattern	4	13.8
Alphanumeric pattern	1	3.4
Subjects pattern	4	13.8
Self-developed	3	10.3
Chronological pattern	2	6.9
Geographical pattern	0	0
Total	29	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2019

Table 3. shows the records arrangement patterns utilized in records offices in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University. It revealed that Alphabetic patterns were the records arrangement patterns utilized most in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University with response rate of 15(51.7%), followed by numeric and subject patterns with both having response rate of 4(13.8%), followed by self-developed pattern with 3(10.3%), Chronological pattern with 2(6.9%), Alphanumeric pattern with 1(3.4%) and Geographical pattern with 0(0%) respectively.

It can be deduced that Alphabetic pattern is the records arrangement pattern utilized most in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University. This finding corroborate with Read & Ginn (2007) who submitted that records arrangement patterns can be categorized into alphabetic, subject, numeric, and geographic methods of storage and the most common filing method is alphabetic. This implied from the findings that alphabetic records arrangement patterns if properly utilized will enhance records management practice in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, according to international standard.

Table 4: Finding Aids Utilized in retrieving information in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

Finding Aids Utilized	Frequency	Percentage
Inventories	9	31
Registers	16	55.2
Indexes	2	6.9
Ledgers	2	6.9
Total	29	100.0

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2019

Table 4 showed the finding aids utilized for information retrieval in records offices in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University. It revealed that registers were the finding aids mostly utilized in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University with response rate of 16(55.2%), followed by inventories with response rate of 9(31%), and indexes and ledgers with both having 2(6.9%)

respectively. It shows that registers and inventories were the finding aids most utilized in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University. Align with the National Archives Catalog (2016) who gave examples of finding aids as published and unpublished inventories, container and folder lists, calendars, indexes, registers. Thus, it's implied from the findings that registers were the finding aids mostly utilized in records offices in faculty of education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and this will facilitate easy retrieval of records on timely bases.

Conclusion

From the analysis and summary of the findings of this study, it was concluded that records Arrangement and Utilization of Finding Aids for Information Retrieval in Departments in Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria were in place. They make use of alphabetic pattern in arranging their records and the most highly utilized findings aids was registers, though inventories, ledgers and indexes were not judiciously utilized.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made in line with the findings of this study:

1. Departments in Faculty of Education Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should be encouraged to continue generating these important records (staff records, admission letters, students' files, UG projects, PG theses/dissertations, examination records, minutes of meetings, incoming mails etc) because records are the corporate memory of any organization and complimentary to human memory.
2. Emphasis should be laid on the utilization of the other records arrangement patterns (subjects, chronological, alphanumeric, etc) as they are also standard and recognized records patterns of arranging records.
3. Records officers in departments in Faculty of Education Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria should be encouraged to use indexes, inventories, ledgers as much as they can as they are also recommended finding aids.

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