

Issues on Serials Policy Formulation for Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

The paper discusses the need and importance of serial policy statement as a guide to providing balanced, relevant and up to date information for quality academic exercise particularly in the area of teaching and research work. The paper formulated and presents a serial policy statement for adoption by Nigerian university libraries. It concludes with few recommendations such as :Policies must be monitored and reviewed (at least once in every five years), also policies should be updated as time goes on.

Introduction

Ibrahim (2003) notes that “many organizations whether profit or non-profit are today struggling to create the needed competencies and markets and to position themselves to win in the market place. The issue now for organizations is not just in surviving the harsh socio-political and economical condition of the day but also becoming relevant, indispensable and different. This urge has therefore propelled many organizations to adopt different cooperate strategies. It is very often interesting to hear such strategies as re-engineering, re-structuring and re-positioning.

However it is evidently clear that whatever strategy organizations are adopting, the starting point is to create good vision and mission statements. Out of these, meaningful goals and objectives are set out, from which effective and efficient policies are formulated and implemented”.

Libraries in universities exist to fulfill fundamental objectives which according to Wilson and Tauber (1982) includes – the conservation of knowledge and ideas, teaching, high quality research, and many more. To carry out these responsibilities successfully, universities have always looked on to their libraries as indispensable tool in achieving these objectives.

To accomplish this important task, libraries particularly university libraries have set out to build balanced, current and dynamic collections of information resources of which serial is one of the most important primary information resources in research. It is from this current collection of serial resources that efficient service provision could be guaranteed for teaching and research purposes.

The librarian glossary of terms defines a serial as any publication issued in successive parts appearing at interval, and as a rule intended to be continued indefinitely. They include such items as periodicals, newspapers, annuals, numbered monographic serials etc.

There is no university library, no matter how financially buoyant, can acquire every serial selected. due to dwindling library allocations, increases in subscription prices and other related impediments. It is in the light of these reasons, the study is set out to practically provide set of serial policy for adoption and implementation by Nigerian university libraries. Serials collection are regarded as core collections in terms of quality teaching and research activities in Nigerian Universities, therefore any attempt to improve on this collection to attain a desired goal through having a good policy is directly promoting the image of the university library and particularly in the area of research, teaching and learning.

Stanford (1979) defines policy as the means by which general management can collectively visualize the separate internal functional areas as a total firm has some responsibility and all the influence and forces that affect its existence and activities. Also, a year before Stanford, Brink (1978) opined that policy is a necessary foundation for achievement of goals. From these two definitions, it can be affirmed that a policy is essentially an internal administrative law, regulation or guide governing executive actions within the organization.

In demonstrating the function of policy statements, Osaze (1991:19) cited five major reasons why policies are formulated. These he stated as follows:-

1. It clarifies management view points and philosophies within designated areas of operation.
2. It provides a pattern within which delegation of authority may be expedited and controlled
3. It establishes latitudes and guides within which authorized persons may make administrative decisions and effect action.
4. It fosters a feeling of confidence in making administrative decisions, it explicit decisions, encourage executive reliance, growth, development and improvement of executive performance.

From the above mentioned reasons why policies should be formulated, Futas (1982) presented the following as advantages of written serial policy!

- i. Enable selectors to work with greater consistency towards defined goals thus shaping stronger collections and using limited funds more wisely.
- ii. Inform users, administrators, trustees and others as to the scope and nature of an existing collection, and the plans for continuing development of resources.
- iii. Provides information that will assist in the budget allocation process.

Policy statements therefore are very important growth and development of organization. As noted by Robson (1997:20), they provide a way to judge the appropriateness of all potential activities the organization might engage in.

Notwithstanding, Ola (2006) in her own studies, itemized the need to formulate and adopt every policy as thus:-

- i. Encourages advice from the academic staff regarding what materials to add to collection.
- ii. Encourages Input from students
- iii. Ensures participation of the collection development librarian
- iv. Defines clearly the goals and objectives of the library.
- v. Helps the acquisition librarian to plan ahead of time.
- vi. Serves as a reminder in the use of the little fund.
- vii. Gives room to continuity.

Writing on the application of serial policy in some Nigerian University libraries, Akobi (2004) revealed that lack of policy statement in Nigerian university library has resulted in:-

- i. Inconsistency and imbalanced selection of serial materials policy statements.
- ii. Lack of judicious use of funds..
- iii. Clients overall interest not fairly distributed.
- iv. Discretionary judgments.

This finding was supported by Olanlokun and Adekenye (2005) who testified that policy statement serves as guidelines for ordering materials, but today our academic libraries have it in the open air, because they use more of discretionary judgment for their selections. In view of the above foregoing, there is no doubt that librarians need to formulate and implement policy of serial acquisition. It is as a result of this

need that this study sets out to formulate serial policy to be adopted by our Nigerian university libraries.

The proposed serial policy statement presented here has tried to indicate the following contents

- i. Responsibility for selection
- ii. Serial policy committee
- iii. Duties of the serial committee
- iv. Purpose of the serial policy
- v. Objective of the serial policy, that summarizes the expected benefits the serial collection is supposed to yield. Also the success of the serial division can be judged from the policy statements.

Areas of Consideration in formulating Serial Policy

Introduction:- serials are publications that are published periodically, most often in series. Since serial publications are numerous and by diverse publishers, coupled with financial constraints of libraries, the need for a clear policy on their acquisition cannot be over emphasized. Such policy could be a guide on who a library's vendor, the publisher, and a subscription agent should be..

Objective: The objectives should be stated in such a way that it will reflect the overall objectives of the library. The objective of the policy should center on the following:-

- a. Meeting students/staff needs. It should be the main objective of the university library to provide relevant, up-to-date serial materials to its immediate and projected community.
- b. Value objective:- To build a well rounded and balanced collection of authoritative, reliable and up-to-date serial materials.
- c. Objectives in types of formats to be collected.
- d. Statement on acquisition of backsets and in hard cover(with no. of issues for acquisition for every edition.)
- e. Electronic resources should also be considered..

Serial Selection committee

There shall be a serial committee to be headed by the university librarian composed of:

- a. University librarian - Chairman
- b. Serial librarian - Secretary
- Subject specialist representation - (one from each faculty)
- c. Acquisition librarian - Member
- d. Student's representatives- Member
- e. Electronic Resources Librarian - Librarian

Funding: Due to the high rate in currency exchange, and the voluminous nature of serials, it is now very difficult to fund serials collection. Rather what obtains is that subscription of the journal aspects is currently achieved through the Journal Donation Project (JDP) This is a particular donation project, a MacArthur foundation project, usually for six years at no cost, thereafter you start bearing part of the cost. at no cost to the Library. However, the local serials collection are still paid for with the little allocation for books given by NUC. This study therefore proposes to these Libraries to reach out and make use of the E –Journals resources, such as TEEAL: (The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library) and others. This is to assist in reducing cost.

Services

- a. Maintenance of adequate stock-monographic and serials.
- b. Bibliographic activities which will include:-
 - *Newspaper clippings and vertical file maintenance
 - *Indexing and Abstracting services
 - *Photocopy services
 - *Print out of serials catalogue print out of serials.

*Holdings services.

Conclusion

This paper highlighted what serial policy statement is, its importance and the need for all university libraries to formulate and adopt a good policy statement. The paper further provides a sample policy statement for libraries to adopt.

The paper concludes that the adoption of this proposed serial policy will go a long way in providing that balanced, current and timely serial collection for attaining the expected goal and objective of every university in the area of teaching, learning and quality research programmes.

Even though a written serial policy will not guarantee one a good collection per say, but it will serve as a guide to the librarian a cover in times of questioning. It will also be beneficiary, if further study is carried out so as to find out what is currently going on in these affected Libraries.

Recommendation:

There is need for a good formulated serial policy for adoption. These policies should be monitored and reviewed (at least once in five years). Update of the serial policy from time to time is also recommended.

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