AVAILABILITY AND PRESERVATION PRACTICES OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CROSS RIVER STATE LIBRARY, CALABAR, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Preservation practices of information resources in university libraries is the process of protecting library materials from damage and decay to ensure their availability for future use. This involves a range of activities, including maintaining a stable environment, using safe handling and storage methods, and creating digital or other reformatted copies of fragile materials. This study aimed to examine the availability and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. An objective of the study was formulated to guide the study. A descriptive survey design was used in the study. The population of the study consisted of eighty (80) librarians and para-professional staff from the University of Cross River State Library, and an enumerative technique was used due to the sample size. The sample size of the study was sixty (60). A structured questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data, and the data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation, and Pearson's product moment correlation at 0.05 level of significance. Results showed significant relationships between availability and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered: that adequate budgetary allocations/subventions should be provided for services delivery in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria to positively enhance the availability and preservation practices of information resources, governments, parent institutions, library management, librarians and other personnel attitudinal change towards the investment in library services in Nigerian universities, and regular training and retraining for Librarians and other staff to acquire and

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improve their competencies and skills needed for the preservation practices of information resources in 21st century.

Introduction

University libraries in Nigeria were established to meet the information needs of stakeholders. Traditionally, university libraries provide access to both print and electronic information. Modern university libraries also preserve collections that include not only printed materials such as books, periodicals, newspapers, and magazines but also electronic resources such as microfiches, maps, photographs, CD-ROM, sound and microfilms, video recordings, and films. University librarians in Nigeria are tasked and saddled with the responsibilities of collecting, preserving, and making accessible information materials in various formats for teaching, learning and research (Nwalo, 2012). However, Igbo, Ibegbulam, Asogwa and Imo (2022) opined that no library can expect to remain solely on the traditional mode of service provision characterized by physical interaction between the librarians and library users. The result is that globally, libraries are responding by redefining their services to meet new expectations.

Some of the responses by libraries include the addition of a ubiquitous and networked environment as an extension of traditional library services, changes in the collections to include digital formats, changes in the method of delivery of services (to include online modes) using social media platforms, email, chat services, among others for electronic information provision. The availability of information resources in libraries plays a crucial role in supporting education research, literacy development and national planning. The university libraries house a broad spectrum of information resources ranging from printed to digital formats (Enidiok, Bassey & Babatunde, 2018). These information resources include: books, journals, newspapers, government publications, maps, manuscripts, audiovisual materials, and electronic resources. Furthermore, libraries subscribed to international journals and databases to support global scholarship access, especially in areas such as science, medicine, law, and technology (Ajidahun, 2017).

Nevertheless, the availability of information resources in university libraries is dependent on the preservation of those information resources. Preservation as well requires availability. Conversely, preservation efforts rely on the initial availability of print and electronic resources; if a resource is not initially acquired and made accessible, it cannot be preserved for future use. In response to global trends and user demands, the Nigerian university libraries have made strides toward digitization and provision of electronic and online resources. The e-library platform of libraries allows registered users to access digital resources such as e-books, academic journals, and online databases (Oduwole & Oyewumi, 2010). Preservation of information resources is a critical function of any library, whether academic, school, public, national, special, or private, as it ensures that information materials are protected for future generations (Ajidahun, 2017).

Regardless of which way the library is located, information resources must be protected, and it is the responsibility of the library staff to keep these information resources in good condition so that they can be made available to users at all times. According to Akin-Fakorede, Ottong and Ottong (2017), the preservation of information resources is the action taken to reduce or prevent damage in order to extend the life expectancy of the collections. Therefore, a library must ensure that its resources are preserved in an accessible form for as long as possible. Oyeniyi (2015) defined preservation as all efforts and actions taken to elongate the lifespan of information materials. The efforts for preservation may include planning, following principles and practices directed at preventing deterioration, or restoring damaged materials to a usable condition. This adds value to library service delivery in the universities. However, there is a positive correlation between the availability and preservation of information resources in university libraries.

However, these libraries are faced with various challenges that negatively hinder the preservation and availability of information resources to users. These challenges include: poor funding, inadequate staff, skilled staff, erratic electricity supply, poor ventilation, excessive humidity, and inadequate storage conditions, among others. University libraries have adopted various preservation practices to preserve and make available information resources in their libraries. Enidiok et, al. (2018) stated that the, digital transformation is still in progress, with limited bandwidth, inconsistent power supply, and insufficient funding often hampering optimal service delivery. One of the most fundamental preservation practices employed by university libraries is physical conservation, thereby protecting paper-based resources from deterioration caused by mold, pests and acidic decay (Ajidahun, 2013; Nkanu, Otu & Eyo, 2024). Nigerian libraries, according to Ukih (2021), have adopted various preservation practices ranging from traditional conservation methods to digitization but the effectiveness and consistency of these practices remain subjects of concern and critique. Physical preservation involves the use of air conditioners, fans, dehumidifiers, and enclosed shelves to regulate temperature, humidity, and light exposure, etc. Another practice used is binding and repair services, which involved reinforcing fragile materials and rebinding worn-out publications. This is particularly important for high-use resources and rare items that are irreplaceable (Kwadzo, 2019). Digitization efforts could be embarked upon to preserve information materials in libraries. Books, newspapers and government publications, among others, could be scanned to create digital copies that not only reduce the handling of originals but also expand access to information.

Digitized information resources can be stored in libraries and accessed remotely by users. These practices not only ensured the accumulation of information resources but also provided the availability of other copies if one was lost or damaged (Adekannbi & Wahab, 2019). Other methods such as regular cleaning and dusting of library books and book shelves, fumigation, lamination, microfilming, deacidification, photocopying, among others can also be employed to preserve information resources in university libraries for future as well as the longevity of those resources. While these efforts are made to preserve its vast collection of information resources, the effectiveness of these practices is constrained by infrastructural deficits, poor funding, inadequate staff training, and inconsistent enforcement of preservation policies (Adekannbi & Wahab, 2019). Without a comprehensive and well-funded preservation strategy to prolong the shelf life of resources in libraries, Uhegbu (2018) stated that Nigeria risks the loss of invaluable cultural and intellectual materials. Consequently, this study examined the availability and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

The researchers' observation and investigation of university libraries revealed that adequate attention has not been given to the preservation of information resources due to poor funding, erratic power supply, inadequate staff training, lack of the deployment of information and communication technology in library services, among others. It is disheartening to know that many university libraries cannot manage or sustain information resources. It is observed that most university libraries do not have a working policy on the preservation and conservation of print and electronic information resources and also that, most university libraries do not have the technological competencies to manage and preserve information resources. Considering the indispensability, importance and huge fund required in setting up university libraries in variance with the alarming records of deterioration in university libraries, a rescue approach needs to be launched.

Furthermore, studies have revealed that no studies have been conducted in the area of availability and preservation of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. It is on this premise that this study seeks to study the availability and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the availability and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to:

i. Determine the relationship between the availability of print and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

ii. Ascertain the relationship between the availability of electronic and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the availability of print and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

2. There is no significant relationship between the availability of electronic and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State library, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Preservation is a planned and managed activity to ensure that the collection of library materials can continue to be used as long as possible. Preservation keeps library information resources to last a long time and not easily damaged. Inherent chemical, pollutant-induced, light-induced, biological and physical agents are all forms of deterioration to library resources. Okiki and Asiru (2011) stated that libraries all over the world should make available a wide variety of electronic information sources (EIS) for use by graduate, postgraduate researchers and staff in their respective institutions. The advent of ICT such as flash drive services have made libraries to be able to preserve their collection through electronic method (Olubiyo, 2020). Olubiyo (2010) emphasized that information on printed format can now be recorded in computer using CD, diskette, flash drives and through digitization of library collection.

However, it was added that it is this digitization of library materials that has helped to prolong and preserve their life span. Therefore, it is observed that library information resources in general are used and preserved better if they are digitized and this can only be done if the required technologies are in place. Akin-Fakorede, Ottong and Ottong (2017) maintained that since paper information resources are organic in nature because part of their components are created from cellulose hemicelluloses, which are plant cells, the materials are susceptible to natural decay and deterioration within a short period of time. There has been an awareness of the preservation of library information resources both in print and non-print format for present and future use. Hence, preservation of library information resources is necessary in libraries to ensure their protection, accessibility and longevity, to foster research and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials (Oyeniyi, 2015; Akin-Fakorede, et al., 2017).

A study carried out by Akin-Fakorede et al. (2017), on the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities, investigated the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities via a study of collections in Cross River State universities. It should be taken seriously to preserve the cultural, social and technical context of our heritage. Availability and preservation of information resources are interconnected aspects of modern information managements. Increased availability of information resources leads to a greater need for preservation strategies to ensure their long-term accessibility and usability. Conversely, effective preservation practices ensure that information resources remain available for future use, even technology evolves.

The following are some of the techniques used for preservation practices of information resources in university libraries: care and handling, control of environmental factors, security, reformatting, digitization, lamination, binding (Tondo, Jembe, & Yankyar, 2022). Furthermore, Adekannbi and Wahab (2019) investigated comparative

analysis of the preservation and conservation techniques of selected special and academic libraries in Nigeria. The study found that both special and academic libraries adopted cleaning and dusting of information resources, shelving to allow free air flow, security systems, deacidification, technology preservation, refreshing and migration to preserve their information resources. Adekannbi and Wahab (2019) also listed photocopying, rebinding, microfilming, lamination, fumigation, air conditioning and digitization. Hence, the preservation practices of information resources are necessary in libraries to ensure their protection, accessibility and longevity, to foster research and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials (Oyeniyi, 2015; Akin-Fakorede, et al., 2017).

Furthermore, a study carried out by Tondo, Jembe, and Yankyar, (2022) on conservation and preservation of information resources for improved services delivery in Francis Idachaba Library, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi Nigeria. These showed photocopying 145 (96.6), CD-ROM 140 (93.3) and installation of air conditioner 140 (93.3), followed by cleaning and dusting 139 (92.6) and binding 139 (92.6), microfilming130 (86.6), digital imaging 125 (83.6), lamination 118 (78.6), use of insecticide 115 (76.6), reformatting 106 (70.6) as the highest percentage value of above 50% yes. Thus, maintaining suitable environment for library information materials will prolong their life span and enhance long term accessibility. In the same vein, records and information resources preserved and conserved digitally would enhance the usability of the records.

However, the availability of information resources in university libraries is undermined by persistent challenges. These include: poor funding which remains the most critical issue, affecting acquisition budgets, maintenance of infrastructure, staff development, and digital innovation (Ezeani & Ezema, 2011). Other constraints, include shortage of staff, outdated materials in some subject areas, and under utilisation to technological tools. Factors for considerations in preserving information resources like policy, fund, skilled labour, infrastructure and management support were explained so that they could be simply understood. The study suggested that universities offering library science programmes should consider making the subject of preservation compulsory so that every librarian could have skills on how to preserve the library information resources.

The study further recommended that modern preservation strategies need to be adopted by all libraries to safely guide the information resources for current and future generation. A study conducted by Akin-Fakorede et al. (2017), on the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities, investigated the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities via a study of collections in Cross River State universities. The researchers opined that preservation is the appropriate housing, protection, care and maintenance of archives, records and manuscripts. Through a descriptive survey research design, the study adopts Ruskin's theory of preservation (Ruskin, 1989) with an emphasis on the seven lamps of architecture. The application of the theory is used to assess the form of the resources, understand the preservation problems encountered in the libraries, and determine if the libraries were insured against disaster. To achieve this, the census sampling technique identified 28 academic librarians to participate in the study. Questionnaires, interviews and direct observation of the collections in the libraries were used to collect data.

The result of the analysis revealed that paper was the major form of resources stocked in the libraries. This meant that the library encountered some preservation problems. The results also revealed that rodents, insects, gaseous pollutants, and many more were some preservation problems encountered in the libraries. The libraries were not insured against a disaster. It was recommended that adequate storage facilities should be provided for appropriate housing, care, protection and maintenance of collections in the libraries. There should be, among other things, a disaster management plan to preserve library resources in Nigerian universities.

On the other hand, Shameenda (2018) investigated preservation and conversation of library materials, techniques and practices in the university of Zambia library and its two branches. The study highlighted that, the preservation

and conversation issues included managerial and financial considerations, storage and accommodation, staffing levels, policies, techniques and practices in preserving and conserving library materials and the information contained in them to ensure long term access to them. The findings revealed that, although the university of Zambia libraries were involved in the long-term preservation of library materials, they did not provide a well-planned preservation and conservation care because preservation was given least priority, and conservation programmes were addressed in varying degrees in the libraries.

The study further identified a lack of preservation and conservation planning, policies and weak commitment from the University of Zambia. Also, inadequate programmes and limited preservation and conservation education and training among librarians were the other forms of obstacles to effective preservation and conservation of library materials in the university libraries. Also revealed, was lack of awareness concerning preventive preservation measures, poor handling and use of library materials. On the other hand, a study by Sunday (2015) on preservation of information resources in selected school libraries in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo state, Nigeria, adopted a descriptive survey research design and the instruments used were structured questionnaire administered to the school principals, vice-principals and school librarians and observational checklist which required a visit to those selected schools and observed some available information resources and existence of preservation on those materials.

Ten (10) government secondary schools were randomly selected in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria while one hundred and forty-five (145) respondents participated. Descriptive statistics methods were used to analyse the collected data. Findings from the study revealed that school libraries based its acquisitions on textbooks, reference resources and fiction materials with 145 (100%), 143 (98.6%) and 136 (93.8%) respectively without considering other vital information resources such as serials and electronic resources. The results also showed that lack of fund and inadequate infrastructure on the aspects of preservation of information resources were the major confrontations in selected school libraries with 134 (92.4%) and 109 (74.8%) respectively. Therefore, preservation of information resources in selected school libraries in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria was given priorities as level of school management supports for preservation of information resources was very high. Adekannbi and Wahab (2019) investigated comparative analysis of the preservation and conservation techniques of selected special and academic libraries in Nigeria.

The findings revealed inadequate funding, lack of necessary facilities, inadequate manpower, inadequate staff training and users and security, autonomy and administrative lags, power, etcetera. Techniques have to do with some measures adopted by libraries to protect or prevent the entire library materials or collections from being harmed, damaged or deteriorated. On the relationship between the availability and preservation practices of information resources in university libraries, a study conducted by Ekpang and Ekeng (2021) on library services and availability of information resources in university libraries, South-South, Nigeria, investigated the relationship between library services and the availability of information resources in federal university libraries, in South-South, Nigeria. Two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 16620 students and a sample of 800 respondents was selected for the study using stratified and purposive random sampling technique. The results revealed a significant relationship between user education and preservation of information resources and the availability of information resources.

Despite challenges faced by libraries in preservation of information resources, efforts have been made to digitize information resources (rare Nigerian publications and historical records) in libraries to prevent physical deterioration and to increase the availability and accessibility.

Methodology

This study adopted the survey research design. The study population consists of eighty (80) library personnel (librarians) and para-professionals staff working in University of Cross River State library, a state government public university in Cross River State, Nigeria. A total enumeration technique was adopted as sampling technique. Instrument used for data collection for the study was structured questionnaire. The research instrument was validated. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained by involving librarians at University of Uyo in Akwa Ibom State who were not included in the population of the study. A pre-test was conducted to ascertain the content validity. The research instrument was considered reliable and suitable for the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, simple percentages, mean and standard deviation and Pearson's product moment correlation at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings of the study

The findings of the study are presented in the table below:

Table 1:   Questionnaire administration and response rate

S/N	Name of institution	No. of questionnaire administered	No. of useful questionnaire returned	Response rate (%)
1	University of Cross River State	80	60	75.0
	Total	**80**	**60**	**75.0**

N= 60 (75.0 %)

Table 1 showed that eighty (80) questionnaire were administered to library personnel (librarians) and para-professional staff working in University of Cross River State library, a state government public university in the South-South, Nigeria. Out of these, sixty (60) questionnaire were validly completed and retrieved for analysis, which accounted for 75.0% response rate.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between the availability of print and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is availability of print categorize as X, while the dependent variable is preservation practices of information resources categorized as Y. To test this hypothesis, Pearson's product moment correlation was employed, as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2:   Summary of the Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between the availability of print and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

(N = 60)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig
Availability of print	60	11 .13	2.201	.211*	.001
Preservation practices	60	14.12	2. 111		

*Significant at 0.05 level

The result presented in Table 2 shows that the P-value of .001 was less than the chosen alpha level of .05 thus implying that the Ho₁ is rejected. Hence, there was a significant relationship between the availability of print and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Ho₂: **There is no significant relationship between the availability of electronic and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.**

The independent variable in this hypothesis is the availability of electronic categorize as X, while the dependent variable is the preservation practices of information resources categorized as Y. To test this hypothesis, Pearson's product moment correlation was employed, as presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: **Summary of the Pearson's product moment correlation analysis of the relationship between the availability of electronic and preservation practices of information resources in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.**
(N = 60)

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig
Availability of electronic	60	12 .03	1.701	.317*	.000
Preservation practices	60	14.12	2.116		

*Significant at 0.05 level

The result presented in Table 2 shows that the P-value of .000 was less than the chosen alpha level of .05 thus implying that the Ho₂ is rejected. Hence, there was a significant relationship between the availability of electronic and preservation practices of information resources in University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Discussion

Findings established significant relationships between the availability and preservation practices of information resources in the university library studied. This corroborates the findings of Ekpang and Ekeng (2021) study on library services and availability of information resources in university libraries, South-South, Nigeria which revealed a significant relationship between user education and preservation of information resources. In the same vein, this study supports Tondo, Jembe, and Yankyar (2022) study on conservation and preservation of information resources for improved service delivery in Francis Idachaba Library, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University Makurdi Nigeria, which showed photocopying 145 (96.6), CD-ROM 140 (93.3) and installation of air conditioner 140 (93.3), followed by cleaning and dusting 139 (92.6) and binding 139 (92.6), microfilming 130 (86.6), digital imaging 125 (83.6), lamination 118 (78.6), use of insecticide 115 (76.6), reformatting 106 (70.6) as the highest percentage value of above 50% yes. Thus, maintaining suitable environment for library information materials prolong their life span and enhance long term accessibility. In the same vein, records and information resources preserved and conserved digitally enhance the usability of the records.

The following are some of the techniques used for preservation practices of information resources in university libraries: care and handling, control of environmental factors, security, reformatting, digitization, lamination, binding (Tondo, Jembe, & Yankyar, 2022). Furthermore, Adekannbi and Wahab (2019) listed cleaning and dusting of information resources, photocopying, rebinding, microfilming, lamination, fumigation, shelving to allow free air flow, air conditioning and digitization. Hence, preservation practices of information resources are necessary in libraries to ensure their protection, accessibility and longevity, to foster research, and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials (Oyeniyi, 2015; Akin-Fakorede, et al., 2017).

Conclusion

The paper concluded that preservation practices of information resources is necessary in university libraries to ensure their protection, accessibility and longevity, to foster research, and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials. However, the availability and preservation practices of information resources are

interconnected aspects of modern information managements. Increased availability of information resources leads to a greater need for preservation practices to ensure their long-term accessibility and usability. Conversely, effective preservation practices ensure that resources remain available for future use, even as technology evolves. Significantly, there are relationships between the availability and preservation practices of information resources. Therefore, governments, parent institutions and library management should take cognisance of the provision of adequate funds to library services in this Information Age to enhance library service delivery in the University of Cross River State, Nigeria to meet the ever-increasing demands of libraries and patrons and to remain relevant in this 21st century.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1.   Adequate budgetary allocations/subventions should be provided for service delivery in the University of Cross River State Library Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria to positively enhance the availability and preservation practices of information resources.

2.   There should be attitudinal change toward the investment in library services in Nigerian universities by governments, parent institutions, library management, librarians and other personnel.

3.   There should be regular training and retraining for Librarians and other staff to acquire and improve their competencies and skills needed for the preservation practices of information resources in 21st century.

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