

PRESERVATION OF INFORMATION MATERIALS FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN IMO STATE

Adaora J. **UDO-ANYANWU Ph.D¹** & Comfort **MEZIEOBI²**

Department of Library and Information Science, Imo State University, Owerri¹ and

University Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri²

adaorautoanyanwu@yahoo.com, dradaudo@gmail.com¹

Abstract:

Purpose: The study examined preservation of information materials for effective service delivery in selected academic libraries in Imo State.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The study adopted descriptive survey research design. Four research questions were posed for the study and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Census enumeration technique was used to select a sample of 290 library staff of the academic libraries studied. A rating scale titled Preservation of Information Materials for Effective Service Delivery in Academic Libraries in Imo State (PIMESDAL) was used to collect data for the study. The research questions were answered using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) while the hypotheses were tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance.

Findings: The findings of the study revealed that library services are rendered in the libraries, the techniques used in preserving information materials in the libraries as rated by the librarians are not significant; library staff are trained on preservation techniques to a low extent and the factors that militate against the preservation of information materials are non-provision of adequate funding for the libraries, inadequate equipment needed for the preservation of information materials, tropical climate, and lack of preservation policy among others.

Implication: The consciousness of the importance of preservation in libraries should be maintained, libraries should uphold and improve service delivery to their users, librarians should be trained on the use of other methods of preserving information materials apart from the ones they know, and the management of the institutions and the government should provide equipment for the preservation of information materials.

Originality/Value: The study has drawn attention for libraries not only to lay emphasis on acquisition of information materials but also their preservation as it enhances service delivery.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Preservation, Library Services, Techniques, Training, Library Staff.

Introduction

The quality of teaching, research, and community service of library staff in any university system depends to an extent on information materials and services available in the academic library. Information availability, accessibility, and use are essential to the teaching, research, and service activities of scholars in the Nigerian university system. The primary purpose of academic libraries therefore is to support teaching, learning and research in ways consistent with, and supportive of the institution's mission and

national development. In addition, library resources and services should be sufficient in quality, depth, diversity and currency to support institutions curriculum. As a result, academic libraries are often considered the most important resource centre of an academic institution (Emwanta, 2012). It therefore behoves that adequate and appropriate library resources and services should be made available to users to support their intellectual, cultural and technical development needs. Library services are those

offered to users' benefit from the resources of the library. They include user education, reference services, loan service, inter-library loan service, internet service, current awareness service and reprographic service. The level of adequacy of these services could be a factor in the use of the library. Library use is contextually defined in this paper as the intentional consultation of library resources for information to enhance the students' academic pursuit.

However, researchers have stated that the quantity and quality of information materials in libraries is faced with varied problems. According to the National Library of Australia (2004), one of the major crises facing libraries throughout the world is the rate of deterioration of their collections. Deterioration refers to a change of original state of any material by interaction between the object and the factors of destruction. Deterioration can also be defined in this study as a loss of quality of library information materials, whether print or electronic materials. Deterioration implies that things are falling apart; something once in good condition is now weakened, worn out, or otherwise decline. Things often undergo deterioration because of neglect, usage and passage of time. Deterioration is a function of such factors as the chemical characteristics of the paper, the mechanical construction of the volume of storage conditions and intensity of use.

Although an increasing quantity of information is captured at its source in electronic format, a significant percentage of Africa's library and archival documents exist solely in paper form. This is also true of the libraries in Nigeria, where most of the information materials are in printed form. University libraries in Nigeria today face a lot of problems as a result of deterioration and degradation of their holdings at varying levels. Preservation of information materials has often been a challenge in academic libraries across the nation. Notable among these problems is that library collections especially paper-based are acquired without allocation of adequate resources (financial and human), to address their future deterioration, lack of proper recognition of the need for preservation,

conservation and restoration of information materials.

Most library managers fail to realize that preservation and of information materials is an important issue they have to contend with. In addition, no training is given to library staff regarding how to handle the issue of deterioration of information materials in the libraries. There is also a generally low awareness about preservation issues especially on the corruptible tendencies of information materials and what could be done to prevent their deterioration. The preservation and conservation of information resources cannot be carried out without the library staff. But it is a fact that most librarians are not trained in the art of preservation especially the chemical and technological aspect of it. In most libraries for instance, you see fire extinguishers but from experience most of the staff cannot operate them. This calls for the training of the library staff in the techniques of preservation of library materials.

Undoubtedly, the quality of teaching and learning, as well as research in the higher institutions is negatively affected by the condition of the information materials available. In order to nip this problem at the bud, the level deterioration of the library materials, as well as possible ways to ensure the preservation of the information materials should be ascertained. This is what informed the interest of the researcher to carry out this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study:

1. What are the services delivered in academic libraries in Imo State?
2. What are the techniques used in preserving information materials in the academic libraries?
3. To what extent are the library staff in academic libraries in Imo State trained in preservation techniques?
4. What are the factors militating against the preservation of information materials in the academic libraries?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₂: The mean rating of the respondents on the services rendered in the libraries studied is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 22.50.

H₀₃: The mean rating on the techniques used for preserving the information materials in libraries is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 25.0.

Literature Review

Academic library as defined by The American Library Association (2016) is the library associated with a degree-granting institution of higher education. Academic libraries are at the forefront of providing information services to their respective communities which comprises of students, lecturers, and researchers in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs. Academic library supports the university to promote teaching, learning and research. The contemporary practice in academic library services in the 21st century is being propelled with an information explosion, and the inclusion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in all aspects of library services. Kumar (2009) notes that academic libraries are changing dramatically by adopting new means of technology in all activities of print to e-environment where a variety of manual method, are replaced by computerized system which provides opportunity for online accessibility. Libraries are now expected to provide to users a range of information and communication technologies necessary for retrieving information quickly from both immediate and remote databases, as well as creating a need for library cooperation and consortium initiatives (Okiy, 2005).

It was also noted by Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwuoma (2011) that libraries are source for preservation of documents and cultural materials which affirm the views of the respondents. Library stores, preserves and promotes the scholarship of faculty and students through the school's digital repository. Libraries serve a cultural role in preserving and organizing artifacts and ideas.

Great works of literature, art, and science must be preserved and made accessible to future learners. Libraries preserve objects through careful storage procedures, policies of borrowing and use, and repair and maintenance as needed. Libraries are physical manifestations of the values of an entity. Libraries serve a cultural role in preserving personal, organization and a nation's memories. Great works of literature, art, and science are preserved and made accessible to future learners. Kalis (2015) stated that the preservation and conservation of library resources aid better services, and so it is deemed necessary considering future generation of users. According to Ogbewe (2006) preservation refers to all activities that serve to prolong the life of materials in a library's collections. What this means is that, it refers to everything which contribute to the physical well-being, and maintenance of collections. These include the protection, maintenance and restoration of library resources. Preservation of library materials is a vital task in the academic libraries for the users to get effective service delivery from the librarians. Users visit the libraries with the expectation that they will get what they want at least to a maximal extent and so if academic libraries place value on the information resources, then, they must also place value on the preservation of materials under their care in order to satisfy the needs of their users.

Libraries are service organizations where individuals, organizations and societies are provided unhindered access to substantial quantities of information. Library services are regarded as social services which are bound to stimulate the reading habit of the society. In the word of Solola as cited in Bua and Yawe (2014), the quality of services rendered to users or readers in any library reflect the quality of the staff. In a somewhat detailed account of the library services, Okorie (2016) pointed out that all libraries improve people's lives through a whole range of activities and services, which are broadly categorized into two, namely (a) conventional library services, and (b) services for promoting library use. According to her, the conventional services include circulation, reprography and inter-

library loan services while the services promoting library use consists of initiation/orientation service, reference service, current awareness service/selective dissemination of information services, information brokerage, community information service, ICT related services, internet services, new books display, thematic display, press clipping service etc. Some of these services, according to Obi (2013) are user education, circulation and reference services. She further states that efforts must be made to encourage the use of the information materials in the libraries for the achievement of the libraries' basic aims, one of which is to better the academic lot of the undergraduate users. Uwa (2014) also identified a significant number of services offered in the library to users as follows; answering user's reference query, user education, compilation of reading lists, compilation of bibliography, inter-library loan services, current awareness services, routing of periodicals, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), publication of current contents, library extension services, photocopying/printing services, etc. Few of these services will be discussed briefly for the purpose of this study.

Preservation methods are adopted based on location, weather, and environment. Ozioko (2014) and Alhasan (2002) stated that not enough strategies are used by librarians to preserve information materials and resources in Academic libraries in Nigeria. Also, Njeze's (2012) study revealed that the most commonly used techniques in preservation and conservation of library materials in their libraries are binding, photocopying, shelving of books for free flow of air, adequate security, cleaning and dusting.

Preservation of information materials is part of the duty of the library staff. To achieve this, library staff ought to be trained in the techniques of preservation. Training has long been regarded as the bedrock of achieving quality productivity in any profession. Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwuoma (2011) opined that training of librarians on the area of information resources preservation is very imperative if the society really wants to safeguard the present information resources

for the prosperity usage. Also, Ngulube (2005) maintained that for any preservation programme to succeed in libraries and archives there must be adequate and well trained manpower. Lending his voice, Muhammad (2006) stated that staff training is very important, and as such librarians must specialize as preservation professional or conservators to enable them become experts in that area. Asuzu (2018) discovered in her study that training programmes on preservation and conservation of information resources for library staff is rarely done.

On the factors that militate against the preservation of library materials for effective service delivery, Njeze (2012) discovered lack of comprehensive preservation policy, untrained manpower, inadequate funding are the major challenges of preservation policy; Luckey and Umeji (2014) in their own study discovered that inadequate funding to carry out preservation activities in library yearly; there is no preservation and conservation policy in our library; lack of infrastructure facilities for preservation of resources, harsh/high environment condition are the factors militating against preservation. The results of Oluwaniyi's (2015) study also showed that lack of fund and inadequate infrastructure on the aspects of preservation of information resources were the major confrontations.

Theoretical Framework

Theory of Historic Preservation

The theory was propounded by Albert Einstein and Soroka Ellen in the year 1942. The historic preservation is vexed by a simple philosophical point which states that, if beauty is entirely in the eyes of the beholder, if historic importance is merely a creature of historical interest, if the past is wholly a projection of present anxieties, then everything and nothing deserves to be preserved, for everything and nothing is equally valuable, everything and nothing is equally significant, everything and nothing is equally rare, but every beautiful thing should be preserved. The theory states that the distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion, even if a stubborn one. This illuminates the difficulty of historical narrative, which is the basis of most controversies surrounding preservation movement, and that

there is no such thing as a neutral approach to preservation and conservation. Whatever the degree of intervention, some change is involved and some ideological value imparted. They stated that the impulse to preserve has existed since there were first things worthy of preservation. And that everything that gives or makes people beautiful should not be kept carelessly, unprotected and unpreserved, rather should be preserved.

In relation with this study, libraries spend so much money to acquire information materials which are for use by their patrons, there is no gaining saying that these materials are highly valued and so every effort should be made to preserve them for immediate and potential use. The only way the future generation can be aware of literature of the past is only when these literature are preserved using the techniques that is suitable.

Research Methodology

Table 1: Services Delivered in the Academic Libraries Studied

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	s^2	Remark
1	Circulation Service.	128	114	45	3	3.27	0.82	A
2	Reference Service,	112	139	36	3	3.24	0.68	A
3	Lending Service	106	142	40	2	3.21	0.75	A
4	Information and Communications Technology (ICT)	109	126	51	4	3.17	0.76	A
5	Community Contact Scheme Service and User Education	59	141	79	11	2.86	0.86	A
6	Information Referral Service.	50	102	108	30	2.59	0.97	A
7	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI).	49	129	97	15	2.73	0.78	A
8	Information Brokerage.	37	120	96	37	2.54	0.95	A
9	Photocopy Service.	88	122	70	10	2.99	0.80	A
10	Current Awareness Services (CAS).	80	148	57	5	3.04	0.75	A

Analyses in Table 1 are on the services delivered in the academic libraries studied. All the items have means that are approximately equal to 3.0, indicating that the respondents agree with the item statements as the services delivered in the libraries. The finding of the study revealed that services are delivered effectively in the libraries studied. These services are circulation service, reference service, lending service, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), community

The design of this study is survey research design. The population of this study was 290 library staff of the academic libraries studied. The entire population of 290 library staff of the five academic institutions was studied. The instrument used for data collection was rating scale designed by the researcher. The rating scale is tagged Preservation of Information Materials for Effective Service Delivery in Academic Libraries in Imo State (PIMESDAL). The researchers used descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to analyse the data collected that were be collated to answer the research questions. The z-test of significance was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. **Decision:** if z-calculated is greater than the z-tabulated then reject the null hypothesis.

Data Analyses

Research One: What are the services delivered in the academic libraries studied?

contact scheme service and user education, information referral service, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), information brokerage, photocopy service and Current Awareness Services (CAS). This finding is in line with the Okorie (2016), Obi (2013), Uwa (2014) who also identified these as services delivered in libraries.

Research Question Two: What are the techniques used in preserving information materials in the academic libraries?

Table 2: Techniques Used in Preserving Information Materials

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	s^2	Remark
1	Lamination is used to prevent the deterioration of library materials.	17	17	121	135	1.71	0.58	D
2	Microfilming can also stop the deterioration of library materials.	33	24	123	110	1.93	0.69	D
3	De-acidification is one of the ways to prevent the deterioration of library materials.	19	6	155	110	1.77	0.71	D
4	Binding of library materials can prevent their deterioration.	90	116	47	37	2.89	0.80	A
5	Cleaning and dusting of information resources is one of the ways to prevent the deterioration of library materials.	43	121	78	48	2.55	0.83	A
6	Proper shelving can prevent their deterioration.	45	101	110	34	2.54	0.95	A
7	Regular shelf-reading	50	127	98	15	2.73	0.78	A
8	Photocopying	16	99	97	78	2.18	0.64	D
9	Installation of air conditioners	15	28	123	124	1.77	0.71	D
10	Fumigation of the library.	24	24	136	106	1.88	0.67	D
Overall Mean						21.95	2.87	

Table 2 reveals the item-by-item means and standard deviations on the techniques used in preserving information materials in the academic libraries. From the table, the techniques that are used, as indicated by their means which are above the criterion mean of 2.50, are binding, cleaning and dusting, proper shelving, and regular shelving. Binding is mostly used with mean of 2.89, followed by regular shelving (2.73), cleaning and dusting (2.55) and proper shelving (2.54). The least used technique for the preservation of information materials is laminating, which has a mean of 1.71. The finding of the study revealed that the techniques used in preserving information materials in the academic libraries are not significant. This means that library staff do not use various techniques in the preservation of information materials in the academic libraries. From the findings, techniques that are used are binding, cleaning and dusting, proper shelving, and regular shelving. Binding is mostly used

followed by regular shelving, cleaning and dusting and proper shelving. Other techniques such as lamination, microfilming, de-acidification, photocopying, installation of air conditioners, and fumigation of the libraries are not used by the librarians in the preservation of information materials. These findings are in line with findings of Ozioko (2014) and Alhasan (2002) that not enough strategies are used by librarians to preserve information materials and resources in Academic libraries in Nigeria. Also, Njeze's (2012) study revealed that the most commonly used techniques in preservation and conservation of library materials in their libraries are binding, photocopying, shelving of books for free flow of air, adequate security, cleaning and dusting.

Research Question Three: To what extent are the library staff in academic libraries in Imo State trained in preservation techniques?

Table 3: Extent Library Staff are Trained in Preservation Techniques

S/N	ITEMS	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
1	Cleaning and dusting of information resources.	119	107	59	5	3.17	0.76	HE
2	Binding of library materials.	0	6	154	130	1.57	0.64	LE
3	Fumigation of the library.	0	5	130	155	1.48	0.54	VLE
4	Installation of air conditioners	0	0	120	170	1.41	0.53	VLE
5	Proper shelving.	61	139	79	11	2.86	0.86	HE
6	Regular shelf-reading	51	100	109	30	2.59	0.97	HE
7	Lamination.	0	10	120	160	1.48	0.54	VLE
8	Photocopying	0	2	116	172	1.41	0.53	VLE
9	De-acidification	0	1	120	169	1.42	0.53	VLE
10	Microfilming.	1	6	128	155	1.49	0.59	VLE
Overall Mean						18.85	2.86	

Results as presented in Table 3 are the item-by-item means and standard deviations on the extent library staff are trained in preservation techniques. From the Table, items 1, 5 and 6 have means above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating agreement with the item statements. However, these means are approximately equal to 3.0, indicating high extent. The respondents therefore, agree that Cleaning and dusting of information resources, proper shelving and regular shelf-reading are the preservation techniques that the library staff can conveniently carry out. On the other hand, the respondents are of the view that item 2 is to a low extent while the remaining items are to very low extent. The overall mean of 18.85 is less than the expected mean of 25.0 indicating that the respondents agree that the library staff are trained in preservation techniques but not to a great extent. The finding further shows that library staff are trained in cleaning and dusting of information resources, proper shelving and regular shelf reading. This finding is in agreement with the

finding of Asuzu (2018) that training programmes on preservation and conservation of information resources for library staff is rarely done. This finding negates the opinion of Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwuoma (2011) that training of librarians on the area of information resources preservation is very imperative if the society really wants to safeguard the present information resources for the prosperity usage. Training has long been regarded as the bedrock of achieving quality productivity in any profession. Also that of Ngulube (2005) that for any preservation programme to succeed in libraries and archives there must be adequate and well trained manpower and Muhammad (2006) who opined that staff training is very important, and as such librarians must specialize as preservation professional or conservators to enable them become experts in that area.

Research Question Four: What are the factors militating against the preservation of information materials in the academic libraries?

Table 4: Factors Militating against the Preservation of Information Materials

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	σ	Remark
1	Non-Provision of adequate funding for the libraries.	150	105	34	1	3.39	0.75	A
2	Poor quality of paper used in publishing.	104	139	40	7	3.17	0.76	A
3	Inadequate library staff.	78	107	55	50	2.73	0.78	A
4	Inadequate knowledge about the methods for preserving information materials.	0	2	116	172	1.41	0.53	SD
5	Lack of preservation policy.	52	129	79	30	2.70	0.94	A
6	Tropical climate.	94	94	82	20	2.90	0.97	A
7	Inadequate equipment needed for the preservation of information materials.	93	124	65	8	3.04	0.75	A
8	Non-challant attitude towards control measures.	45	109	77	59	2.48	0.92	D

In Table 4 it was discovered that all the items except items 4 and 8 have mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and which approximated to 3.00 for agreed response. That is to say that the respondents agreed that the factors that militate against the preservation of information materials are non-provision of adequate funding for the libraries (with mean of 3.39), poor quality of paper used in publishing (3.17), inadequate equipment needed for the preservation of information materials (3.04), tropical climate (2.90), inadequate library staff (2.73) and lack of preservation policy (2.70). The findings of the study revealed that the respondents agree that the factors that militate against the preservation of information materials are non-provision of adequate funding for the libraries, poor quality of paper used in publishing, inadequate equipment needed for the preservation of information materials, tropical climate, inadequate library staff, and lack of preservation policy. These findings are in line

with previous findings by authors such as Njeze (2012) that lack of comprehensive preservation policy, untrained manpower, inadequate funding are the major challenges of preservation policy. Luckey and Umeji (2014) discovered inadequate funding to carry out preservation activities in library yearly; there is no preservation and conservation policy in our library; lack of infrastructure facilities for preservation of resources, harsh/high environment condition are the factors militating against preservation. The results of Oluwaniyi's (2015) study also showed that lack of fund and inadequate infrastructure on the aspects of preservation of information resources were the major confrontations.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One: The mean rating of the respondents on the techniques used for preserving the information materials in libraries is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 25.0

Table 5: Calculated z (\bar{x}) on the Techniques used for Preserving the Information Materials.

\bar{x} σ \bar{x} σ \bar{x} σ \bar{x} σ							
290	21.58	2.97	25.00	-19.58	289	1.65	H ₀₂ Accepted

Presented in Table 5 is z-test of significance of the techniques used in preserving information materials in the libraries. From the Table, the z-calculated is -19.58, the z-tabulated is 1.65, while the degree of freedom is 289. Since the z-calculated is less than the z-tabulated the null hypothesis three is accepted. Therefore, the mean rating of the respondents on the techniques used for preserving the information

materials in libraries is not significantly greater than the expected mean of 25.0. This shows that the techniques used in preserving information materials in the libraries, as rated by the library staff is not significant.

Hypothesis Two: The extent to which library staff are trained preservation techniques in the academic libraries is not significant

Table 6: Calculated Z (2022) on the Extent to which Library Staff are Trained in Preservation Techniques.

2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022 2022						
290	18.85	2.86	25.0	-36.56	289	1.65

H₀₂ Rejected

Presented in Table 6 is z-test of significance of the extent to which library staff are trained in preservation techniques. From the table, the z-calculated is -36.56; the z-tabulated is 1.65, while the degree of freedom is 289. Since the z-calculated is less than the z-tabulated the null hypothesis two is accepted. Therefore, the mean rating of the respondents on the extent to which library staff are trained in preservation techniques is not significant.

Recommendations

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

1. The consciousness of the importance of preservation in libraries should be maintained.
2. Libraries should uphold their service delivery to their users.
3. Librarians should be trained on the use of other methods of preserving information materials since the librarians are not using varied techniques in the preservation of information materials.
4. Regular training programmes using several methods such as in-service training, workshops/seminars/conference should be organised to train library staff on preservation techniques since the onus lies on the staff to preserve information materials.
5. The researchers recommend that the management of the institutions and the government should provide equipments for the preservation of information materials or make funds available for the acquisition of such, since lack equipment is one of the problems militating against the preservation of information materials.

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