

Availability and Management Challenges of Serials and other Continuing Resources in two Selected University Libraries in North-Central Zone of Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: This study was carried out to examine the availability and management challenges of serials and other continuing resources in two university libraries in North-Central zone of Nigeria.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 11 Serial Librarians. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire and observation checklist. Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data.

Findings: The result obtained from the findings revealed that all the listed serials were all available, while some of continuing resource like newspaper, magazine, Transactions of societies and Monographic series were not available. It was also discovered from the findings that the management challenges of serials ranges from stealing of serial resources by users, mutilation of serials, disorganization of serials, improper weeding of serials by the library, delay in processing of new issues, delay in return of removed issues for repairs, illegal lending of serial resources to users among others. The study also shows that the strategies for enhancing management of serials and other continuing resources include but not limited to provision of signage in the libraries, employment of professional librarians, provision of adequate security gadget in library and provision of library infrastructures.

Implications: Suggested solutions to challenges of serials management in academic libraries include the training of librarians to acquire more skills needed for management of databases, updating loose-leaf, websites and software which are required for effective application of serial and other continuing resources.

Originality/Value: It was recommended that efforts should be made to provide assisted serials resources like generator/power plant, electricity supply, ICT manager, funds, Website, good bandwidth, qualitative computers system and CD-ROMs, to increase the use of online in accessing serial and other continuing resources.

Key Words: Academic Libraries; Developing Countries; North Central Nigeria; Resource Availability, Serial Management Challenges

Introduction

Availability of serials and other continuing resources are of utmost importance to librarians. Tonkery (1995) argued that availability of serials and other information sources means ensuring their presence in the library for immediate use. Tuttle (1983) averred that availability of serials and other continuing resources, and other information sources should be viewed from both the national and instructional dimensions. They attribute the lack of availability of serials and other information sources to the steady proliferation of tertiary institutions- federal, state, private (universities, polytechnics, colleges

of education), along with increase in students and faculty, and the diversification of courses, academic and research programmes, without adequate information sources to meet the actual information need. They identified these as obstacles to availability of information sources in the library. Emeka (2002) also conducted research on the scarcity of information sources including serials in Nigeria and the threat to academic excellence. She was able to establish that non-availability of information sources has led faculty and students not to use library services. Burrow (1993) aptly analyzed and captured the frustrations and disappointment felt

by users who fail to find the information sources they want in the library. He went ahead and outlined four basic relationships that should exist between user and the availability of information sources which are: the greater the popularity, the lower the immediate availability; the longer the loan period, the lower the immediate availability, the shorter the loan period, the higher the immediate availability; also the greater the popularity, the shorter the loan period has to be and the less the popularity, the longer the loan period can be, and of note, increasing the number of copies available, like shortening the loan periods, increases the availability of information source. However, availability of information sources such as serials and other continuing resources must be distinguished from accessibility.

Objective of the Study

The broad aim of the study is to assess the availability and management challenges of serials and other continuing resources in two selected university libraries in North-Central Zone of Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. ascertain the available serials and other continuing resources in two university libraries
- ii. identify the problems affecting the management of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries.
- iii. suggest strategies for enhancing the management and use of serials and other continuing resources publications in the two university libraries.

Scope

The scope of the study encompasses the availability and management challenges of serials and other continuing resources in selected federal University libraries in North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Flaxbart (2001) found that frustration among information seekers is due to the non-availability of sources. Thomas (2006) analyzed the availability of periodical titles used in Nigerian libraries, finding that only 67 (11.5%) of the 578 periodical titles studied were not available in any of the major libraries, and confirming a high availability rate. Kuhagen (2005) studied information needs of library users' at the Yaba

College of Technology, Lagos, and observed low use of the library by the students, which was "attributed to the expressed unavailability of desired information resources." The paper suggests seeking user input for the acquisition process and policy. Many university libraries in Nigeria have not been able to acquire collections comprehensive enough to meet the needs of their users due to inadequate funding of the universities. The 10% of allocations meant for the library as stipulated by the National University Commission (NUC) has not been adhered to in many Nigerian universities. Szilvassy (1996) submits that the inability of university libraries to meet the information requirements of some library users might have forced them to use personal collections when conducting research.

Serials management has been described as the art of formulating and implementing serials and other continuing resources policy for the benefit of users of libraries (Buzzard & Whaley, 2006). Typically, the concept management as relating to serials and other continuing resources "is fundamentally concerned with supporting the mission of the parent institution by acquiring, organizing and providing access to materials collected in an efficient, cost-effective, timely, accurate, and courteous manner" (Hewitt 2006:11). In the words of Amaakaven (1995) serials management is the formulation of routines and procedures for administering serials collection. These routines includes such functions as selection and acquisition, recording of serials and other continuing resources, organizing serials resources (cataloguing and classification), dissemination of serials, handling of claims, renewals of subscriptions, weeding, filling gaps in the back runs, treatment of unbound issues. Nisongor (2000) contends that serials management is probably the most important and the most challenging library function. He opines that interest in serials management has increased in recent years due to such factors as escalating cost of serials in the face of stagnant or decreasing library budget, the emergence of new electronic formats and an increased emphasis on access rather than ownership. However, Hewitt (2006:15) posit serials management is "to serve, to accommodate, and to adjust" the resources in the department to the needs of its users.

Furthermore, Aina (2004) pointed out that management is concerned mainly with the

human and material resources, activities and tasks of an organization devoted to the overall objective of users' satisfaction. Serials management is an umbrella term that encompasses all the systems within an establishment for the creation and use of serials and other continuing resources (Mullis, 1992). According to Wiggins, (2000:20) serials and other continuing resources management is "concerned with the acquisition, circulation, cataloguing and classifying of print and electronic serials and other continuing resources publications". On the other hand Gregory (2000:15) viewed serials management as "referring to issues involved in managing serials and other continuing resources in the library; these basic issues are the selection, the planning of acquisitions, library organization of acquired serials and other continuing resources and their preservation". Considering the unique characteristics and challenges posed by serials to librarians, in this study serials and other continuing resources management is defined as activities concerned with the availability, accessibility, acquisition, and organization of serials in the library. All these variables have a relationship with the use of serials and other continuing resources in the library.

Academics and students find the use of serials and continuing resources indispensable in research and course work. University information seekers meet their information needs through the use of serials publications. Due to the use of serials in pure and applied scientific research, a large part of university holdings are serials, mainly journals and other continuing resources. Meeting user needs in the library environment requires the maintenance of serials holding. Aside from public service such as reference work, the major part of daily work comprises of great effort dealing with serials (Nisonger, 1988:26).

Result

Tables 1: Distribution and return rate of Questionnaire

S/N	University	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number Returned	Percentage of distribution %
1	University of Jos, Jos	7	7	100
2	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	4	4	100
	Total	11	11	100

These valuable resources pose challenges of management in university libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria, consisting of seven states: Plateau, Nasarawa, Benue, Abuja, Kogi, Kwara, and Niger States. One factor that is generally considered powerful predictor of the ability of university libraries to function and meet users demand for serials and other continuing resources is funding. Nwosu (1986) noted that ownership and the generation of university in Nigeria often determine access and the amount of funds available to universities and their libraries. Consequent on Nwosu's assertion University of Jos library is better positioned to acquire resources especially in continuing form than Nasarawa State University library. Serials and continuing resources acquisition is hinged on continual financial commitment. Once a subscription is opened for a title, the library continues subscription thereby investing heavily on the titles (Mullis, 1992, Kanazawa, 1993; Aina 2004). The huge financial commitment is also derived from changes in exchange rate, page increase, volume explosion, increase in postage and handling cost, cost of backbone, network problem, system breakdown as well as inflation (Brown & Smith 1980; EBSCO, 2001; Elliot, 2003). As a result, librarians find it difficult to maintain subscription to all journals that their users want to have access to. Knowlton (2007) pointed out that solution could be sought through commitment, perseverance, creativity, and library cooperation specially targeted at contributing to acquire licence to database.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 11 serial librarians from both university which were used as sample for the study. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires and observation checklist. Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data

From the table 1 above, a total number of eleven (11) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and all were returned and correctly filled. This indicates a 100 percentage of which the researcher considers very appropriate for use.

Table 2: Observation Checklist On Available Serials And Other Continuing Resources

S/N	TYPES OF SERIALS AVAILABLE	UNI JOS		NSUK		REMARK
		Yes	NO	YES	NO	
SERIALS						
1	Journals	√		√		Available
2	Newspapers	√		√		Available
3	Magazine	√		√		Available
4	Annuals	√		√		Available
5	Memoirs	√		√		Available
6	Proceedings	√		√		Available
7	Transactions Of Societies	√		√		Available
8	Monogrpahic Series	√		√		Available
Continuing Resources(Databases, Updating Loose-Leaf, Websites)						
9	Journals	√		√		Available
10	Newspapers		√		√	Not Available
11	Magazine		√		√	Not Available
12	Annuals	√		√		Available
13	Memoirs	√		√		Available
14	Proceedings	√			√	Available
15	Transactions Of Societies		√		√	Not Available
16	Monogrpahic Series		√		√	Not Available
Total		11	5	10	6	

According to the above stated table, the serials materials were grouped into two (2) thus: serials and continuing resources (databases, updating loose-leaf, and websites). the result shows that the available serials in both UNI JOS and NSUK includes Journals, Newspapers, Magazine,

Annuals, Memoirs, Proceedings, proceedings, transactions of societies, Monographic series, while the available of Continuing resources(databases, updating loose-leaf, websites) includes Journals, Annuals , Memoires and proceedings

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on problems serials librarians encounter in the management of serials and other continuing resources

Problems	University						Total	Decision	
	UNIJOS			NSUK					
	Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision			Mean
Many serials are defaced	2.86	.899	Agree	2.50	1.000	Agree	2.68	.253	Agree
Stealing of serials by users	2.86	1.069	Agree	2.55	1.258	Agree	2.70	.217	Agree
Mutilation of serials by users	2.86	1.069	Agree	3.50	1.000	Agree	3.18	.455	Agree
Disorganization of serials by users	3.00	1.000	Agree	3.75	.500	Agree	3.38	.530	Agree
Improper weeding of serials by library	3.29	1.113	Agree	2.50	1.000	Agree	2.89	.556	Agree
Delay in processing of new issues	2.86	1.345	Agree	3.50	.577	Agree	3.18	.455	Agree
Delay in return of removed issues for repairs	2.86	1.069	Agree	3.00	.000	Agree	2.93	.101	Agree
Illegal loan of serials to users	3.00	.817	Agree	3.50	.577	Agree	3.25	.354	Agree
Erratic loan of serials to users	2.71	.951	Agree	2.55	1.500	Agree	2.63	.116	Agree
Broken links affects access to continuing resources	2.86	.899	Agree	3.50	1.000	Agree	3.18	.455	Agree
Access to links may change through update	3.29	.951	Agree	3.75	.500	Agree	3.52	.328	Agree

The result of the data analyzed above shows that respondents agreed on all the items listed above as problems serials librarians encounter in the management of serials and other continuing resources by librarian in UNIJOS and NSUK.

All the problems listed above hinder the effective management of serials and other continuing resources. Hence the mean for all the items is above 2.5.

Table 4: Percentage distributions of Respondents view on suggestions on how serials and continuing resources management could be improved for use in your library

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Provision of signage in library	2	18.2
Employment of professional librarian	2	18.2
Provision of adequate security gadget in library	3	27.3
Provision of library infrastructures	4	36.4
Total	11	100.0

The table above shows that 2(18.2%) of the respondents indicated provision of signage in library; 2(18.2%) of the respondents indicated employment of professional librarian; 3(27.3%) of the respondents indicated provision of adequate security gadget in library, while 4(36.2%) of the respondents indicated provision of library infrastructures.

Consequently, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that proper orientation on use of

library to students will improve the management of serials and continuing resources.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that the listed serials and some continuing resources are available in the two university libraries under study. However, such continuing resources like newspaper, magazine, transaction of society and monographic series are not available.

The findings also revealed that stealing of serial resources by users, mutilation of serials, disorganization of serials, improper weeding of serials by the library, delay in processing of new issues, delay in return of removed issues for repairs, illegal lending of serial to users among others are the challenges librarians face in management of serials and other continuing resources.

With regards to strategies for enhancing management of serials and other continuing resources, the result shows that provision of signage in the library, employment of professional librarians, provision of adequate security gadget in library and provision of library infrastructures among others are some of the strategies that could be adopted to enhance effective management of serials and other continuing resources. In addition to the above findings, Aghauche, (2007) noted that it is the responsibility of serial librarian to ensure that serials are efficiently and effectively managed for easy accessibility and maximum utility. Concurring with the statement, Eaton (1993) enumerated what serials librarian can do to remedy problems of serial publications: acting as agent of change; exhibiting accountability; establishing strategies and identifying allies, educating the faculty, students and the entire users of serials collection.

Limitations

The study has the following limitations:

1. The study is limited to university of Jos, Jos and Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
2. The study includes only the serial librarians.
3. The study is limited to availability and management of serials and other continuing resources.

Conclusion/Recommendation

Serials and other continuing resource publications have been considered traditionally as a separately distinguishable library resource because there are differences in their contents, format, bibliographical relationships, and the methods of acquisition, service and organization. They contain more current information than those in monographs and form an important component of the library collections. Therefore, it is of prior importance to effectively manage the acquisition and organization of serials and continuing resources to ensure the prompt

delivery of serials and other continuing resource literature that the library user may need. Based on the finding of the study the following recommendations were made:

- ✓ There is urgent need for adequate training of librarians to acquire more skills needed for management of databases, updating loose-leaf, websites and software which is required for effective application of serial and other continuing resources.
- ✓ Efforts should be made to provide assisted serials resources like generator/power plant, electricity supply, ICT manager, funds, Website, good bandwidth qualitative computers system and CD-ROMs , to increase the use of online in accessing serial and other continuing resources
- ✓ There is need to embark on advocacy, promotion of continuing resources in the university libraries under study

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