

Availability and Implementation of Preservation Policy: Bane of Information Provision in Selected University Libraries In South-South Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examined the availability and implementation of preservation policy concerning information provision in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The study aims to determine the availability and use of preservation policy in executing preservation activities to guarantee information provision. The descriptive research design of the expo facto type was employed and data was collected through a questionnaire that was administered to a population of 236 librarians and library officers as respondents having 159 representing a 67.4% response rate. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean) using the SPSS version 16. The study revealed that a written preservation policy that guides preservation activities is not available in the selected university libraries studied. Though some of the librarians and library officers are aware of the existence of preservation policy and engage in some form of preservation activities in university libraries, such practices were not documented. The lack of designated staff to supervise preservation activities, as well as inadequate preservation facilities, have an effect on information resources delivery. The study recommends awareness of the documentation of preservation activities for a written preservation policy formulation. Library's involvement in organizing training workshops, conferences, seminars, orientation programmes for new library staff and users, preservation enlightenment, library week and setting up a preservation unit where librarians can acquire indebt knowledge on preservation activities are necessary. This would engender a written policy to guide preservation activities, which would ensure a sustainable information resource provision in university libraries.

Keywords: Availability, Implementation of Preservation Policy, Bane of Information Provision, University libraries.

Introduction

Information provision in meeting users' information needs is a core service for librarians and information professionals in the library. University libraries, which support high-quality research, teaching and learning in diverse fields of studies, acquire, develop and manage resources while promoting and providing access to the resources as widely and effectively as possible. Libraries acquire information resources such as books, theses, journals, government

publications, encyclopedias, dictionaries, e-journals, and e-books, among others (Rukwaro, 2015 and Ekene, Amaoge&Nnamdi, 2016). The availability and accessibility of these resources to library users result in satisfaction. However, Akpe, Gabriel & Gbashinma (2018) observed that information resources are not available. This might be a result of deteriorated materials for a lack of adequate care and handling, which no doubt will hinder information provision and foster user dissatisfaction in libraries.

Making information resources available and accessible to all in useable conditions and format, at all times and timely too is of paramount importance. Information provision is a function of available resources. Nonetheless, the high rates of deterioration of information resources in libraries call for direct action or involvement in preservation activities through appropriate consultations- formulation, implementation and coordination of preservation policies and activities on a library-wide basis. Preservation is an activity in the library that facilitates care for information resources such as books, journals, newspapers, e-resources and other information materials. According to Tukur (2020), the provision of information resources and facilities in Agriculture university libraries will ensure effective services and utilization of the library resources. This justifies library investment in its resources and the overall attainment of the library goals.

Preservation is to keep something alive or in existence (Dictionary. com,2014). It is to keep safe from harm or injury. In other words, preservation is the use of passive measures for the protection of information resources. According to Akussah (2013), preservation of library materials is all activities including upholding and keeping materials away from deterioration, prolonging the lifespan or keeping the document for a long period either in the formal or original state or in such a way that it's useful to the user. Achieving this requires providing appropriate environmental conditions, and storage facilities, and employing safe methods of handling and suitable packaging of information resources and trained personnel. It is only through preservation that continued availability and access to items in the library collections can be maintained. In the same vein, an active preservation policy put in place to ensure the authenticity, reliability and logical integration of all information resources within the library will become a reality.

The International Federation of Library Association Network (IFLANET, 2007) defined a policy as a plan of action, a framework and a set of parameters within which library staff and users work. University of Nottingham Library (2010) posits that preservation policy is a public statement of principles and procedures underpinning all aspects of collection care from acquisition to readers' access. Preservation policy is aimed at explaining to users the standards that are followed and the procedures which are necessary to protect the materials in the library and to ensure the continued availability and authenticity of such resources. Preservation policy according to the National Preservation Office (NPO, 2001), is a plan of action, which addresses the questions of what needs to be preserved, why it should be preserved, for what purpose and for how long.

Adomi (2008) opined that the availability of preservation policy in libraries guide decision-making and provides a framework against which proposal or activities can be tested and progress measured. To effectively carry out preservation activity, there has to be a written

policy that guides library staff on the preservation of information materials. Preservation policy states criteria by which materials in danger of loss through physical decay, orphaned formats, etc. are selected for preservation (Digital Library Preservation Policy, 2008). Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre (2007) outlined some aims of preservation policy:

- i. To preserve the library holdings for current and future use;
- ii. To ensure that high standards of preservation are maintained;
- iii. To provide and maintain a documentation system designed for preservation;
- iv. To raise preservation awareness among staff and readers.

By this, it is clear that policy is essential for the library to carry out its mission of preserving library materials, i.e. safe keeping of information resources. It sets out what it will do to achieve its duty of preservation – its duty to the future – while maintaining and promoting access (University College Library, 2005).

The policy forms the pillar for preservation activities. It gives library management general direction and brings about actual steps in implementing preservation activities to guarantee its coherence. Librarians and library officers must embrace and support preservation policy implementation in libraries. The purpose of preservation policy awareness is to facilitate policy implementation and rule compliance that allow for accountability for non-compliance. Preservation policy awareness may be promoted in libraries through email, instant messages, web portals on the corporation intranet, voicemail, word-of-mouth from coworkers and supervisors, training sessions and periodic newsletters.

As such, effective communication of the policy to staff and users will facilitate proper preservation activities in the library. The development of preservation policy is not without its implementation. Hence, Haynes (2001) defined policy implementation to consist of organized activities directed towards the achievement of goals and objectives articulated in authorized policy statements. Similarly, the Public Health Action Support Team (PHAST) (2011) stated that implementation is the process of turning policy into practice.

Policy implementation in the preservation of library materials is one of the most crucial aspects of preservation and requires the presence of hardworking and dedicated librarians/library staff operating effectively and responsibly. The use of preservation policy in libraries cannot be overemphasized. Weekes (2011) described seven steps on how to implement effective policies, which could also apply to libraries. These steps include consultation, tailoring the policy to the library, clear definition of obligations, making realistic policy, publicizing the policies and procedures, training all library staff in the policies and procedures, and consistency in policy implementation. Wellcome Library (2007) recognized the benefits of preservation policy, as providing a comprehensive statement on the preservation of library collections, providing a high level of guidance on the preservation of library materials, and setting out the library's commitment to the management of materials in its collection.

The issue of implementation of preservation policy had been one of the major challenges facing libraries all over the world and Nigerian libraries are having their fair share of it. The challenge in no small measure affects the effective preservation of library materials, which in turn affects the availability of needed resources for information provision. Therefore, this study

investigated the availability and implementation of preservation policies as a bane to information provided in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the availability and implementation of preservation policy a bane to information provision in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. determine the availability of preservation policy in the selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria
- ii. know the level of implementation of the preservation policy in university libraries
- iii. examine the benefits of preservation policy in the university libraries
- iv. identify the challenges of implementing preservation policy in university libraries

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design of the *expo facto* type to examine the availability and implementation of preservation policy as a means of guaranteeing information provision in selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The choice of this design is to ascertain how the availability or non-availability of preservation policy affects the preservation activities of university libraries. That is an already existing situation. The university libraries selected for this study are from Cross River, Delta and Edo states purposely chosen due to proximity to the researchers. The respondents were chosen from AmbroseAlli University Library, Ekpoma (19), Benson Idahosa University Library, Benin City (9), Cross River State University of Technology Library, Calabar (21), Delta State University Library, Abraka (36), Federal University of Petroleum Resource Library, Ogbomro (9), Novena University Library, Ogume (6), John Harris University Library, the University of Benin, BeninCity (75), University of Calabar Library, Calabar (55), Western Delta University Library, Oghara (6) making a total of 236, which was also used as the sample size due to its small number adopting the total enumeration sampling technique.

The questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to 236 respondents, all the available librarians and library officers in the selected libraries. These categories of personnel were selected due to their level of involvement in the preservation of library materials. However, only 159 (67.4%) copies were retrieved from the respondents. Data collected were analyzed using the mean in SPSS-version 16 for all statistical analyses.

Findings

The results and findings emanating from the study are hereby presented.

Table 1: Availability of written preservation policy in university libraries

Availability of Preservation Policy on the following;	\bar{x}
Pest inspection and control	2.53
Disaster preparedness and response plan	2.38
Lamination of worn-out documents	2.57
Repairing deteriorating information resources	2.92
Paper encapsulation	2.30
Book restoration	2.58

Mass de-acidification of deteriorating books	2.29
Fire detecting system	2.54
Preservation photocopying	2.53
Microfilming of documents	2.28
Digitization of documents	2.50
Reformatting of information resources	2.35
Folded document recovery	2.34
Re-binding of worn-out information resources	2.78
Humidification of storage area	2.32
Air conditioning of the information storage area	2.47
Conservation treatment	2.35
Relaxing and flattening of paper	2.27
Stacks maintenance	2.70
Shelf preparation	2.85
Anoxic treatment	2.25
Training staff/users on proper handling of information materials	2.84
Security for the collections (theft prevention)	2.90
Environmental control	2.63
Weighted Mean	2.42

Criterion mean is $\bar{x} = 2.50$

The result in Table 1 shows a weighted mean of 2.42, which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50. This implies that a written preservation policy is not available in the university libraries studied since the weighted mean is less than the criterion mean. From the result, the aspect of relaxing and flattening of paper ($X = 2.27$), anoxic treatment ($X = 2.25$), mass de-acidification of deteriorating books ($X = 2.29$), reformatting of information resources ($X = 2.35$), paper encapsulation ($X = 2.30$), humidification of storage area ($X = 2.32$), folded document recovery ($X = 2.34$), disaster preparedness and response plan ($X = 2.38$), etc. are some core preservation activities library staff are not engaged in and nothing compels them to do.

Table 2: Level of Implementation of preservation policy in university libraries

Implementation	\bar{x}
Develop strategies to plan coherent preservation activities	3.28
Raise awareness of preservation issues among funding agencies, staff and library users	3.22
Accountability to justify funds expended on resources	3.06
Safeguard information resources	3.12
Act as a guide and point of reference to staff in the management of information resources	3.16
Help to bid for more funds	3.01
Help to set and validate priorities and review long-standing practices	3.01
Act as a sign of a tangible expression of intent	2.92
Help to set out the responsibilities for all concerned; parent body, library staff and users alike	3.14
Help to educate current and future librarians, and library users, about preservation issues	3.34
Serve as a basis for communication with external stakeholders	2.97

Justify the existence/funds expanded in libraries	3.08
Make for the longevity of information resources	3.11
Ensure that trained staff in preservation and conservation are engaged in libraries	3.13
Weighted Mean	3.11

Criterion mean is $\bar{x} = 2.50$

The results in Table 2 show that librarians and library officers participate in the use of unwritten preservation policies in university libraries. With the weighted mean of 3.11, this is greater than the criterion means of 2.50 revealing the fact that there is the implementation of preservation activities in certain aspects, bone out of an unwritten policy. The result shows that the university libraries actually educate current and future librarians, and library users, about preservation issues ($X = 3.34$), developed strategies to plan coherent preservation activities ($X = 3.28$), raise awareness on preservation issues among funding agencies, staff and library users (3.22), makes for the longevity of information resources ($X = 3.11$), etc. However, these preservation activities are not documented in the form of a written policy to guide library staff on preservation activities. They only carried out the activities based on their knowledge and or as directed by the library head.

Table 3: Benefits of using Preservation Policies in University Libraries

The Benefits of Preservation Policy	\bar{x}
Support decision-making when allocating resources for maintenance	3.05
Assist in developing preservation methodologies for collections	3.01
Supports collection decision making	3.08
Allows for a coherent preservation activity	2.92
Acts as the basis to provide a framework for collaborative activities	2.92
Reflect on the goals defined in the library strategic plan	3.03
Contain a reference to other library policies and procedures	3.02
Make explicit the library's commitment to preserving collections	3.16
Helps to enunciate the goals the collections are to achieve	3.02
To focus preservation activities on the most important part of the collections	2.97
For consistency	2.97
To provide security measures for the safety of information resources	3.13
Acts as a public statement to staff and users of the library	3.06
Weighted Mean	3.03

Criterion mean is $\bar{x} = 2.50$

With a calculated means of 3.03 greater than the criterion mean of 2.50, it shows that the library officers/librarians derived so many benefits from the use of preservation policy in the university libraries. This implies that preservation policy is beneficial in carrying out preservation activities; as it makes explicit the library's commitment to preserving collections ($X = 3.16$), supports decision-making when allocating resources for maintenance ($X = 3.05$), assists in developing preservation methodologies for collections ($X = 3.01$), reflect the goals defined in library strategic plan ($X = 3.03$), acts as a public statement to staff and users of the library ($X = 3.06$), among others.

Table 4: Challenges to the Implementation of Preservation Policies in university libraries

Challenges	\bar{x}
Lack of awareness of the usefulness of preservation policy among library staff and librarians	3.14
Lack of a designated staff to carry out or supervise preservation activities in the library	3.10
Inadequate availability of preservation facilities and equipment	3.15
Lack of preservation and conservation workshop in the library	3.03
Non-availability of administrative support in ensuring cost-effective and timely action to implement preservation strategies	2.95
Inadequate funds for the support of preservation activities	3.02
Poor librarian status	2.66
The political environment of the library staff /librarians	2.73
Administrative/ leadership problem	2.96
Lack of a written preservation policy in the university library	3.02
Non-availability of samples of preservation policy on the web	2.68
A faulty system where preservation activities is carried out	2.70
Lack of trained human resources in preservation issues	2.88
Inadequate preservation professional staff.	2.87
Weighted Mean	2.92

Criterion mean is $\bar{x} = 2.50$

As can be seen from the result, a calculated mean of 2.92 being greater than the criterion means of 2.50, shows that there are lots of challenges to the implementation of preservation policy in

university libraries. These are inadequate availability of preservation facilities and equipment ($X = 3.15$), lack of awareness of the usefulness of preservation policy among library staff and librarians ($X = 3.14$), and lack of a designated staff to carry out or supervise preservation activities in the library ($X = 3.10$), lack of available written preservation policy in the university libraries and inadequate funds for the support of preservation activities ($X = 3.02$) respectively, lack of trained human resources in preservation issues ($X = 2.88$), inadequate preservation professional staff ($X = 2.87$), among others that hinders the implementation of preservation policy in the university libraries.

Discussion of Findings

From the results, it can be seen that university libraries engage in some form of preservation activities as part of library routines. Though librarians and library officers studied are aware of and carry out these preservation activities thereby confirming the need for it, there is no written policy to guide library staff on the formal preservation of information resources in the libraries. This finding is in line with the study of the Ministry of Information and Communication Thematic Paper of the Republic of Uganda (2009) stating that libraries lack a written policy on preservation activities and currently, no adequate policies are in place to regulate the management and preservation of library resources.

The non-availability of a written preservation policy implies that the preservation actions carried out in the libraries were not based on standard practices. Having a written preservation policy ensures proper guidance for preservation activities, raising the need for patrons and staff to be indoctrinated in standard preservation procedures as well as compliance with the library's policy on preservation and conservation. Similarly, Iwhiwhu and Akporhonor (2009) stated that an overall policy of cleaning and other preservation activities in libraries should be developed and maintained. Hence, the National Library of Uganda (2010) posits that preservation policy is only in the minds of heads of the Library.

No doubt, a written preservation policy that is implemented in the university libraries will among other things assist the library to bid for funds, be used as a means for accountability for some of its preservation activities and provide a point of reference for staff to consult when decisions on items to acquire are to be taken. The study conforms to the National Preservation Office's (2001) position that policy serves as a framework that sets parameters for librarians to carry out preservation activities.

From the analysis, it is found that librarians appreciate the implementation/use of the preservation policy (though unwritten) in carrying out preservation activities. This finding agrees with that of Wellcome Library (2007) which stated that preservation policies allow the development of coherent preservation activities and workflows, and as such guides, as well as give the librarian/library confidence in taking decisions guiding its preservation activities.

Therefore, libraries are faced with preservation policy implementation challenges because Nigerian university libraries are pathetically funded. In line with the study, Oladele (2008) stated that the initial 10% of the university's annual recurrent budget as allocation has been

replaced by a new policy of 10% of overhead costs, a step he regarded as a classic case of policy somersault. The findings corroborate the study of Siwakoti (2008) stating that there are inadequate awareness programmes, budgetary constraints, inadequate space, lack of trained and skilled manpower and lack of appropriate government policies as some of the challenges to the implementation of preservation policy in university libraries.

Conclusion

The availability and implementation of preservation policy are essential for library officers and librarians as a guide to effectively carry out preservation activities in university libraries. Though some of the respondents claimed to have a preservation policy in their libraries, further investigation revealed that there is no written preservation policy to guide preservation activities. The response is based on their appreciation of the benefits derivable from the implementation of preservation policies. Hence, most times, university libraries engage in but do not adequately implement preservation policy in the management of information resources.

Therefore, the lack of a written preservation policy in these libraries has consequential effect on preservation practices engaged in by library officers and librarians. Consequently, most times university libraries do not adequately implement a preservation policy in the management of information resources making some materials not to be available due to deterioration or loss and the library will be handicapped in the provision of information services to its users.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are outlined in light of the findings:

- i. There is a need to create awareness of the documentation of preservation activities for the formulation of preservation policy in university libraries. This can be done by organizing training through workshops/conferences/seminars, orientation programmes, lectures, library week and also setting up preservation centres where librarians can acquire indebt knowledge on preservation activities in the libraries.
- ii. Library management should adhere to the written policy to guide preservation activities in libraries to determine what to preserve, how to preserve them, and the personnel to be involved in the preservation functions in other to meet users' information needs.
- iii. Library management should encourage the implementation of preservation policy as there are lots of benefits derivable from the use of preservation policy in preserving library materials.

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