

ORGANIZATION AND STORAGE OF STAFF RECORDS IN THE ARCHIVE OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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Abstract

This study examined the organization and storage of staff records in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The study aimed at identifying the types of staff records available, the procedures for organizing staff records, the storage facilities used, and the challenges faced in organizing and storing staff records. The research utilized a qualitative methodology, with interviews used as the primary data collection instrument. The findings indicated that the available staff records include staff appointment letters, retirement letters, sack letters, queries, and birth certificates. The organization of staff records is conducted using various methods, including alpha-numeric, subject-based, geographic, and serial organization, among others. The study concludes that different types of staff records are available, organized, and stored in Ahmadu Bello University's Archive using multiple methods. The methods utilized a combination of alphabetic and numeric codes, subject-based organization, location, and record order using closed and open storage, among others. The study recommends the inclusion of other types of staff records, such as appraisal reports and disciplinary actions. The study suggests the utilization of organizational methods such as alphabetical, numerical, and chronological for effective organization of staff records in Ahmadu Bello University's Archive, among other recommendations.

Keywords: Staff records, Organization Storage, Archive, Ahmadu Bello University

Introduction

Records in an archival institution cannot be adequately accessed without proper organization and storage. Over the past decades, there have been developments in the storage conditions of records. These range from using the building itself to help preserve the environment in which the records are housed. Also, records are preserved in storage media like the non-audio device, shelves, computers, compact disks, steel cabinets etc. Touray(2021) submitted that an

organisations records are key tools of effective administration and planning as instruments by which the public and government hold that organisation accountable. Some of these records are staff records.

Staff record are those documents in whatever medium, received or created by an organization given a descriptive information about a worker and its obligatory duties in a specific organization. However, some of the following information may also be included in a staff records: full name, address, telephone number, age and sex, nationality, ethnic origin, religion and membership of union. Aramide, Ajibola, Olatunji and Oduroye (2020) indicated that common records such as correspondence, reports and books, can be in paper, on optical, digital storage media or intranet. These can be received means such as regular or electronic mails. These records need to be organized and stored for easy access. In many organizations, these records are poorly organized and stored despite the vital or important information contained in them. These records are usually kept in the archives of the organisations. According to College and University Archives (2005), archives are non-current records that are no longer needed for immediate use and are kept under proper safety and security because of their long-time enduring value. In addition, archives are institution that are responsible for the collection and preservation of public and historical records for the use of historians and at same time refers to the place where this old record are located for future use. However, archives serve as organizational memory for organizing and preserving the institutional heritage of academic institution. Therefore, Ngulube (2000) stated that records and archives help to establish communication between the past and the future generation without which it would be difficult for people to learn from past successes or failures, limiting the organizational ability to act based on sound information.

University archives have a scholarly commitment to preserve knowledge, serve as institutional memory of college or university and plays and integral path in the management of institution information resources in all media and format (College and University Archives, 2005). To fulfill the above responsibility, archives identify, acquire, maintain and preserve records of enduring values.

Statement of the Problem

Archives have always been concerned with memory of the past and the present. They are centers where records are organized and stored. Although archival records are evidence of past occurrences and transactions, they remain a living instrument of the present-day society. Even with the migration to a digital office, paper-based records are still a large part of documents in workflow today (Record Nations, 2023). As a witness of human thoughts and actions and a compendium of the underpinnings of societal rules and morals, they provide reference for our daily lives and enrich our collective memory (Adkins, 1992). These memories are generated and preserved in the university archives.

University archives are not only able to identify, describe, arrange, preserve and secure the information in archives but they also allow easy access and retrieval. However, it was observed by the researchers, on a visit to Ahmadu Bello University Archives, Zaria, that staff are finding it difficult to retrieve some of the staff records which ordinarily should be carried out with ease. Therefore, could this be as a result of the organisation and storage of staff records in the achieves? It is in the light of this obvious problem that this investigation on the organization and storage of staff records in Ahmadu Bello University Archives was conducted.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided this study:

- 1.To find out the types of staff records available in the archives of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- 2.To find out the procedures through which staff records are organized the in archives of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
3. To identify the storage facilities used to preserve staff records in the archives of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
4. To find out the challenges faced in organizing staff records in the archives of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Review of Related Literature

This section presents a review of related literature as follows:

Archives

Archives are collection of documents or records which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their evidential research referral value and historical values. Archives are non-current records of an organization that are preserved because of their long enduring value. According to Record Nations (2023), with the migration to a digital office, paper-based records are still a large part of documents in workflow today. These are found in the university archives. University archives are archives found in academic institution. University archives has a scholarly commitment to preserve knowledge, serve as institutional memory of college or university and plays an integral path in management of institution information resources and records in all media and format (College and University Archives, 2005).

To fulfill the above responsibility, archives identify, acquire, maintain and preserve records of ending value that chronicle the institution and ensure it continued existence. Archival materials are materials that have long term historical, evidential referral and research value and they include correspondence, staff records, reprographic files, biographical information (College and University Archives, 2005).

Staff Records in Archives

Staff record is the accumulation of documents arranged in files, relating to the terms and conditions of employment of individuals, faculty and staff members. Staff records may be seen as record that contain initial application forms, results of physical examination, interviewers, notations, test scores, periodical appraisals, transfer and promotions, disciplinary actions, release and retiring wages, salaries, taxes paid, contributions and similar items. Some of the following information may be included in an employee file: full name, address, telephone number, age and sex, nationality, ethnic origin, religion, membership in trade union etc. **Joe** (2022) maintained that keeping good records assists organisations to preserve institutional memory as well as maintain evidence of daily activities. In many organizations these records are poorly organized and underutilized despite the vital or important information contained there. Personal records are among these records.

Personal records pose a particular problem because of their bulk longevity and sensitivity. Staff records are those documents in whatever medium, received or created by an organization in the course of business because of the information contained. Abioye (2009) stipulated that access

in archival content was to do with availability of records, archives for consultation as a result of legal authorization and existence of funding aids. Maidabino (2010) viewed access as the availability of archival resources to users. He also stated that information resources in the archives should not only be made available and accessible to the public at individual level but also at National and International level. According to Ngulube (2003) staff records can be grouped into two groups such as the confidential or subjective records and factual or objective records.

Confidential Records: All records which contains subjective information such as the process and outcome of staff appraisal procedures. These records are regarded as confidential and should be kept locked in the institution record save. Examples of confidential records kept on staff members file include:

- i. References
- ii. Observation of testing
- iii. Interview discussions with heads as part of staff appraisal
- iv. Personal ambitions/personal or professional problems revealed in discussions
- v. Notes for examples, verbal warning or copies of written warning as part of a disciplinary procedure
- vi. Staff salary scale and financial status
- vii. Promotion prospects
- viii. Copies of correspondence, for example, curriculum vitae
- ix. Medical and health records

Factual and Objective Records: factual and objective details such as the ones listed below would be likely kept in the secretary or administrative office but also available on the staff members confidential file such information includes:

- i. Full name, address, date of birth, gender and nationality
- ii. Qualifications, where obtained and date of qualification
- iii. Subjects taught but without formal qualification
- iv. Subject in which the staff is qualified to teach
- v. Date of appointment of the school
- vi. Details of previous past, length of service
- vii. Length of teaching experience
- viii. Details of extra-curricular duties undertaking for example, sporting.

Organisation of records in Archives

The role of the archivist is to manage all the information resources available to them effectively and efficiently for the benefits of the organization. Arrangement is defined as the process of putting archives into order in accordance with acceptable archival principles, particularly those of provenance and original orders. Cook and Reo (1990) in Afolabi (2011) shared the view that files should be transferred to the archives as they reflect the function of the office they represent. These authors emphasized that arrangement should follow their original order to which they were created and used. They further share the view that the components are organized into an order to which depends on the relationship of one to another. Afolabi (2011) added that sorting led to physical control as the content link each one to another. An archivist must continually instructively bring order end categorizing the records to the ends of revealing the content and theme significant (Afolabi, 2011). To plan the materials on the shelf, it involves recording and demonstrating the original relationship between the archives accumulation. The physical storage of materials is

complete in containers and shelves in the repository. The productions of dimming slips (retrieval label) are attached to the containers to indicate location where a record was removed for use. Maidabino (2010) maintained that organisation of records is carried out for easy access to such records.

Records Storage Facilities in Archives

Archives like other documentation centers preserve and stored their materials for long term values. A lot of storage devices and facilities have been found useful in archives. Uwaifo (2004) stated that there is the need for proper storage facilities, filing procedures, so as to facilitate quick and easy access ti the record when required. Archives storage facilities for records include:

- i. Computer: an electronic device that has storage capacity, accuracy, speed and is Programmable to perform certain logical tasks.
- ii. Shelves: furniture made of iron or wood where printed books or other related physical Items are kept.
- iii. Removable Storage Devices: these include flash drives, hard drives, CD-ROM, and DVD for saving and storing archival records in a digital medium.
- iv. File Cabinets: these are those storage boxes made of woods or iron to keep valuable items that cannot be place on the shelves.

Noris (2003) stated that some indications that a good storage programme is in place include:

1. Proper shelving is used to store records
2. Inactive records are stored offside in an in-mouse or contracted records center.
1. Vaults are used for the most valuable records.
2. Electronic data backup procedures are in place and are routinely followed.
3. Fire prevention systems are in place in storage areas.
4. Adequate environmental controls exist in storage areas.
5. Security roles and procedures are in place and followed.
6. Recording format standards are complied with.

Challenges Faced in Organization and Storage of Staff Records in Archives

A lot of challenges are faced in the university archives. However, Cox (2001) identified acute space and inadequate finding to support records and archives management condition. He further stated that inadequate storage facilities and poor maintenance are part of the challenges faced by many institution archives. Similarly, Ellis (2005) asserted that poor staff record organization system, inappropriate storage system, lack of management and technical support and unqualified archivists are the contemporary trends in the archives. According to Haissam (2023), managing records is a challenge for any organization aiming to keep them for a long period of time because of their values. Appropriate organization and storage of these records helps in managing the challenge.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research method was used for this study. According to Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006), qualitative research is concerned with collecting and analyzing information in many forms in the natural settings, chiefly non-numeric as possible. Qualitative research is exploratory (Creswell 2003; Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006) which involves navigating the physical environment of the phenomenon and is useful when the researcher does not know which the

important variables are to examine (Creswell 2003). It aims to achieve in-depth knowledge rather than breadth of phenomenon (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight 2006). Similarly, qualitative research methods are approaches to research that produce a detailed and non-qualitative account of small groups, seeking to interpret the meaning that people make of their lives in a natural setting or phenomenon that exist in a social context (Payne and Payne, 2004). In this study, interview was used through which the responses of the staff in the Archives were collected. Three(3) staff in the Archives were interviewed concerning the organization and storage of staff records. The responses were arranged in tabular form; where available and not available were used for clear understanding.

Data presentation

This section presents the data collected from the respondents of this study. It is presented as follows:

Table 1: Types of Staff Records Available in Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

S/N	Types of Staff Records	Available (√)	Not Available (x)
1.	Staff Appointment letters	√	
2.	Retirement letter	√	
3.	Sack letters	√	
4.	Vice chancellor closed volume files		X
5.	Registrars closed volume files		X
6.	Pay slips		X
7.	Queries	√	
8.	Birth certificates	√	

Key: √ = Available x = Not Available

The finding from table 1 indicates that staff appointment letters, retirement letters, sack letters, medical reports, queries and birth certificates are the archival records available Ahmadu Bello University archive.

In addition, it was discovered during the interview that promotion letters, confirmation, letters of upgrade, additional qualification results are also part of the staff records available in the archives. It was confirmed during the interview that these records are kept because of their long enduring value and referred to by the management for evidential, referral, historical and legal purposes. The finding is in line with the finding of Ngulube (2003) who stated that staff records are confidential/subjective factual and objective records.

Table 2: Organization of Staff Records in Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

S/N	Organization of Staff Records	Available (√)	Not Available (x)
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1.	Alphabetically		X
2.	Numerically		X
3.	Alpha Numerically	√	
4.	Chronologically		X
5.	Subject	√	
6.	Geographically	√	
7.	Serially	√	

Key: √ = Available x = Not available

The findings from table 2 reveals that staff records in the archives are organized alphanumerically, geographically, subject and serially. This implies that archives are meeting up to expectation, though other arrangements like alphabetically, numerically and chronological could also be used to organize staff records. This finding is in agreement with that of Schellenberg (2005) and Afolabi (2011) which stipulated that archives are organized base on provenance and original order.

Table 3: Storage Facilities Used to Preserve Staff Records in Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

S/N	Storage Facilities Used	Available (√)	Not Available (x)
1.	Steel Cabinets	√	
2.	Wooden Shelves	√	
3.	Non-Acidic boxes	√	
4.	Iron Shelves	√	
5.	Filing jackets	√	
6.	Folders	√	
7.	Computers		X
8.	Digitization		X

Key: √ = Available x= Not Available

Table 3 reveals that steel cabinets, wooden shelves, non-acidic boxes, iron shelves, filing jackets folders are the facilities available in the archives. It was also discovered during the interview that the storage facilities available are not adequate. This implies that the University archives are meeting up to expectation even though there are better options, such as the use of computer and digitizing the staff records. This finding is in line with Noris (2003) and Uwaifor (2004) who stated that shelves, non-acidic boxes and filing cabinet are used to store staff records.

Table 4: Challenges Faced in Organization of Staff Records in Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

S/N	Challenges in organization	Available (√)	Not Available (x)
1.	Inadequate funds	√	
2.	Inadequate storage space	√	
3.	Lack of ICT facilities	√	

4.	No security measures in place	√	
5.	Inadequate professional Archivists	√	
6.	Inadequate storage facilities	√	
7.	Inadequate management support	√	

Key: √ = Available x = Not Available

Table 4 above indicates that inadequate funds, inadequate storage space, absence of security measures, lack of International Communication Technology facilities, inadequate professional archivists, inadequate storage facilities and inadequate management support are the challenges facing the archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. This finding is in line with Ellis (2005) who stated that inadequate storage space inadequate professional archivists and inadequate funding.

Summary of Findings

The following are the major findings of this study:

1. The types of staff records available in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, include staff appointment letters, retirement letters, sack letters, queries and birth certificates.
2. The organization of staff records in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, was carried out alpha numerically by subject, geographically and serially.
3. The facilities used in storing staff records in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria include steel cabinets, wooden shelves, non-acidic boxes, iron shelves, filing jackets and folders.
4. The challenges faced in the organization and storage of staff records in the Archives of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria were inadequate funding, inadequate storage facilities, and inadequate Information and Communication Technologies.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is concluded that in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, different types of staff records were available, organized and stored using multitude methods. This included a combination of alphabet and number, subject, location and order of the records using closed and open storage. Furthermore, the Archive is faced with numerous challenges which retard effective and efficient management of the archives.

Recommendations

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

1. In addition to staff appointment letters, retirement letters, sack letters, queries and birth certificates, other staff records should also be kept in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
2. Organisation methods such as alphabetical, numerical and chronological could be used in organizing staff records in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
3. Staff records should be digitized and computers be provided for the storage of such digital records for back up in the Archive of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
4. Sufficient funds should be provided and adequate space made available for the increasing number of records. A new archive should be built while security measures should be put in place in case of disaster. Other recommendations include the provision of Information

and Communication Technology facilities, like computers, scanners; adequate professional archivists; and regular training of archive staff.

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