

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES AS PREDICTORS TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF INFORMATION LITERACY IN NIGERIA

By

Juliet C. Alex-Nmecha, CLN, FIIM
juliet.alex-nmecha@uniport.edu.ng

&

Comfort N. Owate, CLN
Department of Library and Information Science
Faculty of Education
University of Port Harcourt
comfort.owate@uniport.edu.ng

A paper presented at the Library Week of the Nigerian Library Association, Rivers State Chapter, on 14th and 15th of November, 2017 at University of Port Harcourt library complex.

Abstract

The need to preserve and conserve the materials that instil and impart knowledge of information literacy in the academic libraries is crucial. The research methodology adopted for this paper was a literature based approach to investigate and examine how preservation and conservation of library materials will determine the achievement of information literacy in Nigeria. Three objectives guided the study. The study concludes that preservation and conservation of library materials in our academic libraries will enhance and contribute to the achievement of information literacy when the users do not face hindrances in accessing the resources using the skills and expertise they have through the gadgets that are in good condition. Recommendations were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Preservation and Conservation, Library Materials, Academic Libraries, Information Literacy, Nigeria.

Introduction

The beauty of libraries or information centres housing intellectual materials (printed or non-printed) is exhibited when it stands the test of time and satisfies the needs of the users. Preservation and conservation of library materials all over the world today is one of the major functions of the academic library. They acquire these materials regularly and they also make provision for its safety. This has been a serious concern on the libraries on the materials entrusted in their care.

The academic library is the centre of academic activities in a university, and it is the largest single source of knowledge and information within the university system and the world around it. An effective use of it is as compelling as it is necessary. According to Edom (2012) academic libraries are primarily established for support and enhance tripartite functions and the full realization of the education goals of the parent institutions. The primary role of a university library is to support teaching, learning and research activities. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO [nd]), also defined the academic library as an organized collection of published books, periodicals and other reading and audio-visual materials, and the service of staff able to prove and interpret such materials as are required to meet the informational research, educational, or recreational needs of the users. It is a place the information seeker or knowledge seeker communicates with authors both living and the dead (Aguolu & Aguolu, 1989). In order to achieve these functions the library acquires library materials and organizes them in such a way that its retrieval is easy and faster. These materials can be retrieved early and smoothly when they are in good condition, and hence guarantee the function of education to the users thereby, making them literate. There is need therefore, by the academic libraries to adequately preserve and conserve the materials in their collection to enhance information literacy (Amazi, 2015). Library materials in the libraries can only boost literacy when they are adequately preserved and conserved thereby creating stronger avenue and channel to the dissemination and retrieval of information. Library materials are the print and non-print materials collected, processed, and stored by libraries. They comprise of books, periodicals, maps, manuscripts, motion pictures and all other forms of audio-visual records.

Preservation and conservation are two terms that are interwoven although with slight differences. The two activities go side by side to achieve the objectives of the library on proper handling of the materials in the academic libraries. Free online CBSE... describes preservation as the task of minimizing or reducing the physical and chemical deterioration of documents, while conservation is the maintenance of documents in a usable condition through treatment and repairs of individual items to slow the process of decay or to restore them to a usable state. Conservation includes study, diagnosis, preventive care, examination, treatment, documentation using methods that may prove effective in keeping that property close to its original condition and for as long as possible. The conservation actions are carried out for a variety of reasons including aesthetic choices, stabilization, needs for structural integrity or for cultural requirements for intangible continuity. The activity of one leads to the other i.e. the preservation of library materials leads to the conservation of the materials. Preservation and

Conservation of Library Materials houses the documents by considering the long-term preservation of the items while still allowing the end user to access the material easily. But all library collections experience damage from use and decay from aging. So there is need for preservation and conservation of library materials.

Preservation is an activity in the library that encompasses all actions taken by the librarians/library staff to ensure the prolongation of life of resources kept in the library. These library materials include media, non-book, and printed materials. The media materials are computer, hard-drive, databases, and library software. Non-book materials include CD-ROMs, audio and video tape, while printed materials are pictures, magazines, books, maps etc.; these materials put together are to achieve a purpose, the purpose being to educate the users and build literacy into them. And so they (the library materials) are to be preserved.

Conservation on the other hand is the repair treatment and restoration of these information materials. Both preservation and conservation are important functions of the academic libraries since they point at prolonging the life and use of the materials. The rate at which these library materials are given a pride of place determines the rate at which information literacy is boosted and fostered.

Information literacy is defined as an understanding and set of abilities enabling individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the capacity to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (American Library Association [ALA] 1989). ALA further opined that information literacy as set of skills shows that it's people's expertise of finding information, which will be made possible when the library materials are kept safe, and handled with care. The materials in the libraries are embodiment of information which the people or users manipulate to get needed information, and so these library materials are preserved and conserved in order for people to harness the rudiments embedded in them. No matter how skilful a person may be, when the library materials are not adequately preserved and conserved there is no gain saying that information literacy will be achieved. There is therefore, the need to ensure the longevity of these materials as it clearly shows that preservation and conservation of library materials is a predictor to the achievement of information literacy.

Statement of the Problem

On September 22, 2017 the minister of education, Alhaji Adamu paid a courtesy call on Governor Atiku Bagudu of Kebbi State, and he made it clear that Nigeria had about 65-75 million illiterates. A figure he described as unbecoming and high (<https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/illiteracy-rate-nigeria-alarming-fg-2/?Relatedposts-hit=1&relatedpost-origin-593133&relatedpost-position-1>).

And so looking at this figure, there is every tendency that the illiteracy level in Nigeria is not only from the print, writing, and reading etc., information literacy inclusive. For an alarming rate of illiteracy level, all types of literacy are involved. The library(ies) on its activities have played vital roles in developing people's information literacy by organising workshops, seminars, conferences etc. not with damaged materials rather with sound efficient and reliable resources to boost literacy. Hence, this study is to make further push on preservation and conservation of library materials.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the paper is on preservation and conservation of library materials in academic libraries as predictors to the achievement of information literacy in Nigeria. The Specific objectives are to:

- i. State an overview of information literacy
- ii. Determine the roles academic libraries play in preservation and conservation of library materials to achieve information literacy
- iii. Ascertain the need for information literacy in Nigeria.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a literature based approach to collect and analyse relevant information from existing literature on preservation, conservation and information literacy. These literatures would be sourced on the web, journals, documents and text books.

Literature Review

In this section, some literature will be provided to buttress the objectives raised.

Objective I: Overview of Information Literacy

Information literacy as stated by the Creative Commons Attribution is a concept that appeared first print in 1974 report by Paul G. Zurkowski which was written on behalf of the National Commission on Libraries and information Science. This Phrase (Information Literacy [IL]) was used by Zurkowski to expatiate and describe the techniques and skills learned and used by the information literate people. Who are these information literate people? According to Okpala, Bennch, Sefu & Kalule (2017), an "individual is basically considered literate when he/she is able to read and write". Okpala et al. further stated that when an individual gains access to certain information that could change the state of the person's mind, then that fellow is literate. This means that literate people can think critically, solve problems by proffering solutions from their ability to manipulate and use information. The agreement amongst the academic libraries is imperative that they can make a crucial difference in ensuring that information literacy skills are boosted through the preservation and conservation of library materials which will enable the users display their skills and pass it on to other people to acquire. The well-being, and better condition of the library materials as the users use them, will bring out the mastery, expertise and proficiency in them. This will also drive the zeal in them (users) to continue and thereby perfect in their skills.

Information literacy is also defined by Bothma et al. (2014) as "the ability to find, retrieve, analyse and use information". This ability to the researchers is not to be wasted after the users may have found the materials and it is not in a proper condition. The ability which was vested on searching for library materials should be for retrieving and analysing the materials instead of turning away in disappointment. The skills the users had acquired can be slowed down and even forgotten on a continuous interaction with decayed, damaged and spoilt electronic gadgets in the academic library. The early detection and repair of these materials will not only boost information literacy, but it will also stabilize it (library materials) for further usage.

In defining information literacy as the ability to make efficient and effective use of library materials this work is in line with the information sources being sound and efficient in use or during use. There is need to preserve and conserve the library materials because these materials are sources of teaching of the concept of discourse (information literacy). The materials to

showcase literacy must be in a good state. According to the IFLA Information literacy is for all and should be acquired and learned so as to showcase competencies capable of moving both the human and capital resources of this country forward. The important nature of IL made IFLA to establish a section for it. For the quest of it the section has developed and aims at fostering international cooperation in the development of information literacy education in all libraries and information institutions.

Objective II: Roles Academic Libraries Play in Preservation and Conservation of Library Materials to Achieve Information Literacy

The basic functions and primary role of library materials is to provide information to users, that is to say, **that there must be proper care and management** of these library materials for the future generation and for the nation to achieve information literacy in the nearby future. Of course, the academic libraries put in their strength to ensure that these materials are for the acquisition of literacy information, media, digital etc.

The researchers asserted that there should be preservation and conservation **education, workshops and seminars** regularly to acquaint the library personnel on the best practices of care and handling of these materials.

In the same vein, Singh and Kaur (2009) opined that preservation and access to knowledge and information resources are main mandate of academic libraries. Therefore, **knowledge of the causes of the deterioration of library materials** is very essential for academic librarians to acquire and others who are concerned about preservation and conservation of information stored in books and non- book formats. Academic libraries are to preserve and conserve these library materials to achieve information literacy in the near future.

There is need for **proper organization of the library materials** in order to aid accessibility and expertise on the use of information that could lead to information literacy. Libraries engage in the acquisition of these materials, catalogue and classify them for further use. According to National Preservation office (2001) "Libraries and archives contain irreplaceable accumulation of human knowledge and experience" Nevertheless, it would be a waste of resources if after institutions such as academic libraries have devoted considerable sums of money in acquiring and processing information resources and these valuable resources remain inaccessible to scholars and other users especially lecturers and students. Therefore, the cause and effect of library materials on users necessitate its preservation measures such as shelving properly, air

conditioning, fumigation, and good ventilation. Without preservation, access becomes impossible and collections decay and disintegrate (Smith, 1999), and information literacy is hampered. When these resources have long-term span, the coming generation will be able to have access to it thereby creating literacy.

The libraries and information resources centres are the wisdom seat of any institution and human development. The libraries and information scientists are trained to be good preservers of all the library materials under their care. In so doing, they would be able to pass these invaluable resources from one generation of users to another. For any nation to be able to make advancement socially, educationally, economically, and so on it must be a well-informed nation in this era of information explosion, one can easily get as much information as he is exposed to get provided the professionals of information know how to acquire, organize, disseminate, retrieve and preserve them for day to day use (Madu, E.C. & Adeniran, T.N., 2005). The IFLA china centre (2009), submits that, the core activity on preservation and conservation is to ensure that significant library and archive materials, published and unpublished, in all formats, will be preserved in accessible form as long as possible.

Objective III: The Need for Information Literacy in Nigeria for Easy Accessibility to Information Retrieval

The concept of literacy is expanding in many countries to include skills to access knowledge through technology and ability to access complex text.

Libraries are regarded as one of the institutions that have a role in advancing information literacy and education in the society. According to Dike (2003), the information society, as a concept, sum up the new world order where the position of nations, their power, wealth and influence, increasingly depend on their access to and ability to use information. In fact, for any individual or group to navigate well in this increasing computer age, information literacy is essential. The provision of library and information services, preservation and conservation is a *sin qua non*. Access to, and ability to use information among Nigerians is the most important factor by which Nigeria can remain the giant of Africa and achieve its dream to emerge among the twenty largest world economies by the year 2020. The information age has led to a shift in the global economy's focus from physical resources to the way information is manipulated (Castells, 2000)

Utilization of Information to Create

Knowledge

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has become the major driving force behind this shift. The challenge of keeping up with the information economy particularly affects developing countries. However, one barrier to the efficient utilization of ICT in developing countries is the relative low level of information literacy. Without the ability to manipulate and use information effectively, investments in ICT for development projects may not be successful. Without information literacy, Nigeria as a nation may continue to underutilize the technology that is provided. (Pejova, 2002), and this underutilization may result in a waste of resources with serious repercussions for their development. Efforts should be made by academic libraries in the relevant ICT skills in order to educate the users on the use of these library materials which will invariably lead to effective and efficient manipulation of these materials to enhance information literacy in Nigeria.

Evaluation

According to Wolpert (1999), academic libraries are cost effective information service and provider of knowledge products to a resident community of scholars." For them to function and provide timely information at a faster speed to lecturers, researchers and students, they should realize the importance of information literacy skills in their job performance and make it available to their workforce.

Location

Since the library is the agency that manages access to the social transcript paid for by the community, It is a widely shared belief that the library, particularly those funded by educational institutions, should be the lead agency in locating, articulating, promoting and developing the community's and the nation's information literacy. (Stanger, 2009). Academic libraries have a lot to do in promoting the country's information literacy especially in the area of preservation and conservation of library material.

Recognition of the Need For Information

Being information literate aids the recognition of the need for information in any platform for accessing information. According to Lau (2006) in evaluation it has to do with assessment which leads to analysing, generalizing, and then organization which encompasses categorizing, structuring and organizing.

Conclusion

Academic libraries have serious work to do in terms of the preservation and conservation of their materials which are housed and taken care of by them. These materials are important because they house in them all aspects of information literacy. The study has revealed that information literacy aid effective and efficient information use and leads to access of information. The rate at which information literacy will thrive depends on the good nature of the materials. And so, the need for information as this paper states has given rise to the ways of improving information literacy for all.

Recommendations

- There should be regular trainings through workshops and seminars on the librarians to enable them inculcate or educate the users.
- Preservation and conservation of these library materials are vital therefore, there should be mastery of the ways to protect, handle and organize these materials
- Information literacy should be given pride of place in academic libraries with the assistance of the librarians who will always teach them on the information literacy skills to locate, recognize and retrieve information.

References

- Adamu, A.: <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/09/illiteracy-rate-nigeria-alarming-fg-2/?relatedposts-hit=1&relatedpost-origin=593133&relatedpost-postition=1>.
- Aguolu, C. C. & Aguolu, L. E. (1989). [I project.com.ng/library-science/preservation-and-conservation-of-library-materials/index.htm](http://project.com.ng/library-science/preservation-and-conservation-of-library-materials/index.htm).
- Amazi, I. (2015). Preservation of information resources in academic libraries in Nigeria: case study of Federal University of technology, Owerri. (BLIS Project). Imo State University, Owerri.
- American Library Association (1989). Presidential Committee on Information Literacy: Final report. Available www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlpubs/whitepapers/presidential.Htm. at
- Bothma, T. J., Cosijn, E., Fourie, I. & Penzhorn, C. (2014). *Navigating IL: Your information society survival toolkit* (4th ed.). Pearson, Cape Town.
- Castells, M. (2010). "End of Millennium The Information Age, Economy, Society and Culture". (2nd ed. Vol. 3) Malden, M.A. USA: Black well Publishers.

- Dike, V.W. (2007). "Constructing Knowledge Societies for Sustainable Development" A keynote Address at the First Annual Conference of the Association for Promoting Life Long Learning in Nigeria (APPL) held at ESUT Enugu on August, 10 P.3
- Edom, B. O. (2012). *Principles of the use of the library*. Owerri: Springfield publishers...
- IFLA-PAC China (2006). Strategic Plan 2006-2008 Retrieved 8th November, 2017 from <http://www.nlc.gov/Cn/en/service/Iflapacchinacentre/strategic.htm>
- Lau, J. (2006). Guidelines on information literacy for lifelong learning: final draft. IFLA. Available at: <https://www.lead.org/files/assets/information-literacy/publications/ifla-guidelines-en.pdf>
- Madu, E. C. & Adeniran, T.N. (2005). *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal)
- Okpala, H. N., Bennch, E. A., Sefu, A., & Kalule, E. (2017). Advancing the information literacy skills of postgraduate students in University of Nigeria. *Journal of Applied information science and Technology*. 10(2). Available from: jaistonline.org/vol1no2i-2017.html.
- Pejova, Z. (2002) "Information Literacy: An issue which requests Urgent Action in Developing Countries and Countries in transition". Paper Presented at the UNESCO, the U.S. National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, and the National forum on information literacy, for use at the information literacy meeting of Experts.
- Singh, J. & Kaur, T. (2009). Future of Academic Libraries in India: Challenges and Opportunities. A paper presented at the International Conference on Academic Libraries (ICAL) held at the University of Delhi, India 52p.
- Smith, A. (1999). The future of the past: preservation in Amorval Research Libraries. Washington, D.C: Council of Library and Information Resources.
- Stanger, Keith (2009) "Implementing Information Literacy in Higher Education: a Perspective on the roles of librarians and Disciplinary faculty. LIBRES Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal Vol. 19, Issue 1, March.
- UNESCO: iprojectcom.ng/library-science/preservation-and-conservation-of-library-materials/index.htm.
- Wopert, A. (1999), In L. A. Ogunisola, B. F. Akindojutimi & Adenika Damilda Omoike (2011). Information Literacy in Nigeria higher Institutions - Any Role for librarians Ozean Journal of social sciences 4(2), 2011.
- Zurkwosk, P.G. (1974): Creative Commons Attribution-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293703989_Foundations_of_information_literacy_Learning_literacy_Learning_from_paul_zurkowski