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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CATALOGUING POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. A correlational research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 115 professional librarians across eight federal universities, which are University of Benin, University of Calabar, University of Uyo, University of Port Harcourt, Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Federal University Otuoke, Nigeria Maritime University Okerenkoko, and Federal University of Technology Akwa Ibom. The census sampling technique was used, and data were collected using a structured four-point Likert scale questionnaire. Data were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The findings revealed a strong, positive and significant relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery. Respondents affirmed the adoption of cataloguing policies and the provision of cataloguing services. The study concludes that effective implementation of cataloguing policy enhances access and retrieval of library resources, and recommends that library management should provide up-to-date cataloguing and classification tools while government and university authorities should employ qualified professional librarians and ensure continuous training and retraining. The study provides empirical evidence across all federal universities in South-South Nigeria, thereby filling a gap left by previous descriptive studies limited to one or two libraries in a single state.

Keywords: Cataloguing Policy, Service Delivery, Academic Libraries, Federal Universities.

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Introduction

Every library requires a framework that guides how materials are arranged, described and retrieved. That framework is the cataloguing policy. It is a formal document that outlines the rules, standards, and procedures for cataloguing operations, ensuring consistency, accuracy, and uniformity in the organisation of knowledge resources (Nwachi et al., 2021). It specifies descriptive cataloguing, subject cataloguing, and authority control, and mandates adherence to standardised tools such as Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules Second Edition (AACR2), Resource Description and Access (RDA), Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC), International Standard Bibliographic Description (ISBD), Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH), Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC), and Library of Congress Classification (LCC) (Ashikuzzaman, 2024).

Cataloguing is central to service delivery because it determines whether available resources are visible and accessible to users through the catalogue. Edmonds (2019) emphasised that cataloguing helps libraries to keep track of holdings and maintain proper identification. When bibliographic records are incomplete or inconsistent, materials remain inaccessible even when available on shelves, thereby undermining service delivery (Sevo & Lindemark, 2024).

Library service delivery refers to the processes through which libraries provide information resources and services to meet users' needs. Oloyede et al. (2024) described it as a user-focused process increasingly supported by ICT tools, while Nworie et al. (2023) defined it as activities targeted at meeting user and community information needs. Effective delivery depends on availability, dependability, usability and responsiveness (Republic of Uganda, Ministry of Local Government, 2013).

This study focuses on federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The zone comprises six states and eight federal universities: University of Benin, University of Calabar, University of Uyo, University of Port Harcourt, Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun, Federal University Otuoke, Nigeria Maritime University Okerenkoko, and Federal University of Technology Akwa Ibom. In practice, observations and interactions with librarians in the zone suggest weak implementation of cataloguing policy, use of outdated tools, backlogs, inadequate staffing, and reliance on manual methods, affecting quality of service delivery. Previous studies in

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Nigeria were limited to one or two libraries within a single state and adopted descriptive designs without examining relationships. No empirical study has examined the relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery across all federal universities in South-South Nigeria using a correlational approach. This gap forms the basis for the present study.

Statement of the Problem

When cataloguing policy is properly applied, library operations run smoothly and users are served better. Resources are described using standardised tools such as Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules Second Edition (AACR2), Resource Description and Access (RDA), and Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC) format, thereby enhancing retrieval and service delivery. In many Nigerian university libraries, however, this ideal is not achieved.

In federal universities in South-South Nigeria, observations and interactions with librarians reveal inconsistent application of cataloguing rules, use of outdated tools, backlogs, and reliance on manual methods. Consequently, some materials are not adequately represented in the catalogue and remain inaccessible to users even when available on the shelves, thereby undermining effective service delivery.

Previous studies on cataloguing in Nigeria were largely limited to one or two libraries within a single state and adopted descriptive designs that only identified challenges without examining relationships between variables. More importantly, no empirical study has examined the relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery across all federal universities in South-South Nigeria using a correlational approach. There is therefore a gap in empirical evidence on whether adherence to cataloguing policy relates to service delivery in this zone. This study was undertaken to fill that gap and provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

Aim of the Study

The aim of the study was to examine the relationship between library cataloguing policy and service delivery in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Research Question

What is the relationship between library cataloguing policy and service delivery in federal universities in South-South Nigeria?

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Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant relationship between library cataloguing policy and service delivery in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Cataloguing in library management is described as the systematic process of creating metadata for library materials to support organisation, discovery, and access, and it forms the foundation for searching and retrieving items in integrated library systems (Koha Support, 2023). Adekanmi (2023) notes that cataloguing involves creating detailed bibliographic records for individual library items to aid discovery, while classification provides a systematic framework for grouping materials by subject, and both processes rely on standardised rules to enhance organisation and access in libraries.

Ashikuzzaman (2024) notes that standardized cataloguing rules and standards such as AACR2, RDA, MARC, ISBD, LCSH, DDC, and LCC are fundamental to library operations because they ensure consistency, accuracy, and interoperability across library systems. By providing a uniform framework for describing and classifying materials, these standards enhance resource discovery, facilitate resource sharing between libraries, and improve the overall user experience. The author further highlights that adherence to such standards streamlines cataloguing workflows, supports diverse formats including digital resources, and enables libraries to deliver more efficient and accessible services. The National Library of New Zealand (2024) demonstrates that adherence to internationally recognised cataloguing standards — including RDA for description, MARC21 for encoding, LCSH and Māori subject headings for subject access, and DDC for classification — ensures consistency, interoperability, and improved access to library collections.

Kunesh (2024) outlines the Public Information Network for Electronic Services (PINES) cataloguing policy, which mandates the use of RDA for description, WebDewey for classification, MARC21 for encoding, and LCSH/Genre-Form terms for subject access. The policy requires statewide adherence through Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) subscriptions to ensure standardized, interoperable records across all participating libraries. Sevo and Lindemark (2024) describe cataloguing as the essential process that connects physical library materials to the database, where cataloguers interpret and enter metadata according to evolving standards and rule

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systems. They stress that accuracy, language skills, and historical knowledge are required, especially for older materials, and note that errors or missing metadata directly compromise searchability and user access. The authors also highlight Sweden's LIBRIS system, where 500 libraries share bibliographic records, showing how standardized cataloguing supports resource sharing and service delivery.

Institutional cataloguing policies play a critical role in shaping how archival materials are described, managed, and accessed. Bangor University's Archives and Special Collections highlights this in its Cataloguing Policy and Strategy, which defines cataloguing as "the process of creating multi-level descriptions which convey the context and content of archives and promote access to them" (Bangor University, 2024). A cataloguing policy outlines the principles, standards, and procedures guiding metadata work. It specifies the ethical considerations and practices applied in describing library resources to facilitate user access and retrieval (Capilano University Library, 2025). According to the State Library Victoria (2020), a cataloguing policy provides the rules for preparing bibliographic metadata to represent collection materials. It ensures the use of appropriate standards to enable discovery, access, and efficient inventory control. Adhikari (2019) describes a library catalogue as a record of both print and non-print materials available in a library. Cataloguing, therefore, involves preparing records that allow users to quickly identify and locate documents. It serves as a guide to the library's collection and as a retrieval tool, and it may be organized in print or accessed online. Edmonds (2019) notes that cataloguing helps libraries to know what they hold, where items are located, and their relevance. It also supports decision-making on priorities and resource allocation. Cataloguing rules typically organize bibliographic description into eight areas: title and statement of responsibility, edition, material-specific details, publication and distribution, physical description, series, notes, and standard number.

Challenges in Cataloguing Policy Implementation

Hider (2014) recommended the adoption of more innovative search systems in cataloguing to save users' time and improve service delivery. Several studies have identified challenges affecting cataloguing in academic libraries. Muthee (2017) reported the use of outdated tools, inadequate knowledge of cataloguing rules, poor application of standards, backlogs, lack of stationery, shortage of professional staff, and reliance on manual systems.

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Similarly, Moustapha (2021) and Posigha et al. (2019) identified insufficient staffing, lack of modern tools, cataloguing and classification backlogs, and low staff motivation as major challenges in technical service departments. They further noted that poor funding and low motivation, including lack of promotion and salary increment, contribute to weak adherence to cataloguing policy.

Ukwueze et al. (2025) observed that the absence of full automation and clear cataloguing policies in academic libraries contributes to challenges like inadequate staff, outdated tools, and manual processes, and they recommended institutional support through policy, funding, and regular training to improve cataloguing efficiency and resource access. Posigha et al. (2019) also observed positive prospects such as increased advocacy for library automation, external training opportunities, and the shift from manual to computerized systems, which may improve technical services. Other challenges include those specific to electronic resources. Adebayo (2012) highlighted inadequate physical description of some e-resources, weak workflow in cataloguing sections, and copyright issues as key barriers in Nigerian academic libraries. In addition, prolonged periods without cataloguing practice and lack of training in modern tools further weaken policy implementation. Failure to adhere to cataloguing rules often results in errors in cataloguing activities, which ultimately affect the timeliness and quality of service delivery.

Capacity Building for Cataloguers

Nwachi et al. (2021) stressed the need for continuous education and retraining of cataloguers through workshops and seminars to update their skills and align with current standards. Iwhiwhu (2020) added that inadequate cataloguing and classification textbooks also affect the training of students, leading to graduates with weak cataloguing skills. Essentially, while cataloguing policies are meant to guide how library materials are described and retrieved, issues such as inadequate staff, obsolete tools, and limited training undermine their application and ultimately impact library service delivery.

Service Delivery in Libraries

Library service delivery refers to the process through which libraries provide information resources and services to users. Oloyede et al. (2024) described it as a user-focused process increasingly supported by internet and ICT tools in the 21st century. Similarly, Quadri et al. (2024)

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noted that it involves organizing and providing information resources in ways that satisfy users' needs and expectations. Nworie et al. (2023) further defined it as activities targeted at meeting user and community information needs. Supporting this, Onuoha et al. (2015) affirmed that embracing ICT is necessary for innovation and efficient service delivery.

In addition, the Republic of Uganda, Ministry of Local Government (2013) outlined key principles for effective service delivery: availability, dependability, usability, usefulness, credibility, authenticity, responsiveness, flexibility, sustainability, and expandability. These principles suggest that library services should be timely, user-focused, reliable, and adaptable to changing user needs.

Empirical review

Ukwueze et al. (2025) compared cataloguing and classification challenges in ESUT Library and Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, UNN using a descriptive survey of 17 cataloguing staff. Findings showed both libraries use manual and online methods but are not fully automated. Major challenges include inadequate staff, lack of modern tools, manual processes, limited training, and time-consuming work, with NAL staff reporting slightly higher ICT and cataloguing skills gaps. The study recommended automation, staff training, provision of ICT tools, and institutional support.

This study is related to the present study as both examined cataloguing and classification challenges in Nigerian academic libraries and used questionnaire for data collection. However, while the reviewed study adopted a descriptive survey design in 2 university libraries with a population of 17 staff, the present study employs a correlational research design in 8 federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria with a population of 115 professional librarians.

Moustapha (2021) carried out a study on the challenges and prospects of cataloguing and classification in academic libraries in Kwara State, Nigeria, with specific focus on Kwara State University Library. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population comprised 50 practicing librarians who attended the Nigerian Library Association Annual Workshop, 2020 held at the State Library, Ilorin. A questionnaire titled "Challenges and Prospects for Cataloguing and Classification Questionnaire" was used to collect data. Out of the 50 copies distributed, 45 were retrieved and analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS.

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The findings revealed that the major challenges facing the cataloguing and classification section include inadequate staffing, lack of up-to-date cataloguing and classification tools, backlogs in cataloguing and classification, continued use of manual methods, lack of training opportunities for cataloguers, lack of medical support for eye-related problems, and lack of incentives for technical staff. On the other hand, the study identified several prospects such as increased advocacy for library automation and ICT adoption, availability of training opportunities outside the state, reduction in eye-related problems through the use of ICT, introduction of library management systems, regular workshops for updating cataloguing knowledge, and the gradual shift from manual to computerized methods. The study concluded that although challenges exist, the future of cataloguing and classification in academic libraries is promising with increased ICT adoption.

The present study is related to Moustapha (2021) because both focus on cataloguing and classification practice in Nigerian academic libraries and both used questionnaire as instrument for data collection. However, while Moustapha (2021) adopted a descriptive survey design in one university library in Kwara State with a population of 50 librarians, the current study adopts a correlational research design in eight federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The population of the current study is 115 professional librarians and the entire population was used as the sample.

Posigha et al. (2019) examined the challenges and prospects of cataloguing and classification in academic libraries in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. Using a descriptive survey design, 54 out of 66 librarians who attended the NLA Bayelsa chapter conference in 2018 responded to a questionnaire. Findings showed challenges such as inadequate staff, lack of modern tools, cataloguing backlogs, use of manual methods, and poor motivation. Prospects identified include increased advocacy for automation, ICT adoption, training opportunities, and shift to computerized methods. The study concluded that ICT adoption offers a bright future and recommended full automation and regular staff training.

This study relates to the present study in its focus on cataloguing and classification in Nigerian academic libraries and use of questionnaire. However, while Posigha et al. (2019) used a descriptive design in Bayelsa State with 66 librarians, the current study adopts a correlational design in eight federal universities in South-South Nigeria with a population of 115 professional librarians.

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Hider (2014) conducted a study on contemporary cataloguing policy and practice in Australian libraries. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 160 heads of academic and public libraries, from which a sample of 40 was selected. Data were collected using a questionnaire and analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages. The findings revealed that there was little evidence of further deskilling of cataloguing, and that there was considerable interest in the new standard, Resource Description and Access (RDA). The study recommended the effectiveness of more innovative search systems, noting that output is ultimately reliant on input.

The present study is similar to Hider (2014) in that both focus on library information policies with specific attention to cataloguing policy, and both employed a structured questionnaire for data collection. However, while Hider (2014) used a descriptive research design in Australia with a population of 160 and a sample of 40, the current study adopts a correlational research design and was conducted in eight federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The population for the present study comprised 115 professional librarians, and the entire population was used as the sample.

Anyira (2021) investigated the implementation of library and information policies in libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. The study utilized a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of 70 librarians drawn from eight public and academic libraries in Delta State, and the entire population was used as the sample. A questionnaire was used for data collection, while simple frequency tables and percentages were used for data analysis. The findings showed that most of the institutions studied did not have a written information policy statement, and the majority operated with unwritten policies. Consequently, the study recommended that regulatory bodies should make policy implementation an operational requirement for libraries and information centers, and that library staff should be trained and retrained on policy implementation processes.

The reviewed study is related to the present study as both examined the implementation of library and information policies, including cataloguing policy, and both used a structured questionnaire for data collection. However, Anyira (2021) adopted a descriptive design in eight public and academic libraries in Delta State with a population of 70, while the current study employed a correlational design in eight federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria with a population of 115 professional librarians, using the entire population as the sample.

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Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. The population of the study comprised 115 professional librarians from eight federal universities in South-South Nigeria. The census sampling technique was used, hence the entire population of 115 librarians served as the sample for the study. Out of 115 copies administered, 101 were retrieved and used for analysis. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The instrument was structured on a 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with values 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The instrument was validated by experts and its reliability was established. Data were analysed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC) to answer the research question and test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Items	Frequency
Male	44
Female	57
Total	**101**

Table 1 shows that out of 101 questionnaires retrieved from 115 librarians in federal universities in South-South Nigeria, 44 (43.6%) were male and 57 (56.4%) were female. This indicates that females formed the majority of participants.

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Table 2: Mean Ratings on Cataloguing Policies Adopted

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Tot	$\bar{X}$	Rmks
1	Use the title as it is indicated in the title page	72	27	1	1	101	3.68	Accepted
2	When a book has more than one author, the name of the first author becomes the main entry, and other author added entry	53	42	6	-	101	3.47	Accepted
3	Use city as place of publication not country	41	44	9	7	101	3.18	Accepted
4	Main pages should be written in Arabic numerals, while preliminary pages in Roman numerals	51	42	8	-	101	3.43	Accepted
5	Use List of Subject Headings to determine the subject of the material	50	31	18	2	101	3.28	Accepted
	Cumulated						3.41	**Accepted**

Table 3: Mean Ratings on Cataloguing Services Provided

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Tot	$\bar{X}$	Rmks
1	Creation of resources retrieval tools	34	67	-	-	101	3.34	Accepted
2	Cataloguing of newly acquired resources	45	53	3	-	101	3.42	Accepted
3	Assigning of subject heading to resources	20	68	6	7	101	3.00	Accepted
4	Assigning classification number to the book	50	48	1	2	101	3.45	Accepted
5	Choosing of access point to the book	52	43	4	2	101	3.44	Accepted
	Cumulated						3.33	**Accepted**

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Table 4: Pearson Correlation on Relationship between Cataloguing Policy and Service Delivery

Variable	N	r	P-value	Remark
Cataloguing Policy & Service Delivery	101	.791	< .001	Significant

Data in Table 2 revealed that respondents agreed to all five items as cataloguing policies adopted, with a cluster mean of 3.41 above the criterion mean of 2.50. The highest was use of title as indicated on the title page (M=3.68), followed by main entry under first author (M=3.47), pagination in Arabic and Roman numerals (M=3.43), use of List of Subject Headings (M=3.28) and use of city as place of publication (M=3.18).

Similarly, Table 3 showed that all five cataloguing services were affirmed with a cluster mean of 3.33. Assigning classification number was highest (M=3.45), followed by choosing access point (M=3.44), cataloguing newly acquired resources (M=3.42), creation of retrieval tools (M=3.34) and assigning subject headings (M=3.00).

Furthermore, Table 4 revealed a strong, positive and significant relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery ($r=.791$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that effective implementation of cataloguing policy significantly enhances service delivery.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study show that there is a significant relationship between library cataloguing policy and service delivery in federal universities in South-South Nigeria. This implies that effective implementation of cataloguing policy leads to improved library services, while poor implementation results in service gaps. This result agrees with Moustapha (2021), who found that challenges such as inadequate staffing, lack of modern cataloguing tools, backlogs, and low staff motivation weaken the application of cataloguing policy in academic libraries. Moustapha also noted that prospects such as ICT adoption, automation, and training can improve technical services.

It also supports Posigha et al. (2019), who reported similar challenges in Bayelsa State including inadequate staff, obsolete tools, and reliance on manual methods. They concluded that increased automation and staff training offer a brighter future for cataloguing and classification. The finding

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further aligns with Hider (2014), who stressed that quality service delivery in libraries depends on professional cataloguing practice and adherence to standards. Anyira (2021) also noted that lack of written cataloguing policy affects consistency in service delivery.

In summary, the reviewed studies and the present study confirm that cataloguing policy is central to effective service delivery. Challenges such as inadequate staff and tools continue to hinder policy implementation in Nigerian academic libraries.

Conclusion

This study was undertaken to provide empirical evidence on whether adherence to cataloguing policy relates to service delivery in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The need arose from observed inconsistent application of cataloguing rules, outdated tools, and service gaps across the zone. The study adopted a correlational design with 115 professional librarians, with 101 responses analysed. Based on major findings, the study concludes that there is a strong, positive and significant relationship between cataloguing policy and service delivery ($r = .791$, $p < .001$). Effective application of policies such as proper title transcription, main entry determination, and subject heading assignment significantly enhances services such as creation of retrieval tools, assigning classification numbers, and choosing access points. The study therefore concludes that adequate application of cataloguing policy is necessary to enhance library service delivery and ensure users have timely access to information resources in federal universities in South-South Nigeria.

Recommendations

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

1. Library management should procure and equip the cataloguing unit with up-to-date cataloguing and classification tools to support effective implementation of cataloguing policy.

2. Government and university authorities should employ qualified professional librarians to manage the cataloguing units of university libraries and ensure continuous training and retraining of technical staff.

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