
Handling of Records: The Case of St. Joseph Major Seminary Library, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine how records are handled using St. Joseph Major Seminary Library, in Akwa Ibom State, Southern Nigeria as a case in point. Three objectives and research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. A questionnaire entitled "Handling of Records Questionnaire (HRQ)" was used to elicit responses from respondents. The population of the study consisted of 445 registered library users from the seminary during the 2019/2020 academic session. 150 respondents were sampled using random sampling technique. Out of the 150 copies of questionnaire distributed, 146 were properly filled and returned. Research questions were answered using simple percentages. It was concluded from the findings of the study that improper handling of records such as mutilation and defacement adversely affects library records. As such the library should properly manage its records to curtail mutilation and defacement for adequate availability, accessibility and utilization. It was recommended among others that library orientation, or formal user education programme allotted with credit hours can be incorporated as part of the school programme for Seminarians as this will enable them to know the disadvantages of mutilation in addition to the privileges that abound in relation to appropriate use of library facilities.

Key words: *Library materials, mutilation, defacement, seminary.*

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Introduction

At its inception in 1976, the St Joseph Major Seminary in Akwa Ibom State was a philosophy campus of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu under the erstwhile Onitsha Ecclesiastical Province of Anambra State, Nigeria. In the 1970s, the Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu witnessed an upsurge in population and to make for a smooth running of the system and quality formation of priests for the erstwhile province, they needed to decongest. Accordingly, in 1978, a campus for the study of philosophy also named Bigard Memorial Seminary ((affiliated to the Pontifical Urban University, Rome) was opened in Ikot Ekpene community in the present Akwa Ibom State. The Seminary existed as a philosophy campus until the 1989/ 1990 academic session when the Department of Sacred Theology was opened and the first set of theology students admitted. Consequently, the bishops of the erstwhile Onitsha Province wisely decided to re-name the seminary to St. Joseph Major Seminary, to reflect its new status. This came into effect on 1st March 1991 (St. Joseph Major Seminary Kalendarium, 2019).

The Seminary library is one of many libraries that exist to play a unique role in promoting intellectual freedom and knowledge acquisition. It is a learning laboratory for seminarians as they acquire critical thinking and problem-solving skills needed in a pluralistic society. Accordingly, it serves as a point of voluntary access to information and ideas. The library is decentralised into acquisition, processing, reference, serials, circulation, audio-visual, Africana/Nigeriana and reprographic departments. It carries out professional duties like selection, acquisition, processing, organisation, location, and retrieval of information. The major functions of the seminary library are to provide both staff and students with information materials for teaching and research purposes.

Background of the Study

However, this study discusses various forms of records handling and examines them from the perspective of mutilation, defacement and records consulted.

Records can be said to be any information or communication captured and retained in some reproducible media. They are information media created and valuable enough to be retained. Records in this context become the object, the document or medium, which carries the information. International Standard Organisation (2001) defines a record as information created, received and maintained as evidence, and information by an organisation or a person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. This implies that an institution in its business activities creates records. Scholars such as Shepherd and Yeo (2003) opine that records may be created either in the course of an activity or afterwards in conscious act of record keeping. How records are handled is therefore vital as records relay information about an activity; they provide evidence that an activity occurred, and therefore serve as a source by which decisions are made. This is evidenced by Mnjama and Wamukoya (2004) who observed that records are valuable assets that need to be managed and protected. The authors further stressed that besides providing essential evidence of organisational activities, transactions and decisions; records also support business functions and are critical for organisational performance. Records enable organisations to conduct business and deliver services in a consistent, equitable, orderly and efficient manner. It also supports and documents policy formulation and managerial decision making, continuity and productivity in administration. It also facilitates the effective performance of activities throughout an organisation, meet legislative and regulatory requirements including archival, audit and oversight activities.

Records carry the history of organisations and history cannot properly be told to the future generations if records are not properly and systematically kept. As indicated from the above benefits accrued from proper handling of records, organisations have a mandate to ensure proper handling of records by always checking against mutilation and defacement in order to enhance quality service delivery to its clients.

The act of mutilation of records especially print materials is one of the ways that a library user exhibit improper behavior in handling of records. Mutilation refers to the act of rendering a thing or book imperfect by cutting off or destroying a part of it (Crayey, 2001). Experience has shown that several records in the library have had pages torn from them. This especially happens in cases where copies of a record are few with many users. Sometimes also, this could be because some users want to deprive other users of the said material, especially during examination period or a crucial term paper. Hart (2003) asserts that mutilation of information materials would include such acts as cutting pages, highlighting, underlining, marking notices in margins and adding materials, such as stickers or letters that are not meant to be part of the materials. Afolabi (2011) stated that mutilation of information materials is caused not only by library users but by insects and other animals. The author also emphasised that recent studies have attributed the greatest agent that mutilates information materials to be human being, and mostly library users. This is in addition to climatic conditions including hazards. Mutilation is to remove part of, or to deform. Mutilation of records therefore involves removal of pages or small portion of the paper that carries the recorded information. Some of the materials at the most risk of being mutilated are reference sources such as encyclopaedia, rare books containing plates, unique (architectural) drawing and sensational records which are not usually on the open shelves.

Defacement of records normally occurs through the use of pencil, pen and crayon markings or writings on records' surfaces thereby distorting and rendering records useless. This could also be in the form of writing notes on the printed pages, painting over pictures or text, spilling liquid such as coffee, tea or soup on printed materials. Spilling food items on a book not only defaces the book but also invites rodents into the library which could also affect other books. Carol (2004) opines that library materials also subject to a range of defacement because some people

just like to write in books they have borrowed, use a highlighting pen, or annotate a text to help them work, while some people deface books to convey a personal message of the political, religious, or social belief. Holt (2007) suggested several methods to deal with abuse of information materials, especially those that involve mutilation and defacement. They are, the installation of high security lock systems, tightening of collection movement procedures, marking collections to indicate ownership, good record keeping and undertaking periodic inventories.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to determine the handling of records at St. Joseph Major Seminary Library in Akwa Ibom State, Southern Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Ascertain types of records consulted by users of St. Joseph Major Seminary library in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria.
2. Determine ways by which mutilation of records occur in St. Joseph Major Seminary Library, Akwa Ibom State.
3. Ascertain defacement of records in St. Joseph Major Seminary Library, Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

This research work would be guided with the following research questions:

1. What types of records are consulted by users of St. Joseph Major Seminary library in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria?
2. What are the ways by which mutilation of records occur in St. Joseph Major Seminary Library, Akwa Ibom State?
3. In what ways do defacement of records occur in St. Joseph Major Seminary Library in Akwa Ibom State?

Literature Review

Handling of records is an essential component of library services. An effective handling of records allows the library to render better user service, provides legal defensibility and leads to improved profitability. Hence, it is necessary to accord high priority to records management to avoid organizational challenges that may arise owing to poor handling of records (Robles & Langemo, 2016). As much as people try to deny it, handling of records has a distinct link with productivity. The quicker an organization can locate a file or important legal document, the more productive it will be (Peters, 2011). This simply implies that an organization needs to learn more effective ways to handle its daily paper flow (Shaver, 2011). Although not all records are equally important, they are all records that must be faithfully managed in accordance with the law. The principal task of handling of records is to help employees manage the records in their desks, cabinets, and computers. Proper handling of records for institution help yield good results in respect to availability of information. It enhances service delivery and growth of an organisation. Proper handling of records should be part and parcel of the strategic functions of an organisation. Further, Shepherd (2006) states that proper handling of records provides the following benefits:

- i. Records which are well managed will help an organization to conduct business in an efficient, accountable manner, deliver services consistently, support managerial decision making and transparent policy formulation and ensure continuity in policy execution, management and administration.
- ii. Effective records handling will help the organisation to respond to planned or unplanned events such as audits or disasters.
- iii. It will also protect the interest and rights of present and future stakeholders, including employees, clients, government policy makers, historians and citizens maintaining corporate memory

- iv. It provides evidence of organisational activity for litigation support.
- v. An effective management plan will ensure that records are available for use when needed.

According to Gama (2010) the nature of organisation and its activities determines the types of records it generates and receives from other sources. With regards to the Seminary, philosophy and theology as departments, performs various activities that result in the accumulation of a vast amount of records. The various records generated may be of less value warranting their disposition immediately after they are used whereas some are vital to the seminary for purposes of tracking what is happening and for efficient planning purposes. Therefore the Records created and received in the course of organisation's activities should be properly managed to allow easy access and retrieval whenever they are needed (Gama, 2010). According Federal Office, (2013) Records are classified into the following categories:

Legal Records: These are Records created to evidence business transactions or legal decisions for example; contracts, agreements, leases, policy records, case files and correspondences. Also, Shephard (2004) writes that legal records are generated specifically from the work of courts, the police, and public prosecution. Within legal context, records serve legal functions. Legal records support legal rights and obligations with the legal system, also provide proof that a particular activity took place. Legal records contribute to accountability in an organization and in government. Shephard (2004), adds that such records includes: subpoena, which is a court order requiring the giving of evidence or the production of document, order of discovery, documents to one or both parties to produce documents on order for discovery. Discovery may also be made to produce a body who is not a party to the proceedings.

Administration Records: They are created to document policies, procedure and guidelines like directives manuals and reports Saleem (2000), staff in this section manages records and information systems related to personnel transactions such as employment, seniority, leave of absence, terminations and changes of status. Records or registry staffs also maintain official employee files. Saleemi (2000) classified records to the line of life cycle as active and archival records.

Research Records: These are created to determine trends, recent developments or new information related to an organization's product. Research records refer to any type of records or materials that document your research effort. These can be electronic or hard copy as in various forms of logs, notebooks, correspondence, videos, computer databases, audio or digital records, or even the actual products of experiments (Saffady, and William, 2009). In addition, research records helps to maintain accurate and complete research records for data analysis, all records relating to the conduct of the project are important, including those that document the management of the research funds and the intellectual property (palmer, M. 2000). Although not an inclusive list, research records typically include: laboratory research, lab notes, computer databases, microscopic slides, gels, images, photos, videos, laboratory equipment printouts, and records of records of statistical and other data analysis.

Financial Records: These are created for accounting and fiscal use. Examples include financial statement and tax forms. Formal documents representing the transactions of a business, individual or and other organization. Financial records maintained by most businesses include a statement of retained earnings and cash flow, income statements and the company's balance sheet and tax returns. Keeping financial records organized is a key element in a successful business (Mackie, 2007).

However other scholars have also come up with different types of records depending on their currency and functions. According to

Sennabulya, (2013) there are three types of Records based on currency and these include:

Active or Current Records: These are active records such as open files that are in use for conducting the current business of the organisation. It was also emphasised that current records and documents that are constantly in use should therefore be maintained close to the users.

Semi-Active or Semi-Current Records: These are records that consist of the recently closed files. They are only infrequently used. They should be entered in a closed records register and systematically transferred and organised in a departmental or organisational records centre. The register acts as a retrieval tool.

Non-Active or Non-Current Records: These are documents that are scarcely ever referred to for the conduct of business operations. Non-current or non-active records should be reviewed and appraised in order to make judgment on their further retention and those that are selected as valuable records should be preserved in the records centre, or with prior arrangements transferred to a National Archives for long term preservation as archival records.

Challenges of Handling of Records

Challenges of handling of records include inaccessibility of the records, while the sensitivity of some records has brought several challenges to managing institutions. The commonest relates to storage, access, safety and security. Organizations which use primarily manual based records practices experience storage problems. Access to records is another challenge that users and custodians face. Sometimes there is conflict on the ownership and the right of access to a critical record. Insecurity of the system is another challenge of records handling. The safety and security of records is a challenge to personnel in-charge of records. Nicholson (1996) revealed that there were numerous instances

where important documents and notes were not kept in secure conditions. When records are not properly handled, without proper security measures, they can be misused, mutilated and defaced which can lead to possible violations of privacy and confidentiality of records. (Berg, 2012) among others, is concerned about the misuse of records and state that: the confidentiality of records is threatened in many different ways. Most news worthy is the misappropriation and disclosure of records for financial gain or to cause harm or embarrassment. Another challenge of handling of records is technical nature of records. Gartee (2007) points out that a disadvantage of electronic record is that they are technical in nature; and demand training before they can be used. In addition, they lack standardized terminology and which render it hard to implement. Some of the challenges of using electronic records are security related. Security lapses might compromise the privacy and confidentiality of records.

Solution to the Challenges of Handling Records

A viable solution to the challenges of handling records is the use of a computer based records management practices, which comprise an information filter for assuring that record data units offered to the practices for storage are complete and not redundant. These record data units may be electronic in nature, scanned from paper, digitally formed from audio, video or otherwise formed as digital data information media, an objective of the disclosed practices being to eliminate paper or microform record keeping (Jobs, 2016). For handling of records to be effective and successful it should be based on certain principles and fundamentals such as data retrievals and data safety. Another solution to challenges of handling of records is recognizing this multi-format reality of paper and electronic records. This is the key first step to properly managing the hybrid environment since a record is a record regardless of the format it takes. In the hybrid world, every file may exist in both paper and electronic formats (Chell, 2016).

Another solution is to establish universal control over the entire lifecycle of a record, regardless of format. These controls include a records classification scheme, a retention schedule, indexing structures, and centralized storage (including both physical storage and electronic). Universal controls help you avoid the trap of having one approach for paper records and another for electronic records (Wallace, 2017).

From the literature review, the researchers conclude that proper handling of records in libraries and information centres should be encouraged because of avalanche values of records acting as a vital asset in an organization, as corporate memory and organization and information resource for strategic planning purposes. Though a lot has been discussed on handling of records practices there is still a vacuum and diversity in analyzing the issue, therefore it is of very great importance that this study discusses various forms of records handling and examines them from the perspective of mutilation and defacement.

Statement of the Problem

In any standard institution, libraries are known for their robust collection of literature that can help in providing information resources and services to support teaching, learning, research and community services. A seminary library is built to meet the needs of students, lecturers and researchers through the provision of qualitative and adequate information resources and services. However, preliminary investigation by the researchers reveal that the seminary have good and accessible records and other information materials, though, the manner in which these records are handled to avoid mutilation and defacement is yet to be fully determined or known. Therefore, this study seeks to find out handling of records in terms of mutilation and defacement in St. Joseph Major Seminary library in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It will also indicate types of records consulted at the seminary library.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the research study. Descriptive survey design was adopted because it is fact-finding in nature. Uhegbu (2009) noted that descriptive survey aims to provide an accurate measurement of the distribution of certain characteristics in a given population. The population of the study consists of 445 seminarians during the 2019/2020 academic session. Simple random sampling technique was adopted to select 150 seminarians as respondent for the study. The sampling technique was adopted because it gave all the seminarians equal chance of being selected. The instrument for data collection was a 19-item researchers' structured questionnaire entitled "Handling of Records Questionnaire (HRQ)". The instrument was presented in two sections. Section A sought information about the personal data of the respondent while section B had 19 questions geared at eliciting information about handling of records in accordance with the objectives of the study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed by the main author being a seminary librarian to enhance quick administration and retrieval. Out of the 150 copies of questionnaires distributed only 146 were properly filled and returned. The data collected from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics in answer to the research questions.

Result and Discussion:

Table 1: Utilisation of Records in St. Joseph Major Seminary (N= 146)

s/no	Type sof records	Yes	No
1	Maps	136 (93 %)	10 (7 %)
2	Monogrpahs	123 (84 %)	23 (16 %)
3	Literature	139 (95 %)	7 (5 %)
4	Newspaper	107 (73 %)	39 (27 %)
5	Journlas	132 (90 %)	14 (10 %)
6	e-resourcs	3 (2 %)	143 (98 %)
7	Reference sources	124 (97 %)	4 (3 %)
8	Magazines	127 (87 %)	19 (13 %)
9	Others: speeches, proedding, bulleting, encyclicals	140 (96 %)	6 (4 %)

To ascertain the types of records used in the seminary library, the frequency and the percentages were computed as indicated and analysed in table 1 above. The highest utilized records in the library as presented in the table are reference resources. The data reveals that 142(97%) of the respondents use reference sources such as dictionaries, encyclopedias etc. This is followed by 140(96%) who use 'other' records like speeches, communiqués, conference proceedings, bulletins, encyclicals, biographies/autobiographies. However, 139 (95%) of the respondents used literature in the form of text books in the library and the study also indicated that 136 (93%) of respondents utilize maps. The rate at which respondents utilized journals in the library stood at a frequency of 132(90%). The study also revealed the use of magazines with a frequency of 127(87%), while newspapers have the frequency of 107(73%). Also from the study, use of monographs has frequency of 123(84%). Based on the analysis, the least utilized records in the library are e-resources with the frequency of 3(2%). On the contrary, 4(3%) do not use reference sources in the library, while 6(4%) do not use other records like speeches, communiqués, conference proceedings, bulletins, encyclicals, biographies/autobiographies in the library. Moreover, 7(5%) did not use literature while 10 (7%) did not utilize maps in the library. Meanwhile, 14(10%) of the respondents did not make use of journals while 19(13%) did not make use of magazines respectively. 23 (16%) respondents did not make use of monographs while 39 (27%) did not utilize newspaper. The records with the highest utilized rate at 143(98%) are e-resources.

Table 2: Mutilation of Records in St. Joseph Major Seminary

S/No	Mutilation	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1	Students remove pages of that are important occasionally	76	52	43	29	16	11	11	8
2	Students practice folding pages of recorded materials	55	38	49	34	34	23	8	5
3	Mutilation occurs through climatic conditions including hazards	29	20	57	39	42	29	18	12
4	Mutilization is mostly caused by insects and other pests	73	50	59	41	9	6	5	3
5	Library users write on book pages in the library	67	46	46	29	34	23	3	2

Table 2 gives the summary of the simple percentage of how mutilations of records occur in St. Joseph Major Seminary. Highest number of the respondents (81%) revealed that removing pages of materials occasionally was foremost while 19% disagreed to the statement. Meanwhile, 72% responded that students practice folding pages of recorded materials while 28% of respondents disagreed. Respondents who agreed that mutilation occurs through climatic conditions including hazards have 59% with

disagreement rate of 41%. Furthermore, 91% of respondents agreed that mutilations are mostly caused by insects while 9% disagreed. Finally, 75% respondents agreed that library users write on book pages in the library while 25% respondents disagreed.

Table 3: Defacement of Records in St. Joseph Major Seminary

S/No	DEFACEMENT	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
1	Library users Use pen /maker to deface library materials	43	29	76	52	11	8	16	11
2	Writing on pages of records occur in our library.	49	34	55	38	34	23	8	5
3	Selfishness is the main factor for defacement	57	39	29	20	42	29	18	12
4	Spilling liquid on printed records brings about defacement	73	50	59	41	9	6	5	3
5	Library users deface materials while reading, for emphasis	42	29	67	46	3	2	34	23

The result in table 3 shows the summary of percentages for Defacement of Records in St. Joseph Major Seminary. The result shows that library users used pen and maker to deface materials in the library, 81% of respondents agreed to this statement while 19% disagreed. In addition, 72% of respondents agreed that writing on book pages occurs in their library while 28% disagreed. Meanwhile, respondents who agreed that selfishness is the main factor for defacement were 59% while 41% disagreed. Furthermore, 91% agreed that spilling liquid on printed records brings about defacement while 9% disagreed. Finally, 75% of respondents agreed that library users deface materials while reading for emphasis with disagreement rate of 25%.

Discussion of Findings

To ascertain the types of records used in the seminary library, the frequency and the percentages were computed as indicated and analyzed in table 1. The highest utilized records in the library as presented in the table are reference resources while the most under-utilized resources are the e-resources. It has also been discovered that reference resources of the seminary library are easily accessible to users thereby enhancing greater utilization while e-resources are not utilized because they are not accessible. The findings agree to the statement that the quicker an organization can locate a file or important document, the more productive it will be (Peters, 2011). As such, an organization needs to learn more effective ways to handle its daily paper flow by making it easily accessible for utmost utilization by users. Mutilation of records occurs as the highest number of the respondents revealed that removing pages of materials occasionally was foremost. This especially happens in cases where copies of a record

are few with many users. Sometimes also, this could be because some users want to deprive other users of the said material, especially during examination period or a crucial term paper (Crayey, 2001). The result in table 3 shows the summary of percentages for Defacement of Records in St. Joseph Major Seminary. The result shows that library users used pen and marker to deface materials in the library and that spilling liquid on printed records brings about defacement. The findings agree with the opinion of Carol (2004) who opines that library materials are subject to a range of defacement because some people just like to write in books they have borrowed, use a highlighting pen, or annotate a text to help them work, while some people deface books to convey a personal message of the political, religious, or social belief.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, the most utilized records in the library are reference resources while the least utilized resources are the e-resources. The findings have also revealed that removing pages of materials occur occasionally and students write on book pages. It was concluded from the findings of the study that improper handling of records such as mutilation and defacement adversely affect library records particularly as the nature of some materials are not types that can easily be found / procured in a regular bookshop.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The library should try to make relevant records readily available and adequate
2. Library orientation, or formal user education programme allotted with credit hours can be incorporated as part of the school programme for Seminarians, this will enable them to know the disadvantages of mutilation in addition to the privileges that abound in relation to appropriate use of library facilities.
3. Library staff on duty should always patrol round the library to prevent defacement.

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