Conservation and Preservation of Information Resources: An Assesment of Two Federal University Libraries in North East Nigeria

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Absract

This study is a survey conducted on selected federal university libraries in north east zone Nigeria. The survey covered the extent of deterioration of information resources, conservation and preservation of information resources, constraints to restoration preservation and conservation efforts on information resources in the libraries under study. Questionnaire and personnel observation methods were used as the data collection instruments for the study. Twenty seven (27) professionals and para professional staff of the libraries under study was observed during the study. Descriptive statistic of frequency count was used to analyze the data generated. Four research questions guided the study. The results of the analysis revealed that the extent of deterioration of information resources in these libraries was high. Four different methods of preservation and conservation of information resources were found to in use in these libraries. The study also identified four major constraints to preservation and conservation in each of the libraries, which included; poor nature of library building, lack of defined policy on preservation and conservation of information resources.

Introduction

Information is the moving force of any society, organization or institution. As Aguolu (1989) asserted "information and knowledge have provided the vital under-pinning for socio economic, political and cultural development in any civilization."Recognition of the potency of information in the development of society, from earliest civilization, evolved institutions whose functions among others, is the safe keeping and protection of information bearing materials. One of such institutions that had progressively survived to-date is the library. Odeh (2007) noted that libraries are repositories of knowledge in various forms, which have accumulated through the ages. The development and growth of libraries dates back to ancient times, as far back as 6000 B.C. The growth of libraries witnessed steady progress through several civilizations such as that of Egypt, Mesopatamia, Greece and Rome. Today, as a social institution, the responsibility of a library is to collect, preserve, organize and disseminate information materials. Maravilla, (2008) opined that preservation is concerned with maintaining or restoring access to artifacts, document and records through the study, diagnosis, treatment and repair of individual item to slow decay or restore them to a usable state. Okonkwo (2009) defined preservation as the totality of measures for maintainingthe integrity of document and the information contained in them which includes all the managerial and financial considerations, storage and provision of accommodation, thus preservation is therefore, a more embracing concept and it includes conservation. Sawant, (2014) states that though conservation and preservation are used synonymously, technically, these two words have different implications though they are related to each other. Conservation and preservation are the processes of keeping an object safe from harm or loss, damage, destruction or decay and maintaining it in a reasonably sound condition for present and future use. Essentially, preservation deals with the regular maintenance aspect whereas conservation deals with the curative treatment.

Ramat library, University of Maiduguri was one of the basic infrastructures established along with the University in 1975 to enhance the objective of the parent institution. It was initially housed in the former anatomy laboratory of the College of Medical Sciences of the university before it was moved, at the end of the 1977/78 academic session, to a two floor building. Presently, preliminary

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investigation revealed that the library as at present has a collection of 1,300,000 volumes of books, 20,000 current journal titles, over 186 video tapes, 17 photograph albums, and an assorted number of instructional audio tapes, film strips, compact disc, slides, various types of audio visual equipment. It was also discovered that there are over 4,287 deteriorated volumes of books (Ramat Librarian, Handbook and Prospectus, 2011-2015). Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi came on board on August 1, 1981. The library has a total stock of 52,312 volumes of books, and 1,890 serial titles (University Library, Accession Register, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The problems of information resources deterioration is an issue of very serious concern to librarians, archivists and educationists in Nigeria. Yaji (2000) in his study of preservation and conservation of library materials in polytechnic libraries in northern Nigeria, identified some of the agents and factors of deterioration which includes high humidity, temperature and sunshine, rodents, insects and mildew, dust, acids and other atmospheric contaminants, theft, mutilation, etc. Studies carried out by Olorunsola (1987), Alafiatayo (1980) and Onadiran (1988) also reported that books in academic libraries are being pilfered and mutilated at an alarming rate. The foregoing factors of deterioration coupled with poor preservation and conservation methods of information resources protection, as Alegbeleye (1996) noted, inevitably leads to unavailability of information resources in libraries, which in turn leads to users frustration. Moreover, deterioration places a high financial loss to libraries as some deteriorated materials are very expensive and can hardly be replaced. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the preservation and conservation of information resources practices in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri, Maiduguri.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions
1. What is the extent of deterioration of information resources in the libraries under study?

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2.   What are the preservation methods of information resources in the libraries under study?
3.   What are the conservation methods of information resources in the libraries under study?
4.   What are the constraints to preservation and conservation efforts in the libraries under study?

Review of Related Literature

Extent of Deterioration of Information Resources

Right from the time information began to be recorded; materials used for the recording have been susceptible to deterioration and prone to damages, as a result of their organic composition, and contact with various kinds of destructive agents as well as exposure to detrimental climatic conditions and man-made disasters. As Madu and Adeniran (2000) observed, the different materials that have been used throughout the ages as writing surfaces with the exception of stones and metals have been susceptible to deteriorating factors. Clay to worms, papyrus to insects and moisture, bark, wood and palm leaves to termites and other insects, leather and linen to rot and damp, and finally paper to light, acidity, moisture, insects, etc.

Methods of Preservation of Information Resources

Though the very first act of preservation begins with the location and consideration of the library itself, Plumbe (1964) stated that it is the province of the architect and the public works engineer rather than the librarian to protect libraries from destruction by hurricanes, typhoons, earthquakes and tidal waves. He noted that the librarian concerned with planning a new building however, must take into account the location and immediate environment of his library. The environment here for all intent includes the terrain of the planned library. After a careful consideration of the terrain, to pre-empt attack on information resources, other preservation measures to check deteriorative activities by humans, such as theft and mutilation as Dan'Azumi et al, (2001) noted, include provision of adequate security system, provision of photocopying services to ease off pressure and reduce wear and tear, and possible mutilation of most often used information resources.

Methods of Conservation of Information Resources

Conservation methods of information resources mostly include pest management through chemical controls such as fumigation. Plumbe (1964) noted that, at least four methods of fumigation of the entire library; fumigation of a few hundred infested items at a time in specially designed fumigators; routine fumigation of the entire library stock carried out at piecemeal in a gas chamber, or fumigation of a single book or a few books only in a small tight cupboard box or sealed biscuit tin. Nzotta (1982) advocated the use of commercial insecticides to fight the menace of cockroaches, bookworms, termites, etc.

Constraints to Restoration, Preservation and Conservation of information resources.

Even though impediments to preservation, conservation and restoration efforts may vary from one library to another, several factors cut across most libraries especially libraries of developing nations. The nature of the building of some libraries presents a serious setback to preservation, conservation and restoration efforts. Another militating factor is the lack of well-defined policy on preservation, conservation and restoration in most libraries of developing nations. Thus preservation, conservation and restoration of in information resources are done haphazardly, with dismal results. According to a report by Alegbeleye (1988), in Nigeria many libraries except the National Archives which cannot be said to have some conservation/restoration policies. Harvey (1993) opined that lack of funding has always been a militating factor to (restoration) preservation and conservation of library materials. Yaji (2000) in his study on preservation and conservation of library materials in polytechnic libraries in Northern Nigeria observed that most of the libraries are starved of finances mainly due to the lukewarm attitude of the management of the polytechnics towards library development, especially conservation programmes.

Methodology

Survey research method was used for this study. According to Ngu (2005), in as much as survey research is usually concerned with large populations, it can as well be used for relatively smaller populations to accurately access major

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variables of a study, and it is best suited for the coverage of a whole population or universe. Survey research seeks to explain causal relationships among variables or attempts to explain the reasons for and sources of observed conditions." That is precisely what this research work intends to do. The population of the study comprised of all librarians (professionals) and, para-professionals working in the two libraries. ATBU library Bauchi: 6 librarians and 7 para- professionals and Ramat Library: 8 librarians and 6 para-professionals, totaling 27. Purposive sampling technique was used for this study because according to Ngu (2005) in purposive or judgmental sampling, the researcher selects his sample based on the knowledge of his population, its elements and the nature of his research objectives and also when a population of study is not too large to manage. Therefore, because the population for this study is not too large to manage, the entire population was considered.

Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage scores was used to answer the research questions.

Findings:

Research Question 1: What is the extent of deterioration of information resources in ATBU Library, Bauchi and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri?

Table 4.1: Extent of Deterioration of Information Resources in the Libraries.

ATBU Bauchi Extent :	(F)	%	Ramat library Extent :	(F)	%
Very low	2	15.4	Very low	2	14.3
Low	5	38.5	low	5	35.7
High	6	46.2	high	7	50
Very high	0	0	very high	0	0
Total	**13**	**100%**	**Total**	**14**	**100%**

In Table 4.1, the data generated for research question 1 shows that of 13 respondents from ATBU Bauchi library, 6 (46.2%) indicated that the extent of deterioration of information resources in the library was high, while 5(38.5%) respondents held that the level of deterioration of information resources was low. Only 2(15.4%) of respondents from Bauchi maintained that the extent of deterioration of information resources was very low. From Ramat Library, 7(50%) of the 14 respondents indicated the level of deterioration of information

resources in their library as being high, while 5(35.7%) of them signified a low level of deterioration of information resources in their library. A mere 2(14.3%) of the 14 respondents indicated 'that the level of deterioration of information resources was very low. Based on the result of the analysis of the data, to state that the extent of deterioration of information resources in the two libraries of ATBU Bauchi and Ramat Library were high (enough to generate concern).

Research Question .2: What methods of preservation of information resources are used in ATBU Library, Bauchi and Ramat Library, Maiduguri?

Table 4.2: Method of Preservation of Information Resources in the Libraries

ATBU Bauchi Library Extent:	(f)	%	Ramat library Extent:	(F)	%
Provision of security	6	46.2	Provision of security	6	42.9
Provision of photocopy	5	38.5	Provision of photocopy	5	35.7
Strict disciplinary	2	15.5	Strict disciplinary	3	21.0
Disaster preparedness	0	0.00	Disaster preparedness	0	0.00
Toatal	**13**	**100%**	**Total**	**14**	**100%**

In Table 4.2above, the result indicated that of the 13 responses from ATBU Library

Bauchi, 6(46.2%) indicated that provision of security systems was a preservation method used in their library, 5(38.5%) indicated provision of photocopying services, while 2(15. 15%) indicated strict disciplinary measures, and 0(0%) indicated disaster preparedness respectively. In Ramat Library, out of the total of t 14 responses, 6(42.9%) indicated provision of security systems 5(35.7%) indicated provision of photocopying services and 3(21.0%) indicated strict disciplinary measures respectively, with 0(0.0%) for disaster preparedness as methods of preservation used in their library.

Based on the results of the analysis of data, it will not be out of place to assert that provision of security systems; provision of photocopying services; strict disciplinary measures; and disaster preparedness and salvage contingency measures are the preservation methods of information resources adopted in the ATBU Library, Bauchi and Ramat library.

Research Question 3: What are the methods of conservation of information resources in ATBU Library and Ramat Library?

Table 4.3. Method used for Conservation of Information Resources in the Libraries

ATBU Bauchi Extent:	(f)	%	Ramat library Extent:	(f)	%
Fumigation	6	46.2	Fumigation	3	21.0
Ventilation	5	38.5	Ventilation	5	35.7
Regular cleaning	2	15.4	Regular cleaning	6	42.9
Training of staff	0	0	Training of staff	0	0
Total	**13**	**100%**	**Total**	**14**	**100%**

Table 4.3 reveals that of a total of 13 responses from ATBU Library, 2 (15.4%) indicated that regular cleaning exercise was a method for conservation of information resources employed in their library, 6 (46.2%) respondents indicated fumigation as a method ofconservation,5 (38.5%) for provision of adequate ventilation and 0 (0.0%) indicated regular training of staff in appropriate cleaning methods. In Ramat Library, 6 (42.9%) of the 14 responses indicated that regular cleaning was a conservation method that was employed in the said library, while 5(35.7%) identified provision of adequate ventilation. This is followed by 3 (21.0%) responses which showed that fumigation was one of such methods used in the library, with 0(0%) that identified regular training of library staff in appropriate cleaning methods as another method of conservation of information resources adopted

Based on the results of the analysis of data on research question four, both libraries use the four methods for conservation of information resources in their individual libraries. These are fumigation, provision, of adequate ventilation and regular cleaning exercise.

Research Question 4: What are the constraints to preservation and conservation efforts of information resources in the libraries under study?

Table 4.4: Constraints to restoration, preservation and conservation efforts in the libraries.

ATBU, Bauchi Extent:	(f)	%	Ramat Library, Maduguri Extent:	(f)	%
Poor nature of library building	0	0	Poor nature of library building	1	7.14
Lack of defined policy	2	15.4	Lack of defined policy	4	28.6
Lack of skilled personnel	5	38.5	Lack of skilled policy	3	21.0
Lack of adequate funding	6	46.2	Lack of adequate funding	6	42.9
Total	**13**	**100%**	**Total**	**14**	**100%**

As shown in Table 4.4, the analysis of data indicates, only 2 (15.4%) indicated lack of defined policy 'on preservation and conservation of information resources as constraint, 5 (38.5%) attributed it to lack of skilled personnel in preservation and conservation of information resources while 6 (46.2%) indicated lack of adequate fund as a constraint to preservation and conservation of information resources. Out of a total number of 14 respondents from Ramat Library, only 1 (7.14%) response indicated the nature of library building as a constraint to preservation and conservation of information resources, 4 (28.6%) indicated lack of defined policy as being one of the constraints, 3 (21.0%) indicated lack of skilled personnel as a constraint while 6 (46.9%) identified lack of adequate funding as a constraint to preservation and conservation effort in their library. Based on this analysis, ATBU library, Bauchi and Ramat Library, Maiduguri faces the same constraints to preservation and conservation efforts of information resources. These were poor nature of library building, lack of defined policy on restoration, preservation and conservation of information resources, lack of skilled personnel in methods of restoration, conservation and preservation of information resources and lack of adequate funding.

Discussions

This study determined the extent of deterioration of information resources, preservation and conservation as well as constraints to preservation and conservation of information resources in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi and Ramat library, University of Maiduguri. The sample size for this study was drawn from the two (2) university libraries under study. It was made up of twenty seven (27) staff (professional and para-professionals purposively sampled. four objectives as well as four research questions guided the study. descriptive statistic of frequency counts and percentage scores were used to analyzed the data collected.

The findings of the study revealed that extent of deterioration of information resources in the libraries studied were high. This finding corroborates the study of William (2010) who stated that "everything in the library collection is deteriorating today, was deteriorating yesterday and will continue to deteriorate tomorrow, although we ought to retard the progress and also that

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of David (2009) who observed that "a large number of library resources in the tropical regions and developing nations are in advanced stages of deterioration, owing to the interplay of factors not very prominent in temperature regions and developed nations."

The finding further revealed that provision of security, photocopying services and strict disciplinary actions were the common preservation and conservation methods used in the libraries studied. This is also in line with Dan'azumi (2001) who identified provision of adequate security systems and strict disciplinary measures as preservation methods for checking material deterioration in libraries.

The finding of the study also revealed that fumigation, ventilation and regular cleaning were the most common methods employed by the libraries studied. This finding is also in conformity with Plumble (1964) who asserted that effective cleaning and ventilation impedes deterioration.

The finding also revealed that poor library building, lack of defined policy and inadequate fund are constraints to preservation and conservation efforts in the libraries studied. This finding tallied with the study of Yaji (2000) who studied preservation and conservation of library materials in polytechnic libraries in northern Nigeria and stated that the libraries lack adequate skilled manpower, lack adequate funding and lack preservation policies to implement conservation and preservation programme which has inevitably led to deterioration of many of the collections in the libraries.

The finding also revealed poor nature of library buildings, lack of defined policy, and lack of adequate funding as constraints to preservation and conservation efforts in the libraries studied.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of preservation and conservation of information resources in ATBU Library, Bauchi and Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri were low, which invariably led to the high extent of deterioration of information resources in the library Studied. This unhealthy condition could well be attributed to the formidable constraints to efforts of preservation and conservation of information resources faced by the libraries studied.

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