



Review Article

Emerging Issues in the Preservation and Conservation of Library Resources in the Development of the Nigerian Tertiary Institution Libraries in the 21st Century

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Abstract

Preservation and conservation of library artefacts and resources are important to link the previous generation of library users to the present. This will ensure continuity and progress in the library and information world. The present paper reviewed the preservation and conservation methods of library resources in the 21st century using Nigeria as a focus. The review explained the concept of preservation and conservation of library materials, identified methods of preservation and conservation of library materials, established the place of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in the preservation and conservation of library materials, and identified the constraints of preservation and conservation of library materials. The study adopted a desktop review procedure which includes the use of secondary data and findings from other empirical studies in Nigeria and abroad. The paper found that preservation is the maintenance of library information materials so that they can be closed to the original condition as much as possible, common methods preservation of library resources of clearing and dusting of library resource, Binding, Digitization, Photocopying, Lamination, Reformation, proper shelving of books to allow free flow of air, provision of enough security personnel to prevent theft and mutilation of library resources, and installation of the air conditioner in the library. ICT plays a dominant role in the preservation of library resources which is termed "digital preservation" and the major constraints identified in the preservation of library resources are inadequate to finance, inadequate Equipment/Materials, and the Problem of Infrastructural Facilities. The study concluded that the preservation and conservation of library resources are crucial to the sustenance of quality education in Nigeria. The paper recommended that school libraries should be adequately funded and ICT should be a priority in every library and there should be existing preservation policies on information resources in all school libraries in Nigeria.

Keywords: ICT, Library resources, Nigerian libraries, Preservation and Conservation

Received: 23 Oct 2020

Accepted: 12 Mar. 2021

Introduction

The Nigeria tertiary institution is the bedrock of educational development in Nigeria and all other issues relating to knowledge acquisition, sharing, and transfer. The traditional and virtual library has been vested with these tasks of knowledge acquisition, knowledge sharing, information preservation, and information conservation. Oluwaniyi, (2015) described the library as an indispensable facility of any educational institution because it houses information and other educational resources. A well-equipped institutional library is therefore very crucial to the education and general information needs of researchers, students, and its community. This is why the thought of stocking a library with adequate information resources readily comes to mind when an institution is to be established (Akporhonor, 2005).

A library is one of the social institutions that have the primary role of acquiring, processing, organizing, preserving as well as conserving the print and non-print information resources for users (Oluwaniyi, 2015). The institutional library is one of the types of libraries that play all the primary roles of acquisition, organization, processing (cataloging and classification), storing, preservation, and dissemination of information resources to students, staff, and its community users.

A library is a collection of books and other forms of recorded information purposefully selected and systematically organized and preserved by qualified library personnel for use by either the public or a target group (Oluwaniyi, 2010). Library and education are two vital institutions of socialization and perpetuation of the human race. The two cannot be separated in the all-around development of the human race. The provision of library services is therefore crucial and indispensable to both the primary and post-primary educational system. Every school needs a library; teachers and students need to use library information materials in the teaching and learning process. The achievement of a qualitative school's education program depends, to a great extent, on quick access to library information resources (Adeniji, 2006).

In the same vein, Musa (2012) reported that libraries have long played an essential role in containing, preserving, and sharing information. Many information technologies have been created over the years. The library itself has the technology to handles information storage and retrieval. University libraries are fully involved in this development as they are the heart of the University, being that they house the intellectual resources of the institutions. This effort to digitize the intellectual property of the institution is what is known as digitization (Eke, 2011). The university library was the focus of this study

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ISSN: 1597 – 9928. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

because it is the apex of education in Nigeria and the procedure of preservation and conservation of library resources starts from the university.

Libraries need to employ a variety of reformatting strategies to meet the demands of preserving the many types of materials in our collections each reformatting method in use has strengths and weaknesses. Choices have to be made based on the characteristics of the originals, the capabilities of each reformatting process, the current and anticipated needs of the user, and cost. Evaluation is key - no one solution can fit all needs. Our preservation programs must be multi-faceted and responsive to be effective. The more preservation options libraries have at their disposal, the better collection managers can meet the current needs of collections as well as the expectations of users now and in the future.

Concept of Preservation and Conservation

An overview of the concepts of “Preservation and Conservation” has erroneously been used interchangeably in some library literature (Ozioko, 2014). However, to preserve and to conserve may literarily be seen as synonymous in meaning. Fadehan (2009) observed that the essence of information is to preserve them for all future generations and also to see that the state of the materials at any period in time is to engender and achieve the latter end. He also argued that the problem of deterioration of library materials applies to all categories of materials in the library.

Institute of Museum and Library Services (2009) stressed that preservation has been described as any action that effectively extends the life or useful life of a living or non-living collection, the individual items or entities including in a collection or structure, building, or site by reducing the likelihood or speed of deterioration. It further explained that preservation actions include: planning, conservation treatment, prevention action to improve the environment or otherwise reduce the risk of damage or loss. It also points out that it deals with formatting or re-formatting to provide access without the physical use of original objects.

However, the Noah Webster dictionary defined preservation as the act of preserving or keeping in safety from harm, injury, decay, or destruction. Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa (2013) documented the work of Akande, (2009) who found that conservation and preservation of deteriorating information resources in libraries have become a global phenomenon to which libraries must aggressively respond if their mission of providing information needs of their patrons would be met. Preservation refers to the set of activities that aims to prolong the life of a record and relevant metadata, or enhance its

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ISSN: 1597 – 9928. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

value, or improve access to it through non-interventive means. This includes actions taken to influence record creators before selection and acquisition (Wikipedia, 2016). It should be distinguished from conservation, which refers to the treatment and repair of individual items to slow decay or restore them to a usable state. Conservation is occasionally used interchangeably with preservation, particularly outside the professional literature.

Preservation as a formal profession in libraries and archives dates from the twentieth century, but its philosophy and practice have roots in many earlier traditions. According to the Association of Research Libraries (2004), a research library collection is a key asset of the parent institution and research libraries have a responsibility to preserve the scholarly record. Through individual and cooperative efforts, members of the research library community are developing ways to provide an efficient means to maintain and sustain multiple formats and to manage the complexities of developing processes and services that ensure the information and resources scholars need is available now and in the future.

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Aina (2003) posited that preservation is the maintenance of library information materials so that they can be closed to the original condition as much as possible. He further explained many preservation methods such as eliminating or reducing the factors that accelerate deterioration of information resources, especially paper-based materials such as high temperature, relative humidity, and long exposure to sunlight rays. Singh and Kaur (2009) opined that preservation and access to knowledge and information resources are the main mandates of school libraries alongside supporting the mission of its establishment which is teaching and learning.

Preservation as a collection management strategy has been relegated if not neglected by librarians and documentalists for a very long time in Africa, especially in Nigeria. Therefore, knowledge of the causes of deterioration of library information resources is very essential for librarians and others who are concerned about the preservation of

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ISSN: 1597 – 9928. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

information stored in books and non-book formats (Varlamoff, 2005). Preservation is defined as everything which contributes to the physical well-being of information resources and it includes the protection, maintenance, and restoration of library and archive information resources. Oluwaniyi (2015). The term preservation also includes all the managerial and financial considerations such as storage, accommodation provision, staffing levels, policies, techniques, and methods involved in preserving library and archives information resources and the information contained in them. Preservation is an aspect of the management of the library. Its objective is to ensure that information resources of any kind or form survive in an accessible and useable form for as long as it is wanted (Popoola, 2003).

Preservation is applied to safeguard the library information resources from decay and deterioration. Preservation is the process in which all actions are taken to check and retard deterioration of information resources in the library. Preservation is a pressing concern for librarians/information professionals in all parts of the world. From time immemorial librarians have seen the need to preserve their information resources. The preservation of information resources has engaged the thoughts and actions of many librarians from the earliest times. They realized that they need to preserve the world's memories.

Methods of Preservation and Conservation of Library Resource

Ozioko (2014) identified the following types of preservation and conservation practices existing in Federal Universities in South-East Zone in Nigeria; clearing and dusting of library resource, Binding, Digitization, Photocopying, Lamination, Reformation, proper shelving of books to allow free flow of air, provision of enough security personnel to prevent theft and mutilation of library resources, and installation of the air conditioner in the library.

Role of ICT in the Preservation and Conservation of Library Resources

The role of ICT in the preservation and conservation of library resources cannot be overemphasized. Wikipedia (2017) expressed the fact that in the library and archival science, digital preservation is a formal endeavour to ensure that digital information of continuing value remains accessible and usable. It involves planning, resource allocation, and application of preservation methods and technologies (Day, 2006), and it combines policies, strategies, and actions to ensure access to reformatted and "born-digital" content, regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change.

The goal of digital preservation is the accurate rendering of authenticated content over time (Evans and Carter, 2008). According to Harrod's Librarian Glossary, digital preservation is the method of keeping digital materials alive so that they remain usable as technological advances render original hardware and software specifications obsolete. ICT preservation ranges from the use of modern internet-ready computers, Digital Video Disc (DVD), Video Compact Disc (VCD), android phones, I-pads, hard disc among others.

Constraints to Preservation and Conservation of Library Resources

Preservation challenges were known throughout the world, many experts in the field have gradually begun to realize that there were specific problems faced by conservators in different parts of the world. Therefore, for this reason, there should be a necessity for preserving information resources for all types of libraries, archives, documentation centres to face off the preservation challenges in Africa and Nigeria particularly (Teygeler *et al.*, 2001).

Inadequate Finance: Almost all African libraries, archives, and information centers do not allocate adequate funds in their annual budget for the preservation of information resources in their holdings. This has caused the low priority or lack of desired attention given to the preservation of information resources by the management of such libraries and archives.

Inadequate Equipment/Materials: Lack of suitable or inadequate equipment and materials contributes significantly to the present poor status of preservation of information resources in African libraries, archives, and information centres. Some of the essential materials and equipment required for setting up functional conservation and restoration laboratories in African libraries and archives are not available locally (ESARBICA, 2002).

The problem of Infrastructural Facilities: Preservation in African countries is facing the problem of infrastructural facilities such as inappropriate library buildings, erratic power supply, and lack of good sites to establish libraries. Many so call libraries in Africa especially school libraries are not adequately reliable for the protection of information resources. Some of these libraries could not provide for any sudden disaster, loss, decay, and unforeseen circumstances of excessive temperature, humidity, light, theft, fire, or even war.

Unfavourable Government Economic policies: The economic policies of most African governments do not favour library and archival services, so preservation activities are not given the priority attention they deserved. Such economic policies include those concerning high duties and tariffs charged on imports of preservation equipment.

Tropic Climatic Condition: The effects of the tropical climate of excessive temperature, high relative humidity, dust, and rodents that feed on paper-based resources cause rapid deterioration and decay of information resources in African libraries and archives. These agents of rapid deterioration and decay of information materials add more to the costs association with conservation and restoration of information resources in African libraries, archive and records offices (UNESCO, 2000). Popoola (2003) opined that while stressing the great need for well-established document repair and conservation units in Africa, observed that air, fungi, insect, and pest are more pronounced in the continent than elsewhere.

Quality of paper and Ink: The low quality of paper and ink used in the production of information materials especially library books and other paper-based information resources in libraries pose a danger to the preservation and conservation of information resources in African countries (Popoola, 2003).

Lack of Preservation and Conservation Knowledge: Akussah (2004) cited in Darling (2004) asserted that “until the preservation field researches the point at which most people know what ought to be done, the lack of money to do it on a scale appropriate to the need is not significant”. This submission attests to the fact that knowledge plays a key role in preservation practices. In the same vein, Ngulube (2005) thinks that the real impediment to having viable preservation programmes is not entirely resource-based, but lack of preservation knowledge.

Lack of Commitment of Librarians: Among the problems confronting preservation is lack of commitment by the available human resources, in particular, educating librarians about preservation is now widely recognized as an essential element of any plan to address the preservation problems. According to Harvey (1993), preservation education courses for library professionals are typically in one of three formats: as a part of compulsory courses such as library administration in a first professional qualification; an optional course of about one semester; or a separate qualification, for example, one or two-year courses in preservation administration. He further argued that it is also essential to offer continuing education opportunities in resource preservation for those whose qualifications need updating or those who wish to build on their existing knowledge.

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ISSN: 1597 – 9928. Science and Education Development Inst., Nigeria

In the same vein, Ozioko (2014) identified some problem associated with preservation and conservation of library resources in libraries which includes lack of trained personnel, lack of preservation and conservation policy in libraries, a harsh environmental condition in the tropical zone, little awareness of the importance of preservation and conservation among information professionals inadequate infrastructure, lack of equipment needed for preservation and conservation of library materials, frequent power failure, lack of effective sanctions among librarians, administrative bureaucracy, inadequate infrastructure and inadequate funding of the library

Conclusion

The study concluded that the preservation and conservation of library resources are crucial to the sustenance of quality education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

The paper recommended that libraries throughout Nigeria should be adequately funded and Information Communication Technology should be a priority in every library. There should also be existing preservation policies on information resources in all Nigerian libraries.

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