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## SERIAL POLICY FORMULATION AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

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### ABSTRACT

The paper discusses the need and importance of a serial policy statement formulation and implementation as a means of providing balanced, relevant and up to date information for quality academic exercise particularly in the area of teaching and research work. The paper presents a sample serial policy statement for adoption by Nigerian University Libraries and other libraries, and then concludes with few recommendations.

**KEYWORDS:** Serials, Policy, Statement, Implementation

### INTRODUCTION

Many organisations whether profit or non-profit are today struggling to create the needed competencies and product marketing, and to position themselves to excel in that art. The issue now for organisation is not just in surviving the harsh socio-political and economical conditions of the day but also becoming relevant, indispensable and unique. This urge has therefore propelled many organisations to adopt different corporate strategies. It is often very interesting to hear such strategies as re-engineering, re-structuring and re-positioning.

However, it is evidently clear that whatever strategy organisations are adopting, the starting point for all the strategies is to create good vision and mission strategies. Out of these, meaningful goals and objectives are set out from which affective and efficient policies are drawn and implemented.

Libraries in Universities exist to fulfill fundamental objectives which according to Wilson and Tauber (1956:15) include-the conservation of knowledge and ideas, teaching, high quality research e.t.c. To carry out these responsibilities successfully, universities have always looked on to their libraries as indispensable tool in achieving these objectives.

To accomplish this important task, libraries particularly university libraries have set out to build balanced, current and dynamic collections of information sources of which serial is best considered most current primary information sources in research.. It is from this current collection of serial resources that efficient service provision could be guaranteed for teaching and research purposes.

The librarian glossary of terms defines a serial as any publication issued in successive parts appearing at interval, and as a rule intended to be continued indefinitely. They include such items as periodicals, newspapers annuals, numbered monographic serials e.t.c.

There is no university library, however financially buoyant, that can acquire every serial selected. It is in the light of the above, the study is set out to practically provide sets of serial policy for adoption and implementation by Nigerian University libraries. Serials collections are regarded as core collections in terms of quality teaching and research activities in Nigerian Universities, therefore any attempt to improve this collection to attain a desired goal through good policies is directly promoting the image of the university library and particularly in the area of research, teaching and learning.

Stanford (1979) defines policy as the means by which general management can collectively visualize the separate internal functional areas as a total firm has some responsibility and all the influence and forces that affect its existence and activities. Also a year before Stanford, Brink (1978) opined that policy is a necessary foundation for achievement of goals.

From these two definitions, it can be affirmed that a policy is essentially, an internal administrative law, regulation or guide governing executive actions within the organisation.

In demonstrating the function of policy statements, Osaze (1991:19) cited five major reasons why policies are formulated. These he stated as follows:

1. It clarifies management view points and philosophies within designated areas of operation;
2. It provides a pattern within which delegation of authority may be expedited and controlled.
3. It establishes latitudes and guides within which authorized persons may make administrative decisions and effect action.
4. It anticipates future conditions and situation and resolves how they will be dealt with.
5. It fosters a feeling of confidence in making administrative decisions, it explicit decisions, encourage executive self-reliance, growth, development and improvement of executive performance.

From the above mentioned reasons why policies are formulated, Futas (1982) presented the following as advantages of Serial written policy:

1. Enable selectors to work with greater consistency towards defined goals thus shaping stronger collections and using limited funds more wisely.
2. Inform users, administrators, trustees and others as to the scope and nature of an existing collection, and the plans for continuing development of resources.
3. Provides information that will assist in the budget allocation process.

Therefore policy statements are very important to the growth and development of organisation. This is because as noted by Robson (1997:20), they provide a way to judge the appropriateness of all potential activities the organization might engage in.

Akobi (2004) writing on the application of serial policy in some Nigerian university libraries came up with some findings. She observed that without an explicit policy statements, there will be inconsistency and imbalance selection of serial materials.

- funds will not be judiciously used
- Clients overall interest not well distributed.

She also observed that where the serial policy is lacking, the staff who select these serial materials dwell on their discretion which is not too good for a balanced, well developed and well planned serial collections for high quality university teaching and research.

In emphasizing the need to adopt a written serial policy statement, Helling (1989) summed up when he noted that serials subscriptions, indexing and abstraction e.t.c can no longer justify any particular pattern, without being able to describe more clearly the main goals and objectives of its importance vis a vis the research needs they are addressing:

The purpose serial policy statement presented here tried to indicate the following contents:

1. Responsibility for selection
2. serial policy committee
3. Duties of the serial policy committee

4. Purpose of the serial policy
5. Objective of the serial policy, that summarizes the expected benefits the serial collection is suppose to yield. Also the success of the serial division can be judged from the policy statements.

#### A SAMPLE OF SERIAL POLICY STATEMENT

##### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

For all intent and purposes, serials are publications that are published periodically most often in series. Since serial publications are numerous and by diverse publishers, coupled with financial constraints of libraries, the need for a clear policy on their acquisition cannot be over emphasized. Such policy could be a guide on who a library's vendor should be the publisher to a subscription agent.

##### 1.1 THE OBJECTIVE OF THE POLICY

The objectives should be stated in such as way that it will reflect the overall objectives of the library. The objective of the policy should center on the following:

- a. Meeting students/staff needs: It should be prime objectives of the university library to provide relevant, up-to-date serial materials to its immediate and projected community.
- b. Value objectives: To build a well-rounded and balanced collection of authoritative, reliable and up-to-date serial materials.
- c. Objectives in types of formats to be collected.

##### 1.2 CONTENTS OF THE POLICY

###### 1.2.1 The Clienteles to make Use of the Serial Publications:

- a. Undergraduate student
- b. Postgraduate student
- c. Academic staff/Researchers
- d. Non – academic staff
- e. Other categories of users that may request for serial publications

###### 1.2.2 The Serial Collection

As proposed earlier, serial collection must consists of well-rounded, balanced, adequate, timely and up-to-date

A. Serial materials should be in the format that meets the service objectives, demand objectives and value objectives

The following types that conform to the objectives of a university library that could be acquired should be:

1. Academic journals
2. Newspapers (daily and weekly general and subject specialist)
3. Pamphlets
4. House journals
5. Memoirs
6. Reports
7. Bulletins
8. Government documents
9. Books in serials
10. Monographic series
11. proceedings of learned societies and professionals bodies
12. Annual (years books, reports e.t.c)
13. Transaction and memoirs of societies
14. Commercial publications
15. Indexing and abstracting services
16. Policy on foreign language
17. Relevant serial in English language would be required

18. Serial materials in other languages like French, German, Russian, Portuguese, Italian and Chinese e.t.c. should only be acquired if there is need for them i.e. where courses are offered in these languages.

#### 1.2.3 Responsibility for Selection

This rest on the university librarian or the serial librarian in consultation with faculty members of the various disciplines and schools in an institution.

#### 1.2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Serial Materials

The policy should state clearly criteria for the acquisition or non-acquisition of general serials materials.

1. General serial material excludes the following:
  - a. Popular serials material or other popular serial literature expected to be in the collections of local public libraries throughout Nigeria.
  - b. Specialized subject serial materials, which are expected to be stocked by academic libraries.
  - c. Published serial materials of no redeeming historical, literary or social value
2. Specific Categories of serial materials to be excluded
  - a. Commercial newspapers that do not involve research and teaching carry any educational values e.g. Lagos weekend, comics e.t.c
  - b. Fiction serial materials
  - c. Children's and young people's serial material
  - d. Gifts materials that are in academic in value.

Although the place of gifts in serials development cannot be over emphasized. The following guidelines should be followed when considering gifts of serial materials for a library. This is incumbent on the serials acquisition librarians.

#### Serial Committee

There shall be a serial committee to be headed by the University Librarian and composed of:

- |                                      |   |                        |
|--------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| a. University Librarian              | - | Chairman               |
| B Serial Librarian                   | - | Secretary              |
| b. Subject Specialist Representative | - | (One for each Faculty) |
| c. Acquisition Librarian             | - | Member                 |
| d. Student's Representative          |   |                        |

#### CONCLUSION

This paper highlights what serial policy statement is, its importance and the need for all university libraries to formulate and adopt a good policy statement. The paper further provides a sample policy statement for libraries to adopt.

The paper concludes that the adoption of this proposed serial policy will go a long way in providing that balanced, current and timely serial collection for attaining that expected goal and objective of every university in the area of teaching, learning and quality research programmes. Few recommendations were also cited.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policies must be monitored and reviewed
- Policies should be updated as time goes on.
- Policies formulation should be flexible and adoptable to accommodate density and change at different levels.

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