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# **Preservation of Library Resources in Nigeria Universities: a Study of Collections in Cross River State Universities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Preservation is the appropriate housing, protection, care and maintenance of archives, records and manuscripts. It should be taken seriously in order to preserve the cultural, social and technical context of our heritage. This study investigates the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities via a study of collections in Cross River State universities. Through descriptive survey research design, the study adopts Ruskin's theory of preservation (Ruskin, 1989) with an emphasis on the seven lamps of architecture. The application of the theory is used to assess the form of the resources, understand the preservation problems encountered in the libraries and determine if the libraries were insured against disaster. To achieve this, census sampling technique identified twenty-eight academic librarians to participate in the study. Questionnaires, interviews and direct observation of the collections in the libraries were used to collect data. The result of the analysis revealed that paper was the major form of resources stocked in the libraries. This meant that the library encountered some preservation problems. The results also revealed that rodents, insects, gaseous pollutants and many more were some of the preservation problems encountered in the libraries. The libraries were not insured against disaster. It was recommended that adequate storage facilities should be provided for appropriate housing, care, protection and maintenance of collections in the libraries. There should be, among other things, a disaster management plan in order to preserve library resources in Nigerian universities.

**Keyword:** Preservation, Library, Resources, University

## INTRODUCTION

There has been an increase in awareness of what needs to be done in order to preserve research materials. Libraries and librarians have crucial roles to play in this exercise. A library is a repository of knowledge both in print and non-print form, with the purpose of organizing, disseminating and preserving the knowledge for both present and future use. The library today is seen as a system responsible for the selection, acquisition, organization, dissemination, preservation and evaluation of information resources both in print and non-print form (Bassey, 2015). Bassey (2015) maintained that libraries provide information resources of various kinds to users. These information resources come in two forms: book and non-book. There is need to preserve these information resources for the present and future generations.

This alludes to one of the definitions of a library as the “shrine of knowledge” (Bassey, 2015). Ottong & Edem (2006) assert that a library is an institution or an establishment, a storehouse of knowledge, or a building housing collections of information resources. The authors maintain that most of these resources need special handling and special storage equipment to facilitate their relevance and usefulness to library users. A library is a collection of information resources that is made accessible to users, either for reference or borrowing, and equally provides physical or digital access to the material. It may be a physical building, a virtual space or both. Regardless of which way the library is, the resources there must be protected, and it is the responsibility of the library staff to keep these library resources in good condition so that they can be made available for users at all times. Hence, preservation of these resources is necessary. Preservation is the action taken to reduce or prevent damage in order to extend the life expectancy of the collections. Ntui and Ottong (2009) maintain that a library is a repository of the wisdom of great thinkers of the past and present. Therefore, a library must ensure that its resources, in all formats, are preserved in an accessible form for as long as possible. Oyeniyi (2015) defined preservation as all efforts and actions taken to elongate the lifespan of information material. The efforts for preservation may include planning, following principles and practices directed at preventing deterioration, or restoring damaged materials to a usable condition. Harvey (1993) gave a more detailed definition of preservation: “all the managerial and financial consideration including storage, and accommodation provision, staffing levels, policies, techniques and methods involved in preserving library and archive materials and the information contained in them.” In Nigeria, as in many other countries, books and book-related materials such as serials, maps and compact discs are considered the main information carriers Ottong & Edem (2006). The authors assert that books, which have been in existence since the advent of printing technology during the middle ages, are the best known of all information carriers. But Oyeniyi (2015) differs. The author maintains that since paper information resources are organic in nature because part of their components are created from cellulose hemicelluloses, which are plant cells, the materials are susceptible to natural decay and deterioration within a short period of time. Inherent chemical, pollutant-induced, light-induced, biological and physical agents are all forms of deterioration to library resources. Hence, library resources need protection from these factors of deterioration. Oyeniyi (2015) opines that libraries and archives should preserve their materials to ensure their accessibility and longevity, to foster research, and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials. This correlates with the report of Schellenberg (1956) on D. L. Evans, the then-deputy keeper of the records in the British public office, on repair and preservation of records. He asked “... what guarantee is there of the permanence of the qualities of the new material: that, with the passage of time, its transparency will not be marred by discoloration and its flexibility give way to brittleness?” After many years, this assertion was partially justified.

The preservation theory of Ruskin (1989), with emphasis on the seven lamps of architecture, is relevant to this study. The seven lamps are sacrifice, truth, power, beauty, life, money and obedience. In delineating the relationship of these terms to architecture, Ruskin distinguishes between architecture and mere building. Architecture is an exalting discipline that must dignify and ennoble public life. It must preserve the purity of the materials it uses, and it must serve as a source of power and renewal for the society that produces it. In the same vein, the library, its librarians and its users must make sacrifices and be truthful in painstakingly maintaining, controlling and consciously preserving information resources in the library so as to maintain its beauty and elongate its life in obedience to the policy statement of the library so that the memory can be preserved for future use. It is with adherence to these seven rules that deterioration could be checkmated and library resources could be preserved.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The deterioration of library resources in recent times is alarming. Although it has been recognized as a problem for many centuries, it is particularly acute today. The crisis has been attributed to many factors: The resources in our libraries, the form/type of these resources and the format in which these are preserved. Although universities employed librarians to organize, control and maintain information resources in the libraries, and cleaners and gardeners to mop, sweep and clean the environment, as well as security measures which were put in place in case of any emergency, the problem still persists. Hence, the increase in the vulnerability of library resources and the preservation problem it poses is the focus of this study, which will evaluate the preservation stature of library resources in University of Calabar (UNICAL) and Cross River State University of Technology (CRUTECH) libraries, the two universities in Cross River State. The study also investigates the preservation problems encountered by these libraries and checks if these libraries are insured against disaster.

### **OBJECTIVE**

The broad objective of this study is to assess the preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities by studying collections in universities in Cross River State.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

1. What are the forms of library resources stocked by the university libraries in Cross River State?
2. What are the preservation problems encountered by these libraries?
3. Are the libraries insured against disaster?

### **Profile of university of Calabar library (UNICAL)**

The University of Calabar Library was established to support and facilitate the achievement of academic programs offered in various colleges, institutes and departments of the University. The University of Calabar Library fulfills this role by acquiring, organizing, preserving and disseminating information resources in all available and affordable formats for teaching, learning and research. The University of Calabar Library was established in October of 1973

as a library of the Calabar campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. By August of 1978, the University of Calabar Library had acquired over 40,000 volumes of books and 11,000 volumes of bound journals. The central location of the library places it as the center of library and information services to the entire university community. It is to be noted that the uncompleted state of the University of Calabar Library building can be partly attributed to eventual lack of funds (Lawal, 2010). Because when the library was conceptualized the economy of the country as a whole was buoyant and building materials were relatively cheap, its gigantic structure was designed and implemented to house at least a million volumes. The new library complex has therefore provided the much-needed space required for professional services and study. Library holdings to date include over 136,000 volumes of books, 9,166 volumes of bound journals, 300 current titles of journals and 37,000 pamphlets/magazines and newspapers. Regarding physical facilities, the total space available for reading is 23,000 sq. meters, and the total seating capacity now is for 2,046 readers. As the university library could not be completed at once, all necessary facilities were not installed before it was occupied. For instance, the lift, standby electricity generator, audio-visual and bindery equipment for the basement, air conditioning and other electrical fittings were not installed, and are still awaiting activation. The University of Calabar Library has a total strength of 204 staff, of which 18 are academic librarians (nine Ph.D holders, six on staff development, pursuing doctorates, and three others with Master's degrees). The remaining 186 are professionals, para-professionals and library support staff.

### **Profile of Cross River University of Technology Library (CRUTECH)**

The government of Cross River State, proprietor of the Cross River University of Technology, emphasized "Education for Human Development" as one of the major policy thrusts. The actualization of this vision was manifested in the establishment of the university through a merger policy backed by the passage of a bill into law that brought CRUTECH into existence.

As of 2007, during the accreditation exercise, the staff strength stood at nine academic librarians, ten para-professionals, thirty-eight library support staff and one administrative staff. The total stock of books stood at 23,904 and journals at 4,108. The CRUTECH library consists of four campus libraries. These are the Calabar campus library, the Okuku campus library, the Obubra campus library and the Ogoja campus library. The Calabar campus library is the headquarters, housing the office of the university librarian. Its collection is dominated by materials in sciences, engineering, environmental sciences, education and communication technology. The Okuku campus library's collection is dominated by materials in the basic medical sciences, *e.g.* physiology, biochemistry and anatomy. The Obubra campus library stocks materials in agriculture and forestry, while the Ogoja campus library is dominated by materials in management and humanity. Conclusively, each of these libraries has a collection complementary to the campus curriculum.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Preservation refers to the set of activities that aims to prolong the life of a record and relevant metadata, enhance its value, or add value to it through non-interventive means. Olatokun (2008) reported that preservation and conservation techniques, though adopted in the university libraries, were not effectively in use, despite the libraries all having preservation policies. The study established that there are indeed incidences of deterioration, the most prominent being

books becoming torn, cracked and scratched. Further results showed that, although some of the libraries adopt and use some digital preservation techniques, they are still not effectively used. Other findings revealed that inadequate research was the most severe inhibitor to effective preservation and conservation activities in the university libraries. Akande's (2009) research study revealed a significant relationship between preservation knowledge of library personnel and their attitude towards preservation of information resources ( $r= 0.214$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). The study also showed a positive correlation between respondents' perception of preservation and attitude towards preservation of information resources ( $r=0.26$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). Knowledge and perception of preservation of information resources were jointly found to be predictors of attitudes toward preservation of information resources in the study ( $f=19.004$ ;  $df = 707$ ,  $p< 0.05$ ). The study concluded that libraries are established to select, acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information. Ifijeh (2014) discusses the intricate dimensions of the preservation of theses in academic libraries and notes the urgent need to address the deteriorating state of students' theses in academic libraries in Nigeria. The paper also discusses the current traditional preservation methods practiced among academic libraries and observes that these methods are not adequate. It recommends that academic libraries in Nigeria should digitalize these and adopt a cloud of institutional repositories. The paper further identifies the digital divide, poor technological infrastructure, inadequate research, data security breaches and issues revolving around copyright, as challenges of digitalization and cloud computing.

Oluwaniyi (2015) studied 145 schools and reported that dusting and regular floor mopping were the available preservation measures put in place (100% of the sample) and fans were the available preservation equipment and materials (67.6% of the sample). The level of school management support of preservation was very high at 62.1%, and the level of staff training given on preservation of information resources (based on the school orientation programs (85.5% of the sample). The results also showed that lack of funds and inadequate information on the aspect of preservation of information resources were the major obstacles in those school libraries (92.4% and 74.8% respectively). Ogunmodede & Ebijuwa (2013) is of the opinion that the main constraints to proper preservation and conservation in academic libraries are lack of funds, lack of qualified conservational librarians, non-committal attitude of staff, and lack of adequate and dependable storage facilities. His recommendations are: a good policy on short-term to long-term preservation and conservation should be formulated, professionally trained conservators should be recruited, and training and retraining of staff should be encouraged. An annual budget allocation for preservation and conservation was also recommended. All libraries should adopt everyday care methods.

Adetunla & Osunride (2016) revealed that library security is the most used measure of preservation and conservation practices. Dust and particulate matter are the greatest causes of deterioration of library materials. The research further revealed that dusting, cleaning and proper shelving are the major techniques adopted by the libraries. The study concluded that lack of proper preservation and conservation practices in the universities are the cause of resource loss and deterioration. The study recommended that libraries should utilize modern preservation and conservation tools such as technological enabled ICT devices, which will aid adequate storage and enhance the durability and longevity of information materials in the libraries.

Ntui and Ottong (2009) observed that in Nigeria, the conservation and preservation of library materials has been neglected for too long. Librarians are aware of the importance of preservation, but little progress has so far been made to establish formal preservation programs for library resources. Alegbeleye (1996) asserts that preservation is given least priority in many

libraries faced with rapid deterioration of collections, increased usage, high cost of materials and other problems associated with inflation. Hence, libraries and archives in Nigeria are finding it difficult to preserve their collections.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study, a descriptive survey design was adopted. Data was collected through the use of questionnaires, interviews and direct observation of collections in the library. Census sampling technique was adopted and the sample for the study was 28. Nine questionnaires were administered to the academic librarians in CRUTECH, while nineteen questionnaires were administered to the academic librarian in UNICAL. The reliability coefficient of the instrument used was at ( $\alpha = 0.72$ ) based on the Cronbach's alpha method. The researchers adopted the use of frequency tables and percentages to analyze the data.

The findings of the study are presented in tables 1, 2 and 3.

**Table 1: Distribution of Responses by Forms of Library Resources Stocked in the Library.**

| Types of resources | University / responses |         |       |            |
|--------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|------------|
|                    | UNICAL                 | CRUTECH | Total | Percentage |
| Paper              | 19                     | 9       | 28    | 100%       |
| Disks              | 12                     | 4       | 16    | 57%        |
| Tapes              | 6                      | 2       | 8     | 29%        |
| Films              | 2                      | 7       | 9     | 32%        |
| Internet source    | 6                      | 3       | 9     | 32%        |

Source: Field data (2017).

The results, shown in Table 1, reveal that all respondents reported resources were in paper form. 57% reported disks, 32% reported use of Internet resources, and 27% reported resources in the form of tapes.

**Table 2: Distribution of Responses by Preservation Problems Encountered in the Library.**

| Preservation problems encountered             | University / responses |         |       |            |
|---|------------------------|---------|-------|------------|
|   | UNICAL                 | CRUTECH | Total | Percentage |
| Sulphur dioxide                               | 17                     | 7       | 24    | 86%        |
| Nitrogen dioxide                              | 19                     | 9       | 28    | 100%       |
| Acetic acid                                   | 16                     | 7       | 23    | 82%        |
| Gaseous pollutant                             | 16                     | 6       | 22    | 79%        |
| Solid particles: dirt dust, car bonstoot, tar | 19                     | 9       | 28    | 100%       |

|   |    |   |    |      |
|---|----|---|----|------|
| Fungi: mold and mildew                              | 15 | 7 | 10 | 76%  |
| Insects: cockroaches, silverfish, termites, beetles | 19 | 9 | 28 | 100% |
| Rodents rats mice, squirrel                         | 19 | 8 | 27 | 96%  |

Source: Field data (2017).

The results listed in Table 2 reveal the reports of preservation problems encountered by the libraries as follows: Nitrogen dioxide 100%, sulphur dioxide 86%, acetic acid 82%, gaseous pollutant 79%, solid particles 100%, insects 100%, rodents 96% and fungi 79%.

**Table 3: Distribution of Responses by Library Insurance Against Any Disaster.**

| Insurance against disaster | University / responses |         |       |            |
|----------------------------|------------------------|---------|-------|------------|
|                            | UNICAL                 | CRUTECH | Total | Percentage |
| Yes                        | 5                      | 1       | 6     | 21%        |
| No                         | 15                     | 8       | 23    | 82%        |

Source: Field data (2017).

Results listed in Table 3 show that 21% of respondents indicated that the libraries were insured against disaster, while 82% indicated that the libraries were not insured against disaster.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on examination of the data, the following information was obtained. The information resources in the two libraries were in paper format with other non-book materials. This is in agreement with Bassey (2015), who maintained that libraries provide information resources of various kinds to users, and that these information resources come in two formats: book and non-book. Upon observation by the researchers, it was discovered that deterioration has already set in on the papers and some were already decayed. This observation was supported by Oyeniyi (2015), who maintained that, since paper-based information materials are organic in nature, their basic structures are created from cellulose and hemicellulose (plant cells), which are susceptible to natural decay and deterioration over time as a result of the interplay of physical and chemical factors and the inherent acidic content. The brittle paper needs extra care to handle; it must be treated as fragile to help it remain beautiful and retain life. This helps preserve the “power” that the information resources carry. This was in agreement with the theory of preservation (Ruskin, 1989).

The preservation problems encountered by the libraries were examined, as shown in Table 2. It was observed that all of the libraries under study had preservation problems, and it was observed by the researchers that the resources kept in the various libraries are quickly deteriorating due to sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, acetic acid, gaseous pollutants, dirt, dust, cockroaches, termites and rats. For effective preservation of materials in the library, it is important to maintain moderate temperature and humidity; the temperature should be between 20° C and 24° C, and the relative humidity should be about 50%. Adequate storage facilities should be provided and proper fumigation should be done to prevent infestation by insects and rodents, which are enemies of printed materials. This is in agreement with Ntui and Ottong (2009) who observed that in Nigeria, the conservation and preservation of library materials has



been neglected for too long. Libraries were aware of the importance of preservation, but little progress has so far been made to establish formal preservation programs for the library resources. Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa's (2013) opinion supports this finding that lack of funds, lack of qualified conservational librarians, non-committal attitude of staff and insufficient storage facilities bring about problems with preservation. Adetunla & Osunride (2016) supported the opinion above, as the study agreed that lack of proper preservation and conservation practices in the universities are the cause of resource loss and deterioration. A close observation of the storage facilities showed leeches and mold in the walls. These are factors that aid deterioration of library resources.

The result in Table 3 showed that six respondents, representing 21% of those interviewed, agreed that their libraries were insured, while 23 respondents, representing 82%, agreed that their libraries were not insured against disaster. Observation by the researchers showed that some of the disaster-control measures put in place were water holes, fire alarms and security personnel, which could not prevent deterioration. This is consistent with Adetunla & Osunride (2016) who revealed that library security was the most used measure of preservation and conservation practices. Also, Alegbeleye (1996) revealed that preservation was given least priority in many libraries faced with rapid deterioration of collections, increased usage, high cost of materials and other problems associated with inflation. Libraries and archives in Nigeria find it difficult to preserve their collections.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study examined preservation of library resources in Nigerian universities. It was a study of collections in Cross River State universities. The following findings and conclusions were reached:

1. The libraries have the majority of their information resources stored in paper form, and with the presence of all the pollutants around, the library resources were easily susceptible to leeches and mold, which resulted in decay and deterioration of information resources.
2. The preservation problems observed were enormous due to air conditions -- dust and pollution -- coupled with acidic paper, accelerating deterioration of library resources at an alarming rate.
3. Observation revealed that disaster preparedness was minimal. What was noticed were water holes, fire alarms and few private security guards, which, the researchers feel, do not have a direct effect on preventing deterioration of library resources.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1. Libraries should employ librarian archivists and conservationist to manage the resources.
2. There should be environmental control, pest control, and micro-organic control.
3. The libraries should be insured against disaster.
4. There should be disaster preparedness planning.

5. Adequate storage facilities should be provided.

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