

RECORDS MAINTENANCE IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN THE SOUTH-SOUTH ZONE OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated records maintenance in University Libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. The population consists of 83 librarians of the ten (10) federal and state university libraries in the south-south zone of Nigeria, which also constitute the sample. The questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Eighty-three (83) copies of the questionnaire were administered but 77 copies were retrieved from the respondents. The data collected were subjected to frequency count and simple percentage. Findings reveal that there are poor retention and disposal of records, and also, inadequate preservation techniques. It also revealed that federal university libraries maintain records more than the State Universities Libraries. It was recommended that adequate filing techniques should be adopted. Proper retention and disposal of records should be done. Also environmental control and good handling practice should be carried out; this will extend the life of records.

Universities the world over are centres for academic pursuits as well as places where learning is sought at its maximum level. A university library, be it federal or state owned, is part of the university set-up. Accordingly, it seeks to advance the functions of the institution (Kumar, 1987) by generating and transacting information in form of records for teaching, learning, research and for administration in the course of its daily activities (Akporhonor & Iwhiwhu, 2007). In other words, records are created and utilized in the operations of a university and its library. Morris (1992) identified four basic types of records that could be prepared and kept in a library or in a media centre. Financial records, organizational records, service records and statistical records.

Records are the life blood of any establishment. It will be foolhardy to take their proper maintenance lightly (Hopler, 1976). One important aspect of records management is the need for the created record to be adequately maintained for use. (Uwaifo, 2004). The history of an organization is often vividly and accurately described in the records that it has maintained. These are often by products of the operations of the

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organizations (Brumm, 1996). Nwosu (1993) acknowledge that in state and federal universities including their libraries, there is neither uniformity nor file management programmes in the offices. The basic problem therefore in management records is one of arranging them in an orderly and accessible manner. According to Attah-Udoh (1997) maintaining the sheer quantities of records without any form or order would be as bad as having no records. The result is occupation of valuable library space by voluminous and ephemerals papers. Weeks (1986) identified the following as major components of records maintenance:

- Filing system
- Retention/disposal
- Protection/preservation

One way of achieving effective organization of records is through filing. Filing is one of the most important tasks in any office in the university library. If proper records are not kept and filed so that they can be retrieved when they are needed, they serve no useful function. Record retention is a listing of records within the organisation together within the time that they must be retrieved for legal or operating purpose (Brumm, 1996). On the other hand, preservation is the process of taking corrective measures to strengthening weakened or brittle documents. The study seeks to provide empirical data on how records are maintained in federal and state university libraries in south-south zone of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out how records are maintained in federal and state university libraries in the south-south zone of Nigeria. Specifically, the purpose of the study is to:

- i. Find out the type of filling systems adopted for records management in University libraries
- ii. Find out the methods adopted for retention/disposal of records in University libraries
- iii. Find out how records are preserved in university libraries

Research Questions

The followings are the research questions that were asked in the study.

- i. What are the types of filling system adapted for records management in university library
- ii. What are the method adopted for retention/disposal of records in university libraries
- iii. How are records preserved in university libraries.

Review of Related Literature

Filing is a process of arranging and sorting records so that they may be found quickly it may also be defined as the classified arrangement of collecting records for reference and preservation (Umar, 2005). Brumm (1996) define file management as

creating, retrieving and updating of records within a file. The emphasis in filing system today is on fast and accurate retrieval of stored information. Most business organisations in developed economies have invested heavily in appropriate file indexes. The use of a good index guarantees fast and accurate retrieval of information (Akporhonor & Iwhiwhu, 2007). Akinfemiwa (1967), Neimolar (1975) & Farr (1976) view filing system as ways in which records can be easily retrieved. According to Records Management Publication (1998), there are three basic methods for arranging files. These are alphabetic, numerical and alphanumeric:

- Alphabetic: using letters or names, subjects or geographic location.
- Numeric: using numbers in various combination (including dates, in a chronological system).
- Alphanumeric: using a combination of letters and numbers.

According to Aina (2010) on student records management practices in private universities in Nigeria, alphabetic method is the most popular methods used for filling and classifying students record. As noted in a study carried out by Ugwunze (1992) the filing system used in the university of Lagos registry is the index and simple list. In spite of this, there was still difficulty in filing and retrieving records. Akporhonor and Iwhiwhu (2007) observed that the filing system and the filing aids use are registers and indexes which are cumbersome. Retention which is the second component of maintenance is a listing of records within the organization, together with the time they must be retained for legal or operating purpose (Brumm, 1996). Ricks, Swafford & Gow (1992) stated that there are two main goals of a retention schedule and these are: to meet legal requirement and organizational information needs. In essence, meeting university library need is about enabling the right information to be accessible to the right person, at the right time and at the least cost. Brumm (1996) indicated among others that the following steps should be performed in order to develop a sound retention schedule:

- Conduct a record inventory
- Appraise the records
- Duplicate and distribute the records retention schedule

A record inventory serves as a basis for the entire records management programmes. Brumm (1996) define a record appraisal as an examination of the data gather through the records inventory, interview and research to determine the value of each record series. The records retention schedule is not a fixed item because there are constant changes in the law and in the organisations operation, various method can be used to destroy records that have satisfied their retention requirements. They can be shredded or pulverised or incinerated (Brumm, 1996). Popoola (2003) noted that the major methods of disposing of useless records were outright sale, burning and burying, where as pulping maceration and shredding, which are modern methods of disposing of useless records, were not practiced in records management in Nigerian Universities. Also, according to the study carried out by Osakwe (2009) in the management of academic records in the universities in the South-South zone, there were only three major ways of disposing records in this universities. These methods were burning,

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outright sales and burying, the modern method such as shredding, maceration or pulping were not frequently used. The third component of records maintenance is preservation. Preservation is an expensive venture but it is nothing compared to the amount of money that will be spent on repair and restoration due to neglect of rare and valuable records. Marrelli (1996) added that a variety of methods exist to protect records physically and to ensure their stability and security. Environmental control and the use of quality storage containers and good handling practices will help extend the life of records. The steps available to protect and preserve records will vary depending on the availability of resources of different university libraries. Roper (1989) is also of the opinion that preventive measures are critical to good records care because they are a sound investment in time and money. The essential principles involved with ensuring the physical protection of records need not be overly complex. Kenney (1993) emphasized that the subject of preservation can be highly technical and most trained conservations have a background in the science of chemistry. It is important to remember that remedial item-by-item conservation is an expensive service requiring the participation of skilled and trained conservation specialists.

Apart from the control of environmental factors in storage areas, the most common methods for protecting, federal and state university libraries records are dispersal, duplication and storage. Dispersal is the practice of duplicating records and storing them in different locations. This method is based on the premise that it is unlikely that the same records stored in at least two different locations would be destroyed at the same time. It is the information in the records that are actually being protected, and duplication does not necessarily have to be the same medium as the original. It can be done in any medium: floppy and microform, optical disk, paper or photocopy.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey method using export-facto design. The population for this study was made up of university librarians, their deputies and all heads of divisions/units of ten (10) federal and state university libraries in the south-south zone in Nigeria. The choice of these categories of people is justified by the fact that only heads of divisions/sections/units together with the university librarian and deputies handle records. The population of the study is 83. The data collected was subjected to frequency count and simple percentages.

**Table 1: Population of Study
South-South Zone University Libraries Indicating University Librarians, Deputy
University Librarians and Heads of Divisions/Section/Units**

S/N	Name of university library	Status	UL	DUL	Head of Div/Sec/Unit	Total
1.	University of Port-Harcourt <i>Blessing Amina Akparhonor, (Ph.D.)</i> Library, Port-Harcourt.	Fed	1	1	6	8
2.	John Harris Library, University of Benin, Benin- City.	Fed	1	1	7	9

3.	University of Calabar Library, Calabar.	Fed	1	1	6	8
4.	University of Uyo Library, Uyo.	Fed	1	1	6	8
5.	Ambrose Alli University Library, Epkoma.	State	1	1	6	8
6.	River State University Of Science and Technology Library, Nkpolu.	State	1	2	6	9
7.	Cross River State University of Science and Technology Library.	State	1	1	6	8
8.	Delta State University Library, Abraka.	State	1	1	7	9
9.	Akwa-Ibom State University Library, Akwa-Ibom.	State	1	1	6	8
10.	Niger-Delta University Library, Amassoma.	State	1	1	6	8

Source: University Librarians (Research Field Work, 2009).

Analysis of Response Rate

A total of 83 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the respondents in the four federal and six state university libraries in south-south zone of Nigeria, out of this number, 77(92.8%) were retrieved from the respondents as shown in table II.

Table II: Response Rate

S/N	University Library	Status	Libraries Head of Div/Sec/Unit	No. Administered	No. of completed and retrieved questionnaire	%
1.	University of Benin Library, Benin-City.	Fed	9	9	8	89
2.	Ambrose Alli University Library, Ekpoma.	State	8	8	8	100
3.	Delta State University Library, Abraka.	State	9	9	9	100
4.	Cross River State University Library.	State	8	8	8	100
5.	University Of Port-Harcourt Library, Port-Harcourt	Fed	8	8	8	100
6.	University Of Calabar Library, Calabar.	Fed	8	8	8	100

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7.	River State University Of Science And Technology Library, Nkpolu.	State	9	9	8	89
8.	Niger-Delta University Library, Amassoma.	State	8	8	6	75
9.	Akwa-Ibom State University Library, Akwa-Ibom.	State	8	8	6	75
10.	University Of Uyo Library, Uyo.	Fed	8	8	8	100
Total			83	83	77	92.8%

Source: Research Field Work (2009).

The 77 that were retrieved were used for the study.

Institutional Data

Table III: Federal and State Universities Used in the Study

S/N	Status	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Federal University Libraries	4	40
2.	State University Libraries	6	60
Total		10	100

Table III above shows that 10 university libraries were used for the study of which 4 were federal and 6 state. The percentage for federal is 40% and state is 60%, bringing the total to 100%.

Filing System

Table IV: What Type of Filing System is Adopted for Records Management in University Libraries?

Filing	Types of university library	Agree/strongly Agree		Disagree/strongly disagree		Total %
		N	%	N	%	
Alphabetic	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	40	90.9	4	91	100
Numeric	Federal	12	36.36	21	63.64	100
	State	32	72.73	12	27.27	100
Alphanumeric	Federal	24	72.72	9	27.28	100
	State	38	86.36	6	13.64	100
By subject	Federal	30	90.9	3	9.1	100
	State	40	90.9	4	9.1	100
By code	Federal	14	42.43	19	57.57	100

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	State	28	63.64	16	36.36	100
By dumping them Ogether	Federal	5	15.16	28	84.84	100
	State	17	38.64	27	61.36	100
All of the above	Federal	9	27.27	24	72.73	100
	State	28	63.63	16	36.37	100
Other (please specified)	Federal	27	81.82	6	18.18	100
	State	24	54.54	20	45.46	100

From table IV, more federal than state university libraries file records alphabetically with the figures standing at 31(93.94%) as against 40(90.90%) respectively. This suggests that both federal and state university libraries utilise alphabetic filing generously. For filing by subjects, the librarians in federal 30(90.90%) and state university 40(90.90%) agree and strongly agree respectively that they utilise this method of filing.

Also, from table IV, less federal and state university libraries agree and strongly agree with 5(15.16%) to 17(38.64%) respectively that they dump all their records together. This shows that federal university libraries have more filing equipments.

Table V: Retention/Disposal
What Methods are Adopted for Retention and Disposal of Records?

Retention	Types of university library	Agree/strongly agree		Disagree/strongly disagree		Total %
		N	%	N	%	
Inventory	Federal	28	84.85	5	15.15	100
	State	34	77.27	10	22.73	100
Appraisal	Federal	25	75.76	8	24.24	100
	State	26	59.09	18	40.91	100
All of the above	Federal	17	51.51	16	48.49	100
	State	19	43.18	25	56.82	100
Disposal of records						
Shredding	Federal	19	57.57	14	42.43	100
	State	16	36.36	28	63.64	100
Pulverizing	Federal	11	33.33	22	66.67	100
	State	21	47.72	23	52.28	100
Burning	Federal	16	48.48	17	51.52	100
	State	27	61.36	17	38.64	100
Maceration	Federal	11	33.33	22	66.67	100
	State	20	45.46	24	54.54	100
Pulping	Federal	12	36.36	21	63.64	100
	State	21	47.72	23	52.28	100
Incineration	Federal	11	33.33	22	66.67	100
	<i>Pristine</i> State	21	47.73	23	52.27	100

From table V, more librarians in federal than state university libraries agree and strongly agree that there is a high retention by inventory with 28(84.85%) and 34(77.27%) respectively supporting this. Also, 25(75.76%) and 26(59.09%) of federal and state university libraries respectively agree and strongly agree that some form of appraisal take place. More federal than state university libraries strongly agree with 17(51.51%) to 19(43.18%) respectively that they participate in “all of the above” for disposal of records. More librarians in federal university libraries indicate higher rate of shredding with 19(51.51%) as against 16(36.36%) for state university libraries. as for burning as a form of disposal, more state university libraries indicate higher use of this practice with 27(61.36%) as against 16(48.48%) for federal university libraries. These figures suggest that federal university libraries undergo more records maintenance.

Table VI: Records Preservation
How are Records Preserved in University Libraries?

	Types of university library	Agree/strongly Agree		Disagree/strongly disagree		Total %
		N	%	N	%	
Control of environmental factors	Federal	29	87.87	4	12.13	100
	State	35	79.54	9	20.46	100
Proper storage	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	36	81.82	8	18.18	100
Proper handling	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	36	81.82	8	18.18	100
Proper storage	Federal	31	93.94	2	6.06	100
	State	36	81.82	8	18.18	100
Duplication	Federal	25	75.76	8	24.24	100
	State	41	93.18	3	6.82	100
Dispersal	Federal	21	63.64	12	36.36	100
	State	25	56.82	19	43.18	100
Regular cleaning	Federal	25	75.75	8	24.25	100
	State	37	84.09	7	15.91	100

From table VI above, more federal university libraries than state agree and strongly agree that proper storage and proper handling were undertaken with 31(93.94%) as against 36(81.82%) respectively. For dispersal of records as a form of preservation, more federal university libraries agree and strongly agree with 21(63.64%) as against 25(56.82%) for the state university libraries.

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Discussion

The finding of this study reveals that more Federal University Libraries than State University Libraries file their records alphabetically. Since the difference is not much this suggests that both Federal and State University Libraries utilize alphabetic filing generously. This probably due to the fact that filing by alphabetic sequence is relatively easy. This conforms with the study of Aina (2010) when she noted that alphabetic method is the most popular method used for filing and arranging students record. Also more State University Libraries than Federal University Libraries agree that they dump all their record together. Although these figures are really low, it may probably be due to the fact that Federal University Libraries have more filing equipments. These findings agrees with the study of Nwosu (1993) when he acknowledged that in State and Federal Universities, including their libraries, there is neither uniformity nor file management programmes in the office. Also for retention/disposal Federal and State University Libraries agree that some form of retention/disposal takes place. The methods mainly used for Federal University libraries is shredding, while for State University Libraries is burning. This finding agrees with that of Osakwe (2009) when she observed that there were only three major ways of disposing of records in Universities in the South-South Zone: Outright sales, burning and burying. Modern methods such as shredding, maceration or pulping were not frequently used. It also agrees with the study of Popoola (2003) when he noted that the major methods adopted for disposing of useless records were outright sales, burning and burying, whereas, pulping maceration and shredding which are modern methods of disposing useless records were not practiced in records management in Nigerian Universities. For preservation, proper storage and proper handling are the method mostly used by both Federal and State University Libraries but Federal University Libraries utilizes this method more. This finding agree with that of Marelli (1996) when he added that environmental control and the use of quality storage conditions and good handling practices will help extend the life of records.

Conclusion

The study focused on the records maintenance in university libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. It could be concluded that alphabetic filing is the most used method by both federal and state university libraries. Federal university libraries file more records by alphabetic sequence. For retention, federal and state university libraries appraise their records prior to retention with federal university rating higher. Federal and state university libraries dispose more by shredding and less by burning. For shredding, federal university libraries rated higher while state university libraries burn their records more. Also for preservation, federal and state university libraries preserve their records through proper storage and proper handling with federal and university libraries rating higher.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations are made:

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- Adequate filing system should be adopted for filing records so that they can be retrieved quickly when needed. The basic type of filing system should be alphabetic, numeric and alphanumeric filing system.
- Proper retention and disposal of records should be done.
- Environmental control and good handling practice will help extend the life of records in the university libraries.

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