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An Assessment of Effective Serials Management in Selected Academic Libraries in Niger State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This paper reports an examination of effective serials management practices in some academic libraries in Niger state. The study specifically investigated the types of serial materials in the libraries. It also examined the acquisition methods as well as methods applied in organizing serial materials in the studied libraries. Challenges bedeviling effective management of serial information sources also form the objective. The study further made a review from different sources on management of serials in libraries. The population of the study consisted of twenty three (23) staff manning the serials units of the affected libraries. Questionnaire and observation check-list were used as the instruments for data collection. 23 copies of questionnaire and observation check-list were distributed, filled and completely (100%) returned for data analysis. Descriptive statistics of frequency and percentages was used for data analysis. The study revealed that Newspapers, magazines and academic journals are the major serial materials available in the academic libraries. Direct purchase from book vendors, Constant subscription of physical serials and online databases were the main methods applied in acquiring serials in the libraries. It discovered that shelving and shelf reading, carding among other were the organizational techniques adopted by the libraries. Paucity of funds, Inadequate ICT facilities as well as inadequate working tools was the factors bedeviling effective serials management in the libraries. The study thus recommended among others that adequate funds be allocated to the libraries, online subscription be enhanced, conducive working environment for library personnel, independent power sources be provided to the academic libraries.

KEYWORDS:
Assessment, Effectiveness, Serials Management, Academic Libraries, Niger State, Nigeria.

Introduction

The need for effective management of serial publications in academic libraries cannot be overstressed. Serials are the backbones behind the success in every research. These publications give the most current/up-to-date information in aiding researches occurring almost on daily or hourly basis in every field of human endeavor. Serials are the publications that appear regularly and as a rule, are intended to continue as there are continuous problems and continuous researches are being conducted. Serial publications include journals, conference proceedings, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, bulletins, inaugural lectures series, annual reviews etc. The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science gives a succinct definition of serial as "a publication issued in successive parts, usually at regular intervals, and, as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals, annuals (reports, yearbooks, etc.) and memoirs, proceedings, and transactions of societies. Serial publications especially academic journals and conference proceedings are the most important and indispensable tools used in teaching, learning and in carrying out research in every academic institution because they report the most recent research discoveries in all subject areas. In the words of College at Brockport (2013), academic journals are periodicals in which researchers publish articles on their work. Adeola & Monisola (2017) while citing Aina (2001) confirmed that journal is the principal medium for reporting research findings because of the wide publicity it gives to the author. Research articles that discuss recent findings are published in journal. Ogunniyi, Akerele, and Afolabi (2011) stated that of all the serials subscribed by any library, journals are the most important to researchers because much of the articles therein are products of research and it may never appear in any other publications.

The regularity or serialization of any serial title depends heavily on the continuity of research in a particular field of knowledge vis-à-vis how constant they are and what are available as research discoveries in the subject area that the serial title publishes.

Statements of the Problem.

Serials unit of every library serves as the brain box for success in teaching, learning and research by staff and students of the tertiary institution hosting the library. The unit is featured by its statutory role of providing the most current information sources on research discoveries ranging from general to the specific fields of knowledge in the parent institutions and beyond. Additionally, because of the importance and technicalities of the various ideal activities taking place in this unit, libraries vary on which section/division the unit should be placed. In some libraries the serials unit is placed under technical services division while others place it under readers' services division. This is a strong indication that the routine activities of serials units are indispensable tools in the overall progress of libraries of all types. Serials are an essential and integral component of every major research library collection because the information they contain reflects the most current developments in all fields of activity Linda, B. & Bill, A. 1993).

It is sad to note that despite the importance of serials to the development of libraries, preliminary observations made by the researchers point to the fact that there are numerous lacunas to the effectiveness and efficiency of routine activities in the management of serials units in academic libraries. This was indicated by the fact that in many academic libraries, serial materials most especially physical journals and conference proceedings are lying on shelves unused. Hence, the researchers are spurred to embark on a critical insight into the effectiveness of serials management activities in selected academic libraries in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is to critically assess the effective serials management activities in the selected academic libraries in Nigeria. Specifically, the study is to:

1. Determine the type of serial publications available in the selected academic libraries.

2. Ascertain the methods of acquisition of serial publications in the selected academic libraries.

3. Ascertain how serial materials are organized for easy access and retrieval by serials units of the studied academic libraries.

4. Pin-point the challenges bedeviling effectiveness of serial management activities in the academic libraries being studied.

Research Questions

The study is carried out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the types of serial publications available in the selected academic libraries?

2. What are the methods of acquisition of serial publications in the selected academic libraries?

3. How are the serial materials organized for easy access and retrieval by the serials units of the studied academic libraries?

4. What are the challenges bedeviling effectiveness of serial management activities in the academic libraries being studied?

Review of Related Literature

Various types of serial publications exist in academic libraries worldwide. The three and the most common serials include scholarly or academic publications, the trade/professional publications and the popular or general interest serial publications. The scholarly or academic serials as it name depicts are publications emanating from academic and scholarly research reporting the outcomes of research. These publications according to university of Waikato library (2019) are written by experts and researchers in the academic or professional community, aimed at experts and researchers in the academic or professional community, including students whose content is research and current thinking on a subject area. In depth-articles, which cover case studies or report research. May include book reviews and contain no advertising or non-essential images. References are formal, often lengthy and often peer reviewed or refereed. It further stated that trade/professional serial publications are referred to as those written by practitioners, or journalists/writers with subject expertise, aimed at people in a particular trade or profession whose content is a discussion of current events and matters specific to that industry or profession and carries shorter articles, cover a wide range of topics. May include book reviews with photos, advertisements and graphics. References are informal, often short; in some cases references may not be provided. The general interest or popular serial publications according to this library are those publications that are written by journalists or writers who may have some subject expertise, aimed at a general, non-academic audience. Its content is a discussion of the ideas or current issues of society or a sector of society. Shorter articles cover a wide range of topics. May include book reviews. It contains photos, advertisements and graphics. References are always informal, often short; in some cases references may not be provided.

Serial publications have many peculiar characteristics which differentiate them from other categories of publications. These include the fact that it is a corporate or organizational research publication, credited to many authors or contributors, each article in them written by one or many contributors, contains editor-in-chief, editorial board members (who may change from time to time), information to authors or note for contributors, editorial notes, volume and issue numbers as well as imprint information. Serials are very cost-effective in nature when compared to textbooks, they carry up-to-date information in the subject area, available in print and electronic forms, free and fee-based to acquire, the articles therein represents the original thinking or personal initiatives of the researchers. Some of these characteristics is corroborated by Madu and Adeniran (2005) who outlined some characteristics of journal to include, the editor might change; the content of each issue is different; the publication interval varies; they are published annually, bi-annually, monthly, quarterly, forth-nightly and weekly; no planned end to the sequence; currency (up-to-date); more expensive than books, and are usually subscribed to. Adeola and Monisola(2017) state that Serials are published at different intervals, that is, daily, weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, bi-annually, and annually by an academic or research institution, a learned society, reputable publishing organization or professional body. Some serials are published on subject bases while some are on general topic. It is the serialization that distinguishes serials from books and monographs, and it is the period that dictates format and price. Serial connotes the idea of subdivisions that make a whole. It is a concept of instilment maturity. The idea of serialization is not limited to printed materials. When printed document are referred to as serial, an idea of publications that is consecutively number and indefinitely continued is in place (Sambo and Akpojotor, 2016).

Management is a deliberate and sustained effort in planning and use of available human and material resources in order to achieve individual or organizational goals. World Bank (2012) defines management as the planning and integration of effort, judicious use of resources, motivation of people, and provision of leadership in order to guide an organization towards its goal and objectives in the most efficient manner. Management of serials therefore connotes all the processes involved in the selection, acquisition, receipt and verification, processing, organizing, access and retrieval by prospective users. Management of serials could also be viewed as effective planning for acquisition and control for easy access and use.

 In other words, management of serials entails bringing-in the needed information sources, cataloging and classifying using appropriate library organization tools, display on serial display racks, bibliographic compilation of research articles, effective carding and proper shelving of all serial materials acquired by the library. In the words of Akinbode and Nwalo (2017), the elements of serials management are serials acquisition which involves selection, deselection and subscription; organisation which involves processing and display on racks for users; and maintenance which involves updating, filling the gap, preservation, and binding of back issues and repair of damaged ones. Others are provision of facilities like finding aids, reading areas equipped with tables, chairs and air-conditioners as well as provision of services such as current awareness services, photocopier, exhibition, translation from foreign language like Germany, French and Arabic to the language understood by the users.

Availability, access and retrievability of serials thus, plays vital roles in teaching, learning, research, resource assessment and accreditation exercises which fathers the emergence and sustainability or life span of academic programmes in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. In line with this, Anunobi, Nwakwuo and Ezejiofor (2010) while citing Farrington (1997) posit that to be

able to carry out a meaningful research, the researcher must be able to have access to and use current, relevant and adequate information especially from serials in the university library. Using the journal literature, the individual researcher has to make a trip to the library to locate bound volume containing the article or articles desired.

Methodology

The study employed survey design. This is due to the fact survey design give respondents chances of responding and expressing their opinions and attitudes on a particular fact or phenomenon. This is corroborated by Bell (2010) who opined that survey is concerned with demographic characteristics, the social environment, the activities, or the opinions and attitude of some group of people. The population of the study consisted of twenty three (23) staff (both Professional and Para-professional staff) of serials units of the academic libraries being studied. They include the libraries of Federal University of Technology, Minna; Federal Polytechnic Bida; Federal College of Education Kontagora; Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai; Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru and Niger State College of Education Minna. A whole population sampling technique was adopted since the population is of manageable size.

Results and Discussion

A total of 23 copies of Questionnaire and observation check-list were administered to respondents. The questionnaires were filled and returned in its entirety representing 100% of the respondents and were found usable for analysis. This is enumerated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents according to Institutions/Libraries.

S/n	Institution/Library	Questionnaires administered	Questionnaires returned	Percentage (%)
1	Fed. Uni. Tech. Library Minna	7	7	30.4
2	Fed. Poly Library Bida	5	5	21.7
3	FCE Library Kontagora	2	2	8.7
4	IBBULAP Library Lapai	4	4	17.4
5	Niger State Poly Library Zungeru	2	2	8.7
6	C.O.E. Library Minna	3	3	13.1
	TOTAL	**23**	**23**	**100**

Table 2: Types of Serials available in the Academic Libraries.

S/n	Types of Serials	Available	Not Available
1	Journals	21(91.3%)	2(8.7%)
2	Conference proceedings	19(82.6%)	4(17.4%)
3	Inaugural lecture series	11(47.8%)	12(52.2%)
4	Newspapers	23(100%)	0(%)
5	Magazines	20(87%)	3(13.0%)
6	Newsletter/Bulletins	18(78.3%)	5(21.7%)
7	Annuals	10(43.5%)	13(56.5%)
8	Electronic databases subscription (e-journals, e-magazines, e-newspapers etc.)	20(87%)	3(13.0%)

Table 2 above revealed that the serial materials are available in the libraries investigated. It showed that newspapers are the most widely available information source in the academic libraries with the highest (100%) response rate, followed by academic journals (91.3%) as well as magazines and e-databases (87%) respectively. This can be attributed to the current nature of newspapers as daily information source and so also journals and magazines for containing academically oriented articles coupled with level of their usefulness to academic environment.

Table 3: Methods of Acquisition of Serials in the Academic Libraries.

S/n	Methods	Applied	Not Applied
1	Direct purchase from book vendors(when needed)	20(87.0%)	3(13.0%)
2	Constant subscription from publishers (to ensure continuity).	22(95.7%)	1(4.3%)
3	Donations	10(43.5%)	13(56.5%)
4	Gifts	11(47.8%)	12(52.2%)
5	Exchange with other libraries (through weeding)	5(21.7%)	18(78.3%)
6	Inter-library loan	3(13.0%)	20(87.0%)
7	Resource sharing through consortium	1(4.3%)	22(95.0%)
8	Online subscription to databases	21(91.3%)	2(8.7%)

The table above showed that constant subscription to physical serials(95.7%), online subscription to databases(91.3%) as well as direct purchase from vendor based on the need(87.0%) are the methods mostly adopted in acquisition of serials by libraries investigated. Donations, Gifts Exchange, inter-library loans and resource sharing and very vital in meeting users' need in academic libraries and should be taken into proper consideration while planning for acquisitions in the academic libraries.

Table 4: Techniques for Organization of Serials in the Academic Libraries.

S/n	Techniques	Applied	Not Applied
1	Shelving and shelf reading	23(100%)	0(0%)
2	Manual Cataloging and Classification	10(43.5%)	13(56.5%)
3	Carding(using Kardex)	22(95.7%)	1(4.3%)
4	Display of serials on the display racks	17(74.0%)	6(26.0%)
5	Indexing and Abstracting	5(21.7%)	18(78.3%)
6	Automation of serials using suitable library software	8(34.8%)	15(65.2%)
7	Bibliographic listing of journal articles and display for interested users.	6(26.0%)	17(74.0%)

In Table 4 above respondents revealed that Shelving and shelf reading which a normal routine activity in libraries is strictly adhered to in organizing serials (100%). This is followed by Carding of serial with the aid of Kardex cards (95.7%) and Display on the racks (74.0%) which are special ways of storing and displaying information about serials in the library. However, manual cataloging and classification of serials which is the basic knowledge to aid in automation of serials, indexing and abstracting, automation of serials as well as Bibliographic listing of articles to aid faster access and use of physical journals are not in proper practice in the studied libraries with low responses as 10%, 8% 6% and 5% respectively.

Table 5: Challenges Bedeviling Effective Serials Management.

S/n	Challenges	YES	NO
1	Paucity of funds	23(100%)	0(0%)
2	Inadequate working tools	19(82.6%)	4(17.4%)
3	Lack of institution's interest in acquiring physical/hardcopies of serials	15(65.2%)	8(34.8%)
4	Inadequate manpower to handle effective management of serials.	5(21.7%)	18(78.3%)
5	User's negative attitude towards the use of hardcopies of serials.	17(74.0%)	6(26.0%)
6	Absence of bindery tools to restore defaced serials to usable states.	10(43.5%)	13(56.5%)
7	Inconducive working environment.	22(95.7%)	1(4.3%)
8	Inadequate ICT facilities for effective automation.	20(87.0%)	3(13.0%)
9	Erratic power supply	16(70.0%)	7(30.0%)
10	Weak/unstable computer network.	14(60.9%)	9(39.1%)

Table 5 revealed that paucity of funds accounted for 100% of factors militating against effective management of serials in the academic libraries. Inconducive working environment (95.7%), inadequate ICT facilities for effective automation(87.0%), inadequate working tools(82.6%), users' attitude towards the use of physical serials (74.0%), Erratic power supply(70.0%), lack of

institution's interest in acquiring physical serials (65.2%), weak computer network are also major inhibiting factors against effective management of serials in the academic libraries.

Findings

The following findings were recorded from the study:

- Newspapers, Academic journals, Magazines and electronic databases constitute the majority of information sources in the serials units of the academic libraries in Niger State.

- It was also discovered that constant subscription to physical serials, online subscription to e-databases and direct purchase from book vendors based on the need are mostly the methods adopted in acquisition of serials in those academic libraries.

- The study also revealed that shelving and shelf-reading, carding, display on racks are the main techniques applied in organizing serials in the academic libraries in Niger State.

- The study also found that cataloging and classification, indexing and abstracting and bibliographic compilation which are basic library organization tools are not adequately practiced in the academic libraries under investigation.

- Paucity of funds, Inconducive working environment, inadequate ICT facilities for automation of serials, weak network signals, inadequate working tools, users' negative attitudes towards the use of physical serials as well as lack of institution's interest in acquisition of serials are the major challenges affecting serials management in the academic libraries.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research, the researchers concluded that effective management of serials is of utmost importance to teaching, learning and research in academic environments. This made it imperative for academic libraries to plan, adopt effective and efficient methods of acquiring and organizing serials, ensure possession of manpower and skills required to achieve effective service delivery to users.

Recommendation

The following recommendations were proffered from the study.

- ✓ There should be proper allocation of funds to academic libraries to aid timely acquisition of serials as the most current information sources in libraries.
- ✓ Library staff should be provided with adequate working tools, constant training on necessary skills. Techniques such as indexing and abstracting, cataloging and classification required to organize serials in easily accessible and retrievable manner should be revived. This is very cardinal to effective automation of libraries.
- ✓ There should be conducive working environment, better condition of service, financial motivations for library personnel to ensure effective management of serials.
- ✓ Adequate ICT facilities with strong network bandwidth should be provided and enhanced to achieve effective automation of serials in the academic libraries.
- ✓ Subscription to e-databases should be enhanced. There should be resource sharing through library consortium. This will increase the efforts of academic libraries in meeting users' need since no library has ever attained adequacy in its resources.

✓ Related to the above is the provision of independent power sources to ensure free flow of operation for facilities and equipments that require electricity to operate.

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