

## CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES IN PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES: A CASE STUDY OF NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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### ABSTRACT

The librarians are often encouraged to maintain and keep their collections accessible through digitization as their stock in trade is their collection. This study examined capacity building initiatives in preservation techniques in selected libraries and assessed the level of training received by different library staff. Four university libraries were randomly selected and a descriptive survey method using a self-developed questionnaire. The respondents comprised librarians and non-librarians. A total of one hundred and twenty copies of questionnaires were distributed, but a hundred and twelve was retrieved and used for the analysis. The study revealed that there were no professionals to manage the preservation section of the university library and as such, most institutions make do with Para-professionals like binders, technicians and library officers etc. Analysis from the respondent's show that Universities in Nigeria are not exposed to capacity building in preservation. Finally, regular trainings are vital for the development of all staff and for any university to stand out amongst others; there must be provision for usual capacity building of both faculty and staff.

**Keywords:** Capacity Building; Professional/Librarian; Para-Professional/Non-Librarians; Preservation; Academic Library.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Accessibility of resources is very important in meeting user's needs and also satisfying the objectives of the University. It is not enough to buy very expensive books if there are no measures put in place to reduce the rate of deterioration. Most academic/research libraries have high demand of library users who frequently use

the circulation for general borrowing and making large photocopies. However if the rate of traffic is not checked by ensuring that books that are deteriorating are withdrawn from the library collection and taken to the bindery for repairs, the library will later be filled up with books that are worn out and physically damaged.

Capacity building is very important because it gives staff the knowledge to decide which resources to digitize and not to digitize, while obsolete resources are weeded, in terms of content, date of publication, and date of acquisition.

Smith (2000) observed that in many parts of the world, a preservation concern is accorded low priority in most academic libraries and staffing for preservation is reduced. It is extremely rare to find universities with preservation departments. According to Wikipedia (2012) one of the biggest challenges in the field of preservation today is educating librarians and other staff, in the best ways to handle materials as well as the conditions in which particular materials will decay the least. This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that preservation is a peripheral element of most library science curricula and preservation techniques like care of library collections, conservation, digitization, digital preservation and disaster preparedness plan etc.

Ajidahun (2007) opined that professional librarians in University libraries today whose knowledge of library automation has been rendered outdated as a result of inadequate training pose a great challenge in their coping with modern library practices. This is absolutely true because Altobellis (2011) noted that lack of information in preservation techniques, grants, and workshops etc. limits the extent to which many universities particularly care for their collections.

## **2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

It is a popular saying that prevention is better and even cheaper than cure. This is true even in the library setting; replacing library materials when possible, is expensive. Preservation makes good economic sense. Considering the huge risk librarians stand to face in the case of any loss/disaster in the library, this study therefore attempts to identify whether librarians are taking proactive steps especially

by receiving the necessary training in order to prevent the occurrence of loss or damage of any kind.

The specific objectives are: a) Investigate if the libraries have a functional preservation department; b) Investigate the category of staff responsible for preservation of library materials; c) Find out if librarians attend international workshops/conferences on preservation; d) Investigate the frequency of capacity building in preservation; e) Investigate the capacity building initiative available for library staff; f) Investigate the current preservation technique used in the library.

In carrying out this study, the researcher intends to put forward the following questions, which will guide her in conducting the study. These include:

- a) Does the library have a functional preservation department?
- b) What category of staff is responsible for preservation?
- c) Do librarians attend international workshops/conferences on preservation?
- d) How often does the library conduct capacity building on preservation?
- e) What capacity building initiative is available for library staff.
- f) Which preservation technique is used in the library.

### **3 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Building capacity involves development of your mind, by reading, writing and acquiring other skills. Chandan (2000) opined that capacity building is as a short term process which uses systematic and organized procedure to enhance the knowledge and skills of personnel. Ajidahu (2007) and Zhang (2004) noted that training is needed for managerial and non-managerial staff of any profession though they are very essential for non-managerial staff who constitute large portion of the total employee in an academic library. Yesufu (2000) and Chandan (2000) say training of staff enhances productivity, because education and training is regarded as the most important direct means of upgrading the human intellect for productive employment, this applies in all organizations and the library is inclusive.

According to Donata (2011) capacity building enhances job performance and management efficiency. The advantage of capacity according to Anunobi (2012) and Stoner (2002) is that it reduces cost of production, enables staff make prompt decisions, boosting of one's morale, reduces supervision, rapid growth in staff status and organizational stability.

Goldsmith (2007) observed that training for both staff and users is an important part of the library mission, thus librarians must conduct training sessions for all category of library staff to promote preservation awareness through lectures and documentary videos. A good library must have a disaster plan which must be updated with current telephone numbers of agencies to contact for directions within the library and other emergency information for rapid response in order to salvage a good number of library resources.

Page (1999) is of the opinion that emergency response plan needs 'exercise' similar to fire or evacuation drills in which everyone practices leaving the building, without panic. These drills teach staff what to do, where to exit, and how to proceed in an orderly manner. Exercise of this nature must teach preparedness, build confidence, among the staff. Simpson, (2011) observed that one of the biggest assumptions or oversights people make is to overlook how important it is to be personally prepared for an emergency. The first 72 (seventy-two) hours is the most crucial, and self-preparedness can make a lot of difference when disasters strike hence the need for having a functional and workable preservation department. It also is expedient to initiate a robust training package for the library.

On the other hand Oketunji (2001) observed that library schools are inadequate in meeting the challenges of modern information technologies owing to lack of financial resources to procure the necessary equipment needed for the training of students. Emphasis still remains on printed materials rather than on information sources in electronic form which is the new trend in information technology. This shouldn't be because we are in digital age where information must be accessed irrespective of the location of the users.

Nizier (2006) is of the opinion that training helps to develop theoretical and practical knowledge in preservation and conservation and to support experience

sharing in the sense that the staff will have a better understanding of what has been taught, because he has experienced it practically, and is in the position to share such knowledge with his colleague.

According to Drewes (2006) one successful step for many universities is to make preservation a part of every staff job description. From readers services, to technical services there must be proper care in handling and treating library materials; this creates a sense of ownership of the collection and gives the responsibility that staff must feel to care for the university collection as if it were their own.

Feather (1990) observed that technical training is largely in the hands of the binding industry, but as a profession we need to take a greater interest, in conducting training for librarians through workshops, conferences and seminars. The advantage of external training is that staff may concentrate better when removed from the regular workplace, and training from an outside "expert" may make more of an impression than internal training. In-house training, like seminar presentations, taken in turns by librarians as part of capacity development for staff will assist them to read wide and be updated with current happenings in the society.

Wilson (2000) observed that in eliminating ignorance through proactive education, staff needs to learn how to recognize items that are in need of conservation, by educating users in careful and appropriate handling procedures, and ability to monitor and examine current practices.

Muhammad (2006) opined that staff training is very important, and as such librarians must specialize as preservation professional or conservators to enable them become experts in that area. When library materials are newly acquired, staff and students prefer the current edition because of new information carried out through developments, and research hence the high demand for them.

Morrow (2000) opined that every library seeks to keep the materials that comprise its collection in useable condition after they are selected, acquired, processed, and made available for users. This is in fulfillment to Ranganathan's law on librarianship. Most libraries make do with support staff (like Library Assistants/Library Officers or Technicians, etc.) who don't possess formal training on

methods of handling library materials, and are not acquainted with current trends and techniques in preservation.

According to Doyle (2005) there are different types of librarians that specialize in preserving library materials these librarians are recognized as preservation librarian, conservation librarian, reformatting librarian and preservation consultant. They ensure smooth running of their section and effective management of resources at their disposal, but in most Nigerian Universities we hardly have librarians with such specialty.

#### **4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study used questionnaire, observation and interviews as the instruments for collecting data. The population of this study covered 120 (one hundred and twenty) librarians and non-librarians in academic libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria. The random sampling technique was used to select respondents from each of the libraries to represent the sample of the study.

This presents the demographic variables used in this study. All the variables selected and tested as independent and dependent variables were described in the tables 1-11.

**Table 1: Sex distribution.**

| <b>Sex</b>    | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Male</b>   | 41               | 36.6                  |
| <b>Female</b> | 71               | 63.4                  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>112</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

The analysis on Table 1 depicts that 63.4% of the respondents are female while 36.6% are males. This is expected as there are more female librarians compared to their male counterparts in the library profession. Fisher (1997) asserts that women are in the majority in librarianship.

**Table 2: Age distribution.**

| Age          | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|------------|----------------|
| 20-40        | 40         | 35.7           |
| 40-60        | 55         | 49.1           |
| 60 and above | 17         | 15.2           |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The Table 2 indicates that the least age bracket falls between 60 (sixty) and above representing 15.2% of the respondents, while the age bracket between 20 (twenty) and 40 (forty) represents 35.7%, whereas ages between 40 (forty) and 60 (sixty) represents 49.1% of the respondent, this in actual fact constitutes the age bracket of the active labor force in Nigeria.

**Table 3: Educational qualification.**

| Qualification                     | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Bachelor of Library Science (BLS) | 34         | 30.3           |
| Master of Library Science (MLS)   | 19         | 17.0           |
| PhD in Library Science            | 1          | 0.9            |
| ND, Diploma, WAEC and Others      | 58         | 51.8           |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The data above reveals that the highest respondents are non-librarians (Para-professionals) representing 51.8% (this constitute WAEC/NECO, OND, NCE, Diploma and B.sc/HND holders), professionals – first degree bachelor of Library Science (BLS) 30.3%, master in Library Science (MLS) 17.0%, while the least 0.9% possess doctorate degree.

**Table 4: Years of experience.**

| Years of Experience | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|------------|----------------|
| 1-5                 | 78         | 69.6           |
| 6-10                | 26         | 23.2           |
| 11-15               | 4          | 3.6            |
| 16 and above        | 4          | 3.6            |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The Table 4 shows that 3.6% of the respondents ranging between 11 (eleven) and 16 (sixteen) years and above have work experience in the field of research, 23.2% of the respondent representing between 6 (six) and 10 (ten) years, and 69.6% representing between 1 (one) and 5 (five) years have experience in the field of study.

**Table 5: Job status.**

| <b>Job Status</b>  | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Library Assistant – Library Officer</b>               | 73               | 65.1                  |
| <b>Assistant Librarian – Librarian II</b>                | 31               | 27.7                  |
| <b>Librarian1 – Senior Librarian</b>                     | 6                | 5.4                   |
| <b>Principal Librarian – Deputy University Librarian</b> | 1                | 0.9                   |
| <b>University Librarian</b>                              | 1                | 0.9                   |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>112</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

From the classification of the respondents library assistant and library officer represents 65.1%, while assistant librarian and librarian II represent 27.7%, librarian I and senior librarian represent 5.4%, and deputy university librarian and university librarian represent 0.9% of the respondents.

**Table 6: Distribution according to institution.**

| <b>Universities</b>               | <b>Frequency Distributed</b> | <b>Percentage (%) Distributed</b> | <b>Frequency Retrieved</b> | <b>Percentage (%) Retrieved</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Babcock University (Bab)</b>   | 35                           | 29.17                             | 36                         | 32.1                            |
| <b>Bells University (Bell)</b>    | 20                           | 16.66                             | 15                         | 13.4                            |
| <b>Covenant University (Cov)</b>  | 30                           | 25                                | 32                         | 28.6                            |
| <b>Redeemers University (Red)</b> | 35                           | 29.17                             | 29                         | 25.9                            |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>120</b>                   | <b>100</b>                        | <b>112</b>                 | <b>100</b>                      |

The Table 6 shows the total questionnaires completed and returned by the universities participating in the survey. A total of 120 (one hundred twenty) questionnaires were distributed to individuals from various universities. These, only 112 (one hundred and twelve) have been completed and returned, representing 93.3% of total, which were used for analysis.



**Table 7: Presence of preservation department.**

| Does the library have a preservation department? | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|--|------------|----------------|
| No   | 86         | 76.8           |
| Yes  | 26         | 23.2           |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The Table 7 shows that 76.8% of the respondent's observed that the library does not have preservation department but they do, it is because it is not functional, while 23.2% of the respondent agree having preservation department.

**Table 8: Category of staff responsible for preservation.**

| What category of staff is responsible for preservation? | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Para professional staff                                 | 96         | 85.7           |
| Professional staff                                      | 16         | 14.3           |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The Table 8, clearly shows that 85.7% of the task on preservation and has been enormous on para-professionals, this is so because librarians/professionals do not possess enough skills to manage the section effectively, while only 14.3% of the professional staff are knowledgeable and have skills to match in preservation.

**Table 9: Attendance of workshops for library staff on preservation.**

| Does librarians attend international workshops & conferences on preservation? | Frequency  | Percentage (%) |
|---|------------|----------------|
| Yes   | 37         | 33             |
| No  | 75         | 67             |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The Table 9 indicates that the negative response to workshops and conferences by librarians is very high about 67% compared to their colleagues in the developed world that is conversant with modern trends in the profession. On the other hand only 33% of librarians attend international conference and workshops which is quite low for an academic library.

**Table 10: Capacity building in preservation.**

| <b>How often does the library conduct capacity building in preservation?</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Quarterly</b>   | 02               | 1.9                   |
| <b>Once in six months</b>  | 10               | 8.9                   |
| <b>Once yearly</b>   | 22               | 19.6                  |
| <b>Once in three years</b>   | 78               | 69.6                  |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>112</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

The Table 10 shows that capacity building is not being organized for librarians and non-librarians because within one to three years, only 69.6% and 19.6% of staff have been exposed to training while in the duration of six months only 1.9% and 8.9% were exposed to trainings. This is very low because knowledge is power, therefore as information providers we must be abreast with current trends in our profession.

**Table 11: Capacity building initiative for library staff.**

| <b>What capacity building initiative is available to library staff?</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Seminars</b>   | 38               | 33.93                 |
| <b>Conferences</b>  | 20               | 17.86                 |
| <b>In House</b>   | 34               | 30.36                 |
| <b>Formal</b>   | 12               | 10.71                 |
| <b>E-Learning</b>   | 8                | 7.14                  |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>112</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

The Table 11 highlights that libraries surveyed conduct more seminars (33.93%) and in-house training (30.36%) for its employees. Capacity building initiatives related to conferences (17.86%) appear in the background. Finally, it appears personal development (10.71%) and e-learning (7.14%) demonstrating initiatives that are little used.

**Table 12: Current preservation techniques used in the library.**

| <b>What capacity building initiative is available to library staff?</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|---|------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Care of Collections</b>  | 25               | 22.3                  |

|                                   |            |            |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Conservation</b>               | 15         | 13.4       |
| <b>Digitization</b>               | 35         | 31.3       |
| <b>Digital Preservation</b>       | 28         | 25         |
| <b>Disaster Preparedness Plan</b> | 09         | 8.0        |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>112</b> | <b>100</b> |

The Table 12 shows that all the libraries have exposed their staff to capacity building in scanning (31.3%), digital preservation (25%), though more trainings needs to be conducted in attempts to take appropriate care of library materials, because it is considered that conservation (13.4%) and disaster plan (8%) are very low rates.

## 5 FINDINGS

The study revealed that majority of the libraries studied do not have functional preservation department perhaps this is because the direct impact of wear and tear and its effect on library materials have been underestimated by the Librarians. Even for those who have, they are run and managed by non-librarians (Para-professionals). It is imminent to stop and ruminate over certain questions at this juncture (questions that could lead to further research) is it that the professional librarian perceive preservation as an unprofessional task which should be left to the non-librarians, if yes, then there needs to be a study of library schools in Nigeria to discover whether preservation and conservation of library materials is not taught at postgraduate level. This is absolutely inappropriate especially in the current climate of digitization, where professionals are expected to champion the cause.

The low priority accorded preservation in most of the libraries studied may not be unconnected to the relegation of preservation to the non-librarians after all; if there are professionals involved it would go a long way to justify the need to establish functional preservation department which would be headed by a qualified professional.

It was also discovered that librarians and non-librarians rely more on in-house trainings, seminars/workshops than international conferences due to

insufficient funds from the university to sponsor them, and when they do it is not enough, it is usually complimented with their personal funds.

## **6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the afore-mentioned observations, there is need for libraries to have a functional and operational preservation department. More professional librarians should be encouraged to major in preservation, in other to be to committed and concerned about preserving the material with which they work and to be further equipped in supervising the Para professionals for better quality of work and quick delivery of service to library users.

National and international trainings on preservation techniques must be made compulsory for all library staff irrespective of their sections in the library. Capacity building should be done in two phases: the first phase should be for the newly employed staff, while the second phase for staff that has worked for more than five years and above. After trainings, it would be expected that the performance of the non-professionals will improve as they will strive to apply the techniques and knowledge they have acquired from the trainings. Regular update of library science curricular must be introduced in our universities, both in undergraduate and postgraduate levels and the lecturers equipped with the latest trends in information communication technology (ICT). Staff must be trained on types of disaster, prevention and conservation strategies.

It is the duty of all library staff, beginning from the University librarian, to safeguard the welfare of their collections. This training must be supported and encouraged by all categories of staff. Capacity building is necessary in every academic university especially for new staff, because it equips them with the relevant skills in their profession.

In spite of the busy schedule of librarians, time must be created for adequate and timely trainings on preservation in order to be equipped with modern trends in the profession.

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