

A Survey of Preservation and Conservation of Information Resources in Private University Libraries, South-west, Nigeria

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Paper Type:

Research Paper

Abstract

Background of Study: Deterioration of information resources, especially print materials have been in existence for some decades but have escalated drastically. Hence, the need for preservation and conservation of the cultural, social, and technical context of our heritage is germane.

Purpose: The study examined the preservation and conservation of information resources in the selected private university libraries in South-west Nigeria. Eight (8) selected private universities in South-west, Nigeria with the population consisted of one hundred thirty-seven respondents which comprised of library professionals and para-professionals.

Method: The study employed a survey research design and random sampling technique. Data collected with the aids of semi- structured questionnaire and was analysed using frequency, mean and standard deviation with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM-SPSS) version 20.0

Results: The findings revealed that the book becoming torn is the highest nature of deterioration followed by vandalisation, mutilation and brittle of print library materials. Moreover, the study revealed that digital preservation level of utilisation is low and is not extensively used in selected private university libraries.

Conclusion: The study concluded that preservation and conservation techniques are recognized in the selected university libraries, but the digital preservation techniques are not adequately used due to various constraints. One of the recommendations made was the provision of formal training for library staff on preservation and conservation of information resources.

Keywords: Conservation, Preservation, Library, Vandalisation, Mutilation, University, Nigeria.

Submitted: 15 July 2021

Revised: 05 September 2021

Accepted: 02 October 2021

Online: 17 November 2021

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Introduction

Information has been a dynamic source of enlightenment for human beings in early and modern civilisations; this is why it is crucial to store it in functional and operational conditions. Libraries and librarians are the gateway and custodians of various organised, store and preserve information resources. The library information resources could be print and non-print (electronic materials) that are vital and delicate. The methods of handling library information resources can affect the life span of the records contained in them. According to Iyishu, Nkanu and Ogar (2013) records must be preserved and conserved for present and future use. This implies that preservation and conservation activities are germane as part of the roles of any library and archive. This is supported by Oyeniyi (2015) who reiterated that libraries and archives should preserve their materials to safeguard their accessibility and longevity, to foster research, and to prevent spending on replacement costs of old materials. This must be done by the library as a shrine of knowledge (Bassey, 2015) and the librarian as a keeper of information. The prime objective of a library is to facilitate public access to library information resources so that collections are accessible by each member of the society for educational, research, recreational, cultural and informational purposes. Library information resources thus may be books, journals, newspapers, maps, compact disc, microform, internet, databases and others (Popoola, 2009). As part of the responsibility of the library includes developing, maintaining and preserving information resources to support library users and enhance their information needs. The library established by the university authority is referred to as an academic library. Academic libraries are the heart of any institution irrespective of their ownership status (Federal, State, and Private). Private university libraries are academic libraries attached to private universities to provide information resources in support of the teaching, learning, research and information needs of the students, academic, non-academic staff and the host community. The focus of this research is primarily on private universities which are institutes of higher learning sponsored by individuals, religious organisations and private enterprises (Owoeye, 2015). The relevance of these private universities libraries like other academic libraries can be viewed in the light of the following: acquisition, organisation, processing (cataloguing and classification), storing, preservation, conservation and dissemination of information resources to students, staff and its community users.

Private university libraries are expected to provide access to information resources for use by all stakeholders in the university community. The regular usage of information resources may lead to damage. The reason for this is because any form of use will likely boost the deterioration of resources and, in the end, its destruction if there is no intervention (Shameenda, 2011). Thus, there is a need to preserve and conserve library information resources.

Preservation and conservation are often used interchangeably as interventions in the protection of library information resources. In librarianship parlance, a material may be preserved in its original form but conserved into other forms different from the original. Herein, lies the complexity of the two seemingly simple terms, the present study is, therefore, a retiring attempt to extensively deconstruct them. According to Sawant (2014), preservation is the actions associated with maintaining the library and archival materials for use either in their original physical forms or in some other usable form. Similarly, Goswami (2018) reiterated that preservation is undertaken to safeguard, protect, keep in safety or secure library or archives collections from harm, injury or destruction.

On the other hand, Game et al. (2011) defined conservation as the act of maintaining library materials that are decayed, injured or violated. It is the work of the conservator to repair

To cite this document:

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and restore deteriorated library materials to the state where they can be put back into circulation and use. Also, Oluwaniyi (2015) provided extensive lists of library materials that can be preserved which include managerial and financial, storage accommodation provision, staffing levels, policies, techniques, and methods involved in preserving library and archival materials and the information contained in them.

To this end, preservation and conservation meant to prolong the lifespan of information resources by applying treatment to them. Moreover, the preservation strategy includes three aspects. These are assessment, planning, and action. A preservation assessment is usually undertaken to determine the preservation requirements for the collection and to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the building, guidelines and policies, collection media, storage environment, holdings maintenance and disaster management.

Several studies (Olatokun, 2008; Sawant, 2014; Oluwaniyi, 2015; Goswami, 2018) extensively examined preservation and conservation of information resources, but it seems none of the studies focused mainly on private university libraries in South-west, Nigeria. Therefore, this study examined the preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private university libraries in the South-west, Nigeria. The outcomes from the study will assist the university libraries' stakeholders on how to improve preservation and conservation of information resources to further, meet the information needs of the undergraduates and other users. Moreover, it will enable library management to understand the difficulties librarians encounter when preserving and conserving information resources. In addition, data and information that will be made available at the end of the study will expand the existing literature and equally serve as the foundation on which the future related studies will be based.

Statement of the Problem

The deterioration of library information resources in recent times is alarming. Preservation and conservation of information resources in academic libraries play a vital role that cannot be overemphasized. Preservation prevents deterioration of information resources and elongates the life span of information resources. However, the rate at which information resources are getting deteriorated is unabated. The situation may lead to wear and tear, bad shelving, dust particles and growth of biological and chemical agents.

Though deterioration of library information resources has become a global phenomenon and as such, many experts continue research on preservation and conservation of information resources. Several studies (Oluwaniyi, 2015; Agboola et al., 2015) carried out on the preservation and conservation of library materials. Based on the knowledge of researchers, it seems none of the studies exclusively examined the preservation and conservation of information resources in private university libraries. Therefore, this study examined the preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private universities in South-west, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were provided to give the study focus:

1. What are the nature of deterioration of information resources in selected private university libraries?

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2. What are the causes of deterioration of information resources in selected private university libraries?
3. What are the techniques used in the preservation and conservation practices in selected private university libraries?
4. What is the level of use of digital preservation technique in selected private university libraries?
5. What are the barriers hindering effective preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private university libraries?

Research Method

The study adopted design adopted descriptive survey design. The descriptive survey design aims at explaining the situation under the period of investigation through the collection of data. Creswell (2014) established the fact that survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The target population for this study consists of all the professionals and para-professionals staff in the eight (8) selected private universities in South-west, Nigeria. Eight (8) private universities were purposely selected out of thirty-six universities in the South-west. The population of the study in selected university libraries is 137 as shown in Table1. The population size is small and manageable hence, the researcher adopted a census approach (total enumeration).

The study adapted a questionnaire from Oladokun (2008) for data collection tagged “Questionnaire on Conservation and Preservation of Information Resources in Private University Libraries (QCPIRPUL)”, was divided into two main sections. The first section contains the staff demographic information, while the second sections comprises of various items and variables that are contained in the research objectives/questions of the study. The descriptive analysis was used to analyze the collected data using frequency table counts and percentages.

Table 1: Population of the study

University	Population	State	Year of Establishment
Afe Babalola University	10	Ekiti	2009
Adeleke University	16	Osun	2011
Ajayi Crowther University	22	Oyo	2005
Babcock University	20	Ogun	1999
Bowen University	30	Osun	2001
Caleb University	10	Lagos	2002
Fountain University	6	Osun	2007
Redeemer’s University	23	Osun	2005
Total	137		

Source: Library Staff Records (2019)

Result and Discussion

A total number of one hundred and thirty-seven (137) copies of questionnaire were administered to the respondents. One hundred and one (101) copies of the questionnaire were properly filled and returned with the response rate of 73.7%. The response rate of 100% could not be achieved because 36 staff members in the selected libraries were on annual leave /sabbatical leave.

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Demographic Information of Respondents

The demographic information of respondents that participated in the study were discussed as follow:

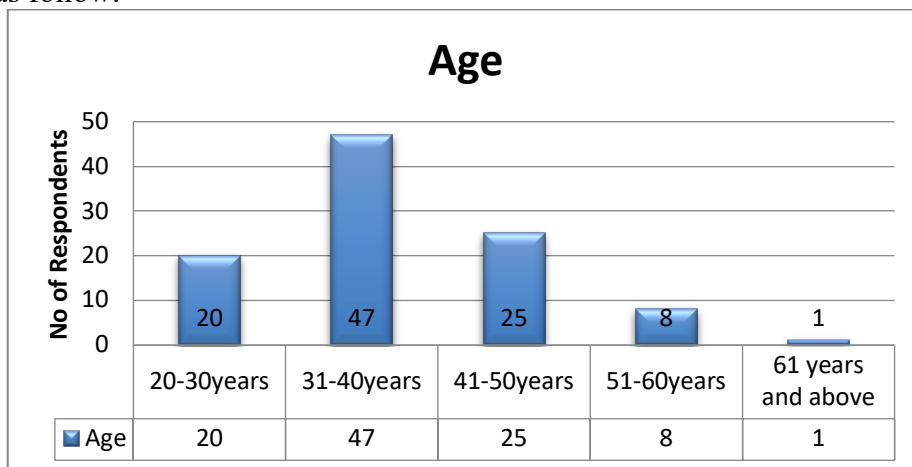


Figure 1: Age of Respondents (n=101)

Figure 1 shows that 47(46.5%) of the respondents were of age distribution of respondents within the age bracket of 31-40years while 25(24.8%) were within the age bracket of 41-50years. Additionally, 20(19.8%) of the respondents were within the age bracket of 20-30years while 8(7.9%) were within 51-60years and 1(1.0%) was above 61years. It can be inferred that most of the respondents are within 31- 40years of age.

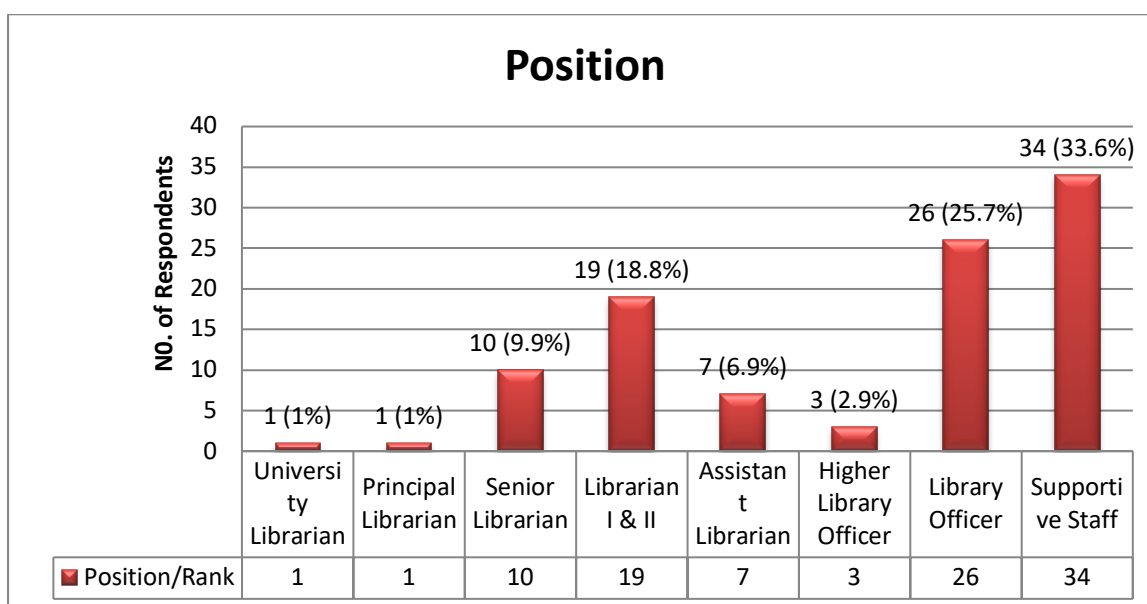


Figure 2: Position of Respondents (n=101)

Figure 2 shows that 34 (33.6%) of the respondents were supportive staff while 26 (25.7%) were library officers in selected university libraries. Also, librarian 1&1 were 19 (18.8%) followed by senior librarians of 10(9.9%). Additionally, assistant librarians were 7

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(6.9%) while higher library officers were 3 (2.9%). The principal librarian was 1 (1.0%) and the university librarian was 1 (1.0%). It can be deduced that the highest number of respondents are para-professionals.

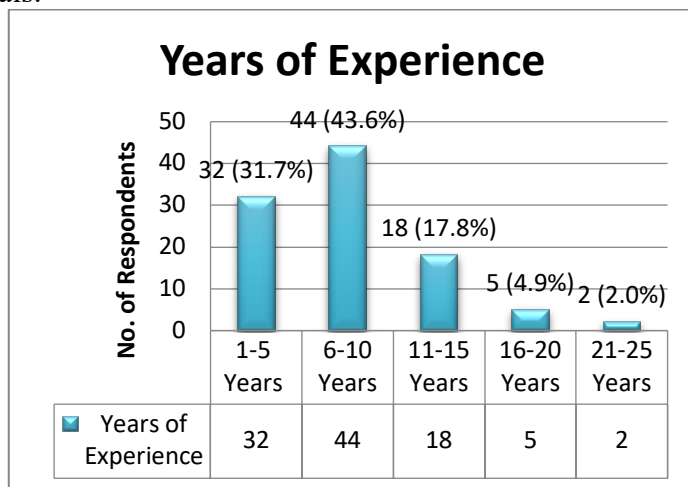


Figure 3: Years of experience of respondents (n=101)

Figure 3 shows the years of experience of the respondents as professional librarian and para-professional. It was observed that 44 (43.6%) of total respondents have years of experience between 6-10 years, followed by 32(31.7%) of the respondents with 1-5 years of experience. In addition, 18(17.8%) of the respondents were within 11-15years while 5(4.9%) were within 16-20 and 2(2.0%) were within 21-25years. Therefore, the findings suggest that the highest number of the respondents was within 6-10years of experience as a librarian.

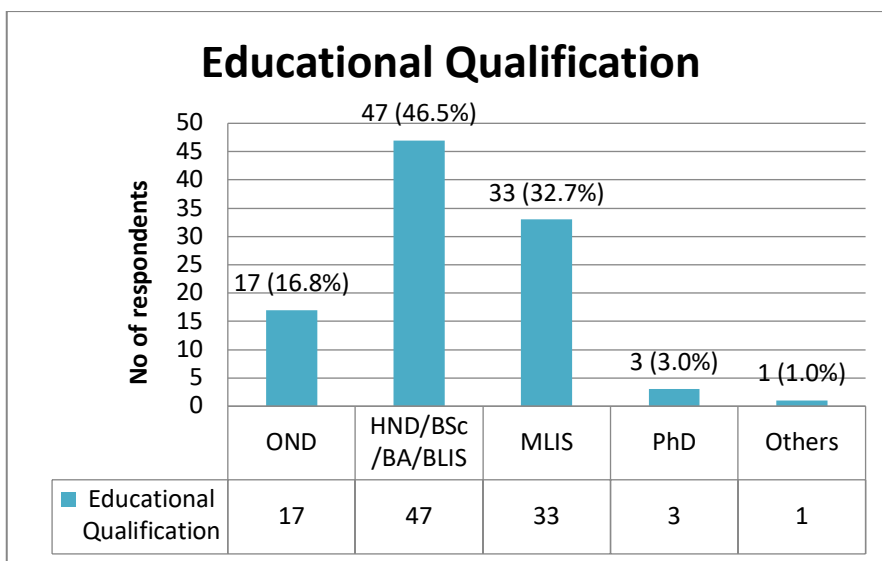


Figure 4: Educational qualifications of respondents (n=101)

Figure 4 shows that 40 (42.6%) have HND/BSC/BA/BLIS degree while 33(35.1%) have MLIS degree. Also, 17(18.1%) have OND certificates while 3 (3.2%) have Ph.D. Moreover, 1(1.1%) respondent has other certificates less than OND. It can thus be deduced that most of the respondents are first degree holders.

Research question 1: What are the nature of deterioration of information resources in selected private university libraries?

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Presented in Table 2 are the results of the analysis of the nature of deterioration of information resources (Print and non-print) in selected private university libraries.

Table 2: Nature of deterioration of information resources (Print and non-print)

S/No	Nature of deterioration of Information resources(print and non-print)	Large extent		Little extent		No extent	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Mutilation of library information resources	59	58.4	35	34.6	7	6.9
2	Broken spine of books	53	52.5	38	37.6	10	9.9
3	Vandalisation of information resources	63	62.4	27	26.7	11	10.9
4	Book becoming torn	75	74.3	17	16.8	9	8.9
5	Brittle library materials	38	37.6	42	41.6	21	20.8
6	Others	0	0.0	9	8.9	92	91.1

Source: (Field Survey, 2019): Key: F=Frequency, %=Percentage. n=101

Table 2 shows that the majority 75 (74.3%) of the respondents indicated that *books becoming torn* is the highest nature of deterioration of print library materials in the surveyed university libraries. This is followed by “*vandalisation of information resources*” while “*mutilation*” of library resources is the next. The least nature of degradation of print library materials is “*brittle of library materials*”.

Research question 2: What are the causes of deterioration of information resources in selected private university libraries?

Presented in Table 3 are the results of the analysis of the causes of deterioration of information resources in selected private university libraries

Table 3: Causes of deterioration of information resources (n=101)

STATEMENTS	Very Great extent		Little extent		No extent		Mean	Std. Dev.
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
High acidity levels causes deterioration of information resources.	45	44.6	46	45.5	9	8.9	3.23	0.80
Information resources can get wear out and tear due to excessive photocopying	52	51.4	39	38.6	10	9.9	3.27	0.81
Air pollution is another causes of deterioration of information resources	41	40.5	43	42.6	17	16.8	3.04	0.83
Information resources can be affected by high temperature levels	49	48.5	45	44.6	6	5.9	3.26	0.76
Relative humidity can also cause information resources to get deteriorated	43	42.6	52	51.4	6	5.9	3.29	0.77
Excessive light is another factor that causes deterioration of information resources	48	47.5	42	41.6	11	10.9	3.17	0.82
Dust and particulate matters are the major causes of deterioration of information resources	47	46.4	45	44.6	9	8.9	3.22	0.78

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Bad Shelving damaged and deteriorated information resources	46	45.5	44	43.6	11	10.9	3.22	0.76
Biological agents(termite, cockroaches, spiders, rodents etc.) is another agents which affected information resources	60	59.4	34	33.7	7	6.9	3.27	0.87

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 3 shows that shows that air pollution is the least cause of deterioration of information resources with a mean score of (3.04) and the major causes of deterioration of information resources found to be relative humidity followed by excessive photocopying and biological agents. Similarly, high temperature levels with a mean score of 3.26 followed by high acidity levels (3.23). In addition, dust and particulate matters, bad shelving damaged information resources with a mean score of (3.22 and 3.22) respectively. Furthermore, excessive light is another factor that causes deterioration of information resources with a mean score (3.17). In overall, it can be said that relative humidity is one of the major factors while air pollution is the least factor that causes information resources deterioration in the selected libraries.

Research question 3: What are the techniques used in the preservation and conservation practices in selected private university libraries?

Presented in Table 4 are the results of the analysis of different techniques used in the preservation and conservation practices of information resources in selected private university libraries.

Table 4: Techniques used in the preservation and conservation practices (n=101)

Preservation and conservation Techniques	Frequently		Occasionally		Never		No response		Mean	Std. Dev.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Emulation	24	23.8	46	45.5	25	24.8	6	5.9	2.91	0.63
Encapsulation	21	20.7	46	45.5	26	25.7	8	7.9	2.87	0.61
De-acidification	28	27.7	45	44.6	21	20.7	7	6.9	3.02	0.68
Fumigation	39	38.6	50	49.5	7	6.9	5	4.9	3.26	0.78
Cleaning and dusting	68	67.3	33	32.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.39	0.81
Binding of books	65	64.4	36	35.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.36	0.77
Microfilming	35	34.7	47	46.5	14	13.9	5	4.9	3.10	0.66
Installation of air condition	59	58.4	42	41.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.33	0.74
Lamination	38	37.6	54	53.5	3	2.9	6	5.9	3.31	0.60
Shelving of books allow free of air	63	62.4	35	34.6	3	2.9	0	0.0	3.32	0.68
Provision of adequate security	47	46.5	43	42.6	6	5.9	5	4.9	3.34	0.71

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 4 shows that the most used preservation and conservation technique of information resources in the university libraries is by “*cleaning and dusting*” (3.39+0.71). This is followed by “*binding of books*” (3.36+0.67) to repair torn books while shelving library materials to allow free flow of air” (3.32+0.58) “*installation of air condition*” (3.33+0.64),and “*provision of adequate security*” (3.34+0.61) are following. Conversely, the least techniques of preservation and conservation of information resources are “*encapsulation*” (2.87+0.51) and

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“emulation” (2.91+0.53). The findings of the study reveal that the most useful strategy used in preserving and conserving information resources in the selected private university libraries is cleaning and dusting, while the least used is encapsulation. The findings suggest that some strategies are being used in preserving and conserving library information resources, but not all the strategies are adopted and used.

Research question 4: What is the level of use of digital preservation technique in selected private university libraries?

Table 5 are the results of the analysis of level of use of digital preservation techniques on information resources in selected private university libraries.

Table 5: Level of use of digital preservation techniques (n=101)

Digital preservation techniques	High		Moderate		Low		No response		Mea	Std.
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	n	Dev.
Technology preservation (Replicating any old configuration of hardware and software)	24	23.8	35	34.6	26	25.7	16	15.8	3.21	0.79
Refreshing (Periodic copying from one physical medium to another)	30	29.7	55	54.5	7	6.9	9	8.9	3.54	0.92
Encapsulation (Creating the original application that was used to create or access the digital object on future computer platforms)	08	7.9	14	13.8	25	24.8	54	53.5	3.10	0.88
Microfilming	11	10.9	44	43.5	08	7.9	38	37.6	3.15	0.84
Migration (Transfer of digital materials from one generation of computer technology to a subsequent generation)	15	14.8	11	10.9	45	44.5	30	29.7	3.10	0.85
Emulation (Preserving the original application program)	07	6.9	13	12.9	51	50.5	29	28.7	3.11	0.36

Source: Field Survey (2019). Key: F=Frequency, %=Per cent

Table 5 shows the major use of digital preservation technique in the university libraries is “refreshing” with a mean value of 3.54 however; this is highly used by only 29.7 per cent of the respondents while 54.5 per cent of the respondents moderately used it in their libraries. This is followed by “technology preservation” with a mean value of 3.21 which is highly used by 23.8 per cent of the respondents while only 34.6 per cent are moderately used. “Microfilming” (3.15) is also used by the libraries as indicated by the respondents although it is highly used by 10.9 per cent and 43.5 per cent of the libraries are moderately used. The findings of the study shows further that “emulation” (3.11), “migration” (3.10) and “encapsulation” (3.10) is moderately used by respondents in private university libraries in South-west, Nigeria. The highest coefficient value of digital preservation technique used is refreshing and it is slightly above average while other variables are below 45 per cent. The findings of the study indicate that digital preservation level of utilisation is low and is not extensively used in selected private university libraries some did not practice it at all.

Research question 5: What are the barriers hindering effective preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private university libraries?

Presented in Table 6 are the results of the analysis of the various barriers to effective

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preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private university libraries.

Table 6: Barriers to effective preservation and conservation of information resources (n=101)

Possible Barriers	Great extent		Average extent		Little extent		No extent		Mean	Std. Dev
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Inadequate funding	58	57.4	33	32.7	9	8.9	1	0.9	3.26	0.78
Insufficient trained personnel	3	2.9	9	8.9	21	20.7	68	67.3	2.54	0.65
Harsh environment	41	40.6	39	38.7	13	12.9	8	7.9	3.18	0.88
Administrative bureaucracy	51	50.5	28	27.7	10	9.9	12	11.9	2.97	0.73
Obsolete or non-existent hardware and software	33	32.6	40	39.6	19	18.8	9	8.9	3.14	0.76
Poor network connectivity	13	12.9	48	47.5	30	29.7	10	9.9	3.14	0.78
Inadequate infrastructure	47	28.7	36	53.4	10	9.9	8	7.9	3.09	0.81
Lack of preservation and conservation policy	0	00	2	1.9	28	27.7	71	70.3	2.12	0.46

Source: Field Survey (2019)

Table 6 shows that the greatest barrier facing the private university libraries is “*inadequate funding*” (3.26+0.78). This is followed by “*Administrative bureaucracy*” (2.97+0.73) while “*Inadequate infrastructure*” (3.09+0.81) and “*harsh environmental conditions speed up library materials depreciation rate*” (3.18+0.88) was following in order of constraints. However, “*insufficient trained personnel*” and “*obsolete or non-existent hardware and software*” are not seen as major constraints. Moreover, the findings reveal that the private university libraries are not faced with preservation and conservation policy issues, but rather, infrastructure and funding problems in carrying out their preservation and conservation activities. This indicates that the preservation and conservation policies in selected private university libraries are effective with the trained staff handling library activities.

Discussion

The findings reveal that books becoming torn, vandalisation of information resources, mutilation, broken spine of books and brittle library materials are the nature of deterioration of information resources. The findings corroborate results of study by Njeze and James (2013) who reported that there was a high rate of deterioration caused by wear and tear, dust particles, bad shelving, biological agents, mutilations and natural disasters.

In addition, the study reveals that relative humidity is one of major factors while air pollution is the least factor that causes information resources deterioration in the selected libraries. The findings are in accordance with the results reported by researchers (Olatokun, 2008; Goswami, 2018) that high humidity, moisture and biological agents are common forms of deterioration of information resources. Moreover, the findings of the study reveal that the most useful strategy used in preserving and conserving information resources in the selected private university libraries is cleaning and dusting, while the least used is encapsulation. This finding corroborates Adetunla and Osunride (2016) who reported that dusting, cleaning and proper shelving are techniques adopted to preserve library materials. However, the present findings of the study indicate that digital preservation level of utilisation is low and is not extensively used in selected private university libraries some did not practice it at all.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the private university libraries are facing challenges of insufficient funding, administrative bureaucracy, poor infrastructure, and harsh

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environmental conditions among others affecting preservation and conservation activities in selected private university libraries. This is in agreement with Zintah, Timothy and Oyinloye (2017) and Ikegune (2015) who observed that in Nigeria, the conservation and preservation of library materials has been neglected due to poor funding, book mutilation and other issues. Similarly, the present findings agreed with Olatokun (2008) that reported inadequate funding, harsh conditions and administrative bottlenecks are among challenges facing preservation and conservation in academic libraries in Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study examined the preservation and conservation of information resources in selected private university libraries in South-west Nigeria. The findings of the study concluded that preservation and conservation techniques are recognized in the selected university libraries, but the digital preservation techniques are not adequately used as a result of constraints notably inadequate funding, administrative bureaucracy and others.

Based on the findings and discussion of the study, the following recommendations were made: 1). Digitization is costly to implement and it is an acceptable means of preservation and conservation of information resources in libraries and archives yet, funds available to university libraries are insufficient. Therefore, university management should seek private partnership within and outside to raise more funds. 2). University library management should provide formal in preservation and conservation of information resources in the libraries. Some of the library staff who had claimed to have received formal training in preservation and conservation could have confused the training they got in general librarianship to mean formal training in preservation and conservation as supported by Shameenda and Kanyengo (2012). 3). University library management should provide an alternative source of power to ensure stable power supply because power failure serves as a threat to preservation and conservation of information resources.

This study covered only private university libraries in South-west, Nigeria. There is a need to examine the preservation and conservation of information resources in public university libraries in South-west and other zones in Nigeria. The study used only a survey approached with aid of a questionnaire thus, there is a need to use a triangulation approach to carry out the study on assessment of preservation and conservation of information resources in South-west, Nigeria.


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To cite this document:

Bashorun, M. T., Idogun-Omogbai, E. K., and Muhammad, J. O. (2021). A Survey of Preservation and Conservation of Information Resources in Private University Libraries, South-west, Nigeria. *Record and Library Journal*, 7(2). 307-319.

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To cite this document:

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