

Management of Public Library Collections: A Case Study of Abia State Library Board, Umuahia, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the management practices of public library collections in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia with focus on the management strategies adopted by the Abia State Public Library, tools for managing library collections, impacts of management of library collections, and the challenges facing the management of public library collection. Five research questions were raised from a corresponding number of specific purposes. Survey research design was adopted and the population of the study was all the 71 staff in the Library. Questionnaire constituted the instrument for data collection, while descriptive method (frequency table and mean) were used to analyze the collected data. The findings of the study showed that Abia State Library Board, Umuahia have strategies for managing their collections such as applying collection development policy in building its collection, it adopts acquisition of up to date collections, placement of ownership stamp on materials, cataloguing and classification of materials, binding and weeding of its collection. Another finding revealed that most of the respondent disagree that the library board has adequate finance. Based on the findings, the study recommends that for effective management of the library board collection, government should fund the library adequately, it also recommends that: appropriate staff members of the Abia State Library Board, Umuahia should be sent for more professional training programmes and workshops on management of library collection; Librarians in the Library Board should be sponsored locally and abroad for higher education at Masters and Ph.D degree levels in Library and Information Science, library users and staff should be sensitized on the importance and the need to properly use and manage library collections.

Keywords

Library administration, library management practices, Public Library.

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Introduction

Public libraries are made for the public and designed to serve the general masses irrespective of age, race, whether poor, rich, literate or illiterate, black or white, young or old. It houses information resources both in print and non-print that help in satisfying the people's information needs. Public library is a library established to provide unrestricted access to information resources free of charge to all the residents of a given community. Akanwa (2017) sees public library as an organization that provides information resources, services and

recreational outlets for the generality of the citizenry, namely, the young, old, literate and non-literate. Unlike other types of library, the public library is not restricted to any group of users and the collections are developed to reflect the diversity of their clientele. Its services, resources and facilities should suit the local needs of its communities and users.

Onyenachi (2012) notes that through public libraries, people can discover knowledge, learn new skills, get informed about personal health and well-being, find out about government and local authority service and seek information about employment and

business development. Akanwa (2017) states that management refers to the effort put into the administration of an organization by a group of individuals who ensure the survival and achievement of the organization's goals. Ogbonna (2019) highlights the transformation in the public libraries already taking place in Nigeria and Africa as follows:

- a. People now go to the public library to hear lectures and musical performances or attend workshops, conferences, skill acquisition, and book clubs;
- b. Public libraries digitize their collections and network their catalogues, extending the range of materials users could access;
- c. Public libraries have introduced e-books or e-resources;
- d. They mount screens to watch movies (cinema) or to play videos such as video games;
- e. They install computers and provide free internet access which is helpful especially to the many that do not have access to the internet. The internet has become the major source of information, yet in Nigeria, millions of people who need it do not have access to the technology or the skills needed to get online. Some Nigerian public libraries address this challenge.
- f. Public libraries wire up their spaces with free Wi-Fi, providing extra power-points so that users could plug in their own devices;
- g. Besides offering new technologies and services, public libraries offer people a welcoming and safe space to gather without spending money. By investing in attractive, versatile furnishings, they have actively encouraged people to dwell in their

spaces to read a newspaper, complete a job application online, to study, etc. In a digital age where communication technologies create both efficiency as well as forms of isolation, such spaces assume a renewed social importance. However, many public libraries in Nigeria do not have welcoming space.

Statement of the Problem

The practice of librarianship is becoming tedious and cumbersome. This is due to increase in information demand, and how to effectively manage their collections for the purpose of giving information to their users. This researcher has visited many public libraries in the country and noticed that the collections in these libraries are not properly managed. This problem is evident in disarranged shelves, improper shelving and shelf-reading, torn and mutilated library books, book theft, inefficient search and retrieval devices, etc. Published researches in library and information science have identified some of the other problems in managing the collection of public libraries to include: wrong cataloguing and classification, poor shelving and shelf-reading, poor preservation and conservation, lack of collection development policy, lack of qualified staff, poor remuneration and salaries and deliberate theft of library documents by patrons (Nnadozie, 2007, Ifidon & Ifidon, 2007). These issues no doubt, affect the quality of service delivery to patrons of these public libraries.

The uniqueness of each public library means that there could be differences in the kind of challenge they face in managing their collection. This necessitates the study of the Abia State Library Board, Umuahia, Nigeria in order to identify the specific problem they face to avoid generalization.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the management practices of public library collections in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia.

The specific objectives are:

1. To identify the strategies adopted by Abia State Library Board, Umuahia for the management of its collection.
2. To ascertain if there are working tools for the management of collection in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia.
3. To examine the impact of management of library collection on service delivery in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia
4. To determine the challenges facing the management of library collections in Abia state Library Board, Umuahia.

Research Questions

The research provided answers to the following research questions;

1. What are the strategies adopted by Abia State Library Board in managing its collection?
2. What are the working tools provided for the management of collection in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia?
3. What are the impacts of library collection management on service delivery in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia?
4. What are the challenges facing the management of library collections in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia?

Review of Related Literature

Management refers to planning, organizing, controlling, leading, and supervising practices or functions in organizations or institutions such as the public libraries. There are several interpretations of the term "supervision," but typically supervisors oversee the productivity and progress of employees who report directly to them. For example first level supervisor supervise entry level employees

(Kaufman, 2017). Library management involves functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.

Planning, a management practice in a public library is about assembling and coordinating human, financial, physical, informational, and other resources needed to achieve library goals. Leading is about functions that involve efforts on the part of the librarian to stimulate high performance by employees, and controlling function is about monitoring various library operations and services. These management functions are highly integrated, but libraries that excel in organizing material and human resources are known to provide better service.

Preservation can be defined as the sum total of deliberate steps taken by libraries to ensure that books and other information sources survive in usable physical or electronic form for as long as it is humanly possible, according to Feather (1996) in Olatokun, (2008). Preservation involves maintaining an object or information in a format that ensures the continued use and accessibility of the information provided, halting the deterioration of materials by providing a stable environment and proper equipment for storage. Preservation also includes preparing for potential disasters such as floods, fires, tornadoes, and earthquakes.

However, with many collections having a digital component, space is no longer an issue for serious concern in some libraries. This does not mean that weeding is not necessary in digital collections. "Clearing out unused materials makes a patron's searching experience better by reducing the number of old and irrelevant records the patron must wade through in their search results to find what they really want. The digital collection like the physical collection should be kept current and easily accessible (Lehman, 2016).

Collection management is the process of information gathering, communication, coordinating, policy formulation, evaluation, and planning. These processes, in turn, influence decisions about the acquisition, retention, and provision of access to information sources in support of the intellectual needs of a given library community. National Universities Commission (2012) states that collection management not only involves the selection and acquisition process, but also the organization and use of all materials in all formats to the level required to support research, lifelong learning and public service. Collection management also includes leasing, renting, de-selection, providing access to other collections, planned resource-sharing and cooperate storage and electronic access to databases.

Looking at the benefit attached to the library if properly managed with a good strategy which ranges from availability of numerous collections to quick retrieval and long-time storage, each task of management would be carried with maximum enthusiasm (Gani, 2014). Those who practice collection management are called variously: selectors, bibliographers, collection librarians, subject specialists, subject liaisons, collection development librarians, collections managers, and collection developers (Johnson, 2009).

Collection development is a logical and systematic process of promptly and continuously building of library collection (Udo-Anyanwu and Wegwu, 2017). Every public library should have a collection development policy that should be supported by the requirements of the library legislation. The policy is meant to define the purpose, scope and content of the collection. The policy should aim at ensuring that the library collection grows steadily and is accessible. The policy should also have room for accessing materials outside the library walls through the use of mobile libraries and

information technologies such as, the internet, databases, CD-ROMs, etc.

Library collections are managed through varieties of library activities such as the acquisition of needed library materials (through purchase, gift, exchange, and legal deposit), cataloguing and classification of library materials, and use of collection development policy (Abdulsalami, and Awolowo, (2019).

Bell (2022) identified the use of ownership stamp as a tool in managing library collection. Placing ownership stamp on library materials and thereby discouraging theft is an important strategy in collection management. In addition to the use of magnetic strips and other anti-theft technological devices, use of ownership stamp is one of the major ways a library could secure the materials from being stolen. Furthermore, Smith, Kinash and Brand (2013) noted the usefulness of library shelves in the management of the library collection. They observed that even in the digital environment in many libraries, the 'public' space is still dominated by the library bookshelves. Akidi and Omekwu (2019) also identified cataloguing and classification as tools in managing library collection. Cataloguing and classification of information resources in a digital environment is fundamentally required to enhance effective bibliographic control and bring about universal access to information resources.

The management of library collection improves service delivery in various ways such as in making the library materials accessible and usable by the library patrons. Locating information or materials would be a herculean task if the materials are misplaced on the shelves or never shelved. Shelf work and shelving are critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of any library. The important role of library shelves in service delivery cannot therefore, be overemphasized (Living in the Library World, 2009).

Adams, Church, and Hanson (2020) stated that libraries are confronted with the limitations of space, budgeting, staffing, and other factors in the management of their collections. They further stressed that despite the challenges, libraries must maintain their collections responsibly.

Methodology

The research design that was adopted for this study is descriptive survey. Nworgu (2015) explained descriptive survey as studies which aim at collecting data and describing it in a systematic manner, the characteristics, and facts about a given population. Structured questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument. All the questionnaires distributed were returned,

representing one hundred percent return rate. The population of the study comprises of seventy one (71) library staff of the Abia State Library Board, Umuahia headquarters. The 71 staff were made up of all the librarians, library officers, library assistants and attendants that serve at the main library/headquarters of the State Library Board located at Umuahia. This method of research design was used because it helped elicit relevant information regarding the management of library collections of Abia State Library Board, Umuahia.

Research Finding Results

Research Question One: What are the strategies adopted by Abia State Library Board in managing its collection?

Table 1: Strategies Adopted by Abia State Library Board in Managing its Collection

S/No.	Strategies	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean	Decision
1	Collection development policy	35	19	12	5	3.18	Accept
2	Acquisition of up to date collections	33	19	13	6	3.11	Accept
3	Placement of ownership stamp	25	27	18	1	3.07	Accept
4	Cataloguing and classification of material	48	23	0	0	3.68	Accept
5	Binding	44	27	0	0	3.62	Accept
6	Weeding	71	0	0	0	4.00	Accept
	Grand Mean					3.44	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2021

The criterion mean for this study is 2.5. Hence, mean response equal to or above the criterion mean (2.5) indicates acceptance region whereas mean response below the criterion mean (2.5) denotes rejection region. The analysis on table 1 above which seeks to investigate the responses of library staff on the strategies adopted by the Abia State Library in managing its collection, shows that the mean response for the items surpassed the criteria mean. This implies that the library adopts collection development policy in building its collection (Mean = 3.18), it adopts acquisition of up to

date collections (Mean = 3.11), imparting of ownership stamp (Mean = 3.07), cataloguing and classification of materials (Mean = 3.68), binding (Mean = 3.62) and weeding (Mean = 4.00). Meanwhile, the grand mean of 3.52 surpassed the criterion mean (2.5). This implies that Abia State Library Board adopts the strategies stated on table 1 for managing its collections.

Research Question Two: What are the working tools provided for the management of collection in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia?

Table 2: Tools for Managing Library Collection

S/No.	Tools	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean	Decision
1	Shelves	14	25	23	9	2.62	Accept
2	Book stands	30	15	12	14	2.86	Accept
3	Spacious stack areas	15	27	16	13	2.58	Accept
4	Catalogue cabinet	26	24	16	5	3.00	Accept
5	Kardex card	38	24	5	4	3.35	Accept
6	Adequate Finance	11	8	21	31	1.01	Reject
7	Index cabinet	20	18	31	2	2.79	Accept
8	Catalogue cards	31	19	19	3	3.12	Accept
Grand Mean						2.66	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 2: reveals the responses of the respondents as it concerns research question 3 which seeks to investigate if the staff of Abia state Library are provided with adequate working tools for the management of their library collections. A critical look at the mean response of the respondents to each of the items shows that the respondents agreed that the library has shelves (Mean = 2.62), book stands (Mean = 2.86), spacious stack areas (Mean = 2.58),

Catalogue cabinet (Mean = 3.00), Kardex card (Mean = 3.35), meanwhile, the respondents disagreed that the library has adequate finance for managing its collection (Mean = 1.01), index cabinet (Mean = 2.79) and catalogue cards (Mean = 3.12).

Research Question Three: What are the impacts of management of library collection on services delivery in Abia State Library Board?

Table 3: Impacts of Management of Library Collection on Service Delivery

S/No.		SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean	Decision
1	It gives quick access to materials	31	17	13	10	2.97	Accept
2	It makes library resources available to library users	26	19	21	11	3.01	Accept
3	Materials are provided	20	28	23	6	2.79	Accept
4	Library users feel satisfied after using the library	20	22	20	9	2.75	Accept
5	It helps library user to locate and retrieve library materials	30	18	11	12	2.92	Accept
Grand Mean						2.88	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

A critical look at the mean response of the respondents to each of the items on table 3 above which investigates the impact of management of library collection on service delivery, shows that all the items raised were accepted as their mean exceeded the criterion mean (i.e. 2.97, 3.01, 2.79 and 2.75 > 2.5). Hence, it can be concluded that the impact of management of library collection

on service delivery are: It gives quick access to materials, it makes library resources available to library users, materials are provided and library users feel satisfied after using the library.

Research Question Four: What are the challenges facing the management of library collection in Abia State Library?

Table 4:Challenges facing the Management of Library Collection in Abia State Library

S/No.	Challenges	SA 4	A 3	D 2	SD 1	Mean	Decision
1	Poor funding of the library	43	28	0	0	3.61	Accept
2	Lack of security management	27	26	11	7	3.03	Accept
3	Inadequate preservation and conservation of library materials	25	20	23	3	2.94	Accept
4	Inadequate trained personnel	39	21	10	1	3.38	Accept
Grand Mean						3.24	Accept

Source: Field Survey, 2021.

Table 4 seeks to investigate the responses of the Abia State Library Board staff on the challenges facing the management of library collections of Abia State Library Board. The general conclusion from Table 4 above is that all the challenges listed were accepted by the respondents as the challenges facing the management of library collections. The challenges are poor funding of library (Mean = 3.61), lack of security management (Mean = 3.03), inadequate preservation and conservation of library materials (Mean = 2.94) and inadequate trained personnel (Mean = 3.38).

Discussion of Findings

The responses given by the respondents on the strategies adopted by the Abia State Library Board, Umuahia in managing their collections shows that Abia State Library Board adopts collection development policy in building its collection, it adopts acquisition of up to date collections, placement of ownership stamp, cataloguing and classification of materials, binding and weeding of its collection. This finding agrees with the position of Bello (2022) and Abdusalami and Awolowo (2019).

Response from the respondents on the provision of working tools for the staff of Abia State Library Board, Umuahia for the management of their library collections agrees with the submissions Smith, Kinash and Brand (2013) that the library has shelves, book stands, spacious stack areas, catalogue cabinet, Kardex card, index cabinet and catalogue cards which are tools for managing library collection. It also agrees with the

position of the research work titled Living in the Library World (2009). Meanwhile the respondents disagreed that the library has adequate finance in the management of its collections.

On the impact of management of library collection on service delivery, the finding of this work shows that library collection management: facilitate quick access to materials, makes library resources available to library users, enhances user satisfaction. Management of library collection ensures timely and adequate access to, retrieval and utilization of information resources. This finding agrees with the work of Akidi and Omekwu (2019).

The challenges facing the management of library collections in Abia State Library Board, Umuahia cannot be overemphasized. The findings of this study showed that the challenges facing the management of library collections are poor funding of library, lack of security management, inadequate preservation and conservation of library materials and inadequate trained personnel. These findings differs from the findings of Peggy, (2009) who found out that the challenges facing the management of library collections include selection of new material, weeding of less important items, storage off-site, and preservation in various formats. It, however, agrees with the work of Adams, Church, Hanson, and Larsen (2020).

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the strategies adopted by Abia State library board in

managing its collection include collection development policy in building its collection, it adopts acquisition of up to date collections, imparting of ownership stamp, cataloguing and classification of materials, binding and weeding of its collection.

Analysis on the provision of tools for the management of library collection at Abia State Library Board, Umuahia shows from the grand mean that the working tools provided for the management of its collections. The respondent agreed that the library has shelves, book stands, spacious stack areas, catalogue cabinet, Kardex card, index cabinet and catalogue cards. Meanwhile the respondents disagree that the library has adequate finance for managing its collection.

Analysis further shows that the impact of management of library collection on service delivery are quick access to materials, it makes library resources available to library users, materials are provided and library users feel satisfied after using the library. It further shows that the challenges facing the management of library collections are funding of the library, lack of security management, inadequate preservation and conservation of library materials and inadequate trained personnel.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study;

- It is recommended that Abia State Library Board, Umuahia should review and update their collection development policy
- The state government should provide the public libraries with adequate funds for the management of their library collections.

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