

Retrospective Conversion of Library Catalogue and Access to Information Resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka

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Abstract

The paper is on retrospective conversion of library catalogue and access to library resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. It examined the implementation of retrospective conversion for improved access to information resources in this library. Three research questions guided the study. The research design adopted for this study is a descriptive survey. The population of the study was fifty-four (54) and all of them participated in the study. The instruments for data collection were observation checklist and questionnaire. Data were analysed using mean scores and standard deviation. Findings revealed that retrospective conversion influences access to information resource. Similarly, human and material resources are very important for the process of retrospective conversion and access to information resources in the library. Basic skills needed for this process includes importing of document, word processing, internet searching, cataloguing and classification skills are needed from the library staff for effective implementation. The study concluded that in order to remain relevant in the present age of information explosion, libraries must be aggressive to provide access to information resources within and outside the library environment remotely. The researcher recommends that the library should continue to be proactive to incorporate new and innovative ways to ease access to information resources in the library.

Keywords

retrospective conversion, library catalogue, university library

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Introduction

The automated driven library operation is seen to be one that would adequately and efficiently meet the information needs of library patrons. As the world is growing technologically, library operations in various locations in the world are also growing technologically and librarians have started making efforts to convert

from manual to electronic operations. This is in an attempt to make information resources in the libraries easily accessible to the patrons especially in the age where time is treasured.

The academic health, intellectual vitality, vibrancy and effectiveness of any university depend largely upon the state of health, performance and excellence of their

libraries. For this reason, libraries irrespective of types are meant to select, order, acquire, process/organize, store and disseminate relevant information resources to their clientele. Specifically, libraries in institution of higher learning (universities, polytechnics and colleges) are organized to meet the information needs of the student, staff and

school/faculty are referred to as academic libraries (Onah, 2012).

In Nigeria, academic institutions are mandated to establish a library which must support the teaching, learning and research processes of such. Hence, the educational processes rely on it as a resource of intellectual development of students, staff and entire community because it

provides tools which support the classroom instructions and curriculum of institutions (Ode and Omokaro, 2007). Therefore, the library as the centre of intellectual activities of any institution has an important role to play to ensure that adequate information materials and library assistance are provided to meet the information needs of the library patron.

Festus Aghagbuo Nwankwo Library (FANL) is a University Library established in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka to support teaching, learning and research of the university faculty and students. They collect, process, organize, store, preserve and disseminate information resources which include reference resources, serials publications, books, research reports (project, thesis and dissertations), Africana publications and audio-visual material. These show that their library resources are very essential in learning, teaching and research. Mindful of this and based on the primary objectives of contributing to learning, teaching, research and cultural development of the parent institution, they strive to ensure that the university library retain its place as the information gateway, by making the resources/collections of the library accessible to its users.

Access to credible and reliable information is important in order to achieve the objective of any library. According to Adebayo (2012), access to information is very crucial as it ensures individual advancement and educational development. Hence, libraries are organized to give easy access to information materials in the library. The library catalogue is the index to the collections of a library. It provides a comprehensive insight to the library resources through the author's name, title of the material and subject of the material. Ekere & Mole (2014) defined a catalogue as a list of material in the library arranged in a kind of order for the smooth and easy retrieval of information by the clientele. If there is no proper organization of materials in the library, it would be difficult to retrieve a particular material from among many. Hence, the core modules of a library catalogue have always functioned as identifying the availability and location of materials in the library thereby creating effective accessibility (Ahenkorah-Marfo & Borteye, 2010).

Just like many other university libraries, FANL materials are catalogued to ease access to the collections of the library. As an index to the library's collection, the

relevance of the library catalogue in accessing the information resources in the library is immeasurable. With the ever increasing collection of the library, the catalogue becomes an essential and important tool to locate the desired material from the ocean of books. According to Ekere and Mole (2014), the main essence of providing a catalogue is to make it easier for a searcher to identify a document amongst collections. However, with the ever increasing library collections and the advance in information technology, manual catalogue becomes insufficient in providing access to resources in the library as users want, expect and pursue access to information digitally; they often look beyond the manual catalogue when searching for information resources. Mindful of this, FANL has adopted Retrospective Conversion (RECON) as a means of coping with greater demand on their services in this digital era.

Retrospective Conversion is the activity or operation that involves the conversion of library catalogue from the conventional method to the computerized or automated method, so as to meet with the best global practices. According to ALA Glossary of Library and information science (2013), the term retrospective conversion has been defined as the process of converting the database of a library holding from non-machine-readable form to machine-readable form. Retrospective conversion of library catalogues creates an Open Access Catalogue (OPAC) which will replace the traditional card catalogue of the library. This became necessary because of the need for library catalogues to provide access to more content and to offer significantly enhanced functionality

based on the features of popular search engines (Ekere and Ihejirika, 2016).

Observations have shown that most Nigerian students do not make use of the library manual catalogue. This may be due to the stress of scanning through the catalogue cards to access information material or the desire among students in this digital age to access information at a click of a button. For this reason, it has become a matter of need that automated access to the library collections is implemented. That is why Asogwa, Nwachukwu and Mmomelu (2021) affirm that it has become paramount in this age of literature and information proliferation to provide a catalogue that will give complete access to the contents of a library collection especially to distant user who wishes to access the records of a library collection through a website.

Consequently, in 2016, FANL adopted Retrospective conversion using the KOHA software. As an integrated library software, the University Library adopted KOHA for the management of all library operation. Such operations include: acquisition, cataloguing and classification, circulation services, reference services, etc. Koha is the first open-source integrated library software (ILS) in use worldwide by public, school and special libraries. Its development was steered by a growing community of libraries and users collaborating to achieve their technological goal (Wikipedia, 2012). Koha user's interface is very configurable and adaptable which has been translated into many languages. It has most of the features that would be expected in an ILS, including simple clear interface for librarians and members

(patrons), union catalogue facility, customizable search, circulation and borrower management, serials system for magazines or newspapers among others (Wikipedia, 2012). According to Omeluzor, Adara, Ezinwayi, Bamidele and Umahi (2012) Koha has several features that makes it usable at both staff and clients' interface. In FANL, Koha software was installed to the Debian software which is further connected to other computer to accept requests from the computers. It is through these computers that both the library staff and library patrons send command to the management system based on their interfaces and receive response to their commands.

The success of retrospective conversion of catalogue records in FANL is an evidence that successful implementation of retrospective conversion of library catalogue in Nigerian libraries is achievable and requires only good management approaches in order to carry out the project effectively and efficiently. It is against this background that this study tends to look at the retrospective conversion of library catalogue in Festus Aghagbo Nwankwo Library, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka and to ascertain the influence of this conversion on access to library collections.

Statement of the Problem

In spite of the fact that FANL Awka is now moving from traditional library system to automated system as a means of coping with the information explosion, there is still need to examine the various procedures adopted in the retrospective conversion and compare it with already existing theory for the benefits of those libraries who are yet to automate

their services and hope to do so in future. For this reason, this study tends to examine the retrospective conversion of library catalogue and access to library catalogue in FANL, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka.

Objective of the Study

- To identify the resources available for retrospective conversion of library catalogue
- To determine the skills and competencies needed for retrospective conversion of library catalogue.
- To identify the methods adopted for retrospective conversion and access to library catalogue.
- To find out the influence of retrospective conversion on access to information resources in the library.

Literature Review

The use of computers has penetrated each and every aspect of the library. It has helped in the mechanization of every activity in the library. The rapid growth and uses of this technologies has changed the traditional library into automated and digital library. This revolution has completely changed the library scenario, especially in an academic setup, and had led to the retrospective conversion of library catalogue (Jan, Sheikh & Jan, 2013). This process is the partial or complete conversion of an existing catalogue into machine readable catalogue form. According to Esievo (2015), retrospective conversion is a method of providing library past records online. Additionally, Rahaman, (2011), defined retrospective Conversion as a process of converting information from a traditional card catalogue to an electronic format.

The term retrospective conversion connotes that the process is the conversion of already existing catalogue records from manual to digital. Dabas (2004) specifies that the word Retrospective indicates that the process is only for already existing records, and the meaning of the word Conversion refers to the form and format of the records changing something from one form to another. Thus, retrospective conversion in library and information center means changing already existing catalogue from traditional form to a machine-readable form.

This process is a costly and time consuming procedure, therefore, it has to be taken up as a special project which requires thorough planning and policy decisions making. Dabas (2004) identifies that it may take years depending upon the size of the existing collection of the libraries or information centers. Smaller and new libraries may have an advantage over the larger and established libraries because of the lesser quantity of data for retrospective conversion. Esievo (2015) stated that retrospective conversion provides varying degrees of challenges depending on the size of the library's existing collection prior to computerization. Nagabhushanam (2011) noted that, before undertaking retrospective conversion, the exact objective has to be established, and the extent to which it relates to local conditions. This will give an indication of the strategy for the project and is essential to gain the support of the parent institution.

Studies have shown that there are several resources available for retrospective conversion in libraries. According to Nkamnebe, Udem and

Nkamnebe (2014) the resources available in the university libraries include both financial as well as human resources. Similarly, Ekere and Ihejirika (2016), listed the material resources as; Stand Alone Computers, networked computers, scanners, digital camera, printers, generators, software e.g Koha, millennium, etc. and the human resources as; professional cataloguers, paraprofessional cataloguers, software experts and System engineers.

There are several methods employed for retrospective conversion in libraries. According to Ekere and Ihejirika (2016), the methods employed can include: manually keying library catalogue into MARC format, scanning of library catalogue, editing the converted catalogue record, matching records using ISBN or LCCN, searching for records in already created database, validating record, and saving the record in the library management system. For this reason, basic skills are needed for effective conversion of library catalogue. According to Anyaogu (2018) the competencies needed for retrospective conversion borders knowledge on the traditional cataloguing skills and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. This is because, the process of retrospective conversion involves automating already existing catalogue record. Therefore, there is need for training and retraining of cataloguing staff, selecting the appropriate database management system, consistent system maintenance and upgrade by library systems unit, increasing internet bandwidth by the university administration, alternative power supply and establishing a cooperative online resource

catalogue among Nigerian Universities. Consequently, the process will be able to save the time of a patron in accessing information resources, improve the work of a librarian and automate the library services.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for collecting data. However, the researchers used an observation checklist to ascertain the accuracy of some of the information provided by the

respondents. The population of this study was 90 staff of the university library. Considering the manageable size, all staff were used. The observation check list was used by the researchers to collect data for research question 1. The completed and returned questionnaires were analysed using the SPSS (statistical package of the social science) to get the mean scores. However, a mean of 2.50 was adopted as a decision rule for the analysis of the data collected. Items with the mean of 2.50 and above were regarded as being helpful while item below 2.50 were regarded as being not helpful.

RESULTS

Table 1: Professional Distribution

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Professionals	45	50%
Para-professional	39	43.4%
Software experts	3	3.3%
System engineers	3	3.3%
Total	90	100%

Table 2: Availability of resources

S/N	Items	Availability and Use of Resources		
		AV	AV&NIU	NAV
Human Resources				
1	Professional cataloguers	✓		
2	Paraprofessional cataloguers	✓		
3	Software experts	✓		
4	System engineers	✓		
Material Resources				
1	Stand-alone computers	✓		
2	Networked computers	✓		
3	Scanners	✓		
4	Digital cameras		✓	
4	Printers	✓		
5	Servers for internet connectivity	✓		
6	Alternative power supply		✓	
7	Software	✓		

The table 1 above shows that there are more professionals which includes the librarians and the system experts (system engineers and software experts) for the retrospective conversion than the para-professionals. This is to show that there are sufficient

professionals needed for the retrospective conversion of the library catalogue.

From table 2, it shows that all the human resources are available in the library for retrospective conversion of the library catalogue.

Similarly, the material resources needed for retrospective conversion and access to library resources are also available. However, while all the material resources are available, materials such as digital cameras and alternative power supply are available but not in use. The digital cameras have been mounted in all necessary corners of the library but

have not been installed to a computer system for its use. The alternative power supply has been purchased but not connected to the library supply power when need. For this reason, the library depends on the power holding company for the supply of power which is not constant.

Table 3: Skills and Competencies

S/ N	Skills and Competencies Needed	X	SD	Rank	DECISION
1	Cataloguing and classification skills	3.52	0.69	1	High extent
2	Internet search skills	3.33	0.87	2	High extent
3	Word processing skill	3.31	0.66	3	High extent
4	Skills on importing of document	3.17	0.75	4	High extent
5	Skills on generation of reports from databases	3.16	0.74	5	High extent
Cluster Mean & SD		3.30	0.74		High extent

The table above shows that the human resources available at the library possess necessary skills and competencies needed for the retrospective conversion and access to library resources in the library. Cataloguing and Classification skills top the rank with overall mean of 3.52. Internet search skills rank 2nd with overall mean of 3.33, while

word processing, importing of document and generating of reports from database ranks 3rd, 4th and 5th with overall mean of 3.31, 3.17 and 3.16 respectively. These human resources include the professional librarians, para-professionals, software designers and system engineers. It also shows that its availability is at high extent.

Table 4: Method adopted for Retrospective Conversion

S/ N	Items	Decision
1	Manually keying library resources into the machine readably	Agreed
2	Editing the converted catalogue record	Agreed
3	Machine records using ISBN and ISSN	Agreed
4	Searching for records in already created database	Agreed
5	Saving the record in the library management system	Agreed

The table 4 shows the methods for retrospective conversion adopted by the library for improved access to library resources. It portrays that

the library adopts all methods for its retrospective conversion and access to library catalogue. However, upon further enquiry, the response is that



searching for records in already
created database is mostly used.
This is because it helps to avoid

repetition and time wastage in the
process of retrospective conversion.

Table 5: Influence of the conversion on access to library resources

s/n	Items	DECISION
1	Author	High extent
2	Title	High extent
3	Subject	High extent
4	Classification number	High extent
5	Keyword search	High extent

The above table shows that retrospective conversion of library catalogue has influenced, at high extent, access to library resources through the following access points: author, title, subject, classification number and keyword search. This is evidence that the reason for retrospective conversion which is to ease access to information resources will be achieved through the listed access points.

Discussion of Findings

Resources available for retrospective conversion of catalogue records in the library: The result of the finding through the observation checklist indicates that the library under study is equipped to undertake the task of retrospective conversion. Feedback from the library staff shows that some of the items available are not in use. Such items are digital cameras and the alternative power supply.

These finding is in line with the findings of Ihejirika and Ekere (2016) who stated that though some libraries have inadequate number of some facilities, the required basic resources for the retrospective conversion process are available in the university libraries

Skills and competencies needed for retrospective conversion of library catalogue: The result of the finding shows that the library staff possess the necessary skills needed for the retrospective conversion. Further inquiry from the staff members of the library under study shows that the library adopted the in-house method of retrospective conversion which required every staff member to develop the skills needed for retrospective conversion.

This is in line with Anyaogu (2018) who stated that the competencies needed for retrospective conversion borders on knowledge on the traditional cataloguing skill and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. This is because, the process of retrospective conversion involves automating already existing catalogue record.

Methods adopted for retrospective conversion and access to library catalogue: The finding here shows that the library adopts all methods for its retrospective conversion and access to library catalogue. However, upon further enquiry, the response is that searching for records in already created database is mostly used. This is because it helps to avoid repetition

of entry and saves time for the library staff.

This finding agrees with Okoroma (2010), who stated that one of the methods adopted for retrospective conversion is Keying manually: even though it is the most accurate way of getting libraries database into machine readable form, but the process is time consuming and needs both properly trained people as well as experts' supervision. Ekere and Ihejirika (2016), in their study identified the methods employed as: manually keying library catalogue into MARC format, scanning of library catalogue, editing the converted catalogue record, matching records using ISBN or LCCN, searching for records in already created database, validating record, and saving the record in the library management system

Influence of retrospective conversion on access to information resources in the library:On the influence of retrospective conversion on access to information resources in the library, the finding shows that retrospective conversion of library catalogue has influenced, at high extent, access to library resources through the following access points: author, title, subject, classification number and keyword search. This is evidence that the reason for retrospective conversion which is to ease access to information resources will be achieved through the listed access points.

This is in line with Asogwa, Nwachukwu and Mmomelu (2021) who affirms that current cataloguing system are not able to save the time of the reader because of its slow processing

system. Saha (2018), affirms this by stating that OPAC has revolutionized ways to bibliographic information through search capabilities such as keyword searching, Boolean searching, truncation, proximity searching, and item identity number searching.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study could be summarized as follows:-

1. There are sufficient professionals needed for retrospective conversion of the library catalogue. These professionals include: professional librarians, para-professional librarians, system engineers and software experts.
2. The human and material resources for effective implementation of retrospective conversion are available in the library. However, Digital cameras and alternative power generators are available but not in use
3. A number of methods are adopted in retrospective conversion for improved access to the information resources in the university library. Such methods as manually keying library resources into the machine readably, editing the converted catalogue record, searching for records in already created database amongst others.
4. The library staff have some required skills and competencies for retrospective conversion of library catalogue in the

university library. Such skills are skills on importing of documents, word processing, internet searching, cataloguing and classification skills.

5. Retrospective conversion influences access to information resources through the access points such as author, title, classification number, keyword search and subject.

Conclusion

It has been observed that retrospective conversion of library catalogue facilitates access to information resources of the university libraries. This is a revolution from the traditional manual card catalogue to machine readable and online type of catalogue which enables easy access to information resources. Effective implementation of retrospective conversion in the university libraries requires a good number of relevant resources which should be readily available. In FANL, retrospective conversion seems to have moved smoothly for the library. Every material and human resources needed were sufficiently provided, however, there is need to provide sustainability. Adequate budget should be made to ensure that the efforts of the library are sustained. Most importantly, the alternative power supply needs to be in use to ensure that users can access these services without any hindrances.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. The government/government bodies which established the

universities to continue to make adequate financial provisions for these institutions as a whole and the university libraries in particular so that they can sustain the conversion to enhance access to information resources.

2. The library management should continue to exploring best practices in the implementation of retrospective conversion for the library.
3. To be abreast with the required staff skills and competencies in effective retrospective conversion of library catalogues, the university library staff members should endeavour to utilize different opportunities to update their existing skills and competencies in this regard.
4. The library staff in charge of retrospective conversion should be trained on using the relevant contemporary software so as to capture the key access points through which information resources could be accessed.

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