

Utilization of Archival Materials in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka

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Abstract

This study examines the utilization of archival materials in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. By so doing four research questions were formulated to guide the study. The study employed a case study research design. The population of the study was made up of 90 comprising of 10 staff of the special collection division of the library and 80 students who use the special collection resources. Data were collected from users through questionnaire by the researchers. Data collected were analyzed through frequencies, and percentages. From the result of the study, it was gathered that users access archival resources of the special collection division of Nnamdi Azikiwe Library University of Nigeria Nsukka through the library staff. Other ways are through library catalogue and shelf browsing. They made use of archival resources for research purposes, examination and recreational purposes. However, the use of archival resources is hindered by the use of foreign classification methods, poor preservation techniques and inadequate space as the problems of archival resources utilization. The study therefore, the researchers recommended that the library should provide more space and facilities and adopt a uniform classification scheme that will be easy for users to comprehend and have access to the collections.

Keywords: Utilization, Archival Materials.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Archives play a major role in boosting the strength and value of research works. The collection of a historical document or records of a government, a family, an individual, an organization is an essential aid to discovering new factor. Archives are human materials, electronic and archival resources of any institution which are adjudged a work of permanent preservation for reference and research (Asogwa, 2004). For the purpose of this work, archives are documents that are not all that current but informative for reference or historical purposes. They constitute primary sources of information. They contain vast amount of events and historical information which could be useful for future reference be it legal or educational. In view of the importance of archives Adikwu (1990) noted that employing the right staff, setting up an archival committee, mapping out phases for the collection of materials and establishing a record centre. He anticipated that the university authorities will finalize their plans for archives in university libraries. Drawing from this, university libraries acquire, preserve and make information in the form of documentation available as effectively and economically as possible. In spite of this, it seems to the researcher that users of the Nnamdi Azikiwe Library do not make adequate use of archival resources. It is in view of this that this study becomes an issue of concern to the researcher.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Archives constitute the primary source of research in university libraries within and outside the world. They contain vital facts could be used for legal administration and reference purposes for the development of university education. They provide data that could be used to backup research findings. It is therefore expected that users of the Nnamdi Azikiwe library, university of Nigeria Nsukka should make use of the resources judiciously. Surprisingly, it seems to the researcher that users of this library are denied access to archival collections either because of the special nature of the collections or its preservation practices. Surprisingly, literature available to the researcher seems like no study has been carried out to study the use of archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe library, university of Nigeria Nsukka. The implication is that, the non utilization of this resources may affect the effective provision and management of the resources, hence, they are provided and the return of its usage or investment is very low to emerge and hard to measure. It is because of this that the study of utilization of archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka is necessary.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the problems of utilization of archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, university of Nigeria Nsukka. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine users access to the archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library UNN
2. determine the purpose of use of the archival resources in the library
3. identify the problems affecting the utilization of archival resources in the library
4. proffer strategies for enhancing utilization of archival resources in the library

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do users access archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library UNN?
2. What is the purpose of use of the archival resources in the library?
3. What are the problems affecting the utilization of archival resources in the library?
4. What are the strategies for enhancing utilization of archival resources in the library?

2.1 Literature Review

Literature abound that there are a number of definitions given to archives by scholars in the field of library and information science, archives as well as other scholars in electronic media. They contain valuable information be it on natural phenomena or events. This enable one to write about the government and the govern in terms of history, administration, development as well as underdevelopment. According to Rhoads in Onah (2006) archives refers to their place of deposit or a building dedicated to their care and use and to the organization or agency responsible for administering them.

Archival resources are very informative most especially in the academic community. Omelege (1990) describing the research value of archives in the academic environment said they students both undergraduates and postgraduates from different universities within and outside the country receive considerable services of the archives in the course of their research work. University libraries provide archival resources for use by its clientele. Conway (1996) articulated that we accept anything we are not legally debarred from receiving, providing it contributes to the research or teaching potential of the university libraries. It is therefore, follows that the archives department operate completely within the general rules and regulations of use designed to protect all the library's rare books and manuscripts.

Whalem (1996) maintain that while institutions have some degree of control over the quality of records and the staff, they have little or no control over the quality of users. The more prepared the users are, the more able the archivist is to offer effective assistance and even professional historians often seem to have little or no training in the proper use of archival materials. This is attributed to lack of efficient management, preservation practices or storage advice, shortage of money, which have led to sale of materials, the speed with which problems multiply and the speed necessary for action to avoid sale or dispersion (Boulet, 1994). Similarly, Peterson (2000) identified economic problems as acute to all archives. This implies that since the mission of archives is to preserve primary documents for centuries, the return on investment is very slow to engage, and it may be intangible hence hard to measure. In view of this, much work has been don't in recognizing and developing the archives, including compiling bibliographies, repairing and rebuilding, producing and reproducing microforms producing CD-ROMs and acquiring space for use of these special materials. Drawing from the above review, one may understand that there is a scarcity of literature on utilization of archival resources most especially in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka and this is why the study of this kind becomes necessary.

3.1 Methodology

The study employed a case study research design. The study was guided by five research questions. The population of the study was made up of 90 comprising of 10 staff of the special collection division of the library and 80 students who use the special collection resources. Data were collected from users through questionnaire by the researchers. Data collected were analyzed through frequencies, and percentages.

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Users access to Archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, UNN

This research question look forward to collecting data on user's access to archival resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka and based on this, responses were collected from the subjects and analyzed below.

In Table 1 above, respondents attested to the fact that they access archival resources in three ways. The highest among the ways user's access archival resources is through library staff with 54.65%. This is followed by library catalogue and shelf browsing with 25.58% and 19.78% while none of the users access the resources through online.

4.1.2 Purpose of Use of the Archival Resources in the Library

This research question seeks to know the purpose of utilizing archival resources in this library. To achieve this, data were collected from subjects in respect to the purpose of use of archival resources and tabulated thus:

Result from Table 2 above shows that users of the library do utilize the resources for research purposes, vital information, recreational, examination and recreational purposes with percentage ratings of 42.37%, 27.96%, 16.94% and 12.71% respectively. Note that the frequency of response is greater than 90 because respondents ticked more than one option of an item.

4.1.3 Problems Affecting the Utilization of Archival Resources in the Library

In view of the problems of archival resources utilization in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria Nsukka, and relevant data were collected from the subjects and analyzed below:

Table 4 above shows that the major problems affecting utilization of archival resources in this library are use of foreign classification methods, with 22.8%, poor preservation techniques with 18.8% and inadequate space with 16.8%. Others are inadequate reading desks/chairs with 15.6% and poor attitudes of staff to readers with 10.8% respectively. Note that the frequency of response is greater than 90 because respondents ticked more than one option of an item.

4.1.4 Strategies for Enhancing Utilization of Archival Resources

This research question was set to collect responses on the remedies to the problems of utilization of archival resources in NAL, UNN. The responses of the subjects are tabulated and analyzed below.

Table 5 above revealed that 32.5% of the subjects recommended that the provision of more space and facilities is the major way of enhancing the use of archival resources in university libraries. Others are adoption of uniformed classification scheme with 26.3%, provision of subject catalogue with 21.7% and weeding of shelves to create more space with 19.3%. Note that the frequency of response is greater than 90 because respondents ticked more than one option of an item.

5.1 Discussion of Major Findings/Conclusion

The study reveals that users access archival resources of the special collection division of Nnamdi Azikiwe Library University of Nigeria Nsukka through the library staff. Other ways are through library catalogue and shelf browsing. Thus, users of NAL, UNN access archival resources of the library through library staff whose task is also to aid users in making use of the library collections. While some access the resources through catalogues which is an access point to library holdings, others made their way through try and error methods of browsing the shelf. This collaborate with Omeje (2006) who reported that postgraduate students get access to special collections through library catalogue, staff guidance and through going direct on the shelves or by chance.

With regards to the purpose of utilization of archival resources, it was found out that users made use of archival resources for research purposes as well as to get vital information. Others purposes or using archival resources were revealed to be examination and recreational purposes. This finding agree with that of Omeje (2006) who reported that postgraduate students made use of special collections for general background reading in areas of research. This because archival collections are part of the special collections resources. Therefore the finding of this is that users of the library utilized archival resources for research purposes.

On the problems affecting utilization of archival resources in the library, the study identified the use of foreign classification methods, poor preservation techniques and inadequate space as the problems of archival resources utilization. Other problems identified are inadequate reading desks/chairs and poor attitudes of staff to readers. This is in line with Boulet, (1994) who identified the problems of archives as lack of efficient management, preservation practices or storage advice, shortage of money, which have led to sale of materials, the speed with which problems multiply and the speed necessary for action to avoid sale or dispersion. The findings also agree with, Peterson (2000) identified economic problems as acute to all archives.

In view of the strategies for enhancing the effective utilization of archival resources in libraries, the provision of more space and facilities, adoption of uniformed classification scheme, provision of subject catalogue and weeding of shelves to create more space are suggested.

Conclusively, it could be drawn from the above discussion that archival collections are materials that contain vital information for different purposes. For this reason therefore, users of library access archival resources of the library through library staff whose task is also to aid users in making use of the library collections. They access the collections for very useful for research information. However, the use of archival resources is hindered by the use of foreign classification methods, poor preservation techniques and inadequate space as the problems of archival resources utilization. The study therefore, the researchers recommended that the library should provide more space and facilities and adopt a uniform classification scheme that will be easy for users to comprehend and have access to the collections.

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Table 1: Users Access to Archival Resources in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library

S/N	Items/ means of access	Frequency	Percentage
1	Through library staff	47	54.65%
2	Through library catalogue	22	25.58%
3	Through shelf browsing	17	19.78%
4	Through online	-	-

Table 2: Purpose of Use of the Archival Resources in the Library

S/N	Purpose of Use	Frequency	Percentage
1	Research purposes	50	42.37%
2	Vital information purposes	33	27.96%
3	Examination purposes	20	16.94%
4	Recreational purposes	15	12.71%

Table 3: Problems Affecting the Utilization of Archival Resources in the Library

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Use of foreign classification methods	57	22.8%
2	Poor production techniques	47	18.8%
3	Inadequate space	42	16.8%
4	Lack of standard searching tools	37	14.8%
5	Inadequate reading desks/chairs	29	15.6%
6	Poor attitudes of staff to readers	27	10.8%

Table 4: Strategies for Enhance the Use of Archival Resources.

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage
1	Provision of more space and facilities	42	32.5%
2	Adoption of uniformed classification scheme	32	26.3%
3	Provision of subject catalogue	28	21.7%
4	Weeding of shelves to create more space	25	19.3%

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