

Challenges and Opportunities of Managing Serial Publications in University Libraries in North Central, Nigeria

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Introduction

Serial publications constitute an important component of information resources in University libraries in Nigeria and elsewhere in the world. Based on the frequency and currency of information that they contain, they are one of the best information resources that are needed for research. Among academic libraries, university libraries are distinctive from college libraries due to their emphasis on journal or periodical literature which is meant to support research especially post graduate research. Serials are in fact indispensable to Postgraduate and other research activities in universities and as such, the management of these essential resources must be given a special place in any university library.

Management of serials encompasses all the processes or stages involved in selection, acquisition to dissemination of serial materials in the library. These stages, according to Agbaje in Idachaba (2017) include acquisition, processing, selection, preservation and dissemination of serials resources to users as well as solving the problems encountered. Oguke (2003) stressed that a well-established serials management help users to locate information easily irrespective of the range or scope of such materials within the collection thus bringing easy access to current and up-to-date materials as well as back issues of available serial collections.

The success of every library programmes therefore, could easily be measured by its efforts in acquisition and management of relevant serials. How well serials are managed in the university library can be a pointer to the success of the library in meeting its objectives. However, serial management has been confronted with a myriad of challenges most of which inhibit results. With proper application of good strategies, serials management in university libraries can overcome the challenges and serve post graduate and other research communities in the university better.

Research Question

- 1: What are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries?
- 2: What are the appropriate strategies for enhancing serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria?

Literature Review

The library has a duty to identify the information needs of its users. Their collections are geared towards achievement of the institutional goals of teaching, learning and research. Aina (2002) corroborated this when he stated that the major objective of the university library is to provide materials and services that will now and in the future best contribute to the fulfilment of the objectives of the university. University library is the most important organ of the university because, academic and intellectual capacity of any university depends greatly on the quality of its library. Furthermore, Aina and Anatola (2004) expressed that in a university system, the quality of library services rendered by university is an important factor of ranking of universities.

University library can be seen as a home and warehouse of knowledge where selection, acquisition, organisation, dissemination and preservation of information materials to users are done. However, for effective conduct of postgraduate research, the librarian as posited by Koo (2017) is to interact with the users to find out what their main problems are (what they need), the best solutions for those problems, and the ideal ways to present the solutions to them. Current awareness services (CAS) can be very useful in this regard. This is where users are informed alerted almost immediately of the information available in the library. Acquiring, processing, organising, storing and disseminating (assisting users to locate and retrieve) information resources (serials) by librarians in various university libraries will assist the institution to achieve its mission and mandate which is teaching, learning and research.

Research activities have rested on how to explore the environment (investigation) and find answers to various questions. This involves searching and seeking for what is happening around man. Research is defined as man's systematic and empirical investigation into existing but hidden elements in nature with the view to unearthing, restructuring and explaining such elements for the purpose of development (Ifidon and Ifidon (2007)). He further stated that research is about human activity whereby answers are sought with great approximation of truth and accuracy as human knowledge make possible, basic or fundamental questions concerning the phenomena of the universe. It could be viewed as a way of using empirical means to find solution to identified problems.

Serials, also known as serial publications refer to publication that appears in successive parts and whose appearance is intended to be indefinite. According to Anglo-American

Cataloguing Rules, AACR (2002), serial material is a publication, in printed form or not, issued in successive parts, usually having numerical or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely. AACR also stated that, they are continuing resources issued in discrete parts usually bearing numbers that have no predetermined conclusion. Similarly, Reitz (2005:648) defined serials as “a publication in any medium issued under the same title in a succession of discrete parts usually numbered (or dated) and appearing at regular or irregular intervals with no predetermined conclusion.” According to Prytherch (2000), serial is any publication issued in successive parts, appearing at intervals, usually regular ones, and as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. In the same vein, Comaromi (2013) posits that serial is a publication in any medium that is issued in successive parts, bearing numerical or chronological designations and which is intended to be continued indefinitely.

They include periodicals, newspapers, annuals, (report, yearbooks, directories and so on) journals, memoirs, proceedings, transactions of societies and monographic series. Feather and Sturges (2004) also listed serials to include periodicals, annuals, numbered monographic series and other categories of this description. Agbaje (2002) stated that various kinds and include journals, magazines, newspapers, news bulletins and reviews.

They are used interchangeably with periodicals in the library (University of Caribbean, 2017) which according to Feather and Sturges (2004) are publication appearing at regular and fixed intervals of time under a distinctive title, which the publishers intend should continue so to appear, without any anticipated cessation.

Amaakaven in Adubika (2007) defines serials management as the formulation of routines and procedures for administering serials collection. These routines include such functions as selection and acquisition, recording of serials, cataloguing and classification, dissemination of Journals, handling of claims, renewals of subscriptions, weeding, filling gaps in backrooms, treatment of unbound issues, preparation for binding and policy for binding back issues.

Serials are expensive and difficult to manage. Their management needs special skills and experience from the serials librarian. Woodward in Aghadiuno, Agbo and Onyekweodiri, (2015) affirmed that management and financial expertise, knowledge of automation and policy development skills are all expected of the serials manager. Management of serials comprises all activities that have to do with the selection, processing, organization, storage, preservation and dissemination of serial resources. Serials management involves all activities that will facilitate efficient and effective transfer of information to the potential users of the library and thereby fulfill its aims and objectives for dealing in serials.

Betterton and Wade (2001) in their study of serial management (print and e-journal) examined traditional areas of serial management namely, Budget Management, Selection Criteria, Bibliographic Information and General Collection Management. Agbaje (2002) stated that the stages of serials management by the organization include selection, order placement, delivery, processing, storage and retrieval of serials.

A study was carried out by, Adio (2005) on the management problems of serials in Nigerian Academic library: A case study of University of Ilorin library. The study was aimed at identifying management problems affecting serials function with a view to proposing solution to

them in the selected library. Descriptive and non – probability random sampling was used to select 50 academic staff, 100 postgraduate and 50 undergraduate of the university. Both questionnaires and interview were used to gather data from the respondents. Also, examination of records and observation techniques were used to elicit more data while frequency distributions were used in analysing the data collected. Findings revealed that policy on the serials management was not written down, funds available for acquisition and maintenance of serials resources are inadequate as well as human resources: the staff strength was inadequate for the management of serials in the library and hindered the delivery of serials services to its patrons. It was recommended that staff should be exposed on the job training to refresh their memory and improve their skill on the job. This study is related to the present study because they both focused on issues of serials management in University libraries.

Inyama (2005) conducted a study at Nnamdi Azikiwe University main library, Awka to ascertain the serial management practices in Nigerian University libraries. The survey design was adopted for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection and they were analyzed via frequency and percentages tables. Findings showed that out of the three hundred and sixty-five (365) respondents, two hundred and ten (210) representing 58.33% declared that they do not use the serials section of the library that they hardly get materials in their field. Also two hundred and eighty two (282) respondents, representing 77.26% were of the view that the serial section is not properly organized. Eighty-eight point sixteen percent (88.16%) stated that the problems hindering effective serial management practices includes poor funding of libraries, lack of library personnel, poor organization of materials, insufficient vote for serial acquisition. The study recommended among others improved funding of the libraries as

well as employment of adequately qualified personnel. The study is related to the present one because both investigated into the management of serials resources in libraries.

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was carried out in North Central Nigeria covering five Federal Universities that offer postgraduate programmes. These are University of Ilorin, Kwara State; University of Jos, Plateau State; Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, Benue State; Federal University of Technology Minna, Niger State and University of Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Federal universities in Lafia, Lokoja and Wukari were not considered because their postgraduate studies was too young and may be at the nucleus of their PG libraries.

The population of the study is made up of 4646 registered Postgraduate students in the 5 universities in North Central Nigeria that have postgraduate programme while 9 are serial librarians in Federal University libraries in North Central Nigeria. Of the 4646 postgraduate students, 3148 are males while 1498 are females. The sample size of 465 was selected with 474 postgraduate students and nine (9) serial librarians in the five Federal Universities in the area. The sample size includes 315 males and 150 females. All the nine serials librarians in the five Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria will be used for the study. This is because their number is manageable.

Two sets of self – developed questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on the Influence of Serials Management on Postgraduate Research in Federal University Libraries in North Central Nigeria” (QISMPR) was used for the study. One is meant for postgraduate students while the

other was administered to serial librarians. The questionnaire was administered by the respondent with the aid of research assistants. Mean and standard deviation were instruments used for data analysis.

Research Question 1: What are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries?

Table 1: PG Students’ Responses on Challenges Associated with Serials Management in the Federal University Libraries

SN	Challenges	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Inadequate staff to attend to postgraduate students	3.16	1.21
2	Inability of some staff to satisfy my information needs	3.51	.95
3	Some of the serials are mutilated and no longer useful	3.42	.98
4	Inadequate quality and current serials	3.34	.81
5	Uncooperative attitude of some staff	3.59	.96
6	Outdated serial materials	3.00	1.25
7	Inadequate sitting space in the library	3.62	.65
8	Inadequate ICT facilities to access open access serials	3.41	.83
9	Poor Internet connection	3.26	.801
10	University database of serials is not made available to PG students	3.72	.68
Valid N (listwise)			

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Serial Librarians Responses on Challenges Associated with Serials Management in the Federal University Libraries

SN	Challenges	Mean	Std. Deviation
	Lack of or insufficient serials display equipment eg serial display racks	3.33	1.00
	Lack of or insufficient serials processing facilities eg cardex	3.67	1.00
	Insufficient funds to purchase/subscribe to current serials	3.89	.33

Challenge of classification and cataloguing of serials	3.56	.53
Poor reading behavior of some PG students	3.00	.71
Many PG students do not register with the library	3.56	.73
Many PG students do not even visit the library	2.67	.71
Erratic power supply from public source	2.89	.78
Valid N (listwise)		

Table 1 shows that the mean rating scores of all the items are above 2.50, which means that inadequate staff to attend to postgraduate students, inability of some staff to satisfy user information needs, some of the serials are mutilated and no longer useful, inadequate quality and current serials, uncooperative attitude of some staff, outdated serial materials, inadequate sitting space in the library, inadequate ICT facilities to access open access serials, poor Internet connection and university database of serials is not made available to PG students, are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries.

Table 2 shows that the mean rating scores of all the items are above 2.50. This implies that lack of or insufficient serials display equipment such as serial display racks, lack of or insufficient serials processing facilities such as cardex, insufficient funds to purchase and subscribe to current serials, challenge of classification and cataloguing of serials, poor reading behavior of some PG students, many PG students do not register with the library, many PG students do not even visit the library and erratic power supply from public source are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries.

Research Question 2: What are the strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of PG Students' Responses on Strategies that Could Enhance Effective Serials Management in the Federal University Libraries

SN	Strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Employment of more staff	3.38	.81
2	Training of available staff to improve their competency	3.23	.98
3	Replacement of mutilated serials	3.71	.63
4	Quality and current (recent) serials should be acquired	3.72	.69
5	SERVICOM should be introduces to improve service quality	3.87	.34
6	Outdated serials should be moved to archives to give way to recent ones	3.76	.43
7	University libraries should explore TetFund to expand library buildings	3.27	1.09
8	ICT facilities like computers, printers etc should be provided	3.56	.85
9	Internet bandwidth should be improved and access password given to PG students	3.72	.56
10	University database of serials should be made accessible to PG students	3.85	.55
Valid N (listwise)			

Table 4: Serial Librarians’ Responses on Strategies that Could Enhance Effective Serials Management in the Federal University Libraries

SN	Strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Preservation equipment eg display racks should be acquired	3.78	.67
2	Serials processing facilities (egcardex) should be acquired	2.67	1.32
3	Funds allocated to the library especially for serials subscription needs to be and management generally needs improvement	3.33	1.11
4	Workshops should be organized to improve cataloguing and classifying skills of serials titles	2.89	1.05
5	Lectures should be organized for PG students to encourage reading	3.33	1.00
6	Library registration should be made compulsory for PG students	3.78	.67
7	PG students should be encouraged to visit and use the library	3.44	1.013
8	Provision of alternative power supply eg generators and solar power	3.33	.50
Valid N (listwise)			

Table 3 shows that the mean rating of all the items are above 2.50. This implies that employment of more staff, training of available staff to improve their competency, replacement of mutilated serials, acquisition of quality and current (recent) serials, introduction of SERVICOM to improve service quality, archiving of outdated serials to give way to recent ones, university libraries should explore TetFund to expand library buildings, ICT facilities like computers, printers among others should be provided, internet bandwidth should be improved and access password given to PG students and university database of serials should be made

accessible to PG students are the strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria.

Table 4 shows that the mean rating scores of all the items are above 2.50. This implies that preservation equipment such as display racks should be acquired, serials processing facilities such as cardex should be acquired, funds allocated to the library especially for serials subscription needs to be and management generally needs improvement, workshops should be organized to improve cataloguing and classifying skills of serials titles, lectures should be organized for PG students to encourage reading, library registration should be made compulsory for PG students, PG students should be encouraged to visit and use the library and provision of alternative power supply like generators and solar power would be strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The result obtained on the challenges associated with serials management revealed that inadequate staff to attend to postgraduate students, inability of some staff to satisfy user information needs, some of the serials are mutilated and no longer useful, inadequate quality and current serials, uncooperative attitude of some staff, outdated serial materials, inadequate sitting space in the library, inadequate ICT facilities to access open access serials, poor Internet connection and university database of serials is not made available to PG students are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries. It also shows that lack of or insufficient serials display equipment such as serial display racks, lack of or insufficient serials processing facilities such as cardex, insufficient funds to purchase and

subscribe to current serials, challenge of classification and cataloguing of serials, poor reading behavior of some PG students, many PG students do not register with the library, many PG students do not even visit the library and erratic power supply from public source are the challenges associated with serials management in the Federal University Libraries.

The finding is in line with Central Washington University (2017) that stated that many university libraries do not have funds available to acquire serial all the serials needed and this pose a problem to information services delivery. This is also in line with Annunobi, Nwakwuo and Ezejiofor (2010) who gave problem of serials management as those related to cost of serials, selection tools, nature of serials and subscription decision. This create problem to the librarians as they find it very hard to maintain subscription to all serials that their users want to use.

The result obtained on the strategies that could enhance effective serials management revealed that employment of more staff, training of available staff to improve their competency, replacement of mutilated serials, acquisition of quality and current (recent) serials, introduction of SERVICOM to improve service quality, archiving of outdated serials to give way to recent ones, university libraries should explore TetFund to expand library buildings, ICT facilities like computers, printers among others should be provided, internet bandwidth should be improved and access password given to PG students and university database of serials should be made accessible to PG students are the strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria.

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library especially for serials subscription needs to be and management generally needs improvement, workshops should be organized to improve cataloguing and classifying skills of serials titles, lectures should be organized for PG students to encourage reading, library registration should be made compulsory for PG students, PG students should be encouraged to visit and use the library and provision of alternative power supply like generators and solar power would be strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria.

The finding is in line with Donald (2010) who suggested that man power development should be given an important place in university libraries to enable the effective discharge of duties in the libraries. Librarians should be user friendly and carry out their duties effectively; experienced librarians should be employed to carry out the task of indexing and abstracting.

Conclusion

The study examined challenges and opportunities of management of serials in federal university libraries in North Central Nigeria. The research shows that there are significant challenges associated with serials management in Federal University Libraries in North Central Nigeria and therefore a crucial need to employ strategies that could enhance effective serials management in University Libraries in North Central Nigeria to influence positively, the postgraduate research.

Recommendations

It is recommended as follows:

1. employment of more staff,

2. training of staff to improve their competency,
3. replacement of mutilated serials,
4. exploring TetFund to expand library buildings,
5. improvement of Internet bandwidth and access to password given to PG students and others should be applied.

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