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APPROACHES TO THE MANAGEMENT OF SERIALS IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN LAFIA, NASARAWA STATE

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Abstract
The study examined the approaches to the management of serials in academic libraries in Nasarawa State. A descriptive research survey was adopted for this study. The population of the study was fifteen (15) staff, comprising of four (4) serials librarians, five (5) staff from serials departments, and four (6) senior staff of the libraries purposively selected from the four (4) academic institutions in Lafia town namely: Federal University of Lafia (FUL) Library, Nasarawa State University Lafia Campus Library, Nasarawa State Polytechnic Lafia Library, and College of Agriculture Lafia Library. There was no sample because the entire population was small. Questionnaire was used as instrument for gathering data for the study. Data collected were analysed using SPSS and frequency tables. The study examine the extents of the approaches of library heads to the subscriptions of serials publications in academic libraries in Lafia; determine the type of funding available for management of serials departments; determine the usefulness of serials department in academic libraries among others. The findings of the study showed that serials departments are very useful in libraries, libraries in Nasarawa State subscribe for serials publications, and fund for serials subscription is got from annual budgetary allocation, funds provided during resource verification, funds provided during accreditation programme, donations/gifts and/or endowment funds. It was also revealed that serials librarians should possess classification, cataloguing, managerial, online searching, effective

communication, budgeting and subscription skills. Challenges were observed and the researchers recommended that to facilitate the use of serials in the libraries, professional personnel, essential facilities and services should be provided in the serials section.

Keywords: Library, Serials, Management, Funding, Acquisition

Introduction

Libraries irrespective of their type are established to accomplish the objectives of the parent organization that set it up. Libraries have the mandate to provide substantial amount of information to users and promote research. On a larger scale, they are expected to provide relevant, accurate and up-to-date information that enhance research, promote knowledge and elicit literacy. These laudable objectives cannot be achieved without the availability and management of information materials. These materials (print or electronic formats) need to be regularly subscribed to, maintained and updated to meet current information needs. The resources could either appear in form of textbooks or serials. A serial publication is defined as any publication issued in successive parts which is intended to be continued indefinitely, example, are abstracts, scholarly/peer reviewed paper, newspapers, sensational, trade, opinion magazine, newsletter, journals memoirs, proceedings among others. Serials are materials in any medium issued under the same title in a succession of discrete parts, usually numbered appearing at regular or irregular interval with no predetermined conclusion (Enenche and Udofot, 2022). Serials publication is very central in providing adequate and most recent information that can trigger research activities in academic institutions via their libraries. Serials publication shapes, directs and add value to the body of knowledge in any discipline. Ultimately, a better approach to serials management is necessary in order to identify and understand the way and manner parent institutions handle the libraries and librarians in terms of how serials publications are acquired, maintained and managed, including challenges associated with their management and strategies to overcome the massive demands by users. Serials and periodicals are used interchangeably in the library parlance to mean the same thing.

Serials publications play a number of dynamic roles for societal development and unity especially this more so in academic libraries. Serials are publications meant for academic, research and informational purposes. Serials exist in various forms such as journals, magazines, newspapers, conference proceedings, compendiums and other forms of periodicals. Accordingly, Akinbode and Nwalo (2016), view serials as literatures which include journals, magazines, newspapers, news bulletins, reviews, reports, proceedings and others alike. In line with their assertions, serials encompass a wide range of scholarly or literary activities which have made academic work more reliable and interesting especially due to their current nature. Serials are by law publications that come out

at regular or irregular intervals and are expected to be continued indefinitely.

Basically, serials departments perform a number of functions which have to do with ensuring that activities relating to acquisition and availability of periodicals are necessary for ensuring the effective utilization of materials by readers. Some of these activities include: Receiving, processing, claiming, assisting in preparing invoices for the business office, building, shelving, holdings, title changes, physical weeding among others (Akinbode and Nwalo, 2016). Importance of serials in academic libraries cannot be overemphasized as serials constitute very essential and indispensable component of every major academic library's collection. They contain information that reflects on the most current development in every area of discipline of human knowledge. Serials are great source of research information. Jones, (2019) maintained that serials have research values as without serials publications knowledge would have been retarded or growing at a very slow pace rather than the enormous growth being recorded today.

A library whether academic or non-academic cannot function properly or achieve its research mandate either to the patrons, the parent institutions or the community it is servicing without serials. Serials department constitutes one of the relevantly significant arms in any library especially academic libraries. This is because; they have consistently adhered to the standards of research and publication with critical mind sets. Hence, the popular parlance of publish or perish syndrome which serve as a propeller to research and publication output of academics. Serials help readers and researchers to know about new development and research fields. It keeps researchers updated about current happenings in their areas. Aboh, Omame and Isaac (2019) agree that where novelty of information is of prime consideration, the serials have a distinct role over books. This is because of the nature of serials publications which are usually on regular or irregular bases and its concern in dealing with very recent issues. Serials are used for policy implementations by governments, helps corporate company and business outfits in taking management decisions that will impact on their overall objectives and performance.

Statement of the Problem

Effective and efficient management of serials are necessary if academic libraries must achieve their desired research goals and objectives. Although, where there is poor serials management, the result will be low research and development output thereby negating the establishment of serials management departments in academic libraries is putting the library in a difficult situation for it to perform it needed role. In recent times, it has been observed that funds are not properly disbursed in order to prioritize the acquisition or subscription of serials resources. Subsequently, this may negatively affect the processing and

organization of serials resources. Inordinate subscription makes it difficult for users to patronize materials that are placed on the shelves.

Most predominant are issues of inhospitable approaches of library staff which by extension signify that the management of academic libraries is not effectively performing its roles of training librarians in relevant aspects of serials as well as making funds available for the departments of serials management to provide relevant and current serials materials that will enhance effective service delivery to readers. However, it is imperative to note that if these issues are not urgently and appropriately addressed, there will be negative effect on academic libraries patronage by their users. Consequently, this may paralyze the quality of teaching, learning and research development in the academic institutions. The dearth of funding academic libraries could have its dire consequences on the management of serials. This is what gave this study the impetus to examine the approaches to the management of serials in academic libraries in Lafia, Nasarawa state.

Objectives of the study

The objective this study is to examine serials management in academic libraries in Lafia Nasarawa State Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine extents of approaches used by library for subscription of serials publications in academic libraries in Lafia.
2. Determine the type of funding available for management of serials departments of academic libraries in Lafia.
3. Identify the challenges associated with management of serials publications in academic libraries in Lafia.

Research Questions

1. What are the extents of approaches used by library for subscription of serials publications in academic libraries in Lafia?
2. What are the types of funding available for management of serials departments of academic libraries in Lafia?
3. What are the challenges associated with management of serials in academic libraries in Lafia?

Review of Related Literature

Academic libraries are growing organisms in the academic institutions that are fully saddled with the responsibilities of making available materials and services that support the information needs of the users. Eni, (2018) viewed academic libraries as those libraries attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics and colleges. Academic libraries are the nerve centre of

scholarly activities in these institutions. This means that academic libraries are the hub or the wheel with which research and publications revolve. It is an intellectual arm for intellectual advancement, being a repository of knowledge, users such as students and lecturers rely on it for their information needs.

Academic libraries operate based on the objectives of the institutions that set them up to provide their relevant services and resources. In line with this, ALA (2018) maintained that objectives of academic libraries are to provide the institutions and their communities with vast range of scholarly materials that are consistent with the institutions mission, curricula and research that reflect the academic disciplines at the institutions. The objectives reflect the information needs of students, faculties and staff. Thus, one of the central tools for contemporary research is the serials publications because of their topical and strategic importance it has in the academic libraries and the institutions.

Proper management of serials in the library is paramount to the overall interest of parent bodies. How well serials can do in determining the extent of success the library can go in achieving set objectives to the parent institutions. Managing serials helps in improving the academic libraries visibility, easy access and institutional repository of research developments. According to Akinbode and Nwalo (2016), serials management refers to how serials are properly managed for effective access and utilization by researchers. The elements of serials management are serials acquisition which involve selection, deselecting and subscription; organization and use which involve processing and display on racks for use by patrons; and maintenance which involve updating, filling the gap, preservation, chairs, air conditioners; as well as provision of services such as current awareness service, photocopy, exhibition and translation from foreign language like German, French, Spanish, Arabic and English or other Languages which users understand. Management of serials collections in the libraries require competency and diligence to ensure that library holdings of any particular serials are systematically arranged and maintained for every user. In line with this, when subscription orders are placed and supply is made, Falaiye (2014) opined that serials whether received late or not at all can be claimed by sending a note to the publisher or agent to inform and place request for replacement of the missing issue. In related development, Falaiye (2014) affirmed that serials are usually controlled using stripdex and kardex equipped with cards specially designed for that purpose. Accordingly, Akinbode and Nwalo (2016) observed that all journals are displayed either on the periodical display racks or in the pamphlet boxes. Usually, arrangements of serials in the libraries are done based on prescribed classification system where all journals on the same subject or discipline are place together under the main classes the two predominant classification schemes used in the academic libraries are; Library of Congress Classification (LCC) and Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC).

On a general note, serials publications are not catalogued in details as

textbooks. Thus, Kadiresan, Mangkhollen and Thiyegarajan (2020) points out that the main purpose of serials cataloguing is to enable the efficient and economy of access for users and present clear and logical bibliographical analysis for every serial's publication given in the catalogue. This infers that, the organization of serials involves cataloguing, classification and display on the shelves or racks. Additionally, for efficiency, management and access to proper utilization of library materials, serials are considered paramount. Serials literatures whether in prints or e-formats are useful in academic libraries for gaining new knowledge and more specifically research purposes.

Online access to serials resources will enhance the services and research activities of serials management. Electronic access to information resources will impact on the services delivery of the departments. Such resources are: use of e-newspapers, use of e- journals, e-magazines, access to other libraries through Open Access Catalogue (OPAC), and use of online databases. Thus, McMahon (2014) revealed that the availability of e-journals and university websites have high positive influence on students' academic research. In same vein, Olalekan, Saturday and Saheed (2013) validate that ICT will stimulate very high positive impact on students' research output. This infers that online cataloguing and classification of serials materials, online searching, e-subscription or purchase/ordering are equally as important.

Research Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data for the study. Survey is a method research whereby data from a sample are collected from selected subset to represent the whole population to which the findings of the data analyses can be generalized. Five (5) research questions were used to guide the study. The questionnaire was administered to four (4) head of serials libraries including five (5) staff from serials departments, and six (6) senior staff of the libraries purposively selected from four (4) academic institutions in Lafia town namely: Federal University of Lafia (FUL) Library, Nasarawa State University Lafia Campus Library, Nasarawa State Polytechnic Lafia Library, and College of Agriculture Lafia Library. The fifteen (15) copies were fully completed and returned. The frequency count was used to analyze data and results presented in tables. There was no need for sampling as the population of the study was manageable.

Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of 15 copies of the questionnaire were administered. All was returned and found suitable for use in the analysis.

Research question 1: What are the extents of approaches used by library for subscription of serials publications in academic libraries in Lafia?

Extents of approach use for subscription of serial publications in academic libraries in Lafia are;

Table 1

S/No	Approaches	VGE	GE	LE	VLE	Total
1	Daily Purchase	12	1	1	1	15
2	Monthly subscription	8	3	2	2	15
3	Quarterly Subscription	1	1	3	10	15
4	Yearly	0	1	2	12	15

Table 1 show that that twelve (12) of the respondent said that daily subscription is used as approach to subscription of serials to a very great extent and one (1) great extent to this but one (1) apiece said low extent and very low extent. Monthly subscription had eight (8) respondent say very great extents and three (3) respondents said great extent while two (2) respondents each said low extent and very low extent respectively. Quarterly subscription as an approach got one (1) respondent each responding very great extent and great extent while three (3) respondents said low extent but ten (10) respondents said very low extent. One (1) respondents said great extent while two (2) said low extent but twelve (12) respondents said low extent to yearly subscription.

Research question 2: What are the types of funding available for management of serials departments of the libraries?

Types of funding available for management of serial department are:

Table 2

S/No	Types of funding available	SA	A	D	SD	Total
1	Annual budgetary allocation	6	2	1	6	15
2	Funds provided in resource verification	14	0	0	1	15
3	Funds provided in accreditation	14	0	0	1	15
4	Donations/gifts of serials	1	1	7	6	15
5	Endowment funds	1	1	5	8	15

Table 2 shows response on the types of funding available for serial management department. Six (6) respondents strongly agreed that annual budget allocation is one for the funding available for management of serial department and two (2) respondents agreed while one (1) respondent disagreed and six (6) strongly disagreed. Fourteen (14) respondents strongly agreed that fund provided for resource verification is funds available for serial management while none disagreed or strongly disagreed. On funds provided for accreditation as source of funding for serial department management, the respond was same as the case of resources provided during resource verification. Donation/gift of serials had one (1) respondent strongly agreeing and agreeing apiece while five (5) respondents strongly disagreed and eight (8) disagreed. One (1) respondent each strongly agreed and agreed that endowment funds are sources funding for serial management while five (5) disagreed and eight (8) strongly disagreed.

Research question 3: - What are the challenges associated with management of serials in the libraries?

Challenges associated with serial department management are:

Table 3

S/NO	Skill	SA	A	D	SD	
1	Cataloguing skills	2	1	8	4	15
2	Managerial skills	6	3	3	3	15
3	Effective Online searching skills	8	1	2	4	15
4	Communication skills	12	3	0	0	15
5	Subscription skills	2	1	9	3	15

Table 3 show response on challenges associated with management of serial department. Two (2) respondents strongly agreed that cataloguing skills is a challenge associated with serial management department while one (1) agreed but eight (8) and four (4) respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. Six (6) respondents strongly agreed that managerial skills are challenge in the management of serial department while three (3) apices agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed in that other. Eight (8) respondents strongly agreed that effective online searching skills affects the management of serial department and three (3) respondents agreed. Two (2) of the respondents strongly agreed that subscription skill is a challenge in the management of serial department while one agreed but nine (9) respondents disagreed and three (3) strongly disagreed.

Discussions of Findings

Data gotten from this study shows that; daily purchase and monthly subscription are approaches used to acquire serial materials for use in the understudied library. Funds available for serial management are mainly funds made available during resources verification and accreditation while resource from annual budget is marginally available for management of serial department. Challenges associated with serial department management include lack of managerial skills, ineffective online searching skills by serial librarians, inadequate communication skills to effective communication between serial staff and user.

Conclusion

The findings showed that the libraries in Nasarawa State acquire, processed, maintained, organise, store, preserve and make available various types of serials publications for research activities. Subscription to serials publication are mainly daily, monthly, quarterly, yearly, biannual, full or partial depending on the type of serials, number of issues produced annually and availability of funds. Funding for serials subscription is through annual budgetary allocation, funds provided during resource verification, and accreditation programme.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the study recommended that;

1. Professionals should be employed to provide serial services
2. Monthly/annual budget should be made for the serials department
3. Adequate funding should be made available for the serial department.

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