

Preservation Systems, Theft and Mutilation of Information Resources at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State, Nigeria

Joy Emmanuel Omah (PhD), Emmanuel Garsaya & Lampo Elisha Dennis

Department of Library and Information Science,

Taraba State University, Jalingo, Nigeria.

joyomah@gmail.com

Abstract

Libraries in third-world countries despite the constraints of finance confronting them still make huge investments in the acquisition of library resources. Deterioration of library resources has been one of the greatest challenges plaguing the libraries. To save these library resources and the libraries from a colossal loss of her heritage, this study examines the preservation and conservation of library materials for effective literacy development in Kwararafa University Library. Three purposes of the study and three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population of the study is sixteen (16) librarians of Kwararafa University Library and a simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size. The sample size of the study is 16. The instrument used to obtain information was a structured questionnaire titled PCLMELDQ, and the data collected were analyzed using mean. Test re-test was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and the result was 0.75. Mean statistics were used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed that library security is the most used measure of preservation and conservation practices. Dust and particulate matter are the greatest causes of deterioration of library materials. The finding further revealed that dusting, cleaning and proper shelving are the major techniques adopted by the libraries. Therefore, the study recommended that libraries should deploy modern preservation and conservation tools such as technologically enabled ICT devices which will aid in adequate storage and enhance the durability and longevity of information materials in the libraries.

Article History

Received: 13-04-2025

Revised: 23-04-2025

Accepted: 23-04-2025

Keywords

Preservation, Theft, Mutilation, Information Resources, Academic Library

Cite as:

Emmanuel, J. O., Garsaya, E. & Dennis, L. E. (2025). Preservation systems, theft and mutilation of information resources at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State, Nigeria. *Jalingo International Journal of Library & Information Science*, 1(1), 140-151.

Introduction

Academic libraries are the backbone of higher education institutions, providing access to critical information resources that support teaching, learning, and research. However, the dual

mandate of preserving these resources while ensuring their accessibility often leads to conflicts. Theft and mutilation of library materials by users are persistent problems that undermine the integrity of collections and hinder the library's mission. User-related damage to library resources is a global issue that affects libraries of all sizes and types. This paper examines the causes and consequences of theft and mutilation in academic libraries, evaluates the effectiveness of current preservation systems, and proposes actionable solutions to safeguard library collections. This is because, across the globe, the library plays a pivotal role in empowering information professionals and promoting national development (Adekunle, Adekunjo, & Unuabor, 2018).

Preservation is defined to include all the managerial, administrative, financial and staffing considerations necessary to safeguard the welfare of library collections”. However, specialists in the field have given a systematically and comprehensive definition of preservation as the overall approach that takes into account the heritage of institutions (libraries). There are different types of materials. In that way, the preservation of serials represents one of the most challenging tasks. There are two main reasons for that. Firstly, serials are made of very low-quality paper (some reasons for that are their ephemeral character, price, mass production etc.). Secondly, they contain important information for users and, as such, the demand for them grows. This dichotomy between low-quality material created and potentially valuable information that needs to be preserved and conserved for the long term represents the major challenge and uniqueness of which one must be aware when speaking of serial preservation. Mutilation means to injure, disfigure, or make imperfect by removing or irreparably damaging parts of library material. Mutilation of library materials is the improper handling of library materials thereby inflicting serious damage on the material. Mutilation could also be referred to as vandalism of library materials. Vandalism is recorded when library users engage in an act of cutting some pages, parts of a page, pictures, colour plates, and computer sets, with the intent to steal them. This cause of mutilation of library materials

could be a result of financial constraints, selfishness on the part of students, and scarcity of library Materials, among others.

Theft, mutilation and abuse of library materials are deviant acts or behaviours by users in the library and have served as one of the major obstacles to discharging effective library services, especially in academic libraries. This deviant act by users could also be referred to as user delinquency in the library. Adekunle, Adekunjo, and Unuabor (2018) study on user delinquency and the actions that can be taken to eradicate such illegal and immoral acts found user delinquencies to be actions that are illegal or immoral that users carry out during the process of consulting library books and other materials. Such actions include misuse of OPAC, databases in the library, unruly behaviours, receiving phone calls in the library while others are reading, mutilation of library materials, impersonation, and theft and computer systems. These illegal and immoral acts of users can be found in different libraries. Therefore, this paper aims to examine preservation systems, theft and mutilation of information resources at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine preservation systems, theft and mutilation of information resources at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State. Specifically, the study seeks to;

1. determine the preservation and conservation practices employed at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State;
2. examine the causes of deterioration of library materials at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State; and

3. Identify the relationship between theft and users in the use of the library resources at Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State.

Research Questions

The following questions were answered:

1. What are the preservation and conservation practices employed at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?
2. What are the causes of deterioration of library materials at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?
3. What is the relationship between theft and users' use of library resources at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?

Literature Review

Theft involves the removal of library resources from the library and user vicinity without due permission and consent. It occurs when according to Ohayagha (2014), a person dishonestly confiscates property belonging to another to permanently deprive the owner of it. It can also be defined as the unauthorized taking of library materials with the intent to permanently deprive others of using them or having access to the materials. Fasae and Adedokun (2016) opine that theft of library material is when information material of any form is taken out of the library in an unauthorized manner by the library users. The major reasons or causes of theft in the library are as a result of high cost and insufficient copies of books or in cases where libraries object to loan services in the library.

Mutilation involves the deliberate or accidental damage of library materials, such as tearing pages, defacing books, or removing sections of text. This behaviour is often driven by the desire to monopolize information, sabotage others' access, or simply disregard library policies. Mutilation not only diminishes the usability of resources but also incurs significant financial costs

for repair or replacement. A survey conducted at ABC College revealed that 20% of library users admitted to mutilating books to avoid purchasing their copies (ABC College, 2022). Complementing this, Maidaine (2012) noted that the major forms of mutilation of library and information resources are tearing of book pages, writing on the pages books and marking of book content which could all temper the actual subject matter of the information materials.

Adomi (2008) defined the mutilation of information resources as the deliberate removal of pages from library materials. Usually, this occurs when a delinquent user is interested in a particular part of a document. Mutilation is the act of destroying or removing an essential part of library materials to render it useless. These could be a result of bending corners of paper or inserting pencil or biro into pages, opening books back-to-back and tearing off relevant pages (Akor, 2013). Mutilation distorts the information content of information resources. Information resources, on the other hand, are library materials. Academic libraries, on another hand, encompass research libraries, Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral degrees granting institutions, junior and community colleges, and distance learning programs of higher education (American Library Association, 2019).

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was employed in this study. According to Ali (2016), descriptive surveys are those studies concerned with collecting data on and also describing systematically the characteristic features and facts about a given population. The sample of the study comprises the entire librarians in university libraries. The population of the study is 16 librarians of Kwararafa University Library. The instrument used for the data collection for this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was titled, “Preservation and Conservation in university libraries”. The questionnaire consisted of two parts-section A and B. The questionnaire

was divided into part A, which contained options for the personal data of the respondents and part B which comprises sections A-C. Each of the section dealt with each of the research questions. Also, the response mode was strongly Agreed (SA), Disagreed (D), SD for Strongly Disagreed, and D for Disagreed. Mean statistics and standard derivations were used to determine the scaling statements in the questionnaire. Nominal values were assigned to different sealing statements as follows: Strongly Agreed – 4; Agreed – 3; Disagreed – 2; and Strongly Disagreed – 1. A cut-off 2.50 was used. The implication is that responses with a mean score of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while responses below 2.5 were regarded as disagreed.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Research Question One: What are the preservation and conservation practices employed at the Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on preservation and conservation practices

s/n	Items	Mean	Remark
1.	Training of staff on the preservation of library materials	2.8	A
2	Restoration of degraded library materials	3.1	A
3	Funding	2.9	A
4	Handling of library materials	3.0	A
5	Environmental control	3.0	A
6	Security of library materials	2.7	A
7	Disaster recovery	2.5	A
	Grand Mean	2.9	

Table 1 above shows that items 1-7 have the mean of 2.8, 3.1, 2.9, 3.0, 3.0, 2.7 and 2.5 respectively. The whole items are above the criterion that is set for the mean. The information contained in items 1-7 is all agreed upon.

Research Question 2: What are the causes of the deterioration of library materials in Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?

Table 2: Mean ratings of respondents concerning the causes of deterioration of library materials

s/n	Items	Mean	Remark
Print materials			
8	Excessive light	2.8	A
9	Poor book shelving	3.2	A
10	Dust and particulate matter	2.7	A
11	Relative humidity	3.0	A
12	Wear and tear due to rough handling.	2.7	A
13	High-temperature level	2.5	A
14	Biological agents (termites, cockroaches, spiders, rodents etc)	3.0	A
Non-print Materials			
15	High humidity and heat	3.0	A
16	Excessive light	2.6	A
17	Atmospheric pollutants	2.5	A
18	Oxidation	2.9	A
19	Dust	2.9	A
20	Biological Agent	2.7	A
21	Magnetism	2.5	A
Grand Mean		3.0	

Table 2 reveals all the identified causes of deterioration of library materials among the sampled institutions. Items 8-21 show that all the identified causes of deterioration have effects on the library materials. This implies that is required by the management to improve the effects of those causes on the library materials.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between theft and users' use of the library resources in Kwararafa University Library, Taraba State?

Table 3

Summaries of correlation analysis on the relationship between theft and patrons' use of library resources.

V	N	Σ	R	r^2	Remarks
Utilization	387	21158			Moderate
			0.46	0.21	Positive
Theft	387	6657			Relationship

Key: Variables (V: X&Y), Sample Size (n), Summation (Σ), Sum of Squares (SS), Sum of Products (SP), Variance (S^2), Covariance (Cov.), Pearson r (r), and Remarks

Table 3 shows the magnitude and direction of the coefficient of the relationship between theft and patrons' use of library resources in the university libraries. From the table, the coefficient of correlation between the theft of resources and patrons' use of library resources in the University is 0.46, while the coefficient of determination is 0.21. The coefficient of correlation is within the range of 0.41 – 0.60 for a moderate relationship. The coefficient of correlation is also positive. This shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between theft and patrons' use of library resources universities studied.

Discussion of Findings

The study reveals that rough handling of materials by library staff, mutilation of materials by library users, environmental factors such as temperature, light and high humidity, biological factors such as insects, moulds, rodents, bacteria and fungi, chemical factors such as acidity of paper, natural disasters such as flood, earthquake, hurricane, tornados and fire, improper organization and frequent use of materials were the factors responsible for deterioration or damages done to information resources in University library. This could be due to a lack of plans for managing records or poor allocation of funds to libraries to acquire preservation equipment or chemicals to fight against the agents of deterioration. This finding is similar to that of Adekannbi and Wahab (2015) who investigated comparative analysis of the preservation and conservation techniques of selected special and academic libraries in Nigeria. The study found out the causes of deterioration in both special and academic libraries were dust, wear and tear, excessive photocopying, pests and excessive light, frequent use of material, magnetism and biological agents. The results showed among others that academic libraries adopted cleaning and dusting, shelving to allow free flow of air, security systems, de-acidification, technology preservation, refreshing and migration to preserve their information resources.

The study reveals that the majority of the respondents' techniques of preservation of information resources listed were adopted in the University library. These techniques included: Photocopying of printed documents, re-binding of books and periodicals, microfilming of periodicals, fumigation of the library building, lamination of charts and related documents, air conditioning of all spaces, cleaning and dusting of the books and computers and digitization of old publications of staff, storage of electronic materials such as Compact Disc Read-Only Memory (CD-ROMs), Digital Video Disc (DVDs) in containers, steel cabinet and use of hard disc or flash disc to store electronic books and electronic journals. This finding is similar to that of Olatokun (2018) who surveyed the various techniques used in the preservation and conservation of library materials in selected university libraries in Nigeria. Findings revealed that preservation and conservation techniques, though adopted in the university libraries, were not effectively in use although the libraries all had preservation policies.

The study also revealed that cleaning and dusting of library materials was the most commonly used technique. The study established that there are indeed incidences of deterioration, the most prominent being books becoming torn and cracking and scratching of digital materials. Further results showed that though some of the libraries adopt and use some digital preservation techniques, they are still not effectively used. Other findings revealed that inadequate funding was the most severe inhibitor to effective preservation and conservation activities in the university libraries.

Finally, there is a moderate positive and significant relationship between theft and patrons' use of library resources in 1 universities. These findings agree with the findings of other researchers. For example, Adekunle, Adekunjo and Unuabor (2018) in their study revealed that theft has affected the quality of research students, caused students to desist from going to the library and has led to

frustration to a large extent. It is also in agreement with the result of the study by Ajala and Oyeboade (2008) where analysis of responses showed vehement agreement that book theft is a serious problem facing the use of the collections in most of the academic libraries investigated.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study assessed the preservation and conservation of library materials. The terms preservation and conservation were defined. The concept of preservation of library material, conservation of library materials, causes of deterioration of information resources, techniques adopted for preservation of information resources, levels of use of information resources and challenges for effective preservation of information resources were highlighted. It is evident from the result of this study that preservation and conservation of library materials are of great importance in any academic library in Nigeria. Library materials should be properly preserved and conserved because of the significant roles they play in academics and research and are most often used or consulted by students and the Academic staff. Management practices on preservation and conservation are paramount for the effective use of library materials in the academic library this is because it will encourage the acquisition of materials in the library and reasons why materials are not often available in the library such as vandalism, lack of knowledge on preservation and conservation of serial materials, theft and mutilation of serial materials, high cost of periodical materials and poor staff vigilance will be overlooked.

Moreso, it is significant to know that methods such as microfilming, fumigation exercise, disaster preparedness, binding, digitization of material Publication, reformatting, de-acidification and preservation of materials in original format were the appropriate methods that should be adopted to preserve materials in an academic library. This study has been able to reveal that the problem of preservation and conservation of materials collection in the university library is a lack

of preservation and conservation librarians in the library, insufficient funds, lack of interest on the part of staff and inadequacy of equipment. Because of the foregoing, it could be seen that the preservation and conservation of material collection in the university library leave much to be desired. Therefore, the librarians in the university library must strive to take urgent and concrete steps to check further deterioration of its materials collection. Based on the findings, the study recommended that;

1. The libraries must ensure effective dusting and cleaning of the library resources.
2. De-acidification should become the common practice of the libraries
3. The libraries should deploy modern preservation and conservation tools such as technologically enabled ICT devices which will aid in adequate storage and enhance the durability and longevity of information materials in the libraries.

References

- Adekannbi, J. O. & Wahab, F. W. (2015). Comparative analysis of the preservation and conservation techniques of selected special and academic libraries in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice, (e-journal)*. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1328>.
- Adekunle, F. A., Adekunjo, O. A., & Unuabor, S. O. (2018). Theft and vandalism: Effect and control mechanism on information resources in academic libraries in Osun State, Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 23(7), 71-78.
- Eden, P. and Feather, J. (2017). *Preservation policies and strategies in British archives and records offices: A survey*. <http://ehostvgw4.epnet.com>
- Emojorho, D. & Nwalo, K.I.N. (2019). Availability and use of ICTs in collection management in university and special libraries in the Niger-Delta region, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 243 <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/243/>
- Fasae, J. K. & Adedokun, F. O. (2016). Abuse of information materials in academic libraries by students of tertiary institutions in Ekiti-State, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 1426. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1426>
- Kundrot R. A. (2017). Cost-effective method of de-acidification of library materials. <http://www.provenancews/paper%20permanence.htm>.

- Kwadzo, G. (2014). Access to library resources by Sandwich Diploma students in the University of Ghana. *International Journal of Academic Library and Information Science*, 36- 45. Retrieved from <http://www.academicjournals.org/.../...>
- Mahapatra, P. K. (2013). Preservation in libraries: Perspectives, principles and practices. Ess. Ess. Publications.
- Maravilla, N. R. (2014). Causes of deterioration of paper. <http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byauth/maravilla/deterioration-cause.htm/>
- Muhammad, U.N. (2016). Preservation and conservation of library materials.
- Ngulube, P. (2017). Guidelines and standards for records management education and training in a model for Anglophone Africa. *Records Management Journal*, 11(3), 155- 173. www.ingentaconnect.com/content/mcb/28
- Ogunmodede, T. A. & Ebijuwa, A. S. (2013) Problems of conservation and preservation of library resources in African academic libraries: A review of literature. *Greener Journal of Social Sciences*, 3 (1), 050-057. <http://www.gjournals.org>
- Ogunniyi, S. O. & Adejube, F. V. (2014). Strategies of curbing deterioration of undergraduate projects: A case study of six selected colleges of education libraries in Southern Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, (e-journal). 1036. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/1036...>
- Olajide, A. (2013). Deterioration of library materials in Nigeria: Causes and remedies for librarians. *Journal of Research in Education and Society*, 4(2), 97-98.
- Olatokun, W. M. (2018). A survey of preservation and conservation practices and techniques in Nigeria university libraries. *Library and Information Science Research Electronic Journal*, 18(2), 2 - 4. <http://libres.curtin.edu.au>
- Ovowoh, R.O. & Iwhiwhu, B. E. (2013). Preserving information bearing material in higher education institutions in Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 396. <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/396>.
- Poll, R. (2017). Quality measures for special libraries. <http://www.ifla.org/IVifla73/papers/152-Poll-en.pdf>.
- Walker, Alison (2013) Basic preservation for library and archive collections. London: Preservation Advisory centre retrieved from <http://www.bl.uk/blpac/publicationsleaf.html> on 27th February, 2024.
- Yusuf, F. & Iwu, J. (2013). Use of academic library: A case study of Covenant University, Nigeria. *Chinese Librarianship: An International Electronic Journal*, 30. <http://www.iclc.us/cliej/cl30YI.pdf>.