

SECURITY OF INFORMATION SOURCES IN LIBRARIES OF GOVERNMENT OWNED POLYTECHNICS IN SOUTH EAST STATES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the security of information sources in polytechnic libraries in South East States. This was with the aim of finding out the problems and methods of securing information sources, constraints to security of information sources and strategies for improvement. Four objectives and research questions were formulated to guide the study. The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The entire population was studied. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire tagged security of information sources in Polytechnic Libraries (SISPL) in South East States. Thirty three copies of the questionnaire were distributed and all were recovered. Frequency tables, simple percentages and mean were used to analyse data collected for the study. The result obtained revealed that: the problems of security are theft, mutilation and overdue. The libraries studied did not adopt electronic security method rather they used manual methods to secure their libraries. They had many constraints and they have adopted many strategies for improvement. Based on the findings, it was recommended that a combination of both manual and electronic methods can make the securing of information sources more effective.

Keywords: *Security, Information sources, Libraries, Polytechnic*

INTRODUCTION

Libraries generally contain valuable information sources which provide information to users on request. Anything that informs a person about something or provides knowledge to somebody can be termed as information source. Information sources may be observations, people, speeches, documents, pictures and a host of others. They may be primary sources, secondary sources and tertiary sources. Aina (2004) points out that primary source of information are original sources that have not been interpreted or condensed by other researches. Examples of primary sources are data collected from research field which could be used for journal articles, technical reports, theses or dissertations. Secondary sources are primary sources that have been interpreted and condensed. Examples are list of tables, statistical/mathematical calculations and other quantitative values. Finally the tertiary sources of information are produced after the primary and secondary sources have been distilled and filtered. Examples of tertiary sources are reference sources like dictionaries, encyclopedia, handbooks and year books. Some libraries have even included electronic resource like electronic journals, online data bases and CD ROM data bases in their library. The focus of this study was on the printed materials which form over 90% of the entire library collections in the polytechnic libraries in the South East States.

Polytechnic libraries are established to assist the institution to perform its functions and roles by providing information materials required for the academic programmes of the institution. These libraries are also an essential part of the polytechnic and the basis of all study and research. There is need therefore to keep it safe and secure. Security is a measure taken to make information sources or persons in the library safe from attack or damage. The security of the library collections is an important responsibility of the librarian and other members of staff working in the library department. No library is immune to the problems of security but coordinated effort of staff and careful planning can help to prevent most of the problem from occurring. Library security is a group effort for the care of the collections. Therefore staff input should be encouraged. Staff should know how to respond to unplanned emergencies.

Many polytechnic libraries have instituted some security measures to ensure the safety of their collections. Security men man the entrances and exits of the libraries. Only registered users are allowed to use the library. Users using the libraries are checked before leaving the library. Bags are kept in the bag room. Despite these conscious efforts shown by these, security problems still persist; Omotayo and Ajayi (2005). Security of library materials should start at the point of planning a library building. This is to embrace both internal and external security of the library, Lanre (2002). Building security is very important and ultimately dependent upon the number of exits the building has and how many people have keys to the library doors. Therefore it is important that unauthorized removal of library materials by library miscreants should be checked.

In all academic libraries emphasis are placed on easy access to library collection, with minimum rules and regulations. Libraries cannot lock their collection away from miscreants in order to secure them, since this will be against the ethics of libraries which deal on open access as opposed to restricted access. This open access of the library collections predisposes the collections to theft and mutilation, while lending of library materials exposes the materials to the possibility of overdue. Therefore, there is a need to strike a balance between easy access and the security of the books thereby making sure that library users get the materials they need without stealing, mutilating or keeping borrowed materials longer than expected. In his contribution, Chadwick (1999) advises library management to reassess its user friendly philosophy for both library patrons and employees because of the high incidence of theft and mutilation experienced in the past. Keene (2001) in his contribution notes that problems or threat to information sources often results on sudden removal of the information sources from accessibility, and use.

Since the polytechnic libraries in the South East States of Nigeria are not immuned to all the aforementioned problems, it follows that they are equally vulnerable. The management of these libraries may well have been battling with the various problems of security of their collections. The problem of this study is how have these libraries, been securing their information sources. Consequently, the

following questions have been formulated to guide the study. (1) What factors constitute the problems of securing information sources in the south east States? (2) What methods of securing information sources are adopted by the polytechnic libraries in the South East States? (3) What are the constraints to security of information sources in these libraries? (4) What are the strategies adopted for effective securing of information sources in these libraries?

METHODOLOGY

The design of the study is descriptive survey. Ezeanya (2003) sees survey research as one in which a group of items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from sample of people or items considered to be a representative of the entire group. In this case, all the government owned polytechnics in the south east States constituted the population of this study.

Table 1: Government owned polytechnics in the south east States and the number of librarians

Names of Polytechnic	Number of librarians
Abia State Polytechnic Aba	7
Federal Polytechnic Unwana Afikpo	11
Federal Polytechnic Oko Anambra	5
Federal Polytechnic Nekede	6
Institute of Management and Technology Enugu	4
Grand Total	33

A questionnaire tagged Security of Information Sources in Polytechnic Libraries (SISPL) was used to collect data for the study. Section A of the instrument was on the demographic information and contained only one item on the name of the polytechnic library. Section B which contained three items sought information on the problems of security of information sources in libraries of government owned polytechnics in the South East States of Nigeria. Section C contained nine items, on the methods of securing information sources in these libraries. Section D contained six items and tried to identify the constraints to security of information sources. Finally section E contained six items and was inquiring into the strategies for improving the security of information sources.

There was no sampling because the population of the study involved was small. Therefore, the questionnaire was administered to the entire number of polytechnic librarians in the population. The data collected were analysed using mean and frequency distribution. A mid point of 2.50 was adopted as the criterion mean. Thus any mean score ranged from 2.50 and above was accepted while the mean below 2.50 was rejected.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2: Mean responses of librarians on the problems of security

Problems of Security	VLE	LrE	LE	VLE	Mean
Theft	14	13	6	0	3.21
Mutilation	14	12	6	1	3.15
Overdue	6	17	8	2	2.81

Source: Survey 2011. *VLE = Very large extent; LrE = Large extent; LE = Low extent; VLE = Very low extent*

Table 2 presented librarians responses that sought to find out the factors that constituted problems to securing information sources in south east states. Mean rating ranged from 2.81 to 3.21 librarians accepted that theft, mutilation and overdue are the problems or threat to security of information sources since the scores are above 2.50. Theft is the greatest problem facing these libraries. It had a mean score of 3.21. This is followed by mutilation with a mean score of 3.15 and finally overdue had 2.18 as the mean score. Curry 2000, Bello 2001, Ayo, 1998, Ogbodo 2004 are of the view that library managers are really concerned about theft and mutilation because of the effect they have on the library services. As for overdue it is a daily experience of librarians that many user borrow and refuse to return library materials. Ozioko (1996) agrees that theft mutilation and overdue are problems of security and attributed the cause to poor parental upbringing and high cost of books and periodicals. Constantinau (1995), Curry (1997) and Onatola (1998) supported the fact that security of library material is at the heart of preservation functions of the library.

Table 3: Mean responses of librarians on methods of securing information sources

	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Electronic system	1	2	8	22	1.15
Close circuit television system	0	2	8	23	1.36
Two way mirrors	0	2	10	21	1.42
Security men	29	4	0	0	2.87
Fire lighting equipment	17	15	1	0	3.45
Staff surveillance	17	16	0	0	3.51
Binding	20	11	1	1	3.48
Repairs	20	11	1	1	3.18
Photocopying	15	15	1	2	3.18

Source: Survey 2011

Table 3 showed that librarians in polytechnic libraries in south east States of Nigeria used all other methods listed on the table above to secure library information source except electronic system and close circuit television system. Even though these methods had mean scores less than 2.50 because these librarians do not have these items, the methods are very effective in securing information sources. The libraries studied should adopt these methods and see a rapid decline in the problems. Manual methods of securing the library material are old fashioned and less effective. Luurtsema (1997) in his on contribution agreed that electronic security can be extremely advantages in preventing theft from occurring in academic library. McDonald (1992) agrees that electronic security systems help in maintaining

collection integrity. Finally, Cornell University Library (2009) agrees that preventing theft and mutilation is a very important way to secure the materials in the library, through controlling entrance and exit.

Table 4: Constraints to Security of Source Information

Constraints to security	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Inadequate funding of library	26	6	1	0	3.72
Lack of security policy	17	13	3	0	3.42
Inadequate infrastructure	17	9	7	0	3.30
Lack of training for staff	18	12	3	0	3.45
Power failure	19	10	4	0	3.45

Source: Survey 2011

Table 4 showed librarians response to the items that sought to find out the constraints to security of information sources. From the table all the items are constraints to security of information sources. The highest among them was inadequate funding; while lack of training for staff and power failure ranked second followed by lack of security policy and inadequate infrastructure. Mujama and Wamukoya (2004) agreed that the constraints to security of information sources are lack of security policy and procedures to guide librarians in case of any problem. Popoola (2003) advocates for the need to expose librarians to security practice during their training. Kenoni and Wamukoya, 2000 in their contribution agreed that poor power supply poses great threat to security of information sources in academic libraries.

Table 5: Mean responses of librarian on strategies for effective security

Strategies	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
Vigilance/surveillance	23	10	0	0	3.69
Creating positive attitude towards the collection among users' staff.	20	13	0	0	3.60
Proper funding	24	9	0	0	3.72
Bibliographic control	21	12	0	0	3.81
Punishing offenders	17	15	1	0	3.45
Formulating security policy	17	13	0	1	3.45

Source: Survey 2011

Table 5 showed the mean responses on the strategies to be adopted for improving security of information sources. It was revealed that the respondents supported all the six items are strategies for improvement of security of information sources. Bello (2001) reveals that staff training, proper funding and teaching users (User Education) are very important to libraries and that punishing offenders will help in preventing library security problems from occurring.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the security of information source in libraries of government owned polytechnics in the South East States of Nigeria. It found that problems of security of information sources in these libraries were theft mutilation and overdue. The methods that the libraries adopted to combat the problems are security men at the entrance/exit firefighting equipment, staff surveillance, binding, repairs, photocopy. The librarians agreed the methods they adopted as stated above were effective. However, the system yearns for a more sophisticated security measures to help meet up with the passage of time and changes in technology. Constraints to security of information are inadequate funding, lack of security policy, inadequate infrastructures, lack of training for staff and power failures. Finally, that the strategies for improvement are: Proper funding, vigilance/surveillance, creating a positive attitude towards the collection among staff, bibliographic control, punishing offenders and formulating security policy.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: Embarking on training of library security men on the importance of ensuring that tight security is maintained. Better incentives in terms of remuneration and welfare package to reduce the possibility of being easily seduced by users to evade responsibility. Introduction of library user education in the polytechnic curriculum to educate users on the basic ethics of library, the evils of book theft and mutilation. Generating plants should be procured for libraries to supply light in case of power failure. Photocopy machines should be acquired for library user to photocopy the materials they need. Burglary proof should be fixed in doors and windows. Electronic security system should be included in the methods of securing information sources because a combination of both manual and electronic methods will make the methods of securing information sources more effective. Security of library collection has not been easy for librarians. But they should not give up on the problems. Instead they should adopt more effective measures to secure their resources. Their efforts will never be in vain.

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