Perception and Attitudes of Registry Staff Members towards Archives Management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure

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Abstract

The paper investigated the perception and attitudes of registry staff members towards archives management at the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA). The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Random sampling technique was used to select 50 registry staff in various departments within the University. A questionnaire was designed for the study and administered to the selected respondents; 46 questionnaires were returned and found usable. Data collected were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Of 46 registry staff that participated in the study, 50% worked in the registry, 71.7% were females, and 45.7% were confidential secretaries in various departments within the university system. Findings showed that 95.7% of respondents are aware of the existence of an archive within the University. Though findings showed respondents with an average mean of 4.76 accepting the necessity for the establishment of archives for storage purposes, an aggregate mean of 2.80 indicated that the respondents were not very cognizant of archives and their management practices at FUTA. The study, therefore, recommends an increase in the publicity of archival functions in order to increase awareness among registry staff members, more funding for archival practices and training as well as re-training of archival personnel for more image boost of the archive.

Keywords: Perception, archive, registry staff members, registry, archives management.

1. Introduction

In this era of information explosion, the necessity to preserve information is on the increase. The task has proved more daunting as information managers grapple with the modalities to manage overwhelming amounts of information and information management systems daily. Information in current use, irrespective of the format, is acquired, processed, organised, stored, and disseminated in established centres such as libraries. However, in the process of time, occasions for the storage of relevant documents that may not meet urgent or pressing needs have arisen. Most organisations including libraries have attempted to manage such resources. But in the face of evolving information technologies, more professionalism is required to store and maintain such documents or resources. Hence, the establishments of archives.

Cook (2016) defined archives as an information media that have been generated from within an organisation. This definition implies that designated areas where information materials of enduring value are kept may be attached to institutional bodies. However, dueto the nature of their activities, archives may be independently managed, assuming supervisory roles over other information or records centres. Archives function as storage facilities especially for documents containing information of enduring value. Essentially, collections in an archive recount events from the past, their effect in the present, and their promises for the future.

In Nigeria, archives administration started as a records office in 1954 through the tireless efforts of late Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike who was saddled with the responsibility to find an adequate and permanent solution to the problem of storage and preservation of records in the Nigerian government.

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Prior to this period, Professor Dike proposed that government records that were no longer used on a daily basis should be collected and kept in one central record office. The proposal was approved by the Secretary of State for The Colonies and the first Nigerian record office was born. Professor Kenneth Dike was made the first Supervisor of Public Records. Since then, the Public Records Office has metamorphosed into a more standard establishment commissioned to collect, process, and store records for posterity use known as the National Archives of Nigeria. From 1954 to 1982, the National Archives of Nigeria existed in three cities in the country: Ibadan. Enugu, and Kaduna. Thereafter, the national archives expanded its base, having branches in other parts of the country including Abeokuta, Akure, Calabar, Port Harcourt, Jos, Owerri, Ilorin, Benin and Sokoto (Abioye, 2009 in Onuoha, 2013).

The spread of archives in the country has, to a reasonable extent, increased archival activities in organisations including tertiary institutions. In some institutions of higher learning, there is a growing awareness of the need to preserve records generated therein as in other tertiary institutions beyond national boundaries which establish archives for storage purposes and the preservation of cultural histories (Feather, 2004).

The Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) was established in 1982 having the major departments that comprise the administrative body of the University, the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Registry, and the Bursary. The registry plays a very important role in the university system. It assists the office of the Vice-Chancellor in the daily running of the University. It also ensures the effectiveness of all statutory bodies and committees within the University. The Registry functions as a service centre rendering services to all departments in the University; theseservices include generating records for reference purposes. In other words, the Registry is a fountain of university information that is expected to supply relevant information to all departments within the University. Given the volume of information generated from this university organ, it becomes more important for the Registry to ensure the proper preservation of records for posterity purposes. This may be made possible through the establishment of a viable archive for the preservation of records of enduring value.

The archive as an arm of the registry department in the Federal University of Technology, Akure was established in 2013. Its main objective was to collect and preserve all publications relating to the University and make them available to researchers. In 2015, the archive took up a more active role by visiting all the faculties, departments and directorates within the University to request for relevant documents of enduring value. The alliance forged with all these units was also to encourage them to send in publications that were relevant to the University for proper record-keeping by the registry archive. Presently, the archival repository is housed in a room within the registry building. It is hoped that in the future, the archive will be allotted a more spacious accommodation that will allow for consultation and research. Records within the archive are currently being digitised to enhance access by patrons.

2. Description of Study

2.1 Statement of the Problem

The practice of archival management is receiving increasing popularity especially among institutions of higher learning. While academic institutions perceive the need for their records to be archived, doubts arise on the rationale for archiving information materials and what benefit they will bring. In higher institutions beyond national boundaries, efforts are not only made to centrally archive information materials of enduring value but to encourage academics to embark on self-archiving as a means of preserving notable research works that may serve future use in academia. (Kyriaki-Manessi, Koulouris, Giannakopoulos, & Zervos, 2013). Furthermore, the repository could serve as a tool for the evaluation of research works at departmental levels in the faculties. This may seem to be a far cry from the conditions and functions of Nigerian university repositories or archives. Presently, some university repositories exist owing to academics' desire to showcase their scholarly literature and increase the citation impact of their work which ultimately, improves the ranking of their universities (Ukwoma & Dike, 2017). However, archival resources should comprise all other resources including scholarly content thus, presenting an inclusive agenda that involves other members of the university community particularly members of the university registry. If Nigerian universities have archives, how are they perceived by people within the academic community? What attitude do workers, particularly registry staff members, have towards the management of archives within tertiary institutions? These issues are what this study aims to investigate.

2.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to evaluate the level of perception and attitudes of registry staff members towards archives management at the Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA). Specific objectives of the study are to:

a) find out the awareness level of registry staff members regarding the existence of an archive inFUTA;
b) identify the perception level of registry staff members towards archives management in FUTA;and
c) investigate the factors affecting the perception of staff members towards archives management in FUTA.

2.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the awareness level of registry staff regarding the existence of an archive in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?
2. What is the perception level of registry staff members towards archives management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?
3. What are the factors affecting the perception of registry staff members towards archives management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?

3. Literature Review

As a practice, archives management has been in existence since the early part of the 19th century (Cook,2016). With the advent of information communications technology (ICT), it has become more popular as people see the need to have personal and national histories brought closer home through the use of ICT. Despite this progress, there is still a need for further enlightenment on the functionality of the archive to encourage the patronage of archival resources by patrons particularly registry staff members in tertiary institutions. The information generated within universities are peculiar and oftentimes relate to the operations of various departments within the university. Therefore, the management of records documenting such information should be the sole prerogative of information experts within academic institutions (Schina & Wells,2002).

Apart from registry records containing facts and figures, other information components related to research and scholarship which make institutional repositories of universities may be preserved in institutional archives. In the words of Lynch (2003), as quoted byYang and Li (2015), an institutional repository is '(a) set of services that a university offers to the members of its community for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members. It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as organization and access or distribution'. This definition reveals, to a level, the contents and quality of resources contained in archives. It also highlights the commitment of university administrations towards the management of archival materials both for the present and the future.

Perception is related to one's capability to understand matters. It is the psychological ability to process or use the information received through the sense organs (Akande, 2009). Perception also includes how we respond to information. Information about archival functions is wide spreading and eliciting more response especially relating to its use. In a study on searchers' perception of access regulations in Nigerian national archives, the majority of searchers use the archive for research purposes (Abioye, 2009). This report evidences the need for effective record-keeping for the benefit of research. Furthermore, efficient record-keeping helps to increase healthy perception and use of archives by researchers and non-researchers. However, record-keeping, particularly within the university system, has not been without its challenges. Incidents of poorly structured record management systems, inadequate training on records management, insecurity of records, and ineffective policy-making strategies on records management have consistently plagued the record management systems in universities (Egwunyenga, 2009; Iwhiwhu, 2005).

Efficient archival management may only be possible if records management is given top priority which inevitably will heighten the perception and ultimate use of archival resources in the university setting. Despite the importance of archives, the level of response to the knowledge of its existence among registry staff members of universities may be questioned based on their frequency of use, hence, the reason for the investigation into the perception and attitudes of registry members towards archives management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the research. The design investigated the present nature or condition of the phenomenon under study. The descriptive research design primarily involves the collection of data on prevailing circumstances with the intention to describe and interpret the findings (Salaria, 2012). On the other hand, the survey research method is used to collect data (either in verbal or written communication form) from a representative sample of individuals or respondents from a target population (Mathiyazhagan & Nandan, 2010). The survey method of enquiry accentuates the descriptive research design in that it allows for the systematic collection of information relating to the present status, practices, beliefs, processes, trends, or relationships among people.

4.2 Population

The target population for the study comprised registry staff members in the registry arm of the University and the administrative office of all the departments in the Federal University of Technology, Akure.

4.3 Sampling and Sample Size

A sample size of fifty (50) staff members were selected for the study. A simple random sampling technique was used to select respondents from different departments. These departments include the Registry, Bursary, Department of Human Resources, the library, School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (SAAT), and the School of Management Technology (SMAT).

4.4 Data Collection Instrument

A total number of fifty (50) questionnaires were distributed among registry staff members. Forty-six (46) of them were returned and found useful. The questionnaire comprised (21) questions which included queries on respondents' background, educational qualifications, and years of work experience. Enquiries on respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards the management of archives were also made.

4.5 Data Analysis Method

The questionnaires distributed and returned during the study were verified and edited to ensure they were correctly completed. The questionnaires were then coded and inputted intoa computer to facilitate analysis. Data collected from the study was organized through descriptive statistical methods to help analyse and interpret the data obtained. The analysis was facilitated by the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

5. Data Presentation and Discussion

Data collected from the study focused on the perception and attitudes of registry staff members towards the management of archives in the Federal University of Technology, Akure. Information about their background and their awareness level regarding the existence of archives in the University were collected. Information on possible challenges confronting proper archives management in the University was also gathered from the forty-six (46) respondents that participated in the study.

Table 1: Status of Respondents

Departments	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bursary	3	6.5
Centre for Continuing Education	1	2.2
DEHR	3	6.5
DVC Office	3	6.5
Library	4	8.7
Registry	23	50.0
SAAT	2	4.3
SMAT	7	15.2
Total	**46**	**100**
Gender		
Male	13	28.3
Female	33	71.7
Total	**46**	**100**
Position/rank		
Administrative officer	12	26.1
Clerical officer	5	10.9
Confidential secretary	21	45.7
Executive officer	8	17.4
Total	46	100
Years of Work Experience		
1-5	9	19.6
6-10	11	23.9
11-15	8	17.4
16-20	7	15.2
21-25	5	10.9
26-30	5	10.9
31 and above	1	2.2
Total	**46**	**100**

Table 1 shows the status of registry staff workers in the Federal University of Technology, Akure. Of the 46 respondents involved in the study, 50%(23) of them worked in the registry while the remaining 50% (23) of respondents are staff members who worked in various departments within the University.

Most of the registry staff were females (33 or 71.7%) and confidential secretaries (21 or 45.7%) in various departments within the university system. The table indicated 23.9% of respondents as those who have worked in the registry between 6 and 10 years. This is closely followed by those who have worked for 5 years and below (19.6%). Those with about 15 years' experience made up 17.4% of the population. Respondents with less than 21 years' experience were about 15.2%, while those with work experience from 21 to 25 years and 25 to 30 years had an equal percentage of 10.9%. only 1(2.2%) respondent had more than 30 years of work experience in the registry.

Research Question 1: *What is the awareness level of registry staff regarding the existence of an archive in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?*

This research question was answered by highlighting the percentage scores of the responses of registry staff members on their level of awareness of the existence of an archive in the Federal University of Technology, Akure. These scores were ranked and presented as shown in table 2 below:

Table 2: Respondents' Awareness of the Archive's Existence

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	44	95.7
No	0	0.0
I don't know	2	4.3
Total	**46**	**100**

Concerning awareness of the existence of an archive in the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Table 2 shows the responses of registry staff members on the subject. A majority of the respondents (44 or 95.7%) are aware of an archive's existence in the University. Two (4.3%) respondents showed that they were uncertain as to its existence. There was no response indicating a lack of awareness of an archive's existence in the University. Findings show that most registry workers are aware of the existence of an archive in the university.

Research Question 2: *What is the perception level of registry staff members towards archives management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?*

Table 3: Opinions of Respondents towards Archives Management

S/No	Items	SD	D	UD	A	SA	Total	Mean
1	Archives are necessary in every tertiary institution for storing documents	1	0	1	5	39	46	4.76
2	There is no need for archives because of the internet	22	16	6	2	0	46	1.74
3	Archives are not necessary if all registry offices have cabinets	21	19	2	4	0	46	1.76
4	Archives materials in my institution are only stored manually	4	14	8	15	5	46	3.07
5	Records no longer regularly used are sent to the archive in my institution	3	10	8	15	10	46	3.41
6	Most tertiary institutions lack funds to effectively manage an archive	7	9	4	19	7	46	3.22
7	Establishing an archive is a waste of resources	25	19	1	0	1	46	1.54
8	Archival materials in my institution have been digitised	2	13	17	10	4	46	3.02

9	The archive in my institution has no disaster plan	3	13	15	11	4	46	3.00
10	There is no need to archive documents because they will not be properly maintained	16	22	3	3	2	46	1.98
11	Climate change in our environment discourages the proper management of archives	7	18	9	10	2	46	2.61
12	Myinstitution lacks preservation and conservation tools to manage an archive	8	17	8	9	4	46	2.65
13	Managing an archive is very expensive	4	16	5	18	3	46	3.00
14	Most archives in tertiary institutions are poorly managed because they are not handled by professional archivists	3	9	7	21	6	46	3.39
	N=46							
	Aggregate mean = 2.80							
	Criterion mean: <2.5 (Disagree), =2.5 or < 3.5 (Undecided), =>3.5 (Agree)							

Note: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, UD= Undecided, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree, N= Totalrespondents

In answering research question 2, Table 3 shows respondents' perceptions regarding archives management. Respondents with an average mean of 4.76 believe that archives are necessary to store documents in tertiary institutions. However, internet connectivity or access to internet resources may take its place if necessary (1.74).Regarding the presence of cabinets to store documents, not many respondents (1.76) believe that these cabinets can or should replace the need for an archive. To most respondents, establishing an archive is financially worthwhile; only a few respondents think otherwise (1.54).The table also reveals that most respondents are aware of the major function of an archive which is to store records that are no longer in regular use (3.41).

Research Question 3: *What are the factors affecting the perception of registry staff members towards archives management in the Federal University of Technology, Akure?*

The opinions of registry staff members in Table 3 revealed certain factors that may negatively affect their perception towards the management of archives in the institution. Relating to the average mean of these factors, they include the high cost in archives management (3.00), poor preservation tools in the archive (2.65), and lack of disaster plan for the archive (3.00). Nonetheless, based on the aggregate mean of 2.80 (which falls within the criterion mean of =2.5 or <3.5), it may be generally inferred that the respondents are undecided in their opinions and not very cognizant of archives and their management practices in the Federal University of Technology, Akure.

6. **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Archives are significant repositories of retrospective information. Absence of their functions can lead to loss of very valuable information and thus, loss of personal or collective histories. It becomes pertinent, therefore, to ensure its continued existence for posterity's sake. The findings of the study showed the existence of an archive in the Federal University of Technology Akure; however, members of the university, particularly the registry staff workers, are poorly informed regarding the functions and benefits of an archival repository in the university system.

To effectively use and maximize the benefits of the archive repository at the Federal University of Technology Akure, this study recommends the following:

- There should be adequate publicity of the archive and its functions in order to create more awareness within the university.
- More funding should be allocated for the management of the archive and its operations.

- Digitisation of archival materials should be encouraged to enhance access by patrons within and outside the university premises.
- Regular in-house training and re-training sessions, especially on professional ethics and functions, should be held for archivists or archival personnel. This will increase self-confidence in the archivists and help to improve the public's perception of the archive.

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