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THE TRAVAILS OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

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Abstract

This paper was aimed at examining the procedure for eradicating anti-library use behavior. Increasingly indeed, academic libraries are presently facing lots of problems besides been ill-equipped, short staffing and degenerate facilities among others. However another problem is the social vices being entranced by the library users. On the whole, these problems are at all times mitigating against frontals of growth, progress and development. The data was collected by interviewing of staff, examination of records and observation of activities in circulation section. Based on findings, it was revealed that theft of library books and pilferages of numerous strength has slowed down every available goal. It was suggested that prompt and adequate measures like regular monitoring detective measures and maintenance measure among others are put in place as its way out of the present precarious situation.

Keywords: *Academic libraries; Anti library activities; Crime; Library materials*

Introduction

Libraries are institutions set up to cater for the educational, cultural , research, recreational and informal needs of their users, Libraries have the main objectives of being entrusted with the selection, acquisition, organization, storage and dissemination of information to their patrons. These libraries stand to be vulnerable to all forms crime and security risks from not only the users, but the library staff as well.

According to Ogbonyomi (2011), the crimes, which are committed by some users of the academic libraries, have deprived many others from fully achieving their information needs. Vandalism, mutilation, defacement, theft, arson, etc. are problems regularly encountered by the materials of these libraries. The commodity the libraries promote: books and other information materials are valuable and expensive but are likely targets for criminal activities. The expected roles of the academic library lead to some criminal activities, the more the control, safeguard and security levels the less it resembles a library that traditionally expected to serve its users.

Theft and malicious damage against books are difficult to combat because the risk of getting caught is very low. While the likelihood of success is high, criminal activities in academic libraries are not limited to library information materials alone but theft of properties such as handbags, purses, keys and notebooks are equally common. The extent, nature and rate at which these crimes occur vary from one academic library to another.

The University of Ilorin library collections recorded a steady growth both in terms of staff and information resources. The academic activities also witnessed great improvement and expansion with the introduction of new academic courses, departments and faculties.

The University of Ilorin library started functioning in 1976. The library which is the life wire of any tertiary institution was created along side with the university. At present, there are three branches of the library, located at the different centers in the two campuses. Main library, Law library and College of Health Sciences library. Main campus was built and commissioned in 1990 located at permanent site of the university, which houses the university librarian's office, and entire technical services and readers service. Other branches which include, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Center for Peace and Strategies studies Libraries are located at permanent site of the University near main library while College of Health Sciences Library, popularly called medical library is located at Oke-Oyi Permanent site campus. It houses books and non book materials related to health sciences and medicine. such as textbooks, journals, magazine and other health related publications.

There is no one universally accepted definition of crime because what is regarded as a crime in one society may not constitute "an offence in another society." According to MacDonald (1992, crime is an unlawful act of default which is an offence against the public and renders an offender guilty at the end. Having understood the crime cause and effect, security agents and individuals have increased their activities to safeguard the lives and property of the Nigerian populace. As part of security managements in our libraries, continuous search to identify prevalent crimes in the libraries by knowing the causes of such crimes, those involved in the criminal activities and steps that are needed to be taken to forestall the commission of crimes in the academic library especially in University of Ilorin is on-going. Crimes that are peculiar to academic libraries include; theft of book materials, personal belongings of staff and particularly library users, mutilation, assaults on library staff as well as the numerous violation of library rules and regulations, Adewoye (1992, Omoniyi (2000).

Statement of the study

Library is just one of the components of Nigerian society where committing of crime has become a regular feature. Omisakin (1998) while commenting on this gives a synopsis of crimes across the strata of the Nigerian society and concludes that the level of criminal activities is on the high side. Though, generally library provides Knowledge, Education and Enlightenment which form the basis for the full development of individual's talent and skills required for the aforementioned changes and development. Having known the peculiarity of Library vis-a-vis its problems at large, thus the aim of this paper is to find solutions to the travails that are associated with University of Ilorin library as an academic library.

Methodology

The University of Ilorin library was selected as the study area for the investigation. The choice of University of Ilorin was made because of its proximity, ensured maximum accessibility to data and served as time and cost saving device to the researcher. Multi method approach was adopted to ensure collection of substantial information on the study and minimize bias from one method approach of data collection. The approach incorporated interviewing some of the staff of the circulation section examination of circulation record, and direct observation of activities of Readers Services Division. The data gathered was mainly qualitative and analyzed so.

Objectives of the study

To study the functions of academic libraries and their travails in a case study of university of Ilorin library.

Justification of the study

The study will bring into limelight the travails of university of Ilorin library. The study can serve as a reference point for other academic libraries especially newly established ones. The result of this study will also serve as impetus for improvement on the travails of university of Ilorin library.

Literature Review

Efforts have been made to review relevant literature in this study. There is paucity of literature on one subject as related to university of Ilorin Anti library situation. Fola-Adio (2009) asserted that anti-Libraries use as perceived by the libraries is a wind that blows, both the library i.e. its staff and users no good, that is the reason it has to be dealt with. There is no doubt, there is need to phase out the acts in the libraries. The library managers must concern themselves with dealing with this problem, if they are to manage successfully a flourishing and efficient library or information service. The potential of anti-library use behavior must be addressed from the earlier possible stage for its being phased out. Mutilation, stealing and mishandling library materials are classified as a crimes that can be committed by library users which can be prevented by disrupting the mechanism which cause the crime. According to the sociologist, crime can be prevented by disrupting the cause. Akinlotan (2011) identified areas of such as economic and social change (structural prevention) as one of the prevention of the travails faced. For instance, if the cause of stealing or mutilating of library materials is a result of lack of money to purchase such materials or to photocopy of such materials, it can be tackled by libraries making available photocopy machines either owned by library or individuals and operated in the library at a lesser cost so that such can have opportunity to own a copy of such materials.

On the other hands, if prevention will be to control or to reform the offender, that means, there will be a discipline committee who will placed a penalty on the offenders for the offence committed. That means libraries can make a rule that any act of stealing or mutilation of library materials will attract punishment or disciplinary measures. And if it is the circumstance prevention measure, it means that the library must be ready to

install mechanical gadgets to prevent such crimes e.g. CCTV or detector machine at the library's entrance. Crime as defined by United Nations (1989) is an act or the commission of an act that is forbidden or the omission of a duty that is commanded by a public law and if it makes the offender liable to punishment by that law. Mutilation of books, mishandling of books stealing of books, not returning overdue books on time, loss of books, eating and drinking in the library are all crimes that is almost being committed daily by users.

Houlgate and Chaney (1992) explained that anti-library use could be deterred by strong, effective management and proposed that the library atmosphere be calm; device a security strategy which would create the ease while the defaulters feel vulnerable, anxious and wary. When the door of the urban library was wide open, there would always be disruptions and problem patrons. He reasoned that unlike university libraries, public libraries were not able to subject their clients to security check through the use of membership cards. He proposed and should use more mundane measure such as blacking trouble-makers. He recommended the use of porters at exit point to check the clients, placing plain-clothed security staff in several parts of the library to watch the patrons, using alarm and video cameras to apprehend potential thieves as security measures in the libraries. He, however, stressed that staff are most important in security measure. He therefore concluded that staff should be motivated, trained and retrained in matters of security and the measure be periodically evaluated. Agboola (2001) explained the issue of stock security considering designing in Nigeria university library buildings through the use of questionnaire and visits to selected libraries. He recommended installation of mosquito netting and wire-meshes on windows and closer architect-librarian relationship in designing library buildings to achieved necessary stock security. As it has been observed that youths commits a lot of crimes and majority that use the library in an academic library like university of Ilorin library are youths between the age of 18-35 years. They formed the highest percentage. An official statistics by U.S in 2005 as indicated by Muhammed (2011) indicated that half of those arrested or connected for various crimes behavior across the country are aged 21-32 years. We can inferred from the above statement that youths performed a lot of crime action in which library set up is also affected.

Fayeye (2002) and Oderinde (2004) identified seven (7) youth crime of which stealing is one. One of the reasons of such is lack of money, therefore, Oderinde suggests that parents should provide money for their children to enable them meet their needs e.g photocopies to prevent them from tempering with library books (stealing, mishandling, mutilating etc), also the government should give bursary allowance to students to ease or augment their allowances given to them by parents and guidance.

Ogboyomi (2011) observed that there are two categories of crime, the one caused by human agents and other by natural agents. The former (human agents) are in form of theft mutilation and non-returned of borrowed materials. On the other hand, Ogbonyomi (2011) also agreed that crimes are numerous, among which poverty, users population, poor security are paramount. Among the measures to control such crimes in the library, Ogbonyomi suggested that restriction of entry with bag/briefcases should be enforced, use of uniformed porters, efficient and cheap photocopying services, improved loan

services using a reliable charging system, the use of electronic devices and annual stock taking to monitor library stocks will help reduce criminal activities in the library.

Functions of Academic Libraries

A university is defined by Encyclopedia International (1975) as an institution of the highest grade. It is characterized by its emphasis on the compilation and classification of acquired knowledge; the transmission of what is known and the creation of new knowledge. These functions are achieved through the university's teaching, research and publication activities. To help the university achieve these functions, a library is set up with the responsibilities of acquiring by what every methods, all the literature required for the achievement of the identified functions. Academic libraries, therefore, are set up to support the instructional programme of universities. And a place where teaching and learning of the highest grade are conducted, the library provides materials at both levels for the teachers, researchers and the students who are the primary users of the library. In other words, the university libraries are setup to acquire process, store and make readily available graphical records of the past and present for future consumption.

The main objective of any academic library is to provide necessary information to lecturers, students, researchers and aid to teaching, learning and research purposes. Also, Eligial (2000) sees academic library services as the creation of new knowledge and transmission to library and culture of the present and the past. Olanlokun and Salisu, (1993) stated that library is an agency, which engage in the collection, organization, processing, preservation and dissemination of recorded information in the various formats most convenient to its target users. The library, therefore, in our society has an important role to play in uplifting the educational standard of every individual. Similarly, Alokun (2003) sees the library as an agent of education some cultural, economic and political changes in the society. In Encarta (2004), the history of library service at all levels of education in Nigeria was characterized by a close interplay of education and civilization, each promoting the other, library services as known today is to promote quality education and on crucial quest for civilization and progress.

Nwoye (1983) highlighted the functions of a university library more eloquently when he asserted that the library helps the university in conserving knowledge and ideas inherited from the past. The university library also expands the frontiers of knowledge by providing free access to what is acquired, processed and stored. It is also the function of the library to provide the staff and the students an opportunity for independent work directed at the expansion and advancement of knowledge.

The Services Rendered at University of Ilorin library

According to Adeoti-Adekeye (2005), library as a social institution provides social services to human being. University of Ilorin library has some sections where services are rendered. These include:

Acquisition section which handles the acquisition of all library books, through purchases, gift (solicited and unsolicited) exchanged. All requests for books are directed to this section through heads of department and lecturers.

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Cataloguing section which catalogues and classifies the books in the order the books will be arranged on the shelves in the library.

The serials section which is charged with the responsibility of acquiring and processing journal of titles in the library.

Documents section: The section houses vital governmental publications, federal and state and other governmental agencies' publications. International organizations' publications are used to provide the informational needs of the readers.

Reference section: This section specializes the provision of reference services as well as giving readers' advice in addition to keeping reference materials. Books in the reference cannot be borrowed out.

Circulation section: This is a section where most library users are familiar with materials that go on loan, are charged to patrons and discharged on return to library. Records of the library users are also kept in this section. Information about material that is not found where it belongs on the shelf rooms is available at circulation section.

Reserve section: This kind of service area is usually available in the University library where study materials are short supply but in constant and extensive demand are kept for in-house use. Books will be loaned to users for period of time and returned when the time expired i.e. hour basis.

Computer section: the introduction of computer system into the libraries has revolutionized the concept of the library. However, University of Ilorin has started using computer in its operations since 1997. The house-keeping functions such as cataloguing, classification; serials control, acquisition and circulation control are now being performed using automated system. Also many routine tasks, such as the provision of Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), CD-ROM searchers and internet; services are now being made available to users at University of Ilorin library.

Types of materials most affected by criminal activities

The professional librarian regrettably agreed that nearly all types of materials are affected by the criminal practices. He, however, specifically remarked that books on social sciences, sciences, aquiculture, humanities, education are grossly affected. The criminal practice may not result in the entire loss of the book but users usually damaged it.

Other damages done to library materials include those affected through shelving books or jamming them to either tightly on the stacks, bending books backward or pressing their backs for the purpose of photocopying.

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These include the following; (a) mutilation, (b) mishandling, (c) stealing, (d) poor storage facilities (e) overcrowding, (f) overdue (g) eating (h) tracing (i) tearing out pages (j) improper borrowing (k) multiple borrowing, (l) loss of book etc.

Mutilation in Library

Mutilation simply means impairment or a disfigurement or badly damage part of a book. For instance, using any writing material to underline library material or cut off part of a book or tearing of some parts of materials. It needs little imagination to realize

that this is a serious antisocial activity which impairs the usefulness of these publications, not only for present readers but for future generations of user since such publications are often obtainable at a very high cost. Therefore, any person convicted of such an offence will face the full severity of library disciplinary action.

Mishandling in the Library

A look at the circulation statistics of University of Ilorin library shows that about 40% library users rough handle library materials and so it is one of the problems; there is nobody that will want to borrow a dirty or damaged materials.

Mishandling of library materials occurs in the following ways'

- i. When he/she uses and leaves within the paper clips, pins and staples which later rust and stain the book.
- ii. When he/she marks and underlines the sentence with ink or scribble on the books.
- iii. When he/she opens or unopens page and turn back covers.
- iv. When one attaches materials with razor blade and needle
- v. When he/she carries many books on hands from one place to another in the library.
- vi. When he/she piles books on the ground.

Stealing in the Library

Ogbonna (2009), mentioned the categories of thieves in the library, ranging from students, professors, lecturers, librarians, and library staff. Stealing simply means taking another person's property unnoticed. This is also a serious anti-social activity in the library. Stealing of book in the library is another major social problem aside mutilation. Libraries have lost books as a result of theft. All libraries lose books, they should not worried about slight losses. Perhaps as many as (10%) ten percent of the borrowers will take books illegally from library as a result of carelessness while some are with deliberate intent to steal. Heavy losses, however, indicate that the preventive measures are not strong enough and should be increased.

Wrong shelving by users in the Library

Some library users hide some books by shelving them in wrong places thereby denied other library users opportunity to make use of library materials. This is another problem in the library that needed to be addressed. Usually, when the library users consult or use some books in the library, he/she is expected to leave the books on the table. It is the duty of library assistants to return the book back to the appropriate shelf cabinet.

Over Crowding in the Library

This is referred to putting too many people, and items in little place. University of Ilorin sitting capacity is not more than 2,000 and students population is more than that beside the danger of breakage and theft which often result from attempt to remove or replace the materials. It encourages insects and other agents by providing hiding places and make through cleaning difficult.

Poor Storage Facilities in the Library

This refers to inadequate provision of good storage condition of equipments in the library. The most common used shelf is the iron shelf which is prone to rust while wooden shelf is another alternative though, if not properly treated and polished with insecticide, it may invite bookworm and cause serious damage to shelf materials.

Overdue Cases in the Library

It refers to delinquent library patrons who failed to return borrowed books as at when due. A lot of library books are with defaulters who have selfish interests. Most of the books are rare or costly by nature which makes it preferable to limit their use. Due to cases of overdue, some library materials are placed on reserved. This is to ensure that all those who require it have an equal opportunity to read it. Therefore, for book to be overdue is another anti-social problem in the library. This problem affects all categories of users, e.g. undergraduates, postgraduates, and staffs.

Loss of Book

This is referred to as missing books or lost books; readers are responsible for the safe-keeping of all books issued to them and are required to pay for replacement in the event of loss or damage. If a reader loses a book, it should be reported to the circulation librarian immediately. A period of time will be allowed for the reader to search for the book. Refusal to pay for such a book should be referred to the Bursary Department for necessary deduction as appropriate.

Eating

Eating is another anti-social problem that is affecting library deviant. Eating simply means taking food items to the library for consumption. Any form of eating, drinking and smoking such as chewing gum, popcorn, groundnut, biscuits etc. are not allowed in the reading room areas. Eating in the library may invite insects such as termites, cockroaches and bookworms. They are particularly dangerous to tropical libraries. Where adequate precautions are not taken, they can do irreparable damage to the library materials (books).

The way forward

In view of the various findings on the subject matter the following recommendations are the way forward to subdue these travails that are peculiar to academic libraries. Ideally, there should be regular patrolling of library security officers who have been trained to identify anyone who is deviant. On the other hand, if prevention will be to control the offender, that means there will be a discipline committee who will place a penalty on the offenders for the offence committed. That means libraries can make a rule that any act of stealing or mutilation of library materials will attract punishment or disciplinary measures. And, if it is the circumstance prevention measure, it means that the library must be ready to install mechanical gadget to prevent such crimes e.g. CCTV or detector machine at the library's entrance.

There are sophisticated devices which can give early warning of a fire developing and theft detective. These devices usually detected either rises in temperature or the presence of smoke. A librarian must never forget that during the expected life of building and materials operational cost will be very much greater than the initial cost.

The following preventive measures are suggested.

- a. The best way to prevent book loss is to encourage a respect for books by the library users and to beef-up security.
- b. Someone in charge, must be a well-trained library personnel, should be present at all times.
- c. The charging system should be one which does not delay the borrowers, such as automated library system.
- d. Fines may be charged for overdue books and for minor damages
- e. Use a book-mark to indicate a place in a book rather than bend the corners of pages or insert pencils between the pages.
- f. Never open a book with dirty hand or return pages with wet fingers.
- g. Never read while eating or drinking.
- h. Never turn an open book back to back or place it face downwards to the table
- i. Turn the pages from the top right hand corner gently

Conclusion

It is evident in the study that academic libraries are faced with these travails and all the suggestions made are to correct the problems so that the library can move forward.

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