



Acquisition and Management of Serials for Utilization by Postgraduate Students in University Libraries in Benue State

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the acquisition and management of serials for utilization by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. Three specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprises 78 professional librarians in universities in Benue State, namely, Joseph SarwuanTarka University, Makurdi, Benue State University Makurdi and University of Mkar, Mkar. Since the sample size was small and manageable by the researcher, no sampling was employed. The instruments for data collection were a checklist and a self-developed structured questionnaire titled "Acquisition and Management of Serials for Utilization by Postgraduate Students Questionnaire" (AMSUPSQ). The questionnaire was validated by three experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was established using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.97 was obtained. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that postgraduate students utilize a variety of serials, including newspapers, newsletters, almanacs, professional journals, reports, yearbooks, gazettes, and indexes and abstracts. It was also revealed that the serials are acquired through diverse methods such as purchasing, gifting, donations, direct ordering, exchange, legal deposits, online subscriptions, and institutional memberships in associations. More so, the study found that the management of these serials involves preservation techniques, computerization, provision of current issues, binding, weeding, air conditioning, indexing and abstracting, and maintaining usage statistics. The study concluded that Benue State university libraries employ a comprehensive approach to acquiring and managing serials for postgraduate students. The study recommended among others that to further support postgraduate students, university libraries in Benue State should prioritize the computerization of all serial materials and expand digital access. This includes developing a comprehensive online catalog and digital repository that allows students to access serials remotely.

Keywords: University Library, Acquisition, Management and Serials.

Introduction

Postgraduate students play a crucial role in the university library's user community, primarily due to their extensive involvement in research activities. These students have a heightened demand for academic and research-related information, surpassing other student categories within the university (Abubakar & Adetimirin, 2016). Undoubtedly, postgraduate programs necessitate a substantial knowledge base to support research and inquiries spanning various academic domains. These programs typically encompass higher degrees, specifically postgraduate diplomas, master's degrees, and doctoral degrees. This study focuses on Master's and Doctoral degree programs, which involve intensive research and a profound need for comprehensive information resources. At this academic level, postgraduate students rely heavily on research and instructional materials for in-depth academic investigations. To facilitate effective research by postgraduate students, the acquisition and accessibility of serials are paramount. Consequently, university libraries often organize their information resources across various divisions or units, such as Acquisition, Reader Services, Collection Development, ICT, and Serial Services. The Serial Services division typically assumes responsibility for managing and providing access to serials within the university library.

Serials have consistently played a pivotal role as vital sources of information, particularly within academic settings, offering a wealth of up-to-date insights. As highlighted by Baduru (2012), individuals ranging from undergraduates, postgraduates, lecturers, and researchers all rely on serials to access the latest information across various domains. Chike, Amaoge, and Nnamdi (2016) further elaborate that serials encompass publications issued in successive installments, appearing at regular or irregular intervals and designed for ongoing publication. The periodicity of these publications can range from annual, bi-annual, quarterly, monthly, bi-weekly, to weekly, contingent on the decisions made by the editorial board. Consequently, any work that falls within, constitutes, or is part of a series qualifies as a serial. Serials are publications that are printed in any medium issued under the same title in a succession of separate parts usually numbered (or dated) and appearing either at regular or irregular intervals with no predetermined conclusion. Serials includes journals, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, indexes, abstracts, annual reports, proceedings, and transactions of societies, monographic series, almanacs and yearbooks, directories, among others. Such publications are expected to contain current information and are very

useful for study, teaching, learning and research purpose. A serial can also assume the format of a paper, microfiche, on-line or CD-Rom. They vary in formats and in frequency of publication such as daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, biannually, annually or irregularly.

Serials form the backbone of any university library because of their nature of informational value. University libraries acquire, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information contained in journals for researchers, educators, students and other interested persons in their various disciplines (Ogunrombi, 2017). The importance of serials to university students in their academic research is very crucial as they provide the most up-to-date and current information in their areas of their specialty. Serials contain current and up-to-date information, which are very important for research and also provide the latest idea. They support and supplement school subjects and provide information on topics not well covered in the textbooks. Serials supply additional information or materials when the reader has exhausted all information in the available books he can find on the subject. They contain articles contributed by different people on different issues, and as such grant an individual access to a variety of stand points in different disciplines. Serial do not just make up library collection but they have to be acquired using various processes.

Acquisition is also the means of obtaining library materials which make up a library collection. Serials acquisition is the physical process of purchasing serial that have been selected by a library (Aghadiuno, Agbo&Onyekweodiri, 2015). Serial acquisition is the process of selecting, ordering, and receiving materials for university library which may include budgeting and negotiating with outside agencies, such as publishers, dealers, and vendors, to obtain resources to meet the needs of the university's users, in most economical and expeditious manner. Serial acquisition functions are generally located in the technical services divisions whose operations provide access to information in all its forms and formats.

Serial acquisition process may include identifying and selecting materials for the library's collection; pre-order searching to identify duplicate orders and to verify correct author and title as well as availability and price; ordering of materials from vendors or publishers; negotiating licensing agreements and contracts for electronic resources; claiming materials not delivered within the expected time frame; receiving materials; approving invoices for payments; physical processing such as ownership identification, security taping, and call number marking; binding; and preserving materials as needed (Ogunniyi, 2016). The core management function of serial acquisition remains the same regardless of the type of library or number of its staff which is to acquire materials for use of its users. Libraries acquire resources like books, periodicals, maps, serials, among others to meet potential information or recreational need. Hence, a university is adjudged high class when it provides adequate information materials especially current serials. However, a survey in ten countries of universities in Nigeria on the acquisition of serials in university libraries revealed that most university libraries acquire their serials through gift, direct purchase, legal deposit, bequest and exchange, professional associations. Maheswarappa and Ebnazar, (2018), identified methods of acquiring serials to include: purchase, exchange, gift, donation, bequest, legal deposit, online subscription, direct ordering and institutional membership to associations. Serials acquisition is hinged on continual financial commitment. Once a subscription is opened for a title, the library continues subscription thereby investing heavily on the titles. For effective utilization of serials, proper management is essential

Serials management encompasses a set of practices aimed at ensuring easy access to the most current information within the serials collection, offering comprehensive insights into the content, breadth, and location of materials. This involves the vital aspects of precise and consistent cataloging and classification techniques, which include the continuous maintenance and updates of catalog records. Furthermore, serials management simplifies access to both current and archived issues of serials stored in the collection. It leverages the collection by apprising users of the array of serial acquisitions and aiding them in their information quests. Managing serials also entails the supervision of serials personnel and the oversight of acquisition processes to provide library users with effective and efficient service. This involves the application of management methodologies, including goal setting, staff training, assessment, and motivation. Moreover, serials management can be approached from various angles, such as selection and acquisition, recording, organization (comprising cataloging and classification), current awareness services, automation services, preservation, and security. According to Agbaje (2012), the stages of serial management by the organization encompass section, ordering, placement, delivery, processing, storage, and retrieval of serials. Ultimately, serials management encompasses all the activities required to ensure the seamless and efficient transmission of information to potential users, thus aligning with the library's objectives and goals.

Serials are usually expensive both in terms of acquisition and management. As such, university libraries commit substantial percentages of their annual budgets to serial acquisition. Adequate library acquisition and management of serials in the university library is necessary. How well resources like serials are acquired and managed in the University library can be a pointer to the success of the library in meeting its objectives. Every university library has a responsibility to manage the serials that are entrusted to it because the unique nature of serials makes their management more difficult. Many university libraries procure, process, collect, organize, and preserve the serials for their users by following different proper procedures. For example, Akinbode and Nwalo (2016), documented that university libraries in south-west Nigeria manage their serials through proper cataloguing in line with Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Edition and classified using standard classification scheme. The university libraries also computerized their serials processes to some extent and make their serials accessible to users to a certain level.

The acquisition and management of serials are vital for meeting the information needs of library users and aligning with the overarching goals of the parent institution. As noted by Barfi, Afful-Athur, and Agyapong (2017), effective acquisition and management of serials create an environment conducive to their utilization, ultimately enhancing the learning experience. When serials are readily acquired and well-managed, they provide valuable support for the research activities of postgraduate students. A library with efficiently acquired and organized serials ensures that users can access resources without hindrances, facilitating maximum utilization.

Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Information Resource Management (IRM) Theory propounded by Harold Leavitt and Thomas Whisler in 1958. IRM is a framework that emphasizes the systematic and efficient management of information resources within an organization. This theory posits that information is a vital asset that must be effectively managed to support decision-making, enhance productivity, and achieve organizational goals. IRM involves the comprehensive management of data and information throughout their lifecycle, including acquisition, organization, preservation, retrieval, and disposal. It integrates various aspects of information management, including library science, records management, information technology, and knowledge management, to ensure that information resources are available, accessible, and usable when needed.

In the context of this study, IRM theory is highly relevant as it underscores the importance of managing serials—valuable information resources—effectively in university libraries. The study's objectives, which include identifying the types of serials acquired, the methods of acquiring these serials, and the strategies for managing them, align with the principles of IRM. The findings demonstrate how libraries in Benue State employ diverse methods to acquire and manage serials to meet the academic and research needs of postgraduate students. By applying IRM theory, the study highlights the systematic approach needed for the acquisition and management of serials, ensuring that these resources are well-organized, preserved, and accessible to support the scholarly activities of postgraduate students. This alignment illustrates how IRM principles can be used to optimize the management of library resources, ultimately enhancing the effectiveness of information services provided by university libraries.

Problem Statement

Despite the critical role of serials in postgraduate education, the researcher has observed persisting challenges in the acquisition and management of these resources within university libraries in Benue State. The observed problem lies in the inadequate alignment of library acquisition and management practices with the specific needs of postgraduate students. This misalignment is evident in the limited diversity of serials, which may not adequately cater to the broad spectrum of postgraduate research interests and specialized fields. Additionally, the researcher has observed shortcomings in the methods used for acquiring serials and in the strategies for their efficient management. This misalignment and these inadequacies, in turn, seem to impact the extent to which postgraduate students can effectively utilize these resources to enhance their academic and research endeavors.

The consequences of the observed problem are far-reaching. Postgraduate students in Benue State universities seem to face limitations in accessing a comprehensive range of serials, which restricts the breadth and depth of their research and academic pursuits. The observed suboptimal methods of acquisition and management also seem to hinder their ability to explore, discover, and utilize relevant materials efficiently, affecting their academic growth and research output. This problem, if left unaddressed, not only hampers the intellectual development of postgraduate students but also impacts the overall quality of research and scholarship generated within the state's universities. It is within the purview of the researcher's observations that this study sought to examine the acquisition and management of serials for utilization by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State

Objectives of the study

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives

1. find out types of serials acquired for utilization by postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State
2. Identify methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State
3. determine methods of managing serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study

1. What are the types of serials acquired for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?
2. What are methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?
3. What are methods of serial management for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for this study comprises 78 professional librarians in the three universities, namely, Joseph SarwuanTarka University, Makurdi (JOSTUM), Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi and University of Mkar, Mkar (UMM), Gboko. Since the population was small and relatively manageable by the researcher, all the 78 professional librarians in the three universities under study were used. The instruments for data collection were an observational checklist and a self developed questionnaire titled "Acquisition and Management of Serials for Utilization by Postgraduate Students Questionnaire" (AMSUPSQ). The questionnaire was divided into two eight (2) clusters: A and B developed in line with the objectives of the study. The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by three experts. The

internal consistency of the questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach Alpha method and a reliability coefficient of 0.97 was obtained. Data for the study was collected by the researcher with the aid of three research assistants. The data collected was analyzed using Means and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

Research question 1: What are the types of serials acquired for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?

Table 1: Qualitative Analysis of the types of serials acquired for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State

S/N	Serials	Acquired	Not Acquired	
1	Newspapers	√	X	Acquired
2	Newsletters	√	X	Acquired
3	Almanac	√	X	Acquired
4	Professional Journal	√	X	Acquired
5	Reports	√	X	Acquired
6	Yearbooks	√	X	Acquired
7	Gazettes	√	X	Acquired
8	Indexes and Abstracts	√	X	Acquired

Table 1 is qualitative analysis of the types of serials acquired for utilization by postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State reveals a comprehensive collection that supports their academic needs. The libraries have successfully acquired a diverse range of serials, including newspapers, newsletters, almanacs, professional journals, reports, yearbooks, and gazettes, which are essential for current awareness, professional development, and academic research. This indicates a strong foundation in providing varied serials supporting postgraduate research activities.

Research Question 2: What are methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of the methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State

S/No	Methods	Mean	SD	Decision
9	By purchasing the serials	3.77	0.93	Agree
10	Through gifting the university libraries	3.46	0.81	Agree
11	Donations to the university libraries.	3.76	0.81	Agree
12	Direct ordering of serials from publishers.	3.40	0.80	Agree
13	By exchanging serials with other libraries.	2.95	0.88	Agree
14	Legal deposit of the serials.	3.30	0.79	Agree
15	Online subscription from publishers	3.65	0.81	Agree
16	Institutional membership of the association	3.33	0.81	Agree

Table 2 shows the methods of acquiring serials for utilization by postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State in Mean and Standard Deviations. From the table as presented, it can be seen that the respondents agreed to all the items, (items 9 - 16) with mean values ranging from 2.95 to 3.77 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. It can be deduced from this finding that all the items are the methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State.

Research Question 3: What are methods of serial management for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the methods of serial management for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State

S/No	Methods	Mean	SD	Decision
17	Ensure preservation of serials.	3.54	0.90	Agree

	18	Computerization of serial materials.	3.38	0.85	Agree
	19	Ensure the provision of current serials across disciplines.	3.39	0.81	Agree
	20	Binding serials with flexible strong spine.	3.18	0.84	Agree
Table 3 shows the methods of serial management	21	Repair of damaged issues.	3.01	0.85	Agree
	22	Weeding of outdated information materials.	3.30	0.84	Agree
	23	Provision of air-conditioners for cooling of the libraries.	3.65	0.80	Agree
	24	Ensuring that indexing and abstracting are done regularly.	3.25	0.81	Agree
	25	Taking statistics of serials available to be utilize by Postgraduate students.	3.00	0.83	Agree

nt for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State in Mean and Standard Deviations. From the table as presented, it can be seen that the respondents agreed to all the items, (items 17 - 25) with mean values ranging from 3.00 to 3.65 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. It can be deduced from this finding that all the items are the methods of serial management for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State.

Discussion

The first finding of the study revealed that, newspapers, newsletters, almanac, professional journals, reports, yearbooks, gazettes, and index and abstracts are the types of serials acquired for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State. This finding aligns with the research conducted by Upev, Ilo, and Orga (2015), which investigated the acquisition and preservation of serial resources in libraries within higher educational institutions. Their study also identified common types of serial resources used, such as journals, newspapers, magazines, newsletters, abstracts, indexes, almanacs, yearbooks, and annuals and reviews. Similarly, the present findings concur with the work of Akinbode and Nwalo (2017) who examined the management of serials in university libraries and reported that various types and forms of serials are subscribed to and retained in these library settings. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the findings in this study differ from those of Aghadiuno, Agbo, and Onyekweodiri (2015), who conducted a study on the availability of resources in universities. Aghadiuno and colleagues found that resources such as newspapers, magazines, transactions of societies, and monographic series were not readily available in universities. The observed variance in findings might be attributed to several factors, including the specific universities or libraries under investigation, their resource allocation, collection development policies, and regional variations. These disparities emphasize the need for customized and context-aware library resource management strategies to cater to the unique requirements of each academic institution and its diverse student population.

The second finding of the study revealed that the methods of acquiring serials for utilization by Postgraduate students in the university libraries in Benue State include: purchasing, gifting, donations, direct ordering, exchange, legal deposits, online subscription and institutional membership of the association. This finding closely aligns with the research conducted by Idhalama and Obi (2019), which investigated the acquisition and management of serials in academic libraries. Idhalama and Obi's study revealed that academic libraries in their study area similarly utilize a variety of methods to acquire serials and employ diverse means to organize them for efficient retrieval. Furthermore, this finding resonates with the work of Diogu (2017), who evaluated acquisition practices in Polytechnic Libraries. Diogu's study found that information materials are predominantly acquired through gifts and purchases, which is consistent with the current study's findings. Additionally, the present findings are in harmony with the research by Kar (2013), who explored how universities acquire their serials. Kar's study highlighted that universities primarily acquire serials through methods such as purchase, gifts/donations, and exchange agreements with other libraries and organizations. This alignment in findings across different studies underscores the versatility and adaptability of library acquisition methods in response to the diverse resource needs of academic institutions. It reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of library management practices that cater to the specific requirements and available resources of each library.

The study's findings shed light on the diverse methods employed for the management of serials in university libraries in Benue State, particularly concerning their utilization by Postgraduate students. These methods encompass preservation, computerization, provision of current serials, binding, weeding, air conditioning, indexing and abstracting, and the systematic collection of statistics. This finding strongly correlates with the results of Idhalama and Obi's study (2019), which explored the management of serials in academic libraries. In their research, they discovered that libraries utilize a range of strategies to preserve their serials, safeguarding these valuable resources for future users. Additionally, the present findings align with the observations made in Kar's study (2013), where libraries similarly emphasized the importance of proper cataloging following standards like AACR2. They classified serials using established classification schemes and leveraged computerization to some extent, making these resources accessible to users. This convergence of findings underscores the importance of efficient serials management practices in ensuring the longevity and accessibility of these resources in academic libraries. Libraries across different contexts tend to adopt similar approaches to preserve, organize, and facilitate the use of serials. These practices are driven by common goals of enhancing resource usability and supporting the research and learning needs of library users.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that the university libraries in Benue State have effectively acquired a diverse range of serials, including newspapers, newsletters, almanacs, professional journals, reports, yearbooks, gazettes, and indexes and abstracts, to support postgraduate students' academic and research needs. The acquisition methods are multifaceted, encompassing purchasing, gifting, donations, direct ordering, exchanges, legal deposits, online subscriptions, and institutional memberships, reflecting a comprehensive approach to resource accumulation. Furthermore, the libraries employ various serial management strategies such as preservation, computerization, updating collections, binding, repair, weeding outdated materials, air conditioning, and regular indexing and abstracting. These practices ensure the longevity, organization, and accessibility of serial resources.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. To further support postgraduate students, university libraries in Benue State should prioritize the computerization of all serial materials and expand digital access. This includes developing a comprehensive online catalog and digital repository that allows students to access serials remotely. Implementing advanced indexing and abstracting services will improve the ease of locating relevant materials, thereby enhancing research efficiency.
2. Libraries should actively engage in more collaborative networks and partnerships with other academic institutions, publishers, and organizations. By establishing exchange agreements and participating in consortia, libraries can expand their serial collections more cost-effectively. Additionally, advocating for more donations and legal deposits from alumni and relevant bodies can bolster resource availability without incurring significant costs.
3. To ensure the longevity and usability of serial collections, libraries should invest in modern preservation techniques and facilities. This includes providing adequate environmental controls such as air conditioning and humidity regulation to protect physical materials. Regular maintenance, binding, and repair of damaged issues should be prioritized. Furthermore, integrating advanced preservation technologies, such as digitization of older serials, can help maintain accessibility and reduce the wear and tear on physical copies.

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