

ASSESSING THE ROLE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT SKILLS IN SAFEGUARDING INFORMATION RESOURCES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN RIVERS STATE

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17466265>

Abstract

Universities, globally recognized as centers of academic excellence, rely heavily on their libraries to support teaching, learning, and research activities. A key function of university libraries, whether public or private, is the management and dissemination of information resources that facilitate academic and administrative activities. These libraries not only provide physical and electronic access to books, journals, and other academic materials but also serve as repositories of recorded information that directly support the curriculum and research endeavors of faculty and students. The role of records management in university libraries cannot be overstated, as it ensures that valuable academic materials are efficiently organized, preserved, and accessible to users. The preservation and effective management of records are vital to maintaining the integrity of an institution's information systems. This study examines the impact of records management skills on the preservation of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State, Nigeria. It highlights the significance of professional records management in safeguarding academic resources, ensuring that universities continue to meet the educational needs of their students and staff. The findings underscore the importance of properly trained staff in handling records, as well as the need for advanced records management strategies to enhance resource accessibility and longevity. Ultimately, this research provides insights into the critical role of effective records management in supporting academic institutions' missions and improving the quality of education.

Keywords: Records Management, Information Preservation, University Libraries, Academic Resources, Higher Education

Introduction

Universities all over the world are centers for academic pursuits as well as places where learning is sought at its maximum level. A university library, be it federal or state owned, is part of a university set up. Accordingly, it seeks to advance the functions of the institution by generating and transacting information in form of records for teaching, learning, research and for administration in the course of its daily activities (Akporhonor & Iwhiwhu, 2017; Kumar, 2017). Higher institutions libraries are attached to a higher education institution and serve two complementary purposes: to support the curriculum, and to support the research needs of the higher institution's faculty and students. According to Ola and Osagie (2011), higher institution libraries serve as content and knowledge repository by collecting and providing access to books, journals and other recorded information, acquiring, re-packaging and providing access to

information. Higher institution libraries ensure that the right information is provided and in the form that the users can understand which forms the record of the institution.

A record can be defined in terms of the information it contains or the tangible or physical format in which it is created. Hence, records differ in content, size, or format in which they appear. Akor and Udensi (2013) define a record as any source of information or document recorded, compiled, or stored in film or in written form. Coetzer (2012) also defines a record as information captured in any form; received or created regularly in the course of an organization's business or correspondence; and stored by the organization as evidence for organizational processes or activities.

Information resources in university libraries are those materials made up of books, audio-visual software media, audio-visual hardware and other materials used in teaching and learning process in a library. Ogbebor (2011) remarks that information resources are selected, acquired and organized by library staff so that information seekers or library clientele can have quick and easy access to them. The importance of information resources can be seen from the fact that if the library information resources are not provided, the library ceases to exist as what will be left is only a building. Library information resources include not only traditional print-on-paper media like books, journals, newspapers, and maps, but also audio-visual materials like cinematograph film records, audiocassettes, video cassettes, projectors, microfiches, Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CDROM), computer software, online databases, electronic books and e-journals and other media via the Internet. Library information resources are those materials made up of books, audio-visual software, media, audio-visual hardware and other materials used in teaching and learning process in a library. Electronic resources deliver the collection of information as full text (aggregated) databases, e-journals, image collections, multimedia in the form of CD, tape, Internet, web technology, just to mention but a few. Eresources include e-journals, e-discussions, e-news, data archives, e-mail online chatting, just to mention but a few. Electronic information sources are a wide range of products going from electronic periodicals to CD-ROMs, from mailing list to databases, all of them having a common feature of being used and sometimes modified by a computer (Thanuskodi, 2012).

Information resources in university libraries are expected to be acquired, organized in retrievable formats and made accessible to the users, staff and researchers to conduct teaching and research activities. Chima and Nwokocha cited in Babadoko et al. (2018) explains that ability to identify and retrieve specific information needed for a particular situation requires an awareness of the source and the skills to retrieve it within a short time and at low cost. According to Popoola (2020), what actually keeps university information resources alive is proper record management skills, which are used for planning, decision making and controlling. For any effective planning, decision-making and controlling to take place, there must be timely access to records. University libraries are great producers of records, some of the vital university libraries' records include, financial, and personnel records (Asogwa, 2014).

In other words, records are created and used in the operation of a university and its library. Rebore (2015) and Odlyzko (2020) see records management as the management science of controlling the quantities, qualities and costs of records and it encompasses the procedural system operations, space, equipment and staff required to administer the records. Penn, Pennix and Coulson (2014) describe records management as the determination in what manner and for how long each record type should be retained to meet legal, business and regulatory requirements. Records management is the process of ensuring the proper creation, maintenance, use and disposal of records to achieve efficiency, transparency and accountability. The fundamental purpose of records management is to preserve valuable records permanently and make them available for use. Records need proper management in order to be usable. The purpose of managing records is to promote economies and efficiencies in records keeping, assuring that useless records are systematically destroyed while valuable information is protected and maintained in a manner that facilitates its access and use, this calls for ICT and Organisational skills. Organizational skills are a set of techniques used by an individual (in this case a librarian) to facilitate the efficiency of future-oriented learning, problem-solving, and task completion. Organizational skills are the abilities to manage time effectively, prioritize tasks, set goals, and develop systems for achieving those goals. Librarians with good organizational skills can juggle multiple responsibilities simultaneously, stay focused on deadlines, and handle complex projects efficiently. Organizational skills are considered to be soft skills. These are non-technical abilities that help a librarian to map out ways to put records in their proper places with identifiable means for retrieval and use. In the same vein, Chris (2016), Ijaduola and Sotunde (2016), Kemoni and Wamukoya (2020), Venne (2021), Efunbayo (2023), have posited that proper records organizational skills go a long way in enhancing effective administration of a university. Nonetheless, despite the indispensable value of records and the huge amount of money spent on its creation and maintenance, proper management of records that will lead to economy and efficiency in their creation used and maintenance as well as disposition is seldom considered the top priority of the university system (Popoola, 2013). Proper record management skills improve the use of staff time by reducing the time spent looking for information.

Weeks (2016) identified the following components as major skills for record management: filing system skills, retention and disposal and preservation. Olivia (2022) further classifies record management skills to include: time management skill, scanning skill, classification skill, flexibility skill, microfilming skill, compliance skill, filing skill, communication skill, attention to detail skill, retention skill, organization skill, data management skill, storage skill and problem solving skill. In this study, record management skills are limited to four namely; ICT competence skill, organization skill, preservation skill and retrieval skill.

ICT Competence skill of library staff is a measure of their capacity to make appropriate use of ICT tools for information selection and acquisition, organization, and storage, retrieval, and dissemination. Marshall,

Taylor and Yu (2013) contend that for librarians to manage records well there must be professional proficiencies in the use of ICT. With ICT skills and competencies, the librarians will be able to know the best way and tools to apply for the good of the records. This may have informed the argument that competency requires of librarians include knowledge of print and electronic information resources. ICT Competency of library staff is a measure of their capacity to make appropriate use of ICT tools for information selection and acquisition, organization, and storage, retrieval, and dissemination. Oyedokun, Oyewumi, Akanbi & Laaro (2018) viewed ICT competencies of library staff to be those relevant skills and knowledge to be acquired by those working in the library to be able to fully exploit information search, retrieval, and delivery using electronic format. It is the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities at a level of expertise sufficient to be able to perform appropriately and professionally a given task in a work place. Competence is synonymous with skills and therefore is used interchangeably in this study.

There are two type of competencies for librarians: first are professional proficiencies which as to do with knowledge of information resources, information technology, leadership and managerial skills and research; and secondly competencies representing a set of skills, attitude and value that emphasize continuous learning throughout librarians' career as well as ability to cope with change The impact of ICT in libraries cannot be over-emphasized, as there is no division and section of the library that has not been shaped and reshaped with the advent of ICT. Nwalo (2020) stressed that librarian is duty bound to implement ICT in their operation if they are to be relevant in this 21st Century.

Introduction of ICT to library operation change many activities of the library from ways information are been gathered, processed and disseminated which is been done manually but now automated. The new era librarians and practitioners are expected to acquire ICT skill that will enable them to assume a new role as required by the new environment in which they now operate. Consonance to the above, Achebe (2010) rightly observed that ICT has strengthened operations in the academic library by providing the necessary support for learning, teaching and research of their parent institutions.

However, how the records management was carried out in the public universities in Rivers State remains the focus of this study.

Statement of the Problem

Records management skills have become valuable tools in the administration of university libraries, particularly in terms of ensuring the efficiency and longevity of information resources. However, despite the importance of proper records management in an institution, records in Nigerian university libraries especially Rivers State may suffer from likelihood of loss or damage due to lack of ICT competence skill, organization skill, preservation skill, location skill, identification skill, retrieval skill, shelving skill, lamination skill, amongst others. The researcher's preliminary observation of records management

practices carried out in some public university libraries in Rivers State, revealed that there is a poor recovery and haphazard arrangement of records.

Although, research works by Philip and Julie (2013), Nyamwamu (2018), Vyas and Margam (2019), Kamau (2020), Mausi, Bosede and Morenikeji (2023) have been carried out on the concept of record management skills. Their studies have focused on different aspects of records management in different parts of the world and in different sections of Nigeria. None has focused on the extent to which record management skills correlate with longevity of information resources in public universities in Rivers State in a combined study. There is therefore an unexplained relationship between records management and longevity of information resources in universities in Rivers State in a combined study. Accordingly, this study provides empirical evidence on how record management skills correlate with longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to examine records management skills as it relates to longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Ascertain how ICT competence skill relates to longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State;
2. Ascertain how organizational skill relates to longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State;

Research Questions

This research provided answers to the following research questions:

1. How does ICT competence skill relate to longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State?
2. How does organizational skill relate to longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant relationship between ICT competence skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between organizational skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State.

Methodology

The researcher adopted a correlational research design in carrying out the research work to establish the relationship between records management skills and information resources in university libraries in Rivers State. The study area is Rivers State, that is the three universities offering library and information science namely University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of

Education. The population of the study was 58 librarians and library officers of the three (3) university libraries in Rivers State. The breakdown of the population is shown below:

Table 1: Population Distribution Table

S/No	University Libraries in Rivers State	Librarians	Library Officers	Total
1.	University of Port Harcourt	14	12	26
2.	Rivers State University	11	12	23
3.	Ignatius Ajuru University of Education	6	3	9
Total				58

Source: Field Survey, 2024

There was no sampling nor sampling techniques in this study, as the entire 58 librarians and library officers in the university libraries in Rivers State was studied. This is due to the fact that the population of the study is small. The instruments used in collecting data for this study is the Questionnaires titled 'Records Management Skills (RMSQ)' and 'Longevity of Information Resources (LIRQ)' Questionnaires. The questionnaires were structured with options from where the respondents will select their choices. The responses of the respondents were taken as true representative of the respondents. The questionnaires were constructed based on the 4point rating scale of SA – Strongly agree (4), A – Agree (3), D – Disagree (2) and SD – Strongly disagree (1). To ascertain the face and content validity of the instruments, the draft copies of the questionnaires were validated by three experts, two lecturers in the Department of Library and Information Science and one expert in Measurement and Evaluation all in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt. To ascertain the reliability of the instrument a pilot study was conducted Ten copies of the instruments were administered once to 10 librarians and library officers in Niger Delta University which was outside the sample of the study. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha statistics. From the analysis, the alpha coefficient values for the items was 0.95 and 0.89. Hence, the instruments were considered adequate and reliable for the study. Copies of the questionnaires were administered to the librarians and library officers of the three selected university libraries with the help of research assistants. Data collected from the respondents were analyzed through frequency table, percentages, mean values and correlation statistics. All the research questions were analyzed through mean values based on item-by-item analysis. Each table of analysis produced a grand mean or significant mean with which each table was analyzed. Any item on each table with a mean value of 2.5 and above was considered high, while items with mean value below 2.5 was considered low. All the hypotheses were tested with the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics. For the null hypotheses test, the decision rule was to retain the null hypothesis if the p-value is less than the significance level at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: How does ICT Competence Skill relate to Longevity of Information Resources in the Public University Libraries in Rivers State?

Table 2: Mean Score of respondent's responses on how ICT Competence Skill relates to Longevity of Information Resources in the Public University Libraries in Rivers State

S/N	Question Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	Sum	Mean	Std.			
1	I can microfilm records				25	22	4	2	53	176	3.32	.779
2	I know how to photocopy records				37	7	2	7	53	180	3.40	1.062
3	I can use computer to assign numbers of records online				26	24	1	2	53	180	3.40	.72
4	I can convert print records into machine-readable format				32	9	7	5	53	174	3.28	1.026
5	I can laminate fragile records				29	13	9	2	53	175	3.30	.890
Grand Mean/Std											3.34	0.89

Source: Researcher Data/SPSS Output (2024)

The result on Table above showed the means response of respondents on how ICT competence skill correlate with longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State. The result shows that all the items had mean scores of over 2.50 when rated on a four-point rating scales. This assertion is indicated with a grand mean of 3.34 and standard deviation of 0.89. This implies that the respondents strongly agreed that ICT competence skill correlate with longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State.

Research Question 2: What is the Correlation between Organizational Skill and Longevity of Information Resources in the Public University Libraries Under Study?

Table 3.: Mean Score of respondent's responses on how organizational skill relates to Longevity of Information Resources in the Public University Libraries

S/N	Question Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	Sum	Mean	Std.		
6	I understand how to arrange records										
	23 property on the shelf				16	7	7	53	161	3.04	1.055
7	I know how to assign correct file				17	5	2	53	179	3.38	.814
	29 numbers to records										
8	I know how to properly label each				28	7	2	53	164	3.09	.766
	16 file in its correct name										

9	I know the kind of place to keep each	14	9	8	53	156	2.94	1.099
	22 record							
10	I understand how to keep related	22	0	7	53	169	3.19	.982
	24 records together							
	Grand Mean/Std						3.12	0.94

Source: Researcher Data/SPSS Output (2024)

The result on Table 3 above showed the means response of respondents on the correlation between organizational skill and longevity of information resources in the public university libraries under study. The result shows that all the items had mean scores of over 2.50 when rated on a four-point rating scales. This assertion is indicated with a grand mean of 3.12 and standard deviation of 0.94. This implies that the respondents strongly agreed that there is a high correlation between organizational skill and longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State.

Testing of Hypotheses

The following five null hypotheses were formulated for this study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical tool.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between ICT Competence Skill and Longevity of Information Resources in Public University Libraries in Rivers State.

Table 4: Summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the Relationship Between ICT competence skill and Longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State

Longevity Of

ICT Competence Skill Information Resources

ICT Competence Skill	Pearson		
Correlation	1		.973 **
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N	53		53
Longevity Of	Pearson		
Information Resources	Correlation	.973 **	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
N	53		53

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher SPSS Data Output (2024)

The result on Table above shows the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between ICT competence skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State. The result shows that there is a substantial positive relationship between ICT competence skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State with a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient value of .973**. Based on this result, it is concluded ICT competence skill highly and positively related with longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between Organizational Skill and Longevity of Information Resources in Public University Libraries in Rivers State.

Table 5: Summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the Relationship Between Organizational skill and Longevity of Information Resources in Public University Libraries in Rivers State

Longevity Of Information		Organizational Skill	Resources
Organizational Skill	Pearson	1	.395**
Correlation			
Sig. (2-tailed)			.000
N		53	53
Longevity Of	Pearson	.395**	1
Information Resources			
Correlation			
Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	
N		53	53

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Researcher SPSS Data Output (2024)

The result on Table 4.6 above shows the summary of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient on the relationship between Organizational skill and Longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State. The result shows that there is a weak and positive relationship between organizational skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State with a Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient value of .395**. Based on this result, it is concluded organizational skill is moderately and positively related with longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State. Therefore, the null hypotheses which states no significant relationship

was not retained, meaning that there is a significant relationship between organizational skill and information resources longevity. **Discussion of Finding**

Relationship Between ICT competence skill and Longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State.

The result shows that there is a substantial positive relationship between ICT competence skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers State. In support of the findings obtained in the results above, Nkamneben, et al. (2015) examined the "extent of ICT skills possessed by librarians in the universities in Anambra State, Nigeria. The findings reveal that Librarians in the universities in Anambra State are weakly skilled in ICTs." Another study by Okafor (2015) examined the "relevance and adequacy of IT skills set in some Nigerian University in a digital environment. The result revealed that many of the respondents do have knowledge and skills of email use and word process task but lack knowledge of search engines and directories other than Google and Yahoo, respectively." Vijay kumar and Sweetey (2015) in their study report that "professionals have above average skills for ICT based information retrieval (accessing, searching and use of e-journals). The respondents also have an average level of skill in electronic document delivery and Inter library loan through a network, online Indexing and abstracting services Digital Reference services, Development of Institutional repository, SDI services, and electronic new additional alert."

Relationship Between Organizational skill and Longevity of Information Resources in Public University Libraries in Rivers State

The result shows that there is a weak and positive relationship between Organizational skill and longevity of information resources in public university libraries in Rivers. In support of the findings obtained in the results above, Barkindo and Murtala (2021) studied the method of information organization and access in the Federal High Courts libraries in North-eastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The findings revealed that the resources in the libraries were organized serially in accordance with the broad subject of each item in open shelves without the provision of any class mark on the books, it also identified some of the challenges to be lack of comprehensive and uniform information organization policy and shortage of manpower. Gwang (2010) determined the influencing of organization on library resources provision in university libraries in North Central Zone. The results revealed that library resources were provided to a small extent in the university libraries in the zone. It also showed that organization has no significant influencing on provision of library resources.

The study found that there is a significant relationship between ICT competence skill and longevity of information resources in the public university libraries in Rivers State. It also revealed that there is a weak and positive relationship between organizational skill and longevity of information resources in the public university libraries under study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following are recommendations are made:

1. Management of Public University Libraries in Rivers State should prioritize training and development programmes aimed at enhancing ICT competence among library staff. This could include workshops, courses, and certifications in information technology relevant to library management and information systems.
2. Management of Public University Libraries in Rivers State should focus on improving organizational skills among staff. This could involve implementing efficient cataloging systems, better resource allocation, and improved workflow management to ensure information resources are organized and accessible over the long term.

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