

# ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION OF NEWSPAPERS IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper primarily outlines and analyses the basic procedures for newspaper acquisition, processing and preservation. It then looks at the problems that militate against the effective acquisition and preservation of newspapers in the National Library of Nigeria. Some prospects are discussed and recommendations proffered including a review of the newspaper acquisition policy in the National Library of Nigeria and microfiling of all bound volumes of newspapers.*

## INTRODUCTION

One of the greatest problems that have bothered Librarians from the earliest times to the present is how to ensure the security of Library materials. Librarians have tried to preserve their materials against such threats as theft, mutilation, insects, fungi, fire, floods, and so on.

Archives and Libraries as cultural agencies pass information to succeeding generations in a variety of distributable media, the bulk of which are paper documents e.g books, manuscripts, maps, photos and the like.

According to Chukwu (1988) one of the indicators of a good Library is the quantity and quality of its stock which should include books, journals, reference materials, dailies and audio-visuals (A.V). It is a well known fact in the professional literature that periodicals represent a vital organ of propagating recent and up-to-date findings in various fields of study.

Harvey (1978) observed that periodicals are primary sources of new data, announcement about products and services or whatever. They are concerned with the supply of current information. Contributing on the role and importance of periodicals, Fayose (1995) said that they are the



most up-to-date resources in the Library. She emphasized further that the articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field; therefore they are reliable and are precise to the point thus not as cumbersome to read as text books.

To sum up, newspapers constitute an indispensable genre of reference materials in most Libraries, hence the preservation of the materials is very important, considering their usefulness to the clientele.

### THE NATIONAL LIBRARY DECREE NO. 29 OF 1970

In 1970, a National Library Decree was promulgated in which a real attempt was made to rectify the major short coming of the National Library Act of 1964. This emphasizes deposit obligations and bibliographic functions.

The National Library as the National Bibliographic Agency of Nigeria is privileged to receive three (3), ten (10) and twenty-five (25) copies of everything published in Nigeria by Private/Commercial Publishers, State and Federal Government Agencies respectively, within one month of such publication and at the publisher's own expense. One copy of everything received under the above will be sent to the University of Ibadan Library while the rest are for preservation in the National Library of Nigeria. These Legal Deposit publications are listed in the National Bibliography of Nigeria, thus helping in the achievement of the country's bibliographic control. This is in line with Universal Bibliographic Control (UBC) network which aims at achieving Universal Availability of Publications (UAP) programmes adopted by UNESCO and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), the goal of which is "to develop a universal system for the control and exchange of bibliographic information on publications from countries and to make it available promptly".

### DEFINITION OF "ACQUISITION" AND "PRESERVATION"

**Acquisition** is the act of procuring or obtaining something. This could be knowledge i.e. acquiring knowledge or books or any valuable assets. The known gateway to any Library's collection development is the Acquisition Department or Section. The functionality of acquisition can be aptly described as the foundations on which Library systems are built.



Generally, Acquisition policies are designed to facilitate ordering and receiving of Library materials and monitoring expenditures of fund for those materials. In the National Library of Nigeria, acquisition of newspapers is through Legal deposit, daily purchase and gifts/donations.

**Preservation** is the act of safe-keeping or conserving of items. This can be anything e.g food, one's health, paintings or books. In this context, we are discussing preservation of newspapers. Preservation prevents loss of separate issues and maximizes the usefulness of newspapers in Libraries. Preservation is normally done to prevent deterioration. However, all paper and therefore every book deteriorates over time. The rate of deterioration is a function of such factors as the chemical characteristics of the paper, the mechanical construction of the volume, storage conditions and intensity of use.

Alegbeleye (2002) argues that archives and Libraries are prone to disasters that can be classified broadly as natural and man made and they include fire, flooding, civil unrest, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, war, lightening, and to some extent, rodents and pests attack. It is in this regard that the usefulness of preservation cannot be over emphasized in our Libraries today.

## NEWSPAPER ACQUISITION AND PRESERVATION IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

As empowered by the Legal Deposit Act of Parliament No. 29 of 1970, Section 4(1)-(7), the National Library of Nigeria is charged with the responsibility of collecting publications in the country.

Newspapers are amongst materials published in Nigeria and so are a part of Nigeriana collection. Being papers published in Nigeria, they are also covered by the Legal Deposit Act. As such, the publishing houses are bound to deposit three (3) copies of their publications with the National Library of Nigeria within one month of publication. When these copies are deposited in the Legal Deposit Division of the Library, they are processed to their different locations. The papers are checked to certify that they are perfect copies, after which they are stamped with the National Library Ownership stamp and then entered into the Kalamazoo. The Kalamazoo is to help in checking for missing copies and also to write for



claims from defaulting publishers. At the end of the month, the papers are arranged into different titles and distributed as follows: two (2) copies to the Readers and Users Services Department (RUSD) and a copy is sent to University of Ibadan. When there are extra i.e more than three (3) copies, such are sent to the State Branches.

The State Branches also receive newspapers and other publications in their areas of jurisdiction through Legal Deposit Law on behalf of the Collection Development Department (CDD) and send such to the department in Lagos.

The newspapers regularly received at the Legal Deposit division of (CDD) are: The Punch, Daily Champion, The Guardian, Daily Independence and the Sun. Others are not regular, hence during Legal Deposit drives such are collected from the publishers.

The National Library of Nigeria still purchases newspapers on daily basis to meet the urgent needs of users. These newspapers are normally received at the Reference and Users' Services Department of the Library. When the newspapers are received, they are certified with the National Library of Nigeria's stamp to make them authentic and acceptable when tendered for subpoena anywhere in the world. At the end of the day, the newspapers are taken to the newspaper room where they are sorted according to type and kept till the end of the month.

At the end of the month, all the issues are tied together, ready for binding. Before sending the newspapers for binding, they are normally checked for any missing issues. If any issue is found missing in the volume, the number and title is written on a slip and placed on the unbound newspapers.

The State Branches of the National Library also make daily purchase of the Newspapers in their localities. One of the newspapers must be the state or "native" newspaper. The newspapers are also processed and preserved in the same way the "main Library" newspapers are preserved.

The method of newspaper preservation in the National Library of Nigeria is through binding and digitization. The bound newspapers are kept in the newspaper room. The room is normally fumigated twice a year to prevent insects, rodents and pests attack. In 1997, the National Library of Nigeria embarked on microfilming of newspapers to enable it



preserve all her newspapers both from the states and the main Library, but this was suspended due to lack of funds, personnel and high cost of machinery. However, since December 2004, the Library has embarked on the digitization of some major Nigerian Newspapers.

## **PROBLEMS OF NEWSPAPER PRESERVATION IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA**

The magnitude of preservation problem has become increasingly apparent. This situation has been partly caused by many years of neglect and partly by the environmental conditions most often beyond the control of the Librarian. Despite the digitization project of newspapers in the National Library of Nigeria, the bulk of newspapers are still in bound volumes. Below are some of the problems of newspapers preservation in bound volume.

### **(1) Lack of sufficient Airconditioning**

Air-conditioners are highly recommended for rare book collections. Air-conditioners help in stabilizing the temperature and humidity condition in Libraries. They also help to filter out particulates and chemical pollutants. A visit to the National Library newspaper room in Lagos shows that there are insufficient air-conditioners in the room. Air-conditioning is very important in the preservation of newspapers in particular and books in general. Lack of sufficient air-conditioning in the newspaper room will result in the fast deterioration of the newspapers.

### **(2) Lack of Constant Electricity Supply**

Electricity must be available in the newspaper room for 24 hours a day to facilitate the use of the Air-conditioners, or even ceiling fans. This is not possible because of the epileptic power supply in Nigeria. The incessant power failure is not conducive for the preservation of newspapers.

### **(3) Lack of Funds and Modern Equipment for Preservation**

The National Library of Nigeria lacks funds to preserve her newspapers with modern preservation methods. Latest information technologies for



conserving information such as microform, magnetic tapes/disc and optical disks are better ways of preservation than binding. Mayes (1978) giving reasons for binding journals, says its main purpose is to conserve an item for the future, to protect it against current heavy usage or to ornament or decorate it. He did not hesitate to point out the difficulty in binding periodicals; that bound volumes are difficult to maintain on the shelves. Information preserved in microform e.g microfilming has a life span of 500 years as against preservation through binding. Moreover, the Library lacks equipment like hygro-thermographs which can also be used for preservation purposes.

#### **(4) Lack of Trained Professionals in the Field of Preservation**

Most Librarians in the National Library of Nigeria are not conversant with the preservation technologies. Muya (1986) advocated for the need to expose Librarians and archivists to conservation practices during their training. If Librarians are trained as preservation experts, their work or job becomes easier, because they will know the ethic of the job. Adams (1973) maintains that the greatest enemy of library and archival materials is the Librarian (or Archivist) who neglects his collections in the quest for ever more efficient management systems. This is very true, because in most cases librarians handle newspapers very carelessly and do not care about what happens to them.

#### **(5) Newspaper Acquisition In The National Library of Nigeria**

Puccio (1989) writing on periodicals in Libraries points out that they (periodicals) comprise a significant portion of the collections of most Libraries and obligate a large percentage of the budget of those Libraries. Each type of periodicals is important to at least one group, relating to their area of specialization, work or leisure activities. The implications of Puccio's views is that serials consume much of the acquisition budgets in most Libraries. He suggests that adequate financial provision should be made by Libraries in order to meet such commitments.

Apart from Legal Deposit collections, the National Library of Nigeria still purchases newspapers daily at their different branches. But there is no specific number or titles of newspapers to be bought. This has led to the reduction of newspapers bought in the Library over the years as a



result of cost.

## THE WAY FORWARD

In November 2004, the Director/CEO of the National Library of Nigeria Dr. L.N. Ikpaahindi, inaugurated a Committee to look into the establishment of a digital unit to digitize National Library materials. The objective of this project was to stop the advanced stage of deterioration of Library materials such as journals (newspapers), rare collections etc.

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2005, a Digital Pilot Project was set up. Currently, the Unit has been able to digitize eleven (11) National dailies from December 2004 to date. The digitized newspapers in CD-ROM format are now available for sale to users. The process of digitization is slow especially for an organization like the National Library of Nigeria which has large volumes of bound newspapers. If the organization continues with digitization, there will be accumulated bound newspapers in danger of deteriorating before getting digitized. Beside digitization, the Library can embark on microfilming.

Microfilming according to Alegbeleye (2002) is the most common format of preservation copying and it is very durable.

Dalton (1999) in comparing preservation microfilming and preservation digitization said "the enduring popularity of preservation microfilm is because of its practicality. Unlike its digital counterpart, microfilm is the product of nearly static, tested technology that is governed by carefully crafted national standards. When created and stored according to these standards, microfilm has a life expectancy of 500 years. It is also worth noting that, while digital data requires use of a sophisticated retrieval system to access their treasures, microform (i.e microfilm and microfiche) can be read with the naked eye using only light and magnification. The access potential of microforms admittedly pales in comparison with that of digital technology. Still microforms can enhance access to information that would otherwise be unavailable because the original items are at a distant location or are vulnerable to damage and or loss through handling. Also, microform is relatively inexpensive to produce and copy"

Microfilming is a well known preservation method for its durability



and efficiency. The National Library of Nigeria has some microfilm of London Times and microfiche documents in their audio visuals collections. The Library can as well provide funds to microfilm the bulk of newspapers at the Reference and Users' Services Department in all branches, while the digitization project continues at the headquarters of the Library. This venture will not only add to the preservation age but will also conserve space and reduce the deterioration process.

## CONCLUSION

The National Library of Nigeria values newspapers highly in the performance of its role of education, information, recreation, cultural promotion and public enlightenment. The Management should as a matter of urgency release funds for the microfilming of all bound volumes of newspapers both at the headquarters and state branches. This will not only save space and reduce deterioration, but it will go a long way to boosting the image of the Library as the apex Library in Nigeria.



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