

MANAGEMENT OF ANTI-LIBRARY USE BEHAVIOUR IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

University libraries are exposed to risk from their clients. Strategy of the behaviour cumulating in the risk should be effectively managed towards its eradication. There should be management procedures for such. The study which was exploratory, interventional and descriptive aimed at identifying and discussing the procedure for eradicating anti-library use behaviour. Ten libraries of various types were selected as the study units, and 50 clients were randomly selected from each to constitute the sample. Multi-method approach was used to collect the data based on the management procedure and the respondents were asked to indicate their perception of the level of contribution of the procedure towards eradication of anti-libraries behaviour. Good security discipline has the highest level of contribution, followed by Team work, good lighting and users education while the use of alarm and controlling the extent of exposing the library properties were among those considered having the least contribution.

INTRODUCTION

Anti-libraries use as perceived by the libraries is wind that blows both the library i.e its staff and users in particular and the society in general no good. There is no doubt, there is need to phase out the acts in the libraries. It is therefore, one of the many areas, the library managers must concern themselves with, if they are to manage successfully a flourishing and efficient library or information service. They must take full cognisance of the sorry situation and from the beginning of a new idea of planning a whole new library or information service, the potential of anti-library use behaviour must be addressed from the earlier possible stage for its being phased out. In what ways then, can the anti-library use behaviour be minimized in our libraries or information centres if not totally phased out? This paper aims at preparing ways to devise and manage anti-library use behaviour in Nigerian libraries and information service centres. The study was however limited to selected libraries in Kwara State of Nigeria and covered a period of one year which was July 2007 to -June 2008.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is paucity of literature on the subject as related to Nigerian situation. However, the ones reviewed are as outlined below:

Quinsee and McDonald (1991) posited that insiders had greater chance of getting away with substantial criminal activities and that library managers had to reduce the opportunities for their own staff to be tempted. He stated further that prudent planning and investment in electronic devices were Pre-requisites to reduce theft from libraries.

Houlgate and Chaney (1992) explained that anti-library use could be deterred by strong, effective management and proposed that the library managers should device a security strategy which would create the atmosphere of calm efficiency in which genuine library users are at their ease while the defaulters feel vulnerable, anxious and wary. Paris (1984) said that 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 that libraries should resort increasingly to technology to solve the problems and should use more mundane measure such as blacklisting trouble-makers. Olanlokun (2000) 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 library. 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 measures be periodically evaluated. Agboola (2001) explained the issue of stock security considering designing fenestration 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 achieve necessary stock security.

Despite what has been revealed in literature, the author feels that there are other ways of managing anti-library use strategy in Nigerian libraries. This literature review therefore focuses on how to find possible ways of combating anti-library use behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

The study design was purely exploratory and descriptive in nature. It was interventional. Four academics libraries -one university, one polytechnic and two colleges of education libraries, one public library, a branch of National Library and 3 school libraries were selected for the study.

From the selected libraries, 40 users and 10 members of staff were randomly selected from each academic library and public library while 45 users and 5 members of staff were selected from the school libraries and the branch of National Library. This was due to low level of number of members of staff in the latter mentioned units.

Multi method approach was adopted to collect the data for the study. Questionnaire administration on both the library users and workers was to deduce level of effectiveness of the management procedures towards the anti-library behaviour and risk as perceived by them. The subject were asked to rate the effectiveness of the procedure on 5 point Likert scale from very high with +2 to very low with -2 to elicit more information for the study. The library clients in the selected libraries were interviewed on their use of libraries, selected library staff were also observed and interviewed on the performances of their duties in relation to the library clients. This study was also an outcome of an earlier study on anti-library use acts which had identified anti library use behaviour generally found among library clients. Intervention in this study is by manipulating some measures that are outlined below on the library client. This was done with the hope that some of, if not all the measures would have positive control on the clients' anti-library use attitude or behaviour. Services of two trained research assistants were engaged at each study unit to stand in for the researcher when he was unavoidably absent at any of the study units. The study was divided into two sessions. The first session, six months July-Dec 2007 when the situation at the libraries was not manipulated and second session of another six month Jan-June 2008 when the situation was not manipulated by intensifying already measures at the library and introducing other measures (as outlined below) which the author believed would have positive effect on reducing or eradicating the anti-library acts from the libraries.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

DISTRIBUTION BY WEIGHT OF PERCEIVED LEVEL OF EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES

SN	Management Procedures	Effectiveness On Curbing Anti-Library Use					Total weight
		High	Low	Very low	Undecided	Not	
1	Establishing ethos of orders and a coded of acceptable behaviour in libraries	+36	+256	-5	-10	0	+568
2	Controlling extent to exposing libraries properties to anti-use risk	-150	+280	-39	-118	0	+380
3	Reinforcement of libraries against burglary	+204	+157	-19	-48	0	+327
4	Prompt repair of damage	+256	+314	4	-4	0	+562
5	Good record keeping	+336	+217	-5	-5	0	+545
6	Teamwork	+432	+235	-7	-3	0	+667
7	Good security discipline	+62	+175	-7	-4	0	+284
8	Prompt decision and action on physical environment	+312	+289	-69	-20	0	+512
9	Good lighting	+552	+168	-27	-46	0	+647
10	Use of alarm	+246	+297	-70-80	0	0	+303
11	Adequate staffing	+204	+326	-27-36	0	0	+467
12	Security patrols	+298	+283	-6	-16	0	+509
13	Users education	+348	+290	-7	-6	0	+634
14	Supervision of reading rooms	+348	+271	-43	-4	0	+542
15	Coordination of activities	+206	+387	-17	-4	0	+582

Source: Authors field work, 2008

Weight per level= No of respondents X rate
Rate= +2 to -2 from very high to very low.

The higher the total weight the more effective the perceived level of procedure.

$$\text{Mean of average of total weight} = M = \frac{\sum Twt}{N \times n}$$

Where N= No of respondent

n = no. of management procedures considered

$$\text{Mean} = \frac{8,029}{500 \times 15} = +1.07$$

Assessment of the management procedures outlined above has cumulative high effectiveness on the management of anti-library use behaviour. Hence the discussion that follows.

Good security discipline seems to have the highest contribution to the effectiveness, closely followed by teamwork, good lighting, and users education while controlling the extent of exposing library properties against burglary and use of the alarm have lowest contribution. However these three procedures are considered well in curbing and arresting culprit on theft from the libraries. Adequate staffing has to do not only with numbers but also their training and deployment.

DISCUSSION

Introduction of the measures stated above greatly reduced the anti-library use behaviour in all the libraries. For instance the incessant theft of both library books, personal belonging kept in the cloak room, rate and intensity of book mutilation, assault on staff, refusal to be checked by the security men, noise making, reservation of chair, eating in the libraries, shifting book on shelves for hiding and the likes were greatly reduced at the libraries. These variables are fashioned out to constitute the strategy and if well managed in libraries, the anti-library use behaviour shall be minimized in libraries.

PLANNING

The question of planning must be seriously taken. Though security is expensive, on long run it will prove to be cost effective. Proper planning at the take off of the library is capable of minimizing the anti-library use behaviour.

This involves establishing an ethos of order and a code of acceptable behaviour in the libraries. The opportunity to commit wrongdoing should not be allowed in libraries as institutions which hold collections of publicly-owned property. Buildings are usually open to all and sundry and attract some users of which consider library as property of government and take it as soft target. The libraries need to plan as to who visit the library, what they can steal or damage or other anti-library behaviour they can engage in and prevent them. Their prevention can be guaranteed by physical measure security, building maximum amount of potential natural surveillance taking into account the value of integrating offices and other administration functions into the public area of the library building. A genuine user should see the approach as both accommodating and efficient and at the same time serve to induce caution and anxiety in the anti-library uses.

DECIDING AND IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

The process of minimizing and possibly eradicating anti-library use can take the following three steps:

STEP1:

Appreciating the Risk: Library manager must consider the extent to which their libraries are exposed to damage or risk by their user and plan accordingly. The undesirable library acts can be from vagrants looking for shelter, intruder involving drug taking and dealing, addiction of alcohol use and hooligans who are termed unwelcome users such as lunatics that gained entrance into libraries.

Library managers should assess the susceptibility of their libraries to burglary, which may be on a casual or opportunity basis. A great part of burglary can be phased out by systemic appraisal and planning. Personal property of library staff and library users open to theft also must receive attention and receive weight in the assessment process of the extent of damage/risk that may arise from anti-library use behaviour of client. There must be assessment process of wilful damage to the library properties such as the building, stock and staff, and may range from graffiti, through vandalism to arson.

STEP2:

Involvement of Everyone: Devising management of anti-library use behaviour, no doubt, requires the effort of both the library staff and users. For its effectiveness it has to be collective responsibility of the stakeholders. Working group should be established with a brief to monitor the use and security of the library. This group should be meeting regularly under the chairmanship of a high ranking Librarian like Deputy University/College/Chief Librarian or experienced principal (for university)/ Assistant Chief Librarian. The group should meet regularly and the minutes of such meetings be maintained fully and members sanctioned. The group should survey the library use from time to time, initiate an audit of anti-library use act so as to know the nature and extent of the act. This is to know the nature and extent of the acts in order to facilitate appropriate measures to deal with them. The libraries should effect with dispatch repair of damaged library properties to avoid appearance of neglect or slovenliness in libraries. This is necessary because the appearance of an organization is valuable in the management of crime and other anti-library use behaviour. The librarian should insist on good record keeping and up to date inventories of the library properties for good management strategies. To promote the air of calm, efficiency and confidence in the libraries which anti-library users find unsettling, there must be good security discipline within the library. Such include establishing identity for staff, and users, displaying professional notices, good key discipline, unobtrusive bag search, challenging strangers and unauthorized entrants in a non-provocative manner, lock in restricted/closed areas, individual staff member made responsible for the equipment and other library materials in their charge, zoning of the library service and high level of staff presence.

STEP3:

Decision Making And Action: This stage has to do with making decision and acting upon them as regards the physical environment. The perimeter and grounds must be paid attention to. Exterior lighting increases the likelihood of observation of illicit activity and assists in recognizing offenders. Good lighting deters intruders and should be installed. However, aesthetics should not overshadow practical usefulness. For instance globe lights creates shadows and localized pools of brilliance, which actually intrudes. They are therefore of little use and should be avoided.

Also there should be regular security patrolling of the building both within and outside. Landscaping and fencing off with chain links leaving only the entrails and loading bay would serve to deter defaulter especially in carting away library property. Library managers should be aware of the weak areas in the fabric of their libraries most especially where the visibility is poor and where opportunities to hide are high. Basic lighting would serve as a cost deterrent. Strong door frames should be used while exposed hinges should always be reinforced or replaced without delay with tight windows security.

Alarm, which remains operative all the time, should be fitted into the library. A public address system though expensive to install, can also be used to convey information and warnings quickly and clearly to both staff and users appropriate warnings against anti-library use behaviour. The initial planning of library buildings should be critically looked into. It is advisable to site offices and staff room adjacent to public areas discreetly. Other measures include: planning (incomplete statement)

Organizing valuable equipment in more secured area as much as practicable; all library equipments should be security coded, as visibly and as indelibly as possible with portable items in stores and cabinets under lock and key; Keeping all cash handlings secret and vary the routine use of the cash tills reduce the opportunity for snatch theft. However, the tills must be regularly cleared use of various surveillance devices, such as mirror and closed circuit television to enhance staff supervision of the public areas especially when there is problem of inadequate staffing.

There should be suitable lockers for staff and supervised cloakroom for clients for security of their properties. Key copying should be avoided and staff to which keys are allocated should be held accountable for the keys. Also, keys should be signed for in a central register when taken and returned. Keys allocated for specific jobs should be returned promptly and not taken home. In order to forestall the criminal acts of anti-library behaviour, there should be only one access point in the library. The library staff should make their presence known as much as possible by walking round at reasonably regular intervals but not in over-obtrusive manner.

Strategic Shelves Supervision (SSS) should be in place. This is a strategy employed by National Library of Nigeria which is capable of minimizing mutilation, stealing of books from shelves and shifting of books from shelves to shelves to hide titles of limited copies for the exclusive use of some client at the expense of other users. Cleaners and other less busy staff are made to sit between the books shelves in the stack area and watch over them. Entry into the library should be by proof of identity such as borrowers ID Cards.

Some libraries especially such as University of Ilorin, Ladoke Akintola university of Technology, Obafemi Awolowo University Libraries in Nigeria now offer late night opening (24 Hrs) service to their clients. This portends area of vulnerability for the library managers. In order to reduce the risk, a number of procedures should be adopted. This includes reducing access to certain area of the libraries, not allowing one person especially female to work alone and arranging for the safety of staff such as having a means of transport on the ground during the night opening. Furthermore, there should be regular security patrol to the toilets which are haven for anti-library use activities. Installation of ultra-violet lighting is a useful device against drug takers, because it does not allow clear sight of veins.

User education for the library users must be given to them regularly and properly planned with regular training for the staff in the management strategy for anti-library use behaviour and in discharge their duties.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The forgoing is an attempt to formulate management strategy for management of anti-library use behaviour in Nigerian libraries. There is no doubt that observations that are highlighted here may be likely applicable to many other libraries. It then devolves on various librarians to resist the anti-library use behaviour for both effective, efficient and maximum exploitation of the information content of their library holdings for information needs of their patrons.

The libraries therefore need to device management strategy for the anti social behaviour that are experienced in the libraries. This is to make genuine library users be at ease and wrong doers feel vulnerable, anxious and wary. No matter what is done, clients with anti-social behaviour shall always be found in the libraries all over the universe. Their actions can always be deterred by strong and efficient management strategy towards the misdeed, and this creates the atmosphere of efficient use of the library materials, safeguarding both the materials and staff and preserving them for future use. Libraries should therefore ensure enforcing strategy that will deter the hardened library criminals and other anti-library users from their misdeed. Introduction of electronic security devices in library should be adopted as evident in other organizations such as banks.

Also library managers should be carried along in administration of libraries. They should be allowed to make inputs such as providing brief in designing their libraries. The security officers, porters and all other supporting staff in the library should be well groomed on the operations of their libraries. The last but not the least is that everyone working in libraries should always be on the alert, security conscious and diligent in performance of his/her duties to safeguard the library stock and other properties from wilful damage and other criminal acts.

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