The Role of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Curbing Theft and Mutilation of Library Resources in Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo, Imo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated The Role of Information & Communication Technology (I.C.T) In Curbing Theft and Mutilation of Library Resources in Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo. A total of 221 users' population made up of 41 staff and 180 library users were obtained through random sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and direct observation method. The result showed that the major cause of mutilation and theft of library information materials is lack of adequate security network as 61 % opined that users hide library materials inside their bags and files. The result also showed that reference materials are the most frequently affected as 43% of the users attested even though all library materials are vulnerable to mutilation and theft. In other to prevent mutilation and theft of library resource, 60% are of the opinion that there should be electronically devices; security guards and attendants at the main entrance of the Polytechnic Library and 33% suggested that offenders should be handed over to the library committee for disciplinary action. The researcher therefore recommended as a way to alleviate this ugly situation that there is the need for a good and strong electronic security system, multiple copies of library materials, photocopying machines, user education programs and adequate financial support from government for effective management of information resource in the Polytechnic Library.

Keywords: Mutilation, Theft, Library Resources, ICT, Imo state Polytechnic.

1. INTRODUCTION

The library is the heart of academic in any institution of higher learning. Rubin (1998) stated that colleges are walking up to the fact that the work of many researchers and many departments depend on the library because it is an authentic place where students can learn beyond lectures and textbooks. The level of any country's development depends largely upon the level of its higher education institutions and the success of higher institutions depends on the viability and richness of its library (Anyaoku, 1994). Meaning that no academic library can play unique role in coordinating, supporting, teaching learning and researches to create innovations for sustainable future without taking drastic measures to protect and preserve their collection by introducing a very tight security in terms of electronic systems. And the technological innovation in informatics and communication has revolutionized the capacity to store, transmit, access and use information in an extremely sophisticated and efficient manner (Maidabino, 2012).

In spite of the seemingly influx of information communication technology, most libraries are still seating on traditional style of services, knowing full well that without the libraries an institute is dead in terms of knowledge generation and dissemination. According to Maidabino (2012) many of the printed materials are deteriorating quickly and can hardly be managed effectively, besides that, they are (mutilated) not in good condition that can warrant users to make consultations. Libraries should employ modern electronic security systems such as book security systems like the RFID technology, surveillance cameras, metal detectors, door intrusion alarms, delay devices, and a heat sensor were found to be useful in detecting different security patterns and ensuring effective security strategies for the protection of collective materials in the libraries, ensuring longevity, accessibility, availability of old and current resources for effective provision of services for students to attend higher education, have enough resources to research on, develop into innovations that can help build a sustainable life.

A study conducted by Okoye-Ikonta (1981) revealed that book mutilations and thefts constitute the major threat to the resources of Nigerian academic Libraries. Mutilations and thefts of Library materials is a problem that is multifarious in form and wide in scope. Some unscrupulous library users are daily coming up with new, complex and sophisticated means and ways of ripping off pages from library books and journals and actually stealing library resources. It is not an overstatement that libraries have lost most of their valued information materials through this illegal channel. The disturbing aspect is that illegal removal of books from the library is an ill wind that blows no one good (Sokari, 2011). The library staff, users and the institution in which the library is established share from this problem. In ancient times, replacement of lost documents involved expensive and laborious tasks of locating a good copy of the lost document from another library and copying it by hand for days, while these days' mutilated texts are either repurchased or rebound (Polytechnic of South Carolina Beaufort, 1976). In library policy, all library users are subjected to state law regarding theft, damage and failure to return borrowed library materials. Universities libraries all over the world formulate library rules and regulations aimed at regulating the conduct of library users and checking library book mutilations and thefts.

One major challenge libraries contend with, is the problem of mutilation and theft of library and information resources. It is a very serious problem as it places library resources in jeopardy; thereby hampering teaching and learning. This ugly phenomenon is not new; it has been with the library system from time immemorial (Sokari, 2011). Although, the level or frequency of mutilation and theft of library resources in Imo State Polytechnic library is very high due to lack of adequate security, hence the need for this type of research investigation becomes paramount.

Bello (1997) Mutilation is the method of ripping off or removing of any important part of library book or material while theft is the act of stealing library materials. Nwamefor (1974) described mutilation and theft of library books as anti-social act which is universal and persistent in-spite of student's orientation on care and management of library books. Ibok (2000) reported how a student was caught by library security guard when the student turn-off a whole chapter of a book from the library and attempted to escape with it. It is instructive that library porters be security conscious and vigilant at all times in the library so as to forestall mutilation and theft of books by delinquent library clientele.

This problem of mutilation and theft has been linked to various causes. Aina (2003) stated that theft and mutilation of library resources usually occurs when a delinquent user is interested in a particular document, rather than borrowing the whole book he/she resorts to the removal of pages that he/she is interested in. Asiru (2003) observed that reference books are kept for consultation only and are not allowed to be used outside the library; this means that reference materials are usually not given out on loan but to be consulted in the library. One possible reason for mutilation of reference books or theft of them could be due to the strict control on them. Omoniwa (1986) also revealed that book Mutilation and theft in academic Libraries is as a result of poor attitude to public property, lack of commitment on the part of the staff, non-functional facilities and infrastructures.

Another cause is an economic factor. Dare (1986) observes harsh economic situation on students is essentially responsible for such-anti- social behaviours in our tertiary institutions. Some students may be poor, books and other reading materials are beyond the reach of the teeming population, to alleviate the harsh economic situation which they found themselves, they indulge in mutilating and theft of library materials without considering the effects on themselves, other users and the library.

Library users in academic library employ various methods of mutilation and theft of library materials. Afolabi (1993) stated that various methods such as ripping—off of books and other information sources using chemicals to clean off library ownership stamp ,removing date- due- slip and removing of book jackets and preliminary pages of book to avoid identification. Library users write and make notes inside a borrowed library book, most at-times; users deface the book by attempting to erase all identification marks on the books (Ibok, 2000).

On the implication of mutilation of theft of library books, Gojeh (1995) pointed that mutilation of book costs library a considerable sum of money, in the bindery for repair. Libraries are suffering serious losses of information resources. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) stated that high incidence of book theft and mutilation of resources can reduce the library's effectiveness in supporting the academic pursuits of the universities.

Prevent this, librarians should provide multiple copies of books. Nwosu (2000) observed that availability of photocopying services within the library also enable users to make personal copies of needed texts especially those they cannot borrow out of the library.

2. METHODS.

Methods Descriptive research design was used for this research. Questionnaire and direct observation constituted the instrument for data collection. The sample size of the study is made up of the entire schools and 41 library staff. For adequate representation of the students, the researcher used random sampling technique to select 20 students from each school making a total of 180 students and 41 library staff. Thus the population frame is 221. The total population of the study was 221, out of which 41 are library staff and 180 library users. The selection of the library users was based on the 4 schools of the polytechnic understudy. 20 copies of the questionnaire were given to the library users in each school; whereas the 41 questionnaires were given to the library staff. The selection of 20 respondents each from the schools was designed to represent even distribution of respondents/users to maintain a universal opinion of users. Secondly, the administration of same questionnaire to both staff and users was intentional since this problem is a broad based one requiring solution from both users and library staff and sometimes library staff are involved. Data collected was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages as shown in the results.

Results As much as possible, the data were analyzed based on the objectives. Both the staff and library users answered the same questionnaire. Out of 221 copies of questionnaire distributed all were returned representing 100%. The outcome of the result is as shown in Tables 1— 5.

Table 1: Causes of Mutilations and Thefts

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of Photocopying facilities in the Library	50	4
Insufficient number of needed textbooks in the Library	45	23
Negative feelings among some library users that Library materials belong to nobody	30	20
Poor Security Network in the Library	56	14
Inability of students to purchase their reading Materials as a result of high costs	40	25
Total	**221**	**18**

Table 1 above shows that 25% respondents agreed that poor security network in the library cause mutilation and theft, followed by lack of photocopying services 25%, insufficient number of needed materials 20%, inability of students to purchase their textbooks as a result of high cost 20% and negative feelings among some library users that library materials belong to no. one 14%

Table 2: Materials frequently mutilated and stolen

Materials	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently consulted materials	23	10
Journals	34	14
Reference Materials	94	43
Books with limited copies	70	32
Total	**221**	**100%**

Out of the 221 respondents, 43% opined that reference materials are the material frequently mutilated and stolen while 32% said books with limited copies, and 15% said journals and finally 10% said frequently consulted materials.

3. THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CURBING LIBRARY LOSES

In spite of the seemingly influx of information communication technology, most libraries are still seating on traditional style of services, knowing full well that without the libraries an institute is dead in terms of knowledge generation and dissemination. According to Maidabino (2012) many of the printed materials are deteriorating quickly and can hardly be managed effectively, besides that, they are (mutilated) not in good condition that can warrant users to make consultations. Libraries should employ modern electronic security systems such as book security systems like the RFID technology, surveillance cameras, metal detectors, door intrusion alarms, delay devices, and a heat sensor were found to be useful in detecting different security patterns and ensuring effective security strategies for the protection of collective materials in the libraries, ensuring longevity, accessibility, availability of old and current resources for effective provision of services for students to attend higher education, have enough resources to research on, develop into innovations that can help build a sustainable life.

The Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras to monitor the perimeter of libraries can alleviate risks as it allows staff to view customers entering or leaving the library. It is a system that has a playback mode, can download to a server when connected to recorder if placed in special areas containing sensitive and high valued materials, it observes readers movement and behaviour, monitor work areas, deter theft, mutilators and ensures recording evidence on clientele and employee misconduct which can be reviewed at anytime. Silent duress/panic alarm is often placed under the counter or desk of the staff and by a simple press of a button, when the staff is faced with threat or subjected to excessive hostility, it calls the attention of the security officer, police or both.

In the context of education, the Federal Ministry of Education established virtual libraries to help expand access to education and current materials without the limited budgetary allocations used for physical infrastructure (Asiru, 2008). It is an opportunity to address the scarcity of teaching and research materials in the libraries of higher education in the country (Yau, 2003). The inclusion of collection security for print and non-print resources prove library a house of knowledge. According to Osinulu, (2005) library resources are the stock in trade of the librarians and the library materials make services possible and the learning resources are indispensable tools for the acquisition of knowledge and development of the intellectuals, with education of services for students to attend higher education, have enough resources to research on, develop into innovations that can help build a sustainable life.

The Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras to monitor the perimeter of libraries can alleviate risks as it allows staff to view customers entering or leaving the library. It is a system that has a playback mode, can download to a server when connected to recorder if placed in special areas containing sensitive and high valued materials, it observe readers movement and behaviour, monitor work areas, deter theft, mutilators and ensures recording evidence on clientele and employee misconduct which can be reviewed at anytime. Silent duress/panic alarm is often placed under the counter or desk of the staff and by a simple press of a button, when the staff is faced with broadening knowledge base by helping identify opportunities and pointing out ways to overcome barriers imposed be it ones environment. Then it means both terms have definite roles in transforming the consciousness of a person and impact on him to aspire.

Table 3: Measures to Prevent Mutilation and Theft

Measures	Frequency	Percentage
There should be one exit point	53	24
Provision of wire protector in all the windows	79	36
Force and threat should be employed on the users	-	-
There should be guards and attendants at the main entrance	89	40
Total	**221**	**100%**

Table 4 shows that 40% said there should be guards and attendants at the main entrance, 36% said provision of wire protector in all the windows, 24% said there should be one exit point and non-admitted that force and threat should be employed on the users.

Table 5: Types of Sanctions for Offender

Type of Sanction	Frequency	Percentage
Expulsion from Polytechnic	52	24
Denial of or suspension of the use of the library for a period of time	41	19
Handed over to the library committee for disciplinary action	73	33
Hand over to police or dismissed if staff is involved	55	25
Force out of the library	-	100%
Total	**221**	**100%**

Concerning the type of sanctions mapped out to offenders, 25% suggested that any staff involved in such crime, he/she should be handover to the police or dismissed from his/her job, 24% agreed on expulsion from the Polytechnic. 33% said handing over the offenders to the library disciplinary committee, 18% said denial of or suspension of the use of library for a period of time while non-agreed that forcing out of the library is the appropriate punishment.

4. DISCUSSION

From the analysis, the finding revealed that poor security network in the library is the major cause of mutilation and theft of information resources. This finding supported the view of Bello (2001) that some of the causes of library malpractices were lack of enough security and inadequate number of books in the library. The findings also agreed with Abullaihi and Dawha (2006) that high cost of books and poverty are some reasons while users steal and mutilate materials in the library. The result also revealed that methods employed in executing this act include hiding library books inside bags and files, smuggling out books from the library, tearing out important page(s), and borrowing without returning. These findings confirmed earlier finding by Afolabi (1993) who stated that delinquent library users and staff have devised many ways of removing out illegally, information sources from the library through — throwing out materials through the windows, and tearing page(s) from information resources.

The findings also revealed that the type of materials that are frequently mutilated are reference materials with limited copies, journals and highly demanded. These findings agree with the findings of Nwogu and Anunobi (2002) that all material are vulnerable to mutilation and theft, buts well illustrated materials especially those with photographs, journals, frequently consulted materials with limited copies are the most vulnerable to theft and mutilation. The outcome of Table 4 revealed that the Imo State Polytechnic Library does not use force and threat to check mutilation and theft, the methods adopted are provision of security guards and attendants at the main entrance, wire protectors at the windows to avoid illegal passage of library books and provision of one exit point in the library. These findings are in conformity with Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) that to safeguard library collections, many devices should be employed such as the use of guards and surveillance.

Lastly, the study revealed that the punishment that should be given to the offenders especially staff, is to dismiss him/her from the job and hand him/her over to the police or disciplinary committee. This was in agreement with Edem (1998) who reported a case of book theft in the Polytechnic of Calabar where the culprits mentioned two library staff as their accomplices during interrogation and they were handed over to the Polytechnic disciplinary committee for action.

5. CONCLUSION

Careful security measures both in the sense of electronic and physical protection will clearly reduce the risk of loss through theft and mutilation. Efficient library services delivery and protection of material resources will definitely reduce the ugly trend of theft and mutilation of library resources.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following recommendations are made
1. The library should be adequately funded to guarantee provision of periodicals, books, digital and photocopy services in the library to enable library users make quick photocopies for their needed materials.
2. The library should endeavour to provide various security facilities e.g. electronic security networks, uninterrupted power supply is very necessary in order to maintain the electronic security network and other ICT equipment.
3. Orientation on how to effectively use library service should be organized regularly for all library staff and users.
4. Library staff that collaborates with users to steal library materials should be dismissed, while penalties should be well spelt out for dishonest users associated with theft, mutilation, illegal removal of library materials or vandalism.
5. Library users and staff should be properly checked at the gate so that, they do not leave the library premises with library materials or mutilated materials. In view of this, porters should ensure that bags and folders of users are not allowed into the library.

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