

Evaluation, Stocktaking and Weeding in Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

The library's primary task is to select, maintain, and provide access to relevant and representative information resources. It is established to provide information resources for the community it serves. School libraries on the other hand are to enrich the school curriculum through the acquisition and dissemination of a variety of carefully selected information resources for enhanced literacy and high learning achievement, promote a reading culture and critical thinking skills in the student. The functions of academic libraries are to provide information materials required for the academic programmes of the parent institution, and also provide information resources in consonance with the needs of the faculty and students. This paper examined evaluation, stocktaking and weeding in academic libraries. Recommendations are made based on reviewed literature, findings and assessment of the parameters in focus.

Keyword: Evaluation, Stocktaking, Weeding and Academic Libraries

1. INTRODUCTION

To put it into a proper perspective, an academic library is a library attached to tertiary institutions. It is as distinctive as the institution it serves. This class of library can be divided into two categories namely; university and non-university libraries. University libraries are libraries owned and run by the university to support study and research activities in such institutions. The non-university libraries on the other hand include Polytechnic libraries, Colleges of Education libraries, School of Nursing libraries etc. Academic libraries perform functions that relate directly to the mission of the institutions they belong to. These functions are performed through the library collection processes ((Biblarz, 2001; Ukejianya, 2007; Edoke, 2000).

This collection process also known as collection development, involves selection and acquisition of information materials. In this present time however, Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals have turned their attention towards clients. Clients (academic scholars / researchers, and learners) are now asked directly about their information needs instead of librarians making assumptions and collecting titles to meet them, (Wikipedia, 2010). Academic libraries are established to support the objectives of their institutions in the areas of teaching, learning, research, and reader's services. They are regarded as the heart of the institutions. They attract various categories of users. These include students, researchers, lecturers, support staff and members of the local community in which the libraries are located.

They provide materials for learning for all the various courses offered by the institution. They also provide resources and services to support research projects and provide information sources for the purpose of extra-mural studies, entertainment, recreation, and general knowledge.

They act as depository of the institution's publications as well as other national publications. Because of the magnitude of the academic library resources, the library employs professional librarians who are highly qualified. Indeed it is the most developed type of libraries in the developing countries of the world because it enjoys better funding than other types of libraries. It is also worthy of note that that the fundamental functions of academic libraries include collection development management, selecting and acquiring. According to Aina (2004), collection development management is an all encompassing term that ensures that there is a balance of materials acquired with respect to various disciplines and types of materials. It also includes policy on the conservation and preservation of information materials no longer needed.

Spiller (1991) noted that the principle of books and, by extension, document provision is invariably concerned with service to a particular set of people or users. The needs of the various users must provide the basis for acquisition. The librarian is thus faced with the daunting task of identifying the needs of the different sets of users. Brindley (1988) identified the needs of users, as the primary basis on which to provide or acquire documents and render services.

The selection of document, she stresses, must be related to the current needs of users. In other words, libraries need, as a starting point, to relate acquisition policies to the importance of meeting current user needs. Jenkins and Morley (1999) opined that collection management emphasizes the systematic maintenance and management of the planning, composition, funding, evaluation and use of library collections over extended period of time, in order to meet specific institutional objectives. According to Derek (1999), collection development relates to the selection and acquisition of material for an expanding collection and decisions on die material to be included in that collection. Webb (1999) identifies four basic collection management principles.

They are the following;

- The collection that supports learning should have an appropriate balance between expenditure on books, serials and electronic information.
- The second one is the scope. The way in which one subject area is studied within the institution may affect the kind of material needed.
- The third is the appropriateness of the material which could be measured based on format, level, language and cost.
- The fourth principle is access: access mechanisms such as structural loan periods', and the provision of multiple copies, as well as wider issues of access to the same, service and to its resources.

Evaluation, stock-taking and weeding are integral part of a five-pronged collection-management framework. The five identifiable processes are community analysis, selection policies, stocktaking, weeding and evaluation. (Ukejianya, 2007). Out of these five, stocktaking, weeding and evaluation are very critical in managing collections in the library. Gardner (1981) also identifies collection development as a dynamic process aimed at managing (Selecting, acquiring, processing, storing, disseminating) the information holding of a library relative to timeliness, accuracy and relevance of a situation. For the purpose of this paper, I will look at how evaluation, stock-taking, weeding are conducted in an academic library environment.

The three concepts (evaluation, stock-taking, and weeding) help in managing collections in the library. Evaluation, stock taking and weeding as aids to collection management are formalized in an institution or a library collection development policy. A collection development policy is, to a library, what a compass is to sailors. Every library usually has a collection development policy. The aim of the policy is to guidance to staff when selecting and deselecting (printed and electronic) resources for the local collection. It serves as a guideline for each stage of materials handling, (Biblarz, 2001). This policy document may include purpose of the collection, type of material in the collection, selection criteria and processes, budgeting policy, weeding criteria, stocktaking processes, and procedures for dealing with controversial material.

A school library collection must be relevant accessible and attractive. Stocktaking and weeding are complementary activities necessary for achieving these goals. According to Angela & Versosa (2010), for academic library to meet up in the provision of effective library services evaluation, stock-taking and weeding has to be performed in order to ensure the following:

- 1) Knowing the strength and weakness of library collection
- 2) Provision of up to date information materials for the readers
- 3) Justification for the library's annual budget
- 4) Creation of space for new and current information materials on the shelves and in the library at large

It is regrettable however that; in spite of immense benefits of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding, many academic library staff as well as users of libraries do not know the importance of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding in the management of academic library. Apart from that, because evaluation stocktaking and weeding were not properly done, many academic libraries were unable to meet the desired needs of their users. It is in the light of this that this paper is being packaged in order to illuminate the importance of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding, highlights how they are done and promote their institutionalization in all academic libraries. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to highlight how stock taking, weeding and evaluation are conducted and also examine how important they are in the day to day running of an academic library. The emphasis on evaluation has grown, to keep balance between inputs and outputs, and to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in managing collections (Mosher, 1979), (Lancaster, 1993), (Chyton & Gorman, 2001), and (Crawford, 2006).

Pryterch (2000) views collection management as the organization and maintenance of library stock beginning from a library having a clearly stated policy of intent, a principle of collection development, keeping the needs of users a priority objective and considering alternative means of document and information supply to supplement local holdings.

The role of acquisition and collection development is not only to plan a stock acquisition programme but to make it relevant to immediate and future needs of the users. Bom (1993) rightly observed that "a closer co-operation has developed between departments as librarians assess and evaluate library collections to ensure the current and future needs of students and scholars are met". Evans and Saponaro (2005) describe a library as a social institution established primarily to collect materials, organize and make them available to people preferably at the right time and the right place. Academic library on the other hand is "a library that is attached to academic institutions above the secondary level, serving the teaching and research needs of students and staff. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum, and to support the research of the university faculty and students. Academic libraries are dependent on the academic institution of which they are part.

They formulate their mission, vision, goals and objectives based on the mission vision goals and objectives of their parent organization. They plan activities in congruence with the plans of the academe. And they support the academic and research needs of the students and faculty members of the academe. As stated by Budd (1998), "the academic library is part of the politics, part of the culture and part of the response of its parent, institution, whatever affects higher education, affects academic libraries.

1.1 Aims and Objectives of Academic Library

Ogunsola (2004) stated the academic library is established to support the objectives of its institutions in the areas of teaching, learning, research, and reader's service is regarded as the heart of the institution. It attracts various categories of users. These include students, researchers, lecturers, support staff and members of the local community in which the library is located. It provides materials for learning for all the various courses offered by the institution. Academic library also provides resources and services to support research projects and provide information sources for the purpose of extra-mural studies, entertainment, recreation, and general knowledge.

It acts as depository of the institution's publications as well as other national publications (Wikipedia, 2011). Osinulu and Odusanya (2004) stated that academic libraries are expectedly charged with the responsibility of meeting the information needs of scholars and students in the pursuit of their academic endeavors. This is made possible through the library's traditional functions of identifying, selecting, acquiring, processing, storing, and disseminating knowledge in print and non-print formats.

Because of the magnitude of the academic library resources, the library employs professional librarians who are highly qualified. Indeed it is the most developed type of libraries in the developing countries of the world because it enjoys better funding than other types of libraries. It is also worthy of note that the fundamental functions of academic libraries include collection development management, selecting and acquiring. According to Aina (2004), collection development management is an all encompassing term that ensures that there is a balance of materials acquired with respect to various disciplines and types of materials. It also includes policy on the conservation and preservation of information materials no longer needed. It is also important to note that since library collections are accumulations of published and unpublished materials. A good collection for students working on the undergraduate or master's level may be a bad collection for students or faculty working at advanced research levels.

In all cases the collection has to be judged Native to the academic program. A good library collection means that a student or faculty member can located and gain access to needed resources in a reasonable period of time. The library collection manager is responsible for molding the collection. Collections will usually be developed first at the "instructional" level, which may be defined as an 'organized group of publications containing commonly accepted important titles published in a particular field. A research level collection will be more thorough; it will contain not only the instructional level titles but the "edges" in focused areas. Through a research collection, the faculty and students will be able to review the historical development of the field deeply as well as have access to a broad range of current materials.

Building collections at the research level involves a concerted effort to sustain a wide array of current purchases, including materials in "grey" publication areas which are not available through normal trade channels, to locate retrospective materials in the out of print market to build more comprehensive serials collections including publications of relatively obscure association or learned socialites collections, including publications of relatively obscure associations or ;earned societies, to purchase foreign language materials, to develop access to a board selection of electronic and remote sources of information, to create vigorous gift-exchange programs, special collections, and private/public sector development programs, special collections, and private/public sector development programs. Developmental efforts will take a large number of directions, all of which have a significant budgetary impact.

2. REASONS FOR EVALUATION- STOCK-TAKING AND WEEDING

For academic library to meet up in the provision of effective library services evaluation, stock-taking and weeding have to be performed in order to ensure the following:

- 1) Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of library collection.
- 2) Provision of up to date information materials for the readers.
- 3) Justification for the library's annual budget.
- 4) Creation of space for new and current information materials on the shelves and in the library at large, Obille (2007).

It is regrettable however that; in spite of immense benefits of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding, many academic library staff as well as users of libraries do no' know their importance in the management of academic library. Apart from that, because evaluation stocktaking and weeding were not properly done, many academic libraries are unable to meet the desired needs of their users (Vidor and Futas, 1988). It is in the light of this that this paper is being packaged in order to discuss the process of evaluation, stock -taking and weeding and also illuminate the importance of evaluation, stocktaking and weeding, highlights how they are done and promote institutionalization of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding process in all academic libraries.

2.1 Process of Stock Taking

Stock taking is the same thing as taking the inventory of a library collection. Slote (1997) stated that "Libraries need methods, such as stock-taking to determine whether or not their collections are in good shape, or whether or not some preservation or conservation activities are necessary" "It is a vital component of keeping the library collection relevant to the curriculum and recreation needs of the school borrowers (OASIS, 2000).

The main objective of stock-taking is for the Librarian to look at its collection and discover if there are materials in need of rebinding repurchasing, or repair. Stock-taking propel us to set machinery in motion to replace lost items. It also helps us to rearrange our shelves in order to reduce incidence of overcrowding of materials which could lead to damaging of the library materials.

To effectively conduct stock taking of library materials, the librarian in charge need to be well acquainted with the processes and steps in the stock taking process. He should know how the data on the available materials will be collected, and how findings from the process will be processed and analysed. He needs to shelf read before he starts stocktaking. This should be followed with the running of a trial stock taking of a small collection for him to be able to determine how long it would take to conduct stock-taking for the entire collections. It is important however to note that it is not important to do a stock-taking of the entire library all at once particularly if it is a big library.

What the librarian could do is to take stock from one shelf or one section of the library to the other. Evans and Saponaro (2005) stated that stock taking is best done at the end of the academic calendar. Innovation in school curricular can make the content of a book inaccurate, wrong and misleading or irrelevant to user's needs. Materials in the library's collection that are "often used by so many people (students, teachers) will suffer from wear and tear thus making the materials physically unusable. Weeding should be done to remove such materials from the shelves (Ukejianya, 2007). Finally, it is important to note that "An unused book is not a good (book). The Library should be a practical thing to be used, not an ideal to be admired "(Cutter, 1901).

3. EVALUATION PROCESS

There are various methods of conducting library evaluation. This include check listing, direct examination of the collections, examination of shelf list data, compiling statistics on holdings, use and expenditure, applying library standards, assessment of specific subject support, user centered assessment as well as rating total resource adequacy (Familusi et al, 2010). In practical terms, evaluation starts with the review of the academic program and collaboration with all faculties to determine their library study and research objectives and needs. The officer in charge of the evaluation then reach an agreement with the faculties and relate the evaluation statement to the "List of Narrative Information," which are the data contained on Program Review forms as required by the Program Review Process. The person in charge of the evaluation should associate the programs under review to Library of Congress (LC) and Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and produce a list of the classifications.

The list should represent the "core" collection; i e., the primary group of research resources supporting the academic program at all levels. For example: English/ American Language and Literature: LC classes, PR, PS and sections of PN, Z; Dewey classes, 810-810.9 and 820.8-820.9. The evaluator should determine if unclassified or uniquely classified library collections should be considered part of the "core" collection and involve the various collection coordinators in the evaluation process (Evans& Saporano, 2005).

The evaluator should ask one or several faculty members involved in the program to review the list of classification/subject headings for both the core and indirectly related collections as soon as the list is completed. Since the evaluation statement contain " inventory statistics and scope statements outlining the strengths of both the core and the indirectly related collections, the evaluator should develop a list of the collection coordinators who ought to be involved in the evaluation and request their appointment to the "team.

Following the inventory, which assembles the entire universe available to the faculty and students in the academic program, the evaluator analyzes the data and reaches a judgment as to how well the collection supports the academic program (Smarthers. 2011).

3.1 Evaluation Statement

After the conduct of an evaluation, an evaluation statement is produced and the contents of such an evaluation statement may contain the following and many others:

- 1) A clear description of the current and anticipated directions in the academic program, both at the instructional and research level
- 2) A description of the current collection resources, both in terms of ownership access;
- 3) An evaluation of the collection, in terms of ownership, access, and condition relative to the current academic program;
- 4) Recommendations to improve access to needed resources;
- 5) A proposed estimate of the budget required to maintain the collection and implement recommended improvements (Obille, 2007).

3.2 Criteria for Evaluating Academic Library Collection

1. The completeness and quality of the collection—are all items owned by the libraries or accessible to the faculty and students in the program.
2. The available materials reflect areas of specializations currently important or anticipated to become important in the discipline?
3. The selection guidelines and current collecting intensities cover the core materials?
4. Retrospective holdings provide an historical perspective -or the field
5. Indigenous and foreign language materials available to the necessary extent
6. There are gaps in the collection
7. There is a large want list for the collection
8. There are current collecting areas which should be de-emphasized
9. Reference materials are adequate 10)Important library tools are available
10. The serials collection is adequate? Are important titles or parts of runs missing
11. The strength and weaknesses of the collection
12. Significant additions or new types of access that have been made to the collection during the past five years?
13. The additions or new types of access that should have been made during the past five years but were not?
14. The adequacy of the library support for the instructional and research program?
15. Overall remarks on whether the collection is poor, adequate, good, or excellent at each program level. This statement is a preliminary judgment and need not be shared (Shim, 2003).

Apart from using the above criteria the evaluator also test his judgment against an external standard in form of a published bibliography, an especially prepared bibliography a sample of the holdings of another library known to support comparable research level academic program through, various indexing and/or abstracting services, conspectus verification studies, and so forth. The evaluator should also review the physical condition of the collection. This review should include materials such as paper film, computer file etc in order to determine whether the materials are torn, worn or damaged. He also assess whether a substantial numbers of materials is missing. After completing his assessment the evaluator should also make it a point of duty to make appropriate recommendations on how the collections could be improved upon in order to ensure that the library serves its statutory functions and is able to meet the both the learning and research objectives of the academic institution.

The recommendations may include any of the following:

- What need to be done to make the collection an adequate support for the instructional and research program?
- What holdings need to be enhanced to better reflect areas of specializations currently important or anticipated to become important in the discipline?
- What changes need to be made in the current collecting intensity?
- Which retrospective holdings should be made accessible?
- What languages should be collected?
- What foreign publications ought to be represented?
- Which important changes in publication patterns or in publication formats (especially electronic access) need to be considered?
- Which gaps in the collection ought to be filled?

- Are there large want lists for the collection?
- Are there current collecting areas which should be de-emphasized during the next five years?

Ukejiana (2007) stated that since it is the last exercise in the collection development process a comprehensive evaluation will also include the review of services provided by the Library in support of research/study for discipline. For George A Smarthers Library, evaluation helps us to determine "the qualitative level of collection support for a specific academic program, to identify the collection's maintenance and development needs and to create a budget plan.

3.3 Budget Review

The process of evaluation is not completed without a comprehensive budget review. This is so because it is the budget review that will provide information which reflects the costs associated with creating the current collection. It should ideally x-rayed amount of money spent in the past five years and form the basis for projecting a new five year budget plan. To objectively conduct the budget review, the evaluator should identify

1. Funds allocated specifically to support the collection (regular and special)
2. Expenditures by code
3. Estimate of funds allocated to support the indirectly related collections
4. Average cost changes for monographs and serials over the five year period
5. Changes in the ratio of expenditures for monographs and serials during the past five years
6. Average number of volumes added each year during the past five years
7. Cost of emerging information technologies
8. "Effect of currency fluctuations
9. Cost of equipment to access new information technology\
10. Projected cost of maintaining current collecting intensities over the next five years
11. Savings anticipated by altering current collecting intensities
12. Collection objectives and estimates of the cost of implementing these objectives.

Concluding the evaluation process, a summary concluding statement should be written to articulate key findings from the assessment regarding the collection's adequacy to support the academic program. The conclusion will function as an executive summary. The preliminary draft statement is now complete and should be distributed to library collection managers for comment.

4. THE WEEDING PROCESS

The moment you start having challenges in getting new materials into the shelves, and then it is time for you to conduct weeding. It is also important to tackle one section at a time and ensure that you complete that section before you move on to the next section. It is also advisable to share the weeding responsibility with other members of your staff or you, weed in a team of two so that you can learn from each other and can keep each other from straying too far from your established criteria. To do this it is advisable that the team should consist of people from a different generation in *other* to bring generational perspective into the process. Weeding was rarely done flamboyantly, but usually in small sections with books discarded quickly and quietly (Beilharz, 2006). The most widely adopted strategy being used in the weeding process is the Continuous Review Evaluation and Weeding (CREW) approach. CREW approach provides very good opportunity for academic libraries to fulfill their objectives (Texas State Library Association, 2011).

In the course of weeding, one approach is for the person conducting the weeding to do a quick and dirty weeding by going through the collection quickly and remove the worn, the dirty, the unattractive, the dusty, those with old binding or loose binding as well as materials that are unnecessarily duplicated.

Apart from that, weeding could also be done by using the computer systems to provide the list of every item that has not circulated or enjoy enough circulation in the last three or more years. A young person and an elderly person can constitute a team. This will promote effectiveness in the weeding process as many things will be taken into consideration from the different generational point of view. One other way of weeding is to examine materials as they are returned to the circulation desk. Materials that are damaged, equated 01 rarely used are set aside and are eventually prevented from getting back to the shelves (Palma Bound, 2011).

4.1 Importance of Evaluation Stock taking, and Weeding in academic libraries

1. It enables the library to detect information materials that are missing from the library collection
2. It helps to facilitate shelf-reading of books on the shelves because by taking stock of information materials on the shelves, the Librarian helps to shelf-read the shelves at the same time
3. It ensures that the library catalogue tallies with the holdings of the library.
4. It helps to determine the relevance of information materials on the shelves based on the date of publication, how recent the material is, and usage of materials.
5. It saves time used in automating the collection for the first time as it prevents the situation whereby one spends ample time, energy and money in the various aspects of automating each bibliographic and item (barcode) record for things that should just be removed.

4.2 Challenges of Evaluation, Stocktaking and Weeding in Academic Libraries

William Sara (1999) opined that research materials should be collected in advance of need and retained in perpetuity, contributes to a substantial reluctance on the part of libraries finally and irremovably to eliminate a book from the collection.

- Another challenge is inadequacy of funding for academic libraries which may relegate evaluation of the library to the background in the face of other pressing and immediate demand (Ojoade and Ochai, 2000).
- Lackadaisical attitude of librarians to evaluation is another major challenge Limited number of experts with technical competency in evaluation of academic library
- Insufficient librarians in academic libraries.
- Lack of management support (both institution management and library management)

5. CONCLUSION

This paper identifies the fact that evaluation, stock-taking and weeding is integral part of collection management. The three concepts help in managing collections in the library. It looks at how evaluation, stock-taking and weeding are conducted in an academic library environment. The paper increases understanding of what an academic library is in order to be able to put the discourse in the right perspective. It also identifies the importance of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding in the day to day running of an academic library. Since the essence of the establishing academic library is to cater for and meet the objectives of the parent institution; it is now clear that evaluation, stock-taking and weeding are three basic areas by which the library helps the institution to cater for and meeting the objectives of the parent institution.

This is so because evaluation, stocktaking, and weeding helps the library to provide relevant, accurate and up to date information materials for its clientele. They help the library to know the strength and weaknesses of its collection. They help the library to prepare appropriate and adequate budget that will cater for its needs every year. They enable library to provide adequate security system for its collections against theft of materials.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Since evaluation, stock-taking and weeding are three of a kind doing one and not doing the other may not provide the desired result so academic libraries should develop policy for institutionalization of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding stating who should do what and when.
2. Librarians working in an academic library should be adequately equipped with needed skills in evaluation, stock-taking and weeding.
3. Academic libraries should adequately involve faculty representatives from all faculties to ensure that the library holistically meets the minimum requirement of all its users
4. To promote effectiveness of academic libraries, the different methods highlighted in this paper in different aspects of evaluation, stock-taking and weeding should be followed by librarians with enough room for innovation based on the peculiar needs of their library.
5. The institution's policy document showing the mission and educational focus of the institution should also serve as a basis for any decision to be made on evaluation, stock-taking and weeding.

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