

# THE USE OF TECHNOLOGY IN CURBING LIBRARY LOSSES IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

*Stella C. Ohayagha*

## **Abstract**

Loss of library materials has been of great concern to librarians or information managers right from the onset. The pitiable part of the situation is when a user or researcher get to the shelf, on picking a textbook, find out that the most important pages he is looking for are cut-off or defaced. He feels dissatisfied and frustrated. The paper reviewed the losses in term of theft and mutilation, the factors responsible for the losses and a discussion on the role technology can play in curbing the frustrating situation, and its contributions to higher education, research and innovation for sustainable future.

Library globally houses collection of books, manuscripts and other non-book materials. Isiaka (2001) confirmed that they provide support for academic programmes thus serving as a catalyst to the learning, research and teaching activities, helps in creating skills and innovative capacities in individuals.

Ohayagha (2004) asserted that library is a nerve centre, a place to learn the essential skills of finding the facts and the existing body of thought on any topic. But this cannot be guaranteed without providing adequate protection to the current existing collections.

Thus Aguolu (2000) observed that the best protection that a collection of books and non-book materials can have is a concrete building. Although most academic libraries have solid structures, well designed to protect the collections and provide easy access to readers, but still these resources were not given proper protection that will protect or secure them from being mutilated, stolen or lost.

The problem of theft and the mutilation of books and other materials in libraries is not new, even the chained collections provided one mark of the longevity of the problem, Munn (1935) traced origins back to ancient Egypt.

As a matter of fact, the management of theft and mutilation has thus long been part and parcel of the librarian's responsibilities, although it has not been a straight forward task in a service where one of the main tenets is to encourage readership through borrowing.

There is need for this issue to receive prominence and priority by the management. Ifidon (1999) stressed the significance of this subject when he opined that library and information managers must face up to the contemporary reality of criminal activity in their organization. Maidabino (2011) highlighted the need for libraries to cultivate professional culture and behavior with regard to safeguarding the library's collection and the need for library management to take the lead in developing an honest culture with reporting responsibility. The library manager and management should sit together to look into the issue and suggest a strategic measure to use in curbing this frustrating issue in the library.

Library is the bedrock of any institution, its strength and weakness is judged basic on the collections. According to Ahyaku (1994), the level of any country's development depends largely upon the level of its higher education institution and the success of higher institution depends on the viability and richness of its library. It means that without the libraries an

institution is dead in terms of knowledge generation and dissemination and in the provisions to aid teaching and research work of students in higher education. In addition to this, the introduction of ICT, Morka (1999) explained that library will play important part in the society by promoting personal development which leads to proper training and development in research and innovation for sustainable future.

### **Concept of Theft and Mutilation**

**Mutilation**  
Mutilation according to Lorenzen (1996) is an act of underlining and highlighting text in library books, tearing and or removing pages of books and annotating in books margins, tampering with the subject-content of library collection, thereby making it unusable to users.

Mutilation also includes bending the spine of a book to ensure that it stays open at the right page, thereby damaging the book spine, shading book pages with pencil, or biro, using wet fingers to turn book pages etc.

Book mutilation is an act not always immediately visible to the librarian, unless specific checks are carried out after any usage of material or users take the mutilated materials to the staff, even then the librarian cannot give account of when it happened.

### **Theft**

Theft is when a person dishonestly appropriates property belonging to another with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it. Theft is a common phenomenon to all types of libraries and most difficult to eradicate because of the staff involvement – borrowing out materials without properly charging it out, these acts lead to non-return, seen as loan out or over-dues whether or not they do so deliberately, they do not regard their actions as theft.

The deliberate or accidental mis-shelving by those wishing to have unique access

to material at a later point and the temporary removal of stock without recording for repairs makes the greatest contribution and the disposal of items without deleting them from inventories has a part to play.

### **Factors Responsible for Mutilation and Theft in the Libraries**

The mutilation and theft in libraries cannot be overlooked rather it should be reviewed from time to time, finding ways to curb the problem. Omoniyi (2001) identified that both students and staff were often involved in collection theft and this may be due to their unawareness of the graveness of the thieving issue, and that the incident is of great frustration to the library users and staff of the library when library materials in the catalogue or database are not found on shelves or appropriate places. In this regard the factors are reviewed as follows:

- 1. Demand outstripping supply:** The acute shortage of materials foster stealing and mutilation or using another users borrowing tickets. In a library where large number of users including lecturers are chasing few library materials, some dishonest users that came across these library materials quickly steal or mutilate them for personal use or monetary gain.
- 2. Security lapses:** Besides that, most libraries do not have electronic security network systems to detect crimes or monitor the use of library resources, the library gates and open access materials are not effectively checked and monitored by porters and surveillance staff respectively.
- 3. Staff conniving with users to carry out criminal acts,** helping library defaulters, Maidobino (2011) highlighted theft of library collections by staff as a real problem that libraries should address and not ignore

because of the risk of bad publicity. Some library staff indulge in the guise of borrowing for themselves, relation or friends by using their veto power as staff. This practice is very common with rare collections, books with multiple copies and collections under process.

4. Inadequate photocopying service is the most identified service, which, if absent or rendered poorly, influences theft and mutilation of materials in libraries. There should be cheap and easy-to-access photocopying services, especially within the library in order to curb theft and mutilation.
5. The increasing in-take of students each year with less number of staff to handle or attend to users' needs lead to non-challenging attitudes of staff towards the users. And since there is unrestricted access to information materials, users go into the collection to search for articles, thereby mutilate or steal them. This was confirmed by Gouke and Murfin (1980) that lack of control over stock led to disappearance of key journal issues and articles.
6. Libraries lack policy, that is clearly defined inappropriate behaviours and do not set out appropriate sanctions. Examples of stiffer penalties such as suspension from the use of library materials or rustication from school or jobs by the offenders.
7. Lack of good policies and procedures of the library services has also been attributed as a factor that induces theft and mutilation of library materials. E.g. lack of sufficient access to the library and difficult processing in borrowing books which sometimes annoy the staff or patrons and lead to anti library attitudes.

8. Lack of standby generator to substitute the erratic power supply, financial problems, faced by students, selfish interest of patrons as a strong factor that influences theft and mutilation of library material and many other factors.

#### **The Role of Technology in Curbing Library Losses**

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 (Anyaku, 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 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 behavior, 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 (Ya'u, 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 broadening knowledge base by helping identify

opportunities and pointing out ways to overcome barriers imposed by its environment. Then it means both terms have definite roles in transforming the consciousness of a person and impact on him to aspire.

### **Contributions of Protected Library Resources**

To provide higher education, and research as for sustainable future: When a library is well – equipped with its materials protected, it provides all necessary information in form of quick reference services for research work, literature researches, providing technical information services for technicians. It also enhance understanding of working environment and to help develop the necessary skills needed at work and in adult life generally, for example some people are able to sustain themselves by writing projects, analyzing data for people, even write simple story books for sale.

The library as a source for educational excellence by the provision of its informative materials, well protected from loses, serves as an agent of cultural transmission, storage of new discoveries, innovations resulting from researches done by individuals or acquired and preserved in the library collections, so as when utilized in higher studies help produce enough manpower that would help actualize the dream, of a technological sustainable nation.

The acquisition of knowledge, skill and competencies in the use of electronic protected collections with the use of virtual library or computer, the student will foster greater attainment in higher education, increase their skills in conducting researches to predict outcomes and anticipate consequences and to test conclusions and improve ideas that can give rise to manufacturing products and services that helps to improve the lives of the people. In these view research is the most serious subject that is intended to discover new ideas, a tool for advancing knowledge, which enables one

understand, explain and predict trends in the course of study and choice of carriers for sustainable future.

### **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 induce reading and remain a fundamental building block for liberal education, providing a broad basis for knowledge and understanding. It will help give contextual framework for a lifetime of self directed higher learning.

### **Recommendations**

1. The library should be adequately funded to guarantee adequately funded to guarantee adequate provision of periodicals, books, digital and photocopy services in the library to enable library users make quick photocopies for their need materials.
2. The library should endeavour to provide various security facilities such as electronic security networks, effective surveillant staff/porters suitable library with all security out fits like fire extinguishers, stable and uninterrupted power supply in order to maintain the electronic security network and other ICT equipment.
3. Orientation on how to effectively use library services, should be organized regularly for all library staff and users.
4. Library staff that collaborates with users to steal library materials should be summarily dismissed, while stiff 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.

### **References**

- Anyaoku, E. O. (1994). *Demystifying the Library Benin City*, Supreme Idea pp. 1-2.
- Aguolu, C. C. (2000). *Libraries knowledge and National Development*. Maiduguri, University of Maiduguri.
- Asiru, S. M. (2008). Implementation of Virtual Library Project in Nigerian College of Education: Challenges and Prospect in *COCLIN Journal of Library and Information Science*. 4 (1) pp. 13-22.
- Gouke, M. N. & Murfin, M. (1980). "Periodical Mutilation: The Insidious Disease". *Library Journal*. 105 (16).
- Ifidon, S. E. (1999). *Essentials of African University Library Management*. Lagos: National Library Press.
- Isiaka, M (1998). Managing crisis in Nigeria Libraries, *Guardian Newspaper*, pp. 28.
- Maidabino, A. A. & Zainab, A. N. (2011). Collection Security Management at University Libraries: Assessment of its Implementation Status, *Malaysian Journal of Library and Information Science*, 16 (1).
- Morka, P. C. (1999). *History of Libraries: Benin City Skola*.

- Munn, R. (1935). Problems of Theft and Mutilation. *Library Journal*. 60 (1) pp. 589 – 592.
- Obaseki, T. I., Maidabino, A. A. and Makama, F. H. (2012). The Development and Challenges of Virtual Library Services in Nigerian Colleges of Education, in *Trends in Information Management (TRIM)*. 8 (1) pp. 1-8.
- Ohayagha, S. C. (2004). Library and national Development in *BAHF Journal of Vocation*. 1 (1) pp. 276-283.
- Omoniyi, J. (2001). The Security of Computer and other Electronic installation in Nigeria University Libraries. *Library Management*. 22 (6/7) pp. 272-277.
- Osinulu, L. F. (2005). *Library Resources and Language Teaching* in A. V. Jibowo (ed). *Language, Language Teaching and Learning: A book of Reading*. Ibadan: Bounty Press Ltd. Pp. 130-142.
- Yau, Z. Y. (2003) *Towards a Virtual Libraries for Nigeria*. Retrieved on 29/06/2006 from <http://portals/unesco.org/en/ev.php>

*Stella C. Ohayagha*  
*College Library,*  
*Federal College of Education,*  
*Kano.*