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## Awareness and Use of Intellectual Freedom Policy in Academic Libraries in Ilorin Metropolis

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# **Awareness and Use of Intellectual Freedom Policy in Academic Libraries in Ilorin Metropolis**

## **Abstract**

*This study investigates the awareness and use of intellectual freedom policy in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis. To accomplish its objectives, it raises four research questions while its scope is restricted to academic libraries within Ilorin metropolis. It uses descriptive survey research method to examine eleven academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis. Out of 195 staff of the selected academic libraries, 55 staff are purposively sampled as respondents among the academic librarians and staff of acquisition department of the selected academic libraries. Questionnaire titled “Awareness and Use of Intellectual Freedom Policy in Academic Libraries” is designed to obtain data from the academic librarians and staff of acquisition department of the libraries. The findings reveal that the respondents are aware of intellectual freedom, intellectual freedom is somewhat important to collection development of the academic libraries and also show that intellectual freedom concerns freedom of expression, access to information, confidentiality and privacy, while censorship and internet filtering are the major challenge to intellectual freedom in academic libraries.*

**Keyword:** Intellectual freedom, Academic libraries, Access to information, Freedom of expression, Censorship, Internet filtering.

## **Introduction**

Academic library are libraries attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, college of technology and also research institutes (Akpohonor, 2005). These libraries fill two integral needs: to help the school’s curricula, and to help the research of the university, faculty and students. Academic libraries are knowledge centers built up in support of the mission of their parent institutions to create knowledge, equip people with knowledge in order to serve the general public and advance the prosperity of mankind (Oyegunle, 2013).

According to Kolawole and Igwe (2016), academic libraries are libraries in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Colleges of Agriculture, etc. that are established, maintained and administered by these institutions to meet the information, literature and research needs of students, Faculties' (lecturers), other researchers and administrative staff of these institutions. Academic libraries are established primarily to serve the academic and general purpose of the staff and understudies of parent institution (Olalokun, 2013).

Academic library contributes to achieving of the mission of their parental institutions, and this make Obadare and Olusanmi (2015) submitted that an academic library is central and significant in any academic institution. Academic libraries are set up for the sole purpose of complementing the easy achievement and continuous promotion of academic excellence in the parent institution

(Ademodi, 2011). The need for promoting excellence, therefore, makes academic libraries to be central to the awareness and use of intellectual freedom policies.

Usman and Fakandu (2018) posited that intellectual freedom as a concept in Librarianship implies opportunity to express one's thoughts and beliefs in unrestricted manners and means, and freedom to access content and thought regardless of the content or viewpoints of the author(s) or the age, background, or beliefs of the receiver. This is to mean that the academic libraries acquire information materials to build their collections of resources with a wide diversity of opinions and topics to ensure the availability of suitable information materials for users by engaging faculties and students in open discussion in order to facilitate access to unlimited information.

The American Library Association [ALA] (2007) describes intellectual freedom as "the right of every individual to both seek and receive information from all points of view without restriction. It accommodates free access to all expressions of ideas through which any and all sides of an inquiry, cause or development might be explored." Intellectual freedom encompasses the freedom to hold, obtain and circulate ideas. Maryland Library Association [MLA] (2017) posited that intellectual freedom is the cornerstone of our societal freedoms ranging from freedom of thought, freedom of belief, freedom to read and freedom to express one's ideas. All these freedoms are protected by the Constitution of various countries and specifically guaranteed by various Charters. Intellectual freedom is therefore seen as fundamental human right which the awareness and use of its policies in academic libraries will enhance the expansion of societal knowledge-base.

### **Statement of Problem**

Intellectual freedom is the liberty granted to an individual to write, seek, or express views, opinions or interest as he or she pleases, without any interference from anyone, regardless of the frontiers. The major purpose of intellectual freedom is to ensure and enhance equal participation of the citizens in either social, educational, political, cultural or economical issue without any discrimination, influence or whatsoever. Also, the academic library is seen as the nerve center or intellectual hub around which scholarship revolves. This is to mean that an academic library is a vital tool that supports the intellectual emancipation of users by providing scholarly materials to aid the exploit of users' intellects.

Apparently, as in the case of Nigeria; it has been observed that little or no research work has been carried out on intellectual freedom in academic libraries and less is known about intellectual freedom in academic libraries. This gap is further expanded by (Dashlstrom, as cited in Oltmann, 2017) when they submitted that intellectual freedom is of concern to a public or school library, not that excessively essential to academic libraries. And it has not been practically established that academic libraries are aware of the significance and use of intellectual freedom policy. This, therefore, makes it imperative for this study to investigate the awareness and use of intellectual freedom policy in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.

## **Objectives of the Study**

This study is guided by both general and specific objective. The general objective is to investigate the awareness and use of intellectual freedom policy in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.

The specific objectives are:

1. To determine the level of awareness of intellectual freedom in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.
2. To examine the intellectual freedom policies used in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.
3. To identify the importance of use of intellectual freedom policies in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.
4. To identify the challenges associated with the use of intellectual freedom policies in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis.

## **Research Questions**

1. What is the level of awareness of intellectual freedom in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis?
2. What are the intellectual freedom policies used in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis?
3. What are the importance of use of intellectual freedom policies in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis?
4. What are the challenges associated with the use of intellectual freedom policies in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis?

## **Review of Related Literature**

Intellectual freedom, according to Byrne (2000), suggests the freedom to believe one's thought, consider one's thought, detail perspectives and express them unreservedly. It is revered in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as Article 19 and African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (Article 9) respectively as:

*“Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”*

*“Every individual shall have the right to receive information. Every individual shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions with the law.”*

American Library Association [ALA] (2009) defines intellectual freedom as a worldwide human right that includes both physical and intellectual access to knowledge and ideas. Libraries offer physical access through resources, facilities, and services and nurture awareness of intellectual freedom privileges within the context of educational programs and instruction in essential information skills. Intellectual freedom which encompasses of freedom of expression thoughts and

ideas, freedom of access to information, etc. in every circumstance is essential cornerstone of librarianship (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], 2007).

In supporting intellectual freedom, the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional [CILIP] (2015) cautioned that access should not be limited to information materials on any grounds apart from that of the law. CILIP further argues that if publicly accessible material has not acquired legal consequences, then it should not be excluded on political, morals, religious, racial or sex grounds, to please the demands of sectional interest. Usman and Fakandu (2018) also corroborated this by submitting that individuals have the fundamental right to have access to all ideas of knowledge, ingenuity and intellectual activity, and to prompt their opinions in public.

The significance of intellectual freedom has been recognised by multi-lateral institutions and has resulted in establishing various Articles and Declarations such as the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (Article 9), United Nations International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (Article 19), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Article 10), and other similar conventions. By endorsing the Universal Declaration and other Instruments, nation states bind themselves to its requirements that must then be imitated in the law and practice of the nation (Byrne, 2000).

Libraries, which are central to the development and promotion of education in societies have a huge role to play encouraging intellectual freedom in academic environment. Easing this challenge makes the ALA (2009) referred to that the significance of education to the development of intellectual freedom as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 that:

- Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.
- Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial, or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

### **Libraries and Intellectual Freedom**

The library, as a societal institution, plays a critical role in the development of the intellectual potential of society and must, therefore, respond to changes that take place in the country (Sayenko, 2002). The right to think what we delight and say what we think serves as the foundation upon which all knowledge is built. Sutton (2001) opines that to a library, intellectual freedom proceeds as the form of the right to obtain ideas, that is, to access information and the library is first and foremost a place to access information, making intellectual freedom essential to the duty of the library profession. The library's unique role as an integral part of educational institution has been the endowment of materials to enhance the growth of individual's abilities,

interests and information. Therefore, the state of intellectual freedom in libraries is a significant indication of the progress in a country.

According to ALA (2009), libraries of all types nurture education by promoting the freedom expression and exchange of thoughts which are prominent to empowering lifelong learners. Libraries provide resources, designed programmes, and services to brace intellectual and physical access to information and thus construct a base of intellectual freedom: increasing collections (both real and virtual) with multiple perceptions and individual needs of users in mind; providing programming and instructional services enclosed around equitable access to information and thoughts; and teaching information skills and intellectual freedom rights incorporated properly throughout the continuum of library programming.

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions also supports, defends and promotes intellectual freedom by declaring that human beings have a fundamental right to access to expressions of knowledge, creative thought and intellectual activity, and to express their views publicly. IFLA believes that the right to know and freedom of expression are two aspects of the same principle. The right to know is a requirement for freedom of thought and conscience; freedom of thought and freedom of expression are necessary conditions for freedom of access to information. IFLA asserts that a commitment to intellectual freedom is a core responsibility for the library and information profession.

IFLA therefore calls upon libraries and library staff to adhere to the principles of intellectual freedom. IFLA urges its members to actively promote the acceptance and realization of intellectual freedom by stating that:

- Libraries should provide access to information, ideas and works of imagination.
- Libraries should serve as gateways to knowledge, thought and culture.
- Libraries should provide essential support for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development for both individuals and groups.
- Libraries should contribute to the development and maintenance of intellectual freedom and help to safeguard basic democratic values and universal civil rights.
- Libraries have a responsibility both to guarantee and facilitate access to expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity. To this end, libraries shall acquire, preserve and make available the widest variety of materials, reflecting the plurality and diversity of society.
- Libraries shall ensure that the selection and availability of library materials and services are governed by professional considerations and not by political, moral and religious views.
- Libraries shall acquire, organize and disseminate information freely and oppose any form of censorship.
- Libraries shall make materials, facilities and services equally accessible to all users. There shall be no discrimination due to race, creed, gender, age or for any other reason.
- Library users shall have the right to personal privacy and anonymity. Librarians and other library staff shall not disclose the identity of users or the materials they use to a third party.

- Libraries funded from public sources and to which the public have access shall uphold the principles of intellectual freedom.
- Librarians and other employees in such libraries have a duty to uphold those principles.
- Librarians and other professional libraries staff shall fulfil their responsibilities both to their employer and to their users. In cases of conflict between those responsibilities, the duty towards the user shall take precedence.

Restriction of access to library materials has been considered as the major problem to intellectual freedom in academic libraries. ALA (2006) noted that some libraries block access to certain materials by placing physical or virtual barriers between the user and those materials. For example, materials are sometimes labeled for content or placed in a “locked case,” “adults only,” “restricted shelf,” or “high-demand” collection. Access to certain materials is sometimes restricted to protect them from theft or mutilation, or because of statutory authority or institutional mandate. Physical restrictions and content filtering of library resources and services may generate psychological, service, or language skills barriers to access as well. ALA (2006), American Library Association Office for Intellectual Freedom (2007), Yaya (2013) have identified censorship, lack of patron privacy and confidentiality, corporatization, internet filtering, lack of explicitly articulated principles on intellectual freedom are the bane of awareness and use of intellectual freedom in academic libraries.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted descriptive survey method, the descriptive survey to seek the opinions of Library and Information Scientists on their awareness and use of intellectual freedom; whereby the consensus of their opinions provides the needed solution to the problem understudy (Issa, 2012). Its population comprise of Head of Academic Libraries and staff of Acquisition Department in academic libraries in Ilorin metropolis. It uses purposive sampling to deliberately select 55 qualified librarians across the libraries understudied, while questionnaire is used to collect data from the respondents and the data collected is coded by using SPSS and analysed into simple percentage and frequency table.

### ***Demographic Information of respondents***

<b>Name of institution</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Al-hikmah University	7	13.5%
Crown-Hill University	4	7.7%
Kinsey College of Education	4	7.7%
Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies	5	9.6%
Kwara State College of Education	5	9.6%
Kwara State polytechnic	6	11.5%
Kwara State University	6	11.5%
Michael Imodu Institute for Labour Studies	5	9.6%
Muhyideen College of Education	3	5.8%

The polytechnic Igbo-owu	4	7.7%
University of Ilorin-	3	5.8%
<b>Type of institution</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Federal	9	17.3%
State	22	42.3%
Private	21	40.4%
<b>Which of the following describe your institution?</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
University	20	38.5%
Polytechnic	10	19.2%
College of education	17	32.7%
Monotechinc	5	9.6%
<b>Please indicate your position in the library</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Academic librarian	10	19.2%
Staff in acquisition department	42	80.0%
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	26	50.0%
Female	26	50.0%
<b>Age Range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
25-30yrs	9	17.3%
31-45yrs	12	23.1%
46-50yrs	10	19.2%
51-55yrs	5	9.6%
56yrs & above	16	30.8%
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Degree	33	63.5%
M.Sc	19	36.5%
Ph.D	0	0.0%

The table above reveals that respondents of the study were from 11 institutions, whereby 7 (13.5%) were from Al-Hikmah University, 4 (7.7%) were from Crown-Hill University, 4 (7.7%) were from Kinsey College of Education, 5 (9.96%) were from Kwara State College of Arabic and Islamic Legal Studies, 5 (9.96) were from Kwara State College of Education, 6 (11.5%) were from Kwara State polytechnic, 6 (11.5%) were from Kwara State University, Malete, 5 (9.6%) were from Michael Imodu Institute for Labour Studies, 3 (5.8%) were from Muhyideen College of Education, 4 (7.7%) were from The polytechnic Igbo-Owu and 3 (5.8%) were from University of Ilorin. This indicates that the larger percent of the respondents were from Al-Hikmah University.

On the types of institution of the respondents 9 (17.3%) were Federal, while 22 (42.3%) were State, and 21 (40.4%) were Private institution. This indicates that majority of the respondents were from State institutions' academic libraries. The demographic information on description of the institution of respondents who took part in the study stated that, 20 (38.5%) were University,

while 10 (19.2%) were Polytechnic, 17 (32.7%) were Colleges of Education and 5 (9.6%) were Monotechnics. This indicates that participant of this study were more from University.

In addition, 10 (19.2%) of the respondents were academic librarians while 42 (80.8%) were staff in acquisition department. There show that the higher number of participants were acquisition staff. Also 26 (50.0%) of the respondent were male and 26 (50.0%) of the respondent were also female. This indicates that both gender took part in the study were equal. The age range of the respondent who participate in the study, 25-30 years were 9 (17.3%), 31-45years were 12 (23.1%), 46-50years were 10 (19.2%), 51-55years were 5 (9.6%), while 16 (30.8%) fall between the age of 56 years and above. This indicates that the higher percentage were within the range 56 years and above. On the educational qualification of the respondent, 33 (63.5%) of the respondent had Degree while 19 (36.5%) had Master Degree, and while none of the respondent had Ph.D which showed 0 (0.00%). This indicated that majority of the respondents of the study were Master Degree holders.

**Research Question One: Are you aware of the concept of intellectual freedom in your library?**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	52	100.0%
No	0	0.0%
Not Sure	0	0.0%

It is apparent and clearly stated in table above that 52 (100%) of the respondents are aware of intellectual freedom. This indicates all of the respondent are aware of intellectual freedom in their library.

**Does your library refer to or use any of these statements or polices of intellectual freedom?**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act	21	40.4%
Library of Bill of Rights	8	15.4%
Freedom to Read Statement	12	23.1%
Freedom to View Statement	7	13.5%
Intellectual Freedom Principle for Academic Libraries	19	36.5%
IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom	13	25.0%

To investigate the degree to which intellectual freedom is officially used in academic libraries, respondents were asked if they include intellectual freedom in their collection development policy. 28 (53.8%) of the respondents indicated that their library includes intellectual freedom in their collection development policy, while 23 (44.2%) of the respondents that their library doesn't include intellectual freedom in their collection development policy and 1 (1.9%) is "not sure".

In addition to the types of intellectual freedom principles used in the libraries understudied, the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act was the most frequently used document with 21 (40.0%), followed by the Intellectual Freedom Principle for Academic Libraries with 19 (36.5%), IFLA Statement on Libraries and Intellectual Freedom with 13 (25.0%), Freedom to Read Statement with 12 (23.1%), Library of Bill of Right with 8 (15.4%), and Freedom to View Statement with 7 (13.5%).

**Research Question Three: Which of the following identify the importance of intellectual freedom in academic libraries?**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Right to access information in the library without any form of restrictions.	41	78.8%
Freedom of opinion and expression.	13	25.0%
Equal access to all information for all in academic community with no discrimination.	39	75.0%
Right to personal privacy and confidentiality	16	30.8%

The above table to try to know overall important intellectual freedom, respondents were to identify the importance of intellectual freedom from the following perspectives: 41 (78.8%) indicated that intellectual freedom in academic libraries is important to right to access information in the library without any form of restriction, which it the most common term recognized by the respondents as the concept of intellectual freedom, followed by equal access to all information for all in academic community with no discrimination with 39 (75.0%), right to personal privacy and confidentiality with 16 (30.8%), and freedom of opinion and expression with 13 (25.0%).

**Research Question Four: What are challenges associated with intellectual freedom in your library?**

Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Censorship	42	80.8%
Internet filtering	26	50.0%
Privacy and confidentiality	10	19.2%
Academic freedom	20	38.5%
Meeting rooms, research carrels and exhibit spaces	23	44.2%

In the table above, respondents were asked to indicate some of the challenges associated with intellectual freedom in their library. Censorship is the most frequent challenges associated with intellectual freedom in academic libraries 42 (80.8%) of respondents indicating this. Internet filtering was the next most common challenges with 26 (50.0%), followed by meeting rooms, research carrels and exhibit spaces with 23 (44.2%), academic freedom with 20 (38.5%) and privacy/confidentiality with 10 (19.2%).

## **Discussion of the Findings**

Academic libraries have to take upon themselves the responsibility of providing information for all in the academic community with no discrimination on the basis of age, race, gender, values, sexual orientation, cultural or ethnic background, gender identity, physical, cognitive or learning disability, economic status, religious beliefs, or views. However, it is stated in MLA Intellectual Freedom panel (2017) that, intellectual freedom cannot bring itself into existence. Individual librarian and library staff must apply these principles in our daily activities, activities such as material selection, reference and circulation services, collection evaluation, collection building, providing access to electronic resources and acquiring material from other organization and institutions, in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Based on the first research question, the findings of this study indicate that the entire librarians understudied are aware of intellectual freedom. Observations revealed that there is no formal training on intellectual freedom in academic libraries. This showed that academic librarians and acquisition staff are familiar with intellectual freedom based on their advanced study in their field and online awareness on intellectual freedom. The relative lack of training on intellectual freedom in academic libraries show that being aware of intellectual freedom are not basically thought of in the libraries understudied. This is supported by Oltmann (2017) whose finding shows that staff training did not include intellectual freedom in academic libraries. If academic libraries do not incorporate training in intellectual freedom at their library, library collections may not be as diverse, comprehensive and broad as they ought to be.

The third research question of this study reveals that majority of the academic libraries refer to Freedom of Information (FOI), The Law of the Federation of Nigeria and Intellectual Freedom Principles for Academic Libraries: An Interpretation of the Library Bill of Rights developed by American Library Association [ALA] (2006). These principles articulate the application of intellectual freedom specifically to an academic library context. This finding corroborates Oltmann (2017) study reports that some academic libraries have separate, distinct intellectual freedom policies, while others prefer to incorporate intellectual freedom as part of collection development.

Going further, it was revealed that the librarians understudied considered intellectual freedom important in academic libraries because it guaranteed freedom to access to information in the library without any form of restrictions and provide equal access to all information for all in academic community with no discrimination. Their position is supported by Sutton (2001) in the article titled Advocacy for Intellectual Freedom in an academic library. It stated that to a library, intellectual freedom takes the form of the right to receive ideas, that is, access to information. Library is first and foremost a place to access information, the principle of intellectual freedom becomes central to the mission of the library profession.

The findings finally reveal that challenges associated with intellectual freedom in academic libraries are censorship, internet filtering, privacy and confidentiality, academic freedom and meeting rooms, research carrels and exhibit spaces. The findings revealed that censorship,

followed by internet filtering, meeting rooms, research carrels and exhibit spaces, and academic freedom are the most challenges associated with intellectual freedom in academic libraries.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Considering the fact that intellectual freedom is perceived mostly in public libraries, school libraries and not that significant in academic library; it has, however, been discovered that intellectual freedom is critical to selection and development of academic library collections and services to meet the tripartite objectives of teaching, learning and research which are applicable to every academic institution. It was concluded that majority of the academic librarians and staff in acquisition department of academic libraries were well aware of intellectual freedom in academic library, but intellectual freedom issues are not often or regularly addressed in academic library. It is related to the fact that majority of the respondents find intellectual freedom somewhat important in their libraries.

Based on the foregoing, this study hereby make the following recommendations:

1. Academic libraries should ensure that staff training should include intellectual freedom, this will prepare library staff to explain and defend intellectual freedom within the academic libraries.
2. Policies and statements of principle on intellectual freedom endorsed by appropriate institutional governing bodies should be referred to or use by the academic libraries in the interest of promoting intellectual freedom in academic libraries.
3. Academic libraries should ensure that development of library collection in support of their institution objectives, based on the interest, information needs and enlightenment of all people in academic community.
4. Academic libraries should be more proactive in addressing intellectual freedom issue in academic libraries, they should set up a solid foundation of staff awareness of intellectual freedom within the academic community.
5. Academic community should ensure that the selection and accessibility of library materials and services is governed by professional considerations and not by moral, political and religious views. They should purchase, consolidate and circulate information generously and oppose any form of censorship.
6. Academic libraries should ensure that meeting rooms, research carrels and exhibit spaces available all in academic community on an impartial basis, irrespective of the beliefs or attachments of individuals or groups demanding their use.

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