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**Security Problems of Academic Libraries in Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

Librarians across Nigeria are gradually more concerned with the safety and physical integrity of important intellectual property or properties. Security and prevention of crimes in libraries more specifically academic libraries are necessary library duties for librarians to accomplish. Due to security breaches in university libraries, users at times are not able to get the information resources needed and this makes the library ineffective in satisfying users' information needs. The security of collections in a library embraces a large number of responsibilities. The cost of acquiring processing, and maintaining collections are soaring. If information materials are stolen or damaged or mutilated, can be difficult, if not impossible, to replace. The common threats in all the libraries most especially academic libraries in Nigeria include book theft, mutilation of library materials, and non-return of borrowed information resources, it was found that the major cause of security problems was the high cost of books and periodicals, it is also found that the major source of loss in the academic library was stealing the library materials. Finally, it was discovered that the highest measure taken to reduce loss was to employ qualified security staff. This article, therefore, highlights Concept of security problems, Security problems of academic libraries, Library building decisions, and security problems, Loss through theft of book and periodicals, Mutilation of books and periodicals, Reasons for mutilation, Problems caused by book theft, mutilation, and vandalism, Measures to safeguard library materials, Summary, and recommendations

**Keywords:** library, academic, theft, security, mutilation, vandalism, materials, information, users, resources

### **1.1 CONCEPT OF SECURITY PROBLEM**

The issue of security affects the entire library community, crime is increasing at a spectacular rate and criminal activity of one sort or another is now affecting every type of library and information service.

There is need for the security of the library or security measures, which includes physical considerations, building, stock, or personnel issues for staff and users in the library. Due to the unpleasant attitude toward crime in the library, managers can be persuaded to take the question of security seriously; the battle against library crime is already half-worn.

Therefore, the question of security in libraries generates some intractable problems for the crime prevention expert and it is apparent that book theft is not the only issue that gives the cause for concern so library managers are supposed to devise security strategies that will create calm atmosphere in which the library user is at ease, while the wrongdoers feel vulnerable and anxious.

## **2.1 SECURITY PROBLEMS OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

University Library collections are broad and varied; they support access to the collection, and borrowing. Privileges are an important means of giving access to library collections for study, research and teaching purposes. Goff (2005) calls the library the only centralized location where emerging information technologies can be combined with the knowledge, and resources in a user-focused services-rich environment that supports today's social and educational patterns of

learning to teach, and for research. Library services can only be offered through the availability of library collections.

Anunobi and Okoye (2005) state that academic libraries are faced with hybrid challenges of managing resources and are challenged to acquire the necessary skill. One challenge is the issue of collection security of print and non-print resources.

### **2.1.1 LIBRARY BUILDING DECISION AND SECURITY PROBLEM**

In most cases the most important aspects of library security problems are often overlooked, one is how the library building was designed. The federal and state university discovered that building design was responsible for the loss, and for this reason, there is a guideline which states that whether the stocks are open or closed the design of the library must be so that there will be one controlled exist through which all library users must pass before reaching the exterior door.

According to power (1984), He said that his advice in building a new library is security will be discussed and included in any negotiation with architectural firms. Akpata (1980) said that in academic libraries in Nigeria, books some time fly out through the windows and their fellow students will be waiting to collect them. He observed that this is usually performed by partners in crime, one of the students will be inside the library and the other one will be outside the library.

In his statement he also discovered that a greater number of books are lost through the entrance and exit, he also explained that students hide books in their jackets. Nwafor (1989) said that his

observation comprises of two methods through which books are stolen from the library by the students. One is by throwing books, down through the windows, and then there is by getting pregnant, while their men student load their shirts with books. As Nwafor said that the prevention of multiple entrance buildings causes security problems

Akpata (1980) said that the existence of multiple entrances make effective checking very difficult and therefore aid the loss of books in general, he also said that it is very important to note the need to ensure the library building is designed so that it will aid prevention of theft in the library. He also emphasized that Ohio state university has an estimated 1.0% of the library collection has been lost through theft simply because of the library building design.

### **2.1.2 LOSS THROUGH THEFT OF BOOKS AND PERIODICALS.**

According to Oche (2000) made mention of the following reasons for theft, are the introduction of new courses, inadequate reading tables, and chairs, lack of loan policy, inadequate availability of books and other information sources, the attitude of staff members, inadequate staff members.

According to Gojeh (1986) in his own contribution, book theft in libraries are due to poor services to users, lack of photocopying facilities within the library, poor security, lack of knowledge of readers, and the general feeling among others, is that the library books belong to no one, insufficient multiple copies in the library. Some of these causes of theft and mutilation have also been identified as typical of the Nigeria factors and situation.

Bassey (2000) attributed the causes of security problems in the library especially book theft and mutilation of the information resources by unusually large number of students in a class. When about 100 students in a class are sharing three or four books, the tendency is for them to steal,

hide or mutilate the materials.

Ngoka (2000) said that in this own observation, there is a little thing the library can do to prevent people from carrying out their evil intentions; this has to be done by not opening the access to the library materials. He also noted that free access to library materials is accepted, but on the other hand, the freedom of access costs no small amount of money, in mutilated books and periodicals. ... He stated that as a profession he is committed to an open policy of free access to the library materials if a selfish and dishonest user of the library is caught he must be prepared to accept the consequence.

### **2.1.3 MUTILATION OF BOOKS AND PERIODICAL**

Mutilation of books and periodicals have been regarded as another form of theft, which involves the removal or tearing of necessary parts of books and periodicals. Taylor (2000) points out that time and after time students complain that every article they locate pages has been cut off from the periodicals in the library. He also observed that the books which are not subject to cutting with a razor are more subject to being underlined and are made aesthetically displeasing and distracting to the readers.

He also said that reading an underlined book is just like listening to a warped or cracked record. Simmeman, (1993) said that the most commonly practiced form of mutilation is the cutting diagrams from books. The mutilation of documents and periodicals as he pointed out is a very serious problem, in the sense that the impact may be useful, but it deprives others of the materials, they may need.

Mutilation or vandalism occurs when users knowingly tear, mark, or otherwise damage or destroy materials. Delinquent library users and staff have devised many ways of illegally removing information materials or resources from the library. Users engage in various delinquent acts using different methods. Among these methods are the deliberate keeping of borrowed books beyond the due date, defacing of books etc. Hiding of books for the purpose of monopolizing it is also a delinquent act (Hant, 2003). Lorensen (1996) observes that mutilation takes many forms, ranging from underlining and highlighting text, tearing and removing pages, and tempering the content, Lorensen identifies several causes for mutilation including students' dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library policies, lack of knowledge of replacement costs, lack of concern for the needs of others, few students think of library mutilation and theft as a crime etc.

Momodu (2002), asserts that libraries have faced varying degrees of delinquency in the use of their resource. The extent of the problem varies from one library to another, but it seems to be universal...

Mutilation of library materials in the institute of management and technology has assumed a wasteful proportion than the serial librarians were considering removing the partitioned tables and replacing them with flat-topped ones, this will enable the staff on duty to keep a close watch on the users.

### **3.1 PROBLEMS CAUSED BY BOOK THEFT, MUTILATION AND VANDALISM**

The effect of these three core problems on the libraries cannot be overemphasized. Mutilation and book theft occur in every type of library especially academic libraries.

Their effect is more widespread ( the mutilators and thieves), and have caused approximately a quarter of students who used university libraries everywhere, inconvenience and frustration they encounter in their various research in the library.

Studies carried out by eminent scholars show that library management is often left with the alternative of spending funds that could have been used in developing collections in replacing already acquired collections that have been stolen or mutilated. The need of employing more staff has also affected the budget of libraries, as they bring more personnel into the security section to checkmate theft and book mutilation.

It is notable to say that most libraries have remained non-functional because they cannot meet the desires and needs of their users due to problems caused by the vandalism of their libraries. Vandalism is deliberate, mischievous, or malicious destruction or damage of property, vandalism could be in the form of writing on the doors, and windows, destruction of furniture, attacking staff in the library using different language on them, snatching of notice board, entering the library without entry qualification. The case of voting in more funds for the related materials damaged by vandalism affects the general growth and security of the library, thereby making the library to be far from the desired objectives of its establishment.

### **3.2 MEASURES TO SAFEGUARD LIBRARY MATERIALS.**

To safeguard library materials Knot (1994) reported on the installation of a security system in the library. Bishops, UK prescribed the planning of the camera installation, the taking of the stock, and the changes made to the library layout. He emphasized the importance of the angle and distance of the computer, and distance from the security gate and noted the routines involved in

working with the system. He gave advice on finding culprits and dealing with helpful pupils. He decided that the system has been extremely successful. This can also be applied to academic libraries.

Okon (1995) said that theft in libraries can be controlled through administrative policies on security control. He pointed out that the availability of materials is of prime importance in the discussion of theft prevention. The number of theft will obviously be reduced, thus the library will co-ordinate the need for certain books with the number of copies to be purchased.

Aziagba and Edet (2008) identify disasters as natural and man-made, we have little or no control over the natural things which come usually as a result of floods, landslides, earthquakes, storms, cyclones, or hurricanes, all of these have been expended by universities in different countries.

He also said that the signature and address of patrons wishing to use these books within the library would be required, the second philosophy which will be the librarians' alternative policy has increased the accessibility, this can also be done by librarians.

Initially an increase in books, on open stock expending interlibrary loan devices and lengthening the loan period, and open stock preferable to be closed. Stocks in this regard give the reader the choice to browse through the shelves to see what he wants.

Various measures and solutions have been employed in different libraries to control the loss of library materials.

Stock surveillance and familiarity with the library patrons and their habits, and the proper relationship between existing and guard status are measures to lesson.

### **3.3 CONCLUSION**

Clearly the extent of hidden crime in the library is great, if not greater than that in the outside world. Crimes against staff, against other readers and against the book whether of theft or mutilation, there are no limits to the forms or type of criminal actions.

### **3.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are therefore made for the improvement of the security arrangement in Nigerian academic libraries.

For the fact that some libraries have more than one exits it makes it difficult for security guards to concentrate on all exits, there should be one exit, so as to enhance effective security. Also library administration should pursue unreturned books as quickly as possible after two copies of overdue notice have been sent out, it should be compulsory made to return the books since we could not entirely prevent people from stealing, mutilating and hiring library books.

Sufficient reading spaces, chairs and tables should be made available in the library to accommodate greater number of people who want to use the library.

Photocopying facilities should be made available in the library as a matter of necessity, this will enable the user have access to the library materials and to the extent to reduce the problem of theft and mutilation in the library.

Again materials borrowed by any staff should be properly recorded in the request five with the full bibliographic details of the books given.

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