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# Strategies of Curbing Deterioration of Undergraduate projects: A Case Study of Six Selected Colleges of Education Libraries in Southern Nigeria

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# **Strategies of Curbing Deterioration of Undergraduate projects: A Case Study of Six Selected Colleges of Education Libraries in Southern Nigeria.**

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigated the strategies of curbing deterioration of library materials: A case study of long essay preservation in selected Colleges of Education libraries in Southern Nigeria. Particularly, it examined the stock level of Undergraduate projects, nature and extent of deterioration of Undergraduate projects, extent of use of ICT and the level of support given preservation by senior management. The study adopted a survey research design and the instrument used was structured questionnaire administered to librarians, library officers and library assistants. Six Colleges of Education libraries were randomly selected from South West Nigeria. Ninety (90) respondents participated. The population sample was 15 libraries comprising librarians and library assistants. Ninety questionnaires were administered and were returned. All the questionnaires were valid for analysis. Descriptive Statistics of tables were used in analysing the data collected through questionnaire and were further subjected to statistical analysis using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study reveals that there are indeed incidences of deterioration, the most prominent being broken spine of projects, mutilation of the projects and vandalism of the projects. Furthermore, results show that none of the libraries has digitised the undergraduate projects. Also, 24(27%) out of the sampled libraries are automated while 28(31%) have internet facilities. Based on the finding, the following recommendations among others were made towards curbing deterioration of library materials in the College libraries: adoption of the digital method of*

*preservation, recruitment of adequate and competently trained manpower on preservation, provision of adequate infrastructure and adequate provision of funds for college libraries to enhance effective preservation of Undergraduate projects.*

**KEYWORDS:** Strategies, Deterioration, Undergraduate projects, College libraries, Southern Nigeria.

## **Introduction**

The library is an indispensable facility of any educational institution. A well- equipped library is therefore very crucial to the education and general information needs of the public. This is why the thought of stocking library with adequate information resources readily comes to mind when an institution is to be established. Academic library which is one of the types of libraries is library attached to tertiary institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, colleges of agriculture, colleges of technology and also research institutes (Akporhonor, 2005).

Preservation is the action taken to anticipate, prevent, stop, or slow deterioration. It can also be described as the art of anticipating and preventing decay (Baker, 1981). The library plays a crucial role of protecting and preserving information-bearing materials from distortion, deterioration, and eventual loss. Preservation according to Smith (1993) is the art of managing risk to the intellectual and physical heritage of a community. Preservation is a branch of library and information science concerned with maintaining or restoring access to artefacts, documents and records through the study, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of decay and damage.

Preservation as a collection management strategy has been relegated if not totally neglected by librarians and documentalists for a very long time in Africa, especially in Nigeria. This underscores the indispensability of preserving and conserving library materials to ensure their constant availability to library users. Therefore, knowledge of the causes of deterioration of library materials is essential for all librarians and others who are concerned about the preservation and conservation of information stored in books and non-books formats.

Preserving for the sake of preserving is useless and giving access lavishly to all documents without taking into account preservation measures will, sooner or later, lead to making the documentary heritage inaccessible for future generations (Varlamoff, 2005). Also, Singh and Kaur (2009) stressed that preservation and access to knowledge and information are the main mandate of academic libraries alongside supporting the mission of their parent institutions which is teaching and research. For decades, librarians have tended to mix up preservation with conservation and all efforts have concentrated on the curative treatment of single documents. Conservation and restoration are

the most central activities of preservation; they are concerned with the physical maintenance and repair of documentary material.

Colleges of Education libraries in Nigeria today face a lot of problems owing to the deterioration of their holdings at varying levels. Notably among these problems are the library collections, especially paper-based, which are acquired without allocation of adequate resources, (financial and human) to address their future deterioration, lack of proper recognition of the need for preservation and restoration of information resources. Most library managers fail to realize that preservation of information resources is a component of the issues they have to contend with. In addition, no training is given to library staff and there is a generally low awareness about preservation issues especially on the deteriorative tendencies of information materials and what could be done to prevent their deterioration. In some cases, libraries do not have preservation policies and as a result, there is neither preservation plan nor program to ensure safekeeping of library collections.

Undergraduate project is a compulsory empirical research undertaken by undergraduates both in Nigerian Universities and Colleges of Education that are affiliated to Nigerian Universities. It is written under the supervision of project supervisors. It is divided into five chapters, which are: Introduction, Review of related literature, Research design and procedure, Analysis of data and discussion of results, Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations. The outcome of the research is submitted in form of reports to the Institutions.

In higher institutions of learning for example, very limited copies of the undergraduate projects are kept in the library in most cases a copy each of the student's projects is being kept as the library copy. Once this only copy is defaced, torn, mutilated, burnt, stolen or damaged in any form, the valuable findings would be lost to the library users thereby rendering the research findings of no use and benefits to the public. The study is aimed at investigating the preservation of undergraduate projects in six selected Colleges of Education libraries in South West, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Issues on preservation of library materials especially undergraduate projects in recent times have been of great concerns to librarians in higher institutions. This is because these projects unlike other library materials like books, encyclopaedia, magazines, journals, newspapers etc, where many copies are produced by the publishers or producers, only one copy is retained or kept in the library in the

case of the Undergraduate project. This only copy is therefore needed to be adequately preserved in view of the fact that it may not be replaced if it is damaged or stolen.

However, these projects amount to large volume which might make their preservation a bit difficult. The researcher has over the years observed that some of these projects are being defaced; back of some could only be seen while the content could not be found. Sometimes the whole copy would be missing out of the stock. Large numbers of Undergraduate projects are deteriorating in many Colleges libraries which will hinder long term access to them when they are later needed by users. Could this be attributed to poor preservation techniques and practices? In the light of the above, the researcher intends to find out the preservation practices and techniques of preserving undergraduate projects in six selected Colleges of Education libraries in South West, Nigeria.

### **Objectives of the study**

The main objective of this study is to find out the strategies of curbing deterioration of undergraduate projects in selected Colleges of Education Libraries in Southern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. examine the stock level of undergraduate projects in the selected COE libraries in Southern Nigeria;
2. examine the practices and techniques for the preservation of undergraduate projects;
3. investigate the nature and extent of deterioration of Undergraduate projects in the selected COE libraries in Southern Nigeria;
4. find out the extent of use of ICT in the preservation efforts in the selected COE libraries in Southern Nigeria;
5. find out the existence and coverage of preservation policies in the selected COE libraries in Southern Nigeria; and
6. examine the level of support given preservation by senior management in the selected COE libraries in Southern Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the stock level of undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries in Southern Nigeria?
2. What are the practices and techniques used in the preservation of undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries?
3. What is the nature and extent of deterioration of undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries?

4. What is the degree of information and communication technology (ICT) utilization in the preservation activities in the selected College libraries?
5. What policies exist on preservation of undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries and the coverage?
6. What is the level of support given preservation by senior management?

### **Literature Review**

The processes of preservation, conservation and restoration are applied to safeguard the library materials from further decay and deterioration. Preservation is a pressing concern for librarians in all parts of the world. From time immemorial librarians have seen the need to conserve and preserve their materials. The conservation and preservation of library materials have engaged the thoughts and actions of many librarians from the earliest times. They realize the need to preserve the world's memories. In Nigeria, however, preservation has yet to take its actual place in most academic libraries. The reason for this is a lack of funding. Madubuike (1998) emphasizes the significant role that libraries play in the social, economic, and political development of a nation. They are the “intellectual brickyards” of our civilizations, fundamental to survival and growth. It is important to take adequate care of library resources. Preservation is the process in which all actions are taken to check and retard deterioration whereas conservation includes proper diagnosis of the decayed material, timely curative treatment and appropriate prevention from further decay (Jyotshina Sahoo 2005).

### **Training of library staff on preservation**

Ducker as cited in Ekwelem (2011) sees training as a systematic process of altering the behaviour and/or attitudes of employees in a direction to increase organizational goal. Librarians, irrespective of their levels in the hierarchy, must possess the conceptual. Similarly, Appleby (1991) reiterates that the purpose or objectives of any training programme should reflect the basic knowledge for the job which usually comes from education. He also noted that a good training programme should include skill and experience acquisition it should include development and conditions of attitudes and patterns of behaviour of employees.

Much writing on the state of professional librarian’s training in most Third World Countries including Nigeria constitutes a library of woes, which can be summarized as lack of equipment, poor funding, and inadequate manpower. These are interlinked and are generally blamed on a variety of problems external to the library itself, such as lack of government policies supporting libraries,

this of course lead to poor services to our users. As rightly observed by Ogunseye (1984) “developing countries such as Nigeria” cannot afford the luxury of training passive librarians only. According to him, we need librarians who are also information specialists and information brokers.

As stressed by Oketunyi (2001); Singh (2004); Ekere and Ekere (2008), the graduates and postgraduates turned out by library schools do not possess adequate skills and expertise to interact confidently with Information Technology (IT) specialists, evaluate what is recommended by them and fulfil their requirements. Singh (2004) further opined that the developments in library and information curricula have serious implications for library and information science education. As a result, it has become imperative to incorporate appropriate components of Information Technology in LIS education if the profession intends to retain its identity. He further observed that few library schools have responded to this challenge by expanding teaching areas and including integration of computer applications into their information systems in order to prepare for the turning out of professionals that are capable of functioning in non-traditional settings.

Training has long been regarded as the bedrock of achieving quality productivity in any profession. However, Ajidahun (2007) argued most convincingly that there are professional librarians in the university libraries in Nigeria whose knowledge of library automation has been rendered obsolete owing to lack of training and re-training courses, which development poses challenges to their coping with modern library practices. This unpleasant trend is inimical to the development of library automation in Nigerian university libraries.

Silver (1981) comes up with ten training techniques as follow:

1. on-the job training;
2. vestibule training;
3. classroom/lecture method;
4. case study, in-basket, case history method;
5. self-study;
6. electronic teaching media;
7. simulations, games and role playing;
8. T groups, encounter groups, and sensitivity training;
9. schools and outside seminars and workshops; and
10. Consultants and special training.

Similarly, Appleby (1991) identified the following as the basic primary methods of employee training: on-the-job-training, apprenticeship training, vestibule training and classroom training methods. Also Penn state university libraries provided the following preservation training for library staff: bindery, replacement pages, book repair, deacidification, encapsulation, consultation, disaster response and recovery.

For any preservation programme to succeed in libraries and archives there must be adequate and well-trained manpower (Ngulube, 2001). This is because preservation and conservation of information resources is a specialized field of knowledge that requires information professionals who understand the physical and chemical nature of the materials in their library and archive holdings. Popoola (2003) advocates the need to expose librarians and archivists to conservation and restoration practices during their training. Akussah (1991) (cited in Popoola (2003) suggests that such a training programme should include, operating environmental control, storage and housing, operating environmental systems, designing new buildings or renovation of buildings. Africa has not been able to train students adequately in the area of conservation and restoration of information resources due to lack of functional laboratories where students could undergo practical works. Added to this is the problem of inappropriate buildings, poor power supply and water supply that pose great threat to preservation and conservation of information resources in African countries (Kemoni & Wamukoya, 2000).

### **Existence of Preservation Policies**

Most African countries do not have a national information policy which makes the formulation of preservation and conservation policies in the libraries and information centers out of the question (Wamukoya & Mutula, 2005). Kemoni (1996) cited in Popoola (2003), reviewed the conservation programmes of archive materials in Kenya and found that the conservation departments did not have a disaster control plan. The absence of such a plan means that in the event of a disaster, they would not be in a position to respond to the disaster with the urgency that is required. Forde (1997) cited in Ngulube (2005) described preservation policies for cultural materials as indispensable tools for organisations that are committed to facilitating the survival of materials in their custody. Policies are important because they set out goals to be achieved as well as guidelines for implementing them.

On the other hand, codified and stipulated or prescriptive policies facilitate a creative allocation of funds and staff, and specify other aspects of implementation and monitoring. Lack of



preservation policies was also highlighted in the UK as a factor that hindered effective preservation management (Feather & Eden 1997). Although the existence of preservation policies does not guarantee their implementation. Granted, without funding and personnel with expertise, the implementation of preservation policies would be extremely difficult, but all the same efforts must be made to formulate policies that encompass all activities that are fundamental to the preservation of documentary materials into the future.

### **Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprises librarians, library officers and library assistants from six Colleges of Education libraries. The major instrument used for the collection of data was a structured questionnaire. Out of 126 librarians, library officers and library assistants in the college libraries, 90 questionnaires administered and all were returned and valid for analysis.

The sampling technique used was simple random sampling and the sample size was 15 library workers comprising librarians, library officers and library assistants. Data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **Findings**

**Table 1: Selected Colleges of Education**

<b>Libraries</b>	<b>Librarians</b>	<b>Library officers</b>	<b>Library assistance</b>	<b>Total</b>
Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo	10	-	5	15
Osun state College of Education, Ila Orangun	2	5	8	15
Osun state College of Education, Ilesha	3	5	7	15
Michael Otedola College of Pry Education, Epe	4	4	7	15
Ekiti state College of Education, Ikere Ekiti	4	5	6	15
Emmanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo	5	4	6	15

Table 1 reveals that 90 staff were used for the study in the six colleges of Education in Southern Nigeria.

**Research Question 1:** What is the stock level of undergraduate projects in the selected libraries?

**Table 2: Stock levels of undergraduate projects in libraries**

S/N	STOCK LEVEL	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1.	1-20000	36	40%
2.	20,001-40,000	41	46%
3.	40,001-60,000	8	9%
4	60,001-80,000	3	3%
5	Above 80,000	2	2%

Table 2 shows the stock levels of Undergraduate projects in the libraries. (1-20000 (40%), 20,001-40,000 (46%), 40,001-60,000 (9%), 60,001-80,000 (3%), Above 80,000 (2%). The highest stock level of Undergraduate projects is in between 20,001-40,000

**Research Question 2:** what are the practices and techniques used in the preservation of undergraduate projects?

**Table 3 : Preservation techniques for preserving undergraduate projects**

S/N	ITEMS	VERY OFTEN		OFTEN		OCCASSI ONALLY		NEVER		$\bar{X}$	S.D
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
1.	Lamination	16	18	14	16	2	2	58	64	1.15	0.19
2.	Microfilming	2	2	11	12	7	8	70	78	0.37	0.15
3.	Deacidification	-	-	-	-	3	3	87	97	0.08	0.24
4.	Binding	-	-	7	8	17	19	66	73	1.58	0.16
5.	Encapsulation	1	1	1	1	7	8	81	90	0.18	0.29
6.	Cleaning & Dusting	65	72	23	26	2	2	-	-	2.58	0.3
7	Photocopying	63	70	16	18	9	10	2	2	2.43	0.35
8.	Shelving projects to allow free air flow	84	93	6	7	-	-	-	-	3.00	0.71
9.	Installing air-conditioners	-	-	-	-	7	8	83	92	0.07	0.31

10.	Provisions of adequate security system to prevent theft, mutilation and defacing of undergraduate projects	62	69	25	28	3	3	-	-	2.32	0.32
11	Use of insecticide and insect repellent for projects preservation	18	20	6	7	61	68	5	5	1.37	0.15
12	Digitization	-	-	-	-	-		90	7	1.05	0.21

Table 3 shows that the most used preservation techniques for preserving undergraduate projects in the college libraries is by shelving projects to allow free air flow, with the mean and S.D of 3.00/0.71. This is followed by Cleaning and Dusting with the mean and S.D of 2.58/0.30. Photocopying the projects to have duplicates followed with 2.43/0.35 Provisions of adequate security system to prevent theft, mutilation and defacing of undergraduate projects came next with 2.32/0.32. However, the least techniques of preservation of the projects are deacidification with 0.08/0.24 and installing air- conditioners with 0.07/0.31.

**Research Question 3:** What is the nature and extent of deterioration of undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries?

**Table 4: The nature and extent of deterioration of Undergraduate projects**

S/N	ITEMS	VERY GREAT EXTENT		MODERATE EXTENT		LITTLE EXTENT		NONE	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Mutilation of undergraduate Projects	45	50	24	27	20	22	1	1
2.	Vandalization of undergraduate projects	42	46	27	30	16	18	5	6
3.	Brittle undergraduate projects	34	38	24	27	30	33	2	2
4.	Broken Spine of	47	52	28	31	14	16	1	1

	undergraduate projects								
5.	Projects becoming torn	38	42	28	31	18	20	6	7

Table 4 shows that broken spine of projects was the highest nature of deterioration of undergraduate projects in the selected college libraries with 47(52%). This was followed by mutilation of undergraduate projects having 45(50%) while Vandalization of undergraduate projects is next with 42 (46%) is next. the least nature of deterioration of undergraduate projects is brittle undergraduate projects with 34 (38%)

**Research Question 4:** What is the degree of information Communication Technology (ICT) utilisation in the preservation activities of the selected Colleges of Education libraries?

**Table 5: ICT Utilization in the preservation activities of undergraduate projects**

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%	$\bar{X}$	S.D
1.	Availability of digital resources in libraries	23	25	67	75	1.25	0.72
2.	Awareness of Undergraduate projects digitisation	85	94	5	6	2.32	1.64
3.	Opinions of staff on how digitization could help in preserving undergraduate projects	90	100	-	-	3.43	2.51
4.	Opinions of staff on how digitization could help to provide quick access to undergraduate projects	90	100	-	-	3.43	2.51
5.	Library automation	24	27	66	73	1.4	0.81
6.	Availability of internet facilities in libraries	28	31	62	69	1.38	0.85
7.	Availability of computer facilities in the serial section to access Undergraduate projects online	-	-	90	100	0.73	0.51

In order to identify ICT utilization in the preservation activities of undergraduate projects,

respondents were asked to rate some ICT preservation activities. The findings from table above were made. Opinions of staff on how digitization could help to preserving undergraduate projects and how digitization could help to provide quick access to undergraduate projects were ranked highest by the mean score rating 3.43, 3.43 respectively. Almost all the staff indicated their awareness of undergraduate projects digitization with mean score rating 2.32. Lest than one quarter of the staff indicated that their libraries are automated while about one quarter indicated that their libraries have internet facilities.

**Research Question 5:** What policies exist on preservation of Undergraduate projects in the selected Colleges of Education libraries and their coverage?

**Table 6: The existence and coverage of preservation policies in the libraries**

S/N	ITEMS	YES	%	NO	%
1.	Availability of preservation policy in libraries	63	70	27	30
2.	Usage of preservation policy	75	85	15	17
3.	Preservation direction to staff through preservation policy	63	70	27	30
4.	Policy positive enhancement of preservation	67	74	23	26

Table 6 reveals that 63(70%) of the selected College libraries have preservation policy which is expected to enhance their library operations provided its provisions are adhered to and implemented. Results also show that 75(83%) of them indicated that the policy has been in use.

**Research Question 6:** What is the level of support given preservation by senior management staff?

**Table 7: Level of management staff support to preservation?**

S/N	ITEMS	FREQUENCY	%
1.	Very high	24	27
2.	High	7	8
3.	Average	45	50
4.	Low	14	15
	Total	90	100

Table 7 shows the level of senior of management staff support to preservation.

The highest frequency was average with 45(50%), Very high 24(27%), Low 14(15%) and High 7(8%) respectively.

The findings revealed that the management staff support to preservation is at the average level.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The outcome of this study revealed that the highest stock levels of undergraduate projects in the libraries are between 20,001- 40,000. The results also show that the most used techniques in the preservation of undergraduate projects in the College libraries in Southern Nigeria is shelving projects to allow free air flow while the least used technique is deacidification, this is in contrast to Olatokun (2008) who stated that cleaning and dusting of library materials is the most commonly used techniques.

On the nature and extent of deterioration of undergraduate projects, the results show that the highest nature of deterioration is broken spine of projects being a result of frequent and careless use of the projects. This is followed by mutilation of undergraduate projects. Brittle undergraduate projects is however the least nature and extent of deterioration facing the College libraries. This result is supported by Menges (2006) who submitted that there was no guideline on how to preserve library materials and this has led to the extent of deterioration of undergraduate projects.

The findings equally revealed that the degree of ICT utilisation in the preservation activities of the College libraries showed that not all the digital preservation activities are being used despite their awareness. Also, none of the College libraries' undergraduate projects were digitized. These College libraries have low availability of digital resources. The staff of the libraries were of the opinion that digitisation could help in preserving the projects; provide quick access to the projects. Most of the libraries are not automated and they lack Internet facilities which made these impossible. This has revealed that College libraries in Nigeria still have a lot to do in the aspect of ICT adoption and utilisation.

Furthermore, more than an average number of College libraries have preservation policies which have really provided direction to library staff in carrying out their collection management responsibilities and the provisions in the preservation policy are adequately in use and adhered to. This result contrasts with Cloonan (2001) and Menges (2006) submissions that some libraries do not have a preservation policy and with the reports of surveys carried out at the national Archives,

National Library and major archives and libraries in Hungary that confirmed that preservation policy formulation was a neglected area (Albrecht-Kunszeri & Kastaly, 2000). The findings from this study revealed that preservation policy is adequately in use in Nigerian College libraries.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that preservation techniques are recognized in the selected Nigerian College libraries but the techniques are not fully practiced due to some problems notably inadequate funding.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. There should be provision of adequate funds for the effective functioning of the College libraries, adequate fund is needed especially to get the best out from the two other factors (human and material resources). Where adequate funds are provided, training of librarians and equipping of the library will be effectively achieved and this will enhance the whole process of digitization of undergraduate projects.
2. College libraries need to adopt the digital method of preservation to enable undergraduate projects stay a longer time in meeting research needs of the users. Digitisation has been widely canvassed as one of the solutions to the problem of projects preservation in libraries.
3. There should be adequacy of trained manpower in the libraries for preservation programmes and activities to succeed because preservation activities are specialized, and require information professionals who understand the physical and chemical nature of the projects in their library holdings.
4. There should be provision for infrastructure. This is because every organization stands on three pillars of capital, human and material resources to support its functions. For the College libraries to develop properly they need not only human but also material resources such as infrastructure which will help the College libraries to carry out its operations.
5. Environmental conditions constitute a lot of barrier to the preservation of undergraduate projects. Both harsh and humid weather adversely affect those projects. To ensure the preservation of the projects, they should be stored in air-conditioned rooms with moderate temperature and electric fans to avoid hotness excessive heat from damaging the materials.

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