

Management and Utilization of Theses and Dissertations in Micheal Okpara University Library: A Digital Approach.

Abstract

Digitization---Response to management and utilization of theses and dissertations in Michael Okpara University Library Umudike, a method of converting rare materials from their print format to electronic format. This literature based opinion piece looks into digital approach as a way of making traditional management and utilization of theses and dissertations issues none issues via digital approach.

Keywords University libraries, theses and dissertations, management/Utilization

Introduction

The fast depletion of TDS as one of the library resources is of global concern in libraries. Thus the continuous search for the most efficient way of their management and utilization to reduce lots of space deficiencies, cost deficiencies, access and availability deficiencies which amounts to reduction in their utility in various university libraries in Nigeria is imperative. Theses and dissertations falls within the first generation information sources in every university library. Their fundamental goals are to meet the requirements of a degree, proving that one has mastered the skills necessary to succeed in ones field, while at the same time, making an original contribution to that field. They are the first expression of maturity in mastery of a field. According to Anunobi (2002) the production of an original work in the form of projects and theses/ dissertation is usually a standard requirement from undergraduate or postgraduate degree awarded by universities. Theses and dissertations are useful primary sources of information, to which may be attributed to the acceleration of research. This is because they consists a form of academic literature which a scholar cannot ignore, therefore they are useful sources of information on new research with extensive bibliography that are also useful to students, researchers and institution as a whole. For most institutions, they are the best instrumentality by which to measure student's preparedness, ambition and accomplishment. But despite the tremendous benefits of this

special and rare material, its management and utilisation in most university libraries has been grossly inadequate. Therefore the objective of this work is therefore to examine the management and utilization of theses and dissertations and to identify proper measures required for efficient management and utilization in university libraries in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Management and Utilization of Theses and Dissertations: Traditional Approach

In MOUAW library, the Acquisition Department library receives TDS from colleges, records, accessions, stamps and shifts them to the Cataloguing Department. In the Cataloguing Department, bibliographic information about the TDS are recorded and catalogued and sent to the Reference Department of the library for further processing. In the Reference Department, the TDS are indexed and abstracted with 3 by 5 catalogue cards via an in house scheme to enhance access to them. They are further arranged according to the type of degree, discipline, year of award of the degree, in alphabetical sequence of subject and kept in a closed access area on shelves to avoid theft and plagiarism among student and researchers. Access to them is usually done manually via those library catalogue cards usually stored or preserved in a cabinet with bibliographic information about each of them. As a matter of access, users must visit the library before having access to them. External users who may have a research need must also visit the library with an introductory letter from institutions concern before access could be allowed to its use. During access, users are expected to copy out the bibliographic information of titles needed according to the Reference Department format and then place the copied title in the request box where a library officer on duty will retrieve the main work from the closed access room. Students are equally expected to statistically record the date, time, and title of the work before usage. Usage is

seriously limited to short term loan services within the Department. Although traditionally, the manual method of managing and utilizing theses and dissertations has been in existence and useful since the inception of the library, several issues have evolved and combined to force a rethink and uneasiness in the heart of librarians and staff on management and utilization of theses and dissertations.

Issues such as:

- Regular increase in the number of hardcopies of these materials received from colleges with increase burden of space issue.
- Old, fading, fragility, brittleness level of most of the theses and dissertations due to regular handling and usage by users.
- Traditional methodology of management and utilization by librarians, library officers, users.
- None remote access to theses and dissertations, which does not also allow efficient and direct users-friendly presentation of information being search.
- None global visibility of theses virgin works.

University libraries world over are now trying to come out of these traditional woods moving beyond their custodial role by the introduction of ICT in their libraries to relieve their libraries and their patrons much stress that accompany with these manual and traditional issues. Ugwuanyi and Ezema (2009) Informs that information and communication technology (ICT) brought about a paradigm shift on library and information science profession. Information and Communication Technology application to library works and services could be seen as the best way that could be used to assist researchers to adequately solve their literature needs for effective research activity because the application of ICTs to library operations greatly helps in the provision of efficient reference and information services. Information which are bibliographically borne are now emerging as “digital borne” or digitized for the sake of convenient use and longevity. Ezema (2010), states that ICT has created a digital atmosphere for information acquisition, processing and dissemination. The new realm has led to the development of enhanced access and preservation technique called digitization. Fabunmi (2006) in his view

affirms that the manual system of searching for information in library does not permit multiple use of the same material by different library users unlike the online library services. It is time consuming, hence the need to exploit the advantages of the digital approach which enables provision of online services.

Digitization: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

Digitization has been variously defined. Sonaike (2005) referred to it as the transformation of the acid paper and endangered library materials and printed pages into high quality images. This process basically involves taking a physical object and essentially making an electronic photograph of it. An image of the physical object is captured using a scanner or digital camera and converted to digital format that can be stored electronically and accessed via a computer.

Witten, etal (2003) describes digitization as the process of taking traditional library materials that are in form of books and papers and converting them to the electronic form where they can be stored and manipulated by a computer. Digitization refers to a standardized evolutionary transition from traditional to modern society. According to Fabunmi (2008) it is the art of converting the content of a document from hard copy into machine readable format. It makes library resources available electronically and bits the impediment of distance. Theses and dissertations in Michael Okpara University library has been saddled with lots of management and access barriers. Stewart (2008) states that access mechanisms are very important predictors of information resources satisfaction, effectiveness and relevance of any university library. Tangible library resource like theses and dissertations in university library should be given a digital attention that will enhance their relevance and effective use electronically. The benefits attached to digitization are numerous. Fabunmi (2006) have also identified justifications for digitization of theses and dissertations in university libraries. According to them:

- Digitization makes the invisible library resources visible.
- Improves multi-user access to resources at a given time, irrespective of location.

- Allows users to search for collections rapidly and comprehensively from anywhere at any time.
- Removes the access barrier inherent in traditional libraries.
- removes the problem of distance, as users do not have to travel to libraries that possess the hard copies of library materials before they can access and use such materials

Consequent to these, the concept of electronic theses and dissertations is clear. According to Eaton (1996) quoted in Ezema (2010), E-theses have been openly discussed by key players in the present world wide ETDS movement since 1997 and even accepted by some universities since 1994. Many universities are still hesitant in adopting e-theses and dissertations especially in the developing countries. Nonetheless, at the last count the number of universities registered with the Networked Digital Library of these and dissertations (NLTD) that actively mandate electronic submission totalled 56, from a diverse background including north American and European institutes but also universities from South America, Asia and Africa (Adanu, 2004). Networked digital library of theses and dissertations (NDLTD) is a global organization programme. At the regional level, we also have ETDS programme known as Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD). Okyi (2008) cited in Eke (2010) explains that DATAD project is an initiative of the Association of African universities (AAU) and sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and AAU. The AAU is an international non-governmental organization which was set up in 1967 by Universities in Africa with a number of objectives which included, collecting, classifying and disseminating of information on higher education and research, particularly in Africa. The goals of DATAD are to create capacity in African universities for collection, and management of theses and dissertations electronically and approving visibility through improving access to the work of African scholars in and outside the continent. Libraries in Nigeria such as University of Jos, Obafemi Awolowo university Ile-Ife, University of Nigeria Nsukka to mention but a few have also joined their counterparts both in developed world and developing world to digitized their theses and dissertations with their success stories and challenges.

SUCCESS FACTORS TOWARDS ACHIEVING ELECTRONIC THESIS AND DISSERTATIONS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: A CASE FOR MOUAU LIBRARY.

Certain factors are necessary for a successful digitization project in a university library. These include: policy enactment, policy approval, planning budgeting and monitoring, training of staff, and funding.

Policy Enactment

It is necessary for a library that is considering digitization of its theses and dissertation to enact a policy that will stand as a guiding statement for the project. According to Fabunmi (2006), the policy should contain the goals of the digitization project. He further explains that good goal setting is important for any new initiative and digitization is no exception. Categories of users that will be having access to the collections and how it will be used after digitization need to be specified in the policy. The intellectual property right issues need to be discoursed. Eke (2011) explains that efforts to formulate digital libraries will be seriously delayed in the absence of a common, responsible framework of rights, permissions, and restrictions that acknowledges the mutual needs of rights-holders and users of materials in digital libraries. Intellectual property seems to be the major challenge of building a digital library she added. In University of Nigeria Nsukka, same subject of intellectual property has caused most academic staff to withhold their publications from being scanned and uploaded to the university website. This situation calls for goal-setting regarding the issue of digitization of the university resources. The materials also deserve some sort of security in terms of restrictions to users. Not every part of the work should be viewed or downloaded by users on the Internet. The university authority, academic staff, digitization personnel need to sit down and brainstorm on the issue of intellectual property rights and ways of preserving the resources already stored on the university database.

Policy Approval

Policy need to be approved by appropriate authorities before project implementation. For instance the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture management should as a matter of leadership role give an approval to the before the commencement of digitization process in the library.

Planning, Budgeting, and Monitoring:

Planning, budgeting and monitoring are very essential stage. It is desirous to set up a planning committee that will draw the plan and budget for the digitization project. Thus should include categories (a) salaries wages and benefits (likely to be about 50% of the project cost); (b) staff training, (c) equipment and supplies;(d) services, contracts and legal fees, (e) overhead and

indirect cost (including office and workplace; and (g) contingency (setting aside 10% of the total project budget of unexpected expenses Fabumi (2006).

Training of Staff

Human beings very often, are resistant to change. It is therefore necessary for a library who wants to go into digitization to organize digitization training programme for its members. Akpan (1992) stresses that an untrained man in the modern world is a quack, he knows only the hows of a thing he has no idea of their why. Hence, if there is any trouble anywhere, breakdown in a ledger, all he can do is to fumble and patch up the trouble anyhow, leading to a more serious breakdown or a greater confusion. Really, there is no place for an untrained worker or even the intelligent amateur in these days of special work. Hence, training needs to be organized especially in the areas of computer literacy and software usage to enable staff move towards achieving the general goal of digitization process.

Funding

The issue of funding is also very essential this is because digitization project is usually cost effective and very often stands as barrier in achieving digitization project. For instance, funds are required to get a good office place, payment consultants and payment of legal fees. Funds are basic to ensure quality and right equipment (hardware and software), and appropriate technologies. They are essential to ensure the standard of digitization content of the library. No digitization process can thrive in any library without money in its bid to ensure quality management and digital accessibility of its theses and dissertation. Hence, funding issue becomes fundamental. University libraries who have engaged in digitization of their theses and dissertations do collaborate with some agencies for fund and these agencies can also provide a model for the starting of digitization process. For instance, University of Ghana with the help of Caregie Corporation of New York has overcome the barrier of lack of fund, and is currently in the process of automating its library process. Digitization of theses and dissertations at the university libraries of Jos and the Obafemi Awolowo University, under the [AAU-DATAD](#) programme, provided a model for ABU to start digitizing its post-graduate theses and dissertations (Eke,2011).

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION

In summary, MOUUAU library has a pathway to follow for her theses and dissertations to be digitized. From the forgoing success factors itemized and discussed, MOUUAU library would need to enact a digital policy approved by appropriate authorities with a well planned budget that is monitored. Also, a good digital training attention should be given to its human resource with a fundamental attention to the overall funding of the project. Digitization holds great potentials in management and use of theses and dissertation in university libraries especially, in this electronic age. It is therefore recommended that the MOUUAU library should key to the contemporary trend. The rich research output TDS kept under lock and keys can be remedies to problems in the society. The furtherance of knowledge will recover new frontiers and the image of MOUUAU as an institution would be made visible if her TDS are digitized and made available online. This research therefore recommends that that the library should inform management of the need to digitize her research output and thus key into the success factors outlined in this study to achieve digitization of MOUUAU TDS.

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