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Policy Guidelines for Records Management in Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract: This study was conducted to examine the policy guidelines for records management in Nigerian university libraries with a case study of libraries of federal universities in North Western States of Nigeria. The study aimed to identify the impact of policy guidelines on staff records management practices towards effective information resource management, the policies guiding the management of staff records and the challenges in the management of staff records of the libraries under study. The study population included seven staff records officers in the libraries studied. Face-to-face interview was the main instrument for data collection with the aid of semi-structured interview schedules with accompanying checklist. Data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study found out that policy guideline in records management in the libraries under study has a positive impact on effective information management. It also revealed that there are policies guiding the management of records which partly included that records are only to be handled by designated officers, records are not to be destroyed, rather, they are to be kept in the archives, and there should be separation of non-current

records from current records. However, these policies are not written or documented. However, they can be regarded as policies as they affect the ways and manner these records are handled. The libraries are faced with the challenges of poor policy guidelines, inadequate funding, inadequate accommodation, poor electricity supply, and low morale of staff, lack of training and retraining of staff, and lack of strong support from the top managerial staff. Staff training and re-training, recruitment of staff to be done on merit, good attitude to work by staff, legislation and adequate funding among others are the recommendations.

Keywords: Policy guideline, University libraries, Information management, Nigeria, Records management.

Introduction

The term records management is not new. Records management profession is as old as the first societal groups, because the need of a memory arises naturally in any organization. People have been keeping records in some ways since the early development of writing. According to Association of Records Managers and Administrators International (ARMA, 2010, paragraph 1), records serve the purpose of what an organization does. They give details of its general involvement such as contract negotiation, personal files, business transaction and financial statements. Akor and Udensi (2012) see records management as any document or other sources of information compiled, recorded or stored in written form or film, or by electronic process, or in any other manner or by any other means". Based on the definitions above, the concept can be seen as a branch of information management. Information Management is the management of information, software, hardware, system and people in an organization. Records management is a field that is fast growing with high importance to many organizations. The records of any

organization, such as the university system, sum up her corporate memory which replace/complement human memory and serve as guide for effective planning, research and decision making, as such, records are necessary to university management. In order to take advantage of past experiences, accurate records and good records management are the bedrock of planning for the future in the university system. Universities all over the world are hubs for academic activities and where people seek learning at its maximum. A university library, whether federal or state oriented is part of a university set up. Accordingly, it pursues the function of its parent's institution and plays very important roles in the administrative system of any university. It is in line with this that this study therefore investigates the policy guidelines for records management in Nigerian University libraries.

Research Objectives

1. To find out policies (if any) guiding the management of staff records in Nigerian University Libraries
2. To identify policies guiding the management of staff records in Nigeria University Libraries

3. To identify the strategies employed in the management of staff records in the libraries understudy
4. To identify the impact of policies on staff records management in the libraries understudy
5. To identify the challenges in the management of staff records in the libraries understudy

Review of Literature

Records are needed for the proper running of the library (Akporhonor, 2011). They include financial records such as Budget request, statement of expenditure, shipment receipts and purchase order, receipts of money received and expended; personnel records such as initial application form, result of physical examination, interview notations, periodical appraisal/promotion/confirmation records, transfer, disciplinary actions, release and retiring, and taxes paid; organizational records or service records such as manuals, reports, directives, minute of meetings and policy statement. In the study by Abdulrahman (2014), it was reported that wooden shelves/cabinet, cupboard, drawers and top of table where storage facilities that were made available for usage in the university libraries in Nigeria. The study further revealed that the universities depended largely on wooden shelves for storing records. From the above discussion, it appears that there is a shortage of storage facilities for records management in Nigerian University libraries.

An organization's records management program needs to be backed by policies and procedures that clearly state and describe every part of the records

management program in relation to operational and legal requirements. Though, an organization may decide to have different policies and procedures for retaining records, management of files, management of vital records and dormant or inactive file management. According to Akor and Udensi (2013), records management is not given the attention it deserves in Nigerian universities. Reasons being that; they lack training of both records staff and users, file plans are not considered for usage, unskilled and de-motivated records staff and lack of management support. In like manner, the study by Nakpodia (2011) reveals that policy and program on records management are not obtainable in Nigerian universities; hence, the management of records is with no alignment to the principles of records management. There are no manuals for records management in the universities, no records retention and disposition plan, personnel are not well trained in records management, insufficient equipment for the storage and retrieval of records, shortage of facilities for the preservation, storage and retrieval of records, inadequate modern ICT to cater for the records generated and attitude of management towards records and its management summed up the problems of records management in Nigerian universities.

Other challenges faced in the management of records in Nigerian University Libraries according to Akporhonor (2011), Nakpodia (2011), Abioye (2006), Nwogu (2006) and Akor and Udensi (2014) are identified as inadequate funding, lack of storage space, poor maintenance, lack of skilled

manpower, lack of access to information, delay in retrieval, inadequate power supply, lack of equipment, insecurity, poor record disposal culture, low morale of staff, lack of training and re-training, poor use of ICT, poor record creation cultures and inconsistency government policy.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative methodology as it looked in-depth at non-numerical data in providing quality answers to this research work. The population of this study consisted of all Federal University Libraries in the North Western States of Nigeria. The subjects of the research are the Library administrative officers of all the Seven (7) Federal University Libraries in North Western States Nigeria. The choice of the subjects is justified by the fact that, it is the library administrative

officers that are responsible for the management of staff and other administrative records in the university libraries understudy as revealed by the preliminary study conducted by the researcher in October, 2016.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher conducted interview with the seven (7) Administrative Officers that are responsible for the management of staff records in their libraries. The data collected were presented and discussed based on the major themes that were derived out of the variables of the study.

Response Rate

A total of seven (7) library administrative staff of the federal university libraries in North Western States of Nigeria were interviewed. The interview data were transcribed and presented in the following sections

Table 1: Background Information of the Participants

Name of the Library	Code	Rank	Educational Qualification	Working Experience	Date and Time of Interview
Bayero University Library, Kano (BULK)	A1	Chief Confidential Secretary	2 nd Degree (Masters)	32 Years	11/03/2019 11:00-11:34am
Federal University Library, Dutse (FULD)	A2	Administrative Assistant	1 st Degree (Bachelor)	5 Years	12/03/2019 10:00-10:30am
Federal University Library, Gusau (FULG)	A3	Administrative Assistant	1 st Degree (Bachelor)	4 Years	13/03/2019 10:00-10:31am
Usmanu Danfodiyo Library, Sokoto (UDLS)	A4	Faculty Officer	2 nd Degree (Masters)	25 Years	14/03/2019 2:30-3:03pm
Federal University Library, Birnin Kebbi (FULB)	A5	Administrative Assistant	1 st Degree (Bachelor)	5 Years	15/03/2019 9:00-9:30am
Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria (KILZ)	A6	Faculty Officer	2 nd Degree (Masters)	29 Years	18/03/2019 10:00-10:32am
Federal University	A7	Administrative	1 st Degree	6 Years	19/03/2019

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Library, Dutsimma		ve Assistant	(Bachelor)		10:00-10:30am
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Source: Research Interview, 2019

Key:

- A1= Bayero University Library, Kano (BULK)
- A2= Federal University Library, Dutse (FULD)
- A3= Federal University Library, Gusau (FULG)
- A4= UsmanuDanfodiyo Library, Sokoto (UDLS)
- A5= Federal University Library, BirminKebbi (FULB)
- A6= Kashim Ibrahim Library, Zaria (KILZ)
- A7= Federal University Library, Dutsimma (FULDA)

The data presented on Table 1 show the summary of the background information of the seven (7) participants interviewed. The data in the table revealed the names of the libraries under study, code given to each library under study, rank, educational qualification, their years of working experience as well as the date and time the researcher conducted the interview with the participants. Based on the data collected it has been revealed that only participant A3 had the least years of working experience, but all other participants had over 5 years of experience in records management. It also revealed that participants from A1, A4 and A6 had their second degrees (Masters) while A2, A3, A5 and A7 had only their first degrees (Bachelor). It has also been revealed that participant A1 has the highest number of working experience of 32 years. The duration of the interview had the maximum time of 34 minutes and minimum of 30 minutes.

The data also revealed the date and time the researcher conducted the interview with the participants from 11th March, 2019 to 19th March, 2019.

Cell phone was used to record the interview process for play back and proper analysis of their responses. A checklist developed was used to assist in the process of collecting data from my respondents which form parts of the appendix of this work. Personal observation of the storage facilities and conditions of the records was done by the researcher in that it was observed that, the records and its storage facilities were kept neat in Cupboards, File cabinets, Shelves, Drawers and Computer set in a conducive dedicated offices (except for BUK Library) with installed Air conditioners. It was also observed that most of the Administrative staff in charge of records did not have basic training in the field of record management.

Table 2: Coding of Emerged Themes

S/No	Themes	Coding
1	Existence of policies in management of staff records	RQ1
2	Policies available in management of staff records	RQ2
3	Strategies employed in the management of staff records	RQ3
4	Impact of these policies in the management of staff records	RQ4
5	Challenges in the management of staff records	RQ5

Key:

RQ1= Research Question 1

RQ2= Research Question 2

RQ3= Research Question 3

RQ4= Research Question 4

RQ5= Research Question 5

Existence of policies in Management of Staff Records

Data collected from A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A7 revealed that all the participant libraries have policies guiding records management in their libraries.

Policies Available in Management of Staff records

A1, A3 and A5 revealed as part of their policies that, staff are not allowed access to their records, staff records are not to be destroyed, inactive records are to be separated and kept in the archive, records are to be handled properly, while A2, A4, A6 and A7 revealed as policy that, staff records are not to be destroyed, records must be handled with care, staff records must be treated and filed within one week of its arrival, staff records are to be handled only by the records officer, staff are not allowed to see their files. From analysis, A1, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A7 revealed that the policies are specific to staff records management alone while A2 was not sure. The study also revealed that, there are no written policies guiding the

management of staff records in all the libraries studied.

Strategies Employed in the Management of Staff Records

The findings revealed that, not all the participants had a comprehensive records management programme in place to manage records in their libraries, and that all the participant libraries had not properly promulgated records management policy to all staff that would clearly and adequately define the authority, objectives, responsibilities and the interrelationship of the staff who manage or perform records management processes. As revealed by the participants, records management responsibilities were not in most cases assigned to staff of appropriate level and skills. A senior officer is designated to oversee the library's record management as it involved the University Librarian in the case of participant A1.

In the exact words of participants A4, "enough financial resources are made available for records management programme in the library" while participants A1, A2, A3, A5 and A7 revealed that the financial resources

were not enough to enable the records management programme to be established and maintained. It was also revealed that, as part of the strategies employed in the management of staff records generated in these libraries, there were established procedures and guidelines that underpinned the records management policy for compliance by staff. For example, all the participants revealed that “as a policy, staff records of any form are not allowed to be destroyed but to be moved to the archive which is a designated area within the records office”.

The findings also revealed that the records management policies, guidelines and procedures are not properly documented in the participant libraries. No document of such was made available for signing on request. A1 revealed that as part of their policy, “all staff are not allowed access to their records as they are treated confidentially, there is also no destruction of records in the libraries”. As parts of the strategies employed by A1, in his words “staff records are kept in a designated place within the office of the University Librarian who also oversees the library records management and to ensure the security of the records”. In fact, the researcher was taken to the record area in the office of the University Librarian where the researcher personally made observations. Participant A3 in his words, “proper cleaning of storage shelves, devices and files, keeping the records in conducive environment, adequate provision of storage shelves and in-house training are some the

strategies employed for their staff records management”.

Impact of Policies on Management of Staff Records

Participants A1, A2, A3 and A7 indicated that it saves cost to strictly observe records management policies as it reduces duplication of effort while participants A1, A2 and A7 in their response indicated that it ensures accountability and guarantees the right thing are done at the right time as well as indicating who to do what.

Challenges in the Management of Staff Records

A2, A3, A5, A6 and A7 were revealed to be battling with the challenges of funding; they reported that the recognition and status the unit deserves was not given by those at the top management of the libraries. This was said to have affected the unit in all of its ramifications, including funding. However, A1 and A4 were revealed to be properly funded. In the words of participant A1, “Funding is never our problem”. A3 was found to be faced with the problem of storage space as against data collected from A1, A2, A4, A5, A6 and A7 who are not faced with this same problem.

Participants A1, A2, A3 and A7 are challenged with the problem of lack of a robust policy on records managements, lack of modern ICT gadgets for storing and manipulating information as well as inadequate power supply. This can be corroborated with the exact word of participant A3 that, “Inadequate power supply is our major problem in this library, the library cannot afford to run her generating set for 8 hours as electricity supply from the national grid

is nothing to write about". All the participants revealed that there is a dedicated power generator to the library but are only put to work between 9am to 2pm daily, whenever there is power outage. Due to the inconsistent power supply from the national power grid to these libraries, these libraries are still left without powers most of the time especially when the generating set is faulty. As for A4, A5 and A6, Power supply cannot be listed as one of the challenges they faced in their day to day activities due to the fact that there is a dedicated power generator as an alternative means of power supply to the library that help in supplying power to the library when the primary source fails.

Participant A1 revealed in his exact words during the interview that "I am lacking manpower in the handling of staff records as the work is too much for me alone to handle...I have made request for an assistant to assist me but nothing has been done yet". This revealed that there is inadequate manpower in his library.

A6 outlines low morale of staff as one of the challenges faced in the management of staff records in his library. Even though the challenge of low morale was not mentioned by A1, but he revealed in his word that "the importance of records managers are downplayed in this part of the world, as it is believed that even someone without basic training in the field of records management can take up their responsibilities as against what is realistic".

The interview checklist also revealed that, training and retraining of staff is

another major challenge faced in the management of staff records. From the study, it was obvious that, these staff are not specially trained and retrained in the field of record management. They are not given the opportunity to attend seminars, conferences, workshops etc. This agrees with the result of the study of Abdulrahman (2014) which showed that staff engaged in records management in the universities libraries in North Central Nigeria were not exposed to other forms of training. His finding is in line with the study of Nwogu (2006) who observed that in many organizations, employees usually learn on the job.

The findings show the various challenges associated with records management by the seven (7) participants interviewed. The responses indicated that the major challenges being faced in the effective management of records included: inadequate funding, inadequate accommodation, poor electricity supply, lack of modern ICT gadgets for storing and manipulating information, low morale of staff, lack of training and retraining of staff, and lack of strong support from the top managerial staff.

Measures to Overcome the Challenges in the Management of Staff Records

Participant A1, A2, A4, A5, and A7 were of the view that, there was need for the library authority to identify ways to train and retrain records managers as well as making it a standard to recruit experts and professionals into the sensitive roles of records managers. They were also of the view that, the library authority should consider only those who were qualified, experienced

and ready to work for employment as records managers, rather than employing based on other prerequisites.

A4, A5, A6 and A7 were of the opinion that records managers should cultivate a good attitude to work as this would build their inner motivation to work and contribute to the field of records managers. They should also be ready to develop themselves by enrolling for formal training and programmes that would add up their qualifications. Participant A1 was of the view that, the library authority should ensure that adequate number of hands were employed to handle staff records to enable them work effectively and efficiently and to avoid leaving this sensitive job in the hands of a few.

Participants A1, A2, A3, A5, A6 and A7 were also of the opinion that the concerned authority should provide robust written and functional policy that guide the management of records and adequate funding that would go a long way in fuelling the power generators to work for a longer period, for training and retraining of staff and for the acquisition of ICT gadgets and other facilities and the maintenance of those available for staff records. From the analysis, the measures to be taken in ensuring effective staff records management practices in libraries of federal universities in North Western States of Nigeria include, staff training and retraining, recruitment should be done on merit, good attitude to work by staff, and adequate funding.

Other Suggestions that will ensure the Effective Management of Staff Records in Libraries

All participants (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6 and A7) suggested that the university management at large should be more concerned and sensitive about record managements. They also suggested that records managers should be cared for and maintained properly by those in authority as they believe that, if they were cared for and properly maintained, they would in turn properly maintain their records. Also suggested was that funding should be made readily available for all activities that are connected to records management and lastly that the Government at the federal level should make legislations that would improve records management.

Conclusion

The study is on policy guidelines for records management in Nigeria university libraries. It was undertaken to find out the policy guidelines for records management in Nigerian university libraries. There were policies guiding the management of staff records in the libraries studied which partly included staff's restriction to his/her records, non-destruction of records, records to be handled by only records officer, separation of non-current records from current records, records to be treated and filed within one week, among others. However, these policies were not written or documented. Challenges of staff records management in Nigeria University libraries included, poor policy guidelines, inadequate fund, inadequate accommodation, poor electricity supply, low morale of staff, lack of training and retraining of staff, and lack of strong support from the top managerial staff. The major solutions to all the challenges are staff training and

retraining, recruitment of staff to be done on merit, good attitude to work by staff, legislation and adequate funding, among others. In summary, policies on records management were not constantly reviewed and documented, off-site storage of records were not in practice, records officers only learnt on the job as they were not formally trained and re-trained, funding required by records unit to perform optimally were not provided and the unit was not given the attention it deserved.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered based on the findings of the study:

Policies guiding records management in libraries of federal universities should be clearly stated and properly documented. This will to a very large extent serve as a reminder and a guide to

records officers on how to handle or relate with staff records. The Nigerian university libraries should strive to ensure that qualified and competent personnel are engaged with the maintenance of their staff records, regular training and re-training should be in place for effective and efficient records management. The management should ensure that there is constant power supply as a matter of policy for smooth running of these libraries, they should also create more space to accommodate records generated, these should include modern information and communication technologies like computers, CD ROM, magnetic tape, radio, television, cell phones, satellite systems, network hardware, etc. and finally, funds should readily be made available for the management of records as a policy.

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Interview Questions

Background

Today's date:

Name of the University: _____

Name of the Library: _____

Years Established: _____

Rank: _____

Educational Qualification: _____

Area of Responsibility: _____

Years of Working Experience: _____

Number of Staff in the Library: _____

Interview Questions

1. Are there policies guidelines for staff records management in your library?
2. What are the policies (if any) guiding the management of staff records in the library?
 - I. Are the policy written?
 - II. Can I see the policy (if written)?
 - III. Is the policy specific to this library?
 - IV. Who draw out the policy?
3. What strategies are employed in the management of staff records generated in your libraries?(Refer to the attached checklist)
4. What are the challenges in the management of staff records in your Library?
5. What measures are taken in meeting the challenges of records management practices in your library?
6. What are the impacts of policy on the management of staff records management in your library
7. What other suggestions can you give that will ensure the effective management of staff records in your library?

Checklist on Policies Guidline for Records Management

1. Policies Guiding Staff Records Management in the Library

- (a) Are there Policies guiding the management of staff records in your library
- (b) If yes, what are the policies guiding the management of staff records in your library?
- (c) Are the policies written?
- (d) If written, can I see the policy?
- (e) Is the policy specific to this library?
- (f) Who draws out the policy?

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- (g) Does your organization conduct regular review on records management policy and responsibilities, records management programme, recordkeeping system and records management guidelines and procedures to cater for changing circumstances?
- (h) Does your organization continuously monitor the compliance with established records management guidelines and procedures?
- (i) Does your organization identify areas requiring improvement through regular review of records management practices of sections/units and exception cases (e.g. loss or unauthorized destruction of records)?
- (j) Has your organization put in place the requirement to seek the senior management's endorsement on any change of the organization's records management policy?

2. Strategies Employed in the Management of Records in the Library

- (a) A comprehensive records management programme in place to manage records in your library
- (b) Records management programme adopted as library policy at the top management level
- (c) Records management policy defined clearly and adequately the programme authority, objectives, responsibilities and the interrelationship of the staff who manage or perform records management processes
- (d) Policy been properly authorized and promulgated to all staff concerned of the library
- (e) Records management responsibilities assigned to staff of appropriate level and skills
- (f) A senior officer been designated to oversee the library's records management
- (g) Formally designated officers at an appropriate level with the responsibility for carrying out the records management programme in their sections/units
- (h) Records management programme been allocated appropriate resources to enable it to be established and maintained
- (i) Procedures and guidelines been established to underpin the records management policy for compliance by staff

- (j) Records management policy, responsibilities, guidelines and procedures been properly documented
- (k) Guidelines which prescribe uniform records disposal procedures and consistent records disposal action
- (l) Established records retention and disposal schedules for all its records
- (m) Separation of active and inactive records to enhance retrieval efficiency
- (n) Utilized off-site storage for inactive records to save cost
- (o) Conducting of regular review (e.g. at least once every two years) to systematically and consistently dispose of time-expired records according to approved records retention and disposal schedules
- (p) Instituted safeguards against unauthorized destruction of records
- (q) Physical destruction of time-expired records to avoid inadvertent destruction and leakage of sensitive information
- (r) Reviewing approved records retention and disposal schedules regularly to cater for changing circumstances (e.g. a longer retention period due to a new statutory requirement)

3. Impact of Policies on Records Management

- (a) Cost saving and efficiency in terms of significantly duplication of effort and time spend looking for information
- (b) Effective management in ensuring awareness of and access to the library's records
- (c) Accountability by ensuring that records which document important activity are safely retained for an appropriate length of time
- (d) Preserving the institution's corporate memory by enabling records of enduring cultural and historical value to be identified, captured and transferred to the possession of an approved repository at the end of their life cycle.

4. Challenges in the Management of Staff Records in the Library

- (a) Funding
- (b) Storage space
- (c) Maintenance
- (d) Skilled manpower
- (e) Access to information

- (f) Delay in retrieval
- (g) Power supply
- (h) Equipment
- (i) Security
- (j) Records disposal
- (k) Low morale of staff
- (l) Creation of records
- (m) Use of ICT
- (n) Government policy
- (o) Training & re-training

5. Measures in Ensuring Effective Staff Records Management Practices in the Library

- (a) Measures to be taken in ensuring effective records management practices in the library
- (b) What other suggestions will ensure the effective management of staff records in the library?