

Digital Preservation of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: The world is witnessing a rapid and progressive transformation as a result of IT revolution, which has predominated all aspect of societal development. One of such transformation has manifested in the form of digital libraries. The evolution of digital libraries has ensured the emergence of global networked environment that has dramatically changed the face of libraries, their functions, services as well as their storage and delivery system. One of such services is digital preservation, which is the work needed to ensure that digital content is maintained and accessible into the future use. This paper intends to examine the status of digital preservation of information resources in Academic libraries, its benefit, challenges and prospects in Nigerian perspective.

Key Words: Digital Preservation; information Resources; Challenges; Academic Libraries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital preservation is a major concern for digital libraries. Libraries all over world have always placed emphasis on the preservation of information resources and this has posed serious challenges to librarian and other information managers. Preservation no doubt has in increasingly continued to take center stage information management and handling particularly with proliferation of publications and other information resources in different formats. The present global information environment propelled by information and communication technologies has made preservation of information resources, particularly in academic libraries more critical to information professionals than ever before. Research outputs of any academic institution are considered to play critical roles the assessment of intellectual and cultural growth of any society particularly in developing countries where knowledge production and dissemination have been considered very low. [1] urges that, the major goal of any preservation technique is to hand over the society's civilization to another generation and equally make them available and accessible to the international scholarly community. Therefore transmission of Institutional information resources which are part of the cultural heritage of a people is far to library and information professionals.

[2] Maintains that, the information resources contain active and inactive documents which accumulate overtime in the life of the Institution. Usually information resources are mainly a collection of grey literature and other publication from scholars. The range Information Resources involved; Electronic Magazines/Journals, Library Web sites, Search engines, Audio Books (Downloadable/Digital), online databases, RSS feeds, ask an expert. Etc.

The rationale for a digital preservation of information resources in academic environment has been underscored by [3] when he explained that information resources creates enabling environment for scholarly publishing and make research productivity of a particular institution more visible globally. It therefore adds value to credibility of a university in terms of its intellectual. The objective of this paper is to examining the status of Digital preservation of Information Resources in Academic Libraries in Nigeria. To find out the benefits, challenges and way forward as Nigerian academic libraries adopt the need of globalization of information for their educational development and the fact that Nigeria cannot afford to stand a loaf.

2. THE CONCEPT OF DIGITIZATION

The term digitization' has been described by scholars and writers alike in different ways. In other words the term

means many things to many experts. However, [4] has observed that digitization is the art of converting the con-

tents of a document from hard copy into machine readable formats. [5] Has noted that digitization makes information resources available electronically. He also noted that, in the African context, digitization refers to “conversion of non-digital materials to digital form”. [6] asserted that digitization convert, material from formats that can be read by people (analog) to a format that can be read only by machines (digital) such as read – only scanner, digital cameras, planetary cameras and a number of other devices which can be used to digitize information materials. [7] Observed that, the primary and usually the most obvious, advantage of digitization is that it enables greater access to collections of all types. All manner of materials can be digitize and delivered in electronic formats and the focus of the contents that are selected for digitization varies across institutions.

In Nigeria, the state of a library and information environment is not very encouraging. This is because it is limited to the existence of wide spread poverty, high illiteracy rate, poor funding of educational libraries, lack of infrastructures, as well as large scale corruption that has eating deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society. These and many more factors tend to create very hostile and unpleasant academic environment. The top priority of most Nigerians is on survival.

The above situation aptly presents a clear picture of the contemporary Nigeria society which is peculiar in nature, and within which libraries including digital libraries

are expected to function. However, libraries in Nigeria are provide and organized access to information and knowledge and more importantly in form of a digital library due to the shift in paradigm for obvious reasons.

Digital libraries development in Nigeria is a quite recent phenomenon. [8] Reported that the federal Ministry of education had embarked on the establishment of National Virtual (Digital) library project with the aim of sharing locally – available resources with libraries all over the world using digital technology. [9] observed that the National Universities Commission virtual library project initiated in early 2002, the National Board for Colleges of Education virtual library, the open university library project and the UNESCO virtual library pilot project initiated in 2003 were some of various initiatives by the Nigerian Ministry of Education regarding Virtual (Digital) libraries for higher institutions in Nigeria; but yet none of the efforts had yielded any functional (visual) library at that time

Besides, the rapid growth of the telecommunication industry in Nigeria, another recent success story in digital library development in the country was reported by [10] which stated that the Mobile Telephone Networks (MTN) Nigeria had successfully deployed and commissioned digital libraries in three (3) universities in Nigeria. The three Universities are the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, the University of Lagos and the University of Nigeria, Nsuka. The fourth one which has been billed for commissioning early 2010 established at university of Benin

3. DIGITALPRESERVATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Digital Preservation in academic libraries raise challenges of a fundamentally different nature which are added to the problems of preserving of traditional format materials. The term ‘digital preservation’ means the planning, resources allocation, and application of preservation methods and technologies necessary to ensure that digital information of continuing value remains accessible and usable.

As more information resources are digitized or born digital, the question of how to keep digital objects accessible

for future generation becomes increasingly pressing. Digital preservation in academic libraries presents digital libraries with both technical and service challenges. The method required to preserve digital objects in a readable format test the technological capabilities of digital libraries in additions to presenting complex service challenges. Institutions must make decisions about which documents to preserve and if, or how to preserve the context of the document. The decisions made today will directly impact upon digital libraries ability to meet

future user needs.

The major issues the digital library services that will satisfy user expectations and resolve their information needs for generations to come include how to determine the stake holders in, as well as the legal issues affecting digital preservation initiatives. As part of the effort to preserve institutional information resources and ensure global accessibility of these information resources, the University of Nigeria, Nsuka started digitization project in 2008. The ICT centre which was completed recently with modern information and communication facilities is used for digital preservation initiative. The main objective of the project is to digitize local information resources such as undergraduate research project, postgraduate theses and dissertations generated over the years by the university and publications authored by staff of the university.

The Nmandi Azikwe library is taking a centre stage in the digital preservation initiatives with most of librarians participating in the project. In addition to the librarians, technical staffs were recruited to handle such jobs like scanning of documents, conversion and migration. Librarians are involved in supervision of the work to ensure that the work is properly done. [11] Maintained that in Nigeria digital preservation in

academic libraries in Nigeria depends upon: Copying, Transferring and other strategies.

- i. Copying also referred to as refreshing or 'migration' which is complex than simply transferring a stream of bits from old to new media or from generation of systems on the next.
- ii. Transfer digital information from less stable magnetic and optical media by printing page images on paper or micro filming.
- iii. Another strategy for digital preservation is to preserve digital information in the simplest possible digital format in order to minimize the requirements for sophisticated retrieval software.

Digital preservation is an essential element of digital library management due to the increasingly important role digital information resources play in our academic environment. The work of libraries and information workers will be central to the success of digital preservation activities in academic libraries in Nigeria. Therefore, librarians and information workers must develop skills to take the many challenges raised by digital Meredith ship.

4. BENEFIT OF DIGITAL PRESERVATION

Due to digitization all knowledge has become very accessible due to the free open access to information resources made available online. The benefits are:

- i. No physical limit for storing
- ii. Can be access via the internet
- iii. Available accessed
- iv. Create saving space
- v. Preservation of old texts/manuscripts

- vi. Easy retrieval of information using key words
- vii. It is cheaper to maintain digital library than book library
- viii. Any number of times digital files can be duplicated with exactness
- ix. Many can access a digital file at the same time
- x. Integrated online resources sharing
- xi. Linking and networking possibilities

5. CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL PRESERVATION IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Digital preservation has so many advantages but it is worthy to note that there are some factors that hinder it. [12] Identified some specificity of preservation issue in academic

libraries of Nigeria:

- a. Information Policies
- b. Infrastructures
- c. Financial constraint
- d. Technical knowledge

6. WAY FORWARD

In the light of the foregoing, the following are here by recommended as the way forward:

1. Government at both the federal and state level in Nigeria must develop a more proactive and progressive attitude to implementation of the national policy for information infrastructure and facilities.
2. The problem of epileptic power supply and poor telecommunications infrastructure should be doggedly addressed by the Nigerian government by injecting the necessary funds and technical expertise.
3. Academic libraries should explore more alternative sources of funding as over reliance on the govern-

ment on monies that are not fourth coming may not provide the desired solutions.

4. Practicing librarian must be involved in training and retraining in the knowledge of ICT competencies required for them to effectively manage the resources in the Academic libraries towards digitization of library services.
5. Finally, the need for the committees of University librarians and their counterparts in Polytechnics and colleges to sensitize their respective Intuition's administrators on the central role of academic libraries in teaching, learning and research activities in academic communities.

7 CONCLUSION

Digital revolution has dramatically changed the face of libraries in the 21st century. This posed a challenge to academic libraries to digitize their services and resources through appropriate ICT application in order to remain relevant. However, academic libraries in Nigeria are faced with enormous problems notably that of lack of proper funding. Despite that, they must against all odds try to

measure up with their contemporaries elsewhere. Their ability to overcome some of the major challenges undermining their effort in providing the desired services to their communities in this information age should therefore serve as one of the coping strategy methods for the 21st century academic library service in Nigeria.

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