

## Collection Development in Academic Libraries in Imo State Nigeria: Status Analysis and Way Forward

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**Abstract** The study was conceived to x-ray the performance of collection development function in five academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria, in order to determine possible operational flaws and proffer solution. Data were collected from all the one hundred and nine professional and para-professional staff of the libraries using a self-developed questionnaire. Findings of the study include: absence of comprehensive collection development policy, lack of a coordinating unit for collection development activities, low participation of faculty in book selection, inadequate book votes and irregular weeding of stock. Measures addressing the flaws were suggested as a way forward in the discharge of the important function of collection development in the studied libraries.

**Keywords** *Collection Development Policy; Book Selection; Book Acquisition; Nigerian Libraries*

### 1. Introduction

The core of the library is the collection. Its pivotal place is enshrined in the basic mandate of the library to stock information materials to meet the needs of users. Thus, the collection, composed of the information resources, constitutes the basic instrument of service delivery in the library. Lending credence to this view, Ifidon (2007:1), states thus: "Beautiful buildings, well-trained staff and modern information storage and retrieval systems can only be appreciated if excellent services are given to users. These services cannot be given without live collections". The significance of the above submission is that effective service in the library is closely related to the availability of an adequate library collection.

The academic library is a purpose-driven organization. It is the major support infrastructure for the tripartite function of higher education, teaching, research and extension. In view of this, the need for 'live collections' in academic libraries is unquestionable. A live collection is one that is well-groomed, active and hence responsive to the needs of users. It is the functional domain of collection development to achieve a live collection in the library. Collection development is a multi-faceted activity. Its scope traverses acquisition, user assessment, policies, selection, weeding and evaluation (Edoka, 2000). Similarly, Kumar et al (2008), identify the constituent parts of collection development as assessing user needs, evaluating the present collection, determining selection policies,

coordinating selection, re-evaluating and storing parts of the collection, and planning for resource sharing. None of these aspects of collection development is inconsequential as they all work in synergy to ensure the functional effectiveness of the library collection.

However, a cursory observation by the researchers suggests a collection development practice skewed towards selection and acquisition in many academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria. Hence, this study, conceived as an enquiry into the way and manner in which collection development function is conducted in five academic libraries in Imo State, Nigeria with a view to exposing the flaws and proffering recommendations as a way forward.

The academic libraries studied are those of Imo State University, (IMSU) Owerri, Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), Federal Polytechnic Nekede, (FEDPOLY), Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, (AIFCE) Owerri, and Imo Polytechnic, Umuagwo, (IMOPOLY). These libraries typify the academic libraries in Nigeria and therefore generalizations can be made about academic libraries in Nigeria based on data collected from them. Imo State is located in the South East of Nigeria.

## 2. Objectives

The broad objective of the study is to investigate the status of collection development in the studied libraries. The specific objectives are:

- i. To ascertain the types of library resources acquired by the studied libraries.
- ii. To ascertain the status of collection development policy in the studied libraries.
- iii. To determine the category of persons involved in the selection of materials.
- iv. To identify the acquisition methods adopted by the libraries.
- v. To ascertain the aspects of collection development carried out in the studied libraries.
- vi. To determine the factors that militates against the effective discharge of the collection development function.
- vii. To recommend ways of enhancing collection development in academic libraries.

## 3. Literature Review

The crucial function of building the library collection has been variously termed ordering, acquisition, and collection development depending on the prevailing understanding of the scope of the function. Ordering appears limited to purchasing as a method of bringing books into the library. However, Welch (2003), has noted the gradual replacement of the term 'order' in libraries with acquisition which, in his view, embraces other sources of library resources such as gifts and exchange. Collection development is conceptualized by Ojebode (2009), as comprising a great number of library activities including selection of resources, acquisition of those materials selected, the development of plans for sharing resources between libraries, the maintenance of resources acquired, weeding and evaluation. In recent times, collection management has been used by some librarians to refer to the maintenance of library materials as distinct from collection development. Attempting to show the boundary between collection development and collection management, Adewuyi (2005), classifies the identification, selection and procurement of library materials as "acquisition process" or collection development, and refers to processing, organization, maintenance, stocktaking, preservation and ensuring maximum exposure of these materials for the benefit of the general public as collection management. In real practice, however, the distinction is not clear-cut as part of what is regarded as collection management is performed as collection development.

Baughman, cited in Ojoade (1981), illustrates the components of collection development with an equation thus: collection planning + collection implementation + collection evaluation = collection development. Collection planning comprises community analysis or user study and policies.

Collection implementation refers to selection and acquisition of library materials and funds while collection evaluation involves the process of ensuring that the library collection is relevant to the needs of the users. Lending their joint voice to the conceptualization of collection development, Anyanwu et al (2006), view it as the selection, acquisition, weeding and evaluation of library materials. It is a systematic building of library collection to satisfy the needs of users.

Collection development is guided in most libraries by the collection development policy. It is necessary to have the collection development policy written to make for objectivity in developing the library collection. A collection development policy is essential for a balanced and robust collection. It specifies the scope of the collection, authority for selection, criteria for allocation of funds and for selection of various types of materials, priorities in selection and criteria for weeding Kumar et al (2008). In spite of its importance, some libraries do not have comprehensive collection development policies. For example, reporting a six-month exercise aimed at rejuvenating the reference collection of the University of Mauritius Library, Ephraim (2001:17), notes that his team was 'faced with the daunting situation where there was no collection development policy with clear guidelines on stock relegation'. Similarly, Adewuyi 2005 reports that most of the libraries studied in his survey of collection management practices in Nigerian university libraries lack documented weeding policy.

Selection is a necessary first step in the acquisition process. Information materials are selected on the basis of their perceived usefulness to a group of readers. This is because "the amount of satisfaction a reader finds in the library depends directly upon the materials the librarian has available for his use" (Carter et al 1974:1). Hence, the rationale for selection is to get into the collection, a maximum number of desirable titles from a plethora of titles published every year. It is clear that many of the publications cannot be selected for a particular library because they fall outside the scope of the library's collection. A library's scope is approximately equal to its area of interest, determined by the perceived interest of clientele. Clientele interest-directed selection will doubtless result to higher library patronage and user satisfaction. It is for this reason that Nwaigwe and Onwuama (2004), opine that selection of materials in the library should be preceded by a study of the present and future needs of library users to be able to make informed selection. In agreement, Oparaku et al. (2005), state that ascertaining the needs of users is a necessary prelude to provision of materials relevant to these needs. Ulveling (1974), draws attention to another point of consideration in selection; he insists that the determination of the library's objectives is the most important fundamental in the selection process.

Adewuyi (2005), views acquisition as the bedrock upon which stock development is based. Acquisition procedure usually begins with stock checking and ends when the materials ordered for are received and certified by the acquisition staff. A study by Ojebode (2009), indicted poor funding of libraries as the bane of effective acquisition of library materials. The study found out that the number of books acquired through gifts and donations outnumbered those purchased between 1996 and 2006 in the studied libraries because of insufficient funds for purchase. This finding corroborates the finding of an earlier study by the same author, Ojebode (2001) that gifts constituted the major method of acquiring books at St. Andrew College Oyo Library, Oyo State, Nigeria. However, it is at variance with results of studies by Adebimpe, 2001 and, Egunjobi and Olarenwaju (2002) reporting higher acquisition of library materials via the purchase method. Adebimpe is of the view that although the purchase and non-purchase systems are veritable methods of library acquisition, the non-purchase methods comprising gifts, exchange, legal deposit and bequeaths should be employed as complements to purchase. But the problem with purchase is that it is cash dependent and hence less acquisition would be recorded in situations of inadequate funding. Okoro (2006:81), found out that "the libraries of universities in the Eastern States of Nigeria are not properly funded ... the dire funding situation of these libraries affected the growth of their collections". Fortunately, the Federal Government of Nigeria has introduced some intervention measures to mitigate the problems of poor acquisition status in academic libraries among other factors. Ekoja (2003), reports the positive impact

of three intervention measures viz: the World Bank Federal Universities Development Sector Adjustment Credit, the Petroleum (Special) Trust Fund (PTF), National University Materials Procurement Programme, and the Education Tax Fund (ETF), on collection development at Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library, Bauchi, Nigeria.

Collection evaluation is done periodically to ascertain the collection's validity in relation to the library's objectives. According to Ifidon (1995), collection evaluation is done to determine the scope, depth and usefulness of the collection, test the effectiveness, the utility and practical applicability of the written collection development policy, assess the collection's adequacy and hence highlight its inadequacies and strategize to identify areas where weeding is required. Eze and Eze (2006), opine that collection evaluation is necessary to determine from time to time, how well the selection policy is working out. It shows whether the provisions of the policy in terms of the types of materials to be acquired are implemented or not.

Weeding logically results from stock evaluation. Its benefits to the library have been summarized by Bantai (2002:21), as "creation of space, increase in circulation turnover and greater accessibility of useful materials". Ephraim (2001) agrees that weeding improves access to usable materials as it frees shelving space from unused materials. Despite its benefits, many librarians are reluctant to weed their collections for reasons adduced by Ifidon (1997), as librarian's penchant for impressive set of gross statistics of holdings, lack of time, and the rigour of systematic weeding. Bantai (2002) has empirically ascertained the constraints to effective weeding in Nigerian university libraries as inadequate finance, high cost of importation of foreign books and scarcity of local tertiary books.

The significance of the present study lies in the hope that it will make bare, the flaws in the conduct of collection development in the selected libraries as well as chart a new course for improving collection development practices in the libraries.

#### 4. Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. The population comprised the professional and para-professional staff of the five academic libraries under study. Their number is one hundred and nine (109) distributed as follows:

**Table 1:** *Distribution of Population*

Library	No. of Respondents
IMSU Library	16
FUTO Library	53
AICE Library	12
FEDPOLY Library	26
IMOPOLY Library	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>

The entire 109 staff were used since the number was small and accessible. The questionnaire constituted the instrument for data collection. A self-developed questionnaire was administered to the 109 subjects personally and all were returned in usable form, indicating a 100% return rate. Analysis was done using simple statistical tools of frequency counts, percentage and bar chart.

## 5. Data Analysis, Findings and Discussion

### 5.1. Information Materials in the Library

As can be gleaned from Table 2, all the academic libraries studied acquired both print and non-print materials. This indicates a widespread understanding of the benefits of a mixed collection among the libraries. In an age when Information and Communication Technology (ICT) holds sway as the major tool for disseminating and accessing information, the inclusion of ICT materials in the collection of academic libraries in Nigeria is most commendable. Some of the subjects indicated 'others' acquired by their libraries as projects/theses/dissertation, and manuscripts.

**Table 2:** *Types of Materials Acquired*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Books/monographs	109	100
Reference materials	109	100
Journals	109	100
Audio visuals	96	88
ICT hardware and software	109	100
Others	42	39

### 5.2. Status of Collection Development Policy

The researchers enquired from the subjects if their libraries operated a written collection development policy and all 109 (100%) subjects answered 'no'. This result is worrisome in the light of the importance of such a document as a guide in discharging the collection development function. The researchers found out that all the libraries had acquisition policies, which simply guide decisions on what materials to select for purchase. The absence of a written comprehensive collection development policy in the studied libraries implies a lack of systematic approach in the discharge of the various facets of the collection development function. Previous studies confirm the lack of written comprehensive collection development policy in academic libraries in Nigeria. Ojebode (2009), found that gifts constituted the main means of acquisition for the libraries he studied but these libraries had no policy guidelines on gifts. Hence he recommended that "there should be written collection development policies, particularly on acceptance of gifts in academic libraries ..." (Ojebode, 2009:90). This he opines would shield the libraries from being dumping grounds for unwanted materials from donors. Adewuyi (2005), found out that most of the libraries he studied had no documented weeding policy. Similarly, Ephraim (2001), reported the lack of weeding policy in University of Mauritius Library.

### 5.3. Collection Development Activities

To determine the range of collection development activities carried out in the studied libraries, the researchers provided subjects with a checklist to indicate from. Table 3 shows their responses.

**Table 3:** *Collection Development Activities*

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Selection	109	100
Acquisition	109	100
Stock evaluation	109	100
User study/community analysis	109	100
Weeding	109	100
Library cooperation	109	100

All the subjects checked out all the listed options. This means that collection development is well conceived among the libraries as encompassing selection, acquisition, user studies, stock evaluation, weeding and library cooperation. This conception meshes into the American Library Association (ALA 2013) definition of collection development as a term encompassing a number of activities related to the development of the library collection, including the determination and coordination of selection policy, collection evaluation, planning for resource sharing, collection maintenance and weeding. It is thus myopic to view collection development as a mere synonym for acquisition, as Adewuyi (2005), does.

However, asked if these activities were performed under a coordinating department in the libraries, the subjects unanimously answered 'no'. In the absence of a coordinating department, the discharge of the various facets of the collection development function would be haphazard and hence, ineffective

#### 5.4. Selection of Materials

**Table 4:** Responsibility for Selection

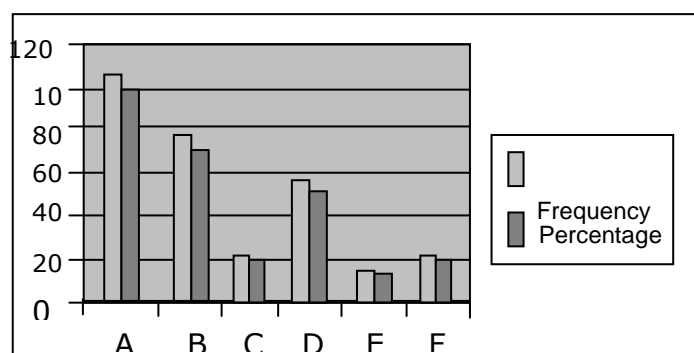
Option	Frequency	Percentage
College/University/Polytechnic Librarian	3	3
Teaching staff	23	21
Students	0	0
Subject specialists	9	8
Acquisitions Librarian	53	49
All of the above	21	19

The implication of the result shown in Table 4 is that the responsibility for selection in the studied libraries rests mainly with the acquisitions librarian. Teaching staff are not adequately involved, while students are not involved at all in the selection of information materials. The low participation of teaching staff in the selection process has been pointed out by Ifidon (1985), who argues that their higher participation is necessary since they stand in a position to determine books that are relevant to the courses taught by them. On the factors considered in selection, the subjects indicated book vote, academic programmes of the institution and available space, adding that hardware and software compatibility is considered in selecting ICT materials.

#### 5.5. Acquisition Methods

Figure 1 shows that purchase is the major method of acquiring information materials in the studied libraries. While this agrees with the findings of Adebimpe (2001), and Egunjobi and Olanrewaju (2002), regarding the prevalent method of stock acquisition in Special Education (SPED) Library, Oyo and Gani Bello Library, Federal College of Education, Abeokuta respectively, it disagrees with the findings of Ojebode (2001), and Ojebode (2009) about the libraries of St. Andrew's College of Education, Oyo, Oyo State College of Education and Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, where gift was the major acquisition method. One major advantage of purchase as a method of acquisition is that it results in the acquisition of premeditated materials following the process of selection. This is as opposed to the gift method where the donor merely gives what he wants to give whether relevant to the receiver-library or not. However, the snag with the purchase system is that less acquisition would be recorded in the face of dwindling book votes.





**Figure 1:** Methods of Acquiring Information Materials

### Key

A	=	Purchase
B	=	Gift/Donation
C	=	Exchange
D	=	Bequeath
E	=	Photocopying
F	=	Professional Association Membership

## 5.6. Weeding

**Table 4:** Criteria for Weeding

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Obsolescence	95	87
Poor physical condition	109	100
Low demand/use	0	0
Adhering to policy	0	0
Inadequate space	82	75
Others	0	0

The subjects were required to choose as many options as were applicable to their libraries. It is clear from Table 4 that 'poor physical condition' ranks highest among the criteria for weeding out materials in the studied libraries. Usually, the worn out condition of a book is an evidence of heavy demand. Therefore it is imperative that materials withdrawn on account of poor physical condition are rehabilitated and returned to the shelf if still relevant. Unfortunately, none of the studied libraries has a functional bindery section; rather their bindery needs are usually met by commercial binderies whose business it is not to ensure a quick return of the books to the shelves. None of the subjects chose 'adhering to policy' as a criterion for weeding, a confirmation of the lack of comprehensive collection development policy in the libraries. It is also worrisome that weeding is not a regular exercise in the libraries as witnessed to by the 109 (100%) subjects.

## 5.7. Inter-library Cooperation

There was a 100% affirmative response to the question "Is your library involved in resource sharing with other academic libraries in Imo State? The reality of dwindling book votes has forced academic libraries all over the world to increase their rate of cooperation for the mutual benefit of their patrons. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), have noted the increased cooperative activities of libraries at local, national and international levels, linking the development to the realization by librarians that no library

however large or comprehensive can possess all the resources needed to satisfy the needs of its users. It is a good thing that the studied libraries have cued into this global trend.

### 5.8. Problems of Collection Development

Table 5 shows 'inadequate book vote' as the major problem of collection development in the studied libraries. Some other previous studies have also indicted finance as a key problem in collection development (Bantai, 2002, Oyeboade, 2009, Okoro, 2006). Book acquisitions decline in the face of inadequate book votes resulting in heavy dependence on gifts to grow the collection. No library can grow a wholesome collection based on gifts alone since donors give what they want. However, academic libraries in Nigeria have, in recent years, had a respite from the Library intervention programme of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund). TETFund makes periodic allocations to academic libraries for the purchase of learning resources. It does appear that many academic institutions in Nigeria now take the TETFund library intervention as a substitute for the traditional book vote allocated in the budgets; hence the budgets no longer reflect the prime place of the book vote.

Also ranking high in the list of problems of collection development is the lack of a coordinating department for all the facets of the collection development function. A coordinating department for collection Development would make for a planned and systematic discharge of the constituent activities. Its absence in the studied libraries suggests that the performance of these activities is haphazard and most likely ineffective. It is equally significant that 53% of the subjects opined that inadequate staff position was a factor against effective collection development in their libraries.

**Table 5:** Problems of Collection Development

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of <b>comprehensive</b> policy	48	44
Inadequate book vote	92	84
Lack of a well-organized system of interlibrary cooperation	10	9
Lack of a coordinating department for all aspects of collection development	61	56
Inadequate staff strength	58	53

### 6. Way Forward

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made as a way forward in achieving effectiveness in collection development in academic libraries.

- A. A formalized comprehensive collection development policy should be developed and operated in academic libraries. The policy will specify the *modus operandi* of all the facets of collection development function. It will therefore serve as a justification for actions taken or not taken in the process of discharging the collection development function. The document should be reviewed periodically for up-to-dateness.
- B. The academic libraries should create a Collection Development Department with a mandate to coordinate all collection development activities of selection, acquisition, stock evaluation, weeding and interlibrary cooperation.
- C. Increased partnership with the faculty should be explored especially in the determination of materials to acquire. As specialists in their disciplines, faculty members are in a position to make valid judgements on the relevance of texts to be included in the collection. Hence, their increased involvement in materials selection will add to the richness of the library collection.



- D. Librarians should press for the re-institution of the book vote in their institutional budgets as well as its release for the purchase of learning and research materials.
- E. Weeding should be a periodic exercise in academic libraries to rid the shelves of irrelevant or unusable materials and increase access to usable ones.
- F. Academic libraries should own functional binderies for quick rehabilitation of damaged but relevant books for prompt replacement on the shelves.
- G. The staff strength of the libraries should be increased by recruiting more staff into these libraries. This will increase effectiveness in the discharge of collection development activities.

## 7. Conclusion

The quality of the collection remains the litmus test of service delivery effectiveness in the academic library. It is the functional domain of collection development to peg collection quality high. Well-conceived, collection development encompasses a range of activities such as selection, acquisition, user studies, stock evaluation, weeding and interlibrary cooperation. None of these activities is inconsequential in the bid to achieve high quality collection as they all work in synergy. The study identified certain logistic lapses affecting the functioning of collection development in the studied libraries such as lack of written comprehensive collection development policy, lack of a collection development department, low faculty involvement in selection, inadequate book votes, irregular weeding and poor staff strength. Addressing these lapses by implementing the recommendations above is the way forward in enhancing optimal performance of collection development activities in academic libraries.

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