

Security of Information Materials in Libraries

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Abstract: *This paper focused on the security problems affecting university library materials with examples drawn from Delta State University Library, Abraka. Nigeria. It explored the security problems and the way out in libraries', described how library materials are mutilated and removed illegally/stolen in different sections of libraries. The causes of theft and mutilation of library materials are enumerated. The effects of the security problems on libraries are highlighted. Among others, the paper recommended installation of security devices in order to help prevent the incidence of theft and mutilation of materials in libraries.*

Keywords: Security, information materials, libraries

INTRODUCTION

The library is the power house of all academic activities in the university. Therefore, no university can function properly without its library. The word "library" is derived from a Latin word *liber*, which means book. Library, according to English dictionary (2015) is the collection of books or records films-etc. for consultation or borrowing. These definitions of library are different from the general opinion about what a library stands for. For instance, the library is generally seen as a collection of books. The library is a book bank where books are kept for easy retrieval of information. The library is a place set apart for storage of books, periodicals, and other materials for reading/consultation or borrowing. A library selects, acquires, organizes, preserves and makes available the recorded knowledge of man to the users:

According to Peter D. in Nwafor (2017) defines a library as a collection of books and related materials housed, organized and interpreted to meet the broad and varying needs of users. A library is a place where organized information materials are kept for use. A library must have a growing collection and be equipped with facilities that can support the university's teaching, research and community service functions.

Library holdings cost a lot to acquire, processed, maintained and provided. Therefore, measures must be put in place to ensure security of the library materials. Despite the security measures which every library tries to provide in order to protect the materials, it has been observed that libraries are indeed suffering substantially; that losses of books alone exceed 150-million-pound sterling each year; that book mutilation, too, is widespread; these losses to the public purse are occurring despite a sizeable,

and burgeoning investment by libraries in measures to prevent theft and mutilation (Burrows & Cooper, 1992).

The loss and mutilation of books explains why ancient librarians guarded their holdings by heavy chains. They meticulously preserved the books, which indirectly discourage their frequent use. The tight protective measures negated the purpose of libraries in the ancient society. Though modern libraries still protect their materials, present day librarians are more generous with their services. Information resources are processed and made available on open shelves for users' exploitation. This apparent freedom for users has set the stage for what may be called library delinquency or theft and mutilation of materials.

The literature search on theft and mutilation of library materials shows that the problem is universal. The problem, it is said, is as old as the existence of the library itself. It might be regarded as a basic sin of some information users. Martell c. in Jefferson (2010) states that book theft and mutilation has been with library since antiquity. In ancient England, this phenomenon was there and was considered a sacrilege if one was caught doing it. The problem is also present in modern libraries all over the world. The problem of theft and mutilation is a general occurrence in nearly all types of libraries especially academic libraries. It is a chronic library problem. The offenders are difficult to apprehend, while first hand evidence against them is not easy to come by.

Problems of security of materials in a university library

Like any other academic library, there have been frequent problems of insecurity of information resources at Delta State University, Abraka. This is evident in the following library books materials which were mutilated in different units/sections of the library.

Serials unit

- Library and Information Science Research. An International Journal. Vol.2, No. 1. 2019. Pages 43 -45 torn/mutilated.
- African Journal of Natural Science, Vol.6. 2013. Pages 10-15 torn/ mutilated.

Reference unit

- The new encyclopedia Britannica. Vol.22. Pages 165-188 torn/mutilated
- The encyclopedia Americana. International edition. Vol. 22. Pages. 601-620 torn/mutilated
- Encyclopedia of library and information science. Vol. 25. Pages 99-112 torn/mutilated

Open access

- Teach yourself English Language. By E. O. Okomi. 2014. Pages 16-20 torn/mutilated
- How to write and reference. By Okonkwo. 2008 pages 114-25 torn/mutilated
- How to catalogue. By James Wille. 1981, pages 18-29 torn/mutilated

Apart from the foregoing, there are other encyclopedias, photographic books, art books containing plates, Medical textbooks, serials, etc. Users are normally disappointed if the portions of books they want to read have been ripped off or the book they need has been stolen. Mutilation renders the material useless to patrons and cause the library waste of resources. They may have to spend huge sums of money to replace them. Mutilation and book theft lead to gradual depletion of library holdings.

Causes of theft and mutilation of materials

Gavey (2001) has identified prevalent modern attitudes that may contribute to people's willingness to steal library materials. Among them is a sense of entitlement, especially for patrons of libraries supported by tax money, as well as a desire for instant gratification. She also pointed out that processing fee charged for "lost books may serve to further encourage library theft. Perhaps the patron would have been willing to pay for the cost of the book, but added expense of library processing fees, can make the patron resort to theft

The problem of theft and mutilation or library materials vandalism, is sometimes referred to as readers delinquency. The following are adduced by users as causes of library delinquency according to Leab. M.(2019).

- i. Restrictive loan policies;
- ii. Poor security in the library (inefficient porters);
- iii. Insufficient Multiple copies;
- iv. The feeling that library books belong to no one;
- v. Poor Service to readers;
- vi. Absent-mindedness on the part of the reader
- vii. Lack of photocopy machine in the library
- viii. Lack of awareness to information

Availability of materials is of prime importance as it can discourage theft of materials. Much theft results from difficulty in initially obtaining books and a competitive atmosphere concerning their use. Rholda (2010) asserted that by eliminating these difficulties, the number of thefts will most likely be reduced. He argued further that librarian must correlate the need for a certain title with the number of copies purchased. He must also be aware of which materials require reserve status. These are the categories of books most susceptible to theft and the librarian would be wise to keep careful watch of these categories.

According to Pitch in Souther (2010) stated that if materials are available readily when required, no one experiences the need to indulge in anti-social activities to ensure access to them. He pointed out that a major determinant of mutilation is the extent to which materials are restricted to the library users. Poor security is another major reason for book theft in libraries. If the security is poor no matter how fully other conditions are satisfied, it is likely that certain people will steal. Pitch in Souther (2010) noted that one of the major issues of security is whether to have exit control and if so whether they should be manual or electronic. It appears that both manual and electronic security devices, when first introduced can be highly effective, but after a period of time has elapsed, the situation tends to deteriorate. The manual controlled exit is only as efficient as the person manning it. Thus a considerable improvement may be achieved if the exit can be controlled by a conscientious and capable person.

Sunil (2009) stated that a characteristic libraries have in common with other institutions is that they are impersonal and theft from them is not regarded as seriously as theft from an individual, For instance, when some readers borrow library books, they sometimes feel reluctant in returning them even sending reminders several times would not change their behavior. A reader has sometimes been made to pay for the cost of missing books only after being threatened with some disciplinary action. Absentmindedness on part of a reader may be another reason for book loss in libraries. The genuinely absentminded man is known because he leaves a trail of things behind him, his own as well

'as other people. A scholar can forget bunch of keys or pen or anything that belongs to him. He can take anything belonging to others that were not in his way; for instance, an umbrella or book. He can select a book; offer it for dating and then hurrying off with any book lying handy on the counter, perhaps a book that another reader wished to borrow. Later he would probably run back to complain that the assistance has given him the wrong book and to confess he has forgotten the one he had chosen.

Ways of removing information sources illegally from the library

There are so many ways information resources can be removed illegally from the library. Oke-Okoro in Afolabi (2015) observed that delinquent library users and some staff have devised many ways of removing information sources from the library. These are as follows:

- i. Throwing out books and other materials or information sources through windows.
- ii. Carrying books and other material resources out of library without getting them charged out.
- iii. Tearing pages with sharp objects from books and other information sources;
- iv. Using chemicals to clean off library ownership stamps in books and removing date due slips.
- v. Removing the jacket cover so that the preliminary pages of books cannot be identified;
- vi. Stealing other registered library users' borrowers' tickets and using them to borrow books;
- vii. User borrows a book legally, goes out of the library removes the date due slip of the books,
- viii. Users sometimes collaborate with library staff such that a user can be issued with more ticket that can be allowed by the library.
- ix. Library staff borrowing books and destroying the records later;
- x. Library staff removing books before they are processed.

Preventive measures of theft and mutilation

There are no known perfect solutions for theft and mutilation yet. However, the following measures could prevent the incidence of theft and mutilation of library materials:

Vigilance by porters: Library books can be saved through extra vigilance and tighter security measures by porters. The security measures in the library is an important aspect to be watched closely in preventing vandalism and theft in libraries. Librarians are of the opinion that security should be discussed with the architect at the stage of designing the building so that loopholes could be considered. There should be only One entrance to readers and security staff should be there always to inspect books, bags, files and brier Cases carried by readers leaving the library. With this system or method, the library's only expense is the continued salary of the guards. The more obvious controls in most developed countries are the utilization of turnstile and guards together at the exit door to examine all books leaving that have been charged out. The most modern preventive measure is the use of electronic air blower for quick turning of pages.

Provision of photocopy facilities: It is widely recognized that if photocopying facilities are poor, it is likely that theft and mutilation will occur more frequently. The provision of photocopying facilities in the library should be accorded high priority and the charges should be made very low.

Use of closed shelf: The library can use a closed shelving system for some of their collections that are in high demand. Before readers are allowed access to these materials. They would fill a request slip

Showing names, department, level and course of study and address of the reader and would show also identification card. The use of identification card would guard against the possibility of using false name for borrowing books. According to Owoeye in Zimmerman (2004) state that such control is highly effective and gives excellent protection against theft. Some libraries, according to him, use a large letter rubber stamp to imprint their names on the top bottom and front inside of books while tightly closed, with ownership marks so conspicuously displayed, stolen library materials may be easily returned. Gavey2001. Averred that there should be limited access to library materials. This type of measure aims to prevent theft simply by limiting patron's access to library materials. In Delta State University Library, Abraka, there is limited access to materials in special collections, reference and reserve units.

There should be sanctions: Academic libraries are expected to impose fines with stringent rate because of their paramount position within academic community. If fines are punitively heavy, the danger of their becoming too heavy to pay is greater than ever. Rhoda in Souter (2010) "noted that for fines on late return of books to serve as a deterrent, it should be at a rate that can make readers sit-up and take notice".

Not allowing patrons' bags into the library: Preventing patrons from bringing bags, folders and related items into the library can help prevent theft and mutilation of information resources.

Monitoring users with surveillance devices: Surveillance can be accomplished with the help of mirrors or cameras with live monitors, and can be expedited by optimal space layout. Though mirrors are not very effective, they are better than nothing. A better choice would be a closed circuit television (CCTV) system consisting of a camera and a digital video recorder (DVR). A DVR is compatible with most kinds of cameras. The choice of a camera should be dictated by factors such as location, lighting, coverage, and image quality (Gelernter, 2005).

Slipping of warnings concerning theft on books:

Other method of prevention or control is that copies of statutes or ordinances concerning larceny and defacement of public property can sometimes slipped into books that are likely to be mutilated. , Libraries, at times, have their own warnings printed and slipped into book pocket took. This library warnings printed is an interesting example:

If a book is being loaned to you in good condition upon return, it will be examined page by page for mutilations, tracing and missing. plates. The borrowers will be held liable for any damage to this book while in his/her possession and will be charged cost of replacement. A borrower's signature on this book card indicates that he understands the conditions accompanying this loan and the obligation involved

With such a note the potential defaulter may be deterred, John-Okeke in Mason (2010)

Microfilming of very important documents: Another way to prevent records from the incidence of theft is by, extensive micro- filming of very important documents so that when original copies are stolen, the microfilms could remain. This measure is very important particularly in respect of very rare books. Close supervision over users: For instance, I have recommended that library staff should be assigned to maintain closer supervision over the readers,

CONCLUSION

This paper focused on why theft and mutilation of library materials exist, how the libraries have been affected by these antisocial acts as well as how to prevent such delinquencies. Materials affected are mostly textbooks, which the users usually consult for examination and other academic purposes. Materials that are stolen or mutilated cost the library so much to replace. As a result, awareness should be created concerning its causes and effects. Library management should ensure that measures are put in place in the library to protect library materials from theft and mutilation.

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