



PRESERVATION OF INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE THROUGH THE LEGAL DEPOSIT SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the preservation of legal deposit resources in Nigeria to discover the factors that hinder the smooth preservation of knowledge heritage in Nigeria. The study adopted the qualitative research approach using the case study method. The study deployed the use of the interview, document analysis and observation methods of data collection. The findings indicated that the National Library of Nigeria's primary pesticide control method was fumigating the library. Air conditioners, fans, and fire extinguishers are present, but environmental monitoring tools like thermo-hygrometer recording, water sensing systems, dehumidifiers, thermometers, light meters, fire alarm systems, and air conditioning and heat ventilation systems are lacking. Furthermore, the National Library of Nigeria does not currently have a preservation policy. Much has been written about the preservation of library materials; however, there is a paucity of literature relating to the preservation of legal deposit materials at Nigeria's national library. This work attempts to demonstrate how the nation's intellectual heritage is preserved.

Keywords: legal deposit, intellectual heritage, Preservation, National Library of Nigeria

Introduction

Preservation of intellectual heritage is essential for maintaining the cultural and historical identity of any nation. The legal deposit system is one of the strategies employed by governments worldwide to preserve their intellectual heritage (Smith, 2010). In Nigeria, the legal deposit system has been in operation since 1958, and it has played a vital role in the preservation and access to Nigerian publications (National Library of Nigeria Act, 1964). The Nigerian legal deposit system requires publishers to deposit copies of their publications with the National Library of Nigeria, thereby ensuring the availability of these materials for current and future generations.

The legal deposit system is critical to preserving intellectual heritage in Nigeria. The system provides a means for collecting, preserving, and making available Nigerian

publications for future generations. The National Library of Nigeria serves as the central depository for Nigerian publications and has the mandate to collect, preserve, and provide access to these publications (National Library of Nigeria Act, 1964).

Despite its importance, the legal deposit system in Nigeria faces several challenges. One of the major challenges is non-compliance by publishers. Many publishers in Nigeria are unaware of the legal deposit requirements or deliberately flout the law (Oketunji, 2013). This non-compliance results in a significant gap in the collection of Nigerian publications, thereby limiting access to information and knowledge. Another challenge is inadequate funding for the National Library of Nigeria, which hampers its efforts to carry out its mandate effectively (Odaró, 2019).

There is a need for a concerted effort to address the challenges facing the legal deposit system in Nigeria. This effort should include public awareness campaigns to educate publishers on the importance of legal deposit requirements and the consequences of non-compliance (Oketunji, 2013). Additionally, the Nigerian government needs to increase funding for the National Library of Nigeria to enable it to acquire and maintain modern technologies and infrastructure necessary for the efficient preservation and access to Nigerian publications.

The legal deposit system is critical to the preservation and access to Nigeria's intellectual heritage. However, the system faces several challenges that need urgent attention to ensure its effectiveness. With proper implementation, the legal deposit system can contribute significantly to the preservation and access to Nigeria's cultural and historical identity.

Statement of the problem

The preservation of intellectual heritage is an essential aspect of maintaining cultural legacy and promoting the advancement of knowledge. In Nigeria, the legal deposit system is the primary means of collecting and preserving intellectual works. However, several challenges and gaps exist, hindering the effectiveness of the legal deposit system in Nigeria. The absence of a comprehensive legal framework, inadequate infrastructure and resources, limited awareness and compliance, accessibility and digital preservation, and cultural and linguistic diversity are significant challenges that need to be addressed. The problem statement of this research topic, therefore, is to identify and address the challenges and gaps in the legal deposit system and develop effective strategies for preserving Nigeria's intellectual heritage.

Aim and objectives of the study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the preservation of legal deposit

resources in Nigeria to discover the factors that hinder the smooth preservation of knowledge heritage in Nigeria. To realise the purpose of the study, the study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- To assess the strategies used to preserve legal deposit materials;
- To find out staff competencies for legal deposit preservation;
- To identify factors that hinder the preservation of intellectual depositories in Nigeria.

Research Questions

- What are the strategies used to preserve legal deposit materials?
- How competent are the personnel in the preservation of materials?
- What factors that hinder the preservation of intellectual depositories in Nigeria

Literature Review

The main and continuous theme of the legal deposit is the preservation and storage of material (Jasion, 1991: 7; Lor, 1995: 97; NEDCC 2015). Legal deposit is being the main instrument for building and preserving the intellectual and cultural heritage of a nation (Lariviere 2000) and even where legislation does not specify that legal deposit material should be preserved in perpetuity, this is often seen as a "moral responsibility" to do so (Lor, 1995: 97).

Preservation is also the one purpose and function of a national library which has been constant over time (Larvriere 2000; Umoh 2017). National libraries face many difficulties in obtaining the material subject to legal deposit and face enormous challenges in preservation, particularly with electronic publishing (Lariviere 2000; Lor, Britz and Watermeyer 2006: 43; Muir 2001). The initiative is of critical importance as Scott (2002) rightly observes. National cultural identity depends to a large extent on the survival of cultural material, and without it, there would not only be gaps in the "fabric of the history of

the nation" (Penzhorn 2007; Nsibirwa 2012) but also the works of literature and scholarship that are the "permanent hallmarks of our civilisation" (Davies 1998: 160) would be lost.

Preservation requires maintaining a balance between collection-level practices, such as environmental management, which may be difficult and/or expensive to manage but which provide the greatest long-term benefit to most resources, and item-level practices, such as conservation care, which are much more easily understood and controlled but can have minimal effect, particularly if the objects are returned (NEDCC 2015).

Within the preservation community, there is consensus on the basic elements of a comprehensive preservation plan, where the balance will differ depending on the type of organization as the institutional and client needs will differ (NEDCC 2015). For example, a public library's primary interest may be to keep materials in good repair so they can be used until they become obsolete and removed, while a research library or archive would emphasize the preservation of long-term intellectual content and/or preservation of artefact-value original items.

The fundamental elements of a preservation programme as outlined by NEDCC (2015) are:

Environmental Control - To provide a moderate and stable level of temperature and humidity, and to control light and pollutant exposure. This should be a priority for all institutions, although control of general circulating collections will usually be less tight than of rare books, special collections, or archival materials.

Disaster Planning - Preventing and responding to water, fire or other emergency damage. Again, this should be a top priority for all institutions. The reasons for collections of durable value are obvious, but even collections that are not intended to be kept over a long term represent a capital

investment for an institution and must be protected from losses.

Security - Collections are protected from theft and/or vandalism. This type of protection is needed for both special and general collections, as general collections of loss and vandalism result in unnecessary replacement and expense.

Storage and Handling - Use of non-damaging storage enclosures and suitable storage facilities; clean up storage areas; take caution while storing, displaying, or reformatting collections; and inform improper handling strategies for employees and users; again, this should be a priority for all forms of collections.

Reformatting - Reproduction of decaying collections on secure media to keep the quality of information or in situations where the originals are fragile or valuable and handling restriction. This category covers microfilming, making preservative facsimiles, and duplicating audiovisual sets. These strategies are ideally suited for collections that need long-term preservation of their intellectual content and/or where security copies for unique objects are needed. Preservation microfilming remains an effective technique for limited paper-based collections, but for organizations replicating general collections elsewhere it is a low priority.

Library Binding - Rebinding damaged volumes to provide hard copy usage. Libraries with general collections in heavy use make use of this strategy. It should not be used on artefact value-bearing items.

Conservation Treatment - Treatment of individual objects using the services of a trained conservator. This may be appropriate for a wide range of institutions, provided that they have unique materials of sufficient value to justify treatment.

In-House Repair - Repair of items with no artefact interest using a professional collection conservator or in-house trained personnel. Public and academic libraries use in-house book repair to keep non-unique books in excellent condition, and

some institutions use basic paper repair techniques (e.g., mending, encapsulation) for historical materials. General preventive activities such as rehousing should be given a higher priority for special collections libraries, archives, and historical societies than in-house repair.

Digital Reformatting and Preservation - Use of digital imaging to provide access to copies of degraded original collections; create digital artefacts that act as preservation copies of original items; and/or conserve 'born digital' objects. Digital projects can be suitable for a wide variety of institutions; the key to implementing such a project is for the organization to clearly understand the requirements.

Methodology

The qualitative research approach in which the scientific belief system is based on an interpretive paradigm was chosen as the dominant research approach for this study. The qualitative research method was used for this study because it enables thorough scrutiny of the researched topic and the researcher is provided with a vast range of options and opportunities for exploring diverse issues within the problem area. Qualitative research design has a flexible structure, as the design can be constructed and reconstructed to a greater extent (Maxwell 2012). This study used a case study as a research strategy to explore the preservation of legal deposit resources in Nigeria. The study deployed the use of the interview, document analysis and observation methods of data collection. The interview target population was five members of staff in the legal deposit department of the National Library of Nigeria headquarters in Abuja and Jos branch. The face-to-face method of the interview was employed in interviewing the staff of the legal deposit in April 2019. The data collected through interviews were analysed based on a three-stage procedure suggested in the literature (Creswell and Creswell 2018; Creswell 2016) preparing

the data for analysis by transcribing, reducing the data into themes through coding and representing the data using Atlasti software.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Participants were asked about the strategies that are used in the preservation of legal deposit materials. All the participants (NLN1- NLN5) noted that the National Library of Nigeria sends a copy of each legal deposit material collected to the University of Ibadan Library to avoid the loss of all collections in case of disaster.

Participant NLN2 observed that "*Security arrangements are put in place to avoid theft of collected legal deposit materials.*"

Participant NLN4 said, "*The environment where collected legal deposit materials are displayed or stored is kept clean, the atmosphere is regulated using air-conditioning; users are educated on careful handling of information materials while using them, and staff are put on duty to monitor the handling of information materials by users and to prevent theft.*" Participant NLN5 added that "*Unlike most national libraries in the world, the national library of Nigeria has decentralised the storage of legal deposit materials collected in the country.*"

All the participants (NLN1- NLN5) agreed that the National Library of Nigeria has embarked on fumigation of the reading areas periodically to fight micro and macro-biological attacks on the information sources.

Participant NLN2 remarked, "*Torn books were handled by the National Library Press before its closure. Presently, the National Library is using the services of commercial binders to ensure that all torn materials needed to be conserved are promptly attended to.*" All the participants (NLN1- NLN5) noted that air conditioners are also provided with a strategy for preservation.

Participant NLN1 further observed, “The National Library of Nigeria undertakes digitisation of government documents, such as reports of Commissions of inquiries. Over seventy-five such reports have been

digitised. These digitised materials are on CDs and available for sale.”

Figure1 shows the different preservation strategies identified by participants.

Table 1 Preservation Strategies

S/No	Preservation strategy	Participants
1	Sending a copy to the University of Ibadan library	1,2,3,4, and 5
2	Provision of air conditioners	1,2,3,4, and 5
3	Fumigation	1,2,3,4, and 5
4	Theft prevention	2 and 4
5	Cleaning the environment	4
6	Educating users on the handling of materials	4
7	Decentralisation of storage	5
8	Binding of torn books	2
9	Digitisation of government documents	1

Preservation policy

When the participants were asked about the availability of preservation policy, four of the participants (NLN1, NLN2, NLN4, and NLN5) said, there is no written preservation policy at the National Library of Nigeria. Their comments are stated below:

“Preservation policy is aimed at defining the preservation responsibilities of a library and providing guidance to the library staff involved in decision-making and other activities that can influence the collection. It also represents a fundamental accountability document for one of the core business functions of the library and is to be the basis for communication with several external stakeholders. Sadly, such a framework does not exist in the Nigerian National Library” (Participant NLN1).

“The National Library of Nigeria is legally responsible for preserving the country's recorded knowledge. Preservation policy is critical to the continued availability of unique and important collections. Unfortunately, after many years of establishment, the National Library has not yet developed a policy to preserve collected materials” (Participant NLN2).

Participant NLN4 observed, “It is very sad to note that, despite being a very important document for one of the library's main corporate functions, the National Library of Nigeria does not have its preservation policy.”

“Preservation policy lays out the approach of a library to the preservation, addressing the issues of what needs to be preserved, why, for what reason, and for how long. However, the Nigerian National Library has not seen the need to implement such a policy” (Participant NLN5). However, participant NLN3 said, “There is a preservation policy, but it is unwritten.” Probing further, he said, “You cannot say that there is no policy, it is there, only that it is not written.”

Preservation challenges

All the participants identified the following challenges: lack of enough storage facilities, inadequate funds to preserve information resources with modern preservation methods, incessant power failure, and insufficient air-conditioners.

Also, participant NLN1 said, “Information resources are deteriorating, books and serials are becoming acidic, and non-book materials have gone bad.”

Participant NLN2 lamented, “The biggest challenge is inadequate funding.”

Participant NLN3 said, “There is no disaster detection facility as a measure towards disaster control.” Participant NLN4 stated, “Lack of trained

Table 2 Preservation challenges

S/No	Preservation challenge	Participants
1	Lack of storage facilities	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
2	Inadequate funds	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
3	Incessant power failure	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
4	Insufficient air conditioners	1, 2, 3, 4 and 5
5	Deterioration of information sources	1
6	Materials are becoming acidic	1
7	Non-book materials have gone bad	1
8	Lack of disaster detection facility	3
9	Lack of trained professionals	4
10	Lack of modern preservation equipment	5

professionals in preservation is one other challenge.” Last, participant NLN5 said, “Lack of modern preservation equipment is also a challenge.” Table 2 further illustrates various preservation challenges identified by the study participants.

Staff competence in the preservation of materials

On the question of staff competence in the preservation of materials, all the study participants (NLN1- NLN5) agreed that most of the personnel in the National Library of Nigeria are not conversant with the preservation technologies. Participants NLN3 and NLN4 observed that there are no training opportunities for preservationists in Nigeria. “Many workers in the National Library are ignorant of preservation techniques” (Participant NLN1).

“Most of Nigeria's National Library employees are not experienced in preservation technology” (Participant NLN2).

“Most of the personnel in the National Library of Nigeria are not in touch with preservation technological developments” (Participant NLN3).

“Most National Library staff are ignorant of preservation methods, and there are no opportunities for preservation training in Nigeria” (Participant NLN4).

“Most staff in the National Library are ignorant of preservation methods, and there are no training opportunities for preservation in Nigeria” (Participant NLN5).

Discussion of Findings

The study examined techniques for preserving deposited materials and the results showed that fumigating the library was the main pesticide control procedure of the National Library of Nigeria. Table 1 presents the various preservation strategies adopted by the National Library of Nigeria. This is contrary to the international best practice recommended by Integrated Pest Management (IPM). No single approach to the prevention and control of pests will be enough, according to Parker (1993). Therefore, it typically takes a combination of strategies to optimise the efficacy of any pest control programme. There is never any need to fumigate library resources with extremely toxic chemicals. It can be justified in bookworms, but fumigation is not required in cases involving mould and mildew (Harvey 1993).

Findings also showed that the National Library of Nigeria had air conditioners, fans and fire extinguishers but was deficient in environmental monitoring equipment such as Thermo-hygrometer recording, water sensing systems, dehumidifiers, thermometers, light meters, fire alarm systems and air conditioning and heat ventilation system. To track and control the library environment where materials are stored, Nigeria, being a tropical country with high temperature, relative humidity and sunlight, monitoring equipment is very important. This confirms the findings of Akussah (1994) at the University of Ghana Balme Library, where he discovered that temperature and humidity monitoring devices are not available, which allows deterioration agents to destroy the collections.

The research also focused on preservation techniques for electronic publications. Participants noted that there is no provision in the legal deposit law on how to collect digital publications, and there is a need to amend the legislation and include a clause on how to collect and handle electronic publications. More so, the only digital activity of the National Library is the migration of digital objects and the microfilming of newspapers. The result agrees with Gbaje's (2011) study, which has shown that the migration of digital objects was the only digital preservation activity carried out at the National Library. The result suggests that digital knowledge has become the most popular method of communication and dissemination, with computers and electronic networks. This creates challenges in the 21st century for legal deposits and so the measures proposed by the Digital Heritage Charter of UNESCO, which is the introduction of legal deposit of electronic materials either voluntary or mandatory should be embraced. UNESCO (2003) has shown that strategies and policies to preserve the digital heritage must be established by urgency, local circumstances, available

resources and future forecasts implementing strategies to preserve digital heritage. This will be enabled by the collaboration between authors, copyright holders and related rights, and relevant organisations in setting common standards and compatibilities, and sharing of resources. The trend (Cadavid 2014) is that the legal deposit has been changed in some countries to preserve digital heritage. The role and functions of national libraries in the 21st century are closely connected with mandatory legislation to preserve digital heritage.

Research by Atanda (2017) found that Nigerian libraries face the enormous challenge of lacking simple strategies to preserve their digital content. There is currently no national policy on digital material preservation in libraries in Nigeria as opposed to prominent countries or organisations worldwide. It is a challenge to provide information services efficiently and effectively in the information technology age. In this crucial time, special training sessions on preserving digital materials need to be arranged for librarians to develop their skills on the job.

The researcher also sought to determine whether there is a written preservation policy in the National Library of Nigeria. The result showed that the Nigerian National Library currently lacks the policy to direct preservation, build conservation facilities, or train and hire personnel. This is a major fault which was confirmed during the interviews by the staff of the legal deposit division. The participants said that preservation policy is aimed at defining the preservation responsibilities of a library and providing guidance to the library staff involved in decision-making and other activities that can influence the collection. It also represents a fundamental accountability document for one of the core business functions of the library and is to be the basis for communication with several external stakeholders. Sadly, such a framework does not exist in the Nigerian

National Library. Participants lamented that despite being a very important document for one of the library's main corporate functions, the National Library of Nigeria does not have a preservation policy.

This finding agrees with Muhammad's (2006) discovery that there is no preservation and conservation policy in place for the National Library of Nigeria. The result also supports Wamukoya and Mutula (2005) who confirmed that many African countries do not have a national information policy that avoids planning preservation and development policies in libraries and knowledge centres. This result, however, is not in agreement with Olatokun (2008) who found that more than an average number of institutional libraries surveyed in Nigeria have preservation policies that have actually provided guidance to library staff in carrying out their collection management responsibilities and that the provisions in the preservation policy are properly applied and adhered to. Olatokun's (2008) result disagreed with Cloonan's (2001) and Menges' (2006) submissions that some libraries do not have a preservation policy and reports from surveys conducted at the Hungarian National Archives, National Library and major archives and libraries that showed that the formulation of preservation policy was a neglected field (Albrecht-Kunszeri and Kastaly 2000).

The study also explored the expertise and professional knowledge of the preservation workers. The result has shown that most librarians in Nigeria's National Library are not adequately trained in preservation management. Participants maintained that most National Library staff are ignorant of preservation methods, and there are no opportunities for preservation training in Nigeria. This result supports Alegbeleye's (1991) and Abioye's (2008) findings that there is a dearth of institutions for training preservation personnel and curators.

Alegbeleye (1991) said that there are few places, even if Nigerians will go for training, where this could be done in Africa. He said that at Ibadan Library School where preservation studies are formally and frequently taught the programme has many issues, including the absence of a practical work laboratory that makes the course teaching purely theoretical.

This finding is following the findings reported by Zaid, Abioye and Olatise (2012) that workers urgently needed training in the areas of conservation and preservation, paper stability and document repair, accelerated development of documentation, storage technologies, retrieval of records, preservation challenges in the digital age, increased nature of conservation and conservation responsibilities, issues of digital preservation, funding, policy and support for conservation, conservation treatment skills, high-priority content for conservation education, preservation tools, conservation and data management planning, strategic planning and policies.

The important implications of these findings are that the design of training should consider the diversity and suitability of the format for employees. It is urgent that the government plans and implements a comprehensive national conservation and preservation policy while recognising each heritage institution's peculiarity. Preservation of heritage should be well funded to ensure improvement in the facilities and facilities available for training heritage conservation workers. The time is ripe for the establishment of well-equipped preservation laboratories where heritage staff can have practical experience in heritage conservation.

All the participants identified the following challenges: lack of enough storage facilities, inadequate funds to preserve information resources with modern preservation methods, incessant power

failure, and insufficient air-conditioners. Table 2 illustrates the preservation challenges faced by the National Library of Nigeria. This conforms with the results of Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa (2013), who reported that in their annual budget, nearly all African libraries, archives and information centres do not allocate adequate funding to preserve information materials in their collections. This has resulted in the low priority or lack of desired attention provided by the management of such libraries and archives to the preservation and conservation of information resources. Also, Ogunmodede and Ebijuwa (2013) argued that the lack of sufficient or insufficient facilities and materials contributes majorly to the current poor preservation and conservation status of information materials in African libraries, archives, and information centres. Some necessary materials and equipment required for the establishment of functional conservation and restoration laboratories in African libraries and archives are not available locally. Concerning lack of enough storage space, the researcher observed that the National Library building which is a rented building in Abuja is dilapidated. A few years ago, the building of the National Library of Nigeria was marked by the Federal Capital Development Authority as not fit for human habitation for its state of rust and decay.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the legal deposit system in Nigeria plays a crucial role in preserving the country's intellectual heritage. Through this system, the government ensures that all published materials, including books, newspapers, and electronic documents, are deposited in designated libraries and archives for future reference and research. This process enables Nigerians to access valuable information and knowledge that would otherwise have been lost or destroyed.

Moreover, the legal deposit system serves as a means of promoting and encouraging creativity and innovation in Nigeria's

publishing industry. Publishers are motivated to produce high-quality materials knowing that their work will be preserved for posterity. The system also provides a means of monitoring the publishing industry, ensuring compliance with relevant laws and regulations, and enhancing the quality of published materials.

Despite the challenges faced by the legal deposit system, such as inadequate funding and limited resources, it remains an essential tool in safeguarding Nigeria's intellectual heritage. The government and relevant stakeholders should continue to support and strengthen the legal deposit system to ensure that it remains relevant in the digital age and that future generations can benefit from Nigeria's rich intellectual heritage.

B

Preservation of legal deposit materials is critical for ensuring that cultural and intellectual heritage is not lost over time. Here are some recommendations for improving the preservation of legal deposit materials:

1. **Prioritize Preservation:** Preservation should be a top priority for all legal deposit materials. Preservation measures should be implemented at the time of acquisition and should be ongoing. The National Library of Nigeria should have a well-equipped preservation department with skilled staff to carry out preservation activities.
2. **Digitize Materials:** Digitization of legal deposit materials can help to preserve the content of the materials and increase their accessibility to a wider audience. Digitization can also help to reduce the wear and tear of the original materials by providing access to the digital versions instead of the physical materials.
3. **Establish a Disaster Preparedness Plan:** Disaster preparedness planning is critical for the

preservation of legal deposit materials. The National Library of Nigeria should establish a disaster preparedness plan to minimize the impact of natural disasters or other emergencies on the materials. The plan should include measures such as emergency response, recovery, and salvage procedures.

4. Increase Funding: Adequate funding is essential for the preservation of legal deposit materials. The National Library of Nigeria should allocate sufficient funds for the preservation department to carry out preservation activities such as conservation, digitization, and disaster preparedness planning.
5. Collaborate with Publishers and Producers: Collaboration with publishers and producers can help to ensure that legal deposit materials are preserved effectively. The National Library of Nigeria should work closely with publishers and producers to encourage them to produce high-quality materials that are suitable for preservation.

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