

## **Acquisition, Preservation, and Retrieval of Archival Materials in the National Archives, Kaduna, Nigeria.**

By

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### **Abstract**

Information is a daily need of every person either for personal or official engagement which is obtainable from various sources including archives. This paper discusses the acquisition, preservation and retrieval of archival materials in the National Archives Kaduna, Nigeria. Case study approach was used for the study. The population of the study comprised the twenty five (25) staff of the National Archives Kaduna, Nigeria. Questionnaires, observation and discussions were used to collect data for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive analysis by means of frequency count and simple percentage. The study revealed that the National Archives Kaduna have a good process of acquiring materials and have poor preservative facilities, the national archives also have internal retrieval devices for easy access by users but the services of the staff are inadequate. The study recommended adequate funding of the Archives among others.

### **Introduction**

Information is a daily need of every person either for personal or official engagement. Information can be defined as the knowledge a person perceived from some communicated data which could be alphabetical, numerical, non-verbal or other symbol. Information is a valuable resource; anybody that has useful information has power. It is seen by many researchers such as historians, genealogist, authors and medical researchers as the fourth economic resources to labour, land and capital. Some even say it refers to data that has been verified to be accurate and timely, is specific and organized for a purpose, presented within a context that gives meaning and relevance and that can lead to increase in knowledge and decrease in uncertainty. It occupies centre stage in all disciplines due to the fact that almost everything which individual do or which society engage in, generates or is driven by information. Information can be obtained from various sources depending on the nature of information required. Major sources of information are libraries, museums, World Wide Web and archives such information must be selected and acquired. Archival resources constitute a unique primary source and are the major sources of information research. They consist of records that have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation on ground of their enduring cultural, historical, or evidentiary value. Archival records are normally unpublished and almost always unique unlike books or magazines for which identical copies exist. It means that Archives are quite distinct from libraries with regards to their function and organization although archival collection can be often found within library building. Some archival materials include: accounts, correspondence, grants, gazettes, legal records, journals, audio records, pictorial records such as prints, drawing, photographs, sketches, films, newspapers, reports, diaries, memoranda, public and business records, maps and plans, and manuscript.

Archives preserve and present the cultural heritage and National identity of the people. It also compliments the human memory thereby allowing

the flow of recorded knowledge of the past for future use. The effective preservation and use of such recorded knowledge therefore, can greatly influence societal transformation, politically, culturally, administratively and economically. Cunningham & Philips (2005) who quoted (Derrida, 1996) described the roles of archives in democracy which is an important requirement for societal transformation. According to them, "there is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory.

The archives is the last phase of both records and information lifecycle just as it is said in ordinary, 'from cradle to the grave' it can also be said of records and information' creation to the archives'. The archives represent the terminal point of any record or information that is of enduring value. Thus Thomas et.al (1993) in their glossary of terms defines archives as a facility that houses for historical or research value after their main purpose have been fulfilled.

Millar (1997) opined that archives are media which have been generated by an organization in the course of business and which had turned out to be worth keeping. In shedding more light on this definition the author goes further to add that 'theses archives had been selected by some means or other from larger body of media produced by the same process, which had not passed the selection test and much which was not worth keeping in the long term. According to Getty (1998) records pass through three stages before they are considered ripe for archives. First there is the stage when they are still in current use and are required by the agency which created them for day to day conduct of its affairs. There is the dominant or semi-dominant stage when records are half dead and reference to them becomes less frequent. Final stage is when they are so old and no longer required by the creating agency. At this stage the record assumes a potential value as archives.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of November 1957 the public Archives ordinance no.43 was passed and it authorized the establishment of the National Archives of Nigeria to provide for the preservation of public Archives. The act empowered the National Archives of Nigeria to establish as many branches as might be deemed necessary and convenient. From 1954 to 1982 the National Archives of Nigeria have established branches with headquarters in Lagos.

The National Archives Kaduna was opened in June 1957 when the work on the accessioning of records of the secretariat, Northern provinces was pronounced. In 1963 the permanent building was opened. The Archive is very spacious and houses a large collection of records though with few number of staff. Some of the collections are either in Arabic or Hausa languages. In view of the fact that many information seekers are familiar with the library than with archives, it becomes imperative to investigate the challenges of acquisition, preservation and retrieval of information in the archives.

#### **Objectives of the study**

The following are the objectives of the study;

1. To find out the methods of acquisition of archival materials at the National Archives Kaduna.
2. To find out methods of preservation for archival material at the National Archives Kaduna.
3. To ascertain the adequacy for staff of effective service delivery in the National Archives Kaduna.
4. To determine the nature of resources kept in the National Archives Kaduna.
5. To find out the methods of the retrieval of archival information in the National Archives Kaduna.
6. To determine problems of acquisition, preservation and access to archival information at the National Archives Kaduna.

#### **Literature Review**

According to UNESCO (1976), the preservation and accessibility of archives among successive generations constitute the greatest single treasure of the human heritage. Archival records are usually appraised, retained, organized and preserved according to acceptable standard and procedures. The concept of access was considered as one of the most important aspect of archival administration by Abioye (2009). He described access in archival context as the availability of records/archives for consultation as a result both of legal authorization and the existence of finding aids. According to Harold (1977) access in archival operations is the availability of archival resources to users. This

means making available (for use) of archival materials to users through the provision of archival services. It is certainly beyond arguments that, the preservation of archival records whether on paper and the more modern form of information documentation cannot in any way serves a meaningful purpose without provision of access to the records. The purpose of selecting, acquiring and preserving archives is to make them available for use. Intellectual and physical accessibility are vital components of managing these important information resources.

Baumann (1986); Jimerson (2007) and Prom (2003) emphasized the need for archival records to be properly described and organized following patterns established during their original use and creation. Prom (2003) further posited that, to retain a proper context for interpreting the actions of an individual or organization, archival files must be properly arranged and described. A good archival practice mandates that the records of an organization, the personal paper of an individual or the aggregation of a documentary collection be described and arranged following patterns established during original use and creation.

Jimerson (2002) also justified the use of provenance principles as an important factor of consideration in describing archival records. "The fundamental archival principles of provenance and original order dictate that, archival records should be organized by office of origin or records creator and that the original filing order should be maintained whenever possible". Also, Akporhonor and Iwhiwhu (2007) indicated that, description and arrangements in archival context not only ensure proper organization of the records but also facilitate quick and easy access to the records when required.

Today archives can include a broad range of material in variety of media archives might be public and corporate records generated by government, business or private papers and records (manuscript) created or kept by individuals. They could be paper documents such as letters, diaries or they may include other media items such as photographic images, maps architecture records, films and even machine readable records generated by computers. Evborokhai (1990) described the nature and coverage of archival resources to include books, paper, maps, photographs, machine readable materials either documentary materials regardless of physical form or characteristics generated or received by a department or organization in connection with the transaction of its business and preserved as evidence of its functions, policies, decision, operations or activities or because of the information value in them.

Akinbulumo (1986) made an extensive search on the national archives Abuja. Her study centered on the acquisition and appraisal of archival documents in the national archives Abuja. The study was limited to acquisition and appraisal without going into archives resources and organization in the national archives of any other branch like Enugu, Ibadan and Lagos. Jato (1989) in his MLS thesis wrote extensively on establishing a university archives taking university of Maiduguri for a case study, he was able to develop a management scheme for the archives and recommended the description of the national union group based on the style of the national union catalogues of the manuscript collection of the library of congress. Again his work was limited to the university archives

Essien and Idika (1991) studied the selection and acquisition of manuscript materials in the national archives Abuja. In one of the conclusions reached they wrote” records are equally valuable to the historians whether engaged in writing political, cultural or religious history or the development of economic legal or judicial institution for the records are vehicles of evidence. The evidence they carry may be trivial, scandalous, treasonable spice.

**Data Analysis**

**Demographic Information**

**Table1: distribution of respondents by sex**

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Male	19	76%
Female	6	24%
Total	25	100%

**Table2: Distribution of Respondents by Academic Qualification**

Qualification	Male	Female	Total
WASC/SSCE	0	2	2(8%)
ND/NCE	12	2	14(56%)
HND/B.sc/B.A	5	2	7(28%)
Higher Degree	2	0	2(8%)
Total	19	6	25(100%)

**Table3: Methods of Archival Acquisition**

Methods	Yes(percentage)	No
Donations	25(100%)	0(0%)
Purchase	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
Soliciting	20(80%)	5(20)
Willful submission	25(100%)	0(0%)
Forceful takeover	16(64%)	9(36%)

Table1 shows that 19(76%) of the respondents are males while 6(24%) are females which implies that there were more males than females.

In Table 2, it is shown that 14(56%) of the respondents have either National Diploma or Nigeria Certificate in Education, 7(28%) have either Higher National Diploma or Bachelor degree, 2(8%) have Ordinary level certificate and higher degree

Alhassan (1992) studied archival resources and organisation at the national Archives, Ibadan Nigeria and reported that archival resources included records of colonial administration, first newspaper in Nigeria, and other records of provisional offices. He reported further that office of providence was used in the organisation of the archives. The work like others also focused on Ibadan while the present study focused on Kaduna national archives. Furthermore, the work was carried out in 1992 twenty years before the present study. The present study is therefore justified.

**Research methodology**

The case study approach was used for the study. The population of the study comprised of the twenty five (25) staff of the National Archives Kaduna. Total enumeration of all the 25 staff of the archive was carried for the study. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Observations of acquisitions, preservation and retrieval techniques adopted by the staff and users were also undertaken. The method of the analysis of data was by direct interpretation of responses to each question posed by the questionnaires by means of frequency count and simple percentage.

respectively. This implies that more than half of the respondents have intermediate certificates.

As shown in Table3, all the 25(100%) respondents affirmed that the archive acquire its materials by donation, 21(84%) respondents stated that they acquire by purchase while 4(16%) said no, 20 respondents (80%) also agreed to acquisition by soliciting while 5(20%) disagreed, 25 respondent

(100%) agreed that they acquire by willful submission and 16(64%) respondents stated that they acquire by forceful takeover while 9(36%) disagreed. These methods of archival acquisition are adopted by national archives in acquiring archival materials. From the researcher observation and findings the national archives Kaduna practice all the methods of archival acquisitions mentioned in the above table, .but donation and willful submission are the commonest means.

Table 4 shows that all the 25 respondents (100%) affirmed that the archives acquire these archival materials which includes manuscripts, old newspapers, colonial records, Arabic manuscripts and audio-visual records while 15(60%), 19(76%) respondents affirmed to operational files and digital collections respectively and 10(40%) , 6(24%) disaffirmed to acquiring operational files and digital collections. From physical observations all the items listed above were seen in the archives collections. Quantities of Arabic manuscripts were found with some video collections of history.

Table5 shows that all respondents 25(100%) affirmed to the following methods of preservation which includes air-conditioning, fumigation, microfilming and binding are used in the preservation of the archival materials. However, only 7(28%) of the respondents agreed that they use electro copying for preservation while 18

respondent (72%) negate the use of electro-copying as a preservative method which shows that electro copying is not a used in the national archives Kaduna. From the researcher observation during the visit the air-conditioners were faulty leaving the archival collections very dusty which accelerates the deterioration of the collections and from discussions the archives have not been fumigated for years. The findings from observation and discussions reviewed that the faulty air-conditions and lack of fumigations are due to poor funding from the government leading to the lack of maintenance of the archive collections.

In Table 6, five respondents (20%) affirmed they had sufficient staff to meet service delivery while twenty (20) respondents (80%) deny having sufficient staff to meet services delivery, eighteen (18) respondent (72%) attested to having staff with requisite qualification in archive management from table two(2) most of the respondent all have been trained professionally in higher institutions while seven (7) respondent (28%) deny this fact, from the researcher findings and analysis most of the staff in the Kaduna national archives have requisite qualification. Training of staff internally to meet demand fourteen (14) respondents (56%) attested to it while eleven (11) respondents (44%) denied it, adequacy of staff was affirmed by eight (8) respondents (32%) while seventeen (17) respondents (68%) disagreed to the adequacy of staff.

**Table 4: Types of Archival Materials**

Types of archival materials	Yes	No
Manuscripts	25(100%)	0(0%)
Operational files	15(60%)	10(40%)
Old Newspapers	25(100%)	0(0%)
Colonial records	25(100%)	0(0%)
Arabic manuscripts	25(100%)	0(0%)
Digital collections	19(76%)	6(24%)
Audio –visual collections	25(100%)	0(0%)

**Table 5: Methods of Preservation**

Method	Yes	No
Air-conditioning	25(100%)	0(0%)
Fumigation	25(100%)	0(0%)
Microfilming	25(100%)	0(0%)
Binding	25(100%)	0(0%)
Electro copying	7(28%)	18(72%)

**Table 6: Requisite Staff availability**

Staff information	Yes	No
Sufficient staff to meet service delivery	5(20%)	20(80%)
Requisite qualification of staff	18 (72%)	7(28%)
Staff trained internally to meet demand	14(56%)	11(44%)
Adequacy of staff	8(32%)	17(68%)

**Table 7: Arrangement and Retrieval Methods**

Methods	Yes	No
Catalogue	9(36%)	14(64%)
Index	15(60%)	10(40%)
Arranged by office of by providence	25(100%)	0(0%)
Arranged by subject	21(84%)	4(16%)
Arranged by title	17(68%)	8(32%)
Availability of internal retrieval devices	20(80%)	5(20%)

As shown in Table 7, retrieval of archival materials using catalogue was affirmed by 9 respondents (36%) and 14 respondents (64%) nullify the use of cataloging as a retrieval method, retrieval of archival materials by index 15 respondents (60%) affirmed and 10 respondent (40%) negate the use of retrieval by index. Arrangement methods of archival material for easy access are done by office of providence, by subject and by title to ease retrieval of material by patrons/users and 20 respondents (80%) attested to having internal retrieval device while five (5) respondents 20% negate the availability.

#### Summary of Findings

Findings show that the methods of acquisition archival materials in the National Archives Kaduna include purchase, donations, willful submission, soliciting and forceful takeover. The materials acquired into the archives includes old newspaper, Arabic manuscripts, colonial records, operational files and manuscripts, it was also discovered that the holdings go beyond paper materials as other information format are also available such formats are audio-visual collection and digital materials. The study also found that the methods of preservation of the archival collections included air-conditioning, fumigations, binding, microfilming and electro-copying. However, from observation it was found that electro copying is not used as a preservative method, the archives have not been fumigated for years and all the air conditioners are faulty awaiting repairs.

The study also discovered that the National archives Kaduna lack sufficient staff and inadequate of staff to meet service delivery but also majority of the staff are trained internally and have requisite qualification to meet the requirements. Finally archival materials/collections are arranged for easy retrieval. Archival materials/collection are arranged by office of by provenance, by title and by subject while retrieval are done by catalogue and by index. The National Archives Kaduna also have internal retrieval devices.

#### Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that the National Archives Kaduna have a well organized method of acquiring, arranging and retrieving archival materials for research, the

national archives have sufficient resources for research and the archival material are not properly maintain which results to deterioration and eventual loss. Although the staff have required qualification but they are inadequate which results to poor service delivery.

#### Recommendation

In view of the findings made above and conclusions reached, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria should fund the Department of National Archives so as to acquire archival materials from all federal departments in any part of the country.
2. The National Archives Kaduna should intensify efforts to generate revenue to maintain the facilities for the preservation of the materials.
3. The National Archives Kaduna should employ more qualified staff to meet service delivery and to ensure adequacy of service.

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