Comparative study of collection management practices of academic libraries

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to find out the similarities and differences in collection management practices of the main libraries of the University of Cape Coast and the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana.

Design/methodology/approach – The study adopted a qualitative approach in considering the research problem and also used the case study to collect data. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents.

Findings – Some of the results highlighted are: both libraries had sections responsible for collection management practices, the collection management practices carried out by both libraries were almost similar, lack of adequate professional staff, lack of adequate funds and unavailability of Collection Management Policy were some of the challenges.

Research limitations/implications – The study focussed on the activities performed by the various sections directly involved in the collection management practices and excludes administrative practices.

Practical implications – In order to make any library functional, collection management should be a shared responsibility of all the sections of the library and that enough money is required to link the staff and the information resources in the library together.

Social implications – All stakeholders of libraries must play their role to make academic libraries functional.

Originality/value – The study provides insight into the collection development activities undertaken by the libraries of the only public academic institutions purposely build by the Government of Ghana to train graduate teachers for Basic and Second-Cycle institutions in Ghana.

Keywords Resources, Libraries, Intellectual, Relevant, Selection, Staff

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The activity undertaken by all types of libraries to ensure that the right information resources are made available for library users is considered as collection management. Collection management entails activities which involve acquisition of library materials, processing, organisation, conservation and preservation, storage, weeding, and promoting the use of the library materials (Kumar, 2012). The main task involved in collection management is to make the information sources gathered useful and physically accessible to users of the library.

Though sometimes collection development and collection management are used interchangeably, the dichotomy between these two terms is that, while the former deals with the selection and acquisition of the library collection, the latter deals with the managing of the use, storage and organisation of the collection (Arinawati, 2011).

The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLANET, 2003) stated that academic libraries are essential to the operations of universities and for that matter play a greater role in the achievement of their academic missions. That is why IFLA has a section for University Libraries. However these libraries cannot perform their role if proper collection development and management practices are not conducted.

The main task involved in collection management is to make the information sources gathered useful and physically accessible to users of the library. That is why needs assessment should be done first so that resources kept in the library become relevant to the information needs of the users (Little, 2011).

In order to avoid what was once stated by Gruenthal (2011), that "our target audience, the reluctant reader, can read, but chooses not to because the books they are exposed to are not interesting to them", academic libraries should have collection development and management policies to serve as a guide that will make it possible for all format of materials to be procured since resources in academic libraries should include all pertinent information regardless of format and nature of access (Pickett *et al.*, 2011).

The community of an academic library is made up of heterogeneous users; so it is prudent that resources are provided for all courses offered in the institution. This means that decisions taken concerning the management of library materials need to be subjective. Basically, users of academic libraries are now looking for librarians who can help them identify the resources they would use for their academic work (Dilevko, 2013).

The Government of Ghana established the institutions under study thus; University of Cape Coast (UCC), and the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), to train professional graduate teachers for basic and second-cycle schools in the country. Libraries in these institutions were expected to be well managed so that the trainee teachers could be attracted to use the libraries and if possible cultivate and sustain the habit of patronising libraries in general.

Objectives of the study
The main objective of the study is to identify and compare the collection management practices carried out by two academic libraries and the challenges encountered when executing these activities.

Statement of the problem
A survey by Jubb and Green (2007) indicated that academic libraries have for centuries played vital role in supporting teaching, learning and research in all subjects and disciplines within their host campuses. An empirical studies by Chaputula (2011), and Mangrum and Pozzebon (2012), revealed that the extent at which collection development and management activities are carried out varies from one library setting to another. More so, a preliminary investigation conducted by the researcher in the libraries under study revealed that both libraries had some challenges militating against their operations, hence this comparative study.

Research questions

RQ1. Which collection management practices are performed by these libraries?

RQ2. What is the level of professionalism of staff of the libraries under study?

RQ3. What are the challenges militating against the collection development practices?

Literature review
Collection development and collection management practices are essential aspect of librarianship. Therefore, it is an obligation for librarians to equip themselves with abilities which will make them competent enough to undertake these activities which can satisfy the information needs of their patrons.

To Smith (2008) collection development can be considered as aspect of librarianship which involves continuous activities in all libraries aimed at ensuring that collections are put together to serve the community at large. This statement has been buttressed by Evans and Saponaro (2005), who stated that collection development is the process meant to ensure that the library make available resources that can meet the information needs of its service population as and when they need it at cheaper rate in and out of the organisation in question.

Collection development and collection management are essential aspect of librarianship in academic libraries. He continued by ascertaining that owning to the nature of the role academic libraries play in fulfilling the vision and mission of academic institutions much need to be done by librarians.

The high level of non-professionals in academic libraries is a problem likely to negatively affect the management of the library materials. This assertion is buttressed by Edekor (2004) who pointed out that lack of professional knowledge and skills may lead to improper management. On the contrary, a study conducted by Simpson (2013) with 500 Academic Library Directors and 370 Public Library Directors revealed that the need for non-professional librarians for subject expertise and technical skills, such as web design, data management, instructional design specialists, rare books curators amongst others is unavoidable.

An academic library should have collections that are free from outdated, obsolete, shabby, or no longer useful items because for every item that is put on the library shelves, librarians should at least be considering whether there are items that need to be removed. Librarians need to analyse the needs of the library clientele thoroughly to ensure that materials weeded have really outlived their usefulness. Aina (2004) also buttressed the above statement by saying that weeding is one of the notable collection management activities undertaken in libraries so that one can get rid of the library's outdated, archaic, redundant materials.

Effective collection management activities cannot take place without adequate funding, however, the present economic stress of most countries especially developing countries has affected library. Chaputula (2013) asserted that lack of funds has affected most institutions to the extent that their libraries are not adequately stocked.

It is expected that all collections in libraries should be managed effectively. But a study conducted by Kwadzo and Annor (2013), on managing newspaper collections in some selected Ghanaian public academic libraries revealed that most of the libraries were undertaking some rudimentary activities to manage their newspapers because there are no policies guiding their operations. They recommended that academic libraries in Ghana need to update their procedures of managing newspaper collection to meet the expected standard of the twenty-first century because such collection preserve the heritage of the country. Not forgetting the maintenance of grey literature, also called "fugitive literature", such as speeches, conference papers, research studies; statistical data sets, curriculum guidelines and instructional materials, and education-related materials kept by most libraries. The majority of these materials in print format hence the collection development and management librarians have a task of managing these documents especially in developing countries.

Also, an investigation conducted by Asante (2014) on the relationship between budgetary constraints and operation of public academic libraries in Ghana are to be based on the following four constructs: patronage, service provision, selection and acquisition and collection development. These constructs indicated positive correlations as far as budgeting constraints are concerned. He recommended that management of academic libraries in Ghana need sufficient funding if they are to remain functional.

Chaputula and Kanyando (2014) noted that due to high cost of living in today's world, resources sharing and consortium purchase have been adopted by most libraries in the acquisition of e-journals and databases. Also, the global economic crisis has compelled some academic libraries to adopt demand-driven acquisitions; this is where the library procures library resources on request to avoid the problem of purchasing items which would never be patronized.

Resource sharing is vehicle for cooperation, coordination, inter-library loans, cooperative acquisition, cooperative cataloguing, so according to Evans and Saponaro (2005), formation of consortium can be an initiator for resource sharing among libraries especially in

developing countries. There are several examples of consortium, among them is the International Coalition of Library Consortia which is an informal, self-organised group of library consortia from around the world; it is there for strategic and practical discussion of issues of common interest among the consortia members.

Academic libraries were established essentially to be custodians of information in the academic setting; they are expected to provide standard information resources. However, the global economic crisis coupled with advanced technology has served as a challenge to the smooth operations of librarians. But according to Ameen (2006), to solve the challenges of collection development in this technological day, most academic libraries in the developed world are more into formulating and updating of their policies. Campbell (2006) asserted that some of the challenges tend to serve as a catalyst for advancement. This can be said of the coming in of the web which has made searching for information too easy, but this pose a challenge for librarians. However, Web-based information resources should rather present an opportunity for librarians responsible for collection management.

Collection development activities developed during the print era, so according to Campbell (2006) academic libraries are now struggling to maintain their reputation as the sole disseminators of information simply because digital technology has revolutionised to the extent that information need to be processed, organised, packaged, preserved and disseminated digitally. Challenge of libraries in developing countries can be minimised if libraries are radically well-resourced technologically.

Theoretical framework
Evans theory of collection management: an activity and attribute approach
First, Evans theory of collection management process which is an activity and attributes approach was adopted for the study. This theory was viewed against the collection development management activities or practices. This theory has plans that would lead to the building of collection and management of the collection of a library. It deals with the required steps to be taken to procure the resources of a library and the management of the library collection in a manner that the information needs of the users of the library can be met (Evans, 1995).

The model has the components necessary for collection development and management activities as follows: professional and user activities, the result of professional activities, tools the actors use, value provided to the user and intellectual content.

Theory of collection management: an activities and attributes (Figure 1)
From the diagram, it could be seen that collection management is coordinating the activities of collection development such as access to the collection, resources sharing, conservation and preservation, weeding, deselection of the library's collection. The above components of the theory are prerequisites for collection development and management and their influence on collection management is highly possible because of the following: professional and user activities, the results of professional activities, tool for the actors and the value provided to the user: The researcher decided to use this model to examine collection development and management practices of libraries of different settings because, first, it relates to the study and more so, it handles collection management practices.

Professional and user activities. Collection development and management activities are performed by the professional librarian in a way that the materials can be accessed. Some of the activities are: selection, acquisition, cataloguing, classification, weeding, deselection, policy formulation, and evaluation.

The results of professional activities. To ensure effective management of the collection of the library, this aspect of the model emphasise on the need for the above activities including
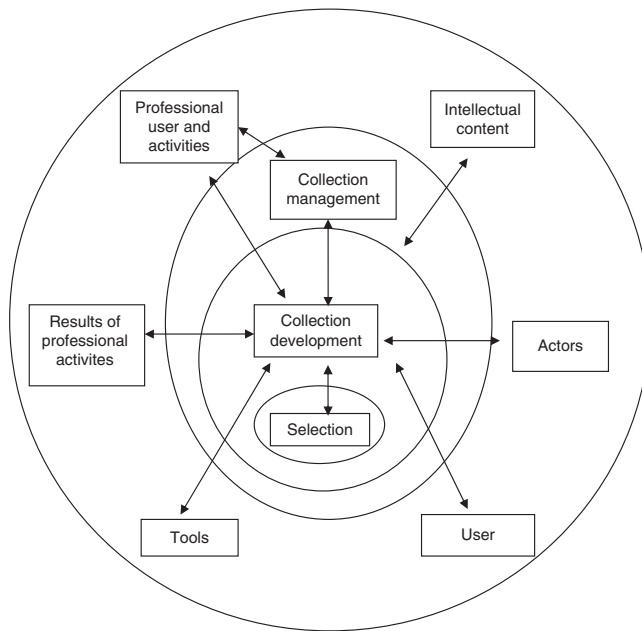
Figure 1.
Theory of collection
management:
activities and
attributes approach

formulation of policies, services that lead to easy access to library materials, bibliographic control, resources sharing, and user education to be performed or supervised by professional librarians.

Tool for the actors. The tools are used to process library materials and according to the model these tools are: classification scheme, all the policies (selection, acquisition, deselection policies) catalogues, union catalogue, bibliographic softwares, etc.

The value provided to the user. When the collection in the library meets users information needs the benefits include: increase in knowledge, increase in academic performance and user satisfaction. This means that much need to done by the librarian.

Actors. These are the users of the library or the user community. They include researchers, lecturers, staff of the institution and students. Analysing the information needs of the user community is essential as far as this model is concerned.

Intellectual content. The holdings of the library portray the intellectual content of the library being it print or non-print resources.

From the description of the various aspects of the model, one can infer that collection management is the effective utilisation of the library tools at the disposal of library professionals to select, process, organise, preserve, maintain and disseminate the intellectual content of the library to users for series of benefits. The researcher decided to use this model to examine collection management practices of libraries of different settings because, first, it relates to the study and more so, it handles collection management practices. Lastly, it serves as a yardstick through which the main objective was assessed and also point out the implications of the findings.

Methodology

The researcher adopted the qualitative approach in considering the research problem; however, due to the comparative nature of the study the researcher used the case study

to collect data. These approaches were used in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the collection management practices of the two libraries and how they differ in their operations.

Though the targeted population was 73 at UCC and 44 at UEW, the purposive sample was used to sample eight and four staff of the UCC and the UEW, respectively; these were sectional heads directly involved in the collection building practices.

To investigate the managerial activities, the interview questions were categorised into three parts. The first part dealt with the level of professionalism of the sections. Section 2 looked at the various practices of each section, whilst the last category considered the setbacks of the various sections of the two libraries. A reliable test was however conducted at two Ghanaian academic libraries, thus the University of Ghana, Legon and the University of Mine and Technology, Tarkwa.

The sectional heads of acquisition, cataloguing, digital, clients, bindery, periodicals, electronic and visually impaired sections were interviewed. The interview was conducted within one month. With the analysis of the data, the qualitative approach was used and the data gathered was analysed thematically.

Data presentation and analysis
The study sought to find out the calibre of staff working in the sections directly involved in the collection management practices. The sections identified in the libraries under study were: acquisition, cataloguing, periodicals, reader services, digital, electronic resources, visually impaired and the bindery. In an interview, the study revealed that there were nine (11.7 per cent) professional librarians, ten (12.9 per cent) para-professional and 58 (75.3 per cent) non-professionals working at the sections in UCC Library. Whilst at UEW, there were four (9.0 per cent) professionals, 19 (43.2 per cent) para-professionals and 21 (47.8 per cent) non-professionals working at all the sections (Table I).

Number of years of employment of sectional heads
On the issue of number of years of experience of the sectional heads (excluding the librarians and their deputies) Table II indicates that at UCC Library, one (12.5 per cent) sectional head each had worked in the library between five to ten years; 16-20 years; and twenty six to thirty years. Three (37.5 per cent) of the interviewees had also worked in the library between 21 and 25 years, whilst two (25.5 per cent) had worked in the library between 31 and 35 years. In UEW Library, three (75.5 per cent) sectional heads had worked between 11 and 15 years and one (25.5 per cent) had worked between 16 and 20 years.

Section UCC Library = 73 UEW Library = 44	UCC Library			UEW Library		
	Professional	Para-professional	Non Professional.	Professional	Para-professional	Non professional
Acquisition	2 (2.6%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.5%)	1 (2.3%)	3 (6.8%)	1 (2.3%)
Cataloguing	5 (6.5%)	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (9.0%)	2 (4.5%)
Periodicals	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)	13 (16.9%)	1 (2.3%)	2 (4.5%)	6 (13.6)
Readers	1 (1.2%)	5 (6.5%)	10 (12.9%)	1 (2.3%)	5 (11.4%)	5 (11.4%)
Digital	1 (1.2%)	1 (1.2%)	9 (12.3%)	1 (2.3%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (4.5%)
Electronic	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	4 (5.2%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (11.4%)	5 (11.4%)
Bindery	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (7.8.%)	–	–	–
Visual	0 (0.0%)	1 (1.2%)	6 (7.8%)	–	–	–
Total	9 (11.7%)	10 (12.9%)	58 (75.3.%)	4 (9.0%)	19 (43.2%)	21 (47.8%)

Source: Field data 2015/2016 academic year

Table I.
Category of library staff working at the sections

The study therefore revealed that about 94.0 per cent of the interviewees had been working in their respective libraries for more than ten years and that put them in a better position to talk about issues dealing with collection management practices of their respective libraries.

Selection and acquisition of library materials

The study sought to find out those who were involved in the selection process of library materials. The response from those in charge of acquisition, electronic resources and periodicals at UCC and UEW Libraries revealed that; library staff, faculty members and students could take part in the selection process.

In a follow up question to know if there were tools use to select library materials, the sectional heads of both libraries mentioned the following as some of the tools they have been using; book vendor lists, bibliographies, catalogues and online catalogues.

The stock of the libraries

The study sought to find out the total stock of the libraries and the breakdown of how such materials were acquired. In response, the acquisition librarian of UCC, indicated that the total stock of the library was 256,533 with the breakdown as; purchase 50 per cent; donation 48 per cent and legal deposit 1 per cent and exchange 1 per cent, whilst at UEW Library, the total stock was 155,000 books with the breakdown as: purchases 51 per cent; donations 46 per cent; legal deposit 1 per cent; and exchange 2 per cent.

Weeding of library materials

Weeding is done in order to ensure that relevant materials are at the disposal of users of the library. Thus the researcher sought to find out how often the libraries carry out this activity. At UCC Library the response was:

> Weeding is an important activity which hitherto, the library used to perform on regular bases, but for some years now it had not been regular.

The story was the same in UEW Library and the reason they gave was:

> We do not want to develop empty shelves so for some years now weeding has not been regular.

The above responses revealed that recently, weeding was not regular in these two libraries.

Preservation of library materials

Preservation could be preventive, curative and substitution. With the current economic crisis, libraries have a vital role to play in the sustenance of the few library resources at the disposal of users. Taking this into consideration, a question sought to find out the preservation measures put in place by the two libraries. On preventive measures, both libraries indicated that during library orientation programmes for fresh users of the library,

Years	UCC Library	UEW Library	Total
5-10	1 (12.5%)		1 (8.3%)
11-15		3 (75.5%)	3 (25.0%)
16-20	1 (12.5%)	1 (25.5%)	2 (16.7%)
21-25	3 (37.5%)		3 (25.0%)
26-30	1 (12.5%)		1 (8.3%)
31-35	2 (25.5%)		2 (16.7%)
Total	8 (100%)	4 (100%)	12 (100%)

Source: Field data 2015/2016 academic year

Table II.
Years of experience of sectional heads

they were told how to handle the library materials. In UCC, the findings established that the library had a Bindery Section responsible for repairs of damaged books. However, the head of the Bindery Section added:

> The Library depends on the Printing Press of the University for assistance sometimes because of unavailability of embossment machine in the Bindery Section of the library.

On the contrary, in UEW Library, it was stated that:

> We have no Bindery Section so we out source the services of a Bindery in the Volta Region of Ghana to repair damaged books.

The findings therefore established that UCC Library does in-house repairs, whilst UEW Library outsourced such services.

Collection evaluation

Collection evaluation is a way of ensuring that relevant materials are made accessible to users of the library. Bearing this in mind, the sectional heads were asked how they carry out this activity. The two libraries stated that they use the following criteria to evaluate library materials; the comprehensiveness of the book or non-book material, accuracy, currency, authoritativeness, scope amongst others.

When a question was posed about when and how often this activity was performed, it came to light that in UCC Library, this practice was done when purchasing and weeding library materials. Similar response was given at UEW Library.

Resource sharing and electronic resources

There is the need for libraries to share the little resources at their disposal. Therefore, sharing of resources could be considered as one of the collection management practices that ensure that patrons of a particular library access the resources of other libraries. With this advantage, a question sought to find out if the libraries under study shared resources. In her response to this question, the sectional heads for readers services of the two libraries stated that in addition to the interlibrary lending services provided for patrons, both libraries were members of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana (CARLIGH) and that members share common goals of ensuring that users got access to their electronic information.

Collection development and management policies

One of the activities of collection development and management is to document the standards and practices needed to develop, care for, and make available for use, the collection of a library. To actualise this, a collection development and management policies are created in which detailed information is noted to explain the specific activities which need to be done in order that the vision and mission of the library in question could be achieved (Johnson, 2009).

It was confirmed that the UCC Library had a Collection Development and Institutional Repository policies, but do not have a Collection Management Policy. In UEW Library, the interviewees stated that the Library had none of the policies. The study therefore revealed that both libraries had no Collection Management Policy.

Budgeting and funding of the libraries

The dwindling nature of funds for libraries makes library budgeting an important issue as far as collection management in libraries was concerned. A question sought to find out if the sectional heads were involved in the budgeting process and if the budget allocation to the

library was adequate, and third, whether the library had a separate account. The respond to the first question from all the sectional heads was positive; thus, at the end of each year all sectional heads were asked to submit their budget for the following year. However, both librarians stated that the funds allocated to their libraries were inadequate. On the question of whether the libraries under study had separate accounts, it was noted that only UCC library had separate accounts.

Major challenges
In UCC Library, the major setbacks stated by the interviewees were: inadequate funding, inadequate professional staff, lack of Collection Management Policy, underutilisation of the library materials and inadequate relevant materials. Whilst in UEW Library the challenges were; lack of Collection Development Policy, lack of Collection Management Policy, inadequate professional staff, inadequate funds, inadequate relevant materials, lack of Bindery section and section for the physically challenged.

Discussion of findings
Selection and acquisition of library resources
Selection is one of the preliminary activities performed under collection development. Evans and Saponaro (2005) regard selection as situation whereby one chooses materials among several collections. They emphasised that selection is a shared responsibility of the teaching faculty, students and the library. A similar study conducted by Seneviratre (2006) at Branch Library of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka revealed that 70 per cent of the users were aware of the fact that they could take part in the selection process of the library, but did not take part in the selection process.

Acquisition is one of the collection development practices undertaken without involving the library community (Evans and Saponaro (2005). The major methods of acquisition noted were; purchasing and donation. The study in both libraries revealed that donations were almost at par with purchases. This is dangerous because in the absence of a collection management policy, the library may accept anything donated to the library. More so, unsolicited donations are discarded materials of the donor(s), so having 51 per cent (UEW) and 50 per cent (UCC) of one's library's stock as donation was a matter for concerned.

Weeding
Weeding is the situation whereby library materials considered to be less relevant, obsolete, weak and mutilated are withdrawn from the shelves. It is done in order that the collection in the library will attain its relevance (Johnson, 2009; Chaputula, 2013). Looking at the above assertions, one can see why all the libraries stated weeding as the way they ensured that relevant materials were displayed on the shelves. The study established that during the period the study was conducted the two libraries lack funds to acquire more books so weeding on regularly bases was suspended because of the fear of developing empty shelves.

Preservation of library materials
The study established that UCC Library had a Bindery Section, which was in line with one of the statements of IFLA. However, it came to light that the Bindery has no embossment machine, thus compelling the Bindery Section to send works that required embossment to UCC Printing Press. The findings therefore established that the UCC Library undertook in-house repairs, whilst UEW Library outsources; the situation in UEW Library was contrary to a study on "preserving the past and creating the future: a case of Makerene University" by Nakiganda and Kaka (2009).

The impact of academic library consortium and resource sharing
The study revealed that both libraries were members of the CARLIGH. A consortium
facilitates sharing of resources thus; library consortia are efficient tools for information
resources sharing, it also helps member libraries to resolve setbacks dealing with
network-level services while assisting members to handle issues dealing with the
management of print collections (Alemna and Antwi, 2002).

Lack of collection development and management policies
Preliminary investigation revealed that UCC Library had a Collection Development and,
Institutional Repository policies, whilst UEW had none. It also came into light that both
libraries had no Collection Management Policy. The absence of Collection Management
Policy in both libraries is a matter of concerned. This situation could negatively affect their
operations because according to Johnson (2009) a library without a policy guideline is the
same as a department without a documented plan.

This finding was in line with a study conducted in Pakistan by Ameen (2006); where he
used academic libraries with the response rate of 97 per cent (29 universities). The study
revealed that all the universities agreed that Collection Management Policy was an
important document, however, they do not have.

Funding
Both libraries stated that the amount they were given for the running of the libraries was
inadequate and that has negatively affected the collection management practices. Similar
studies and assertions by Chaputula (2013) supported this finding. Alemna (1998) also
added his view by stating that empirical findings have indicated that one of the major
challenges libraries in Africa and for that matter Ghana faced is funding. To him, such a
situation compels some academic libraries to depend on donation.

Professionalism
UCC Library had eight professional librarians directly involve in the collection
management at the sectional level, whilst UEW Library had four professionals managing
the resources of the library. The high level of non-professionals was a problem likely to
negatively affect the management of the collection. This finding is buttressed by the
finding of Edekor (2004), according to him, lack of professional knowledge and skills may
lead to improper management.

In-service training
The study also revealed that, apart from the electronic resource, digital and cataloguing
sections, in-service training for staff of the remaining sections was not regular. Therefore as
noted by Chinery (2001) training is another form of motivation and that it needs to be done
to enhance efficiency of all staff.

Conclusion
The findings indicated that both libraries had sections responsible for collection
management practices; second, the collection management practices carried out by both
libraries were almost similar; third, the study discovered some deficiencies as a result of
some challenges; common amongst them were; inadequate funds, lack of collection
management policy, lack of effective in-house repairs of damaged materials and lack
of professionals.

Recommendations

Relating the objectives of the study to the findings, the following recommendations have been made:

(1) funds allocated to the library by the Management of the Universities should be increased;

(2) academic libraries should establish functional Bindery sections so that in- house repairs of damaged library materials could be done easily;

(3) weeding of library materials regularly should be done because it ensures that relevant materials are put at the disposal of users;

(4) all academic libraries should establish a section for the physically challenged; and

(5) it is suggested that all academic libraries should develop an applicable Collection Management Policy to serve as blue print for the management of the libraries.

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