EDUCATIONAL THEORY AND PRACTICE ACROSS DISCIPLINES
(PROJECTING BEYOND THE 21ST CENTURY)

Edited by
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In view of the vital importance of archives administration and preservation to access information resources, the paper takes a look at the archival principles of arrangement and description as well as book preservation in Nigerian libraries. It analyses the various levels of arrangement through which the physical control of archival materials is established. The value of archival description as a means of facilitating the intellectual control of and access to archival materials is also identified. It highlights the variation in access procedure in archives and libraries and concludes that the variation notwithstanding, access to information resources goes to the very root of archives and libraries in Nigeria. The strategic importance of preservation in facilitating access to information resources is also explored. Factors that account for book deterioration, particularly in the tropics are identified. Finally, suggestions are made for tackling the challenges of deterioration of information resources in Nigeria.

Introduction
This paper is in two distinct parts each dealing with what seems to be different concepts – archival principles and book preservation. A close look, however, reveals what seem to be the two sides of the same coin. Despite the perceived divergence in the manner of discharging their professional responsibility, the two sister professions – archival and
librarianship – share a lot in common. One golden thread that runs across the two professions is the preservation of collections or holdings. Preservation is the bridge across the divides and an area of shared concern among information professions in particular and heritage institutions in general. Each profession has its own peculiarities and there are therefore, certain principles that are peculiar to archival profession. These principles are the focus of the first part of this paper. In the second part of the paper, the challenges of book preservation, particularly in the Nigerian environment are examined and suggestions made towards overcoming them.

Archives

Since archives are a key term in the archival field, an understanding of the term is important to the issue under discussion. The term ‘archives’ admit of three meaning: it refers to material, building/place and institution/unit (International Council on Archives Glossary). The context in which the term is used is, therefore, of paramount importance. In terms of material, it refers to records adjudged worthy of permanent preservation. The building or repository where records of permanent value are preserved is also known as archives while the institution or unit with the responsibility for the administration and management of archives is also called archives.

It is not unusual to draw a technical distinction between archives and records, even though the two terms are often used interchangeably, particularly by non-archivists. Archives, by their nature, are records. They are records worthy of and selected for permanent preservation. At all records possess the qualities of archives. It is a common parlance in the archival field that all archives are records but not all records are archives. It is also believed that, generally, not more than ten percent of the records of an organization are records of permanent value. The selection of records of archival value for preservation
among the multitude is, therefore, a core function of the archivist.

**Records Acquisition**

Depending on the status and mandate of the archival establishment, records come to the archives from the records offices, records centre, non-governmental and non-corporate agencies and private individuals (International Records Management Trust, 1999). Generally, records are supposed to be appraised before being accepted into the archives. However, the experience, particularly in Nigeria, is that records come into archives unappraised. It then becomes the responsibility of the archival establishment to carry out records appraisal, sometimes in consultation with the records office staff of the creating agencies, applying the laid down appraisal criteria. As for records coming from the records centre, their transfer to the archives is usually based on the dictates of the records disposal schedule. A summary list and accession form of the records being transferred are forwarded to the archival establishment well in advance of the actual delivery of the records.

Having acquired records from whatever the source, an archival establishment is faced with the challenges of organizing the records to facilitate access which is the end result of all archival efforts. In this regard, arrangement and description constitute key activities in the archives. They are aimed at establishing physical and intellectual control over archival materials.

**Arrangement**

Arrangement, which Brunton and Robinson (1987) defined as "the process of physically organizing records in accordance with the accepted archival principles of provenance and original order", is a means of establishing physical control over archival materials. It consists of "all activities that must be performed to place records in order in the stacks of a
repository" (Schellenberg, 1965). The objective of arrangement is to impose order on archival holdings, ensure their easy location and description. It is in realization of its strategic importance in archives administration that the International Council on Archives (ICA) (2004) made arrangement a key point of focus in drafting archives and records legislation. It should be noted that arrangement of records involves both intellectual and physical operations.

Arrangement of records is based on two basic archival principles. These are:

i. Principle of provenance
ii. Principle of the sanctity of original order

Provenance

In arranging records, archivists adopt the principle of provenance. The term ‘provenance’ simply means the place of origin of records. The principle enunciates that records should be grouped and arranged according to their origin. This entails that records of distinct agency or body are to be treated as a group and not intermingled with the records of another agency or body. The essence of this principle is to “preserve both the integrity of a body of records received from a given source and the identity of the source (Thibodeau, 1988). It also recognizes the shared characteristics of and sustains the relationship existing among the records within a body of archival materials.

Original Order

The second principle governing arrangement or records is the principle of the sanctity of the original order. By this principle, records are required to be arranged and maintained in the order in which they were kept by the institution from which they originated while in active use. Schellenberg (1965) obviously stated the rationale behind the principle that “the original order may show the sequence of actions; or may reveal administrative process such as how a given fiscal or technical
operation was performed; or may reflect other organic connection."

There is however, a controversy on the extent of the application of the principle of the sanctity of original order. While Schellenberg (1965) expressed the opinion that an archivist should preserve the original order only if it is useful, Brunton and Robinson (1987) argued that:

The original order does not have to be neat, easily understandable or obviously meaningful to be retained. If an order has been imposed by the person or body whose papers they originally were this must be retained, for to do otherwise will destroy meaning in the material which may not be readily apparent or which needs special expertise to understand.

The philosophy behind the principle is not only to maintain the integrity of a body of records but also to facilitate easy location and access. If strict adherence to the principle will be counter-productive, a departure should be allowed in appropriate cases. While the controversy rages as to the desirability of retaining an 'illogical' original order, it is generally accepted as an exception to the principle that where there is no order, an archivist can justifiably impose an order that will most likely meet the access requirements of users.

In discerning the original order, it is important that the archivist understand the arrangement patterns of the agency from which the body of records originated. To achieve this, Brunton and Robinson (1987) emphasized the need for the archivist to supervise the initial packing of the records pending transfer to the archives to ensure that the original order is not disturbed. It is also important that the archivist understand the administrative history of the agency concerned to be able to recognize and understand the arrangement patterns of series with the record group.
Levels of Arrangement

There are different levels of arrangement of records in consonance with the principle of provenance and original order. Depending on the status of archival establishment, arrangement of records can be at the depository, group, series and item levels. For large archival establishments like a national archival institution holding large volumes of records from several agencies each constituting a record group, the first level of arrangement is the depository level for administrative convenience. Thus, in the particular example of the National Archives of Nigeria, records are arranged, first, at the depository level based on the level of government.

The second level of arrangement is the record group. The whole records produced by a single identifiable organization or agency constitute a record group. In the case of government records, the whole body of records of a ministry or distinct government agency will be regarded as a record group. It is possible to have subgroups within a record group where there are subdivision within the agency each having its own body of records.

The third level of arrangement is record series. Within a large record group, there may be records series. According to International Records Management Trust (1999), the term 'series' is used for the whole body of record of a single recording system and it represents a function exercised by the creating agency. Within a record series too, there may be subseries which must be arranged and kept together. Records emanating from an agency must be thoroughly examined to identify the series and subseries within the record group. The classification scheme and filing systems of some agencies may provide a clue in this regard.

Records are also arranged at the item level. This is the unit of handling such as file, volume or registers even though individual documents may, sometimes, constitute the unit of handling.
Archival Description

Archival description is a key activity in archives management and administration. It is aimed at facilitating internal controls and access to archives and it is useful for both the potential users of archives and the repository staff whose responsibility it is to retrieve archival materials for consultation. The term 'description' has been defined as "the process of establishing intellectual control over the holdings through the preparation of finding aids" (Brunton and Robinson, 1987). The ICA Glossary simply defines it as the preparation of finding aids. Finding aids are, therefore, the products of an archival description exercise. The purpose of archival description, according to Haworth (1992), is "to present an accurate representation of archival documents so the users can, as independently as possible, locate them".

Description is similar to cataloguing in the field of librarianship and it is done through the preparation of finding aids. A finding aid is defined as a document, published or unpublished, listing or describing a body of records or archives thereby establishing administrative and intellectual control over them by a record centre or archives and making them more readily accessible and comprehensible to the user (ICA Glossary). Basic finding aids include list, inventory, guide, calendar, index and register. They list and describe the content of archives in varying degree of details. Each type of finding aids is prepared to meet specific needs of users.

Access to Archives

Access is an important issue in archives administration. The ultimate goal of all archival activities is to facilitate access to archival materials. Underscoring the importance of access to archives, Harris (1997), quoting Timothy Ericson stated that "... If after we brilliantly and meticulously appraise, arrange, describe and conserve our records, nobody comes to use them, then we have wasted our time". The archivist must,
therefore strive to ensure the availability of archives to ultimate users. This must, however, be done within the confines of the law and regulations governing access and without compromising the integrity of the archives.

Unlike libraries, archival institutions generally operate ‘closed’ access in that searchers (as archives users are usually called) are not granted direct access to archival materials in the repository and on the stacks. They cannot inspect the materials and browse through the shelves to pick the materials of their choice. The only link connecting them to archival holdings is the finding aids and it is the responsibility of the staff of the archives to produce materials from custody after the searcher’s request has been duly approved. This is, perhaps, why access as an archival term has been defined as the availability of records/archives for consultation as a result of both of legal authorization and the existence of finding aids (ICA Glossary).

Access to archival materials is facilitated through the provision of reference services. The existence of a reference or search room where archival materials can be consulted is, therefore, imperative to the provision of reference services. In the same vein, there must be access rules to regulate the conduct of searchers in the use of archives. A violation of these rules may be a ground for denying a user access or further access to archival materials. While it is the duty of the archivist to facilitate and promote the use of archives, there are widely recognized restrictions to the right of access. These include situation where records are in fragile condition and unrestricted access to them may lead to their total disintegration and loss, the need to protect the privacy of individuals, the obligation to comply with donor imposed conditions and the protection of national defence and security.

**Book Preservation**

Preservation is a crucial programme not only to the survival of books but to all heritage materials. Unless there is
a well-planned programme of preservation, heritage materials may not survive for a long time to meet the needs of the users, present and future. Libraries and archives, therefore, have as a core function the preservation of their collections. Preservation is not peculiar to libraries and archives. It is of interest to all heritage institutions and it requires the appreciation and support of the management of these institutions.

**Concept of Preservation**

The term 'preservation' has assumed great significance in library, archival and information science. Related to this term are conservation and restoration. Preservation and conservation are often used interchangeably but are technical terms in library and archival science. They are, therefore, regarded as related but distinct concepts. Preservation, according to Alegbeleye (2007) is "an umbrella term for many policies and options of action including conservation treatment .... {It} is ... the acquisition, organization and distribution of resources to prevent deterioration or to renew the usability of selected groups of materials". From the archival point of view, MacKenzie (1996) submitted that preservation "refers to everything which contributes to the physical well-being of the collections". He argued that conservation, which is direct physical intervention with the material, is only one part of preservation, the others being indirect preservation and preservation by substitution or reformatting. Alegbeleye (2007) shared the view that conservation is an aspect of preservation and defined conservation as "the active use of preventive measures or processes of repair of damaged materials to ensure the continued existence of individual items". Vinas and Vinas (1988) defined conservation as "the operations which together are intended to prolong the life of an object by forestalling damage or remedying deterioration".

Preservation is, therefore, more embracing than conservation. While the latter is mainly technical in nature, the
former, in addition, include all managerial activities including staffing and policies put in place to prevent deterioration and ensure the survival of collections. The third important term, restoration, seems to be similar to conservation in that it involves curative measures applied directly to disintegrating materials. The aim of restoration, according to Vinas and Vinas (1988) is “to re-establish the physical and functional integrity of a work by remedying the alterations which it may have undergone”. Restoration is aimed at returning deteriorated materials to original state as much as possible.

**Book Deterioration**

Deterioration is diminishing quality of materials. It is the state of decay or disintegration of collections. Researches have established the prevalence of book deterioration in Nigeria (Alegbeleye, 1994; Bankole and Abioye, 2005). These studies have underscored the enormity of the problem and revealed that materials in libraries in the country are in varying degrees of deterioration. Factors responsible for deterioration can broadly be categorized into external and internal.

**External Factors**

External causes of deterioration are functions of the environment in which materials are stored. They include unfavourable temperature and relative humidity, light, dust and pollutants. High temperature and relative humidity have devastating effects on library materials, particularly those in paper format. Decomposition occurs when there is excess humidity while high level of temperature and relative humidity can provide a favourable environment for the growth and activities of micro-organisms.

Biological agents like insects and pests can also thrive in a dirty and dusty environment. They cause a lot of damages to paper materials by mutilating, shredding and disfiguring them. Common insects in the tropics include cockroaches, silverfish, bookworm and termites.
The damages caused by human agents to library materials have long been recognized. These occur through improper handling, mutilation, theft and deliberate destruction. Even where there is no deliberate act of destructiveness, the copy reproduction activities in most libraries have the effect of gradually wearing out the materials. Light is also an important factor in deterioration of materials. It brings about both chemical and physical changes in paper which manifest in fragility and colour change. The level of deterioration depends on the intensity of light. Light transmit energy and the shorter the wavelength, the greater the energy level. It accelerates the rate of oxidation and chemical breakdown.

Pollution constitutes both environmental and chemical factors of deterioration. Atmospheric pollutants include gaseous pollutants like sulphur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide. These gases in combination with moisture form sulphuric and nitric acid which can cause deterioration. Solid particles like dirt, dust and sand can also be embedded in the fibres, a situation that is detrimental to the health of paper materials.

Internal Factors

The main internal factor responsible for deterioration relates to the inherent composition of material which has a lot to do with the process of paper making, particularly as from the 19th century. Before this time, paper was made from rags and linen and was generally strong and durable. The rising demand for paper led to attention being shifted to wood as the major source of fibre for paper making. An analysis of wood reveals that it contains three major components, namely cellulose, hemi-cellulose and lignin, each having its implication for paper permanence and durability. Besides, the introduction of the chemical wood pulping process in the 19th century has adversely affected paper longevity and brought about the problem of acidity in paper.
Tackling the Challenges

So far, we have identified material deterioration as one of the major challenges facing libraries and archives and, indeed, all heritage institutions in Nigeria. It is also a big threat to access. The greatest obstacle to access to collections is not much of institutional control over the collections or access regulations put in place which users are obliged to comply with but, more importantly, material disintegration or loss resulting from preservation ineptitude.

It then behoves librarians and archivist to recognize, as a core function, the preservation of their collections. The managements of libraries and archives to have a role to play in that they must recognize, appreciate and give budgetary support for preservation activities. One of the banes of collection preservation in Nigeria is the absence of a preservation policy. A policy is a mission statement and it highlights the institution’s preservation strategies and standards. According to Forde (2008), a policy offers an organization the opportunity to explore and publicize its responsibilities. It is, therefore, essential to have a preservation policy at both the institutional and national levels.

Good housing will go a long way to prolong the life span of collections. A good storage environment is essential for the preservation of collections. The temperature and relative humidity of the storage area must be controlled while their constant fluctuation must be avoided. Materials must, generally, be housed in clean and stable environment. Adverse effect of light on collections can be eliminated or minimized through light control in the storage area. Insects, pests and other biological agents of deterioration must be prevented or eliminated in the storage area. Periodic fumigation will be of assistance in this regard.

Libraries and archives must have a well-equipped repair/bindery workshop for conservation treatment of materials. Materials suffering from acid attack can be treated through mass deacidification process. A crop of well-trained
conservators will complement the conservation programme of a library or archives. The use of acid free paper for publication and vital documentation should be encouraged and promoted by librarians and archivists since they take the final custody of the end products. They must know their collections intimately and do their (collections) SWOT analysis to be able to plan for their survival. For in their survival lie the beauty and glory of librarianship and archival work.

References


International Council on Archives Glossary of Terms