

**PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION OF NEWSPAPERS IN
NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES:
A NATIONAL ROAD MAP**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The paper gave general overview of the concepts of Preservation and Conservation of newspapers as found in literature as well as international practices. Case studies of newspaper preservation and conservation procedures of five Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria were presented from which extrapolations applicable to practices in other Nigerian Universities were drawn. Findings revealed that newspaper management in University Libraries Was still below international standard. The paper proffered a holistic approach to solving the problem through the drawing of a national strategy for newspaper preservation and conservation in Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preservation and Conservation issues are germane to the existence as well as prosperity of any library and information service. The essence of acquisition of information materials is to preserve them for posterity as well as ensure that the state of the materials at any period in time is to engender and achieve the latter end. Peradventure some information materials in different formats had survived the 'wear and tear' of usage and handlings through ages, yet things have not gone down so well with quite an innumerable lot. It is no wonder then that some invaluable library resources have been classified as 'endangered species' in the face of threats constituted to them by their very nature (format) or environmental or human 'foes'.

While the problem of deterioration of library materials apply to all categories of materials in the library, the problem of newspaper collection as an endangered species in libraries seem to be chronic in some countries. Again, the phenomenon though global in nature, is of higher dimension in the tropics and worse in developing countries.

This special species of information resources need to be salvaged from the poor conditions as obtainable in some cases while good standards of administration need to be maintained or improved upon wherever in existence.

To this end, this paper seeks to review the procedure of newspaper preservation and conservation in general, examine the existing practices in Nigerian University Libraries (using some case studies) and draw a paradigm for preservation and conservation of newspapers in Nigerian University Libraries as well as in Nigeria as a whole.

2. NEWSPAPERS: USES

The Encyclopedia Britannica(1993) defined a newspaper among other sources as thus:

*A publication usually issued daily, weekly
or at other regular times that provides news,
views, features and other information of
public interest and that often carries advertising.*

Literature has affirmed newspaper to be invaluable source of information. The State Archives of Florida (2009) describes newspapers as giving information from international, national local issues; such items include news, sports, weather information, important issues occurrences, feature stories, marriage announcements and such other important issues that are tempting to clip and save. They have further been described as a primary source for local history information (Library of Congress, 2009) and having capacity to preserve first hand historical information for research including serving as valuable sources for studies in politics, economy and culture of a country with particular emphasis on specific period of time (Chunming Li, 2006).

In a developing nation like Nigeria, the use of newspapers as bibliographic supplements to other resources by researchers is assuming a broader dimension. Students and staff alike are using newspapers to fill the gaps and inadequacy of published works. This writer in a previous collaborative work (Adegboye and Igbeneghu, 2004) agreed with De-Roche (1999) that newspaper is a viable information supplement to conventional sources especially in the social studies disciplines.

In summary, the term 'preservation' could be described as the all encompassing mission, planning, infrastructure and activities involved in keeping information resources for posterity. Preservation is a broad term that covers even conservation procedures.

On the other hand, the term 'conservation' has also been defined variously as thus:

...a direct method of treatment in which an item is physically or chemically changed. This includes cleaning, deacidifying, repairing, rebinding and re-formatting. All conservation treatments entail the least intrusive methods possible; and use of acid – neutral materials. (University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2009).

[Note: The University of Nevada, Las Vegas suggested in conservation techniques the use of materials such as pastes, fungicides, marbled papers as well as microfilming and photocopying until the issue of best methods of reformatting are universally resolved].

... the discipline of physically altering the physical or chemical condition of an object, collection, structure, building, or site to repair or delay damage. (Institute of Museum and Library, 2009).

In summary, conservation is of a smaller scope of procedure that is subsumed under preservation of materials.

5. CONSIDERATIONS IN NEWSPAPER PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

This segment of the paper highlights some basic factors to be taken into consideration as revealed by literature and international benchmarks with a view to achieving effective preservation and conservation of newspapers.

a. The Chemical Agents of Destruction

Newsprints are basically acidic in nature and are prone to natural chemical deterioration. Literature and practice have generally recommended conservative chemical treatment of deacidification

and the use of an alkaline buffered sheets and supports for the newspapers (Library of Congress, 2008).

b. **Environmental and Physical Agents of Destruction**

(i) **Temperature and Relative humidity**

Temperature and relative humidity especially in the tropics have been identified as fast agents of deterioration. These elements needs to be monitored and standardized. Literature and practice set the relative humidity for paper holdings at about 40 – 45 % while film is generally set at 30%. RH (Lull, 1995;) Kelvin Smith Library, 2009).

Also, important is the temperature factor which had also been standardized to 60 – 65 F/ 65 – 70F as may be desirable. It should be noted that the temperature factor should be considered along with humidity factor.

(ii) **Light**

Excessive light is inimical to the survival of newspaper Collections as they easily turn yellow and brittle. 1 – 5 footcandles (11 – 55 Lux) is recommended for storage areas for paper. (Lull, 1995; Kelvin smith Library, 2009).

(iii) **Handling/Wear and Tear**

Physical deterioration naturally sets in as a result of frequent usage of paper. The resultant effect of this is usually, cracking and brittleness. The antidote suggested for this is usually an evolvement of reformatting policy. The use of surrogates for instance, - digitized and accessible

formats will elongate the life – span of the original (University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, 2008).

(c) **Biological Factors**

Biological agents of deterioration include among others moulds, Bacteria, fungi, insect infestation and rodents (Igbiosa, 2000). These obviously are very noticeable in the libraries and archives of tropical countries. Controlled relative humidity and regular cleaning habits are potent solutions to this challenge.

(d) **Housing**

Conservatively, newspapers are better stored in alkaline buffered customized flat boxes. The newspapers should be chronologically stacked in the boxes and properly arranged and really labelled (giving the title and dates). The box labelling should also reveal the missing issues in the papers. (Library of Congress, 2008).

(e) **Binding**

In practice, binding has been used by various libraries as a method of newspaper preservation. However, international best practices have discouraged it as not being the best option because of some encumbrances associated with storage (Library of Congress, 2008).

It should be added that most libraries in the developing countries do not use alkaline buffered covers for the binding.

(f) **Storage Environment**

Newspapers last longer if stored in a neat, temperature/humidity controlled rooms. Efforts should be made to minimize the exposure of the resources to damp, dust, water heat, air pollutants

insects and rodents. (Library of Congress, 2008).

(g) **Bibliographic Control**

A good newspaper bibliographic control and documentation form part and parcel of a worthwhile preservation programme. These prevent clumsiness and adds value to readers' services mechanism. Bibliographic documentation gives a good picture of what is in the holdings as well as the missing gaps. Preparation of surrogate copies might be cumbersome without comprehensive bibliographic information. (Library of Congress, 2008).

(h) **Newspaper Clipping Preservation Option**

It has been argued that while newspaper subject clippings are valuable, additional efforts should be made to photocopy them on an alkaline paper to promote longevity. (State Archives of Florida, 2009) This option has also been seen to facilitate reformatting of articles into digital format. (Library of Congress, 2008)

(i) **Reformatting And Surrogating Issues**

The basic essence of preservation and conservation is to protect the original document from damage and ensure permanence as much as possible. To a greater extent, deacidification is a laudable attempt at conservation in the case of acid based papers like newspapers. This however does not cater invariably for the effect of physical damage especially from wear and tear sustained as a result of regular use of resource over time.

Current trends have resorted to reformatting and creation of surrogate

copies of documents in form of digitization and microfilming (Library of Congress, 2008, Dormolen [2009]). While both methods have been found desirable the role of digitization as a preservation method has remained controversial and has placed microfilming above it as a long-lasting method of preservation. Though, digitization however has been known to facilitate accessibility to a wider audience (Workshop on microfilming and digitization, 2003), microfilm has been adjudged the best surrogate today as it could survive hundreds of years especially if stored in a conducive environment. (International Standard of 20C for temperature and 40% for humidity) (Chunming Li, 2006). Lastly, an encouraging development is that microfilms can now be migrated into digitized formats thereby solving the problem of lack of access on-line. The two surrogate methods being complimentary could be adopted and embedded in preservation and conservation strategy for newspaper. It should also be noted that the use of surrogates – digitization and microfilming requires extensive co-operation for cost effectiveness. (Workshop on microfilming and digitization, 2003). The need for adoption of International bibliographic descriptions and metadata are also of paramount concern (Chunming Li, 2006).

(j) Copyright Issues

Exercises in digital preservation are sometime encumbered by debates on copyright and intellectual property issues. It has not been really thrashed out on who the responsibility of preservation lies between

the content provider (the licensed provider/publisher of the electronic versions of documents) and the subscribing institution agency such as libraries. The two options available are suggested by Lavoie and Dempsey (2004) as thus:

.... the content provider must be persuaded or enjoined to preserve the materials in their custody; or alternatively, the content provider must cede the right to preserve to another entity who is willing and able to assume responsibility for preservation.

Lavoie and Dempsey (2004) further expatiated on the fact that since digital materials are usually purchased through license or subscription, clearance need to be sought between preservation responsibility and protection of intellectual property. As a result of this, they exemplified with Elsevier who has agreed to transfer a copy of the content of its Science Direct Service to the National Library in Netherlands.

The import of this is that newspapers agencies in Nigeria and Nigerian libraries have issues to sort out in cases of preservation electronic versions of Nigerian newspapers.

(k) **Security And Disaster Control Challenges**

Libraries continually face the challenges of security and disaster control. The problems range from theft, misplacement and mutilations of resources. The solution to these over the years have ranged from vigilance, the use of electronic security devices and an attempt to create a positive attitude towards collections in users.

On a rather grave side, incidental occurrences such as virus infection of electronic resources, water spillage, fire outbreaks and total structural

collapse make disaster planning of prime importance.

Every library, archives and information agency need a greater consciousness by evolving disaster control strategy or plan (Geiger, 2004).

(l) **Capacity Building**

Training and retraining of library and information service personnel in the art of conservation of various forms of information resources remain a matter of expediency. Observations revealed the absence of training schools dedicated to preservation and conservation of materials in this part of the world. Exposure to conservation theories in the Nigerian Schools of Library, Archival and Information Studies is very peripheral.

However, training opportunities are available in various developed parts of the world in the art of conservation of library and archival resources. The impact of the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) Italy is acknowledgeable. In this respect, preservation and conservation of information resources go beyond mere general knowledge.

(m) **Funding**

The role of funding in the survival of preservation and conservation of a nations heritage can not be overemphasized. In fact, Anabulu (1997) described money as germane to the survival of library services. Yet, it is a common knowledge that funding of this kind of services has been a chronic problem over years. In

Nigeria, the government howbeit remains the greatest stakeholder in terms of funding. This view is supported by Okiy (2005). The government however still needs to look inward into executing this task better.

6. NEWSPAPER PRESERVATION/CONSERVATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: CASE STUDIES

An attempt was made to sample the newspaper management experiences of the Nigerian university libraries with a view to making inferences and generalization about the status-quo and draw out a future strategy for improved services and usage of these special collections.

The university libraries of the five Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria were used as case studies. The choice of these university libraries was purposive and informed by (a) the southwest geo-political zone is one of the zones with a relatively high cluster of federal universities (b) limited funds (c) limited time frame of this study (d) the years of establishment of these libraries (e.g. three of them are 1st/2nd generation universities in Nigeria) should reflect the pattern of newspaper administration in Nigerian universities.

The case studies took the form of structured interviews with officers in charge of newspaper administration/services in the university libraries. The following therefore represent the summary of findings:

1. Number of Universities Visited - 5

2. List of Universities Libraries Visited/Year of Establishment

<u>NAME</u>		<u>Year of Establishment</u>
(a)	Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan.	1948
(b)	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.	1962
(c)	University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria.	1965
(d)	Federal University of Technology Library, Akure, Nigeria.	1982

(e) University of Agriculture Library Abeokuta, Nigeria.

1988

3. Existence of Newspaper Collection in the five Universities

Yes - 5 responses

4. Units Responsible for Newspaper Administration and Designation of Officers in-charge

(a) Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan -

Reference Section, Head,
Reference Librarian;
Schedule Officer: Library Officer.

(b) H.O. Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife -

Serial Section, Head, Serial
Librarian, Schedule Officer:
Assistant Chief Clerical Officer.

(c) University of Lagos Library, Akoka, Lagos -

Research and Bibliography
Section - Librarian (I)..

(d) Federal University of Technology Library, Akure -

Serials Section, Chief
Library Officer

(e) University of Agriculture Library, Abeokuta -

Special Collection, Head,
Reader Services Librarian;
Schedule Officer - Principal
Library Officer.

NOTE: Newspaper administration was put under various departments with different nomenclature and designation of officers in charge.

5. Unit responsible for conservation of library materials - None

NOTE: Except the bindery section for binding of newspaper in some cases. The H.O. Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife however has a unit called 'conservation' - but only designated for arrangement of newspapers in boxes as well as charging and discharging of newspaper which is done in conjunction with the reference section.

6. Qualification/Training in conservation. No special qualification/related training in conservation.

7. Bibliographic Details of Papers:

Not Available

NOTE: The only record in the five libraries were the records of subscriptions/acquisitions of titles from the newspaper vendors. They were not really kept in a manner useful for tracking the holdings of the library in newspapers.

8. Newspapers Clippings Indexing Services:

1 response

9. Content indexing of newspaper page by page:

Not Available

10. Housing/Storage Facilities

	No. of Responses
Newspaper boxes	- 4
Open shelves	- 4
Cupboards	- 0
Stacking on the tables/floors	- 4
Others (binding)	- 2

NOTE: Most of the Housing (storage facilities/storage environment for the newspaper were in a poor state as observed during visitation. Only one (1) out of the five libraries maintained a consistent method of storage in boxes and in a neat and orderly manner. (See Pictures on pages 15 – 18 for an overview of newspaper management in the libraries).

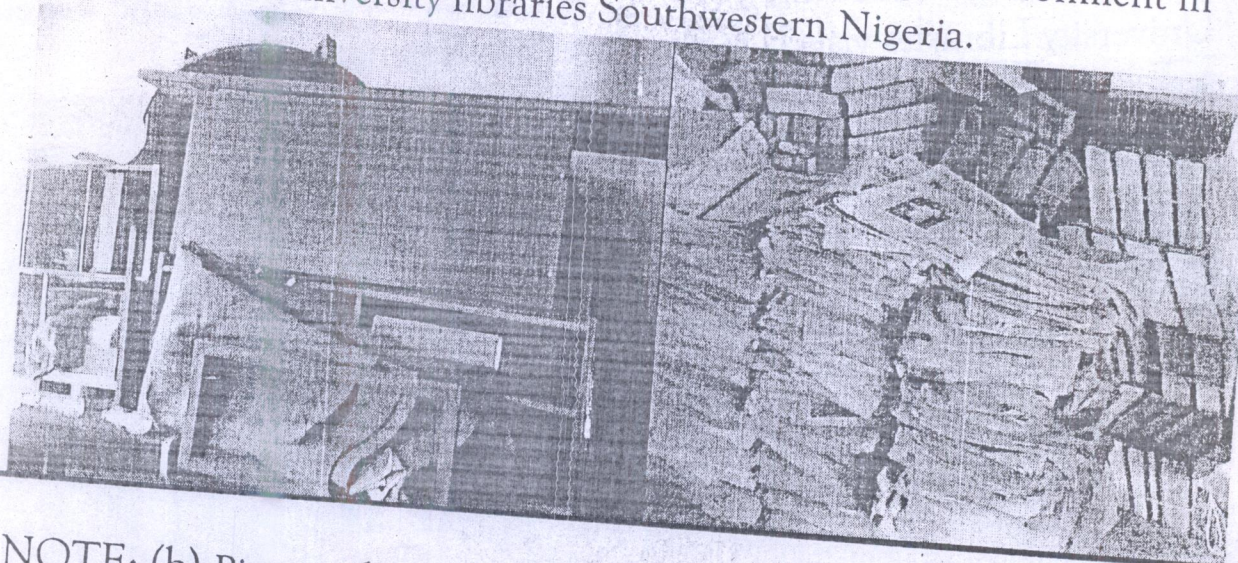
11. Types of Preservation/Conservation Techniques Adopted

	No. of Responses
(a) Regular dusting	- 5
(b) Controlled Temperature	- 3 (use of air conditioners fairly/non functioning.
(c) Deacidification	- 0
(d) Digitization	- 1 [H.O. Library; OAU, Ile-Ife Digitization of 5 titles of Newspapers from year 2005 to-date with missing gaps]. (Use of scanner – for conversion to Jpeg format, needs content software). (See Picture on page 18).
(e) Keeping of off-site back-up	- 0
(f) Microfilming	- 1 (H.O. Library, O.A.U., Ile-Ife but had stopped since 1976). (See Picture on page 18).
(g) Protection against fire	- 4 (Fire extinguishers available). (See Picture in one of the libraries on page 18).
(h) Insurance	- 0
(i) Others	- Binding – 2; Stapling – 1

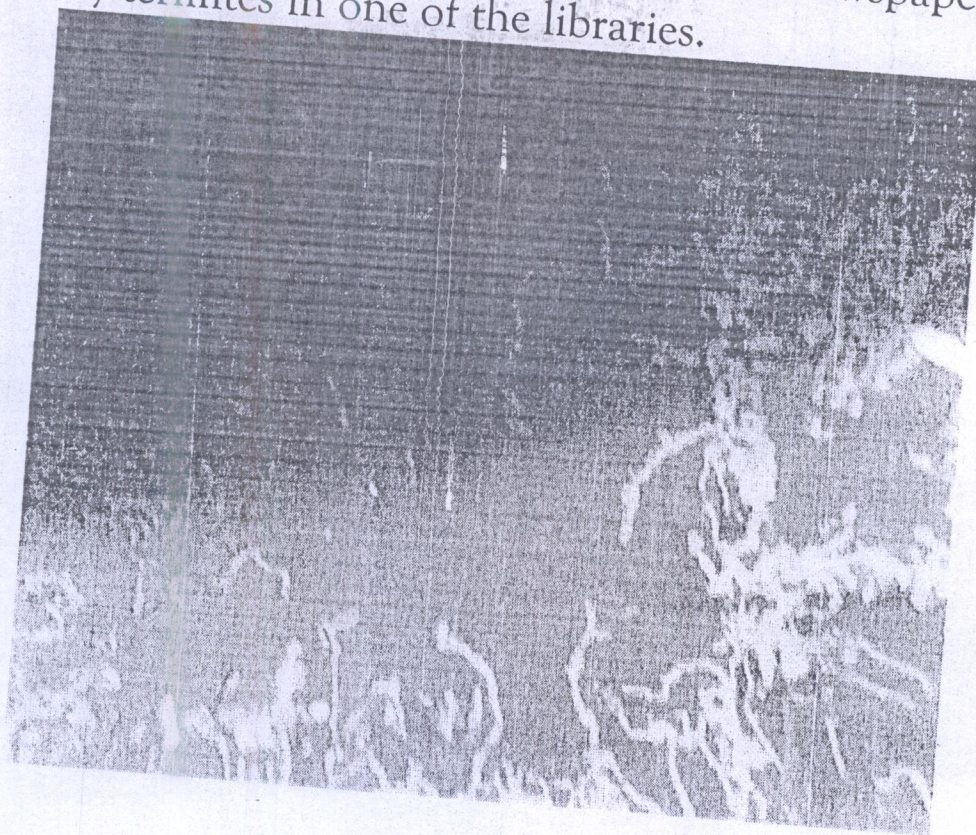
NOTE: Pictures showing poor storage of newspapers in some Federal University Libraries visited in Southwestern Nigeria.



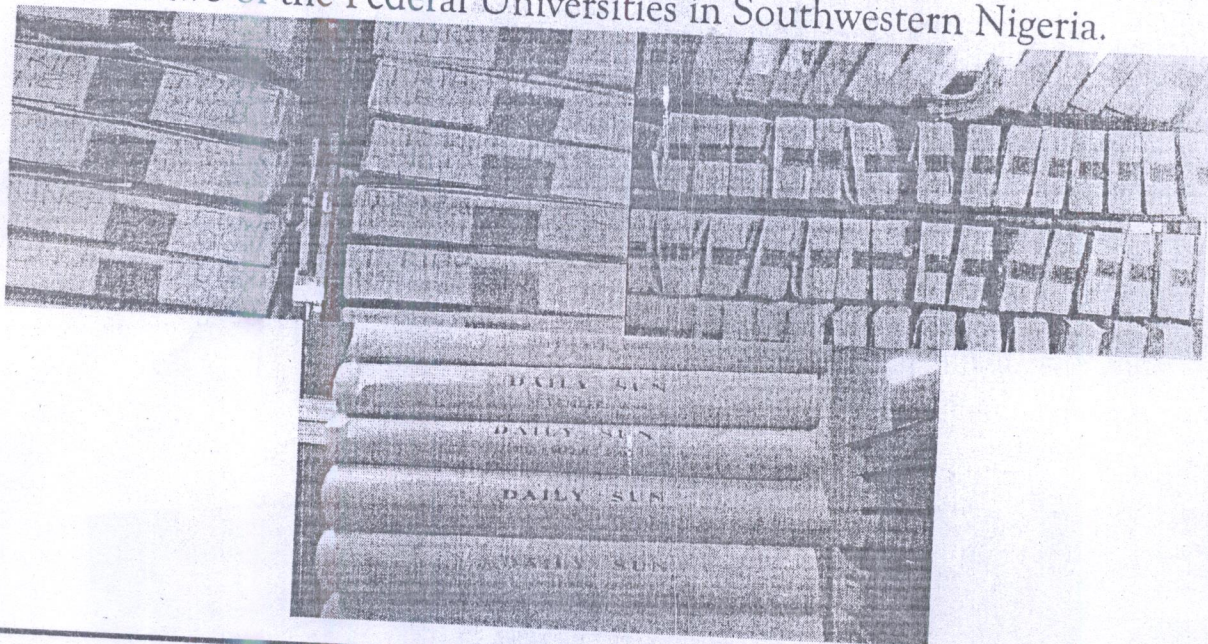
NOTE: (a) Pictures showing poor newspapers storage environment in some Federal University libraries Southwestern Nigeria.



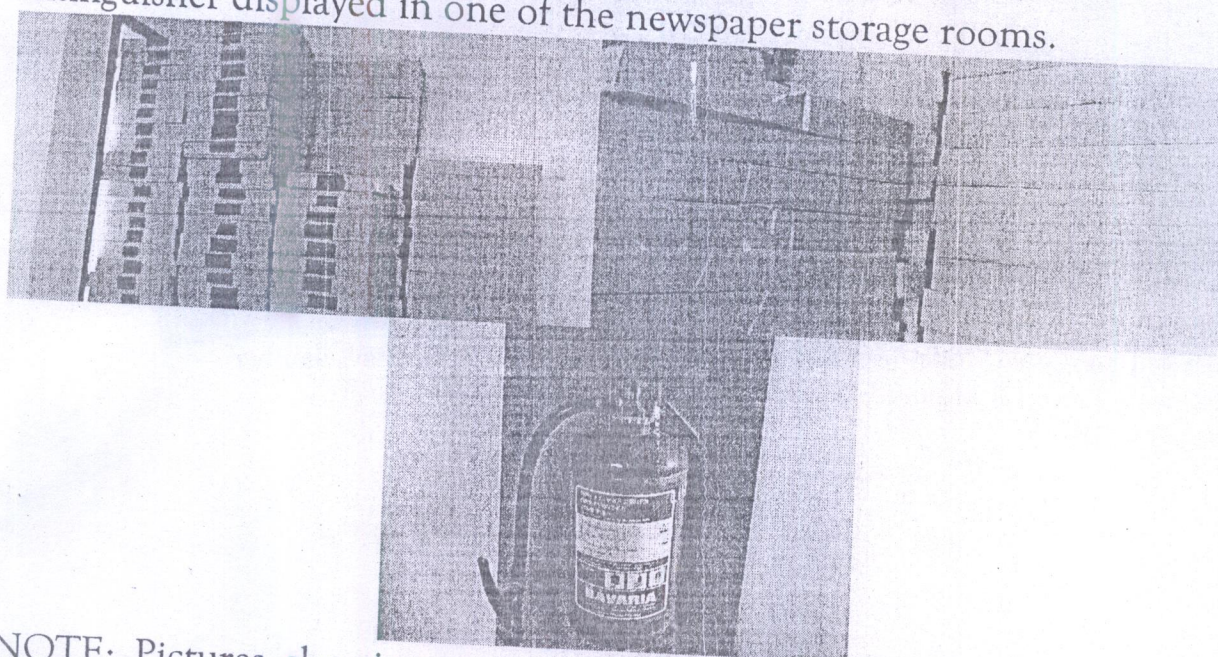
NOTE: (b) Picture showing a bound volume of newspapers attacked by termites in one of the libraries.



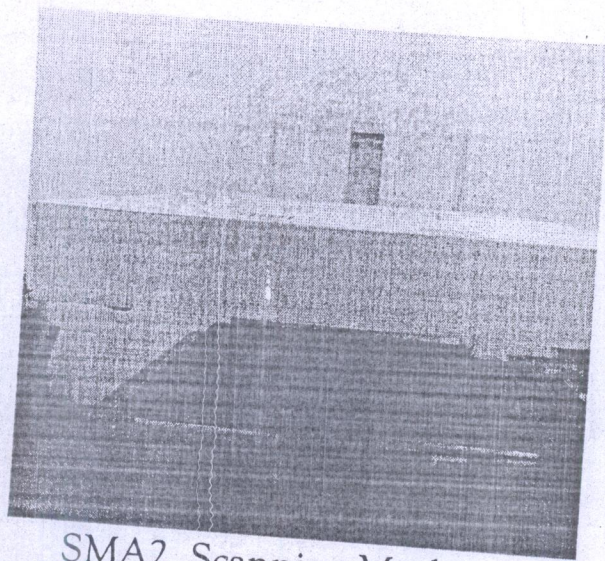
NOTE: (a) Pictures showing some good attempts at storing newspapers in boxes in two of the Federal Universities in Southwestern Nigeria.



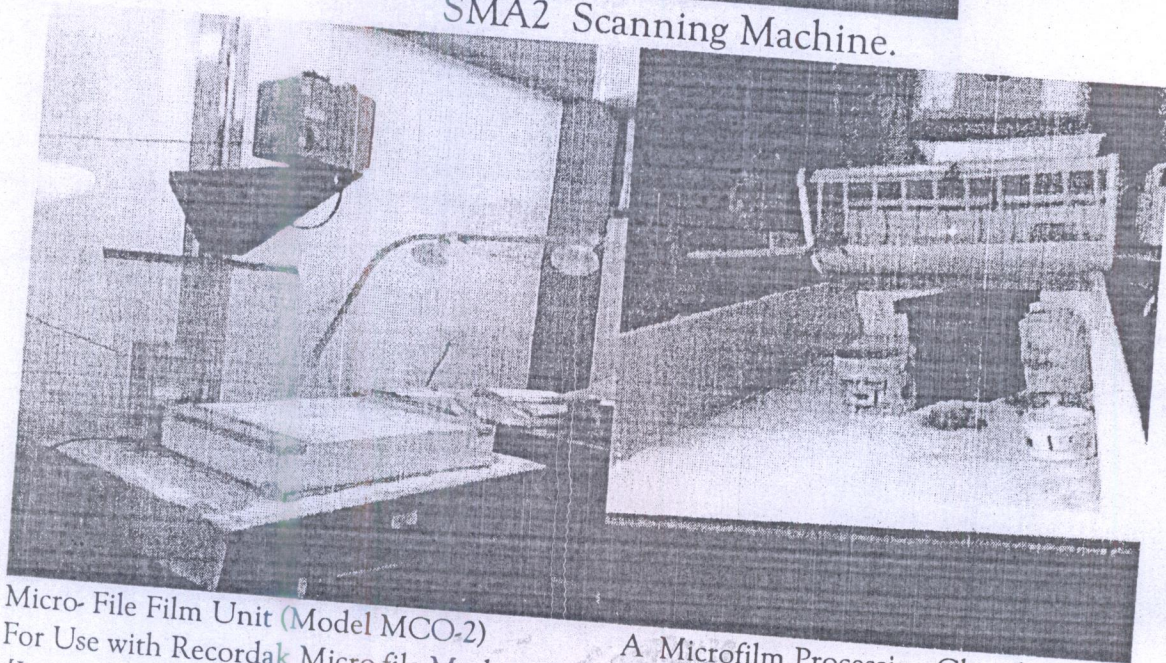
NOTE: (b) Some empty newspaper boxes for storage and a fire extinguisher displayed in one of the newspaper storage rooms.



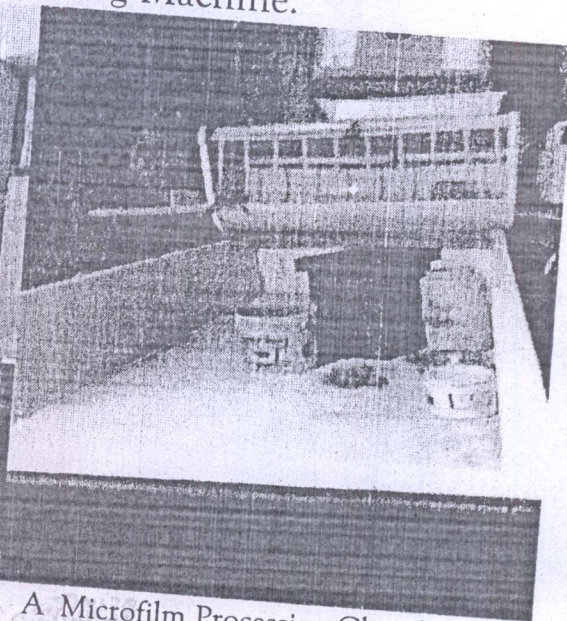
NOTE: Pictures showing some digitizing and Microfilm Equipment in one of the Federal Universities Libraries visited.



SMA2 Scanning Machine.



Micro-File Film Unit (Model MCO-2)
For Use with Recordak Micro-file Machine.
[Last used in 1976]



A Microfilm Processing Chamber
[Last used in 1976]

12. Formal Policy on Preservation/Conservation of Newspapers - None

13. Ratings of Library's efforts in preservation/Conservation of newspapers by Librarians/Officers in charge

		No. of Responses
Excellent	= 5	1
Good	= 4	1
Above Average	= 3	0
Average	= 2	3
Poor	= 1	0

NOTE: Most ratings were rather emotional, self-defensive and were not reflective of what was on ground.

14. Hindrances to effective preservation/conservation of newspaper

	No. of Responses
Lack of Awareness	- 2
Lack of Training in conservation	- 3
Lack of Advocacy	- 3
Funding	- 3
Conservation is not important	- 0
Others	- 0

15. General Overview of newspaper preservation/conservation procedures by Librarians/Officers in charge

The following were the general comments and recommendations of the Librarians/officers in charge of newspapers that were interviewed:

- Newspapers are invaluable resources for research.
- Need for specialists in newspaper management.
- Digitization of newspapers necessary.
- Indexing of newspapers necessary.
- Micro-formatting of newspapers necessary.
- Training and capacity building in preservation and conservation necessary.
- Fumigation necessary.
- Better funding required.
- Motivation of staff in charge necessary.

Conclusions from the Case Studies

Newspaper acquisitions and management obviously are not new in Nigerian university libraries as exemplified by the five federal universities libraries visited whose age range of establishment was between 21 – 61 years. The two oldest establishments out of them (Ife and Ibadan) had quite a lot of the old newspapers (especially the moribund ones) in their custody and reflected how large the holdings of some other old university holdings in other parts of Nigeria would look like.

Observations however revealed that apart from the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Nigeria that demonstrated some fairly positive attitude in the management of its newspapers, much was still left to be desired of the remaining four libraries visited. Newspaper managements transcends mere acquisition of the resources and requires a firm grasp of what it takes to preserve and conserve them.

Findings revealed poor storage facilities (housing, storage environment), lack of bibliographic control, absence of skilled staff/training in conservation, lack of content indexing of papers (either in clippings or page by page), lack of full understanding of the concept of preservation/conservation, no sign of reformatting techniques (except in one of the libraries) and obvious deterioration of the resources.

The following conclusions were drawn from the case studies:

- Poor perception of the need for preservation/conservation of newspapers. [Awareness]
- Poor knowledge of what preservation/conservation of newspapers entail
- Lack of pressure [Advocacy] for improvement of newspapers management and services from the major stakeholder, - the libraries in the universities. This stemmed out of the problems of poor perception of preservation and conservation..
- Gross deterioration of the resources. Poor accessibility to and usage by potential users of the resources

- The magnitude of the problem is high and requires a generic solution in all university libraries and other related information agencies in Nigeria.

Having drawn the above conclusions and considering the enormity of the problems, it is suggested that the solution transcends just what the individual establishments can handle but is better given a holistic approach by evolving a national strategy towards effective preservation/conservation of newspapers in Nigeria. These shall be the concern of the last segment of this paper.

7. NEWSPAPER PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION: A NATIONAL ROAD MAP

The nature and enormity of newspaper preservation and conservation make it require a national solution. The problems range from attitudinal issues, the general lack of understanding of the concepts, the absence of required skills, the large volume of newspapers involved and the general poor funding state of our libraries. It is also important to note that in nations where the problems are relatively less or absent, newspaper collection and management is difficult to be handled alone by individual libraries and information agencies. It requires a collaborative effort for efficiency. Hence, in a developing nation where there seems to be a generic problem a national blueprint seem to be the best option.

As an example, the United States of America had come up with a scheme known as The United States Newspaper Program (USNP) The program is a "cooperative National effort to locate, catalog, preserve in microfilm and make available to researchers newspapers published in the United States from the 18th century to date". The program is funded by the National Endowment for Humanities (NEH), Division of preservation and access while the technical and the project management is provided by the Library of Congress. (Library of Congress, 2008).

Here in Nigeria, it is known that the National Library has been commissioned to digitize Nigerian Newspapers, especially by the virtue of its legal depository right, much is still left to be

desired as far as coverage, accessibility to users and general impact on research and the public are concerned. In view of all these developments, this paper will proffer the establishment of some national strategies or road map towards the solving of the newspapers management problem in Nigeria.

7.1 Road Map / Strategies

Basic National Action Plan

(a). Formation Of National Steering Committee

Formation of a National Steering Committee on the preservation and conservation of newspapers in Nigeria. The Committee shall be a committee of the federal government.

(b). Statement of Objectives

- To see to the formation of a national policy on the preservation and conservation of newspapers in Nigeria.
- To see to the coordination and execution of the blue-print in all stakeholders' libraries and information centres in Nigeria.

(c). Scope of Policy

The policy should cover principles and practice of newspapers preservation/conservation at the national and individual repository level. The document shall include infrastructure, procedure, human resources and their qualification etc.

(d). Initial Activities of Steering Committee

- Preparation of sectoral papers by experts to identify specific problems in various areas.
- A national survey of newspapers management holdings of university libraries and all other libraries having newspaper holdings.
- Collation of survey reports and the drawing of other action plans including areas of intervention.
- Circulation of the drafts policy to all stakeholders for feed back.

(e). **Issues to Factor into the National Policy**

- Definition of concepts
- Itemization of procedure
- Conservation techniques
- Housing and storage environment
- Bibliographic control
- Access
- Surrogate issues
- Security and disaster planning
- Guidelines for establishment of preservation and conservation policy at the local /establishment level etc.

Major National Action Plan

(a). **Formation of a National Newspaper Preservation and Conservation Agency**

The activities of the National Steering Committee shall culminate in the formation of the National Newspaper Preservation and Conservation Agency. The body shall be responsible centrally, for acquisition, storage, management of all newspapers in Nigeria in a national repository. The body shall make available to all subscribing academic, research public and corporate libraries microfilmed copies of newspapers. The agency shall also invest heavily into the issue of accessibility of these newspapers through the provision of online services as may be desired by independent public subscribers. This step is desirable in view of limited resources available to individual libraries for the conservation of these resources.

In order to arrest financial bottlenecks and duplication of resources in universities and other research libraries, storage of hard copies of newspapers should stop. Such libraries should depend on surrogate copies to be made available by the National agency. The agency shall produce according to International standard three categories of microfilms namely: the master film for preservation; production film for production of duplicates and working films for circulation (Chunming Li, 2006).

(b). **Legal Backing for the Policy**

The National Policy on newspapers should be signed into law for effectiveness.

(c). **National Training School**

There should be an establishment of a National Preservation and Conservation Training School fashioned after such international standard like International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM).

(d). **Administration of Moribund Local/National Newspapers**

Old national and regional newspapers that had gone moribund over the years and such that are still in the custody of some university libraries should be left with them. Efforts should be made by the National agency to take a survey and inventory of such papers and provide assistance and technical support for their microfilming.

(e). **Awareness Creation/Benchmarks/Advocacy**

It shall be the responsibility of the National Newspaper Preservation and Conservation Agency to create awareness through all forms of media on the need for the protection of these resources. The agency shall also engage in periodic research, exploration of international benchmarks and serve as a pressure and advocacy agency through its publications and public discourses on this subject.

(f). **Finance**

The Federal Government remains the major stakeholder in the finance of this project. Alternative sources of funding could be sort but the capital-intensive nature of the project requires heavy commitment on the part of the government.

8. CONCLUSION

The problem of Newspaper management in Nigerian university libraries and other related institutions is an enormous one. Without proper preservation and conservation plan, the invaluable resources will be a lost heritage. The answer lies in the institution of a national initiative. Though it may be cumbersome as well as time-consuming, it is likely to be a worthwhile exercise thereafter.

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