

## **Strategies for Managing Theft and Mutilation of Information Resources in Nasarawa State University Library Keffi, Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper is on strategies for managing theft and mutilation of information resources in Nasarawa state university library, Keffi, Nigeria. Case study research was adopted to find out the types of security devices used in checking theft and mutilation of information resources, the extent to which the security devices can help in curbing the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources, the commonly stolen and mutilated information resources and the preventive measures taken as security strategies in order to curb the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in the library under study. The population of the study comprised of ten Librarians. Structured questionnaire and checklist were used as instruments for data collection. Frequency counts and percentage were used as technique for data analysis. Ten copies of the completed questionnaire were distributed and returned, representing 100% response rate. The findings revealed that windows with nets / iron protectors and electronic surveillance camera were the dominant security devices used and were found to be effective in curbing the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources. Textbooks, students projects/theses were the commonly stolen and mutilated information resources. Photocopy, bindery and stocktaking were the measures taken as security strategies in order to curb the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources. The study amongst other recommended the need to acquire body scanners, perimeter alarm, radio frequency identification and use of camera at security checks at both entrance and exit doors.

**Keywords:** Theft, mutilation, information resources, University Library, Keffi.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Securing information resources in university libraries is key in enhancing information resources availability, access, utilization and preservation. Sadly, the efforts made by library managers in ensuring the longevity of the life span of library is being threatened by the activities of deviant library users. It is a fact to state that while some library users come to the library and comply substantially to library rules and regulation governing how best to handle library materials by desisting from theft and mutilation of library materials, deviant users on the other hand, come to the library with the ulterior motive of stealing and mutilating library resources. It is in the light of this fact that the holy bible in the gospel according to John chapter 10 verse 10 says a thief come to kill, steal and destroy. Again, it was Gibbs, a Philosopher who once said, ‘‘ He who kills a reasonable creature, kills God’s image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself’’. Scholars have reported that theft and mutilation of library resources constitute perilous threats in many university libraries which Nasarawa state university is a part. As the saying goes, it is better to know what to do before one gets to the bridge than to be at the bridge, before one starts thinking of what to do. In view of the foregoing, University libraries managers are expected to be proactive in protecting library resources under their watch by the introduction of some preventive security measures in libraries .The twin maladies of theft and mutilation no doubt impact negatively on the smooth access and utilization of information resources as mutilated and stolen materials remain unavailable for use by prospective library users thereby resulting to information resources mortality. Maidabino (2012) noted that libraries need to provide, maintain and secure their collections in order to ensure the availability, accessibility and longevity of the collections. Bello (1998) reported high rate of theft, mutilation and misplacing of books in Nigerian academic libraries. To curtail these, Atkins and Weible (2003) emphasized that successful inventorying process helps identify missing items in the library.

Today, many university libraries in Nigeria are counting their monumental losses following reported incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources under their watch and custody. It is an open secret that print and non print materials constitute the dominant information resources in Nasarawa State university library. The Nasarawa state university library, like any other university libraries is vulnerable to deviant activities related to theft and mutilation of information resources. Consequently, lost and mutilated materials are

extremely difficult to be replaced due largely to paucity of funds and rare nature of some materials. Thus, the seemingly under-stocked collections in Nasarawa state university library by implication cannot adequately meet the information needs of its growing users. There are indications that libraries annual stock taking reports are replete with pockets of missing and stolen information resources.

It is also obvious to note that the prices of stolen and mutilated information sources are not only prohibitive but their replacement are becoming practically difficult and if not impossible, particularly in an era of dwindling economic fortunes characterized by security threats and low revenue profile for libraries and dwindling revenues accruable to government at all levels. It is disheartening to state that deviant behaviour seems to be rearing its ugly head in many libraries in Nigeria. This is glaring in the ways and manner some library resources are stolen and mutilated despite the existence of rules and regulation governing the use of library resources. It is a statement of fact that such rules and regulation are often not complied with by some deviant library users. The twin problem of theft and mutilation are still prevalence in academic libraries. These cases are most often discovered during stock taking, shelve reading and in the process of weeding and binding of worn out materials. Be that as it may, concerted efforts have been made in the past to curb some menace with a view to nip it in the bud but to no avail. This problem has thus assumed a cancerous dimension and can best be described as intractable.

The twin problems of information resource theft and mutilation has negative multiplier effect on the quantum and quality of information services rendered in University libraries. In order to curtail these, Alokun (2004) noted that readers are required to be well behaved in the library. Jackson (2005) affirms that a person is guilty of misdemeanor if he/she shall willfully or maliciously cut, tear any document deposited in the library belonging to any college or university or any institution of learning. Mutilation as defined by Peters (2000) is to cut off or permanently destroy a book or essential part of a book or material. Theft on the other hand is the unauthorized removal of a book from the library for the purpose of using same as a personal belonging. Book theft and mutilation could be prevented if strong and effective preventive security measures are put in place by university library managers. A situation where the perpetrators of theft and mutilation act with impunity and get away with their acts without being caught and punished leaves much to be desired.

#### **BACKGROUND OF NASARAWA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.**

Nasarawa state university library was established to support the teaching, learning and research needs of the academic community and visiting scholars. Nasarawa state university was established in the year 2000. The library is situated in keffi. The library is an offshoot of the defunct school of preliminary studies library. There are faculty libraries that complement the services of the central university library. As at 2016, Nasarawa state university library has 50010 volumes of textbooks and reference materials in addition to 6010 volumes of serials (Collection Development Records: 2016).

#### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Nasarawa state University library, Keffi, like its counterparts elsewhere in Nigeria are surely counting their losses as a consequent of the twin maladies of theft and mutilation of information resources. Library collections in print and non print format are vulnerable to security threats. The colossal loss of library collections constitute a huge financial and management burden. This is premise on the fact that their replacement and repairs has been extremely difficult if not impossible especially in era of economic recession where there is paucity of funds. By implication, the seemingly under stocked library collections in many university libraries cannot adequately meet the information needs of the ever growing library patrons. Again, there are indications that the annual stock taking reports in many university libraries are replete with pockets of missing and mutilated library collections. It is also note worthy to buttress the fact that the prices of stolen and mutilated collections appear not only to be on the rise but is increasingly difficult to be replaced due to their rare nature. Nasarawa state university library cannot be an exception. It is in the light of this nagging problem, that this study seeks to investigate how to manage the incidences of theft and mutilation of library collections of Nasarawa state university library with a view to nipping them in the bud most importantly in the current era of economic recession.

#### **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To find out the available security devices used in Nasarawa State University library.
2. To determine the effectiveness of the security devices used in curbing the incidences of theft and mutilation in the library under study.
3. To identify the type of information resources that are commonly stolen and mutilated in the library under study.
4. To identify the preventive security strategies put in place in order to curtail the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in Nasarawa state university library.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions guided the study.

- 1 What are the major security devices used in checking the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in Nasarawa State university library?
- 2 To what extent are the security devices effective in curbing the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in the library under study ?
- 3 What types of information resources are commonly stolen and mutilated in the library under study?.
- 4 What are the preventive measures taken as security strategies in order to curb the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in Nasarawa state university library?

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in university libraries have been extensively documented by scholars. Theft is the total removal of library materials from the library without following the due procedures either by the library users, library staff or both of them. Utah (2004) defined mutilation and theft of library materials as intentional removal or willful removal of library materials from the library without their being checked out or the successful unauthorized removal of library materials from the library. Thus, failure to return materials to the library is also considered to be theft of library materials. Mutilation and theft in libraries maladies have persisted, and are no doubt global problems. The worsening state of libraries in Nigeria appears to have aggravated its intensity and the consequent negative impact on information access and utilization. Sadly, book mutilation abounds in libraries and is the commonest form of abuse in all libraries. Bello (2001) revealed that book mutilation reduces the content of standard books and rendered them incoherent. Olalokun(2000) suggested the use of porters at exit point in addition to the use of plain clothe security men in libraries to apprehend thieves as security measures. Peters (2000) noted that book mutilation has significant effect on library services. Rude and Hauptman (1993) reported that theft of library collections has always presented a problem for library administrators, particularly in universities libraries. Ughah (2007) considers theft of library collection as a criminal activity and formidable obstacle to information access and use. He described theft and other incidences like mutilation of information resources, assault on staff as serious security issues that need urgent attention. Burrows and Copper (1992)expressed very strong views on the extent to which librarians themselves are directly responsible for book theft and mutilation and while there seems little empirical evidence to support such views, there have been numerous cases of library staff being prosecuted for the theft of many books and other library materials. Students dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, the lack of knowledge of replacement, costs and time, cause students to mutilate, or damage collection. Ajayi and Omotayo (2004) viewed mutilation of library materials as a global phenomenon that should be handled effectively by library managers and administrators. They suggest provision of more photocopiers, cheaper photocopying services, and publicizing the effects of mutilation to users as some of the approaches for the effective management of mutilation incidences in university libraries. In addition, they suggest a campus-wide campaign through display and exhibition of mutilated books and other library materials. Teaching of library culture and ethics through training and education of staff will help instill security culture for ensured protection of the library collection. Library managers should provide regular training of personnel particularly on detection techniques of mutilation and other collection security breaches or incidences. Ughah (2007) attests that collection security breaches constitutes formidable obstacles to information access and use. He noted that such acts are serious problems that result to user dissatisfaction.

Oder (2004) noted that security measures such as supervision, strolling and surveillance are lacking in libraries, and keys are unsecured, if not in plain sight of the users. Atkins and Weible (2003) remarked that successful inventory process helps identify missing items. They however, observed that this depends on the size of the library's collection. Brown and Patkus (2007) stressed that university libraries must ensure that access and storage of collection are arranged and monitored for quick and easy inspection. Non-return of library materials is a threat to the effective use of resources. Udoumoh and Okoro (2007) opined that libraries should create policies to ensure library resources are used effectively. Dowlin (2014) insists that academic library building must set new standards for seismic mitigation, ventilation, heating, lighting and openness of the building, security of the occupants and collections and ability to provide a comfortable environment for study, communication and programmes. Ramamurthy (2001) revealed that there are variety of weapons available for library security. These are closed circuit camera Television (CCTV), Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), alarm on exit doors and sign in sheets.

## **III. METHODOLOGY**

Case study was used for the study. Cresswell (2003) stated that case study research takes place in a setting where the researcher is interested in a particular phenomenon that requires detailed information with few population. The population of the study comprised of ten Librarians . Structured closed ended questionnaires

and checklist were used as instruments for data collection. In all, 10 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and the 10 were returned representing 100% response rate. Descriptive statistics expressed in frequency scores and percentage were used in analyzing the data collected.

#### IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

**TABLE 1: TYPES OF SECURITY DEVICES USED IN CHECKING THEFT AND MUTILATION IN THE LIBRARY STUDIED**

N = 10

S/No	Types of security devices	Responses
1	Body scanners	X
2	Perimeter alarm	X
3	Electronic surveillance camera	√
4	Radio frequency identification	X
5	Windows with net/iron protectors	√
6	Camera at security checks	X

√ = Available  
 X = Not available

The types of security devices were listed using checklist. Table 1 indicated that windows with net/iron protectors and electronic surveillance camera were the security devices available in Nasarawa university library. It could be deduced that the library lacks adequate security devices in checking the twin problem of theft and mutilation of information resources. Evidently, body scanners, perimeter alarm, radio frequency identification and camera at security checks were not being used to nip in the bud the incidences of theft and mutilation of information resources in the library under study. This portends a catastrophic threat to the security of both library staff, students and information resources particularly at the time where the activities of terrorists are becoming more pronounced in tertiary institutions in Northern Nigeria. The reason for non-utilization of some of these security devices could be attributed to paucity of funds faced by Nasarawa State University Library Keffi.

**TABLE 2: THE EXTENT OF EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SECURITY DEVICES USED IN THE LIBRARY STUDIED**

N = 10		Responses			
S/No	Types of security devices	V.E	E	FE	NE
1	Body scanners	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
2	Electronic surveillance camera	1(10%)	5(50%)	1(10%)	3(30%)
3	Radio frequency identification	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
4	Windows with net/iron protectors	Nil	8(80%)	2(20%)	Nil
5	Camera at security checks	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Key: VE – Very Effective; E – Effective; FE – Fairly Effective; NE – Not Effective

The analysis in Table 2 above indicated that there is no body scanners as a security measure in the library studied, while 1(10%) of the respondents indicated that the electronic surveillance camera is very effective as a security measure to check stealing and mutilation of information resources in the library under study. 5(50%) of the respondents agreed that electronic surveillance camera is effective as a security measure in checking stealing and mutilation of library resources in the library studied. 3 (30%) of the respondents indicated that electronic surveillance camera is not effective as a measure of checking stealing and mutilation of library resources. There is no Radio Frequency Identification used as a security measure to check stealing and mutilation in the library under study. Also, 8(80%) of the respondents indicated that windows with net/iron protectors are effective measure to check stealing and mutilation of library resources, while 2 (20%) of the respondents agreed that windows with net/iron protectors were fairly effective as measure to check stealing and mutilation of library resources. The library has no camera as security checks in the library.

**TABLE 3: COMMONLY STOLEN AND MUTILATED INFORMATION RESOURCES IN THE LIBRARY STUDIED**

S/No	N = 10	Responses
		F (%)
1	Textbooks	10(100%)
2	Newspapers	6(60%)
3	Dictionaries	4(40%)
4	Encyclopedia	3(30%)
5	Pamphlets	9(90%)
6	Maps	Nil
7	Journals	9(90%)
8	Conference proceedings	1(10%)
9	Students projects/thesis	10(100%)

Analysis in Table 3 above indicated that 10 (100%) of the respondents agreed that textbooks are the most commonly stolen and mutilated information resources in the library studied. 6 (60%) of the respondents indicated that newspapers are the commonly stolen and mutilated information resources in the library, while 4 (40%) of the respondents indicated that dictionaries are the commonly fairly stolen and mutilated information resources in Nasarawa state university library. 3(30%) respondents said encyclopedia are the commonly stolen and mutilated resources in the library. 9 (90%) indicated that pamphlets and journals are the commonly stolen and mutilated information resources in the library. 10 (100%) of the respondents agreed that students projects / theses are the most commonly stolen and mutilated information resources in the library studied.

**TABLE 4: PREVENTIVE SECURITY STRATEGIES USED IN CHECKING THEFT AND MUTILATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN THE LIBRARY STUDIED**

S/No	N = 10	Responses
		F (%)
1	Orientation programme	8(80%)
2	Closed circuit camera TV (CCTV)	Nil
3	Library users consultative forum	Nil
4	Staff security meeting	9(90%)
5	Photocopy and bindery services	10(100%)
6	Inscribed flyers and hand bills “don’t steal/mutilate me”	Nil
7	Constant supervision of library patrons	9(90%)
8	Use of plain clothe security men	Nil
9	Security public relations campaigns	Nil
10	Library membership cards	9(90%)
11	Inter library security synergies	Nil
12	Periodic training and retraining of library staff on security measures	9(90%)
13	Use of electronic body scanners	Nil
14	Stock taking	10(100%)

Analysis in Table 4 above showed that 8(80%) of the respondents agreed that students orientation programme is a preventive security strategies used in checking stealing and mutilation of information resources in the library studied while 9 (90%) of the respondents accepted that staff security meeting, constant supervision of library patrons, library membership cards and periodic training and retraining of library staff on security measure are some of the common preventive security strategies used in checking theft and mutilation of information resources in the library studied, while 10 (100%) of the respondents indicated that photocopy and bindery services are very excellent preventive security strategies used in checking theft and mutilation of information resources in the library studied.

## V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

1. The findings showed that windows with net/iron protectors and electronic surveillance camera were the dominant security devices used in checking theft and mutilation of information resources in the library studied. Conversely perimeter alarm, radio frequency identification and camera at security checks were not being used in the library studied.

2. On the efficacy level of the security devices used by the library under study, the findings revealed that windows with net/iron protectors and electronic surveillance camera were effective in checking security breaches and threats bordering on theft and mutilation in the library studied.
3. The findings on the commonly mutilated and stolen information resources revealed that textbooks and students project/thesis were the dominant commonly stolen and mutilated information resources. This is marginally followed by pamphlets and journals. Conference proceedings and encyclopedia were the least commonly stolen information resources in the library studied.
4. The findings, on the preventive security strategies used in checking theft and mutilation in the library studied showed that photocopy, bindery services and stocktaking were the major preventive security strategies used in the library studied. This is closely followed by staff security meeting, constant supervision of library patrons and periodic training and retraining of staff on security measures. Conversely, closed circuit camera, library users consultative forum, inscripted flyers and handbills “don’t steal/mutilate me” use of plain cloth security men, security public relations campaigns and inter library security synergies were not being used as preventive security strategies in the library studied. These findings corroborated with the study carried out by Ajayi and Omotayo (2004) where they suggested the need for provision of photocopiers, cheaper photocopying services, stocktaking and publicizing the effects of mutilation of library materials as preventive approaches of managing the incidences of theft and mutilation in academic libraries.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

The protection of library resources against theft and mutilation is onerous task that must not be taken lightly by library and information service providers considering the devastating impact of theft and mutilation. It is important that new preventive security strategies are initiated and implemented to nip in the bud the twin problem of theft and mutilation of information resources. The findings of this study showed that the library lacked state of the art security devices. This must be addressed with urgency in order to zealously preserve the available information resources for future scholars and generation. Anything short of this will not only spell doom against information resources availability and access but will truncate the realization of the noble objectives for which the library was established in particular and the university in general.

## **VII. RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. There is the urgent need to acquire additional security devices such as body scanners, perimeter alarm, radio frequency identification and camera at security checks in order to beef up security in the library under study.
2. There is the need for constant supervision of library users in the reader services department in order to curtail the incidences of theft and mutilation of textbooks, students project/theses, pamphlets and journals.
3. There is the need for preventive security measures such as the use of close circuit camera TV library users consultative forum, use of inscripted flyers and handbills, use of plain clothe security men, security public relations campaigns, inter library security synergies and use of electronic body scanners. This will go a long way in nipping in the bud some security threats associated with the theft and mutilation of information resources in the library under study.

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