

The Roles of Librarians in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Collection Development Practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

The article investigated the roles of librarians in promoting diversity and inclusion in collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria. The research examined the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria; to ascertain the level of diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices; and to determine the roles of librarians in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in these Colleges. The research population was 65 Librarians in the Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria; the total enumeration technique was adopted; and the study was descriptive. The research instrument was the questionnaire, and data were analysed using tables and means. Findings reveal that Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria uphold collection development practices, there is a low level of diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices, but the librarians in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria play their roles in ensuring diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices. The research recommended that the libraries should perform collection evaluation yearly, practice community engagement, and should conduct diversity audit to assess the collection diversity of the library.

Key Words: Collection development, Diversity, Federal Colleges of Education, Inclusion, Librarians

Introduction

Collection development is an integral part of any library, regardless of the type of library. For an academic library, the importance of a robust collection cannot be overstated. Collection development is the systematic building up of the information holdings of a library. It entails the selection of required materials, the acquisition of selected materials; the processing of such acquired materials and the eventual introduction of the processed materials into the general holdings of the library that can be accessed by the library clientele. When selection exercises are carried out in the library, it is expected that various considerations are made and put in place such that the information resources that will be acquired are relevant to the intended users on the one hand; and also ensure that the selected and acquired information resources do not exempt anybody or group of people from the possible use of such information resources. It is on the basis of this that the library collections need to reflect diversity and inclusion.

Diversity in library collection development refers to the act of having a fair representation of all concerned parties in the eventual use of the library. Walters (2023) says diverse library collection

provides good representation of the topics, perspectives, authors, characters, and narratives associated with the underrepresented and marginalised groups. With a diverse library collection, the library can easily influence and champion social change among its users, as everybody has at least, an information resource to consult, thus making real the saying that ‘every reader its book’. Inclusivity in library collection development practices refers to the practice of ensuring that library collections are accessible by all categories of people, the collections are sensitive to the cultural needs of the people, and reflects equity in accessing information materials. Little wonder Nnatu, Okechukwu and Chinemerem (2024) posited that building a sustainable library in the digital era requires a deliberate focus on the need to embrace diversity and inclusion.

Research Objectives

The research is poised to achieving the following objectives:

1. To determine the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria;
2. To ascertain the level of diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria;
3. To determine the roles of librarians in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria.

Literature Review

Astari and Marwiyah (2024) studied cultivating diversity: multicultural representation in collection development at Tumbuh 2 elementary school, Yogyakarta. The article looked at how multiculturalism is reflected in the collection development practices of the library. The study applied a qualitative method that is descriptive in approach, adopting non-participant observation, semi-structured interview and documentation as data collection techniques. The research findings reflect that the collection development practices at Tumbuh 2 elementary school effectively cover multiculturalism values, underscoring the need to promote diversity and inclusion.

Firmansyah, Hakim and Kristanto (2024) studied the implementation of the MOORA method in the library book procurement decision support system. The author noted that when purchasing books for the library collections, it is expedient to put several factors into consideration, so that the books so acquired will be of relevance to the academic pursuits of both lecturers and students.

Kadrić, Hodžić and Mašić (2024) investigated the library collection of the Waqf of Ahmed Agha in Mostar from the mid-17th century. Using the identification method, the authors were able to determine the exact titles and authors of the books and manuscripts of the library. The article showed that the titles and authors of works from the library were collections of the educational institution of that time; showing the thematic and content diversity of the library.

Kennedy and Saragossi (2024) evaluated a patron-driven acquisition (PDA) pilot program to address equity and diversity in academic library acquisitions. The study posited that collection development practices should be more user-centric in nature rather than acquiring materials for the purpose of acquisition alone, even when such materials are not needed in the library by the library users. This is because there is a shift in user expectations and campus diversity.

Madu, Odenigbo and Yakubu (2024) investigated on walking the talk: envisioning sustainable libraries in Nigeria through diversity and inclusion in the digital era. The study explored the integration of diversity, inclusion and sustainable principles in Nigerian libraries by leveraging digital technologies. The study adopted a qualitative approach, through systematic literature reviews, case studies and best practices from global library systems. Findings showed that libraries are evolving as community hubs that contribute to social cohesion and equitable access to information, also highlighting the barriers to access of information and participation among the underserved populations, as well as proposed practical interventions.

Nnatu, et. al (2024) researched on building sustainable libraries by embracing diversity and inclusion in digital era. The article explored the relationship between sustainability, diversity and inclusion, as they relate to the library parlance. The research targeted library users in schools in Anambra State through the use of an online questionnaire hosted in Google Form. The research findings showed significant demographic variations in the effectiveness of diversity enhancement strategies, findings also reveal the necessity of tailored interventions to promote sustainability and inclusivity in library especially in the digital era where diverse perspectives and equitable access to information are very crucial.

Okechukwu, Okafor and Chinemerem (2024) researched on integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in the acquisition of library resources and services for sustainable development of public libraries. The study examined how integrating cultural diversity and inclusion in public library resources and services is crucial for sustainable development. The study adopted a qualitative method of systematic literature reviews, and found out that librarians' roles in promoting equity, engagement and cultural preservation were possible because of the adoption of inclusive policies, tech use for diverse population, amongst others.

Prihatin, et. al (2024) studied community development in rural public libraries: supporting social inclusion and library transformation. The study explored the roles of public libraries in developing rural communities and the impact it has on social inclusion. The study adopted a case study approach, and data were gathered using participant observation and focused group discussions, involving facilitators from the library and participants from the communities. Results revealed that these libraries help to preserve the cultural practices of the villages, as well as provide economic development opportunities for the communities; thus highlighting the importance of rural libraries in promoting social inclusion and development of rural communities.

Walters (2023) researched on assessing diversity in academic library book collections: diversity audit principles and methods. The study focused on revealing the extent to which library collections are incorporating the topics, perspectives, authors, characters, and narratives that are associated with the underrepresented and marginalised groups within the coverage of the libraries. That way, libraries will be able to determine if their collections embrace diversity and inclusion, by ensuring they evaluate whether the collections aligned with the basic user community, and try to improve on areas with loopholes.

Methodology

The research adopted the survey research design. The population of the study is the 65 librarians in the Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria; and the research adopted a total

enumeration technique. The instrument adopted for data gathering was the online questionnaire; the link was sent to the librarians through their colleagues in the different Colleges of Education. The instrument was validated for face and content clarification by an expert librarian, before it was sent to the respondents. The data were analysed using statistical tools of tables and means, presented in Tables. The four (4) point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used to measure the level of acceptance of the statements in the questionnaire by the respondents. For the decision rule, the Criterion Mean is 2.5. That is, items with Mean values of 2.5 and above were accepted, while those with Mean values lesser than 2.5 were rejected.

Table 1: Population distribution of the Respondents

Colleges of Education	Number of Librarians
Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo	14
Federal College of Education, Abeokuta	18
Federal College of Education (Technical), Akoka	12
Adeyemin College of Education, Ondo	21
Total	65

Presentation of Results and Discussion

The total number of responses to the online questionnaire, after 2 weeks in the first instance, and another 1 week after reminder notices were sent, was 57. This gave a response rate of 88%. The analyses of the research are based on the 57 copies of responded questionnaire.

Table 2: Collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria

Strong Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SD)

SN	Question Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
	<i>Our College Library ...</i>					
1	Has collection development policy document	48	9	0	0	3.84
2	Conducts needs assessment	19	21	11	6	2.93
3	Follows established selection criteria	22	17	5	13	2.84
4	Performs collection evaluation at least once a year	11	08	12	26	2.07
5	Practices preservation and conservation	14	13	13	17	2.42
6	Practices weeding and de-accessioning	39	14	2	2	3.58
7	Practices community engagement	06	08	15	28	1.86
8	Ensures diversity, equity, and inclusion	45	12	0	0	3.79
	Grand Mean					2.92

Table 2 showed that the collection development practices that are evident in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria included having collection development policy document (Mean = 3.84); ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion in their collection development practices (Mean = 3.79); they practice weeding and de-accessioning (Mean = 3.58); they conduct needs assessment (Mean = 93); they follow established selection criteria during collection development (Mean = 2.84). However, they scarcely observe other collection development practices like preservation and conservation (Mean = 2.42); they do not perform collection evaluation at least once a year (Mean = 2.07); and they do not involve in community engagement practices (Mean = 1.86).

Generally speaking, however, College Libraries in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria uphold the collection development practices, as this is evident with 2.92 as the Grand Mean. Thus, based on the decision rule of accepting any Mean value that is equal to or greater than the Criterion Mean of 2.5, we state that Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria uphold collection development practices.

These findings complement those of Astari and Marwiyah (2024) who reported that collection development practices that follow set rules ensure commitment to foster an environment that is diverse, equal, inclusive, open, and committed to dialogue. Similarly, Okechukwu, et. al (2024) averred that strategies that ensure promoting diversity and inclusion were inclusive policies, improved collections, staff cultural competence training, and technology use for diverse populations.

Table 3: Level of diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria

Very High Extent (VHE), High Extent (HE), Low Extent (LE), Very Low Extent (VLE)

SN	Question Item	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean
	<i>To what extent do your Library ...</i>					
1	Develop selection criteria that prioritise diverse perspectives, experiences and voices	11	12	21	13	2.37
2	Seek out information resources written by authors from diverse background	23	34	0	0	3.40
3	Ensure that the collections include materials that represent the experiences and perspectives of the marginalized	09	13	24	11	2.35
4	Ensure that the collection development team reflects the diversity of the users served	08	05	14	30	1.84
5	Engage with library users to solicit for feedback	13	19	25	0	2.79
6	Collaborate with diverse stakeholders	07	12	08	30	1.93
	Grand Mean					2.45

Table 3 explored the level of diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria. Findings revealed that in a bid to embrace diversity and inclusion, the College Libraries seek out information resources written by authors from diverse background (Mean = 3.40); and they also engage with library users to solicit for feedback (Mean = 2.79). Nonetheless, they do not sufficiently engage in other practices to enhance diversity and inclusion, like developing selection criteria that prioritise diverse perspectives, experiences and voices (Mean = 2.37); they do not ensure that the collections include materials that represent the experiences and perspectives of the marginalized (Mean = 2.35); they scarcely collaborate with diverse stakeholders (Mean = 1.93); and they rarely ensure that the collection development team reflects the diversity of the users served (Mean = 1.86).

The generally section on the level of diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria revealed that these College Libraries do not yet sufficiently practice diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices. This is evident with 2.45 as the sectional Grand Mean. Thus, based on the decision rule of rejecting any Mean value that is lesser than the Criterion Mean of 2.5, we state that Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria have a low level of diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices.

The findings are in accord with Prihatin, et. al (2024) who opined that libraries can encourage social inclusion through community development programmes, especially in rural areas, as these areas often represented the marginalised groups in society. Walters (2023) also noted that diversity in the context of library collections should reflect the ages, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, socioeconomic status and occupation, ability, disability, physical and psychological characteristics; diversity also meant having diverse authorship.

Table 4: Roles of librarians in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria

Strong Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SD)

SN	Question Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean
	<i>Do you ...</i>					
1	Conduct diversity audit to assess the collection diversity of the library	04	21	07	25	2.07
2	Ensure that cataloguing and classification practices are inclusive and respectful, by using diverse and representative subject headings and keywords	47	02	07	01	3.67
3	Regularly review and update the library collection to ensure that it remains diverse and inclusive	13	22	14	08	2.70
4	Engage with diverse user groups to understand their information needs and preferences	11	12	23	11	2.40
5	Participate in training and professional development opportunities to enhance your	29	13	05	10	3.07

knowledge and skills in diversity, equity, and inclusion	
Grand Mean	2.78

Table 4 x-rayed the roles of librarians in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria. Findings showed that librarians ensure that cataloguing and classification practices are inclusive and respectful, by using diverse and representative subject headings and keywords (Mean = 3.40); they also participate in training and professional development opportunities to enhance your knowledge and skills in diversity, equity, and inclusion (Mean = 2.79); they likewise regularly review and update the library collection to ensure that it remains diverse and inclusive (Mean = 2.70). However, they do not sufficiently engage with diverse user groups to understand their information needs and preferences (Mean = 2.40); and they scarcely conduct diversity audit to assess the collection diversity of the library (Mean = 2.07).

In generally, the section on the roles of librarians in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria revealed that these College Librarians are striving in their capacities to ensure the practice diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices. This is evident with 2.78 as the sectional Grand Mean. Thus, based on the decision rule of accepting any Mean value that is equal or greater than the Criterion Mean of 2.5, we state that Librarians in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria play their roles in ensuring diversity and inclusion in their collection development practices.

The findings agree with Nnatu, et. al (2024), who reported that conscious efforts to imbibe strategy choices significantly influences the efficacy of sustainable practices like diversity and inclusion in the digital era; and that these diversity enhancement strategies significantly varies across different demographic groups within the library context in the digital era. The research findings however, deviate from Walters (2023), who upheld that diversity audit is a necessity for a library that practices diversity and inclusion; this is because librarians in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria seldom carry out diversity audit to determine the suitability of their collections to the intended users, in terms of diversity, equity, and inclusivity.

Conclusion

The roles librarians play in ensuring diversity and inclusion in the collection development practices of libraries is very important. To effectively achieve this, libraries need to have well documented collection development policy, which stipulates the guidelines for inclusion or exclusion of any information resource in the collections. In like vein, all hands must be on deck to ensure that librarians are able to bring in specialists from diverse backgrounds too, who will better represent the interests of the underrepresented and marginalised.

Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations are presented:

1. Libraries in Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria should perform collection evaluation at least once a year; strive to preserve and conserve their holdings.

By so doing, the library holdings will always be relevant to the users, and last longer for users to access anytime the needs arise.

2. The Federal Colleges of Education in Southwestern Nigeria should practice community engagement; develop selection criteria that prioritise diversity and inclusion. That way, they can carry the communities along, as well as be carried along by these communities. That way the libraries will reflect and represent the experiences and perspectives of everybody, even the marginalized people in the society. That way, they can carry the communities along, as well as be carried along by these communities.
3. Federal Colleges of Education Libraries in Southwestern Nigeria should engage with diverse user groups to understand their information needs and preferences. By so doing, the libraries will be able to effectively meet the information needs of their users, regardless of the diversity reflected in their characteristics.

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