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DIGITISATION AND EFFECTIVE DOCUMENTATION PRACTICES IN THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, OWERRI (FUTO) LIBRARY IMO STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Purpose: *This study examined the relationship between digitisation and effective documentation practices in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), Imo State, Nigeria.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *A descriptive correlational research design was adopted to describe the existing conditions of the variables and determine the relationship between them without manipulation. The population comprised 47 librarians and total enumeration was adopted because of the manageable population size. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher and measured on a four-point Likert scale its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation.*

Findings: *Findings revealed that the library had adopted digitisation practices, particularly in conversion of print materials into digital formats and the maintenance of repositories, although inadequate infrastructure and funding constrained these efforts. Documentation practices, including cataloguing, classification, metadata application, and the use of documentation tools, were found to be moderately effective in supporting resource organisation and retrieval. It further established a strong positive relationship between digitisation and effective documentation practices.*

Implications: *It was concluded that improved digitisation is associated with more effective documentation practices.*

Originality: *The study's originality lies in its recommended increased investment in digitisation infrastructure and continuous staff training in digitisation, metadata creation, and modern documentation tools.*

Keywords: *Digitisation; Effective documentation practices; Information resources; University libraries; Librarians.*

Introduction

Digitisation involves the conversion of physical information resources into digital formats to facilitate easier access, storage, and dissemination. In university libraries, digitisation has become increasingly important as institutions strive to meet the demands of a digital-savvy user population. By transforming print materials such as books, theses, manuscripts, and archival documents into electronic formats, libraries can significantly enhance the

accessibility and preservation of their collections. Digitisation also supports remote access to information resources, enabling users to obtain academic materials regardless of their geographical location. This is particularly important in contemporary academic settings where distance learning and online education are becoming more prevalent.

The benefits of digitisation extend beyond access to include improved preservation of fragile materials and increased visibility of institutional research outputs. Digital repositories, for instance, allow universities to showcase their scholarly work on global platforms, thereby enhancing academic visibility and impact. Empirical studies have demonstrated that digitisation significantly improves information retrieval efficiency and the total service delivery in academic libraries (Eniekebi, 2024). However, the implementation of digitisation initiatives is not without its challenges. High costs associated with acquiring and maintaining digital technologies, a lack of skilled personnel, and issues related to copyright and intellectual property rights often hinder effective digitisation efforts. Furthermore, digital preservation remains a major concern, as technological obsolescence and data loss pose risks to the long-term sustainability of digital resources (Babagana & Kemboi, 2024).

Documentation in university libraries involves the systematic recording, organisation, storage, and retrieval of information resources and institutional knowledge. It plays a vital role in ensuring that information is accessible, reliable, and usable over time. Proper documentation practices include cataloguing, classification, indexing, and the use of standardised metadata systems. These processes enable libraries to organise their vast amounts of information in a manner that facilitates efficient retrieval and utilisation by users (Hider, 2018; Oliver, 2021).

In addition to supporting information access, effective documentation practices contribute to the preservation of institutional memory and the continuity of library operations. Documented procedures, policies, and records ensure that knowledge is not lost when librarians leave the institution and that new librarians can easily understand and follow established practices. Effective records and knowledge management systems also strengthen institutional efficiency, accountability, and long-term preservation of organisational knowledge in academic libraries (International Organisation for Standardisation [ISO], 2016; Yakel, 2021). Recent developments in research data management have further expanded the

scope of documentation practices in academic libraries. Libraries are increasingly involved in managing research data by providing support for data organisation, storage, and sharing. This trend underlines the growing importance of documentation in supporting research activities and ensuring data integrity (Igbinovia, Segun-Adeniran, & Okuonghae, 2024).

Effective documentation practices in university libraries require integrating standardised metadata schemes, digital repositories, and automated cataloguing systems to improve information organisation and retrieval. The adoption of internationally recognised standards such as Dublin Core, MARC 21, and Resource Description and Access (RDA) enhance consistency in documenting library resources and promotes interoperability among information systems. Through these standards, university libraries can facilitate seamless exchange of bibliographic data and improve accessibility to scholarly resources across institutions. Recent studies emphasise that libraries that implement structured metadata frameworks and robust research data management systems are better positioned to support data preservation, scholarly communication, and long-term accessibility of institutional research outputs (Nwagwu, 2024; Igbinovia, et al., 2024). In addition, the deployment of institutional repositories and cloud-based documentation platforms has strengthened libraries' capacity to preserve digital content and ensure continuous access to academic materials despite technological changes or staff turnover.

Another important practice for effective documentation in university libraries is continuous professional development and collaborative knowledge sharing among librarians. Documentation processes are more efficient when librarians possess adequate digital literacy, data management skills, and competency in emerging information technologies. Regular workshops, in-service training, and participation in professional development programmes enable librarians to stay updated with modern documentation tools and evolving information management practices. Collaborative documentation initiatives among university libraries also enhance resource sharing, reduce duplication of efforts, and encourage the adoption of best practices in information organisation and preservation. Studies have shown that data literacy and technological competence significantly influence the effectiveness of documentation and research data management services in academic libraries (Palsdottir, 2021; Okiki & Alabi, 2024). Therefore, university

library management should prioritise staff capacity building, policy development, and investment in digital infrastructure to strengthen documentation practices and improve service delivery.

Digitisation, and effective documentation practices are indispensable components of modern university libraries. They play a crucial role in enhancing information access, improving service delivery, and ensuring the sustainability of library operations in a rapidly changing digital environment. While significant progress has been made in adopting these practices, challenges related to infrastructure, skills, and organisational culture continue to impede their full implementation. To address these issues, university libraries must invest in technological development, promote a culture of collaboration, and adopt standardised documentation practices. By so doing, they can strengthen their role as vital knowledge hubs and effectively support the academic mission of their institutions.

Statement of the problem

University libraries are expected to function as a dynamic knowledge hub that support teaching, learning, and research through efficient access to information resources. However, despite advancements in information and communication technologies, many of these libraries continue to struggle with limited digitisation efforts, and poor documentation systems. At the same time, a significant proportion of library resources at universities remain in print format, restricting accessibility and limiting users' ability to benefit from remote, timely access to information. These challenges are further compounded by insufficient funding, lack of technical expertise, and inadequate infrastructure, which collectively hinder the transformation of libraries into modern, digitally enabled institutions.

Furthermore, ineffective documentation practices in university libraries contribute to difficulties in organising, retrieving, and preserving information resources. Poor cataloguing systems, inconsistent metadata standards, and weak records management practices often result in information loss, duplication, and reduced usability of available resources. The absence of integrated systems that link knowledge sharing, digitisation, and documentation processes makes these problems worse, leading to inefficiencies in service delivery and reduced user satisfaction. Although previous studies have examined these variables independently, a gap remains in understanding how their combined influence affects the performance of university libraries. This study, therefore,

seeks to address this gap by examining the interaction between digitisation, and effective documentation practices, with a view to improving service delivery and enhancing the relevance of university libraries in the digital age.

Research Objectives

The study specially aimed to:

i. assess the level of digitisation of information resources in FUTO library

ii. evaluate the effectiveness of documentation practices in FUTO library

iii. determine the relationship between digitisation, and effective documentation practices in enhancing service delivery in FUTO library

Literature Review

Digitisation of information resources in libraries

The digitisation of information resources in university libraries has become a central theme in contemporary library and information science, reflecting the transition from traditional print-based systems to digital knowledge environments. Digitisation involves converting physical materials such as books, theses, manuscripts, and audiovisual content into digital formats that can be accessed electronically. According to Patra and Sahoo (2022), this transformation is fundamental to the development of digital libraries and plays a critical role in improving access to scholarly resources. Similarly, Olubiyo and Olubiyo (2023) noted that digitisation enhances the visibility and usability of academic collections, enabling users to access materials remotely and simultaneously, thereby supporting teaching, learning, and research in higher educational institutions.

Studies highlight that university libraries, particularly in developing countries, are increasingly adopting digitisation initiatives, though progress remains uneven. Emiri, Okonoko, and Ogochukwu (2024) observe that while many Nigerian university libraries have begun digitising key resources such as dissertations and institutional publications, the best level of digitisation is still moderate due to infrastructural and financial limitations. In addition, Igbinovia, et al. (2024) emphasise that digitisation is closely linked with emerging services such as research data management, requiring libraries to upgrade their technological capabilities and staff competencies. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digitisation efforts, as libraries expanded electronic services to ensure continuity of academic activities, although disparities in access to digital

infrastructure were also exposed (Shikali & Muneja, 2024).

Despite its numerous benefits, the literature identifies several persistent challenges affecting the digitisation of information resources in university libraries. Omigie, Adeniran, and Bosah (2022) point out that inadequate funding, lack of skilled personnel, poor power supply, and copyright issues significantly hinder digitisation projects. Furthermore, digital preservation has emerged as a critical concern, as maintaining long-term access to digital resources requires robust strategies and adherence to standards. Jalaludin et al. (2025) stress that without effective preservation mechanisms, digitised materials risk becoming inaccessible over time. While digitisation has significantly improved access and resource sharing in university libraries, addressing these challenges is essential for achieving sustainable and effective digital library systems in university libraries.

Effectiveness of documentation practices in libraries.

The effectiveness of documentation practices in university libraries is a critical aspect of information management, as it determines how well information resources are organised, preserved, and made accessible to users. Documentation practices encompass activities such as cataloguing, classification, indexing, metadata creation, and records management. According to Aina (2022), effective documentation ensures systematic organisation and retrieval of information resources, thereby enhancing the all-round efficiency of library services. Similarly, Olatokun and Makinde (2023) argue that proper documentation practices improve information accessibility and support academic research by enabling users to locate relevant materials quickly and accurately.

Studies indicate that the effectiveness of documentation practices in university libraries is increasingly influenced by the adoption of digital technologies. Ezeani and Ezema (2011) note that the integration of automated cataloguing systems and digital repositories has significantly improved documentation processes, reducing manual errors and enhancing information retrieval. In addition, Okorie, Ekere, and Nwofor (2024) emphasise that the use of standardised metadata frameworks and information organisation tools contributes to better resource discovery and interoperability across library systems. However, the effectiveness of these practices largely depends on the level of the librarian’s competence, the availability of technological infrastructure, and adherence

to international standards. Yakubu and Abubakar (2024) also highlight that ineffective documentation can lead to information loss, duplication of records, and difficulties in resource retrieval. That is to say that while documentation practices in university libraries have improved with technological innovations, continuous investment in librarians' development, infrastructure, and standardisation is essential to ensure their effectiveness.

Relationship between digitisation, and effective documentation practices

The relationship between digitisation, and effective documentation practices in university libraries is grounded in the interconnected role they play in knowledge management and service delivery. while digitisation involves converting physical information resources into digital formats for broader access. Effective documentation practices, on the other hand, ensure that information is systematically recorded, organised, and retrievable. These concepts are mutually reinforcing because effective documentation provides the structure through which knowledge is preserved, while digitisation enhances its accessibility and sharing across platforms. Similarly, when digital systems are in place, as they facilitate real-time access to documented information resources.

Studies has shown that digitisation plays a central role in bridging knowledge sharing and documentation practices in university libraries. Digital platforms such as institutional repositories, content management systems, and cloud-based databases enable librarians and researchers to share knowledge beyond physical boundaries. Ayeni and Adetimirin (2024) note that digitisation improves documentation efficiency by reducing reliance on manual records and enhancing metadata accuracy, which in turn supports smoother knowledge exchange among library professionals and users. Effective documentation practices serve as the backbone of digitised systems because they ensure that knowledge assets are accurately described, organised, stored and retrieved through metadata and standardized information management processes, thereby increasing their usability for academic and research purposes. (Higgins, 2007)

However, the effectiveness of the relationship between these variables are influenced by several institutional and technological factors. Studies by Quadri and Adegbore (2023) reveal that inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited librarians' expertise, and poor organisational culture can weaken knowledge sharing and reduce the impact of digitisation and

documentation efforts. Additionally, (Adeleke and Olorunsola, 2024; Ogunmodede and Emearhara, 2024). Highlight that without a strong culture of collaboration and standardised documentation procedures, digitisation alone cannot guarantee effective knowledge flow in university libraries. All-encompassing, the literature suggests that digitisation, and documentation practices are highly interdependent, and their combined effectiveness depends on adequate infrastructure, skilled personnel, and supportive institutional policies.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive correlational research design. This design was considered appropriate because it enabled the researcher to describe the existing conditions of the variables under investigation, digitisation, and effective documentation practices without manipulating any of them. The design is suitable for examining naturally occurring situations within an academic library environment. The population of the study comprised forty-seven (47) librarians working in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), Imo State, Nigeria. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. The instrument was organised into sections based on digitisation of information resources, and effectiveness of documentation practices. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results

Table 1: Digitisation of Information Resources

Items	VHL	HL	U	LL	VLL	Mean	SD
The library has adequate facilities for digitising information resources.	13	18	7	6	3	3.68	1.19
Print materials are regularly converted into digital formats for access.	15	17	6	6	3	3.75	1.21
The library maintains a digital repository for institutional resources.	12	19	8	5	3	3.68	1.15
Librarians are adequately trained in digitisation processes.	11	18	9	6	3	3.60	1.16
Digitization improves access to library resources for users.	14	16	7	6	4	3.64	1.26

The library uses modern technologies such as scanners and digital databases for digitisation.	16	18	6	5	2	3.87	1.12
There is a clear policy guiding digitisation activities in the library.	10	17	8	7	5	3.43	1.27
Challenges such as funding, infrastructure affect digitisation activities.	13	19	7	5	3	3.72	1.16

The findings show that digitisation of information resources is moderately implemented in the library. Most respondents agreed that digital systems exist and improve access to information. However, the relatively lower mean for infrastructure (3.43) indicates insufficient technological support in some areas, suggesting the need for improvement in digital infrastructure and training.

Table 2: Effectiveness of Documentation Practices

Items	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Library resources are properly catalogued for easy retrieval.	14	20	6	5	2	3.83	1.10
Classification systems used in the library enhance information organisation.	13	18	7	6	3	3.68	1.19
Metadata standards are consistently applied in documentation processes.	12	19	8	5	3	3.68	1.15
Documentation practices improve access to library resources.	11	17	9	6	4	3.53	1.22
Library records are regularly updated and maintained.	15	18	6	5	3	3.79	1.14
Librarians are skilled in documentation of information.	14	19	7	5	2	3.81	1.10
Digital tools are used to improve documentation efficiency.	12	20	7	5	3	3.70	1.15
Ineffective documentation leads to difficulty in retrieving information resources.	13	18	7	5	3	3.66	1.18

The data shows that documentation practices are fairly effective, with most respondents agreeing that records are well managed and useful for decision-making. However, moderate disagreement and undecided responses indicate inconsistencies in documentation procedures, especially in record updating and standardisation.

Table 3: Relationship between Digitisation & Documentation in University libraries

Item	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	SD
Digitisation of library records improves the effectiveness of documentation practices.	15	18	7	5	2	3.83	1.11
Effective documentation practices enhance the organisation and management of digitised library records.	14	19	6	6	2	3.79	1.15
Digitisation facilitates the accurate storage and retrieval of documented information.	13	20	7	5	2	3.79	1.12
There is a strong relationship between the level of digitisation and the effectiveness of documentation practices.	16	18	6	5	2	3.87	1.10
Digitisation improves the accuracy and consistency of documentation practices.	12	19	8	6	2	3.70	1.18
Poor documentation practices hinder the effective digitisation and management.	15	18	7	5	2	3.83	1.11
Integration of digitisation into documentation processes improves the accessibility and usability.	14	19	6	6	2	3.79	1.15
Digitisation and effective documentation practices are interdependent in improving the management of information resources.	13	18	7	6	3	3.66	1.18

The results confirm a strong positive relationship between digitisation, and documentation practices. High mean scores indicate that respondents believe these variables are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Improvements in one area are perceived to positively influence the others, supporting an integrated systems perspective in library management.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings on digitisation of information resources reveal that the FUTO library has adopted digitisation practices such as conversion of print materials to digital formats and maintenance of digital repositories, although challenges such as inadequate infrastructure and funding still exist. This supports Emiri, et al. (2024) found that Nigerian university libraries are engaging in digitisation efforts, but the level of implementation remains moderate due to resource constraints.

Findings on the effectiveness of documentation practices show that cataloguing, classification, metadata application, and digital documentation tools are moderately effective in enhancing

resource organisation and retrieval. This supports Yakubu and Abubakar (2024), who reported that ineffective documentation leads to retrieval difficulties and information loss in university libraries.

The findings on the relationship between digitisation, and documentation practices reveal a strong positive relationship between the variables. This supports Ogunmodede, and Emeahara, (2024), who emphasised that these concepts are interdependent and collectively improve library efficiency and service delivery. The finding confirms that when digitisation, and documentation are effectively integrated, university libraries achieve improved information access, collaboration, and academic support services.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it is concluded that Digitisation of library resources is also evident, with efforts made toward converting print materials into digital formats and maintaining institutional repositories, although these efforts are constrained by inadequate infrastructure and funding. Moderately effective documentation practices,, particularly in cataloguing, classification, and metadata application, could ,mean that challenges such as inconsistency and limited technical capacity still exist. A strong and positive relationship between digitisation, and documentation practices implies that improvements in one area tend to enhance the effectiveness of the other in the sense that effective documentation supports knowledge sharing, while digitisation facilitates easier access to documented resources and strengthens collaboration among librarians.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The management of FUTO Library should increase investment in digitisation infrastructure, including modern scanning equipment, stable internet facilities, and functional digital repositories, to enhance the conversion and accessibility of information resources.
2. Continuous training and capacity-building programs should be organised for library staff to improve their competencies in digitisation processes, metadata creation, and the use of modern documentation tools.

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