Effects of Mutilation and Defacing of Library Materials on Shelving Services in Tertiary Institutions Libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria

Eyo, E. B. E.

University Library,
Cross River University of Technology, Calabar,
Cross River State

Corresponding author: ekanemeyo45@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT
The study surveyed to find out the effects of mutilation and defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions’ libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. The ex-post facto type survey design was adopted for this study. The population of the present study comprised of registered library users from three tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 593 registered library users from the population. The measuring instrument used for the study was self-developed questionnaire. The data collected from the completed questionnaire were analysed. The population t-test statistical analysis was used to test the formulated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The major findings were that there are significant effects of mutilation and defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions’ libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. The paper concludes that, while mutilation and defacing of library materials cannot be completely eradicated in libraries, however, some measures could be used to curb the menace in libraries in tertiary institutions in Cross River State, Nigeria. Recommendations which could serve as preventive measures as well as education for library users on the danger posed by such acts in tertiary institutions libraries are proffered.


Introduction
Library services constitute one of the instruments needed for the improvement of educational standards in tertiary institutions. Library services are geared towards supporting and promoting the academic and research programmes of the parent institutions. Shelving services in libraries cannot be ignored in libraries. Shelving and shelf work is critical to the efficiency and effectiveness of any library. Hence, proper and accurate shelving and shelf-reading guarantee users’ confidence. Shelving has helped by keeping the collections neat and in order. Shelf-reading also helps personnel to discover damaged library materials, such as, mutilated and defaced materials hidden in shelves. However, materials that are not in good condition cannot be shelved in any library. The conditions of library materials determine their shelving for accessibility and use by users. Users are required to be well behaved and conform to library rules and regulations which others uphold.

In recent years, there have been complaints of frequent delinquent acts in Nigerian libraries. Users indulge in many delinquent activities, such as mutilation, defacing of library materials, book theft, pilfering, hiding of library books in-between shelves away from the shelving areas, among others, thwarting efforts and time of librarians which could have been judiciously used for delivering library services to users. Much time is wasted searching for, reordering and replacing mutilated, torn and defaced pages in books and journals. Tertiary institutions’ libraries, for instance, have lost rare books through these acts. This rather annoying infraction can cause librarians to deny users access to certain endangered materials.

Many defaced and mutilated materials are unique and have high monetary and historical value, and may therefore be irreplaceable. Furthermore, most tertiary institutions’ libraries in Nigeria have tried to meet up
with the expectation of users by safeguarding their valuable materials, increasing their staff strength and ensuring security against misuse of materials. Some have provided photocopying services at reduced rates to ensure that individuals or users can easily take copies away without harming the source materials. In the event photocopying machines are not in order, a library staff would be required to escort the user to a commercial photocopy place. Mutilation, defacing of library materials and other misdemeanours severely affect the operations of tertiary institutions libraries.

Unfortunately, some unscrupulous users misuse materials, to the detriment of both the library and other users. These users do not take kindly to rules and regulations of the library. These vices of mutilation have become increasingly widespread, making it very difficult for additions to be made to most library collections in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The issue of mutilation in libraries has been one of the most intractable and perennial problems of all types of libraries and therefore a global menace.

Mutilation means to cut off or permanently destroy a book or essential parts of a book or material (See Plate 1). Mutilation has destruction as its essential element. Mutilation, which often reduces the content of standard books to incoherence, could also cause libraries rare materials to be lost. On the other hand, defacing is another abuse of library materials found in tertiary institutions libraries in Nigeria and elsewhere (See Plate 2). Here, defacing is the act of damaging the appearance of library books (or other property) especially by drawing or writing on them. It is observed that users engage in defacing of library materials when they lack positive forms of engagement. These persistent behaviours have become a cause for concern to many people and the academic community in general.

Defacing library materials takes many forms, ranging from writings, paintings or drawings on library books, tables and chairs, underlining and highlighting in library books, marking or shading book pages with pencil or pen on any library materials and damage to book spine, rendering them useless (See Plate 3). These are unauthorised and often intentional casual writings that exist on books, book cards, library tables, chairs, among others. These forms permanent stains on those materials, the pages or covers of library books, tables and chairs (See Plate 4). To deface is to mar or destroy the face (i.e. the physical appearance of written or inscribed characters as expression of definite meaning) of a written instrument, signature, inscription, among others, by obliteration, erasure, cancellation, or super imposition, so as to render it illegal or unrecognisable.

It is however observed that, it is a common occurrence in the library for a reader to suddenly appear before a librarian and say, “the book I am looking for is defaced”, “the article I want has been torn out” or “the pages I needed are mutilated” or “the plate (diagrams)
have been lifted from some pages”. This is usually very frustrating and annoying to the library personnel and users for much time wasted in trying to locate the materials in the library. The frustration experienced by readers and staff and the time wasted searching for mutilated and defaced library materials, all combine to reduce the efficiency of library services. Mutilation and defacing of materials perpetrated by library users are threats to intellectual property and a tremendous challenge to the library profession worldwide. In the same vein, where extra copies of mutilated and defaced library materials are not available at all to replace by photocopy, the loss is suffered by the library, users and future generations.

The problem of mutilation and defacing of library materials in tertiary institutions libraries is even more pronounced in these days of economic downturn in Nigeria where books are not only scarce but their prices are also highly exorbitant. These acts are greatest threats to the expensively acquired resources of tertiary institutions libraries bother librarians most, and seriously affects the realisation of library aims and objectives. It leads to the withdrawal of mutilated and defaced library materials from the shelves and the inability to satisfy the information needs of users.

Furthermore, mutilated and defaced materials in libraries prevents the effective use of the library and hence, impacts negatively on the academic life of users. Mutilation and defacing of library materials could cause distortion of information. These acts are serious and individuals who indulge in them should not go unpunished. Sometimes the mutilated and defaced library materials could be regarded as stolen if withdrawn from the shelves, most especially if the most valuable pages have been ripped off or defaced with ink marks.

Moreover, book mutilation and defacing have effects on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries. The extent of mutilation and defacing determine books’ availability on library shelves. Importantly, mutilated and defaced library books are also not fit for circulation, because they cannot be displayed on the shelves for access by users. Mutilated and defaced library materials are automatically withdrawn from library shelves where they should be and sent to the acquisition librarian for replacement. The affected library book cards are removed from the card catalogue cabinets, filed in damaged books file and arranged by author (Otuturu and Oyadonghan, 2012). This means that, mutilated and defaced books cannot be shelved or given out to users who need such books got photocopy or usage within and outside the library.

Sometimes, academic librarians are more worried by their patrons’ delinquent acts which threaten the
resources and services, even though there is a dearth of statistics to confirm the actual rate and extent of the problem. If these acts continue unchecked, tertiary institutions libraries in Nigeria will become glorified reading rooms with mutilated and defaced library materials. It is of paramount importance therefore, to investigate the true nature of this problem in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

**Purpose of the Study**
The present study sought to investigate the effects of mutilation and defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1) Determine the effect of defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2) Examine the effect of mutilation of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Research Questions**
1) What are the effects of mutilation of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria?
2) How does defacing of library materials affect shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria?

**Hypotheses**
1) Ho1: There is no significant effect of mutilation of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.
2) Ho2: There is no significant effect of defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Literature Review**
Literature revealed the prominent abuses of library materials which have been the focus of many of the studies and reports in user delinquencies through mutilation, defacing of library materials, book theft, among others. Ajayi and Omotayo (2003) averred that mutilation in libraries is a menace that has persisted, and it is indeed a global problem. Ajala and Ayeboade (2008) reported the rampant increase of mutilation in Nigerian academic libraries. The studies of Peters (2000), Bello (2001), Eyo (2008), Eyo and Nkanu (2009) and Eyo and Ekpenyong (2010) reported that cases of book mutilation abound in libraries and, that due to the lack of proper records, the extent could not be readily determined. According to a study by Lincoln and Lincoln (1987), in their international perspective and comparative view about crimes and disruptions in libraries, it showed that there is no difference of these acts in libraries across national or international boundaries.

Mutilation and defacing of library materials in tertiary institutions libraries are not limited to books alone. Ajala and Ayeboade (2008) identified reference books, periodicals, rare books and other books as the most vulnerable to mutilation and theft. Forley (2005) reported that, all libraries and public collections which include books, journals, as well as rare books and archives are at risk of mutilation. In some academic libraries studied by Maidabino (2012), a high incidence of book and periodical mutilation was reported. Similarly, Eyo and Ekpenyong (2010) found that 80% of users mutilate reference books, 90% mutilate books that are relevant to their course of study, 76.67% mutilate serial materials, such as journals, newspapers, magazines, among others, while 73.33% mutilate students projects, and other documents and 63.33% agreed that users also mutilate library books that have no relevance to their courses of study.

However, the issues of misdemeanour in libraries take different methods. Others include: stealing of library materials, posting out of books through the window for collection later, hiding library books far away from the normal shelving area, removal of some pages of important textbooks and journals, pilfering from text, hiding of books under the dress they put on and tearing or lifting off plates (diagrams) from text (Busayo, 2007; Eyo and Ekpenyong, 2010). Abareh (2001) identified different forms of mutilation to include misuse of library collections such as bending the spine of a book to ensure that it stays open at the right page, using wet fingers to turn book pages, tearing book pages and damage to the book spine. Maidabino (2012) asserted that mutilation of collections takes many forms, ranging from tearing and or removing some pages of the books and tempering with the editorial comment appearing in library books.

According to Ott (2002), it ranges from tearing, cutting off, marking, writing inside and folding the pages of a book, as well as unlawful removal of library materials. Busayo (2007) asserted that library users/vandals remove parts of the book pages they consider important and leave the “residue” behind. A study by Eyo and Ekpenyong (2010) found that 63.33% of users mutilated library books by removing every trace of library stamps in books when staff are not policing them, and 83.33% mutilated library books with razor blades hidden in their dresses/books. However, the cause of most book mutilation in academic libraries is that demand outstrips the supply of library materials. Furthermore, the reasons for book mutilation in academic libraries identified by Forley (2005) include: greediness, selfishness and lack of respect for other users’ information needs. Bello (2001) and Eze (2005) identified absence of photocopying services among others in some libraries.

Ajala and Ayeboade (2008) declared poor library security culture, ignorance of consequences of theft
and mutilation as the major rational for mutilation in university libraries. In the same vein, Maidabino (2012) insists that necessity, rather than criminal drive is responsible for users’ mutilation of books. Users’ dissatisfaction or unfamiliarity with library services, the lack of knowledge of replacement costs and time, lack of concern for the needs of others may often cause users to mutilate or damage library materials. According to Maidabino (2012), Abareh (2001) conducted an exploratory survey of book damages in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU), Bauchi, Nigeria, in order to establish the motives for book mutilation in libraries. He identified selfishness, non-availability or insufficiency of books, poverty and denial from using books as the main reasons for book mutilation in libraries.

A study by Eyo and Ekpenyong (2010) found that 80% agreed that the lack of conscience among users accounts for mutilation, 66.67% indicated that book mutilation persists because the sanction/punishment is not severe, 60% indicated that the non-loan policy of the library is responsible for book mutilation, 56.67% agreed that high costs of books in the bookshops is responsible for book mutilation. What this means is that if information materials are readily available when needed, probably less readers will need to indulge in delinquent behaviours. The more there are books available, the less the temptation to mutilate.

The challenges for libraries and librarians today, according to Eyo and Ekpenyong (2010), are not just to acquire books and process them but to devise methods for protecting the library collections from being mutilated and defaced or stolen. Constant awareness of happenings within and around the library, especially on mutilation and defacement is essential and should not be ignored or neglected by library staff generally and librarians especially. They should be on alert always to save library materials from mutilation and defacement. Moreover, mutilation and defacing of library materials have negative consequence on library staff and students’ academic performances.

Particularly, a depletion or non-availability of library materials, for instance, might connote inefficiency on the part of librarians and other information managers who keep such materials. The menace of book mutilation in libraries hinders the growth of library collections and, thereby, imposes substantial financial drains on limited book budgets of the library. Both defacing and mutilation have destruction as their essential elements. In Nigerian tertiary institutions libraries, more studies are needed to properly frame the issues. However, Hare (2012) states that defacing of library materials is not a major problem in our library but, nevertheless, it is most annoying when one comes across defaced materials. Nobody likes reading a defaced book.

In this context, Ajala and Oyeboade (2008) strongly urged library managers to employ very strict measure to prevent mutilation of library materials and proposed suspension of library user once found guilty of mutilating library collections, paying for the replacement and processing cost of the book, undertaking legal measures and subsequent dismissal if found guilty, based on the rule of law. In his contributions, Onatola (2004) suggests that, during the freshmen library orientation talks, the university librarian or any delegated official needs stress and highlight the great harm that such misdemeanours inflict on the library, and the depriving of other users. He further emphasises the provision of easily accessible and relatively cheap photocopiers in libraries to discourage book mutilation by users who may want to duplicate the contents of any desired materials.

Methodology

A survey design of ex-post facto type was adopted for this study. The researcher did not manipulate the variables but reported the trend as it existed. The population of the present study comprised of registered library users from three tertiary institutions. The population comprised of the two universities in Calabar, Cross River University of Technology (CRUTECH), University of Calabar (Unical) and Cross River State College of Education (COE), which is at Akamkpa. A stratified random sampling technique was used to select 593 registered library users from the population. The measuring instrument used for the study was self-developed questionnaire titled, Mutilation and Defacing of Library Materials and Shelving Services (MDLMSS). The instrument measured mutilation of library materials and defacing of library materials and shelving services. The instrument was validated by adopting the face validity. A pre-test on registered library users in University of Uyo was conducted to ascertain the content validity. The Cronbach Alpha method was used to analyse the data that was collected and coefficient scales for each of the sections was measured to consider whether it will be suitable for the study. The instrument has the following reliability coefficient for 1. Mutilation of library materials (r = 0.76). 2. Defacing of library materials (r = 0.70) and 3. Shelving services (r = 0.83). This made the instrument valid for the study. Data collected were analysed using Population t-test analysis.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are presented below. The analysis and discussion follow each Table for ease of reference and better understanding.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant effect of book mutilation on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Population t-test analysis of the effects of book mutilation on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries
in Cross River State, Nigeria is shown in Table 1.

In Table 1, the calculated t-value of 2.179, 3.265 and 2.066 for CRUTECH, Unical and COE libraries are, in each case, greater than the critical t-value of 1.960, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant effect of book mutilation on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no significant effect of defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. Pop ulation t-test analysis of the effect of defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria is shown in Table 2.

In Table 2, the calculated t-value of 2.308, 3.561 and 2.467 for Cross River University of Technology, University of Calabar and College of Education libraries are, in each case, greater than the critical t-value of 1.960, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is a significant effect of the defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria.

**Findings**

The findings, with respect to the effect of book mutilation on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria, show that the null hypothesis was rejected. According to data, there is a significant effect of mutilation of library materials on shelving services with a calculated t-value of 3.265 in Unical, 2.179 in CRUTECH and 2.066 in COE. This implies that, shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries is determined by good conditions of library materials. Mutilation makes shelving in the library difficult, especially if valuable pages have been ripped off (Bello 2001, Eyo and Nkanu 2009, and Eyo and Ekpenyong 2010). It could also cause the depletion of library archives and lead to the withdrawal of mutilated materials from the shelves by librarians. Keeping such mutilated materials will be unprofessional and connotes inefficiency on the part of librarians and other information managers. The menace of mutilation of materials in libraries hinder the growth of collections and, thereby, imposes a substantial financial drain on limited book budgets of the library.

While the findings indicate that the null hypothesis was rejected, there are significant effects of defacing of library materials on shelving services with a calculated t-value of 3.561 in Unical, 2.308 in CRUTECH and 2.467 in COE libraries. This implies that shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries are also determined by the good conditions of library materials. Defacing can also make availability of materials in the library difficult, especially if most valuable contents have been blotted and obliterated with ink or permanently destroyed, thereby hindering the provision of good and satisfactory services in tertiary institutions libraries in Nigeria (Eyo, 2008; Eyo & Nkanu, 2009; Eyo & Ekpenyong, 2010).

However, the study seems to confirm that both mutilation and defacing of materials in tertiary institutions libraries have destruction as their essential elements (Eyo, 2008; Eyo and Nkanu, 2009; Eyo and Ekpenyong, 2010). Mutilation severely affects the charging or loaning of library materials and the ability to satisfy users’ information needs. Librarians/library staff cannot circulate or loan out mutilated and defaced books to users because they are withdrawn from library shelves, their cards removed from the card catalogue cabinets and filed as “damaged books”. Furthermore, some librarians that observe acts of mutilation in their libraries may deny their clients access to materials. It also affects library services because time, money and efforts that could have been used in expanding collections and services are rather used in replacing mutilated and defaced pages in books, journals, newspapers and magazines. These contribute to the inabili-
ties and inefficiencies of university libraries in Nigeria, in satisfying the needs of their users.

Conclusion
Based on the results, this study concludes that there are significant effects of mutilation and defacing of library materials on shelving services in tertiary institutions libraries in Cross River State, Nigeria. Both mutilation and defacing of library materials in tertiary institutions libraries seem to have destruction as their essential elements.

The problems of mutilation and defacing of library materials may not be eradicated completely in the tertiary institutions' libraries under study. However, it is evident that library managements can no longer afford to ignore or over-look mutilation and defacing of holdings in tertiary institutions libraries. Something needs to be done to curb these behaviours in libraries.

To significantly reduce these acts, constant awareness of happenings within and around the library, especially on mutilation and defacing of materials, should not be ignored or neglected by library staff generally and librarians especially. They should be on the alert always to save library materials from mutilation and defacement.

Staff should also endeavour to leave their comfort zones, be vigilant and police library users from time to time to deter these acts.

Staff should examine books immediately after use by users within the library and when the borrowed books are returned. Also, stiff penalties should be fully spelt out in the library guide, and meted out to any offenders. Such punishments should be executed with caution so as not to defeat the original purpose for which the library is established. The library authority is enjoined to ensure that a strict guideline for the use of materials in the library is put in place, and constantly monitored.

References

