

DIVERSITY IN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS: ENSURING REPRESENTATION AND RELEVANCE IN SOME SELECTED UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated diversity in library collections: Ensuring representation and relevance in some selected university libraries in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey using questionnaire to collect data. The population of the study consists of 78 librarians which were randomly picked from some selected university libraries in Nigeria. A total of the 78 questionnaires were distributed only 69 were retrieved. Descriptive statistics, (mean and percentage) were used for analysis. A mean score of 2.5 and above and a percentage score of 50% were considered for decision making. The study revealed the effect of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: To develop cultural literacy, to develop social economic statuses, it increases innovations; it enhances creativity and facilitate strategic thinking. The findings further affirmed that how diversity of library collections are represented and relevant to users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: It facilitate the reflection of diverse users that uses the library, it reflects our own sense of self-esteem and self worth, it treats all library users equally in respect of tribe, color, age, mentorship opportunity among librarians is relevant, and it enhances internal talent development among the users. The study recommends that University libraries collection should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation and a diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences.

Keywords: Diversity, library collections, representation, relevance, university libraries

Introduction

The library is the heart of the university as it is responsible for the management of resources such as books, journals, electronic materials necessary for academic pursuit. The primary purpose of university libraries is to assist parent institutions' teaching, learning, and research initiatives. In particular, a university library is a library that is affiliated with a

university; it is created, supported, and run by the university to fulfill the informational, research, and educational requirements of faculty, staff, and students. According to Awujoola and Philip (2020), university libraries' mission and vision frequently align with the aims and objectives of their parent organizations, which are the universities.

Since complete collections are not possible, university libraries must choose a priority for collection growth. Librarians accomplish this by determining the needs of the institution or university's academic programs, faculty, student body, and mission. The main purpose of university libraries collections is to assist the research, teaching, and learning missions of their parent institutions. In order to reflect a variety of viewpoints, they should also create collections that record and conserve our society's scientific and cultural legacy. In these efforts, universities and their libraries should develop this approach that address calls for diversity of its collections.

Diverse library collections are defined as collections that provide good representation of the topics, perspectives, authors, characters, and narratives associated with underrepresented or marginalized groups. The American Library Association's Library Bill of Rights (originally adopted in 1939 and last amended in 2019) begins with the statement that library resources should be made available to all members of the community the library serves and should not exclude materials based on the origin, background, or viewpoint of the authors. It also states that libraries should provide materials reflecting all points of view without specifically mentioning diversity. This phrase stresses non-exclusion to the extent that it implies that all viewpoints need to be represented in library collections, as opposed to advocating for the inclusion of specific items. When a library's collections reflect the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of its patrons, it can make those patrons feel seen, relevant and represented. This can lead to a more

positive and inclusive experience for patrons who may have previously felt marginalized or underrepresented.

Additionally, having a varied collection of materials may make resources and information more accessible to patrons, increasing their representation and relevance. For minority users who might not have previously had access to resources that represent their own experiences and origins, this might be particularly crucial. Additionally, a diverse collection may help the library become a more relevant and friendly location for all users. In addition to fostering a greater awareness and respect of various cultures and viewpoints, it can serve to build a feeling of community. It is in light of this, that this topic diversity in library collections: Ensuring representation and relevance in some selected university libraries in Nigeria is imperative.

Statement of the problem

For distinctive people who are recognized, appreciated, and mirrored in their environment, having access to a variety of collections promotes self-determination and personal development. Examining library shelves and structures is a highly personal experience, even if many voices contribute to these conversations. Diversity in the library is crucial because it fosters students' ability to think critically. Furthermore, diversity includes a number of identity-related topics, such as sexual orientation, gender, class, religion, color, ethnicity, disability, and family kinds. Libraries are ideally positioned to take the lead in promoting diversity among students and literature by emphasizing these many identities. Minority presence is a crucial component of diversity in the library. By employing a diverse workforce, purchasing a varied collection of resources, and providing programming that speaks to the needs and interests of

various minority groups, libraries that prioritize diversity of collections show their dedication. Libraries may support the understanding and acceptance of diversity by offering representation and relevance.

It has been observed that research topics on diversity in library collections: ensuring representation and relevance exist, but no study has been carried out on the diversity in library collections: ensuring representation and relevance in some selected university libraries in Nigeria, hence the need for this research.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the diversity in library collections: Ensuring representation and relevance in some selected university libraries in Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. To find out the effect of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria
2. To find out how diversity of library collections influences representation and relevance of users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria?
2. How does diversity of library collections influences representation and relevance of users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria?

Literature review

Diversity shows how many the subjects, viewpoints, writers, characters, and stories of disadvantaged or underrepresented groups are included in library collections. They can assist us in determining whether the collection is in line with the needs of the user community. The recruitment and retention of staff as well as the introduction or modification of library services to accommodate the demands of different populations were the two main objectives of early initiatives to promote diversity in academic libraries (Frederick & Wolff-Eisenberg, 2021). The authors added that recently, the development of diverse library collections has emerged as an important topic.

Winston, (2021) opined that there are at least two reasons why diverse library collections are crucial. They can, first and foremost, help to foster the type of dialogue and comprehension that informs and advances social change. The authors went further to say that academic libraries are not the only ones that offer this first advantage, which is more generally socioeconomic or cultural than purely educational. The functions of public libraries and many other organizations are essentially the same. Second, a variety of library holdings can help students succeed academically. For example, by offering stories and viewpoints that students are already familiar with, varied collections might assist students in recognizing themselves in the library's holdings. As a result, students could become more used to the library, become more aware of its resources, and utilize it more skillfully to meet their learning objectives. According to Johnson (2018), the primary criterion for assessing library collections is utility that is the degree to which they fulfill the functions for which they were created rather than excellence. This was supported by Stemmer & Mahan, (2016) when they opined that academic results like course performance, graduation rates, and postgraduate success are the best indicators of value in a university setting.

According to Johnson (2018), library users may feel recognized, relevant, and represented when a library's holdings reflects the variety of their origins and viewpoints. Users who might have previously felt excluded or underrepresented may have a more pleasant and welcoming experience as a result. Representation in library collections is the extent to which the materials in a library reflect the diverse backgrounds and perspectives of its patrons. While relevance according to Stemmer and Mahan, (2016) entails providing a wide range of resources and information to support the needs of a community. For minority users who might not have previously had access to resources that represent their own experiences and origins, this might be particularly crucial. The literature on diversity in library collections deals almost exclusively with representation (Lawrence, 2020, 2021; O'Neal et al., 2020). In this context, diverse books are those that present the voices, perspectives, or experiences of underrepresented or marginalized groups. This emphasis on representation within the library collection may be an outgrowth of the longstanding concern for representation within libraries more generally among library staff. For instance as Winston (2014) has noted, libraries' efforts to support diversity have been measured largely on the basis of representation of members of various segments of the population as a percentage of those in the organization or profession. To a large extent, the diversity goals in the profession have been related primarily to underrepresentation, and less so to diversifying collections and enhancing services.

According to Koss and Paciga (2022), it is critical to recognize that representation and relevance is insufficient and that deliberate efforts must be made to achieve fairness, which entails giving everyone, regardless of background, equal access to resources and opportunities. This entails identifying and removing structural obstacles that can keep some groups from using

the resources and services offered by libraries. This might involve actively interacting with and soliciting input from underrepresented groups, delivering staff cultural competence training and education, and making language and accessibility modifications. Libraries must actively seek to create an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels represented and relevant in addition to promoting representation and relevance (Winston & Li, 2022). This entails actively fostering an atmosphere free from prejudice and discrimination as well as educating and training employees on how to work with and serve a variety of demographics.

Additionally, Koss and Paciga, (2022) suggest that a diversity audit's objective is to critically analyze the collection's current identity and representation materials and then highlight any gaps in that representation. The final result of completing the gaps in a collection is the creation of materials that honor the lives of all students and the communities they serve. Regardless of the demographics of the community or classroom, the diversity audit procedure remains the same. Koss and Paciga (2022) proposed a four-step strategy for finishing a diversity audit. Educators or librarians must first envision the library. The inventory must then be finished. Third, the librarian or teacher must consider the results. Lastly, a strategy for the following actions and steps must be created. The initial phase of a diversity audit is essential because it calls on the librarian or educator to consider carefully and thoughtfully the resources they presently possess. They went further to say that many experts who inherit a collection haven't had time to thoroughly examine the materials. It is crucial to keep in mind that "the quality of the collection and the people and world views it represents are more relevant than the number of resources available.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey using questionnaire to collect data. The population of the study consists of 78 librarians which were randomly picked from some selected university libraries in Nigeria. A total of the 78 questionnaires were distributed only 69 were retrieved. Descriptive statistics, (mean and percentage) were used for analysis. A mean score of 2.5 and above and a percentage score of 50% were considered for decision making.

Population of the study

Table 1

S/N	Selected University libraries in Nigeria	Population of librarians
1	Delta State University Library Abrka	19
2	University of Nigeria Nsukka Library	23
3	Ahmadu Bello University Library	16
4	Abia State University Uturu	11
	Total	69

Table 1 above depict the population of the study which was randomly picked in the following order: Delta State University Library Abrka (19), University of Nigeria Nsukka Library (23), Ahmadu Bello University Library (16) and Abia State University Uturu (11) respectively

The effect of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria

Table 2

S/N	Items Statements	A	SA	D	SA	-X	Remarks
1	It develop cultural literacy	25	33	11	0	3.2	Accepted
2	It develop social economic statuses	29	37	1	2	3.3	Accepted
3	It increases innovations	33	23	5	8	3.1	Accepted
4	It enhances creativity	34	21	7	7	3.1	Accepted
5	It facilitate strategic thinking	21	22	12	14	2.7	Accepted

Table 2 shows the effect of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: It develop cultural literacy (3.2), it develop social economic statuses (3.3), it increases innovations (3.1), it enhances creativity (3.1) and it facilitates strategic thinking respectively.

How diversity of library collections influences the representation and relevance of users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria

Table 3

S/N	Items Statements	A	SA	D	SA	-X	Remarks
1	It facilitate the reflection of the many diverse users that uses the library	25	23	11	10	2.9	Accepted
2	It reflects our own sense of self-esteem and self worth	34	23	2	10	3.1	Accepted
3	It treats all library users equally in respect of tribe, color, age	41	16	10	2	3.3	Accepted
4	Mentorship opportunity among librarians is relevant	27	25	6	11	2.9	Accepted
5	It enhances internal talent development	26	25	7	11	2.9	Accepted

Table 3 depicts how diversity of library collections are represented and relevant to users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: It facilitate the reflection of diverse users that uses the library (2.9), it reflects our own sense of self-esteem and self worth (3.1), it treats all library users equally in respect of tribe, color. Age (3.3), mentorship opportunity among librarians is relevant (2.9) and it enhances internal talent development (2.9) respectively.

Discussion of findings

The study is on diversity in library collections: Ensuring representation and relevance in some selected university libraries in Nigeria. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. The results revealed the effect of diversity of library collections in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: To develop cultural literacy, to develop social economic statuses, it increases innovations, it enhances creativity and it facilitates strategic thinking. The findings further affirmed that how diversity of library collections are represented and relevant to users in some selected university libraries in Nigeria in the following order: It facilitate the reflection of diverse users that uses the library, it reflects our own sense of self-esteem and self worth, it treats all library users equally in respect of tribe, color, age, mentorship opportunity among librarians is relevant, and it enhances internal talent development among the users. This is in line with Winston and Li, (2022), when they opined that libraries must actively seek to create an inclusive atmosphere where everyone feels represented and relevant in addition to promoting representation and relevance.

Conclusion

To suit the informational and recreational requirements of their local communities and their potential users, librarians must include diversity into their programs and user resources. All forms of diversity, including color, ethnicity, gender expression, religion preference, family structure, ancestry, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and citizenship status, should be represented in the print and digital works available to library patrons. More literature from all cultures should be added to library collections so that patrons may develop their identities and interact with people throughout the world. The study of

diversity collections is imperative in libraries, librarians should be at the forefront of guiding users to scholarly information that highlights and discusses these complex topics. For libraries to fulfill this aim, they need to have methods for measuring and evaluating their collections for supporting users' diversity, representing and relevance.

Recommendations

1. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation
2. A diverse collection should contain content by and about a wide array of people and cultures to authentically reflect a variety of ideas, information, stories, and experiences.
3. University libraries should improve classroom and school library collections
4. University libraries should evaluate their strategies when it comes to diversity of library collection
5. University libraries should display themes and thoughtful selections

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