Chapter 8
The Role of Library Digitization in Access and Preservation of Library Resources

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ABSTRACT

Digitization implies conversion of a paper document to a digital document. The main reasons for library digitization are to enhance access and preservation of library resources. Despite the benefits of library digitization, it is disheartening to know that while libraries in developed countries are putting in efforts digitizing their resources, little effort is being put by libraries in developing countries to digitize their resources. Hence, this chapter attempts to create awareness of the importance of library digitization in the preservation and enhancement of access of library resources. In addition to discussing the roles of library digitization in preservation and enhancement of access of library resources, the chapter also discussed some digitization tools, some misconceptions of library digitization, stages of library digitization, and some challenges of library digitization. Some recommendations were also given in the chapter.

INTRODUCTION

The evolution and advancement in ICTs have made it possible for a digital copy of a document to be available and kept for a longer period of time. ICT is adopted in libraries to enhance delivery of library services. It has brought about dynamic changes to library routines, library outlook, mode of operation, mode of information storage and dissemination, and library service deliveries. This infiltration of ICT in library management has placed demands on librarians and other library personnel to be digitally literate. ICT adoption in libraries cuts across different library routines and services which include but not limited to current awareness services, library registration, cataloguing, reference services, document delivery services and library resource acquisition. Despite the infiltration of ICT in library, some librar-

ies, most especially libraries in developing countries, are yet to fully embrace ICT. Some of the libraries still rely heavily on print resources with little interest in providing access to digital documents. Some of the available print resources such as academic projects, backend newspapers, fragile documents and old library resources become poorly kept and deteriorate due to lack of space to accommodate them. Some of these resources are also not sought after because of lack of awareness of their existence. This problem reduces the efficiency and efficacy of libraries in serving as a centre for learning. Therefore, it is imperative for library authorities to device ways of preserving these resources and enhancing their accessibility to their users. This they can achieve what is known as digitization.

Digitization is defined as the conversion of non-digital documents to digital documents. It is the act of transforming a document (a paper document or audio documents) into a digital document that can be stored, shared, processed and accessed on electronic devices such as smart phones and computers. Amollo (2011) defined library digitization as the transformation of non-digital documents to digital documents through the use of scanners. Similarly, Igwe and Uzuegbu (2013) stated that library digitization connotes any form of activity which is directed at transforming or converting a paper document into a document that can be accessed, processed and used on electronic devices, with the primary purpose of preserving and enhancing access to those documents. According to Akintunde and Anjo (2012) digitization will help developing countries such as Nigeria and other west African countries to enhance the life-span of their historical records as well as their scholarly works which are deteriorating due to age. Pandey, Prabhat and Misra (2014) agreed that libraries embark on digitization to preserve their archival resources for longevity and also to promote a wider access to the documents. In addition, library digitization helps with increasing the global visibility of its parent institution, it helps with curbing plagiarism, it helps with extending library services to a wider population, it helps with enhancing flexibility in information search and retrieval, and it also helps with curbing the problems of book mutilation and book theft. Digitization will not only promote longevity of library resources, it will also create awareness of their existence in the library, and also enhance their accessibility to library users.

Digitization is traced to the 15th century when information was stored in binary systems. Advances on the binary systems led to the development of computers which became an integral component of library digitization. The early computers had no operating systems and they were mainly used for processing information during the world war (Lopez, 2021). Operating systems were added to the computers after the second world war, and computers became a tool not meant only for fighting wars but also for assisting mankind in his daily activities.

The first digitization is said to have been done in 1957 when a team that was led by Russell A. Kirsch developed a scanner which was used to scan the image of Russell's 3 months old baby in black and white with a resolution of 176 pixels (Panos, 2020). Text digitization started a couple of decades in 1971 after the invention of scanner by Russell A Kirsch and his team. The first text digitization was done in the University of Illinois when the first Project Gutenberg text was keyed into a file on a mainframe computer by Gutenberg (Johnston, 2012). Prior to the invention of the Internet, the focus of document digitization was more on preservation than enhancement of access because computers as at then had no internet accessories for document sharing and global visibility. The scanned documents were mainly for in-house use with limited access to the public. The scanned documents became accessible to the public after the creation of the Internet and World Wide Web in the 1990s. Library digitization started in the Library of Congress in 1995. Other libraries in the world joined in digitizing their collections after the source of the Library of Congress digitization project.

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