

## Use of Africana Collection by Postgraduate Students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the level of Africana collection usage, and the problems encountered in accessing these materials among postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Survey method was adopted in the study using questionnaire as an instrument to collect data. The study population was 1,000 postgraduate registered library users in 2022/2023 academic session of which 420 postgraduate registered users were purposively selected for the study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for the data analysis. The result of the study indicated that the level of Africana collection usage among postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University was low. In addition, findings revealed that: lack of awareness of the availability of the collection ( $x=3.59$ ) and difficulty in finding relevant material ( $x=3.52$ ), were the major problems encountered by the respondents. Therefore, library must create awareness for its collection and services for optimum utilization. The study recommended that Library management should organize orientation programmes for fresh postgraduate students, engage the use of user education, library manual, bulletin and website to create awareness for library collection. The process of retrieving materials in Africana section need not be cumbersome. Up to date catalogue cards should be prepared for Africana collection and catalogue box to be placed at a strategic position in the library for easy accessibility.*

**Keywords:** Africana collection, Culture, Heritage, Library, Postgraduate student.

## Introduction

Africana collection constitutes an important part of intellectual heritage which contributes to the formation and preservation of institutional, national and continental collective memories. These are special collections originally created and maintained for both historical and research purposes. Africana collections provide a key to examine past and present events. The collections ensure appropriate and permanent means to record documents of antique values and make them available for the present and future research studies on the continent of Africa (Iyishu et al., 2013). Historical, legal, fiscal, and/or administrative collections of enduring values are generated by the members of the Institution. Onibere & Edewor (2024) identified the importance of Africana collection in the understanding of rich and diverse history, culture and the perspectives of people of Africa descent. The collections are means of preserving cultural heritage as they cover Africa countries and diverse African languages (Ogbo & Ejikemeuwa, 2024).

The collection provides invaluable access to rare, hard-to-find primary source documents in the significant era of African political life that is rarely visible in archival collections or mainstream publications. Africana collections tend to cover for dearth information and provide avenues to access resources needed for decision making as they continue to collect and disseminate peculiar and eventful local contents concerning Africa and useful for Africa. The influence of Africana collections is scarcely noticeable in this regard. Rossman (2022) suggested an improved communication and outreach to draw attention to the role Africana collection plays in information literacy training. Africana collections are good sources of primary information and of immense importance to support learning, teaching and research. Garland (2014) emphasized that Africana collection offers an opportunity to introduce the foundation of information and organization of knowledge and considered the environment ideal for engaging students through course assignments in line with standards for information literacy.

In some libraries, these collections are dispersed throughout various units within the library. In other libraries; the materials are housed in dedicated sections. For instance, in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Africana collection materials are kept separate from the rest of the collections for security reasons in the library. The materials are alphabetically arranged on the shelves. Catalogue cards serve as access tools to these materials which are provided on demand. Notably, the Library provides access to the old legal records as evidences to support claims in land disputes over the years. Africana section of the library keeps special collections in closed access and provides much preservation and access to the materials. This unit of the library seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of the origins, aims, programs, and goals of the parent institution as reflected in the workings of the various directorates, institutes, faculties and departments for permanent preservation for cultural heritage. Most importantly, the library maintains Africana collection to attract researchers within and outside the university to the library as a centre for scholarship in various fields of learning.

## Review of Related Literature

Africana collections are special collections which cover irreplaceable materials of cultural assets with potentials for research and teaching (Kamposiori, 2020). In an academic library, an Africana collection embraces collection from the ancient that replicate current learners' knowledge. Special collections reproduce our lingering characteristics by describing who we were, implying what we may likely come to be, and differentiating our peoples. Africana collection and other explorative collection make students think critically about the connection between a primary source and the present-day experience. For instance, special collections link materials about the slavery and human trafficking in the 1900s with the situation of modern-day child's labour and human trafficking. Special collections facilitate knowledge and information creation; information analysis and information transmission thereby improve learning experiences. With the efforts of Librarians, primary information sources in the various faculties are made available for students at any levels for research opportunities. Library enriches teaching and learning processes in the university by making special collections integral parts of classroom experience in spite of rapid advances in digital technologies (ODonnell & Anderson, 2022).

Special collections exist parallel to normal library collections to support preservation of the human record as instanced in original documents or in specific documents of importance. Primary sources are uniquely valuable for fostering critical thinking because they are subjective by nature. It requires the interpretation of primary sources using their cognitive process transforming the relevance of these materials into the present situation. Understanding that historical research requires cognitive processes, the role played by special collection in helping students develop critical thinking skills cannot be overemphasized. Working with special collection, cognitive skills are learned if the students could contextualize primary sources within the framework of their current knowledge of subject. Bahde & Smedberg (2012) established a relationship between special collection instruction and information literacy with the collaboration between faculty and library special collection unit. Special collection embraces unique primary (source) information on the history of Africa countries of which individual items are appreciated. For instance, Juli pharmacy collection in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library has a historical, intellectual and community significance as evidence of one of the Yoruba's most famous pharmacists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This library donor has been a reference point for the upcoming generation especially in the field of pharmacy. In addition to this, Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library is the depository of legal records of cultural and ethnic significance. These records contain documents of criminal and civil proceedings in the old western region of Nigeria. They constitute a unique body of document of land dispute cases and the resolution system. These records open up universal relevant question of inequality and justice in colonial and post-colonial societies and are of irreplaceable social and cultural significance. Undoubtedly, Africana collections are a reminder of people's identity and the respect accorded own cultural heritage (Henrici, 2015). Africana collection comprises valuable collections of boundless historical

meanings and curiosity relating to Nigeria and Africa as a continent. In addition to this, researchers writing on legal proceedings in the old Southern Region of Nigeria could consistently use the old criminal and civil records from 1900-1983 in the library. Special collection stands as the trustee for both institutional and private documentary heritage which will serve not only the creators of the documents or today's researchers, also the University community and society in general for many years. Africana collection unit seeks to provide adequate and appropriate conditions for storage and preservation of official records (Touray, 2021). In addition, special collection facilitates efficient records management to further assure that permanently valuable records are preserved and to encourage efficient use of the records by the creator, researchers and the potential users.

### **Statement of the problem**

Observations have shown that there is low level of demand on Africana collection in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library. Efforts have gone into acquiring, processing, preserving and making special collections available for users. Due to the nature and sensitivity of these materials, they are enclosed and are only accessed on request. It is expedient to find out if this collection is used in research work to ensure that efforts expended in acquiring the valuable collection are worthwhile.

### **Objectives of the study**

- i. To assess the level of use of Africana collection among postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife.
- ii. To find out the problem encountered by the students in the use of Africana collection.

### **Research questions**

1. What is the level of use of Africana collection among postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife?
2. What are the problems encountered by postgraduate students in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife in the use of Africana collection?

### **Methodology**

The study adopted survey method. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The population consisted 420 postgraduate registered users of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. 450 copies of the questionnaire were administered to postgraduate students in the section designated for them. Data was collected within the period of 2 months. The consents of the respondents were sought. They were individually asked if any of them had previously completed the questionnaire. This was to ensure that no respondent completed the questionnaire twice. 420 (93%) copies of the questionnaire was duly completed and returned for analysis. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. Section1: level of Africana collection usage with the scale (ACUS). This scale consisted 6 items measuring the use of Africana

collection among the students. A five point Likert scale: never, occasionally, monthly, weekly and daily used was adopted. Norm test showing the level (low, moderate and high) of Africana collection use among the students was determined using weighted means as the benchmark for determining low, moderate and high levels. Section 2: problems encountered in accessing Africana collection using the scale (PEAAC) which consisted 6 items using a four point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree to measure the problems encountered in accessing Africana collection. The scales were developed by the author and pretested to determine the reliability coefficient of 0.76. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Table 1: Africana collection level of use

S/N	Africana materials	Never used	Occasionally used	Monthly Used	Weekly used	Daily used	Mean	SD
	Rank	1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Africana books	242(57.6%)	32(7.6%)	58(13.8%)	62(14.7%)	26(6.12%)	2.04	1.66
2.	Pamphlets	306(72.8%)	38(9.0%)	35(8.3%)	17(4.0%)	24(5.7%)	1.65	1.21
3.	Digital and print newspapers	340(80.9%)	38(8.9%)	16(3.8%)	14(3.3%)	12(3.0%)	1.39	0.94
4.	Theses	354(84.3%)	27(6.4%)	11(2.5%)	11(2.5%)	17(4.1%)	1.36	0.97
5.	Films and documentaries	354(84.3%)	32(7.2%)	15(3.5%)	8(1.9%)	11(2.6%)	1.33	0.88
6.	Inaugural lecture booklets	373(89%)	18(4.2%)	11(2.5%)	7(1.7%)	11(2.6%)	1.25	0.80
	Weighted mean = 1.52							

Table 1 indicates that inaugural lecture booklets ( $\bar{x}$ =1.25), films and documentaries ( $\bar{x}$ =1.33), theses( $\bar{x}$ =1.36), and digital and print newspapers ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.39) all have the mean values below the weighted mean of 1.52. This showed that the materials are not adequately used by the respondents. While, Africana books ( $\bar{x}$ =2.04) and pamphlets ( $\bar{x}$ =1.65) were the materials used by the respondents with their mean values above the weighted mean ( $\bar{x}$  =1.52)

Table 2: Norm test showing the level of use of Africana collection among respondents

Interval	Mean index	Levels of use	Frequency	Percentage
1-10	9.02	Low	319	76
11-20		Moderate	67	16
21-30		High	34	8

Grand mean=30  
Maximum score =30  
Interval = 10

Table 2 shows that 319(76%) of the respondents had a low level usage of Africana collection. 67(16%) had a moderate level of use of the collection while 34(8%) had a high level use of the collection. This analysis indicated that there was a low level use of Africana collection among the postgraduate students in Obafemi Awolowo University.

Table 3: Problems encountered in accessing Africana collection

S/N	PROBLEMS	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	S.D
1.	Lack of awareness of the availability of the collection	280	121	12	7	3.59	0.64
2.	Difficulty in finding relevant materials	260	130	25	5	3.52	0.69
3.	Materials are obsolete	202	183	27	8	3.33	0.74
4.	The section is ill equipped	202	170	40	8	3.30	0.78
5.	Lack of adequate time to search for material	189	162	44	25	3.19	0.89
6.	Materials are dusty	117	133	74	96	2.62	1.11
	Weighted mean = 3.26						

Table 3 reveals that lack of awareness of the availability of Africana collection ( $\bar{x}$ =3.59), difficulty in finding relevant materials ( $\bar{x}$  =3.52), obsolescence of the materials and the fact that this section of the library is ill equipped ( $\bar{x}$  =3.30) were the problems encountered. Meanwhile, dusty materials ( $\bar{x}$  =2.62) and lack of adequate time to search for materials ( $\bar{x}$ =3.19) were not problems to the respondents in getting access to Africana collection as their mean values are below the weighted mean ( $\bar{x}$  =3.26).

## Discussion

Findings of this study showed that the level of use of Africana collection in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library among the postgraduate patrons was low. In other words, the materials were underutilized. This finding is similar to that of Alcober (2022) who observed that students seldom utilized primary source materials located in special collections; mainly due to lack of understanding of what these materials have to offer and how they are used. Correspondingly, Lynch et al., (2021), Tumakloe & Ayiah (2023) identified low and negative users' perception about library in meeting their research information needs. The low level of usage of Africana collection in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library seems not to be an isolated problem. Udensi (2011) identified that Africana collection was sparingly consulted in Nigerian Universities due to the



fact that Africana collections were not popular. Due to the nature of Africana collections, the materials are given special treatment in the library in that, they are kept in separate room away from other materials in the library and are only accessed on request. In view of this, these materials could possibly be kept away from the reach of those who actually need them. Given the fact that library is generally considered a place to read books or possibly to access the internet, users might not conceive this library a place to access local and indigenous material as Africana materials. There is therefore a need to create awareness for Africana collection in Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library seeing that the fruition of collection and efforts expended to acquire, process, preserve and to make these rare collections available for use depend on the usage of the materials.

The results of the study indicated that the major problem encountered by the postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University in accessing Africana collection was lack of awareness of the availability of the collection. In Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, efforts were taken to seek and acquire Africana collection but these materials might have been kept away from the users. Observably, the card catalogue box as an access tool for the materials was obscurely positioned; it was placed in a location far from that of other library materials. Therefore, there is a need to make the catalogue box visible and create awareness for the materials in the library. Nwonkwo et al. (2019) advocated for the creation of awareness for library collection and services. There is an urgent need for Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library to develop strategies to create awareness for services and collection available to meet the various information needs of their patrons. Though, Africana collection could appear to be old due to aging, obsolescence could possibly not be a problem in accessing Africana collection in the library. These are rare materials that couldn't be withdrawn from library collections at will. It is desirable to digitize the materials as this will improve the accessibility of the materials but funding has long being the major factor hindering library development in Nigeria.

## Conclusion

The study examined the level of use of Africana materials among postgraduate students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The problem encountered by postgraduate students in the use of Africana and archival materials was also investigated. There is a matter of concern, as currently, the level of use of Africana collection which form a vital part of the library collections is grossly low among the postgraduate students. Lack of awareness of the availability of the collection and difficulty in finding relevant material were among other problems expressed by the respondents in this study. These problems need to be addressed for the maximum utilization of these materials. Library users must be conscious of the available collection. Users will only place demands on materials they know are within their reach. It does not matter the volume or quantity of any library collection; lack of awareness could render them redundant. Therefore, the library must make the materials available and accessible by create awareness for its collection for optimum utilization.

## Recommendation

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- i. There is a need for Library management to organize orientation programmes for fresh students. The idea is to get the students familiar with the available collection and services.
- ii. The library instruction programme being taught as a course in the University to educate fresh students on how to effectively use the library collection and services could be used as a medium to create awareness for Africana collection.
- iii. Library posters and bulletin showcasing Africana collection could be distributed to users.
- iv. Library website is also a suitable platform for Africana collection advocacy.
- v. The process of retrieving materials in Africana section need not be cumbersome. Catalogue cards for Africana collection should be updated and the catalogue box placed at a strategic position in the library for easy accessibility.



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