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ANALYSIS OF ARCHIVE ADMINISTRATION AND RECORDS PRESERVATION IN CATHOLIC CHURCH COMMUNITY IN NIGERIA

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Analysis of Archive Administration and Records Preservation in Catholic Church Community in Nigeria

Abstract:

The study assessed Catholic Church community's way of archive administration and records preservation in Nigeria. Four objectives and four research questions guided the study. The design of the study was a descriptive survey which used questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The population of the study was 180 representing members of the Catholic community; a total enumeration (census) sampling was used to select the sample of 180. Questionnaire was administered to the 180 respondent, 114 were returned representing a response rate of 63.3%. The study found out that 90 (78.9%) of the churches repositories are customised, 24 (21.1%) possessed a purpose built, while 71 (62.3%) indicated use of microfilming use of preservation. In addition, 96 (84.2%) shown use of duplication as revealed in some of the results in the findings All the results had shown that churches administration had control inform of written guidelines over their records, storage facilities, use of cabinet and cupboards and archival repositories. The study concluded that archive administration and records management practices in Lagos and Ibadan need improvement for future

development attainment in the Catholic Church Community.

Keywords: Records Preservation, Archive Administration, Catholic Church Community, Management, Steel Cabinet,

Introduction:

The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 6th Ed (2000) has defined archive as a collection of historical documents or records of a government, a family, a place or an organization. Kennedy & Schauder (2010) also defined archives as the records of any institution, public or private, preserved because of their value. The Greek word "archeion" was originally applied to government records (public archives). There are also records generated by families and individuals, which are generally described as "private" or "personal papers". The term archives is also used to designate an agency or administrative unit responsible for identifying, appraising, accessioning, preserving, arranging, describing and providing reference service on archives material, and for approving the destruction of records of transitory value and also as a building or part of a building housing archival materials and providing office space and facilities for both archivists (that is those engaged in the administration and use of archives).

It therefore means that, archives have accumulated as a result of administrative action and have thereafter been set aside for permanent preservation since they have been adjudged to possess certain lasting qualities. As civilization become more complex and knowledge increased, a more effective method of reproducing records through printing evolved. The records of civilization from thence increased at such a rate that a new situation was created whereby the keepers of these records were inundated with records of the society, beyond their capacity to absorb and comprehend (Chibambo, 2003)

Daramola (1991) posits that, archives consist of records that have been selected for permanent or long-term preservation on grounds of their enduring cultural, historical, or evidentiary value. Archival records are normally unpublished and almost always unique, unlike books or magazines for which many identical copies exist. This means that archives (the places) are quite distinct from libraries with regard to their functions and organization, although archival collections can often be found within library buildings. Archives administration shares common purpose with library and information service provision - that is to acquire, preserve and make information in the form of documentation, available as effectively and as economically as possible. The administration of archive however, because of their origin, their basic character and their primary uses, requires the application of principle and techniques different from those developed for the effective management of other types of documentary materials (Crockett, 2006)

Archives, however, have their immediate origin in administrative activities; they are created and accumulated in the course of conducting the business activities of an institution and are therefore natural accumulation of documentary materials. Archives are organised in such a way that the identification and significance of individual items are frequently use as a body of documentation (Evborokhai, 1990). According to International Records Management Trust (1999) they are usually unpublished and are primarily intended to accomplish functional purpose. As the unique product of day-to-day activities of an institution, archives have an official and legal character with respect to the origin, structure, functions, procedures and transactions of that institution. These are essential to the preservation and protection of property and other organization's and individual activities within the scope of the institutional activities.

However, in the Church, archives are places of memory of the Christian community and storehouse of cultural heritage. As places of memory, archives must systematically gather all the data making up the articulated history of the Church community so that what has been done and the results obtained, may be properly evaluated. The Code of Canon Law (Canon Law Society 1983) gives suitable norms for the diligent conservation and care management of archival sources. The documents preserved in the archives of the Catholic Church represent an immense and precious heritage. This is shown by the great number of archives which have been instituted by the presence and activities of Bishops in the Episcopal cities (Ismail & Jamaludin 2009).

Harvey, (2003) pointed out that the responsibility for documenting material is assigned primarily to individual Church entities. This makes it necessary to establish suitable criteria for management of historic archives, protection and conservation of the secret archives, and their proper organization. There should be a set up for computerization of data, which needs assistance of technical experts and qualified personnel. Information about the collection should be circulated among various archives. Participation in national and international Archive associations is important for archivists and librarians. Availability of the collection for consultation and research should be promoted.

Mutula & Wamukoya, (2009) argued that the establishment of a church archives centre serves several purposes and functions. Legal documents may be preserved in the church archives to provide necessary information. Vital statistical records (membership, baptismal and marriage) are often referred to by persons needing proof of birth dates for retirement and pension purposes. Archival files provide useful data to church leaders on past promotional activities and events and assist them in evaluating future programs and methods.

Statement of the problem

The church archives are faced with problems of insufficient space,

staffing, maintenance and infrastructure particularly for information communication technologies and also poor layout of and untidiness in the records storage area. Preservation is a crucial element of an integrated records management program. If records are not well protected physically through their life cycle, the media (paper, digital tape, and film) will not survive long enough to serve their administrative and cultural purposes by providing evidence of present and past activities.

Objectives of the study:

1. Find out the availability of storage facilities in these churches' archive centres;
2. Find out the type of archival repositories possessed by the churches: customized or purpose built;
3. Determine the method of preserving records;
4. Find out the type of finding aids available in the church;

Research questions:

1. What are the available storage facilities in the churches' archive centres?
2. What type of archival repositories do the churches have?
3. What methods do they employ in preserving their records?
4. What type of finding aids available in the church?

Literature Review

The growth and development of archives centres in the economically developed nations have been associated with historical research and development, and as such, record-handlers and management-initiators were mostly historians. Records centre were places where historical archives were collected, sorted, organized, stored and made available to researchers Archives, defined as the records of any institution, public or private, preserved because of their value (Chimbabo, 2003).

The Greek word "Archeion" was originally applied to Government records (public archives). There are also records generated by families and individuals, which are generally described as "private" or "personal papers" Dekker (1998). The term archives is also used to designate an agency or administrative unit responsible for identifying, appraising, accessioning, preserving, arranging, describing and providing reference service on archives material, and for approving the destruction of records of transitory value (Crockett, 2006)

According to Popoola & Oluwole (2007), the first attempt made by the colonial government in the establishment of archives began in 1914 when the secretary of state for the colonies was quoted as demanding from the British administration overseas "a report as to the existing arrangement for the custody

and the preservation of the older official records of government in Nigeria". He suggested in the memoranda that appropriate steps should be taken for "safe keeping and preservation of the documents in question". The outbreak of the First World War prevented any positive action. At the end of war in about 1936, a circular from the colonial secretary (Ormsby Gore) to the British colonies in West Africa informed that "preservation of historical records must be regarded as one of the first duties of a colonial government, a duty which derives greater urgency from the fact that delay in the institution of suitable retentive measures may and does lead to the inevitable loss of documents of value"

In 1948, another circular was issued referring to the implementation of the scheme to establish Central African Archives and urged that survey of records be undertaken and offered the assistance of the British Public Records Office in the survey. In spite of the pressure mounted by the colonial office as revealed in many of the circulars, the actions of the British administration in the colonies were unimpressive towards the preservation of the government records. For instance the advice that "the destruction of records should henceforth require the approval of some responsible authority to which details of the documents to be destroyed should first be submitted" was followed and wanton burning of records persisted even up to the eve of Nigerian independence celebration. The attitude of Nigerian government to the colonial office circular was lukewarm on the care and preservation of records (Popoola & Oluwole 2007).

Alegbeleye (1991) opined that today's paper has become a complex process increasingly based on scientific research. Most records are kept on paper, documents, files and photographs; such private communication as letters and greetings. Mass communication, newspapers and magazine require great amounts of paper. Present day educational systems would be impossible without paper. However, records their creation, use and maintenance accounts for a considerable portion of our general operating expense. It is important, therefore that we keep the volume of records we generate to a minimum and retain those we require in the most economical and efficient manner. Records and Archives are often used to mean the same thing but a distinction should be made. Archives refer to records that have been selected for preservation as distinct from records which refer to and include all media which contain information acquired or generated in course of administrative action irrespective of origin or date (Oketunji, 2003)

However, the preservation of records being representations of the past as well as promoting their importance to the public has been part of the emerging concerns of the archival profession. Trace (2002) presumed that the growing realization of the complicated nature of the materials that the archivists manage calls for a deep thinking of what really constitutes a record and the contentment of the archivists on being mere guardians or passive keepers of records.

'Preservation' is the means by which archives are protected for the use of present and future generations. It is a word commonly used by record offices, libraries and museums to describe the ways in which their collections are safeguarded and kept in good physical condition. This can be done through a variety of measures aimed both at minimizing the risk of loss of records and slowing down, as much as possible, the processes of physical deterioration which affect most archive materials. (Alegbeleye, 1991). Preserved records pass on our history and cultural heritage from one generation to another. They are indispensable to scholarly research into the past by historians, sociologists, geographer, demographers, and others; hence, society relies on these scholars who use church records to make the past more comprehensible and relevant to the present (Ham, 1993).

Preservation has a tremendous impact on the longevity of the life span of records as it ensures the availability of records over time. Rothenberg (2000) advocated that preservation of any informational entity is ultimately defined in terms of which of its attributes can and must be preserved to ensure that it will fulfil its future use, whether originally intended, subsequently expected or unanticipated. Preservation strategies and techniques have evolved from preserving physical records to preserving electronic records in line with the expanding usage of ICTs in workplaces. Preservation efforts should embrace the record life cycle and not be limited to any specific stages due to the need to keep and maintain metadata for accessibility and authentication.

Methodology:

Research design employed for this study was descriptive survey. Total enumeration sampling technique was adopted for the purpose of this study. It was chosen because of the small number of population of professional archivist/ personnel in charge of church archives involved which is put at 180. This cuts across all the Catholic Archdioceses of Lagos and Ibadan in South West, Nigeria. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used for the analysis.

**Table 1: Total enumeration sampled for Lagos
LAGOS CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE**

S/No.	DEANERY	POPULATION
1	Agege Deanery	15
2	Apapa Deanery	10
3	Badagry Deanery	7
4	Ikeja Deanery	30
5	Lagos Island Deanery	20
6	Lagos Mainland Deanery	25
7	Lekki Deanery	13
	Total	120

**Table 2: Total enumeration sampled for Ibadan
IBADAN CATHOLIC ARCHDIOCESE**

S/No.	DEANERY	POPULATION
1	Ibadan	60

Results and Discussion of Findings**Demographic variables**

The background data collected from the respondents revealed the following demographic characteristics of the respondents:

Table 3: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	93	81.6
Female	21	18.4
Total	114	100
Archdioceses		
Lagos	86	75.4
Ibadan	28	24.6
Total	114	100.0

In Table 3, it is obvious that 93 (81.6%) of the respondents were males and 21 (18.4%) were females. This implies that male respondents were the higher in number. Also, it was further revealed that the Archdiocese of Lagos was represented by 93 (81.6%) respondents and archdiocese of Ibadan was represented by 28 (24.6%) of the respondents. The high number of respondents in Lagos Archdiocese could be as a result of the large concentration of the Deaneries in Lagos metropolis more than archdiocese of Ibadan. This is similar to the report of Okello- Obura (2012) on the gender distribution of records management personnel in Tororo district of Uganda.

Research question 1: What are the available storage facilities?**Table 4: The Storage Facilities Available in the Churches**

Storage facilities	Yes	%	No	%
Wooden racks	55	48.2	59	51.8
Steel Cabinet	103	90.4	11	9.6
Cupboards	62	54.4	52	45.6
Shelves	32	28.1	82	71.9
Floor	1	.9	113	99.1
Others	1	.9	113	99.1

Table 4: The durability of steel cabinet for storage facilities had shown here with 103 (90.4%) as the highest. While 62 (54.4%) had cupboards, 59 (51.8%) does not have wooden racks for storage facilities in the church. The implication is that those with cupboards should go for steel in case of fire accident, while those using wooden racks are advised to change to steel also in order to prevent fire hazard

since most of the steel products are fire proof. These findings are not at variance with the findings of Ndenje-Sichalwe (2010) which revealed that majority of the respondents controlled light and most registries make use of fumigation in pest control in the record storage area in the public sector of Tanzania.

Research question 2: What type of archival repositories do the churches have?

Table 5: Types of Archival Repositories in the Churches

Type of archival repository	Customized	90	78.9
	Purpose-built	24	21.1
	Total	114	100

Table 5: showed that 90 (78.9%) of the churches possessed customized repository, while only 24 (21.1%) possessed a purpose-built repository respectively. Prior to the administration of the questionnaires, the researcher's feasibility study revealed that some of the churches have customised repositories and others purposely built, the questionnaire administered were to ascertain the usefulness of the facilities or availability of those facilities.

Research question 3: What methods do the churches employ in preserving their records?

Table 6: Methods Employed in Preserving their Records

Preservation Methods	Yes	%	No	%
Microfilming	71	62.3	43	37.7
Vaulting	32	28.1	82	71.9
Site storage	32	28.1	82	71.9
Duplication	96	84.2	18	15.8
Encapsulation	7	6.1	107	93.9
Off-site storage	4	3.5	110	93.5

Table 6 showed the methods employed in preserving their records. About 71(62.3%) indicated the use of microfilming in the preservation of records and 96(84.2%) indicated the use of duplication. Microform refers to the various formats in which microfilm is created and used. Familiarity with these terms is very important because the type of microform used will affect office efficiency and records retrieval, while the type of microfilm used will affect the durability of the record.

Research Question 4: What types of finding aids are available in the church archives?

Table 7: The types of Finding Aids Available in the Church Archives

Finding aids	Yes	%	No	%
Index	52	54.6	62	54.4
Guide	30	26.3	84	73.7
Simple list	7	6.1	107	93.9
Register	23	20.2	91	79.8
Inventory	6	5.3	108	94.7
Calendar	-	-	114	100
Others	-	-	114	100

The findings in table 7 revealed the types of finding aids available in the church archives. The results had shown that (45.6%) of the respondents used index, while 30 (26.3%) of the respondents made use of guide. The use of register as a form of finding aids was indicated by 23 (20.2%) of the respondents. Further findings revealed that finding aids give the descriptions of the holdings of the archival institution for the purpose of establishing intellectual control.

Index is an instrument which allows users to identify particular documents or pieces of information relevant to their search, and it is therefore the means by which the arrangement of interpretation of archives in series may be modified to make subject-based inquiries possible. An index will highlight names, places, events and subjects. It is an important tool for pointing out to readers to some of the relevant holdings. With a good index, the institution can make continuous use of the expertise of the staff who has helped to compile it, and readers are able to make quite accurate searches, thus saving everybody's time (Alegbeleye, 1990).

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The analysis of archive administration and records management in this study has shown the forms of information and records generated before turning into archives by the Catholic Church for both archdiocese in Lagos and Ibadan. Managing these archival repositories possessed by the churches requires professionals and equipment like steel cabinet, metal shelves strong room, coupled with preservation methods employed by the churches through microfilming of records and use of duplication. Information that is kept in the archives can be retrieved through indexing, guides and use of register.

However, for good archive administration and records management, there is need for qualified records management personnel with skills in good preservation in the areas of controlling temperature and relative humidity through the good use of dehumidifiers, dehydrating agents and air conditioners. Adequate archive and records management training should be given yearly to records officers and archivists to update their knowledge on records management practices and to continually introduce its core components.

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