

**THE EFFECT OF LIBRARIANS' KNOWLEDGE AND FUNDING ON  
PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION PRACTICES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Librarians down the ages have been charged with the responsibility of managing information resources and the library users. One of the management practices in the library is preservation and conservation of library resources which is aimed at ensuring the longevity of the library resources. This is a critical concern at this period of dwindling budgetary allocation to public universities where subtle fund is release to the library for the purchase of resources and therefore little or no chance should be given to deterioration. This study therefore investigates some of the key preservation and conservation practices in public universities in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 183 respondents. Questionnaire was used for data collection and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The finding revealed that the knowledge level shown by librarians towards the preservation and conservation of information materials was relatively high and the level of training for staff and funding of conservation and preservation practices in the selected university libraries has improved greatly when compared with previous studies of conservation and preservation. The study recommends that the library management should maintain and improve on the pace of funding and training of staff on preservation and conservation practices in public university in Nigeria.*

**KEYWORDS:** Librarians' Knowledge, Funding, Preservation, Conservation Practices, Public University Libraries, Nigeria

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Library is a link between the user and the information they require and the active players in achieving this aim are librarians. Librarians down the ages have been charged with the responsibility of managing information resources and the library users. One of the professional practices in the library is preservation and conservation of library resources which is aimed at ensuring the longevity of the library resources.

Preservation and conservation is the umbrella term for an array of activities, principles, organization and practices that ensures the usability, longevity and accessibility of recorded knowledge. These activities include; general collection repair, reformatting (photocopy and digitization), environmental control, funding, disaster preparedness, binding and training (Jordan 2003). Some of the challenges facing preservation practices are lack of trained staff, lack of funds and low staff morale (Seton, 1984).

Funding is critical towards the promotion of preservation. University libraries often complain of lack of adequate funding to provide for the preservation of library resources. Funding for universities is generally limited and libraries are often earmark inadequate financial resources

to deal with deteriorating materials. It is clear from the literature that a library does not need a huge financial outlay to start preservation program. Nevertheless, some financial outlay must be made and this cannot be made unless the libraries are given enough grants to manage their services. As a result of inadequate funding, librarians take refuge under the 'no funding' slogan to avoid funding preservation projects and programs. Funding as well as the knowledge level of the librarians is key to the promotion of preservation and conservation practices.

It has been long identified that preservation knowledge is a significant factor in preservation endeavor and by this assertion Lyall (1994) affirmed that the level of knowledge in any information center is one of the four major factors that determine the ability of such library to develop a satisfactory preservation programme for their information resources. Alegbeleye (1999) also observed that ignorance of librarians of the agents of deterioration serves as a major constraint to the preservation and conservation of library and archival materials in Africa. Librarians being active players of preservation practice must be aware and have a thorough knowledge of the causes, effect and solution to deterioration of information materials.

Njeze (2012) in her study on deterioration of library materials in some University libraries in Nigeria found that there was high rate of deterioration of information resources in the studied universities. This is a critical concern at this period of dwindling budgetary allocation to public universities where subtle fund is release to the library for the purchase of resources and therefore little or no chance should be given to deterioration. It therefore becomes imperative to investigate if the key preservation and conservation practices are in place in public universities in Nigeria. Some of these practice are staff training and fund provision and staff knowledge.(seton, 1984),(shameenda 2011),(zaid, abioye and olatise 2012) . It is on this premise that this study investigates the effect of librarians' knowledge and funding on preservation and conservation practices in public university libraries in Nigeria.

### **Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to investigate the effect of librarians' knowledge and funding on preservation and conservation practices in public university libraries in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- i. ascertain the state of funding of conservation and preservation of information materials in public university libraries in Nigeria
- ii. determine the level of librarian's knowledge of preservation and conservation practices in public university libraries in Nigeria
- iii. ascertain the level of training received by librarians on preservation and conservation of information materials in public university libraries in Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

This study provides answer to the following research questions:

- i. What is the level of funding of conservation and preservation of information materials in public university libraries in Nigeria?
- ii. What is the level of librarian's knowledge of preservation and conservation practice in public university libraries in Nigeria?

- iii. What is the level of training received by librarians on the preservation and conservation of information materials in public university libraries in Nigeria

### **Scope of the Study**

This study seeks to evaluate the effect of funding and knowledge on preservation and conservation practices in public university libraries in Nigeria. The libraries include all public universities in the South-West Nigeria. The choice of limiting this study to universities in southwest Nigeria is because of the security situation in the northern and eastern Nigeria at the moment.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The main purpose of a library is the management of information resources i.e acquisition, organization, easy retrievable access and preservation to support lifelong learning. Preservation and conservation of library material is an essential function of the library which IFLA (2010) considers as the task of reducing or minimizing the physical and chemical deterioration of information materials. The practice of preservation and conservation of library materials as address by IFLA in the Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material encompasses all the managerial and financial considerations which include policies, staffing, training, storage and accommodation, funding, environmental control, security measures, disaster preparedness etc. Khayundi's (1995) elucidates that for a proper preservation and conservation practice to be in place, libraries must ensure they stock in purpose-built buildings, proper environmental control, adequate preservation facilities, well trained personnel, proper handling of information materials and budgetary provisions.

Few countries in Africa have environmental control systems, bindery facilities, restoration workshops and photographic laboratory but there is an acute shortage of trained staff and low budgetary priority is given to preservation and conservation practices. the findings of the study revealed that the problems faced by most libraries and archives in Nigeria were similar and these included inadequate buildings and equipment, lack of trained staff, lack of funds and low staff morale (Seton, 1984). (Clements, 1987).

Every library has a duty to ensure the welfare of its collections for present and future users. There is no avoiding the fact that the maintenance and retention of collections cost money. For too long, libraries have spent a large proportion of their budget on acquisitions. Most libraries have no, or inadequate, funds set aside for preservation purposes. Spending time and resources on preventing damage to library material is almost always cheaper than repairing or replacing it. No library can afford not to take precautionary measures against fire, flood, theft, and mould and insect infestation, for salvaging material which has suffered from these disasters is extremely expensive in terms of human and financial resources. The consequences of such disruptions are manifold. Serious disasters are often caused by circumstances which could have been avoided at little cost. Prevention is not only better but, more often than not, cheaper than cure. Caring for library material does not necessarily mean an excessive expenditure of library funds. There are many common-sense and economical solutions to preservation problems. However, all libraries must realise that preserving and maintaining their collections is as important as acquiring them, and that appropriate funds should be allocated accordingly. (IFLA, 2010)

Ubogu and Okiy (2011) opined that funding models for academic libraries vary greatly, depending on whether the institution is private or public, a particular state's budgetary regulations and funding formulas for higher education and the overall budgetary situation of each university. American Library Association (2006) stated that academic library budgets are allocated by the central university administration based on historic formulas or outdated needs, and libraries follow their institutional policies and mandates regarding budgets. Occasionally, an institution provides funding for its library through individual colleges and departments instead of centrally setting the library budget. In that case, each department or university unit decides whether or not to fund the library each year based on satisfactory library service as well as need. In most cases, academic library budgets are not allocated separately from the university budgets. For some libraries, budget is allocated partially for acquisition, while other aspects such as staff and furniture are part of the university budget. This arrangement does not meet the library needs (Hisle, 2002). Nigerian academic libraries derive the major part of their financial support from the government in case of Federal and State Owned Institutions, while those owned by private individuals are solely responsible for the financing. As part of major source of finance for government owned academic libraries are Education Tax Fund (ETF) now Tertiary Education Tax Fund (TETFUND) interventions.

Ifidon (1990) found that university libraries derive the greatest part of their funds from their universities, whose major sources of financial support is the government. Of all the different types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a clearly- defined policy on funding. They are allocated 10 percent of the recurring annual budget of their parent universities, a result of the Federal Government and Academic Staff Union of Universities agreement of 1992 (Okiy, 2005). Funds for library and information services are traditionally derived from the library proprietor. The extent of such revenue varies from fixed fraction of received grant to ad-hoc arrangement (Edoka, 1992).

According to Anafulu (1997) the university library is only one of numerous units in a university. By its centrality and role in the endeavours of the university-teaching, research and extension work - it is a major unit and a vital one at that. Notwithstanding these considerations, however, the fact remains that the university library does not generate its own income and does not receive grants directly from the proprietor. The general financial environment of the university is such that allocations are made to the library, but apart from small imprest accounts, no money is held in the library. (Omotayo,1997).

Also, apart from funding, another key factor that militates against preservation and conservation practices is librarian's knowledge of the practice. knowledge as defined by Webster's Third New International Dictionary (1986) is having general information, wide knowledge, showing heightened perception, ready comprehension and appreciation; being informed, knowing ignorance at the same time is defined as lack of knowledge or information about something. Mishra and Tripathi (2010) submitted that India has the largest and most varied collection of manuscripts in the world. But due to lack of knowledge of conservation and preservation, a vast amount of literature was already lost and the rest available was mostly in a state of decay. There was no effort to document, preserve, or even explore these rare manuscripts lying within personal possession. To forestall loss of valuable resources which may sometimes be irreplaceable, Librarians and other information practitioners have to expand their technological knowledge and expertise to deal with ever-changing information systems. Preservation knowledge sessions (on library preservation and library disaster preparedness and

response, treatment processes and recovery equipment and supplies) should be considered as a matter of urgency to increase the knowledge of staff in preservation issues.

For adequate preservation and conservation of information materials in this 21<sup>st</sup> century, librarians must be thoroughly familiar with the nature of materials collected by the libraries and with the deteriorative processes that act on them; environmental, inherent, and as a result of storage, handling, use and inappropriate treatments performed in the past. This involves knowledge of the physical and chemical makeup of materials, their structure and working properties and their reaction over time and during use to stresses placed on them. It is also expected that librarians should be well grounded in both conservation theory and practice. Conservation principles (such as the use of only reversible processes) are applied to materials in anticipation of stress, to return materials to usable condition, or to halt deterioration or restore materials as nearly as possible to their former condition. This involves knowledge of a wide variety of techniques and procedures, as well as considerable judgment in applying them in the most appropriate manner.

In addition to knowledge of conservation principles and techniques, the librarian must be familiar with the equipment, tools and supplies required. This involves constant attention to the field of conservation, testing and selection of specific materials for their chemical and physical properties and calculation of the cost-effectiveness of materials selected for a specific purpose (Association of Research Libraries, 1985). Lyall (1994) has long identified preservation knowledge as a significant factor in preservation endeavor by his assertion that “the level of knowledge in a country is one of the four major factors that determine the ability of any country to develop a satisfactory preservation programme for information resources. Alegbeleye (1999) also observed that ignorance of librarians of the agents of deterioration serves as a major constraint to the preservation and conservation of library and archival materials in Africa

A study carried out by Shameenda (2011) on preservation and conservation of library materials, techniques and practices in the University of Zambia Library revealed that there was lack of knowledge concerning preventive preservation measures, poor handling and use of library materials. In addition, there was lack of reformatting techniques, resulting in preserving and conserving selected materials (predominantly paper-based materials).

Preservation activities include the maintenance of collections in line with in-house stack management policies and practices. These tasks include the regular shelving of current and used collections, the preparation of periodicals and newspapers for binding and the re-location of library collections. According to Reed-Scott (2000), libraries currently face the intellectual problems of determining what should be preserved and what should deteriorate. Preservation problems are pushing collection managers into a more activist role, in which they must make crucial preservation decisions thus growing awareness in the past decade of the magnitude of preservation problems which has resulted in a steady increase of preservation programs within research, academic, and public libraries. Efforts must be made by librarians to ensure that these valuable resources are well preserved for future generations to avoid extinction.

Digital Preservation Coalition (2008) commenting on the level of awareness of, and interest in, digital preservation is gradually increasing but is not keeping pace with the level of digital resource creation. In particular, institutions that have not played a role in preserving traditional collections do not have a strong sense of playing a role in preserving digital materials.

Individual librarians were keen to "do the right thing" but frequently lacked their clear guidance and institutional backing to enable them feel confident of what they should be doing.

Overall, it appears that there is still a need to develop the librarian's level of knowledge on preservation and conservation with responsibility for the strategic direction of an institution. This needs to be delegated with more detailed education, guidance and training to all levels. Moreover, the training needs to be able to accommodate library staff at varying levels i.e library officers, library assistants and porters as they have significant role to play in conservation and preservation of library materials.

Education and training play significant role in creating knowledge and promoting awareness in conservation and preservation of information resources. Training at all levels can aid acquisition of knowledge and skills in the preservation of library materials. Knowledgeable and skilled staff is likely to expend scarce resources on projects that reflected the greatest preservation and conservation needs. Lack of essential knowledge and skills can be inimical to the preservation of library materials. According to Henchy (1998) quoted by Ngulube (2003), in Vietnam the poor physical conditions in libraries and archives, and problems of deteriorating collections were reportedly exacerbated by the well-meaning but uninformed activities of untrained staff. However, Mazikana (1993) observed that library materials and archival preservation education is underdeveloped. Rhys-Lewis (1996) also acknowledged that the availability of suitable and effective training for developing countries was limited. How can staff without preservation and conservation know-how think of allocating resources for preservation surveys, good housekeeping, storing library materials under suitable conditions, complying with agreed standards of preservation and access, reformatting heavily used materials and those in a poor condition, undertaking conservation treatment, formulating disaster plans and adequate preservation strategies, raising awareness of the importance of preservation and fund-raising for preservation projects? For example, without the necessary skills and knowledge, information professionals are not likely to effectively allocate resources for their collection management that encompassed preservation and conservation education.

Matthews (2009) believed that raising awareness of conditions and practices that damage library materials is sufficient to change the behaviour of library staff and patrons and prevent damage. He reiterated the importance of effective instruction for those who will convey the message to others. According to him, staff with responsibility for special collections will have need of specialist training but all staff in a library can contribute to preservation management from caretakers and cleaners who may notice something amiss with say the environment, a rise in temperature or a potential source of water ingress that could cause damage to collections, to front line counter staff who may observe inappropriate handling of individual items at the photocopier or spot initial damage to a returned book put it aside for minor repair. It is also important that users are aware of basic good practice and understand its significance. These could be achieved through information on websites, posters and leaflets. Personal intervention advice and instruction may occasionally be necessary if misuse of materials is observed.

Matthews (2009) advocated preservation education for librarians. According to him, preservation courses for library professionals are typically in one of three formats: as part of compulsory courses such as library administration, in a first professional qualification, an optional course of about one semester, or a separate qualification, for example one or two year courses in preservation administration and continuing education opportunities in preservation for those whose qualifications need updating or those who wish to build on existing knowledge. Webb cited by Zhu (2012) suggested that a comprehensive staff development programme

should include three components; competency development, career development and personal development. Competency development includes the training of skills in technology, library services, communication and leadership. Career development includes formal education continuing education after graduation and on the job training. He felt that establishing career ladder programme to recognize paraprofessionals' skills and abilities to function in the same capacities as professionals in a variety of duties and tasks are critical.

In a study conducted by Zaid, Abioye and Olatise (2012) on training in cultural heritage preservation: the experience of heritage institutions in Nigeria in which focus group discussion was used to collect data, the findings revealed that they urgently needed to be trained in the areas of environmental control and stability of collections, paper stability and document repair, accelerated development of technologies for recording, storing, and retrieval of records, preservation challenges in the digital age, the expanding nature of preservation and conservation responsibilities, digital preservation issues, funding, policy, and support for preservation, conservation treatment skills, high-priority content for preservation education, preservation tools, preservation and data management planning, strategic planning and policies, technical Systems, trusted repositories and diversity in the conservation and preservation professions. It was also found that the kinds of training programmes available for them were, on-the –job, off- the-job and academic discipline.

The participants in the focus group discussion indicated the training programmes available for workers in Nigerian heritage institutions cover the areas of management of cultural heritage resources under tropical climate, treatment of insects and other organisms that cause the disintegration of heritage materials, general management, research, functional tasks in digital preservation/curatorial work, workflow planning for cultural heritage preservation, capacity building of technical personnel, adoption and use of modern technology, administration and finances, legal aspects. The study identified the following as obstacles to training in National Heritage Institutions, Poor funding or near absence of budgetary provision for preservation of heritage collections, absence of national preservation policy for heritage materials, absence of good local training facilities, particularly good conservation laboratories, lack of technical manpower for training in heritage preservation and conservation and general apathy on the part of policy makers towards heritage preservation.

Similarly, Clements (1987) carried out an international study to assess the state of the world patrimony. His findings showed that most of library materials were housed in unsuitable buildings where, environmental control and monitoring were neglected, and the collections were infested with pests. Despite the fact that many of the institutions surveyed had in place rules of handling materials, it was discovered that improper handling of print library materials during photocopying was the major cause of deterioration of documents. Furthermore, the findings revealed that there was a lack of preservation of library resources and information on preservation because they were not properly trained staff (Clements, 1987).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted survey research design. The population for this study cut across all librarians in the public university libraries in Nigeria. A total of 265 librarians in (13) public university libraries in Nigeria were used for this study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 183 library workers with over ten (10) years working experience as the

respondents. A library staff with over ten (10) years working experience would have been involved in preservation and conservation process at one point or the other.

**Table 1: The breakdown of respondents selected in each of the public universities libraries**

S/ N	Libraries	Actual number of Academic Librarians	No selected	% of total	Actual number of Paraprofessionals	Number selected	% of total	Over all Total selected in each university
1	Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.	26	16	62	17	10	59	26
2	Fatiu Akesode Library, Lagos State University, Ojo.	13	8	62	8	8	100	16
3	University of Lagos Library, Lagos.	19	10	53	11	8	73	18
4	University Library, Federal University of Technology, Akure	12	8	67	9	6	67	14
5	Ladoke Akintola University of Technology Library, Ogbomosho	9	6	67	7	5	71	11
6	Ekiti State University Library, Ado-Ekiti.	13	10	77	9	6	67	16
7	Nimbe Adedipe Library, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta	22	15	68	10	6	60	21
8	Osun State University (UNIOSUN) Library, Osogbo	9	6	67	6	4	67	10
9	Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijebu-Ode Library	6	4	67	3	3	100	7
10	Ondo State University of Science and Tech., Okitipupa	2	2	100	2	2	100	4

11	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Libray Obafemi Awolowo University	22	15	68	9	6	67	21
12	Adekunle Ajasin University Library, Akungba Akoko	7	5	71	4	4	100	9
13	Federal University Oye-Ekiti Library, Oye-Ekiti	5	5	100	5	5	100	10
	Total	165			100			183

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. 183 questionnaires were administered but only 181 (96%) questionnaires was returned and found useful for data analysis. Data analysis was done using relevant descriptive statistics with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.

## DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Research question 1:** What is the level of funding of conservation and preservation of information materials in Nigerian university libraries?

**Table 2: Level of funding of conservation and preservation of information materials in Nigerian university libraries**

Funding	SA	A	D	SD	Not Sure	Mean	Std. Deviation
Library management makes annual budgetary allocation for conservation and preservation	35.7	33.6	6.1	7.6	17.0	3.6	1.5
The management of the library usually allocate fund for conservation and preservation from the IGR	33.0	30.1	6.5	7.6	22.8	3.4	1.6
There are special financial intervention for conservation and preservation of library materials	34.4	23.0	11.5	5.9	25.2	3.4	1.6
Money is allocated for training of staff on conservation and preservation of Library materials	29.6	25.0	8.6	13.6	23.2	3.2	1.6
Fund is allocated for the purchase of equipment used in conservation and preservation of library materials	35.0	27.7	7.3	11.3	18.6	3.5	1.5

Funding is critical towards the promotion of preservation and conservation of information materials in the library. The table 2 shows that each of the sampled institution has an annual budgetary allocation for conservation and preservation, allocated fund for conservation and preservation from the IGR, special financial intervention for conservation and preservation of library materials. Library earmark money for training of staff on conservation and preservation of library materials and fund is allocated for the purchase of equipment used in conservation and preservation of library materials. Fund is deployed for training of staff on conservation and preservation. It is however clear from the findings of this study that there is a paradigm shift in the funding of conservation and preservation of information materials in the libraries. Contrary to many previous studies, which have reported low funding, the present study has shown a change in the management attitude to library matters particularly with regards to preservation and conservation purposes.

**Research question 2:** What is the librarian's knowledge of preservation and conservation practice?

**Table 3: Knowledge of preservation and conservation practices**

Parameter	Classification	Percentage %
Preservation policy in use in your library	Yes	67.7
	No	32.3
Security of library material	Yes	55.4
	No	43.6
Disaster recovery procedure	Yes	60.9
	No	39.1
Environmental control	Yes	61.2
	No	38.8
Funding	Yes	80.5
	No	19.5
Handling of library materials	Yes	74.6
	No	25.4
Training of staff on preservation practices	Yes	79.7
	No	19.3
Restoration of degraded library materials	Yes	77
	No	23

As shown in Table 3, 67.7% of the respondents (Librarians) said they have preservation policy in use in their libraries. However, 55.4% of the respondents reported that they know of the security of library materials as a practice. Table 3 further revealed 30% respondent rate of disaster recovery procedure as being a preservation and conservation practice among the university libraries. Environmental control, funding, handling of library and restoration of degraded library materials were found to have a high percentage response rate of librarians knowledge but training of staff on preservation of library materials has a low response. The findings of this result is in sharp contrast to Ovowoh (2010) who carried out a study to assess the preservation and conservation programmes and activities in libraries in Nigeria and found that there was no written policy in the higher education institutions studied, and decisions on

preservation and conservation were arbitrary and inconsistent. But the finding is In agreement with Khayundi (1995), who asserts that there is a reasonable level of awareness on preservation and conservation practices in university libraries in Nigeria but however, increase awareness programme will contribute to effective implementation of preservation practice in Nigerian university libraries.

**Research question 3:** What is the level of training received by library personnel on the preservation and conservation of information materials?

**Table 4: Training received by library personnel on the preservation and conservation of information materials**

Training for conservation and preservation	SA	A	D	SD	Not Sure	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff Training	62.3	31.2	4.2	2.3	-	4.5	0.7
Conferences and Seminal attendance	59.2	33.1	4.6	2.3	0.8	4.5	0.8
In- house training	48.7	40.6	6.9	3.4	0.4	4.3	0.8
Training on disaster management	45.0	39.1	1.9	7.4	6.6	4.1	1.2
Training on simple repairs e.g bindery	40.7	45.3	2.3	7.8	3.9	4.1	1.0
Training on preservation program	36.3	49.2	1.6	8.6	4.3	4.0	1.1
Training on integrated pest management(IPM)	41.8	46.6	2.0	5.6	4.0	4.2	1.0
Training on digitization and automation	49.4	42.8	0.8	6.9	0.00	4.5	1.8
Training on Monitoring of temperature, humidity etc.	41.7	42.5	4.3	5.5	5.9	4.1	1.1

Contrary to many previous studies such as Arnoult, (1986), Khayundi's (1995) Ovowoh (2010) who reported that there were no personnel trained in preservation and conservation of library materials, the Table 4 reveals a high level of support for staff training on preservation and conservation of library materials with the least mean scores of 4.1 on the scale of 5 points. Implying that the university libraries are beginning to appreciate the need for effective preservation and conservation of library materials since more funding will be required to get them restored after damaged than the ones required for manpower training for its preservation.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Librarians down the ages have been charged with the responsibility of managing information resources and the library users. One of the management practices in the library is preservation and conservation of library resources which is aimed at ensuring the longevity of the library resources. This study has established that Librarians knowledge and funding are critical drivers to preservation and conservation practices in libraries of public universities in Nigeria. It could be deduced from this study that the knowledge level shown by librarians towards the preservation and conservation of information materials was relatively high and the level of training for staff and funding of conservation and preservation practices in the selected university libraries has improved greatly when compared with previous studies of conservation and preservation. In the light of these, this study recommends that the library management

should maintain and improve on the pace of funding and training of staff on preservation and conservation practices in public university in Nigeria.

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