

Chapter 5

The Nature and Utilisation of Archival Records Deposited in Makerere University Library, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Makerere University archives are kept in Makerere University Library (Maklib) but their utilisation is limited. This chapter reports the findings of a study that analysed the types of archives in Maklib and the extent of their utilisation. A mixed method approach of a questionnaire, observation, and documents analysis was used. The data obtained was analysed as descriptive statistics. The population of the study included 302 Maklib users who visited the Africana Special Collection Section between May and June 2017. The findings revealed that the scope of the archives collection is limited in time and content, few users, limited publicity of existing records, deplorable state of the paper records, and long waiting time for the information to be provided. Recommendations include widening the collection, digitisation of the archives, further development of human resources capacity, and initiation of outreach programmes to boost the archives visibility and attract users.

INTRODUCTION

Many university libraries around the world keep archival records to facilitate access to primary information sources (Purcell, 2015; Oakleaf, 2010; Kalfatovic et al., 2008). While academic libraries collect primarily published materials, some also take on records that contribute significantly to the understanding of the history and workings of their parent institution. Given and MacTavish (2010) observe in their research that it is common to find academic libraries maintaining archival records in addition to other information materials and the mission is to retain all records that have been identified to be of permanent value to the academic institution. Archival records have been defined and explained in different ways by different authors. Authors Zolotarevsky (2010) and McKemmish, Reed and Piggott (2005) define archival records as records of value to an organisation deemed worthy of permanent preservation. Archival records provide evidence and information about organisation's policies and actions. According to the International Council of Archives (2014), archival records are records whose content has been appraised as having continuing value to the organisation keeping them. In the context of this chapter, the term 'archival records' is used to refer to those records selected by Makerere university administration and deposited in Maklib for permanent care for their value and suitability as part of the University's history and mandate. These records provide evidence of the University deliberations, decisions and actions relating to its management and administrative functions. The archival records should be made available to researchers who need to consult them.

Makerere University, established in 1922, is the oldest university in Uganda. The University traces its roots to a technical school which was later renamed Uganda Technical College. It began offering various courses in medical care, agriculture, veterinary sciences and teacher training. It expanded over the years to become a centre of higher education in East Africa in 1935. In 1937, the college started developing into an institution of higher education, offering post-school certificate courses. In 1949, it became a University college affiliated to the university college of London, offering courses leading to the general degrees of its then mother institution. On July 1970, Makerere became an independent national university of the republic of Uganda, offering undergraduate and postgraduate course. The University Library (Maklib) was built in 1939 and opened in 1940. Since inception, Maklib embarked on a collection-development programme of published and unpublished information sources to support teaching, learning, research and innovations in the University (Musoke and Namugera, 2013). As part of collecting the unpublished information sources, Maklib collects records related specifically to the historical development of the University.

The archival collections are managed in the Africana Special Collection Section located on the fourth floor of the Main Library building. The Library collections are accessible through Maklib online catalogue known as MAKULA. This study investigated the nature and use of the University archives that exist in Maklib and the value of the collection to the University community and the public.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Makerere University Library's mission is to meet the study, teaching and research information needs of its users (Makerere University Library, n.d.). In order to accomplish this mission, Maklib should collect, keep and make available the University archival records. However, previous studies on the utilisation of

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