THEFT AND MUTILATION OF LIBRARY MATERIALS:
A CASE STUDY OF BINGHAM UNIVERSITY LIBRARY KARU, NASARAWA STATE.

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines theft and mutilation of library materials in Bingham university library Karu, Nasarawa state. The aim of the study is to identify the causes of book theft and mutilation in university libraries, and to proffer solutions. A survey research method was employed. Questionnaire is the main instrument for data collection. 25 questionnaires were distributed but 24 were returned and found to be useful, the questionnaires was administered to the respondents through the help of the library assistant in the various faculty libraries, data were analyzed using frequency and percentage using bar chart to represent the data collected. The findings revealed that most of the offenders are students who use various methods to perfect these acts. It was also discovered that such stolen materials were concealed in clothes or bags. Mutilations of materials occurred in the form of tearing pages of text materials, writing on pages of books and smuggling through the windows. It also revealed that theft and mutilation were encouraged by lack of security system, The paper recommends that the university library through its management should provide adequate library materials to meet the information needs of users, stiffer penalties should be well spelt out for dishonest users associated with theft and mutilation, Orientation on how to effectively use library services should be organized regularly for all library users. The library security personnel should be placed in strategic positions in the library so that strict compliance to the library rules and regulations would be ensured among the library users. Suspension of defaulting user from the library use for a whole session will help control theft and mutilation, Closed circuit television (CCTV) system should be provided in all sections of the library so as to minimize the menace of book theft and mutilation. Management should as a matter of urgency provide fund from the library budget in other to ensure adequate provision of library materials.

Introduction

Libraries all over the world are tasked with the responsibility of acquiring, processing and dissemination of information resources to users, in print and non-print format to meet their educational needs. As complex as security is in our society today, it's cost, notwithstanding the high cost of purchase therefore, the need to secure these collections in order to ensure its availability, accessibility and longevity to generation of users. In order for us to achieve these objectives, library managers must identify these security challenges that are

Statement of Problem

Bingham university library just like any library is saddled with the responsibility of providing information resources to meet the needs of students, lecturers and researchers. Books are scarce and relatively expensive due to economic recession, as such the issue of theft and mutilation comes into play. The researcher intends to look into what leads the user into theft and mutilation of library materials, and proffer solutions to curbing the problem

Purpose of the study

The main objective of the study is to determine possible ways to curb the problem of theft and mutilation. Therefore, the study is designed to:

1. Find out the means through which library materials are being stolen
2. To find out the causes of theft and mutilation of library materials
3. Identify the methods the library will adopt to prevent its information resources from theft and mutilation
4. To find out the security measures that can help to prevent theft and mutilation

Research Questions

1. What are the means through which library materials are being stolen?

2. What are the causes of book theft and mutilation of library materials?

3. What methods does the library adopt to prevent its information resources from theft and mutilation?

4. What are the security measures the library adopts to prevent theft and mutilation?

Review of Related Literature

Theft, according to Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2010), is an act of stealing something from a person or a place. It is also the act of stealing. Specifically, it is the felonious taking and removing of personal property with the intent to deprive the rightful owner of it. While mutilation in the library, is an act of tearing or removing part of a book. It should be noted that libraries are 'systems' and security is a vital part of maintaining balance in the system. Library security is typically best understood as a system that reflects the strategies of librarians and other library staff to prevent or ameliorate the negative consequences of a realized threat in the libraries. The concept of mutilation entails defacement or damage of library materials and collections. It involves removal of book pages, articles from periodicals, of illustration and or the whole text book. The practice has become a serious, disheartening and unfortunate fact of library life. Mutilation is an act of destroying or removing of an essential part from a library material as to render it useless. This could be as a result of binding of corner of paper or inserting pencil, biro or other materials or into pages. Also it can be the opening of books back to back, and tearing of relevant pages etc.

Akor,P.Usman (2013) as cited in Aliyu (2004) defined theft "as the total removal of library materials from the library without the normal procedures, either by the users, library staff or both of them". Utah (2004) further defines mutilation and theft of library materials as "deliberate removal or attempted removal of library materials from the library without being checked out.

Isaac (2008) carried out an investigation on the prevalent rate of book theft in academic society especially academic libraries. He evaluated the rate at which book theft and mutilation is plaguing academic libraries in Nigeria and to proffer some measures for curbing the menace. In his research, a total of 120 copies of questionnaires were distributed to professional librarians, library officers, and library porters (security staff) in four (4) different academic institutions in Ibadan, Ogbomosho and Oyo in Oyo state in Nigeria. Seventy eight (78) copies were returned and found useful (a response rate of 65%). He reported that reference materials, periodicals such as journals, newspapers and magazines are mostly affected. The result from the analysis of responses showed that most of the academic libraries investigated agreed that book theft and mutilation are serious problems facing their collections.

Theft and mutilation of library materials has great financial and socio-cultural consequences. Burrows and Cooper (1992) in their study reported the financial consequences of theft and mutilation in the United Kingdom (UK) libraries with the aggregate cost running to a total of fifty million pounds (50 million) per annum and could very likely be in the order of hundred million pounds (100 million). Today, value of financial loss may probably have increased looking at the rapid increase in the cost of books and other library materials. Academic libraries are prone to

various security threats such as theft and mutilation. Holt (2007) observed that libraries are faced with the problem of physical materials' theft, data theft and money theft. Other problems include theft of library equipment as well as theft and abuse of personal belongings of staff and users. Therefore, there is need to examine the theft and mutilation in order to provide quality services for users making use of the collections. Theft and mutilation in academic libraries is a global problem. Security of library books has been the subject of much investigation. However, the situation seems not to be getting better.

In the researchers' opinion, theft and mutilation is a deliberate act by either the library staff or the user as the case may be. It is a selfish act which deprives others from using the information contents of affected materials. The researchers further assert that unauthorized removal of library materials from the library, and failure to return materials to the library are also considered to be theft of library materials.

Causes of book theft and mutilation

Various authors/writers have expressed their views on what contributes to the cause of different forms of abuse to library collections. However many researchers based their argument on economic recession and insecurity as the main cause of abuse of library material. Bello (1998) conducted a study on theft and mutilation in technological university libraries in Nigeria, revealing that, there is lack of security in university libraries, users resorted to delinquent behavior because demand outstripped the supply of library materials. This result in competition for resources, which invariably tempts users to steal, mutilates or engages in illegal borrowing. Akor P. Usman (2013) quoted Nkiki and Yusuf (2008) by observing that "information is an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is a basic human right". Thanuskodi (2009) asserted that "information is not only a national resource but also a medium for social communication. With declining budgets and higher subscription cost, it is becoming difficult to meet the demand of library users". Libraries should therefore ensure the security and safety of their collections. However, in the researchers' view, theft is an unlawful act and offence to disfigure, deface, tearing of pages, underling using pencil or biro and tempering with the content and also preventing others from having access to vital information that can be used to enhance knowledge.

By and large the researcher opined that Information is not just a national asset but a basic necessity for Individual. Therefore, Poor security necessitates theft. Users feel lazy to use the materials in the library and think of how to make a way with it. Therefore library should improve on their internal security to ensure security of their collection.

Measures to curb theft and mutilation of library materials

Security is very paramount in our daily lives as humans. Security is to ensure the safety of records and archival materials against human and natural agent. According to Adomi (2006) "security of library materials refers to device and method designed to guide library materials against crime, disasters, fire and attacks". Aina (2004) added that, library materials must be safe; hence security devices need to be provided by library to ensure that they are not stolen or mutilated. Mittal (2010) maintained that for effective security measures in libraries the following steps should be followed:

1. A classroom information programme that will acquaint readers with book replacement costs, readers right and implication of mutilation
2. Keeping open a line of communication between teaching staff and library personnel relating to class assignment and reserved books.
3. Passing information through students union
4. Strict penalties for defaulters
5. Theft and damage fee levied
6. Strict vigilance in the stacks, reading rooms and other vulnerable places
7. Using electronic devices to catch book thieves.

Nwalo (2003) said the measures listed below would help reduce the rate of book theft in the library.

a. Constant supervision
b. Searching users at the library exit
c. Periodical unannounced searching of students hostels
d. Keeping educated security personnel in the library
e. Guard against staff connivance with students to steal or mutilate.

In addition to the above measures, Mecomb (2004) state that "video surveillance

and closed circuit television (CCTV) systems serve as a way to monitor and record security defer crime and ensure safety. The system can also be used to monitor and record evidence on clientele and employee misconduct".

In the same vein, Remana (2010) contributed that "Closed circuit television (CCTV) used in the libraries can enhance the ability to control the book theft and tearing off the pages from the books and magazines".

In the researcher opinion "security of library material has to do with guiding against external attack on library materials that could be harmful to library collection.

However the researcher suggests measures that will also help in reducing theft and mutilation in the library and Information centers. These include proper library orientation to users of library; proper architectural design to prevent theft and mutilation; provision of adequate number of library materials; the exit point should be well secured; withdrawal of mutilated materials from the shelf; and wearing of bogus cloths, bags, briefcase to the libraries.
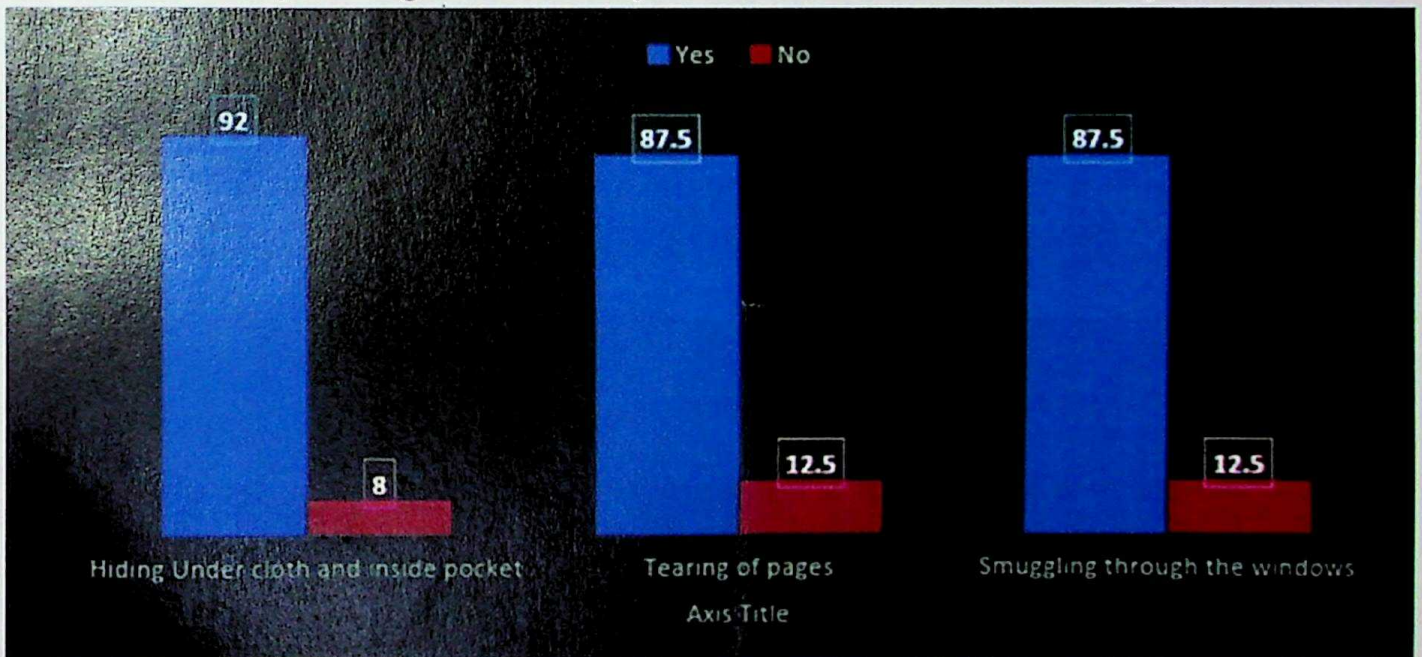
Research Methodology

Survey research design was employed in this study. The population of the study was 25 library staff of the university library of Bingham University Karu campus. Because the population was very manageable, there was an enumerative census of the whole population as sample of the study. The major instrument used to gather data for this study was a structured questionnaire. 24((98%) of the questionnaire were returned and found useful. Data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages and presented using bar charts.

Data analysis and presentation

The statistical approach employed for analyzing the data is frequency and percentage using bar chart to represent the data collected.
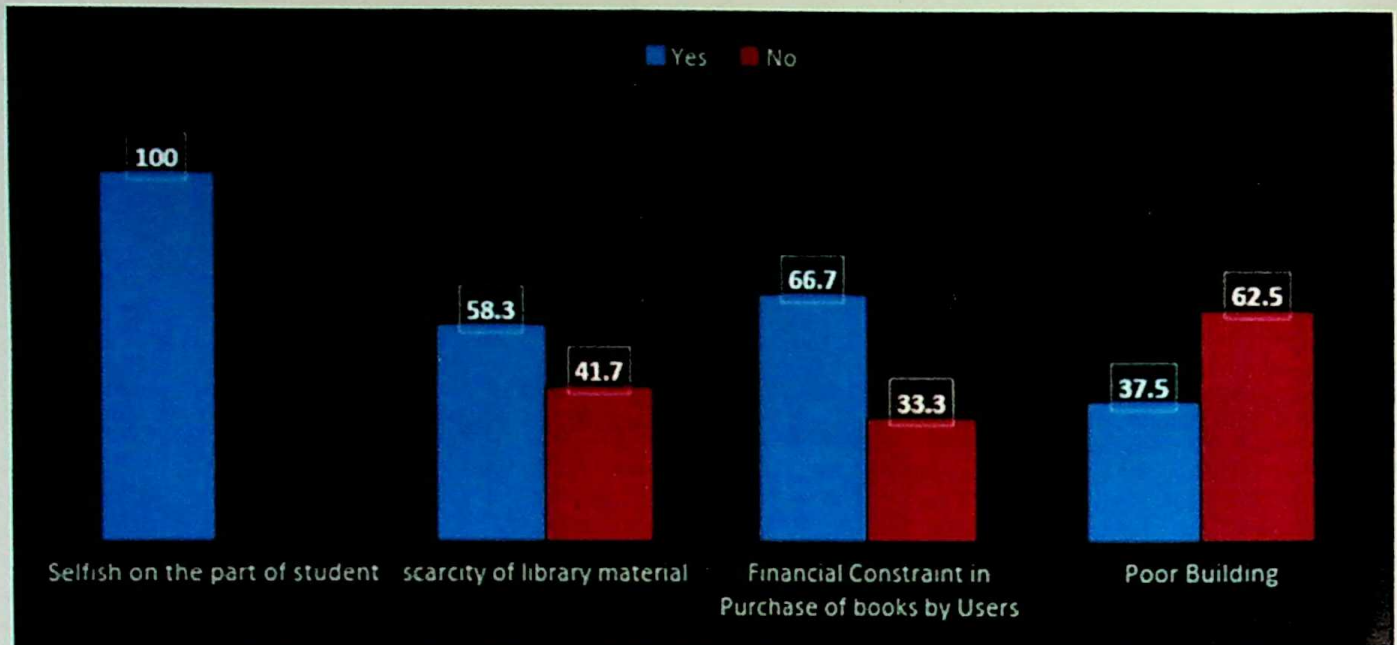
1.What are the ways through which library materials are stolen in the library

The above chart shows that 92% of the respondents agree that library materials are being stolen by hiding them under clothes and inside pocket, while 8% of the respondents indicated that books are not hidden under clothes and inside pocket. 87.5% of the respondents indicate that tearing of pages are ways which users steal library material and 12.5 %respondent agreed that tearing of pages is not a major way which users steal library materials in the library. 87.5%of the respondent said that users smuggle materials through the widow while 12.5% of the respondent indicated that users don't smuggle materials through the windows
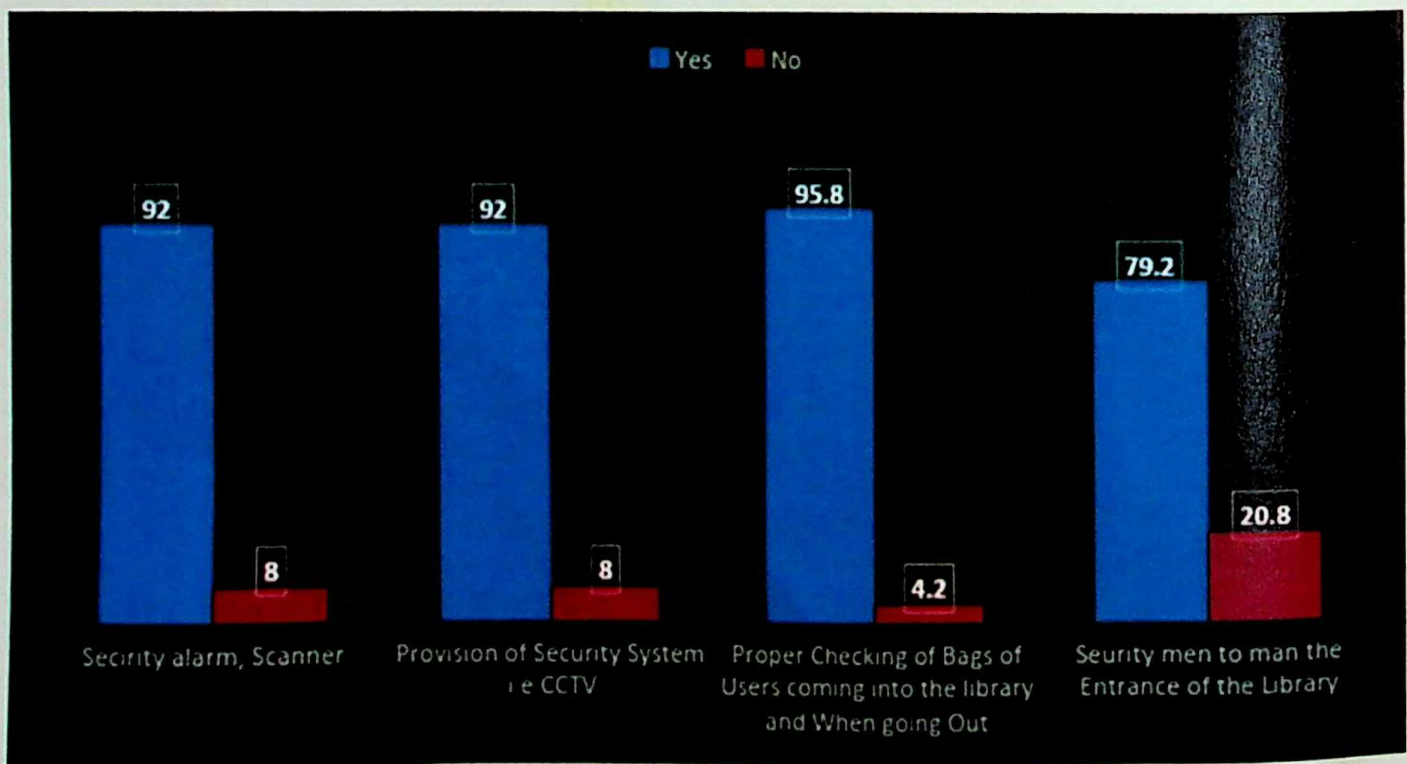
2. **What are the causes of theft and mutilation of library materials**

According to the chart above 100% of the respondents indicate selfishness on the part of the user. 58.3% indicate that one of the causes of theft and mutilation are scarcity of library material while 41.7% disagree that scarcity is not the causes of theft and mutilation of library materials. From the above chart, it reveals that 66.7% of the respondents indicate that financial constraint in purchasing books is one of the causes of theft and mutilation in the same vein 33.3 % of the respondents disagree that financial constraint in purchasing books is not one of the causes of theft and mutilation. The chart also revealed that 37.5% of the respondent agreed that poor building has also contributed to theft and mutilation. While 62.5% of the respondent indicated that they don't see poor building as one of the causes of theft and mutilation of library materials.
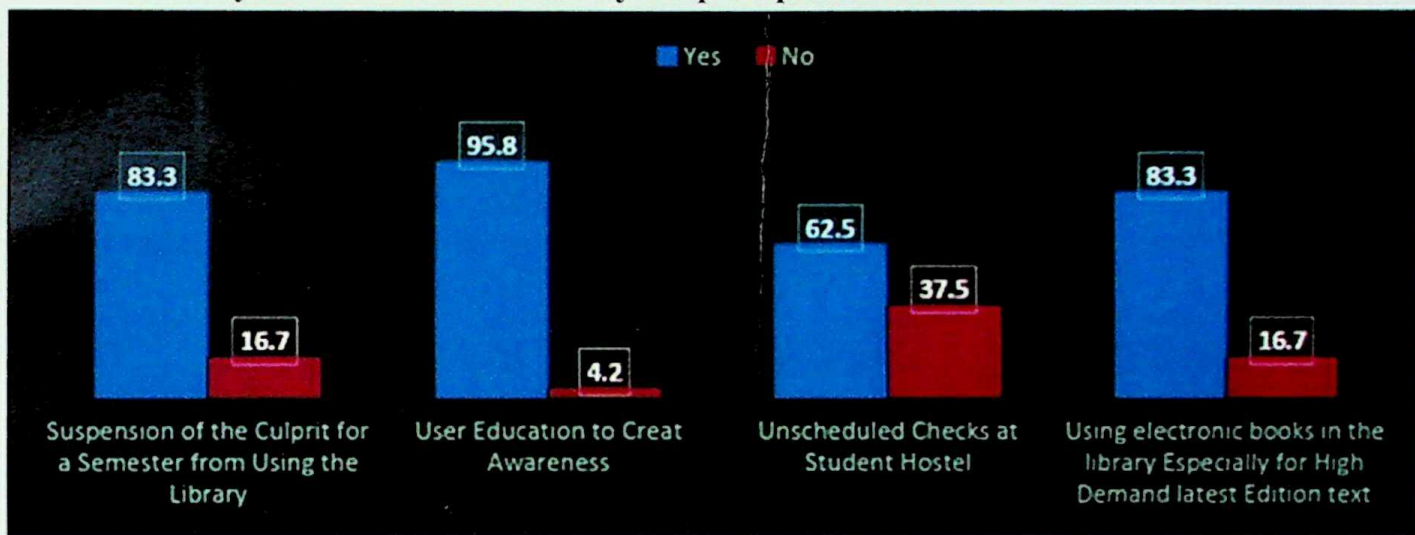
3.What method should the library adopt to prevent its Information resources from theft and mutilation?

The chart above revealed that 92% of the respondents indicate that security alarm and scanner should be mounted in the library while 8% of the respondents indicated that security alarm and scanner should not be mounted in the library. Also 92% of the respondents indicate that security system such as closed circuit television (CCTV) are method to be adopted to prevent information resources from theft and mutilation and 8% of the respondents disagree that security system should be mounted in the library. Furthermore 95.8% of the respondents agreed that proper checking of bags of users coming into the library and going out should be adopted while 4.25% of the respondents indicated that proper checking of users bags should not be allowed when coming in and going out of the library. 79.2 % of the respondents opined that security men should man the entrance to the library so as to prevent or reduce information resources from theft and mutilation while 20.8 % of the respondents indicate that security men should not man the entrance of the library. Another respondent on method the library should adopt to prevent information resources from theft and mutilation suggests two other ways which include: provision of adequate numbers of library materials, proper architectural design to prevent theft and

4. What security measures can the library adopt to prevent theft and mutilation?

It can also be observed from the chart above that 83.3% of the respondents agree that suspension of the culprit for a semester from using the library. While 16.7% of the respondents disagree that culprit should not be suspended for a semester. Also 95.8% of the respondents suggest user education to create awareness, while 4.2 % of the respondents disagree with user education to create awareness .62.5 % of the respondents suggested that unscheduled checks at the student hostel should be adopted while 37.5 % disagree that there should not be unscheduled checks at the student hostel. However, 83.3 % of the respondents suggested that using electronic books in the library especially for high demand latest edition text should be adopted while 16.7 % of the respondents did not.

Discussion of findings

From the result of this research, Ways through which library materials are stolen include hiding under cloth and inside pocket having 92%, care should be taken when students come in and when they are going out, They should be properly checked. The major causes of theft and mutilation is selfishness on the part of the user other causes include scarcity of library material, financial constraint in purchase of books by users is among others which agrees with Akor P.Usman (2013) citing Abifarin (1997) students steal or mutilate library materials because of selfishness on the part of some students. This research also reveal that 92% of the data collected shows that in order to prevent theft and mutilation of information resources security alarm and scanner should be mounted in the library, 92% also provision of security system such as closed circuit television(CCTV) which agree with Remana (2010) that contributed that closed circuit television (CCTV) used in the libraries can enhance the ability to control the book theft and tearing off of the pages from books and magazines, while others include proper checking of bags of students among others. Also the findings reveal that 95.8% of the respondent suggest that user education should be employed to create awareness, 83.35% suggest

that suspension of culprit for a semester from using the library. This agree with Akor (2013) as quoted in Abifarin (1997) who says amongst important findings, it was found that among the various users groups, students (96.6 %) topped the list of culprits as far as book theft and mutilation is concerned.

Conclusion

For a long time libraries have undergo tremendous transformation as a result of the advancement in technologies globally, to ensure university access to information which is in line with the mission of academic libraries. Security issues should be treated with utmost importance at the management level, because of its relevance in ensuring that collections are protected and secured from security incidences like theft and mutilation. The data collected in this research revealed that materials are stolen by hiding under clothes and inside the pockets; it was discover that security systems are not available in the library under study, the study also revealed selfishness on the parts of the students. The study revealed that well trained library porters should be stationed at the entrance of the library to check bags of users coming into the library and going out of the library, so as to prevent or reduce information resources from theft and mutilation. There is still much for the library to do in terms of user education to create awareness to the users. It was further discovered that other contributing factors observed include tearing of pages, smuggling through the windows, the absence of security alarms and scanners. In this Akor (2013) quoting Gojeh (1999) corroborated this finding when he said that "loss of library materials reduces the efficiency of libraries". Aguolu (2002) also stated that "high incidence of book theft and mutilation gradually depletes information resources and reduces the librarian effectiveness". Therefore, there is need to safeguard library collection for generation of users.

Recommendation

The following are recommended based on the findings

1. The university library through its management should provide adequate library materials to meet the information needs of users.
2. Stiffer penalties should be well spelt out and used on dishonest users who are associated with theft and mutilation.
3. Orientation on how to effectively use library services should be organized regularly for all library users.
4. Library porters should be placed in strategic positions in the library so that strict compliance to the library rules and regulations would be ensured among the library users.
5. Closed circuit television (CCTV) system should be provided in all sections of the library so as to minimize the menace of book theft and mutilation.

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