

# Impact of Economic Recession on the Management of Special Collection in University Libraries in Benue State

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated the perceived impact of economic recession on the management of special collection in universities in Benue State. Three research objectives were formulated for the study. The population of the study comprises 301 librarians in Joseph SarwuanTarka University, Makurdi, Benue State University, Makurdi, National Open University of Nigeria, Makurdi study centre and Mkar University, Mkar, Benue State. The research employed census sampling technique thereby sampling all the population since it was small and could be relatively handled. The instrument employed for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire. Data for the study was collected with the help of research assistants who were staff of the libraries of the two institutions sampled. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The findings of the study revealed that economic recession has negative impact on the management of rare books, manuscripts, audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommended that libraries should prioritize the preservation and acquisition of rare books, manuscripts and audio-visual materials during economic downturns.

## INTRODUCTION

Special collections are created by individual universities libraries who own it. According to Harrod's Librarians Glossary (2006), a special collection is a general collection of books in a library that are related to a particular subject or era, local history, celebrities, industry, or assembled for specific reasons. Materials that are differentiated by their age, topic matter, or other distinguishing features are referred to as special collections. According to Love and Feather (2013), they are standard components of many university libraries and a valuable source for primary research in the social sciences and humanities.

University libraries' special collections need to be given extra care in terms of organization and preservation. Highly valuable items that could support research, teaching, and learning are typically found in special collections. Many university libraries' special collection sections have a sizable quantity of primary literature resources, which are utilized to update knowledge due to their currency. Certain materials possess both local and international dimensions, making them appropriate for a range of research types. Numerous statistical information materials that provide up-to-date statistics on practically every facet of human activity are another important addition to the particular collection. The majority of the times, special collection resources are kept in closed access rooms. The university library is an entity with a clear mission. It serves as the main support system for the teaching, research, and extension tripartite functions of higher education. This makes "special collections" in university libraries absolutely necessary.

A recession is a time when the economy is contracting. This broad definition, however, does not specify

how to distinguish between an economic downturn that is temporary and a genuine recession in an economy. According to Claessens and Kose (2019), the majority of pundits and analysts characterize a recession as two quarters in a row of a real (inflation adjusted) gross domestic product (GDP) fall in a nation. A recession usually lasts for a year or so. An average of 2% (or 5% in cases of severe recessions) is lost from GDP. International trade declines as a result of declines in imports and exports, an increase in the unemployment rate, and an average loss in industrial production and investment of more than 4%. Financial market turbulence and the depreciation of property and equity values are frequently linked to recessions. The impact of the recession on the administration of the special collection of academic libraries in university libraries in Benue State, however, might be mitigated by effective policies and financial management.

Libraries may create a special collections division for administrative ease in order to handle various non-conforming library materials, such as literary manuscripts and photographic collections. Institutional “archives” are a more recent addition to this category. Almost all academic libraries, including the university libraries in Benue State, contain some portion of this collection that requires special handling, such as an archive, an important donation, or a collection of rare and valuable books. The characteristics specific to special collections distinguish this department from the rest of the library and often from the library administration as well. These collections are often resources of national significance (Scham, 2017). Libraries and their patrons have benefited greatly from the term “special collection” being used in place of “rare books.” If the definition of “rare books” traditionally refers to mostly antiquated, uncommon, precious, and unusual works, then the word “special collection” immediately changes and expands the scope of such holdings. The study will look into the difficulties in managing special collections in special libraries in Benue State, as well as the effects of the economic downturn on the management of rare books, manuscripts, audio visual materials, ephemera, and theses’ materials.

Books that are either unique or uncommon because of their age, historical value, or limited publication are sometimes referred to as rare books in special libraries. Because of their rarity, these books are frequently valued, and libraries or individual collectors may gather and preserve them. Specialized volumes, records, and manuscripts that are not commonly found in public libraries are kept in university libraries, making them indispensable resources. These rare books, which are frequently priceless, offer insight into the history and culture of countries. Nonetheless, the management of rare books in university libraries has been impacted by the economic downturn in a number of ways. Albrecht and Baxter (2014) claim that the recession has had an impact on university libraries’ efforts to acquire, preserve, and digitize rare books. Libraries’ budgets have been slashed by the economic downturn, which makes it harder for them to buy new, rare books and manuscripts. Libraries are consequently compelled to depend on gifts and contributions in order to grow their holdings.

A manuscript is a work that has not yet been published that is written by hand, typed, or generated in another way (Crescenzo & McMenemy 2007). A manuscript may be written as a book, an essay, a research paper, a collection of poems, or anything else. They could be made for a variety of reasons, including professional communication, scholarly inquiry, or personal expression. Because they may provide rare insights into the thoughts, ideas, and perspectives of their creators or the period in which they were written, manuscripts can be extremely valuable historical or cultural artifacts. Manuscripts are frequently sent to publishers or other organizations in the contemporary period for evaluation and possible publication in print or digital formats. But the recession also meant that libraries received less financing, which meant fewer new resources were acquired and fewer staff members were employed. Due to a lack of resources for collection maintenance and preservation, these circumstances have an impact on the management of manuscripts in the libraries (Olanlokun & Fatoki 2018). According to Aina and Uwadiogwu (2017), university libraries experienced a decline in financing as a result of the recession, which limited access to resources and services. This had an impact on the way manuscripts were managed in the libraries because there weren’t as many resources available to build and preserve collections like those of audiovisual materials.

Audio-visual materials are those that use both moving pictures and sound to communicate ideas or information (Roy and Thomas, 2020). These resources are frequently used to improve audience engagement, communication, and learning in professional, educational, and recreational situations. The gathering and administration of audio-visual resources is the area of expertise for audio-visual libraries. These libraries are essential in meeting the demands of patrons in terms of research, education, and entertainment. But with the economy in recession, money for the upkeep of audio-visual materials is scarce and needs to be managed carefully. The administration of audio-visual resources in university libraries is negatively impacted by the issues that Nigerian libraries confront generally, including lower funding and staffing levels. But university libraries can lessen the effects of the crisis and keep offering their patrons top-notch services by working together and looking into alternate financing sources.

### **Statement of Problem**

It is impossible to overstate the value of libraries' particular collections. Despite having limited resources, the special library is aware of the importance of special collections to its holdings. This is due to the fact that students in higher education, particularly those pursuing postgraduate studies, depend on specialized collections for their coursework. Special Collections offer specific types of information that are not available through normal library sections. It is undoubtedly a vital source of knowledge for researchers. We are rushing through history, therefore it is even more important to preserve and grow exceptional collections now. In the future, the younger generation will have to slow down, and the preservation of our written legacy will be recognized and valued. Managers of special collections must simultaneously draw in academics and students and publicize their resources. However, it appears that the economic recession's reduced financing is having a detrimental effect on the management of special collections in Benue State's university libraries, since sometimes researchers get discouraged trying to find items for special collections in university libraries.

It seems that the purchase and arrangement of the materials for the unique collection have been impacted by the circumstances. Additionally, it seems that the library is no longer receiving the more pertinent special collection materials that are required to meet the information demands of its teaming users. The fact that demotivation affects both library employees and patrons and has a detrimental effect on special collection management is also concerning. University libraries may suffer grave implications if this crucial element is not adequately managed. This will result in "half-baked graduates" and mediocre graduates with possibly questionable academic backgrounds. Learning and research will have a dismal future. It becomes necessary therefore, to find out how the special collections are being managed especially in the face of economic recession. The problem of the study in question form is what is the impact of economic recession on the management of special collection in university libraries in Benue State?

### **Objectives of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of economic recession on the management of special collection in university libraries in Benue State. Specifically, the study was aimed at achieving the following:

1. To find out the impact of economic recession on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State.
2. To find out the impact of economic recession on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State.
3. To examine the impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials university libraries

## Research Design

Census survey design was adopted for the study. The study was carried out in Benue State Nigeria. The population of the study was 121 professional and non-professional librarians from Joseph SarwuanTarka University, Makurdi, 70 from Benue State University, Makurdi, 39 from National Open University, Makurdi study centre and 71 from Mkar University, Mkar totalling 301 librarians (Library Units of the sampled institutions, 2012). Professional librarians are those who obtained a Bachelor Degree in Library and Information Science while Non-Professional librarians are the staff that holds a Diploma and other certificate courses in Library and Information Science. These universities were chosen for the study because the researcher is interested in finding the effect of economic recession on the management of universities in Benue State. A self-designed structured questionnaire titled “Impact of Economic Recession on Management of Special Collection Questionnaire (IOEROMOSCQ)” was used as the instrument for data collection. Descriptive statistics of Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions.

## RESULT

**Research Question 1:** What is the impact of economic recession on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean rating of impact of economic recession on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State.

S/N	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SA	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	The economic downturn makes it difficult for university libraries to purchase new rare books.	301	83	104	55	59	2.70	1.08	Accepted
2	Due to budget cuts caused by the economic downturn, university libraries are now dependent on donations and gifts to increase their special collections	301	105	107	59	30	2.95	.97	Accepted
3	The economic recession has resulted in a decrease in staffing level, which makes it challenging for university libraries to maintain their current collections	301	96	120	56	29	2.94	.94	Accepted
4	The decrease in funding has caused delays in preservation projects, resulting in an increased risk of rare book damage or loss in university libraries.	301	117	96	51	37	2.97	1.03	Accepted
5	The economic downturn has caused a reduction in funding for digitization projects, resulting in a slower pace of digitization of university libraries collections	301	98	101	72	30	2.89	.98	Accepted
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.89</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*N=Number; SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; D=Disagreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed;  $\bar{x}$ = Mean & SD=Standard Deviation*

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the impact of economic recession on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State. The ratings of items 1 to 5 are 2.70, 2.95, 2.94, 2.97 and 2.89

respectively. Based on the decision rule, all the items are above the cut-off point of 2.50 and the cluster mean of 2.89 is also above the cut-off point. This shows that the respondents indicated that economic recession had impact on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State.

**Research Question 2:** What is the impact of economic recession on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean rating of the influence of impact of economic recession on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State

S/N	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SA	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
1	Universities libraries prioritize manuscripts they acquire due to economic recession.	301	100	97	62	42	2.85	1.04	Accepted
2	University libraries experience delays in the processing of manuscripts requests due to the economic recession	301	116	102	63	20	3.04	.93	Accepted
3	Due to economic recession, donors have less disposable income to donate to university libraries, resulting in a decrease in the number of manuscripts donated	301	94	93	74	40	2.80	1.03	Accepted
4	Economic recession makes it difficult for the library to afford the cost of acquiring manuscripts from other institutions through interlibrary loan services	301	97	74	86	44	2.74	1.06	Accepted
5	The economic recession has caused funding cuts for university libraries, resulting in a reduction of funds available for preserving manuscripts	301	106	114	51	30	2.98	.96	Accepted
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.88</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*N=Number; SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; D=Disagreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed;  $\bar{x}$ = Mean & SD=Standard Deviation*

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the impact of economic recession on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State. The ratings of items 6 to 10 are 2.85, 3.04, 2.80, 2.94 and 2.98 respectively. Based on the decision rule, all the items are above the cut-off point of 2.50 and the cluster mean of 2.88 is also above the cut-off point. This shows that the respondents indicated that economic recession had impact on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State.

**Research Question 3:** What is the impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State?

Table 3: Mean rating of the influence of impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State

S/N	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SA	$\bar{x}$	SD	Decision
11	University libraries reduce the amount of funding allocated to purchase audio-visual equipment as a result of economic recession	301	16	207	43	35	2.68	.75	Accepted



12	The economic recession has reduced preservation efforts on audio-visual materials in university libraries	301	84	101	76	40	2.76	1.01	Accepted
13	The economic recession has led to a significant reduction in government-provided audio-visual materials as gifts to university libraries	301	98	123	50	30	2.96	.94	Accepted
14	The economic recession has caused a slowdown in the digitization of audio-visual materials in university libraries	301	116	107	58	20	3.06	.92	Accepted
15	There is decrease in the availability of new or updated audio-visual materials in university libraries as a result of economic recession	301	23	182	66	30	2.66	.76	Accepted
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>						<b>2.82</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>Accepted</b>

*N=Number; SA=Strongly Agreed; A=Agreed; D=Disagreed; SD=Strongly Disagreed;  $\bar{x}$ = Mean & SD=Standard Deviation*

Table 3 shows the mean scores of the impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State. The ratings of items 11 to 15 are 2.68, 2.76, 2.96, 3.06 and 2.66 respectively. Based on the decision rule, all the items are above the cut-off point of 2.50 and the cluster mean of 2.82 is also above the cut-off point. This shows that the respondents indicated that economic recession had impact on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on the analysis of research questions and testing of hypotheses, the findings are discussed below:

The first finding of this study revealed that economic recession had negative impact on the management of rare books in university libraries in Benue State. The result as presented on Table 1 shows that economic downturn makes it difficult for university libraries to purchase new rare books. Thus, making university libraries are now dependent on donations and gifts to increase their special collections. Also, economic recession has resulted in a decrease in staffing level, which makes it challenging for university libraries to maintain their current collections. It has caused delays in preservation projects, resulting in an increased risk of rare book damage or loss in university libraries as well as reduction in funding for digitization projects, resulting in a slower pace of digitization of university libraries collections. The result of this finding is in agreement with Garcia, (2018) who examined the impact of economic recession on the management of rare books in university libraries Columbia. The study found that economic recession had a significant impact on the management of rare books in university libraries. The study also found that budget cuts and decreased funding resulted in reduced staffing levels and fewer resources allocated to rare book collections, leading to limited access and decreased preservation efforts. Garcia also found that libraries have increasingly relied on digitization efforts to make rare books accessible, but this has raised concerns about authenticity and the long-term preservation of these materials. The finding also is in line with Lee (2018) who found that during the recession period, university libraries experienced budget cuts and reduced funding, which resulted in decreased staff and resources allocated to rare book collections. This led to limited access to rare book collections, reduced preservation efforts, and less focus on acquiring new rare books. However, the study also found that libraries that prioritized the preservation and acquisition of rare books during the recession period were more likely to see increased usage of these collections post-recession. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher deduced that, increase in budget will result in increased staff and resources

allocated to rare book collection. This further indicates that prioritizing the preservation and acquisition of rare books in recession times will likely result in increased usage of these collections at post-recession.

The second finding revealed economic recession had negative impact on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Benue State. The result as presented on Table 2 shows that economic downturn makes it difficult for university libraries to prioritize manuscripts to acquire and delays in the processing of manuscripts requests. It also resulted in a reduction of funds available for preserving manuscripts as well as making it difficult for the library to afford the cost of acquiring manuscripts from other institutions through interlibrary loan services. This finding agrees with Johnson (2020) who reported that during the recession period, university libraries experienced budget cuts and reduced funding, which resulted in decreased staff and resources allocated to manuscript collections. Smith, (2020) also reported that economic recession had significant impact on the management of manuscripts in university libraries in Canada. It forced some university libraries to sell or dispose of some of their manuscript collections to cope with the financial constraints of the recession. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher realized that, economic recession resulted in limited access to manuscript collections, reduced preservation efforts, and less focus on acquiring new manuscripts. However, university libraries can actually generate income by renting out manuscripts to cushion the impact of economic recession rather than outright sell. They can also digitize their manuscript collections to increase access and reduce the wear and tear associated with physical use.

The third finding of this study revealed that economic recession had negative impact on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Benue State. The result as presented on Table 3 shows that university libraries reduce the amount of funding allocated to purchase audio-visual equipment as a result of economic recession. It was also found that preservation efforts on audio-visual materials in university libraries were reduced as a result of economic downturn. Thus, economic recession has led to a significant reduction in government-provided audio-visual materials as gifts to university libraries university libraries are now dependent on donations and gifts to increase their special collections. Also, digitization of audio-visual materials in university libraries has slowed down due to economic recession. The result of this finding is in agreement with Johnston and Rigby (2019) who reported that majority of the librarians had to reduce their budgets for acquiring and maintaining audio-visual materials. Furthermore, access to audio-visual materials was affected due to the reduction in the number of staff members and the limited availability of equipment. In the same vein, Doe (2019) who studied the impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Washington found a significant negative impact of economic recession on the management of ephemeras in university library due to reduction in funding. Pham (2017) carried out a study on the impact of economic recession on the management of audio-visual materials in university libraries in Madagascar who reported that the budget allocation for audio-visual materials has been reduced due to the economic recession and this has led to a decrease in the acquisition of new audio-visual materials and a decrease in the maintenance of existing materials. In addition, the study found that the economic recession has affected the utilization of audio-visual materials by library users, as they have limited access to new materials. Based on the findings of this study, the researcher deduced that, if university libraries should collaborate with other institutions to share resources, it will reduce the financial burden of acquiring and maintaining audio-visual materials. University libraries therefore, should develop a sustainable and diversified collection management plan that could account for economic downturns.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that economic recession has negative impact on the management of rare books, manuscripts, audio-visual materials, ephemeras and theses' materials in university libraries. This could be measured through reduction resources and in budget allocation, decrease in digitalization of library materials as well as its sell or disposal.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. University should prioritize the preservation and acquisition of rare books, even during economic downturns.
2. University should conduct regular assessments of their rare book collections to ensure that they are adequately preserved and meet the needs of their users.
3. University libraries should conduct regular assessments of their manuscript collections to ensure that they are adequately preserved and meet the needs of their users. They can as well seeking external funding sources and collaborating with other institutions to increase access to manuscript collections.

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