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Documentation of Family Records in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated documentation of family records in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The project is a collaboration of researchers in the University of Uyo Library, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was carried out to study different family records as represented among Afaha Oku indigenes that are typical to that family which should be treasured and documented for posterity. Three specific objectives were formulated to guide the study. Convenience sampling technique was used in selecting Afaha Oku village out of the 14 villages in Oku district, Uyo local government area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria where the researchers are based while a census sampling technique was used in selecting all the families from Afaha Oku village. The study employed the use of questionnaire in eliciting information. Verbal communication and oral interview were employed to elicit information from the less literate members of the family. A checklist was also used to determine the availability or otherwise of some objects such as ancient buildings, cloths, photographs and biographies. Descriptive statistics such as simple percentages and bar charts were used for data analysis. In conclusion, the researchers agreed that most families do not keep records and that the available records in few families that keep records centered on Medical information, Occupational Information; Social Information; Land and Property; Religion; and Technological development. Finally, it was concluded also that there is influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology. One of the recommendations was that the Government of Akwa Ibom State should take up the study as a state project to educate the Akwa Ibom Populace on the importance of family record keeping.

Key Words: Family records, Afaha Oku village, Preservation, Historical records, Evolution of science, Technology

Introduction

One of the greatest legacies a family can leave behind is a family history in the form of family records. In African countries like Nigeria, record keeping is not widely practiced; this is why the researchers as information specialists have deemed it very necessary to educate members of the public on the need for documentation and record keeping. Record keeping is crucial for efficient and effective management of all organizations. It facilitates transparency and accountability and promotes security and privacy within legal parameters. It ensures we have archives which documents all aspects of life, past and present, which will be preserved for the future (Crockett, 2014). Records preservation is one of the cardinal roles of the librarian and libraries. The librarian is the custodian of documented information whether in the form of books, manuscripts, or photographs, etc. Traditionally, the library is the storehouse of knowledge, before the advent of modern technology; the librarian was associated with collection of books, scrolls. He was seen to be the custodian of what others documented. As time evolved, the librarian steadily evolved to adapt to the needs and desires of the communities globally. He became a creator of knowledge borne out of his experience of managing information materials having firsthand information on knowledge and information users' needs.

Creation, Documentation, Preservation, Circulation and Disposal of information are activities involved in records management. Every facet of life has a unique and specific obligation to fulfill but what is common for all organizations, if there must be continuity and perhaps room for improvement, is the need for records and preservation of knowledge. A record is made up of pieces of documents that have been accumulated overtime (The National Archives of Scotland-NAS, 2013). This suggests that records are produced over a period of time. They constitute a compilation of documents to explain given activities of a specific purpose. Records management also underlines the need to organize into acceptable format such information acquired, collected and recorded for easy understanding by the person documenting and others. NAS enumerated a set of Records Management Principles to include Authenticity, Accuracy, Accessibility, Completeness, Comprehensiveness, Compliancy, Effectiveness and Security of records.

Family record is as important as any other organization's record. For instance, it is essential to know the importance of specific dates and days that events occurred in a family; the events or series of events that are peculiar to a people in production, culture, technology, belief system, common issues; socially, medically etc. It is handed from generation to generation. In fact, these define a people, giving them a common identity.

In times past, our forebears believed in memorization, counting of stones, making of marks on the walls to indicate the number of times something happened, using different colours of materials for different events. This type of record keeping was not very helpful to the future generation. Sometimes such documentations, including photographs, clothing, special buildings, special skills, and special endowments, without adequate explanation would become meaningless to the present generation, and there would thus be no continuity. Researchers have discovered that such special endowments and skills were almost wiped away from memory without proper documentations. Sometimes also the knowledge of such endowments was not shared among family members nor disseminated to close outsiders. So the death of such people terminated the acquisition and transfer of such skills and endowments. Records not properly documented and stored have the tendency to be destroyed. According to Akussah (1991), some of the agents of

deterioration and destruction are lignin, wood pulps, high temperature, high humidity, high sunshine, fungi, rodents, bacteria, insects, and man himself.

This project is therefore timely in trying to educate the public on the need for proper documentation and storage, the need to refer to such information, and the need to improve upon such available information. This study has witnessed some transformation of above mentioned forms of documentation of information into use as diaries by some community members, exercise books, jotters to record important events, burial programmes and photographs to remember the dead, documents like receipts, land agreements, certificates of occupancy, etc. These are forms of record keeping which could remind people of important events. It became very necessary for the researchers as librarians who are vested with knowledge organization and information management to re-organize the community's perception of information organization for future references, by telling them the importance of record keeping and preservation of information depending on what was viewed as very important to the community. Popoola (2000) stated that record creation ranges from handwritten to type written and by extension to database. Filing of this information for easy retrieval takes numeric, alphabetic and alphanumeric forms.

Statement of the Problem

This project on documentation of family records in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria (DOFAR) is triggered by the observation of a particular family where most of the forebears died of blindness; whereas those who lived longer with better eye sight used to drink some reasonable quantity of fresh palm wine. As a result of this, most of the men in that family became palm wine tappers. As long as the people drink palm wine, their eye sight would improve. Their fore bears began to look for ways to preserve fresh palm wine such as by keeping a keg of it in cold water; as long as the keg of palm wine was kept in the cold water; the freshness would be retained. This situation improved with the invention of the refrigerator. However, with the challenge of unreliable power supply, many people still exploited the cold water method. In the course of time, a member of the family became a mechanical engineer who decided to study the mechanism of the cold water method and came out with a fabricated machine where the fresh palm wine known as "bottled ukot" in Akwa Ibom local language is produced fresh as tapped from the tree, after the production. The engineer took time to document the family history, the cold water method of preserving fresh palm wine, and the process of making "bottled ukot". The engineer died and left behind this record. The man's son grew up and also became a mechanical engineer; he studied the family records and became interested in the father's invention. He eventually in a bid to improve upon his father's legacy took the "bottled ukot" to the chemical laboratory to analyze the content. It was found out that the fresh palm wine contained fermented yeast. It was the fresh local palm wine containing the fermented yeast that helped to improve the vision of the consumers in the local community which was not known hitherto. The son now laid a lot of emphasis on advertisement for the sale of the product as being a curative medicine for the correction of defective eye sight. He also added some modern technology and techniques to produce better quality of the "bottled ukot" and in greater quantity which is widely consumed within the country and exported outside the shores of this country. It is right to add at this point that this "bottled ukot" can remain fresh for a period of one (1) year. This improved quality of the product was made possible through the study of that family's history, and the records and processes left behind by the father. There is no other place in the whole state where "bottled ukot" is produced. One begins to ask what could have happened if such records were not kept

and preserved. Those skills and endowments which have improved the family socially and economically would have been lost; even the medical tendency for fresh palm wine to be an excellent alternative for correcting defective vision would not be known universally. Prompted by such discovery, observations and demands for such records, the researchers began to search for such family records. Not satisfied, nevertheless with what was available in the libraries and with their objective in line with users' demand, they as information experts who are ready to disseminate information, went to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, where such records are kept. Though with slight differences, the researchers saw bibliographic records, photographs, clothes, artifacts, etc. The researchers included origin, beliefs, culture, health trends, life style, artistic endowments and skills, as well as demographic attributes as variables which would be investigated. The researchers observed a gap in information flow and dissemination of recorded information from the older society to newer and modern society and formulated the following objectives to guide the study.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess the documentation of family records in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, while the specific objectives are as follows:

1. To find out the types of family records kept by families in Afaha Oku village.
2. To determine the extent of preservation of family records in families in Afaha Oku village.
3. To find out the extent of the influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology.

Research Questions

The following research questions will be answered:

1. What are the types of family records kept by families in Afaha Oku village?
2. What is the extent of preservation of family records in families in Afaha Oku Village?
3. What is the extent of the influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology?

Literature Review

Medical Records

These are documents of health issues of a people which have been observed overtime. The medical record is a tool that allows the treating physician to track the patient's medical history and identify problems or patterns that may help determine the course of health care. It is a living document that tells the story of the patient and facilitates each encounter they have had with health professionals involved (Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario). By extension, a medical record of a people is the history of their medical cases commonly experienced in their geographical location. It could be a genetic cause or a location influence. For instance, people from water-front areas suffer onchocerciasis or river blindness which is a parasitic disease with an insect vector that breeds in water (WHO).

It could also be an inherited disease which is genetically transferred from generation to generation. It might be a disease that is caused abnormally in an individual's genome, the person's entire genetic makeup. The anomaly can range from minuscule to major, from a discrete mutation in a single base in the DNA of a single gene to a gross chromosome abnormality involving the addition or subtraction of an entire chromosome or set of chromosomes. Such diseases include diabetes, asthma, sickle cell anaemia, etc.

Occupational and Technological Records

Technologically, the world has evolved and is still evolving from generation to generation. Available records show that African societies like Nigeria used hoes, machetes, and sticks for subsistence farming, but with time, they evolved to mechanized farming which greatly enhanced the work of their forefathers. For instance, the traditional hunters had spears, bows and arrows, traps, cutlasses, etc. In recent years, hunters have improved upon as well as developed other tools for hunting with the evolution of technology. Also, in cassava production where members of the community hitherto used manual craters for garri, as well as in palm oil production, machines that ease the enormous task in local productions have been fabricated.

Social and Religious Records

Records have it that age grades were used as powerful mechanisms in the traditional African culture for security in vigilante groups. Women played vital roles in welcoming a new bride into the family. They swept the local paths while the men hunted for the family. During celebrations of birth or death, social groups were conspicuously seen in the preparations. This made it mandatory for members of the society to be identified with their respective age grades (closing debate on Africa). Specific traditional titles were reserved for members of specific families which connoted what roles they played in their society. The traditional belief system focused on worship of deities and idols which differed among villages and families, according to their ancestral descent.

Land and Property

Early settlers had opportunity to acquire large portions of lands. The early men were predominantly farmers who made a living through farming.

Methodology

The research was conducted at Afaha Oku Village, which comprises Nung Okporo, Nung Ekpene Utim, and Nung Obio Idang families in Uyo Metropolis in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The researchers first visited the chief's palace to obtain permission to conduct a research on records keeping and information documentation. With the granting of permission by Chief Oscar Edet Ekpanya, Chairman of the Village Council on behalf of the Village Head, the researchers went to church gatherings, women meetings, clubs and associations to educate and sensitize the community on the researchers' mission. Among the places visited was Methodist Church of Nigeria, Mount Zion Gospel Church whose ministers are Reverend Professor Isioma Enang and Pastor Bassey Etim Umoh respectively. Individual houses that make up the three families were visited but only indigenes of Afaha Oku Village were interviewed. A total of one thousand, seven hundred and forty five (1745) persons filled the questionnaires, checklists and oral interview was also used to elicit data as the case warranted.

The family of late Engr. Sunday Udo Ekpo, the case study family with proper information documentation which resulted in continuous Ukot production was interviewed by Prof. Felicia Etim. It was the wife of the late Engineer, Professor (Mrs.) Selina Sunday Ekpo who received the researcher and her team on behalf of the family. All the pieces of information gathered from all the instruments were analyzed and presented in charts, graphs and histograms. Some pictures and maps were attached at the annexure.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One

What are the types of family records kept by families in Afaha Oku villages?

To answer the research question above, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1: Percentage Analysis of the types of family records kept by families in Afaha Oku villages

Types of family records													
FAMILIES	Med infor	%	Occp Info	%	Social Info	%	Land & pr.	%	Relig	%	Tech.	%	Total
NUNG OKPORO	44	22.45	82	41.84	125	63.78	165	84.18	115	58.67	63	32.14	196
NUNG EKPENE	80	36.20	57	25.79	118	53.39	197	89.14	110	49.77	32	14.48	221
NUNG OBIO IDANG	92	43.60	61	28.91	123	58.29	173	81.99	104	49.29	41	19.43	211

**** Highest Percentage Frequency**

*** Lowest Percentage Frequency**

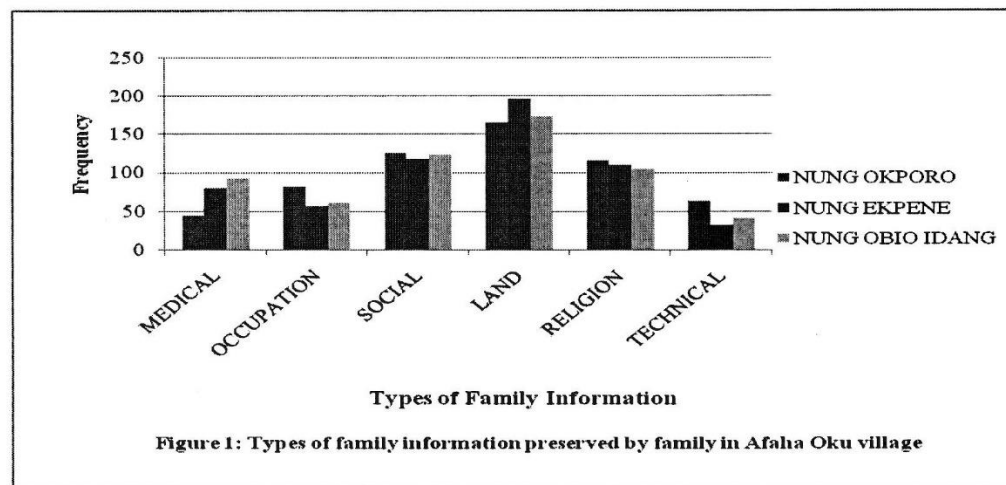


Figure 1: Types of family information preserved by family in Afaha Oku village

Source: Field Survey

The data in Table 1 and Figure 1 were obtained in the course of investigating three (3) families (Nung Okporo, Nung Ekpene Ukim, Nung Obio Idang) in Afaha Oku villages. Available records in some families centered on Medical information, Occupational Information, Social Information, Land and Property, Religion, and Technology Information.

Records obtained which were centered on the following and abbreviated as follows:

Medical Information	-	Med Infor
Occupational Information	-	OccpInfor
Social Information	-	Social Infor
Land and property	-	Land & Pro
Religious	-	Relig
Technological Information	-	Tech Infor

From the results in Table 1 and Figure 1 above, it can be noticed at a glance that numbers from 1-6 types of family information were obtained from each of the three families. All three families recorded high, with respect to records on land and property throughout. The result for Nung Okporo also showed they had their general record from the highest to the least in this progressive succession: Land and property (84.18%), Social Information (63.78%), Religious Information (58.67%), Occupational Information (41.84%), Science and Technology Information (32.14%) and Medical Information and was the least information obtained (22.45%). For Nung Ekpene Ukim, their record was in the progressive succession from the highest to the least recorded information in this order land/property Information (89.14%), Social Information (53.39%), Religious Information (49.77%), Medical Information (36.20%), Occupational Information (25.79%) while Science and Technology Information was the least information obtained (14.48%). Nung Obio Idang had land/property Information (81.99%), Social Information (58.29%), Religious Information (49.29%), Medical Information (43.60%), Occupational Information (28.91%) and Science and Technology Information (19.43%) from the highest to the least also. The results therefore mean that recording of land information is very peculiar to families in Afaha Oku village.

Research Question Two:

What is the extent of preservation of family records in families in Afaha Oku Village?

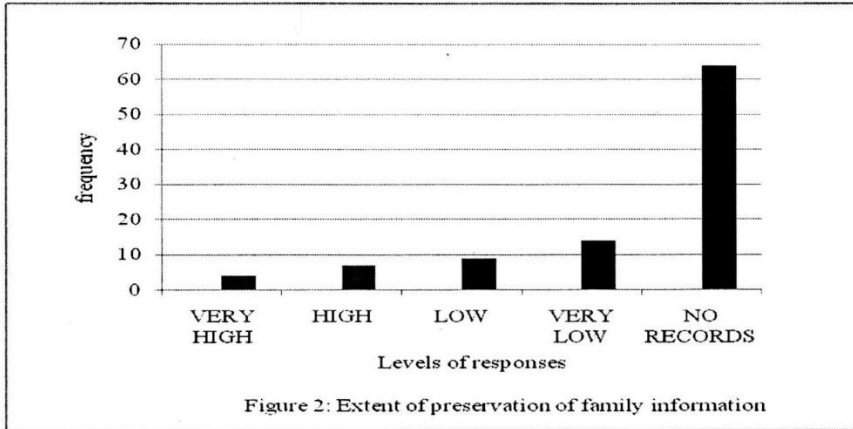
To answer the research question above, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2 and figure 2).

Table 2: Percentage Analysis of the extent of preservation of family records in families in Afaha Oku Villages

Level of responses	Freq	%	Ranking
Very High	70	4.01*	5 th
High	122	6.99	4 th
Low	157	9.00	3 rd
Very Low	245	14.04	2 nd
No Record	1116	63.95**	1 st
Total	1745	100%	

** Highest Percentage Frequency

* Lowest Percentage Frequency



Source: Field Survey

Table 2 and Figure 2 above present the results of the statistical analysis on the information showing the extent of preservation of family records in Afaha Oku Villages. From the analysis it was observed that most families (63.95%) in Afaha Oku do not preserve family records. This was seconded (14.04%) by families with very low preserved family records. The third (9%) in the list were families with lowly preserved family records. Families with highly preserved family records (6.99%), were ranked fourth in the list, while the least (4.01%) group were families with very high preserve family record. The result therefore means that preservation of family records in families in Afaha Oku Villages is of very high extent.

Research Question Three:

What is the extent of the influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology?

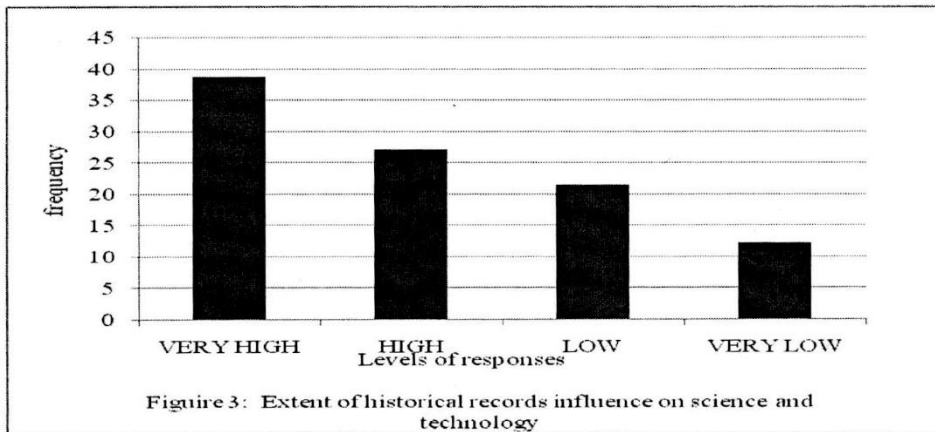
To answer the research question above, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see Table 3 and Figure 3).

Table 3: Percentage analysis of the influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology

Level of responses	Freq	%	Ranking
Very High	231	38.89**	1 st
High	162	27.27	2 nd
Low	128	21.55	3 rd
Very Low	73	12.29*	4 th
Total	594	100%	

** Highest Percentage Frequency

* Lowest Percentage Frequency



Source: Field Survey

Table 3 and Figure 3 present the result of statistical analysis on the extent of the influence of historical records on science and technology. The results reveal that most families (38.89%) in Afaha Oku communities perceive historical records of families to have very high influence on science and technology. This was seconded by 27.27% of families who perceive historical records of families to have high influence on science and technology. This was followed by 21.55% of families who perceive historical records of families to have low influence on science and technology, while least on the list were 12.29% of families who perceive historical records of families to have very low influence on science and technology. The result therefore means that the influence of historical records on the evolution of science and technology is of very high extent.

Conclusion

Record keeping and information organization is not an area that has been widely researched on. Thus, available literature for the study is scanty. Notwithstanding, researchers found the villagers very excited to learn that dependable family records must be accurate, authentic, comprehensive, accessible, complete, compliant, effective and secure. Regrettably the villagers lamented that they had lost so much to lack of knowledge of information documentation and record management. There were also cases of destruction of the few available records by termites, rain leakages, fire outbreak and other vices. Recorded information is skillfully stored alphabetically, numerically, and alphanumerically in registers, CDs and in the courts for preservation and easy retrieval by newer generation.

Recommendations

1. The Government of Akwa Ibom State should take up the study as a state project to educate the populace on the importance of family record keeping.
2. Few herbal records on curative as well as preventive medicines kept by villagers should undergo laboratory analyses by pharmacists. New sets of drugs should be produced with the use of modern technology.
3. Community dwellers need special training to enhance the use of available information for technological development for advocacy, and training the indigenes of this community will help them keep their records of naturally endowed skills. Besides they will be able to organize such records for easy retrieval and use by posterity

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