

# **Records Management among the Academics in Technological Epoch. A case study of Bingham University Karu**

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## **Abstracts**

*Management of records has become imperative to everyone that creates and keeps records for evidence or academic purposes. In this technological age, modality for managing our records has taken a new dimension from the orthodox methods. The academics can no longer survive and grow without evidence of academic achievements, teaching records, research works and other academic activities. Details of all these form parts of the records they keep and manage. The objectives of this study are; to identify the types of records kept by the academics, examine the management of records in terms of; Appraisal, description and arrangement, preservation, to identify the challenges encountered in the management of records etc. The study carefully reviewed all related empirical studies and the findings of the study revealed that, most records held by the academics is administrative records. Survey research was adopted in carrying out this study, questionnaire was basically used as instrument for data collection and the data collected were analyzed using simple frequency and tabulated in bar chart. In appraising records; scholarly, research and information values are mostly considered. It was also found that majority of the respondents have a slight knowledge of records management ideology and, also maintained some of their records in paper and some in electronic*

*formats. Many of the respondents have never acquired training on records management. Lots of management challenges bewildered the respondents but opined for some solutions. In conclusion, the study made some recommendations i.e. often maintaining records in electronic format for easy management and staff training considering the importance to records in the life of academics.*

**Keywords:** *Records, Management, Academics, Technology, Epoch*

## **Introduction**

There is hardly a day gone by in the life of academics that they do not keep memories of their activities. These memories have become records of evidence that speaks volumes of either your personal life or your academic life. Keeping of valuable records has become so vital that in academic communities that we have to begin to think and find ways in which these records can be kept, preserved for generations. The coming of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has opened a new dimension to records creation and its management as such we must open our mind to what these technologies have for mankind. The era has come for mankind to hold and keep tracts of his histories, activities and achievements that will also stand the test of time. Bingham University, Karu was established by the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) following its formal licensing by the National Universities Commission (NUC) on 5th January, 2005. As the name implies, the University was named after one of the trio of pioneer Sudan Interior Missionaries, Roland Victor Bingham whose vision along with those of other founding fathers desired to produce committed Christians in our institutions, including the University through which Christ-centered leaders would emerge. The founding fathers intend to meet the soaring need for not only quality secular tertiary education but education that recognizes and integrates moral and spiritual values in the face of degenerating social decadence in Nigerian University campuses.

## **Statement of the Problem**

It has been observed that Nigerians have passion for education and self-development but perceived to have nonchalant attitude when it comes to keeping and maintaining vital records of great importance. This could be attributed to lack of records management programmes in our various institutions of learning and also, dearth and low priority accorded to records. Azameti and Adjei (2013) citing Shurville, Browne and Whitaker (2008), is due to the poor management of accurate, reliable

and trustworthy records so as to fulfill evidential requirements Kowlowitzet'al (1997) asserted that "Organizations often lack adequate tools to manage the growing number and variety of electronic records some are in danger of losing access to records stored." Adamu (2003) observes that "Records management has remained a neglected area in public sector. Recordkeeping has deteriorated so gradually that it has gone largely unnoticed as a development issue".Although records are being created by the academic staff of Bingham University but researcher's perception and observations have probably shown the inconclusive, unsatisfying and unfounded level of its management in Bingham University Karu, Therefore, this study is designed to understudy academics records and its management using Bingham University Karu as a case study.

### **Research Objective**

The objectives of this study are solely to;

- a. Identify the types records kept by the academics
- b. Examine the management of records in terms of; appraisal, description, arrangement and preservation
- c. To Identify the challenges encountered in the management of records.
- d. To identify strategies in which these challenges could be tackled

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

This chapter reviewed the literature that is relevant to this study under the following areas:

- \* Concepts and types of records
- \* Management of records in technological age
- \* Challenges of records management in era of technology
- \* Strategies to tackle challenges of records management
- \* Summary of the review

### **Concepts and Types of Records**

Information managers and scholars have severally attempted to give a proper definition to records, The National Archives and Records Service Act in 2006 defines a record as "recorded information regardless of form or medium" and in practice a record is also defined as "evidence

of a transaction". In some instances, one may consider records in terms business activities or organizational activities. As such, a record according to Millar (1999) is "information created, received and maintained by an organization or a person, in pursuance of legal obligation or in the transaction of business. A record is evidence of what happened."

Records comes in different types, NARS (2006) concludes that, digital assets constitute visually rich recorded information like images, logos, audio, video, 3-dimensional drawings, graphics etc. In other words records that are not text based. One could go further and say records are either text-based (documents) or visually rich (digital assets) and they all contain informational content. A record in any format is nothing but a treasured possession. Okello-Obura (2011) stated that they are the lifeblood of (any individual), organization's businesses and therefore should be treated with the utmost concern. Records and Archives provide platform to access information about the past by researchers, scholars, students, journalists, lawyers, and others who want to know about people, places, and events in the past (Okello, Obura&Magara, 2008).

Laws have a direct impact on the ways in which governments, organisations and individuals carry out their daily affairs. As well, laws affect the way in which people create and use records since, in virtually all parts of the world, records form the basis for legal evidence. In the case of disputes – between and individuals, governments and citizens, between organisations and employees, between different levels of government – records are the means for proving or disproving claims or complaints (IRMT 2009) and cited by Okello-Obura (2011). Records formed the bases of human memory and as such, learned people keeps records for several purposes.

### **Management of Records in Technological Age**

Management of records is as old as man, as such; its management has a role to play in the sustenance of human history, business integrity, evidence and values. Managing records according to ISO 15489-1. encompasses the following:

- \* Creating and capturing records to meet requirements for evidence of business and (research) activity;
- \* Taking appropriate action to protect their authenticity, reliability, integrity and use-ability as their business context and requirements for their management change over time.

In this technological epoch, management of records has taken a divergent approach. The key reasons for keeping records have not changed: accountability, efficient business, protection of rights and entitlements and the ability to reconstruct the past. Now, the rapidly changing digital and online world has simply introduced additional reasons to create, capture and manage records well: the shift to data-driven business, open government initiatives, shared and collaborative services, greater emphasis on corporate responsibility and more. The records management landscape is changing. With the rise of digital content, and our increasing reliance on it, changes to the way we manage our records are inevitable, (Gasiorowski, 2016). In this current era, records are considered to be in the state of continuum, making it possible to exist in different format.

### **Challenges of Records Management in Era of Technology**

Several literatures commented on influence of technology on records and its management. Meena (2007) asserted that “down the ages, various changes have taken place in the format of records. With the advancement of Electronic media the whole concept of generating the record has underwent drastic changes, not only in terms of their creation but also in their transmission, storage, preservation and retrieval. The current scenario has thrown before the world of Archivists a number of challenges and has raised a number of issues which we have to address and find solutions”. The challenges that bewildered records in this era of technology are so huge and numerous to the extent that information managers are considering so many things to ameliorates this state of enigma.

### **Strategies to Tackle Challenges of Records Management**

Management principles of records have been set up from time immemorial and it has undergone series of transformation and modification. These principles of management mostly focus on records in physical form and until the advent of technology. Most individuals, organizations and even the academic institutions follows orthodox management principles and now realized the newer method of management of records i.e. technological approach, Meena (2007) further stated that, there are two ways to address these issues;

1. What to do with the existing record holdings in the Archives to make them digitally accessible and to preserve them electronically?

2. To address the problems and issues that are emerging with the creation of records electronically as there are a number of issues associated with the creation of e-records in terms of their:- Creation,- day to day use, - survival - Retention and appraisal standards, - preservation as a cultural record of the past,- retrieval, - to make them accessible for use in computerized form for posterity

While considering the above statement, the author concluded that; there is need to modernize our record management practices i.e. moving from paper to electronic records management. Although, there are various challenges with management of records in technological age yet archivist, records manager are beginning to convert huge of their records into electronic form. Electronic record management system has these days taking a center stage, managing both records in physical and electronic form.

Enterprise Content Management [ECM] (2011) opined that, “One of the major benefits of managing and accessing records electronically is that they can be made widely available to the workforce at any geographical location, as a searchable repository for shared knowledge”. Many information managers have devised ways in which challenges facing records management can be solved. For instance, Infolinx (2018) argued that records managers can overcome this challenge by automating this process with records management software. Other forms of strategies to overcome these challenges are; migration, emulation, refreshing etc. (Granger 2000). It has become imperative that academics staff should begin to think towards this direction and have their records in digital formats. The technological epoch has therefore created an avenue to consider that soon or later our memories and records can only be read and view digitally.

### **Summary of the Review**

A number of relevant and related literature have been reviewed primarily to clearly define the research problem; justify the need for the study, have a solid conceptual framework for the study, and to avoid needless duplication of research efforts. The review has shown that records are being created and managed often by organizations, institution and the academics but few has been reported or written about records of individuals and even the academics of higher institutions of learning.

## Methodology

The research technique adopted for this study was a descriptive survey research and the instrument used is questionnaire. David (2005) defined survey research “as a method of research to collect participant responses on facts, opinions, and attitude, through questionnaires.”

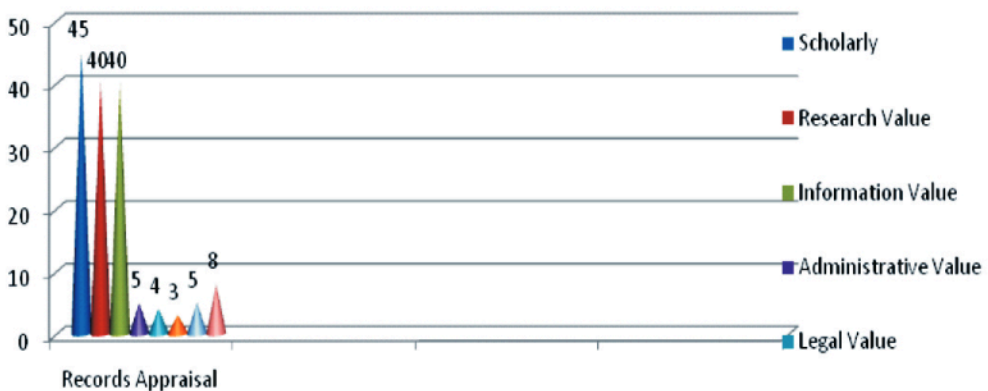
The population for this study is the staff of Bingham University Karu – Nigeria, a total of two hundred and fifty (250) academic staff were recorded and a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents were selected for the study using University of Florida IFA Extension Sample Size Table.

**Figure 1: Types of Records**



The chart in figure 1, revealed that Administrative records i.e. personnel records, office budgets etc. has 144(42%) respondents, Program Operation i.e. formulate policy records recorded a total of 10(3%) and finally, Program management i.e. projects plans, research works etc. has a total of 192(55%).

**Figure 2: Records Series**



In appraising records, the respondents showed that the following values top their priorities; scholarly value has (45, 30%) points, research values and information value recorded a total of (40, 27%) points respectively; the chart also revealed that Administrative value and Historic value have same numbers of respondents of (5, 3%) respectively. Legal value recorded a response of (4, 3%) and Only (8, 5%) respondents considered a record having entertainment material of artistic interest and the lowest responses was recorded of respondents considering historic value and they are (3, 2%).

This implies that academics valued, keep and managed records of scholarly, research and information values. These records possibly help to aid their findings and as well help them in their carrying out lectures, seminars and other academic purposes.

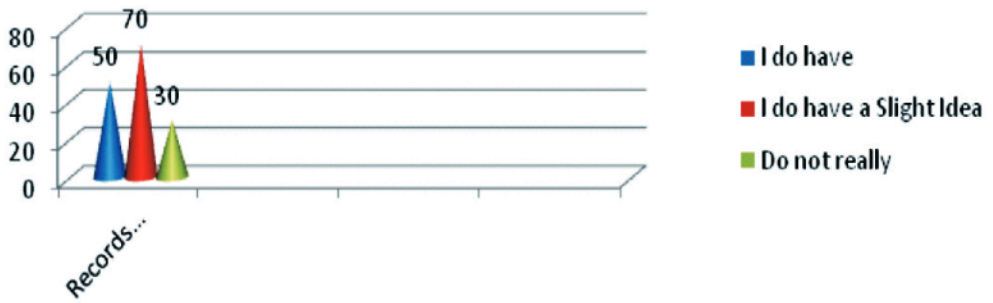
**Figure 3: Date Span of Records**



Figure 3 reveals the date span of records been held and managed by the academic staff. The highest date span fell in between 1-10 years of age and this hath respondents of (90, 60%), records of 10-20 years has (40, 27%) respondents and between records of 20 down to 40 years recorded (10, 7%) respondents each. Meanwhile, it can be deduced from the chart that most records kept by the academics has a life span of 10 and 20 years. The academics need to maintain their records as long as possible as these form their bases their detailing their academic progress, promotion and research development.



**Figures 4: Records Management Ideology**



The diagram shows that management of records ideology is only exposed fully to (50, 33%) respondents, those respondents with slight knowledge of records management are (70, 47%) and (30, 20%) respondents don't even have what ideas of what it takes to manage records. AiiM (2011) argued and concluded that Poor records practice can severely harm your reputation: 28% have had their records management and security practices criticized or exposed. Records management ideas is as important as the records itself as such, all academics are expected to have full knowledge of its implication most especially in an institution (university) that is saddled with responsibility of research and highly academic activities.

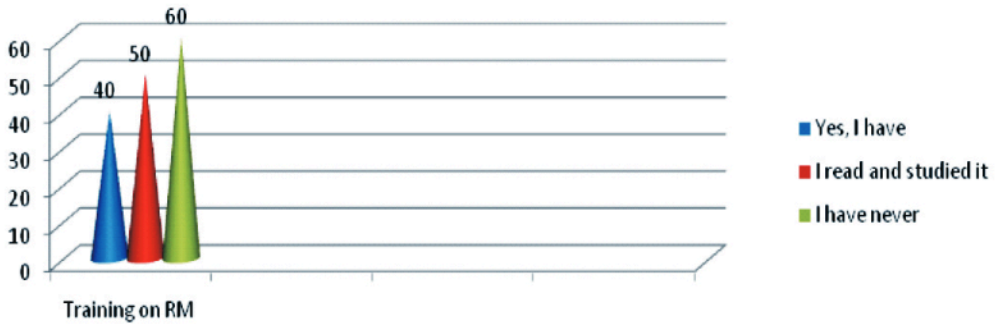
**Figure 5: Records Maintenance Method**



The chart revealed that (10, 7%) respondents maintained their records exclusively in paper format, those that maintained their records exclusively in electronic records accounted for (20, 13%) respondents and finally, major respondents (120, 80%) maintained their records both in paper and electronic formats. It's been shown from this chart that majority of academics responds to the events happening in the technological age. Most things are now done using technology and records management using technology is not left behind. For most of the respondents maintaining records in both formats probably shows that

records are best maintained in electronic form and having also back up in paper format.

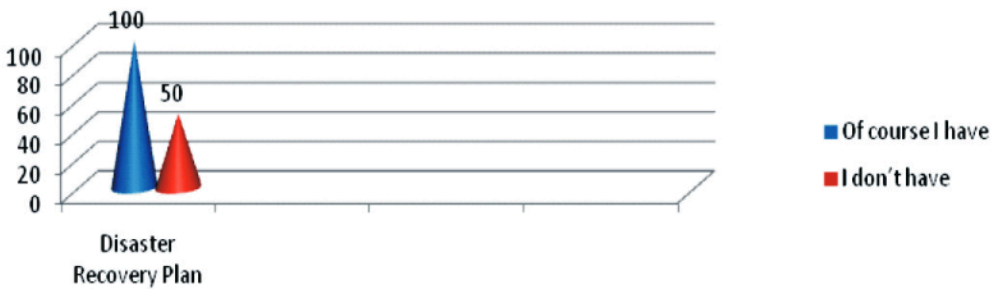
**Figure 6: Records Management Training**



In figure 6, the chart revealed the respondent's level of training they might have received on records management. Only (40, 27%) respondents received Records management training, those that had personal studies about records management training accounted for (50, 33%) and majority of the respondents (60, 40%) never have a single training on records management.

Training on how our records should be managed is very important as this will help keep our valuable records and as well stand the test of time. This shows that awareness of records and its management among staff academic staff is a thing that needs to be attended to.

**Figure 7: Disaster Recovery Plan**



The chart in figure 7, shown the disaster recovery plan for records managers. It was then discovered that multitude of the respondents (100, 67%) has disaster recovery plan while (50, 33%) respondents do not have any tangible ideas of disaster recovery plan.

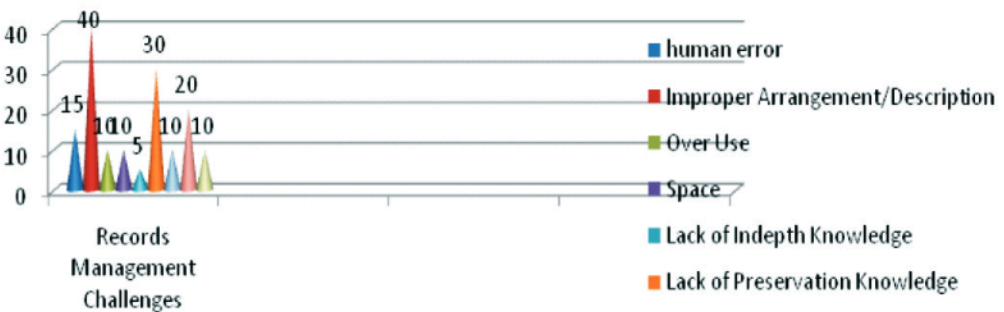
**Figure 8: Records Filing**



In this chart, respondent's records filed method was unveiled, corporate filing cabinets records second lowest rate of (3, 2%), respondent's with electronic recordkeeping system recorded the lowest rate of (2, 1%), those that adopt individual employees' filing cabinets has response rate of (25, 17%). Majority of the respondents maintained electronic document management system like DOCS Openg, hard drive etc. with a total response of (60, 40%). Share drive and task management system had (40, 27%) and (20, 13%) rates respectively.

This chart has clearly shown that despite challenges in maintain records in electronic form, many respondents preferred such saved. This might be because records best captured and preserved in electronic formats. The findings of AiiM (2011) shows that, Paper records are decreasing in 41% of organizations, compared to 31% where it is still increasing.

**Figure 9: Records Management Challenges**

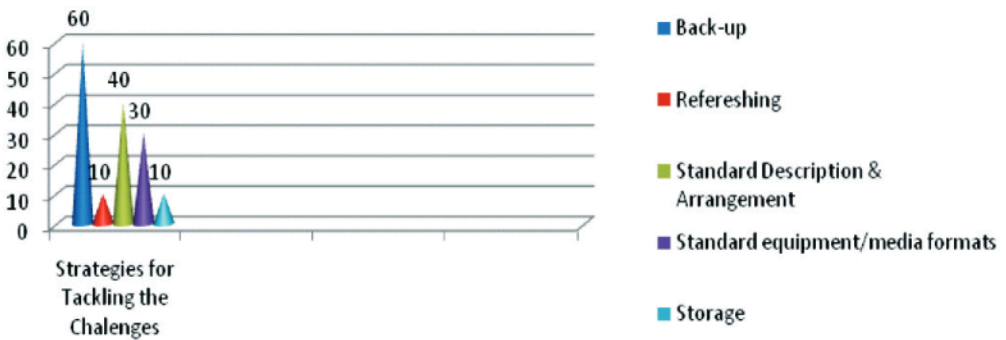


The following respondents recorded (10, 7%) each in their choice of challenges being faced in records management; i.e. over use of records formats, lack of space to maintain records, hardware & software malfunctioning and sabotage. (10, 7%) Chose human error, (30, 20%) respondents are besieged with lack of preservation knowledge, (5, 5%)

has lowest rate in lack of in-depth knowledge of records formats and a huge number of (40, 27%) respondents lack improper arrangement and description of their records.

Series of challenges are said to be hindering survival of records in this era of technology and these are causing huge and tremendous crises in the field of records management. Technological aids to management of records have its own attendant issues, yet it must be implored for the survival of records that will stand the test of time. They need to be preserved, managed and recycled electronically for which we need basic infrastructure to be kept updated, trained human resource and the finances, which is available in scarcity. Instruments and tools of preserving the information are limited and our Public Records Act is also silent regarding the manner, the methodology as to how these records should be managed, preserved and to be made accessible to future generations (GAUTAM, Meena (2007).

**Figure 10: Strategies and Solution**



In figure 10, strategies to tackle challenges facing records management were itemized by the respondents. A total of (60, 40%) respondents suggested back-up of records, (40, 27%) chose standard description and arrangement, (30, 20%) recommended standard equipment/media formats for records. Meanwhile, proposal for storage space for records and refreshing of records has a response rate of (10, 7%) each. It can be seen from here that all the recommendation could be of great help to records management. They are all tailored towards technology which will surely produce great benefits and overall results.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Man can never be separated from records creation as well as keeping of these created records and its management. Recorded information tells us everything about you. Man's history, achievement

and his entire being depend on evidential records that is been handed down. Academic staff needs records to show forth his/her academic achievement and possibly his/her history. Studies have shown that record keeping is so poor among the academics. Most of the academic staff are not exposed to records and its management. The power of knowledge can only be appreciated if records and archives are properly managed. Good management of records and archives is fundamental to a well-functioning organization and the individual since it supports business activity and provides a basis for efficient service delivery (Okello-Obura 1991). Technology has delivered into our hands the power to do so many things for the growth and development of humanity. Our records should therefore be captured, maintained and managed using current technology. It's high time the academic staff begin to utilize this technology in managing records in other to be at par with their counter part in overseas. Records defines who you are, as such, never neglect records.

The study thereby recommended that;

1. Valuable documents for academic purpose should be maintained by the academics in electronic forms
2. University should endeavor to train its staff in the area of records creation, record keeping and its management using technology.

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