

Trends, patterns, challenges and type of archival research in sub-Saharan Africa: an informetrics analysis, 1981-2010

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Abstract

In a study by Onyancha and Minishi-Majanja (2009), it was reported that throughout the entire period from 1971 to 2007, research in library and information science (LIS) in sub-Saharan Africa largely focused on information technology, information resources management, knowledge management, library science, Internet, and information retrieval, just to mention a few. In actual fact, most of the topics of research fell within the scope of library science. Archives (and records management) was less researched although the topic featured among the top 30 subject terms as follows: in 1981-1990, the topic was in position 12; in 1991-2000, it was in position 23; and in 2001-2007, the term was in position 17. It has also noted that among the LIS schools in sub-Saharan Africa, a few have laid emphasis on the provision of courses/programmes in Archives and Records Management, and more particularly at the undergraduate level. Built on two studies conducted by Onyancha and Minishi-Majanja (2009) and Onyancha and Mokwatlo (2011), this paper aims at presenting the status of archives and records management education, training and research in Sub-Saharan Africa. The current paper focuses on informetric analysis of the nature, patterns and trends of archival science research (including records management) in sub-Saharan Africa. Data was extracted from the Library, Information Science and Technology Abstracts (LISTA) database. The search query combined the name of the country (in sub-Saharan Africa) and the topics 'Archives' and/or 'Records – Management' as subject terms. The search was limited to 1981 and 2010. Data was analysed quantitatively using computer-based analytical technologies and software developed specifically for informetric analyses, namely UCINET for Windows, TextStat, and Bibexcel, as well as Microsoft Excel. Preliminary results suggest that archives and records management research is lagging behind in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, given the challenges of technological developments and "infocracy", the paper surmises that there is a need for "change" or paradigm shift in the not only the perceptions but also research on archives and records management so that the profession can keep up with the modern societal needs.

Key words: archival science, records management, sub-Saharan Africa, LIS, research, training