



# **NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION**

**Proceedings of 2015 Conference of  
Nigerian Library Association,  
Kaduna State Chapter**

**Theme:**  
**Contemporary Issues in  
Information Service Delivery**

**Held at**

**Faculty of Education Conference Hall,  
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**

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**12<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> May, 2015**





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# CONSIDERING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN NIGERIAN LIBRARIES: WHAT EXISTING DATA TELL US ABOUT THE SATELLITE LIBRARIES OF AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY LIBRARY COMPLEX

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## Abstract

*The paper enumerates requisite standards necessary for the inclusion of patrons with disabilities in the Library Complex of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Survey research method was adopted for data collection. The instruments utilized were questionnaire and interview administered on library staff to solicit the functionality, preparedness and the available services that caters for these category of clients. What existing data tells was revealed and presented descriptively. Respondents differ on their levels of the library discriminating against clients with disabilities, the interview traced back discrimination to library structure and the academic community take on this categories of people. However to ameliorate the plight of the disable clients in the different libraries of the complex, the paper proposed immediate review of the complex policies to include services peculiar to these clients, restructuring of the libraries buildings to remove barriers impeding free movement, access to resources and services that erstwhile deny and exclude clients with disabilities.*

## Introduction

The call to streamline library and indeed academic policies and services to be friendly to people with disability has come under heavy scrutiny. It is very worrisome that Nigeria assent to numerous treaties on persons with disabilities and have advocated the inclusion of persons with disabilities in most sphere of the Nigerian space, especially in education (Kotso, 2010; Popoola, 2008 and Mani, 2006). The circumstance that led to disability and its definition is relative. According to Sandhu *et al.* (2001) disability can be as a consequence of mobility vision, hearing, speech and language impairments.

Adamu (2009) reported that about 19 million Nigerians are disabled, and that between 75 and 90 percent live below poverty line attributable to failure to secure paid jobs, neglect and sometimes complete abandonment. Kotso (2010) reported that it is very disheartening that the country's policies on disabilities are but mere claims and delve on leap service. She point out that education and rehabilitation which guarantees these groups emancipation is a mirage in most academic

facilities in the country especially among libraries which contributions and facilitation to teaching, research and learning cannot be easily quantifiable.

The preeminent roles of the libraries in education are through acquisition of information resources, facilitation and provision of space for learning and reading, resources classification and arrangements. However, core challenges of persons with disabilities in the failure of libraries are traced to the acquisition policies which most of the time do not intend to accommodate persons with disabilities whether as staff or students who are eventual victims, others include structures of the library building designs and facilities which hinders access to resources, mobility and failure to acquire ameliorating technologies.

### The Concept of Disabilities

There is no single definition appropriate to all people with disabilities but characterized as those having barriers. It is, however, important to understand the distinction between the terms impairment, disability and handicap. As defined by the World Health Organisation (cited in Mani, 2006): **Impairment** refers to an abnormality of body structure, appearance, organ and system functioning. **Disability** is the consequence of impairment in functional performance and activity. **Handicap** is the consequence which is reflected in interaction with, and adaptation to, the surroundings.

### The Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex

The Ahmadu Bello University Library Complex is the largest in the country, it comprise of eleven satellite libraries that are administered by the main university library - Kashim Ibrahim Library. The satellite libraries are (1) The President Kennedy Library, (2) The Institute for Agricultural Library, (3) The Medical Libraries (Clinical and Pre-Clinical), (4) The Lee T. Railsback Library (Veterinary Medicine), (5) The Law Library, (6) The National Animal Production Research Institute Library (NAPRI), (7) The Centre for Islamic Legal Studies Library, (8) The National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service Library (NAERLS), (9) Abdullahi Muhammad Public Library, (10) The Arewa House Library, and (11) Division of Agricultural Colleges Library.

These libraries are centres of research and scholarship, they acquire, process and lends their materials in line with their parental institution's defined goals and objectives, subject specialization and targeted patrons, respectively. This has necessitated knowing the readiness and preparedness of these libraries to include persons with disabilities.

## Necessary Steps Libraries Can Take to Include Persons with Disabilities

### i. *Data collection of patrons with disabilities*

The biometric data provided by every fresh applicants and tragedies reported to the university are prominent avenues that libraries have failed to utilize to effectively and efficiently discharge services, this neglect affects acquisition, buildings and the restructuring of facilities to be disabled friendly.

Data collection and its effective use for disability inclusion shall enable the library attained this quest of inclusion. Utilizing data collected according to Pulman (2004) can help policy makers to advocate that: (i) physical access to buildings, service counters, workstations, reading rooms and shelves are prioritized, (ii) intellectual access to the content of information carriers and alternate format materials are acquired, (iii) sponsorships and release of library personnel for requisite training on treating these categories of clients is prioritized, and (iv) the incorporation of technologies for virtual access so as to reach out to these categories of people not capable of visiting the physical building is incorporated, sustained and maintained.

### ii. *Standardizing Library Structures and Services for Disability Inclusion*

The zero tolerance on stigmatization of any kind as stipulated by several legal documents, schemes and programmes that include the Millennium Development Goals, Nigeria Economic Empowerment Programme and the Small and Medium Enterprises revealed that there is no preference to particular groups of Nigerians but all with one goal which are resolute to empower Nigerians who are in dare need of different forms/levels of education to be able to successfully sustain their businesses and livelihood.

For libraries, this is an opportunity to rethink policies with myopic contributions towards people with disabilities in the educational communities. To a standardize library for all, libraries must operate within standards that take into consideration the plight of the disable so that within the divisions and units of the library people with disability can enjoy and access: (i) a reader service section specially stationed to enable them utilize the library facilities, (ii) employ competent and qualified library personnel who can communicate in sign language and the use of the technologies salvaging the disable from their challenges to acquire needed information from within a library, (iii) the library facilities be made barrier free to enhance mobility, (iv) acquire appropriate facilities to address the different impairments of sight and hearing.

iii. *The Disposition of Librarians as Professionals*

Libraries provide resources and services to enhance effective exploitation for teaching, learning, research and leisure without any form of discrimination. Accordingly, Popoola (2008) affirmed that the information resources and services available in institutional libraries must be capable of supporting and providing information needs of patrons who comprised of a whole community of able and disabled. Library as the hub of learning in any educational institute is at vantage to address the plight of the disable with the support and cooperation of librarians, who can certainly create awareness of the available and accessible resources as well as support all disability issues (Mani, 2006). Noteworthy, is that even where content is "available" it is of little value unless it can in fact be understood and used. There are instances where it must be specifically modified for applications and accessibility to the physically disabled or other forms of challenges.

Libraries managers' orientation must tally with those of Lucioli and Fleak, (1964); Shah and Venkateshwaarlu, (2002), who posited that disabilities may be temporary or permanent. Therefore, whatever dimension this may take, the approach by libraries should be to provide appropriate succor to staff and students with disabilities in their resource collection, access, services, space and equipments to be inclusive of all the university population and community. Fundamentally, inclusion ensures:

- 1) Providing educational, vocational and life experiences to persons with disabilities equal to that of non-disabled persons.
- 2) Overcoming stereotype responses of the society by demonstrating that persons with disabilities are persons first and disabled next.

The role of the library therefore is to see how the use of appropriate technologies that is prominent in education, social and vocational endeavours are harnessed. Therefore, whatever it will take the library and its management as the life wire of the university to comply with United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons of 1976 which states that "disabled persons have the right to respect for their human dignity" must be supported by all. So that whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of patron's handicaps and disabilities turnout to be, library services must accord the same fundamental right to enable the availability and access by all clients of the library.

iv. *Identifying common and causes of disabilities in academic communities*

The common forms of disabilities that dominate in academic communities include those with the loss of vision which can be compensated by providing more demonstrative services (tactile experiences). The communication problem of a

hearing impaired person can be reduced by the application of total communication system involving sign language, lip reading and presentation of more visual information. The difficulties of a person with locomotor disability can be minimized by making the environment barrier-free, and the social behaviour of a mentally retarded child can be improved by mainstreaming and repetitive skill development. Materials to be acquired should include caption videos, assistive listening and alerting devices and several technological communication aids such as Braille printers, Braille embosser, tape duplicators, speech reading machine, close circuit Televisions, special track tape recorders and computers having adaptable equipments such as voice eyes.

Common causes of disabilities include illnesses, aging and accidents. Staff or students may fall ill to peculiar diseases like hypertension, diabetes, measles, tuberculoses, etc which on recovery, leaves them vulnerable to several forms of disabilities as that of hearing, vision and comprehension. Age affects staff especially, several forms of impairments surfaces as a results of aging that comprise difficult mobility, poor vision and slow hearing. Unprepared forms of disabilities are caused by accidents, this takes different forms as fall, automobile accidents, burns, hazards caused by chemicals, loud sounds, bright lightening but do not stop patrons from the need of information to strive well in life.

### **Problem Statement**

Disability issues in academic libraries have come under scrutiny with the increase number of intake of people as students or staff who later in life suffer from accidents and illnesses that made them disable on one hand, on another also challenging academic libraries is the disability act which emphasized that there should be no discrimination in the provision and access to information by all. Against this backdrop is the allegation that the library is fast losing patrons because it is not robust enough to carry every one along. This calls for a review of what effort by academic libraries have made them include or exclude the academic communities, and what are the inadequacies hindering effective service delivery to persons with disabilities? This paper therefore intends to look at these problems and from the findings recommend ways of ameliorating the plight of the disable. As a wakeup call for the library to engage the university managements to pause and reflect on its entire policies on disability to see how they can overturn all forms of discrimination against people with disabilities.

### **Objectives**

The general objective of the study is to assess Resources Dissemination and the inclusiveness of disabled members of the academic community in Ahmadu Bello University library complex, whereas the specific objectives are to:

- i. identify the types of resources available in the complex for persons with disabilities.
- ii. enumerate the different types of technologies capable of resolving the challenges and exclusion of persons with different types of disabilities in the academic community.
- iii. find out what factors are militating against the inclusion of persons with disabilities by the library complex for effective library service delivery.

### **Research Method**

Survey research design was adopted for the study. Only staff of customers' services were administered questionnaire and those of media services were purposively selected for interview and administration of questionnaires use as research instrument for data collection. The choice of these subjects and units was because of their direct contact with different kinds of library patrons and articulate the plight of those with disabilities. In each of the unit of the complex, three staff from customer service and one from media services were randomly selected. Therefore, a total of 44 staff constituted the population of the study. The choice of the two research instruments were for complementarity purposes, the realization of the need to increase options in conducting this type of research as well as to ascertain the essential knowledge of staff on what must be done by the complex to cater for the information needs of these categories of clients by virtue of admission or employment in the university.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Types of resources available for persons with disabilities**

Alan (2004) and Meyers (1971) reiterated that the availability of appropriate library resources for persons with disabilities is a moral issue of human rights as well as a legal obligation. So that it must reflect on policies with direct bearings on collection development, promotion and delivery of services, adaptive technologies and their use, and staff training that is devoid of disable exclusion or discriminatory. Furthermore, Meyers (1971) recommended the principle of normalisation and integration of people with disabilities into mainstream academic community life as a way of making available to the disable library resources and services, however that these resources must be in choice sections of the library and resources that include:

- Reference materials on disabilities.
- Special format materials
- Resources already in library collections, but not previously-identified as being useful to people with disabilities
- Resource-sharing
- Technical aids and adaptive technology

- Internet resources
- It is preferable that materials and aids are readily-accessible and clearly-visible.

### **Resources for people with deaf or hearing-impediments**

It is a widely-held assumption that people who are deaf or hearing-impaired do not have any special difficulties in using traditional library services and facilities (Jordan, 1970; Fulmali, 2006). A collection on deafness and hearing impairment should take into account the diversity of deaf, hearing-impaired people and be regarded as an integral part of a library collection not as special collection. However, the library should ensure that people who can most benefit from such a collection are aware of its existence. Collections on deafness and hearing impairment should include:

- Current information on deafness and hearing impairment.
- Materials on all aspects of deafness, including legal rights, deaf culture and heritage.
- Information about organisations, institutions and individuals providing services for deaf and hearing-impaired people.
- Books and pamphlets on sign language, dictionaries of signs, etc.
- High-interest/low-vocabulary reading materials
- Well-illustrated materials.
- Films/videos including captioned and non-captioned materials.

### **Resources for people with print disabilities**

The library needs of people with print disabilities are generally the same as those of sighted people (McCrossan, 1968, 1970). However, by definition, people with print disabilities cannot use conventional print materials. They must depend upon large type, audio (spoken word), tactile devices (such as braille) and/or mechanical or optical aids - or a combination of these.

One of the difficulties in providing a broad range of special-format materials for blind and visually-impaired people is the relatively low density of the blind population. Resource-sharing should be regarded as a fundamental aspect of providing services for blind and visually-impaired people.

Collections for people with print disabilities should include:

- Large-print books - for both adult and junior readers.
- Talking books, audio magazines and newspapers.
- Large-print magazines and newspapers.
- Computer files of text.
- Braille and other tactile materials.
- Audio-descriptive videos.

### **Resources for developmentally-disabled people**

The provision of resources for people with a developmental disability (the term preferred to describe people who have an intellectual impairment) is a relatively new area of collection development for libraries. Nevertheless, it is essential to have collections that are:

- High-interest/low-vocabulary materials
- Tape-and-text kits
- Well-illustrated materials
- Music collections
- Audio materials

### **Resources already in library collections, but not previously identified as useful to persons with disabilities**

It is important to note that materials which are useful for people with disabilities are already in libraries although their value to different groups may not be recognised. Such materials would include:

- High-interest/low-vocabulary materials including English as Second Language materials (ESL).
- Music collections
- Spoken-word collections
- Picture books
- Books in enlarged print

### **How to Overcome Challenges of Persons with Disabilities by Academic Libraries**

#### **Resource-sharing**

Resource-sharing remains a fundamental aspect of providing services to people with disabilities - particularly for people requiring special-format materials not in circulation of a resident library. Libraries are encouraged to actively participate in inter-library lending both for materials and technical aids especially with people and organisations working with people with disabilities to enable them further identify resources and information that can equip them effectively and appropriately deliver services to these groups of patrons.

#### **Role of librarians**

Different types of disability require different types of specialised services. The trained library personnel who are responsible to serve the blind should ensure access to equipments such as Braille printers, Braille embosser and tape duplicators, Kuzweil reader (a text-to speed reading machine with synthesised speech output), closed circuit TVs for magnifying regular text, PCs with CD-

ROMS, Powermacs with CD ROMS, large print tape writers, special track tape recorders, computers that are having adaptable equipments such as voice eyes.

Services for speech and hearing impaired users must include TTD communications (a device also known as TTY-text type telephone). For those needing library questions answered via the telephone implies that the library should have a functional telephone line. For those in charge of the deaf must familiarise themselves with sign languages considered to be the common language of the deaf community. For the physically challenged the library facility must be barrier free to wheel chairs and other mobility devices, the librarians can do so when they ensure that all devices including door handles are designed for easy manipulation.

Persons suffering from mental disability can be served by helping to locate, and retrieve materials. Whenever in contact, they may require assistance in identifying materials that comprise of print and electronic types attributable to reading problems. They may also be needing help in turning catalogue cards or keying in commands on the computer.

### **Application of Technologies**

The relevance of technology in education of persons with disabilities is more than that of general education. The capability of technology is that (1) it makes the complex simple; and (2) it addresses the individual needs of the learner. Technology has multifarious applications in education of persons with disabilities. Firstly, use of appropriate technology reduces the handicapping conditions of the individual in the study and work environment and secondly, application of the enabling technology enhances the learning potential of persons with disabilities. Technology can also be used to reach out the large number of persons with disabilities who are currently deprived of any educational and vocational opportunities.

**Library Radio Service:** A library program started by the Minnesota State Services for the Blind in reaching the visually and physically handicapped with reading material (Brehm, 1970; Casey, 1971). It is a daily radio service called the Radio Talking Book, which makes available readings from books and magazines, and a varied selection of current information of interest to its selected audience. This can be replicated by the Library Complex of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria as it apply for allotted space on the campus FM radio station.

**Braille Bug:** An Assistive Technology for the Disabled. The Braille Bug [www.afb.org/braillebug](http://www.afb.org/braillebug), sponsored by the American Foundation for the Blind, is

an interactive web site created to teach sighted children about Braille, and to encourage literacy among all children, disabled, and nondisabled alike (ALA, 1968). The Braille Bug combines full accessibility with sophisticated functionality, and a playful environment that features colorful animated graphics, including the Braille Bug itself, a ladybug with the six dots of a braille cell on its back, that helps kids understand the "secret code" of Braille, and invites them to participate in a variety of fun, and educational online games, and activities.

**Assistive Technology for Mild Disabilities** : Lahm and Morrissette (1994) outlined seven areas of instruction where assistive technology could assist students with mild disabilities. These areas include (i) organisation, (ii) note-taking, (iii) writing assistance, (iv) productivity, (v) access to reference materials, (vi) cognitive assistance and (vii) materials modification.

Global IT giants including Microsoft, Sun, IBM and Apple are committed to advances in assistive technology they have IT products and software for the disabled. These include Active Accessibility - the technology software that developers use to make programmes more accessible to people with special needs and use accessibility aids like screen readers. Homepage reader by IBM for spoken web access for the blind and visually impaired, it communicates orally all the content and information presented on the computer screen including graphics descriptions, tables and columns. The Digital equipment corporation has effective text to speech technology by transforming ordinary text into natural sounding speech.

## Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion of Findings

TABLE 1: Distribution Channels of Information Resources for persons with disabilities in the Library Complex of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria for persons with disabilities

Complex	Computers	CCTV magnifying	Braille	Sub-titled DVD and Video (for the deaf)	Large print books	Audio descriptive videos
The President Kennedy Library	√	X	X	X	X	X
The Institute for Agricultural Library	√	X	X	X	√	√
The Medical Libraries (Clinical and Pre-Clinical)	√	X	X	X	X	√
The Lee T. Railsback Library (Veterinary Medicine)	√	X	X	X	X	X
The Law Library	√	X	X	X	X	X
The National Animal Production Research Institute Library (NAPRI)	√	X	X	X	X	X
The Centre for Islamic Legal Studies Library	√	X	X	X	X	X
The National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service Library (NAERLS)	√	X	X	X	X	X
Abdullahi Muhammad Public Library	√	X	X	X	X	X
The Arewa House Library	√	√	X	X	√	X
Division of Agricultural Colleges Library	√	X	X	X	X	X

X = not available; √ = available

Table 1 above revealed the channels which information resources that are acquired by the library are made accessible to persons with disabilities in the library complex. It was reported that the basic equipment that could leverage clients with sight and hearing disorder are absent. Computers were available in all the libraries, CCTV was only obtainable in Area House Library, all the libraries do not have braille and sub-titled DVDs and video for the deaf, however, Institute for Agricultural Research library and medical libraries attest to have audio descriptive videos.

**TABLE 2:** Distribution of the types of technologies when available can facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the library complex

Complex	Technologies					
	Braille	Adjustable furniture	Lifter	Accession tray/ mailing list	Magnifying glass	Hearing aids
The President Kennedy Library	√	√	√	√	√	X
The Institute for Agricultural Library	√	X	X	√	√	√
The Medical Libraries (Clinical and Pre-Clinical)	√	X	X	√	√	√
The Lee T. Railsback Library (Veterinary Medicine)	X	√	X	√	√	X
The Law Library	√	√	√	√	√	X
The National Animal Production Research Institute Library (NAPRI)	X	√	√	√	√	X
The Centre for Islamic Legal Studies Library	√	√	X	√	√	√
The National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service Library (NAERLS)	√	X	√	√	√	√
Abdullah Muhammad Public Library	√	√	X	√	√	√
The Arewa House Library	X	√	√	√	√	√
Division of Agricultural Colleges Library	X	√	X	√	√	X

X = not necessary; √ = necessary

The distribution of response on the technologies that when acquired can facilitate the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the library complex is presented table 2. Most of the libraries agreed that the inclusion of braille, adjustable furniture and hearing aids could step up the libraries in the inclusion of persons with those nature of disabilities. All the libraries support that provision of magnifying glass and the use of mailing list to send available resources are innovations that will include persons with disabilities. The least score was recorded by the inclusion of lifters in libraries for the disabled.

TABLE 3: Distribution of what could constitute to the failure of libraries to include persons with disabilities in the library complex

Complex	Failure to acknowledge that able persons can accidentally become disable	Library structures not friendly to persons with disability (barriers)	Poor or lack of a reach out services to patrons with disabilities	Absent of technologies that can facilitate and ameliorates services and factors detrimental in the dissemination of information and services	Lack of personnel with requisite competences/ trainings to pilot the affairs of patrons with disabilities
The President Kennedy Library	√	√	√	√	√
The Institute for Agricultural Library	√	√	√	√	√
The Medical Libraries (Clinical and Pre-Clinical)	√	√	√	√	√
The Lee T. Railsback Library (Veterinary Medicine)	√	√	√	√	√
The Law Library	√	√	√	√	√
The National Animal Production Research Institute Library (NAPRI)	√	√	√	√	√
The Centre for Islamic Legal Studies Library	√	√	√	√	√
The National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service Library (NAERLS)	√	√	√	√	√
Abdullahi Muhammad Public Library	√	√	√	√	√
The Arewa House Library	√	√	√	√	√
Division of Agricultural Colleges Library	√	√	√	√	√

√ = constituting factor

The factors militating against the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the library is blame on all the factors stated in table 3, which is attributable irresponsible policy formulation and implementation.

## Conclusion

Librarians response has clearly revealed that they are aware of persons with disabilities in their respective domain, understood the concepts of disability but have not exploit and articulated ways to reach out to them and bring them into the folds of active library patrons.

## Recommendation

Following the numerous findings of the paper, the paper recommends that:

1. Information should be provided in dual communication mode for the benefit of disabled persons and the library acquisition policies should include the nature of the identified persons admitted or employed by the university.
2. Assistive devices may be adapted for improving access to information resources by persons with disabilities.
3. The factors militating against the inclusion of persons with disability must be address in terms restructuring the library to be user friendly and sometimes location specific to ease traffic.

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