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# Special Libraries and Information Services in the Development of Nigeria 1962-2022

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## **Abstract**

*Nigerian Library Association celebrated her sixty years anniversary in July 2022. Therefore, the focus of this paper is to reveal how Special Libraries have contributed to development in Nigeria. The paper presents the concept of development and special libraries and also present types of special libraries in Nigeria, users, brief historical development of special libraries in Nigeria and library and information services they provided to support research for development in Nigeria. The paper revealed that for special libraries in Nigeria to provide efficient and effective library and information services some have adopted and utilized Information and communication Technology. Finally. Some challenges still facing special libraries in the provision of library and information service were revealed and necessary recommendations made.*

**Keyword:** Special Libraries, Library and Information Services, Development, Information and Communication Technology, Research.

## **Introduction**

Development can be seen as growth, positive upgrade, or the addition of value to physical, economic, environmental, social, or demographic component. Development also refers to developing countries working their way up the ladder of economic performance, the living standards, sustainability and equality that differentiate them from so-called developed countries (Global Sherpa, 2020). Amartya (1990) defined development as a tool enabling people to reach the highest level of their ability, through granting freedom of action, that is freedom of economic, social and family action. This approach became a basis for the measurement of development by the HDI (Human Development Index) which was developed by UN Development program (UNDP) in 1990. The basis of development of any nation is research. Research is developed from knowledge and knowledge is the ability to think innovative ideas from human mind. Research is elaboration of knowledge stocked where we can find out more information of anything and we can utilize the application of these extra information in nation building. The main aim of research is gaining knowledge so that we can build our nation. Egbunu and Mommoh (2020) assert that knowledge has become a driving force for social development in the society, and it is an important resource for national development. We have need to connect research with nation development to build society, politic and economy for the removal of poverty, unemployment, inequality. The main goal of a nation is to support research and development R&D to improve growth, increase economic efficiency and higher numbers of employers. When we build a nation, then we need a strong financial investment and it is only research that makes this investment succeed. Without research, we will have no development in our nation. With research, we will take our nation on another level of development. Special libraries of all types from inception in Nigeria has provided information services to support research which has contributed to the development in Nigeria. According to ( Maxwell 2011) Special libraries have contributed towards the research

and development programmes of their organizations. Their primary objective is to support research and provide a platform for updates development of their parent bodies and the organization they serve.

Special libraries are established to obtain and exploit specialized information for the advantage of the organization which provides their financial support. They are expected to contribute to the development and research efforts in the organization (Maxwell, 2011). Such an organization is the parent body to which the special library holds its existence. The primary objective of this type of library aside supporting research in the organization, is to create a platform for updates in the development of the parent organization. It is through this parent body the special libraries perform their functions. To buttress this explanation, American Library Association (ALA) glossary of library and information science defined the special library as: “a library established, supported and administered by a business firm, private corporation, association, government agency or other special interest group of agencies to meet the information needs of its members or staff in pursuing the goal of the organisation. Scope of collection and services is limited to subject interest of the host or parent organisation. According to Aina (2004), a library is special depending on whether it covers a specialized collection, a special subject or a particular group of users or even the type of parent organization. There are special libraries which are administered and maintained by University main library such as Law Library, Engineering Library, Medical Library among others. Harrods librarian glossary (1997) also defined a special library as a library or information centre, maintained, by an individual, corporation, association, government agency or any other groups, a specialized or departmental collection within a library.” Other author’s views of Special library further collaborated that, they are libraries maintained by corporate bodies, research institutions, learned societies, professional associations, special government agencies or departments, private companies, none profit organizations, business firms and other

organised groups. Such libraries are distinguished by their focussed collection and services for the proper dissemination of information (Mommoh and Egbunu, 2019, Mount and Massourd,2015, Akunna, 2013 and Special Library Association,2003).

We therefore submit that special libraries are basically established to provide services to the parent organizations and are devoted to the information requirements for both present and future users in the organization. The special libraries are characterised with collections that is limited to one subject area and the users are limited to people who have a deep interest in certain subject. This type of library enjoys the support and financial backing from the parent organization. The library is headed by professional librarian with specialist in the subjects covered as per the type of library, and is expected to comply with the mission and goals of the parent organization.

Collections of special libraries cut across printed books, journals, pamphlets, audio -visual resources, electronic resources among others and the information resources are within the subject area of interest. They provide information whether for immediate or future utilization which bring together users and information in various formats and are presented in the most effective medium to their users. Okiy (2014) assert that the concept of a special library connotes that the clientèle are literary incapable of working without the use of information resources.

Special libraries provide information services to support research that has led to nation development. The question here is, what is the extent of development in the special libraries and the services they have provided to contribute to development in Nigeria and how are they faring with the challenges in Nigeri?. The main purpose of this paper is to highlights the role of special library in the development of Nigeria. The specific objectives that will guide the discussion are to examine various services in the special libraries in Nigeria, highlights challenges confronting special libraries in Nigeria and some recommendations.

Utor (1999) enumerated types of special libraries in Nigeria to consists of: Government department such as libraries of Federal Ministry of Justice, Law Library, Federal Ministry of Agricultural and Natural Resources Library, Abuja;

Public authorities such as libraries of New Nigerian Newspaper Publishing Company, Kaduna, Nigerian Airways, Lagos; Research Institutes such as libraries of Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies, Abuja; Institute of International Affairs, Ibadan, Institute of Agricultural Research, Zaria; Raw Material Research Development Council Abuja, National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research Development, Abuja; Business organization such as libraries of Central Bank of Nigeria, Abuja, Nigeria. Union of Journalists press centre library Jos; Industrial firms, for example all foreign big industrial giants operating in Nigeria have their libraries in Nigeria example SHELL, AGIP, EIF, IBM, PAN, and others. Few Nigerian Industrial Firms have libraries. Special Libraries users cut across Industrial users, Government Research users, Academic users, Professional/Research Association, Students, NGO's, Religious organization, Politicians and Business men, Aina (2014).

### **Historical Development of Special Libraries in Nigeria**

The early special libraries in Nigeria were based in research institute According to Ogunsheye (1970), “the library started with the British cotton grower association research station library, Ibadan: 1910 (now Department of Agricultural Research Library). National Cereals Research Institutes, library (now Institute of Agricultural Research A.B.U Zaria: 1924)”. She further discussed other post-colonial Nigerian special libraries that were established which include: “Nigerian stored products research institute Lagos: 1960; Rubber Research Institute of Nigerian Library, Iyanamo Benin city: 1961; Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA) library Victoria Island: Lagos 1961”; International Institute for Tropical Agriculture, (IITA) Ibadan 1969; Petroleum training institute Effurun, 1975. Today apart from special libraries in

research institutions, all federal and state government ministries, Parastatals, public corporations, private agencies, professional association, societies, religious bodies, etc own special libraries in Nigeria. The tremendous increase in the establishment of special organizations and institutions has led to the establishment of many special libraries in Nigeria. This is because organizations started looking inward to achieve the goals of the parent bodies since researchers in these institutions rely on information for their work.

### **Library Services provided by Special Libraries for development in Nigeria**

Special libraries in their effort and capacity provide several services which translate into information service. These are services provided in anticipation of various needs of the users of libraries. These services are also provided on demand by the users. Library and information service delivery by special libraries is very crucial to satisfy their users information need and to maintain their relevance in the organisations. Some of these services include the followings:

#### **Current Awareness Services**

Current awareness service is one of the services offered by Special libraries based on recently published information sources. The purpose of a current awareness services is basically to inform the users about new acquisitions in the library. Ashikuzzam (2013) defined current awareness service as the establishment of “a system of reviewing publications immediately at receipt, selecting information pertinent to the programme of the organization served and recording individual items to be brought to the attention of those persons to whose work are related”. It is a service that keeps the library users abreast of current development in their subject areas of interest, where users are informed of latest documents available in the library. Most libraries used display boards, telephone calls, e-mail messages, letters, preprint of papers, photocopy of table of content, periodicals routings, maintenance of card files of references, library bulletins, subscription to specialized services, electronic news groups, notice board in

the library and shelves to draw attentions in the library. While other libraries compile list of new materials for circulation to the users (Britannica.com/science/library-classification.2019.). Also, back covers of a selection of recent acquisitions could be displayed. Libraries can publish accession lists or acquisition lists at regular intervals to provide the full bibliographic details of materials recently acquired by the libraries. The order of arrangement of the new documents is usually by major subject categories. Current awareness service is always provided to users in broad subject categories without necessarily targeting a particular user since is not a personalized service.

### **Literature search**

Literature search by Aina (2004) is a systematic search for knowledge contained in the document on a particular topic or theme held by a library or a document which the library has access to. In this service, the library provides an extensive systematic topic, either from its resources and the resources of the other libraries/organisation which specialize in the thematic area. It usually leads to a compilation of a bibliographic description of such materials. For instance, it will provide information on the author, title, ISBN, classification mark and location of the material. In few cases, an abstract or summary of the material may be provided mainly by special libraries.

### **Selective dissemination of information**

Selective dissemination of information is a personalized service provided by special libraries. Katz (1987) state that selective dissemination of information is an attempt aimed at advising both regular and frequent library users of services which the library may perform to meet their information needs. This service is provided where the users need to do extensive and complex researches in a timely manner. This service is often referred to as ‘just-for-you’ service because of its customized and personalized nature. SDI is offered to small group of people because it



requires a lot of time and efforts to deliver the service. SDI service requires that the library interviews a selected user to ascertain the profile of the user, particularly his specific areas of interest. The librarian then keeps the profile and searches for information on the specific area of interest on a regular basis. This may involve scanning through the content of new books, scanning the internet for new issues in the subject matter and scanning newspapers, journals and other resources to search for relevant current information. Such information which matches the interest of the user is then sent to the user in a proactive manner. Information is sometimes re-packaged because rather than sending a whole book, the librarian will send only the relevant chapter or summarize the information for the user. The electronic environment has made SDI simple, but it still requires a lot of time from the librarian in order to satisfy the user's needs.

### **Indexing and abstracting services**

Indexing is the process for providing a guide to the intellectual content of documents in the library collection while abstracting is the process provides an added value to the document being sought by providing a summary of the document Aina (2004). Materials acquired by special libraries are many, devised, technical and specialised in nature, making it necessary for the librarians to provide finding tools in the form of indexes. The librarian scans through incoming publications with the view of selecting items most pertinent to user's interest for the purpose of abstracting them. The library may prepare its own indexes for local materials such as pictures, clippings, journal articles, report pamphlet and leaflets and they may purchase commercial indexes for foreign books.

### **Reference and information services**

Special libraries provide reference services which provides the users of library and information services an interface with the large body of knowledge to satisfy his information needs. Reference service range from the provision of desired information to the training and educating

the user to identify and locate what he needs (Fisher and Kinch, 2000). In special libraries, special attention is paid to any user seeking this kind of reference services. Effort are made to answer the question or supply the information sought. In doing so, the special librarians is quick about it in order to save the time of the user who is assumed to be very busy.

### **Bibliographic service**

Special libraries compile bibliographies, reading lists, reviews and path finders on the topics that are of interest to the users of the library. They produce list of literature requested by the users.

### **Archival service**

Archiving is the art of collecting and keeping documents such as letters, official papers, photographs and others for their historical interest and purposes. It is a way of keeping documents that can be described as corporate memory or inactive materials. Such materials include annual reports, newsletter, bulletins, speeches of eminent personalities in an institution, community, state and the nation, seminar and conference papers. Others include workshop papers, research reports of committees set up on certain matters, photographs, videos of important events such as matriculation and graduation ceremonies, launching events, manuscripts and others. All these materials are generated from historical events and are important in the life of a community. As such, they can be used for research purposes especially on historical, social, cultural, scientific and technological issues. Special libraries in Nigeria offer this service because it is their mandate to do so and also digitised the materials for proper preservation.

### **Provision of Web Access to Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)**

Some special libraries in Nigeria provides this service which makes it easier for library users to access and use information resources at their convenient. The Online Public Access Catalogue is the computer form of library catalogue that is used to access information resources in the library electronically.

### **Photocopying service**

Special libraries in Nigeria provide this service to users. The practice is valuable to the librarians' work and the users as well. For example, people carrying out major research work may need materials from parts of dozens of books, journals and others. Photocopying is the production of single copy into multiple copies, and the facilities are available in special libraries at a cheap rate. Users of special libraries can get copies of the information they need from each book by making photocopy of relevant pages. This service is also essential as it enables readers to possess documents the library cannot provide. It therefore facilitates information gathering, minimizes heavy use and monopoly of the book. However, copyright regulations must be observed.

### **Document Delivery Service**

Document Delivery Service (DDS) refers to the physical and electronic delivery of document from a library collection to the residence or place of business of a library user, upon request. Various media are employed for document delivery, such as delivery from circulation desk within the library, or at the users' doorstep by messenger or by post/courier transmission through fax, delivery of document recorded or CD/DVD, transmission of soft copy through intranet as e-mail attachment.

In order for special libraries in Nigeria to provide information services efficiently and effectively to meet their user's need, to also improve their collections and skills some have

adopted the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT). At the inception of special libraries in Nigeria all their services were offered using traditional methods but with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) special libraries changed their method of service delivery. This is to ensure that the library users are better served. Many special libraries in Nigeria have used various ICT facilities to facilitate their information service delivery. For instance Alabi (1989) Adedibga (1992) respectively reported the successes that have been made by special libraries in Nigeria in library automation by commencing the effort of libraries of Federal Institute of Industrial Research Oshodi (FIIRO), the International Institute for Tropical Agricultural (IITA) Ibadan in the application of modern information technology for processing of their information activities since 1984. Idowu and Mabawonku (1999) in their study have shown computerization of library services at varying degrees in nine special libraries in Nigeria. Okiy (2014) stated that in recent times, some special libraries have been computerized and they are able to connect to the internet to obtain very up to date information at very short notice from both remote and immediate data bases globally. Mommoh and Emmanuel (2019) revealed staff utilization of ICT for service delivery from eight special libraries in the North Central Nigeria. All these instances have shown that special libraries utilization of ICT to enhance information services delivery is making them to make a great impact in their services delivery to their users which invariably make them contribute positively to research and development in Nigeria.

The information resources of special libraries in Nigeria before now consisted of only printed materials but with the emergence of ICT their resources now include electronic resources. ICT has made it possible for some special libraries in Nigeria to provide their users with electronic resources such as E-book, E-journal, E-magazines, E-databases, E-dissertation/theses. Special libraries can now provide information services all around the clock to their users irrespective

of their location. This is a great impact on users of special libraries especially the researchers which leads to development.

The emergence of ICT has made special libraries staff in Nigeria to learn new skills which has impacted on information service delivery. Library staff skills were enhanced through training and re-training. With the ICT skills acquired by the staff they have been able to operate or use ICT to deliver effective and efficient information services to their users. This has impacted on research and contributed to the development in Nigeria.

### **Challenges of Special Libraries and Information Services for Development in Nigeria**

Mommoh and Emmanuel (2019) Danbaki, Gao and Ndams (2018) assert that the major challenge associated with library and Information services in special libraries in Nigeria is inadequate support from the parent organisation. Other challenges include:

**Inadequate Fund:** Special libraries in Nigeria are faced with the challenge of inadequate fund from the management of the parent organisation. This is because the allocation to the parent bodies are being reduced by the government due poor economic situation of Nigeria as a result of corruption. Because funding is lacking, the library cannot achieve the required needs and relevant information resources to provide efficient and effective library and information services. Most special libraries are partly funded by their parent organisation.

**Inadequate Infrastructure:** There are inadequate infrastructure in most special libraries in Nigeria and this makes these libraries not to be functional in meeting the information needs of the user. Most of these libraries have no conducive building, no standard furniture, not to talk of related information resources to provide library and information services.

**Inadequate Power Supply:** The Nigerian power situation is in deplorable condition. There is constant power outage, which has frustrated effective provision of library and information services for development in Nigeria. Most libraries and information centres rely on alternative

sources of electricity which are not regularly maintained due inadequate fund. Most organizations expend huge amount of money providing alternative power supply. These alternatives include generators, solar system, green technology, turbine gas among others (Adepetun, 2012).

**Inadequate Information and Communication Technology Facilities and Literacy:** Most special libraries lack the requisite information and communication technology facilities, computers, internet and literacy needed in delivering effective library services. There is no doubt that lack of these technologies and basic skills of information technology has become a dog in delivering effective information services in special libraries and in application of information system for organisation's activities (Emezie & Neiciohiri (2013).

**Lack of Regular Training and Re-training:** Most library staff in special libraries are not given the required training in providing library services apart from what they learnt from school. This is because some of the management of these libraries do not have the fund for training and this has made them not to provide the required library services to meet the information need of their users as they ought to.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

From 1962 to 2022 special libraries in Nigeria have grown in numbers and despite the challenges encountered they are still contributing to the development in Nigeria through library and information service delivery to researchers in all sectors in Nigeria.

The parent bodies of the special libraries in Nigeria should allocate adequate fund to the libraries. This is to enable them acquire relevant information resources, Information and Communication Technology facilities and other required tools to provide effective and efficient library services.

The parent bodies of the special libraries in Nigeria should endeavour to provide adequate infrastructure and conducive environment for effective library and information services to meet the organizational goals.

Regular power supply and alternatives such as standby generators and system energy should be provided in the special libraries by the parent bodies.

No library can function adequately today without Information and Communication Technologies therefore, adequate Information and Communication Technology facilities should be deployed to special libraries in Nigeria by the parent bodies. This is necessary because no library can survive in the current dispensation without Information and Communication Technology. We live in a digital age and everything including library services are going digital worldwide.

Continuous training and retraining of special library staffs by the parent bodies is necessary. This can be done through sponsorship or by sponsoring the staff to conferences, workshops, seminars, in house training for them to acquire new and necessary skills to meet current trends.

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