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# **IMPORTANCE OF SPECIAL LIBRARIES FOR HISTORY AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES LEARNERS' WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study is an impactful investigation carried out in South-East, Nigeria. The study's rationale was to understand the importance of a special library among special learners. Specifically, it seeks to ascertain the importance of a special library among learners of History and International studies. Several scholarly journal articles were reviewed. Documentaries and published materials found in libraries and the internet were mostly reviewed especially on the relevance in ensuring quality discussion of the issues at stake. From studies reviewed, it was gathered that special learners especially those in History and International studies need information centers where they could gather all possible relevant information of their choices in order tackle both national and international issues as expected in their discipline. The study reveals that special learners are pleased with learning in well-defined learning environments. It further reveals that it has gathered that there are limited information centers in South East federal and state universities. The paper advocates for the establishment of a special library in all state and federal universities in southeast, Nigeria in order to ensure quality and improved learning outcomes among learners of all disciplines especially those of History and International studies that have multidimensional issues to examine.

**Keywords:** Special Libraries, History and International Studies, Learners, Special Needs, South-East and Nigeria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The specialty of learners demands close attention among scholars of all disciplines. Therefore, History and International studies learners are not to be left behind in the course of ascertaining the importance of special library utilization by special individuals among learners of the discipline. The concept of a special library has been described by several scholars. According to LUCIDEA (2020), a special library is the kind of library that offers specialized information resources on a particular subject, delivers specialized information services to special learners, serves as a special resource center for learners with special needs, and serves limited individuals and specialized learners. Buttressing further, the author added that the following are the functions of a special library; it assists special learners to select, organize and acquire relevant information material, offers current awareness information services, enables literature search among its users, and individual assistance among others. No wonder, a special library is also known or referred to as an information service center.

Thus, special learners of all disciplines could improve academically in order to achieve the goal of education through the use of a special library. Affirming this, a special library collects comprehensive and updated information on the concerned subject with the organizational parents and sends such information immediately to individuals associated with the organization in anticipation and on-demand (Ashikuzzaman, 2013). Ashikuzzaman, further stressed that the special library is specially designed for people with special needs so that their purpose of resourcefulness wouldn't be denied in life and in their learning environs. Deducing, learners of all levels need a well-equipped, positioned, and furniture formally arranged library for easy information access. No wonder, Ojo-Igbinoba (1995) reviewed that the beginning of a special library emanates when the few large enterprises (private, public, and quasi-public organizations)

start to offer employment and interest to skilled individuals to assemble and organize printed materials out of which will be supplied to their parents' organizations with relevant activities and the latest information. The author also added that the first special libraries established in Nigeria were those of the high court and Ministry of Justice, Lagos with the initial collection of colonial law books in 1900, followed by the establishment of the Department of Agriculture Research Library in 1910 at Moar plantation Ibadan.

A special library is established and funded to provide specialized and tailored information services based on the interest of the organization, services, functions, goals, and objectives. A special library preserves, disseminates, organizes, and collects information for its particular users (Jegade & Towolawi, 2010). In an earlier contribution by Okoro (1991) a special library is a mission-oriented information center that ranges from a private-funded technical and scientific research library to a public sector corporation special library. Therefore, it is of the general belief that a special library is a vital entity and establishment in ministries, agencies, research centers, and educational institutions as it quickens the attainment of parents' organizational goals and objectives by providing tailored information services and current information to individual users' information needs. According to Asghar and Shafique (2012), a special library is limited to the literature of a group of subjects or a particular subject and extends its facilities to a particular type of people. Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) (2020) also added that the collections in a special library are often heavily weighted to one area of interest in support of a specific user base. A special library sometimes offers highly customized analysis and selection of information (Murray, 2013). LUCIDEA (2020) asserted that a special library gives structured and specialized information materials on a particular subject to special individuals. It is important also to note

that the special library serves as an information hub where special learners irrespective of discipline gather for personal assistance on their information needs.

Learners of special needs are students of different learning particularities that desire to be furnished with learning facilities for self-growth and societal development. To achieve this, all states of Nigeria federation including the federal government should mobilize resources towards establishing and equipping special libraries owned by either state or federal government. In light of this, Murray (2013) asserted that even though the role/function of a special library is limited to individuals with specialties, organizations, and members of an organization among others however provides for interlibrary loans and access to other researchers. Accordingly, Bilawar (2013) opined that a special library is formed to attend to the needs of learning needs such as layers, engineers, doctors, administrators, historians, statisticians, bankers, and traders among others.

Although the service of a special library is a service to all men as there is always a brain behind its establishment. A special library according to American Library Association (ALA) (2020) serves effectively only for learners of special needs like the physically handicapped, and the blind among others. The body further added that some special library also dedicated to special collections like the presidential library, law firms, advertising agencies, hospitals, the military, museums, and professional associations among others. Considering the position of scholars, it is understandable that a special library has far-reaching advantages for institutions and organizations.

## **Types of Special Library**

From the literature, there are different types of libraries based on their organizational use and structure. Therefore, a special library is not also left out in this organizational structure and usage. The following according to Okoro (1991) are types of library could exist in any institution or organization;

1. Mass media libraries
2. Legislative and ministerial libraries
3. Research libraries
4. Financial institutions libraries
5. Print media libraries among others.

The author further stressed that the least funded among them is research libraries. Deducing, the essentiality of special library especially research libraries where all learners (History and International Studies undergraduate students) is inclusive should be a concern of well-meaning nations. This is because information is the engine hub of every learner and therefore demands utmost concern to all citizens. This became imperative because it is said that a nation cannot grow more than its education. So, prioritizing the establishment and equipment of libraries nationwide is an advantage to the strength of our growing educational standard.

## **Characteristics of Special Library**

The service of a special library distinguishes it from other forms or types of libraries in our environment. This is because, from its originality, information services are tailored and specific to the desire of her learners. Therefore, the following are the characteristics of a special library;

- It provides specific information for her users or groups of users
- It selects and acquires information resources on the specific and identified information needs of its users
- It is built away from public access in both organizations and institutions of learning
- It serves a well-defined group of people or individuals of peculiarity.

### **Importance of special library among special learners of History and International Studies**

The use and establishment of a special library is sacrosanct especially as it concerns individual learners of the developing countries of the world. This is because they are less advanced technologically, and thereby her learners of special needs may be hindered academically to compete globally based on intellectual prowess. No wonder, it seems to be little or no positive track record of learners with special needs emerging from Nigeria to compete globally. Therefore, it is on this premise the researchers suggest the following as the importance of special libraries to learners of special needs.

- ✚ It organizes and process information resources in a systematic order of significant materials for easy location and use.
- ✚ It provides its users with information resources based on interest and choice.
- ✚ It offers the opportunity to acquire and select information materials based on the subject of choice of the establisher
- ✚ It offers assistance to learners embarking on fieldwork to conduct a literature search
- ✚ It offers her user current awareness services in the order of the subject requirement and interest.
- ✚ It also offers her users personal assistance to access all forms of social media handles for the interest of personal empowerment among others

## **Challenges surmounting the functionality of special library in South-East, Nigeria**

This is a sure state of organizational order or institutional establishments. So, a special library is not exempted from the ravaging challenges surmounting today's organizational facilities. Although, there are numerous advantages of special libraries that don't shun the avoidance of its challenges, some of the challenges are:

- Government's inability to establish enough special libraries in institutions of high learning.
- Lack of maintenance culture by institutions or organizations
- The devaluing of institutional norms in making learning easier for all categories of learners
- Sense of irresponsibility from both state and federal governments to provide adequate funds to universities especially as it concerns learners of specialty.
- Inability to implement educational policies that prioritize learners' affairs especially those with learning disabilities.

## **Summary**

A special library is an important unit in research institutions, ministries and parastatals, government agencies, and private institutions because it provides special and tailored information services to the users. The study reviewed that a special library offers structured and special services to a particular field or profession. Learners with special needs are well informed and later when given an opportunity to trend in the oceans of special libraries. Its functions include selecting, acquiring, and organizing information material, providing special services such as Current Awareness Services, literature searching, indexing and abstracting services, personal assistance, document delivery services, digital library services, databases, and subscriptions to



online journals among others. Therefore, it is a necessity for learners' environment so that they will be exposed to the ICT facilities of special libraries for easy and quick assessment of all the needed information of their choices. Though challenges affecting special libraries cannot be ignored in order for them to be addressed, such challenges are outdated collections, devaluation of the special libraries, inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, inadequate manpower, poor maintenance culture, poor power supply and poor funding from the federal government, state government and institutions of learning among others.

### **Recommendations**

Considering the findings of this study, the researchers made the following recommendations.

1. The federal republic of Nigeria should establish at least three special libraries (one for Education, Sciences, and Humanities) for both state and federal universities in Nigeria.
2. The management of tertiary institutions should ensure that all faculties of learning in their schools have at least one special library for their learners through internal arrangement.
3. The federal and state government of Nigeria should allocate money to purchase and procure adequate working tools to ease library housekeeping duties for easy service delivery.
4. All special libraries should be furnished with current and relevant information needed by learners of specialty in all institutions of higher learning.

5. Librarians from time to time should organize library programs and workshops to sensitize library users and the management body of the institution on the role, activities, and functions of special libraries.
6. History and International Studies departments in both federal and state universities in southeast, Nigeria and beyond should allocate money to acquire ICT facilities for digital library services among others.

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