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AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the availability of information resources and services for PWDs in Federal University in South-East Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to determine the availability of information resources for PWDs and ascertain the availability of library services to PWDs in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria. This study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria. Observation checklist was the instrument used for data collection. The major findings of the study indicated that most information resources and library services specifically designed for PWDs in meeting their information needs are not available in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria. Therefore, it was recommended among others that Federal University Libraries should acquire information resources specifically designed for PWDs and also have an inclusive library service for PWDs in the university libraries for a seamless academic experience towards achieving their goals.

Keywords: Availability, Information Resources, Library Services, Persons with Disabilities, University Libraries

Introduction

The most fundamental role of any modern university libraries is to provide information resources and services to all users' communities which include students, faculty members, and members of staff without excluding Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who are also part of the university community. The university libraries as part of an academic library are established to support the objectives of the university in areas of teaching, learning, research, and scholarship. It has for decades played pivotal roles in supporting research in all subjects and disciplines within their parent institution. Also, its use promotes active learning and contributes to students' ability to think critically and work independently or in groups. Students of the universities comprise Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) and persons without disabilities. Notwithstanding, the fact that persons without disabilities make up a greater number of the students' population while the persons

with disabilities are smaller in number, the university libraries still have to cater for the needs of both groups of persons regardless of the total number of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the university.

Disability is an umbrella term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of PWDs (UNCRPD, 2006, p. 4) recognizes that disability is an evolving concept. It includes those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. Disability is part of the human condition. Everyone is likely to experience it, either permanently or temporarily, at some point in their life. People with disabilities are diverse and not defined by their disability. Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are persons who have physical, visual, mental, and hearing impairments. The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to perform normal day-to-day activities, that border on their survival within the society Ekwelem (2013).

Availability of information resources as started by Ezekwe (2019) is the capacity of an item to be seen, used, or obtained by the library patron, including reference materials and items in special collections for which access may be subject to certain restrictions. He also stated that availability goes with security control, communication, and, channel. It is the state of having information resources provided and made accessible. For this to happen, the information must be available in the right quantity, accurate, and reliable and the source has to be proxy to the users. The available information is also expected to be current and relevant to the user's requirements. Availability of information resources in any library, as opined by Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami, and Salami (2014), can explain the need for it and why such a library is important. In other words, the absence of relevant and up-to-date materials will undermine the existence of any academic library. Furthermore, they described information resource availability as the existence of books, serials, journal publications, and electronic source documents (non-print-like audio-visual) in the library. To ensure availability, the library should provide adequate, current, and relevant information resources that cut across all users' disciplines. This will support and help realize the goals of the parent institution.

Information resources as stated by Akpe, Ajav, and Ngunna (2018) are materials that convey, carry or contain information for use by the user. Library information resources are central to the provision of services to the users in the libraries and information centers; without them, it would be impossible to meet the information needs of its users (Iroeze,Chima-James, Agim, and Opara 2018). Nwabueze and Saghanen (2017) opined that information resources are inevitable in library operation as they enable the library to fulfill its objectives of meeting the information need of users, sources from which people receive ideas, meaningful messages, enlightenment, and directions that

will help them accomplish a task, make a decision and solve problems. They are housed in the library, systematically cataloged, and classified to aid easy retrieval at any point in time. Information resources for PWDs are materials that must have been transcribed into alternative formats suitable for PWDs before they are made available and accessible for use by PWDs. Some of these resources include BARD (braille and audio reading download), braille devices (an accessible mobile reading app), talking books/audio recording, large prints, e-resources including e-books, tactile picture books, play-back machines, and screen readers.

Availability of library services means ensuring the presence of the services in libraries for immediate use. In other words, if all the conventional library services are readily obtainable in a particular library, they are said to be available. Availability of library services, therefore, triggers the use of library services. (Agbanu, Nwankwo and Ogalue, 2019). Anjiode (2010) posits that all library and information services available to other persons should be made available to the PWDs in a manner that does not stress the individual. Library services should be rendered in a way that PWDs can make use of and one readily acceptable to such individuals

Library services are activities, facilities, and services specifically designed through which the library directly disseminates information resources to users. Stojanovski and Papic (2012) stated that it encompasses services through which librarians directly supply users with information but also interfaces created by librarians and adjusted to users through which users could independently find needed information. It encompasses different segments of libraries' activities; the goal is to provide the information sought by users to meet their needs.

Adekoya (2020) stated that there is still marginalization of PWDs, especially in universities that have been long acknowledged and are still in operation. This is seen in the provision of university infrastructure and facilities within the university's environment. The majority of university libraries seem to be inaccessible to PWDs beyond the main entrance of the libraries while the biggest challenge is the absence of diverse media information for PWDs as stated by Ayoung and Baayel, (2020). They further stated that as more PWDs attend higher institutions, it is incumbent upon university libraries management to provide the same level of information resources and services to them as it is being provided for users without disabilities but that seems not to be the case in most university libraries as PWDs are relegated, marginalized and library services not tailor-made for them. Ezeabasili and Umeji (2018) further supported this claim when they stated that there is a neglect of inclusive library services for PWDs in university libraries in Nigeria. PWDS have an equal right to information irrespective of their condition and also the right to gain satisfaction in productive activity, personal fulfillment, and need assistance while making use of the library. University libraries play a vital role in developing the intellect,

imagination, and general knowledge of their users through the provision of the needed information resources and services. In providing this information to users, the library needs to ensure that information resources are made available in the right format. Therefore, Pragmatic measures must be taken by university libraries to cater to their needs by making provisions for them in the library. This implies creating a special niche for them within the university libraries setting

Statement of Problem

The university library ought to be organized, and well-equipped, to enable all its users benefit from its provision and use the library independently especially PWDs. As important as university libraries are, it has been observed by the researcher that information resources and services are not readily available and accessible for use by PWDs. There seem to be few assistive technologies and devices such as braille technology, speech synthesizing technology, screen-reading technology, and information resources in alternative formats which the library is supposed to use in meeting the information needs of PWDs. Considering the ever-increasing number of PWDs in our universities as they seek further education, it is the responsibility of the university libraries to bridge the gap and make available all the necessary information resources and services needed for use by PWDs in the library. . It is against this background that this research work seeks to determine the availability of information resources and services for PWDs in Federal University libraries in South-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. Which information resources are available for PWDs in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria?
2. Which library services are available for PWDs in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria?

Research Method

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This work was conducted in South-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This study focused on PWDs in only two universities which are University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka (NAU) in South-East Nigeria. This is because as at the time of the study only these two universities had centers that are catering for the needs of PWDs and also had record of total population of PWDs in their universities. The instrument for data collection was an observational checklist. The observational checklist is titled: Checklist on Available Information Resources and Library Services for Persons with Disabilities (CAIRLSPWDs) which the researcher used in finding out the available information resources and services in the libraries for PWDs. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Presentation of Results

Analysis of Research Question: Research Question 1: Which information resources are available for PWDs in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria?

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Table 1.1: Frequency Count of Information Resources Available to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

S/N	Information Resources Available		UNN	NAU	AV	NAV
Visually impaired users						
1	Braille books		-	-	0	2
2	Talking books		-	-	0	2
3	Tactile picture books		-	√	1	1
4	Large prints		-	-	0	2
5	Easy-to-read-text	-	√	1	1	
6	Audio-tapes		-	√	1	1
7	Voice recognition software	-	-	1	2	
8	CDs		√	√	2	0
9	Accessible website		√	√	2	0
10	Braille printer		√	-	1	1
11	Twin vision books		-	-	0	2
12	Screen magnifier	-	-	0	2	
13	Braille translator software	-	-	0	2	
Loco motor impaired users						
14	Page turner		-	-	0	2
15	Book holder		-	-	0	2
16	Height adjustable work area		-	-	0	2
17	Computer with adaptive keypad	√	-	1	1	
18	Microform projector		-	-	0	0
19	Reference materials		√	√	2	0
20	Journal		√	√	2	0
21	Government document	√	√	2	0	
22	Height adjustable catalogue		-	-	0	2
23	CDs		√	√	2	0
Hearing impaired users						
24	Sign language video		-	-	0	2
25	Dictionary of sign		-	-	0	2
26	Audio induction loop		-	-	0	2
27	DVDs with subtitles		√	√	2	0
28	On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)	√	√	2	0	
29	Microforms		-	√	1	1
30	Teletext	-	-	0	2	
31	Reference materials		√	√	2	0
32	Journal		√	√	2	0
33	Government publication	√	√	2	0	
34	Sign post		-	-	0	2
	Total		13	15		

(AV) (√) = Available (NAV) (-) = Not Available

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Table 1.1 shows the information resources available for PWDs in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria. UNN had 13(38%) of the entire information resources out of the 34 listed information resources for PWDs. While NAU had 15 (44%) of the entire information resources out of 34 listed. They include CDs, DVDs Accessible website, Reference material Journal, Government document, OPAC. UNN had 3 available resources for visually impaired users, 5 available resources for loco motor impaired users and 5 available resources for hearing impaired users. NAU had 5 available information resources for visually impaired users, 4 available for loco motor impaired users and 6 available information resources for hearing impaired users.

Research Question 2: Which library services are available for PWDs in Federal University Libraries in South-East Nigeria?

Table 2.1: Frequency Count of Library Service Available to Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

S/no	Library Services Available	UNN		NAU	AV	NAV
Visually impaired users						
1	Braille services	√	-	1	1	
2	Reader's advisory service	√	-	1	1	
3	Automatic door service	-	-	0	2	
4	Kurzweil reader service	-	-	0	2	
5	Online service		√	√	2	0
6	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	√	√	2	0	
7	Current awareness service	√	√	2	0	
8	Document delivery service	-	-	0	2	
9	Borrowing by proxy		√	-	1	1
10	CD-ROM service	√	√	2	0	
11	Designated car park service		-	-	0	2
12	Document reservation service		√	√	2	0
Loco motor impaired users						
13	Ramp service		-	√	1	1
14	Elevator service	-	-	0	2	
15	Designated car park service		-	-	0	2
16	Reader advisory service	√	-	1	1	
17	Automatic door service	-	-	0	2	
18	Search request assistance	√	√	2	0	
19	Online service		√	√	2	0
20	Selective dissemination of Information (SDI)	√	√	2	0	
21	Current awareness service	√	√	2	0	
22	Document delivery service	-	-	0	2	
23	Borrowing by proxies		√	-	1	1
24	CD-ROM service	√	√	2	0	
25	Book retrieval service		√	-	1	1
26	Document reservation service		√	√	2	0
Hearing impaired users						
27	Assistive listening device service	√	-	1	1	
28	Sign language services	-	-	0	2	

29	Information service via teletext	√	-	1	1	
30	Search request assistance	√	√	2	0	
31	Online service		√	√	2	0
32	Selective dissemination of Information (SDI)	√	√	2	0	
33	Current awareness service	√	√	2	0	
34	Document delivery service	-	-	0	2	
35	Borrowing by proxies		√	-	1	1
36	DVDs with subtle		√	√	2	0
37	Document reservation service		√	√	2	0
	Total				26	18

(AV) (√) = Available (NAV) (-) = Not Available

Table 2.2 shows the library services available to PWDs in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria. UNN had 26 (70%) of the entire library services out of the 37 listed library services for PWDs while NAU had 18 (49%) of the entire library services out of 37 listed. They include: Braille service, Readers advisory services, Online service, Selective Dissemination of Information, Current Awareness Service, CD-ROM service, Document reservation service. Only one of the federal university libraries offered libraries services to PWDs; Braille service (UNN), Reader's advisory services (UNN), Book retrieval service (UNN), Assistive listening devices service (UNN), Information service via teletext (UNN), and Ramp service (NAU). UNN had 8 available library services for visually impaired users, 9 available library services for loco motor impaired user and 9 available library services for hearing impaired users. While NAU had 5 available library service for visually impaired users, 7 available library service for loco motor impaired users and 6 available library service for hearing impaired users.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study showed that NAU had less significant information resources available within its collection and UNN had less information resources available for visually impaired users than loco motor and hearing impaired users. Whereas, NAU had less information resource available for loco motor impaired users than visually impaired and hearing impaired users. Furthermore, it could be observed from the result that most information resources available are resources that can be used by both persons with disabilities and persons without disabilities. Information resources specifically designed to meet the needs of PWDs are mostly not available in the two federal university libraries.

The present findings corroborated the findings of Iroeze, Chima-James, Agim and Opara (2018) which revealed that the available resources for visually impaired users are less significantly available than expected compared to the other types of disabled users. The present finding could be attributed to the reason why Solanki and Mandaliya (2016) postulated that, in order for library to be able to achieve making information resources available to PWDs,

libraries should ideally classify the various information resources according to the different disabilities. This would ensure that PWDs in all categories are not left out when making available information resources for them.

The findings of this present study showed that UNN and NAU had a significant library service available within their libraries, which averagely made their library services available for PWDs users. However, library services like: Kurzweil reader service and automatic door services, document delivery service, elevator service, designated car park service and sign language service were not available in the libraries. Moreover, from the result, it can be deduced that services available in the libraries are tailor-made for persons without disabilities and that the libraries do not have inclusive services specifically or intentionally made for person with disabilities.

On the availability of information resources, it was ascertained that information resources specifically designed for PWDs are not available in the federal university libraries in South-East Nigeria. Although there were some available information resource likes CDs/DVDs, accessible website, reference material, journal, government document, OPAC and government publications they were not specifically designed for PWDs but could be used by both PWDs and persons without disabilities.

The present findings corroborated the findings of Kaaria and Namande (2021) which revealed that there was no available elevator, and automatic doors for use by physically challenged. Also the present study agreed with the finding from Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) study which posited that many libraries are ill-prepared to accommodate people with disabilities.

Most of the available library services shown from the study are those services that can meet both the needs of persons without disabilities and persons with disabilities. There is no inclusive library services for PWDs in federal university libraries, hence, most of the services designed to meet the needs of PWDs are seen to be unavailable in the two federal university libraries; services such as Braille services, automatic door service, reader's advisory service, document delivery service, ramp service, elevator service, book retrieval service, sign language service and information service via teletext.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was observed that a recognizable amount of unavailable information resources and library services still exist in federal university libraries in South-East Nigeria which may resulted to no use of information resources and library services by PWDs. Because it is what is available that can be used. Also, it can be observed that federal university libraries in South-East do not have an inclusive library service for PWDs.

Recommendations

The university libraries should include PWDs in the decision making process during acquisition of information resources of the library. This can be achieved by having a policy that ensures that a

percentage of the library's budget is mapped for the acquisition of information resources for PWDs. This will ensure that PWDs are catered for in the library. Also, acquisition of library collections for PWDs should be in line with IFLA guideline for PWDs. Additionally, university library management should advocate for donations from philanthropist, Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs), cooperate bodies, and religious bodies to enable them acquire these information resources for PWDs.

University libraries should incorporate and design an inclusive library service for PWDs in the already exciting library services. The university libraries should adopt a unique standard guideline or personalized information for PWDs in the provision of library service for PWDs.

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