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Library Services to Disabled Students in the recent Era

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Abstract

Libraries are non-profit organizations that provide services to their diverse user base, including individuals with disabilities, without discrimination. The Internet, a global gateway for information transmission with the capacity to share vast informational databases, has evolved in recent years as an information superhighway. People with physical, visual, mental, or hearing impairments are considered to be disabled. The impairment has a significant and long-lasting negative impact on the individual's capacity for carrying out regular daily tasks, to the point that it threatens their ability to survive in society. Disabled is defined as anything, or anything, that stops one from doing something, particularly legal disqualification, physical disability caused by injury or sickness, in The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (1991). Refers to a person who, following a physical or mental impairment that "substantially limits" one or more primary living activities. The respondents were asked to indicate the difficulties they faced using the library by choosing one of six difficulties that had been discovered through research and discussions with respondents and other people. Strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagreed are all acceptable responses. The cost of purchasing and equipping electronic resources, which accounted for 93% of the barriers to use, was followed by "most university libraries are still unaware of the needs of the disabled student users" (91%) and "most electronic resources are designed for normal users" (73%), all of which were obstacles for disabled student users. The findings also showed that the majority of respondents (70%) did view the high development costs and a small market for assistive technology as restrictions.

Introduction

Libraries are non-profit organizations that provide services to their diverse user base, including individuals with disabilities, without discrimination. The Internet, a global gateway for information transmission with the capacity to share vast informational databases, has evolved in recent years as an information superhighway. Digital libraries have grown to be important platforms for information dissemination by people or organizations that choose, arrange, and catalog a lot of documents (King et al, 2003). Similarly to this, the use of information technology is posing new difficulties in the organization, instruction, and research. It is the responsibility of library administration to offer users with disabilities the same level of service that is offered to users without disabilities when more people with disabilities enrolled in higher education institutions. Without a doubt, this generation is using libraries more frequently and needs better support while looking for data-based items. Users

now have unprecedented access to global communication and knowledge thanks to the new technologies found in libraries. Libraries must ensure that the material they maintain and offer in a variety of formats is accessible to everyone, including people with disabilities.

Statement of Problem

A facility where every member of the community is given access to the full benefits of the most recent knowledge in both print and digital media might be defined as the ideal library in our modern era. The libraries have faced criticism, too, for failing to cater to the needs of those with impairments. Many disabled library customers are still unable to utilize the internet because they are ill-equipped on a physical and mental level to do so. Issues are not being resolved by librarians because assistance provided to disabled customers is seen more as a gesture of goodwill than as a requirement that libraries must meet.

Another issue with most libraries in Nigerian universities is the infrastructure. Ramps and other accessibility equipment that let wheelchair users enter the library are hardly ever provided. Huge monitors with large fonts are one technique to increase accessibility for visually impaired people, however, they are rarely found in university libraries.

Benefits of ICT To Educational Development

The public now has access to vast reservoirs of information thanks to the web's recent rapid evolution. But not everyone finds this enjoyable. There are two potential issues with the web for those who are blind. First, because hypertext texts on the web are not linear, readers can easily link to other pages that might have entirely different designs and layouts. For people who struggle to understand visual cues, this could be confusing. Second, video, multimedia real-time collaboration, and interactive documents—all of which strongly rely on visuals—now dominate the web. (2005) Chiang et al.

Concept of Disabilities

People with physical, visual, mental, or hearing impairments are considered to be disabled. The impairment has a significant and long-lasting negative impact on the individual's capacity for carrying out regular daily tasks, to the point that it threatens their ability to survive in society. Disabled is defined as anything, or anything, that stops one from doing something, particularly legal disqualification, physical disability caused by injury or sickness, in The Oxford Illustrated Dictionary (1991). Refers to a person who, following a physical or mental impairment that "substantially limits" one or more primary living activities.

Physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments all fall under the umbrella of disability, and they can all have an impact on a person's capacity to interact with computer technology (Keller, Braithwaite, Owens, and Smith,2001). Additionally, Rousting (1998) takes a different tack when determining impairment. According to him, a person is crippled to the extent that artificial barriers hinder them from fully participating in society. He uses the example of a concertgoer who is unable to go because there is no access to a wheelchair. The number of persons living with disabilities is quite large, as Vanderheiden (1994) quite well noted. He asserts that the percentage of people with disabilities in the general population ranges from 18 to 20% and that as we become older, the likelihood that we may have a functional limitation drastically increases.

Data Analysis

Table.1

Samples for the study

Items	Subtotal
Visually Impaired	103
Mobility Challenged	113
Grand Total	**216**

Response Rate

With the assistance of a few colleagues from the examined college, the interview-style data collection was carried out. First, we found their phone numbers and email addresses on a list. Contacts were formed, some of whom volunteered to assist the researcher with the interview. As a result, the researcher forwarded them the interview instruments through email and the collected interview findings. Interviews with 174 respondents—representing 90% of the sample—were conducted. The analysis did not include the twenty-two (10%) respondents who were not interviewed. The 22 indicated respondents were not present when they were supposed to, which was the cause.

Key: SR- Strongly relevant, R- Relevant, SNR- Strongly not relevant, NR- Not Relevant**Table 2,**

Relevance of electronic Resources (Visually Impaired)

Items	SR	%	R	%	SNR	%	NR	%
Online public access catalog.	86	85	12	12	2	2	1	0.9
Large screen video with Teletext and sub-title facility	91	90	10	10	0	0	0	0
Screen enlargement software	70	69	30	30	1	0.9	0	0
Speech synthesizer with speech output.	93	92	8	8	0	0	0	0
Text enhancement software.	74	73	20	20	5	5	2	2

Table 3

Relevance to Mobility Challenged

A table and adjustable keyboard tray	76	81	16	17	1	1	0	0
Specially fitted lift to move the person inside	81	87	10	11	3	3	0	0
Photoelectric devices that can sense and track the movement of the users	81	87	10	11	3	3	0	0
Lift wheelchairs to all the floors.	90	97	3	3	0	3	0	0
Automatic – opening external doors and internal doorsbetween the foyer and access gates.	91	98	2	2	0	2	0	0
Lift with several disabled-friendly features such as an additional button position for someone in a wheelchair	92	99	1	1	0	1	0	0
Digital hand rail on steps.	89	96	2	2	0	2	0	0

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When asked to rate the relevance of the electronic resources available in the library, respondents used the terms "strongly relevant" or "Not irrelevant." The results, which were displayed in a table, showed that even though many of the resources were viewed as relevant, items like taped books, large-screen videos with Teletext and sub-title support, speech synthesizers with speech output, and large-screen videos with Teletext were selected as being more strongly relevant than others. The electronic text and haptic visuals were the least important components.

A second look at the results reveals that "the automatic-opening external doors and between the foyer and access" gates and "lift with several disabled-friendly features such as additional buttons positioned for someone in a wheelchair" were voted as very relevant to the physically limited library users.

Perceptions on Libraries and Library Services.

By selecting one of five itemized services from a list, respondents were asked to score their understanding of libraries and library services. These services were chosen by the researchers after interviews with the respondents. The respondents were instructed to use the words "strongly agree," "agree," "strongly disagree," and "and disagree" to score the listed services. According to the Table, the majority of respondents believe that libraries were primarily created to accommodate typical customers and that there is insufficient understanding of the needs of individuals who do not or are unable to utilize the library. As shown in the table, the data also demonstrate that respondents strongly disagreed (85%) and disagreed (15%) with the statement that "specific furniture designed to assist mobility-challenged individuals."

Key: SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, SD- Strongly Disagree, D- Disagree

Table 4

Perceptions of Libraries and Library Services

ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	SD	%	D	%
Libraries were established to service only non-physically challenged users.	110	57	65	34	13	7	6	3
There are reading machines at libraries to translate printed documents to speech or cassette.	0	0	9	5	171	90	14	7
Well-trained library staff are always willing to offerhelp at any point in time	0	0	3	2	176	8	15	8
Special furniture designed to accommodate mobility-challenged users.	0	0	0	0	79	41	14	7
There is inadequate knowledge of the needs of thosewho do not or cannot use the library.	169	87	20	10	5	3	0	0

Resources Constraints.

The respondents were asked to indicate the difficulties they faced using the library by choosing one of six difficulties that had been discovered through research and discussions with respondents and other people. Strongly agree, agree, strongly disagree, or disagreed are all acceptable responses. The cost of purchasing and equipping electronic resources, which accounted for 93% of the barriers to use, was followed by "most university libraries are still unaware of the needs of the disabled student users" (91%) and "most electronic resources are designed for normal users" (73%), all of which were obstacles for disabled student users. The findings also showed that the majority of respondents (70%) did view the high development costs and a small market for assistive technology as restrictions.

Table 5

Resources Constraints

Items	**SA**	**%**	**A**	**%**	**SD**	**%**	**D**	**%**
Cost of buying and equipping electronic resourcesfor disabled users	181	93	10	5	3	2	0	0
Most electronic resources are designed for normalusers.	141	23	16	8	37	19	0	0
Non-passage of disability discrimination act by thefederal government	35	18	126	64	31	16	2	1
Due to high development costs and a small market inassistive technology, few industries show little interest in the development of the technology.	136	70	31	16	15	8	12	6

Most university libraries are still unaware of the needsof the disabled.	176	91	15	8	3	8	0	0
Library staff provides services to the disabled fromsympathies rather than as their equal rights and would only consider serving them after serving normal users.	112	58	36	19	33	17	13	6

Results and Findings

The study's findings demonstrated that there is nothing now available to enable students with disabilities to fully participate in current technological endeavors. The only electronic resources discovered to be available are taped books and the online public access catalog (OPAC), neither of which have been used to their full potential. The study also revealed that none of the samples under investigation had any of the goods for the mobility-impaired, indicating that these users are not generally benefiting from the new technology.

The findings are consistent with WHO's observation from 2002 that adolescents with physical disabilities frequently face numerous limitations in everyday life, including in self-care, mobility, and communication activities. Their ability to fully participate in academic activities has been hampered by this in many ways. According to Lathouwers, Moor, and Didden (2003), technology like the internet gives disabled persons more opportunities to interact with the outside world despite their disabilities.

The respondents (visually impaired) preferred all the mentioned features, except for tactile graphics, while physically limited users said all the items are pertinent to their usage of the listed electronic resources. According to Keller, Braithwaite, Owens, and Smith (2001), the inclusion of individuals with disabilities must go beyond a showy gesture if technology is to meet a variety of requirements. To ensure a diverse representation of possible users, such inclusion is necessary.

Conclusion

A digital divide exists between students who can access electronic resources and those who are unable to do so, as seen by the uneven availability of new information technology among disabled students compared to non-disabled and non-disabled student users. Despite the tremendous advancements in communication technologies that have radically changed services in libraries, empirical data on impaired users in south-eastern Nigeria has shown that. Access to technological resources is severely disadvantaged for some people, primarily the disabled. The split could widen the already-existing achievement gap between pupils with disabilities and those without disabilities.

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