

The Role of Special Libraries in Meeting the Specialized Information Needs of its Parent Organization

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Abstract

The need to provide a specialized kind of information for specific purpose is inevitable for the growth and development of any organization. Such a function needs a special entity which will be saddle with the responsibility of providing and servicing such organization. In view of this, Special libraries are usually set up to provide such specialized services. In this paper, the roles of special libraries in organizations have been discussed. Finally, with the arrival of information and communication technologies, the roles of special libraries have rationally diversified in providing especially effective and efficient information to their parent organizations. Problems were highlighted so solution to such problems were prefunded.

Keywords: Special Libraries, Specialized Information.

I. Introduction

The genesis of special libraries may be traced to a few large enterprises; private, public and quasi-public discovered that it paid to employ a skilled person to devote him to gathering and arranging printed materials out of which he could supply the leaders of the enterprise on demand or at stated interval with the latest information on their work. Later on the library's management, commence, transportation, finance, insurance and allied activities could profitably make greater use than they had of information to be found in print. Such as a material was already used to slight extent in the center building, but they believed that if what might be called the printed materials fundamental to a great manufacturing and commercial city were so placed so arranged that it could be easily consulted by men of businesses, the habit of using would spread rapidly.

The name special attached to this kind of library can in a way seem to apply to every library in its own field. But special libraries are the first and almost the only print administering institutions which professionally recognize the change in library method. Agitations for a special type of information by categories of individuals, groups and business brought libraries of private corporation, public service etc. together. Thereafter, mutual arrangements and agreements were reached for exchange of correspondences. Soon special libraries association was formed (Dana;1991:61).

II. Definition of the Concepts

There has never been a universally accepted definition of a special library. Attempts were made by scholars to given a befitting definition of special libraries. For instance, professionals on the subjects have come up with differing view influence by what appears to them to be the most important characteristics of a special

library system. While some view it from the subject specialization, i.e. exclusively with literature of a particular subject.

Others saw it as an information center organized to meet the needs of a particular group of users and some look at it on the basis of the service it.

However, going by the trends of different definitions offer. Ash Worth (1979) Defined Special library as "one which is established to obtain and exploits specialized information for the private advantage of the organization which provides its financial support. The American Library Association Glossary (1985:10) at that point in time gave a generalized definition of special library as:

"a library established, supported and administered by a business form private corporation associations Government agency to meet the information needs of its members of staff in pursuing the goals of the organization scope of collections and services is limited to subject interest of the host or parent organization".

This definition implies that a special library expects to perform the overall function of selecting, collecting, collating organizing and disseminating specialized items of information for the use of their parent bodies. Ofilce (1985:11) sees special library thus: - "as an information service in an organization specially organized to meet the information requirement of a specialized clientele in pursuance or the organizations objectives". Japhet (1990: 191) on his own part recognized the concept of special libraries to simply means. "An information professional charged with the responsibility of managing a special library or an information centre"

From the aforementioned definitions of special library and librarian, referred that especial library is involved exclusively with the information in respective of the form in which that information is conveyed. This is the more reason why some professionals in special libraries proffered to call themselves information scientists, specialists, brokers and consultants. Based on this a number of them saw special libraries and information centre as one the same institution.

III. Characteristics and features of special library

As the name implies, the special library must be seen to have some special feature different from other types of libraries. According, however, some of the features include the followings:-

- a. It's a constituent of the parent organization. That is to say it exist Specially to support the Programme carried out by the parent organization by way of supplying information to meet the needs of its users who most cases comprises of the staff of the organization.
- b. Placement of the special library in an organization. Some parent organizations accorded a special library the status of a department; e.g. in most medial organizations in Nigeria, a special library are a section, in some research institutions, a major department.

Statement of objectives: An ideal special library must have a clearly set out statement of objectives. Since it is established to further the objectives of its parent bodies for which it is a part, its objectives should be

well in line with the aspiration of the parent body. And to realize these objectives, special Librarian must be well versed with the goals and aims of the organization.

- c. The collections of a special library consist in most cases of information materials which have been acquired, organized and administered for the library's clientele. To this end, the end of collections must be balanced, comprehensive in the main area of interest of the parent organization. The collections may, however, include books, pamphlets pre-prints, reprints, translations, dissertations, these, periodicals, newspapers cuttings, press releases, indexing and abstracting materials, transactions, year reports, dictionaries, directories of organizations, technical reports, research and laboratory note books, pamphlets, trademarks, specifications and standards audio visual materials and special collection such as maps globes, manuscript, clipping, microforms and of recent the internet services.
- d. The area of coverage of a special library could be both intensive and extensive to cater for the current and future needs of the organization it served. The librarian should continually evaluate its scope and adequacy in the light of changing developments in the organization. So such collections in a special library be current and made available to users at the time of request; because they are expected to obtain an up to date information as much as quickly as possible.
- e. The users of special libraries comprise generally members of staff of the parent body. Users other than those of parent organization, have to secure special permission before they are allowed to use the libraries collection.
- f. Special libraries sources of finance come from their parent organization. Often times, the fund come the organization main vote. In parastatals and international organizations, library Vote may be supplemented by funds from the external sources e.g. UNICEF, UNDP, etc. while in some smaller libraries, their voter are determine by the management.
- g. Special libraries offered specialized resources such as Current Awareness Services, (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), lending and reader services and indexing and abstracting services among others.

IV. Scope and size of a special libraries:

The ability of the special libraries to provide dynamic and effective information services according to Aguolu (2002:249-250) depends upon the following: "a well-articulated objectives competent, motivated and dedicated, staff, availability of a live, relevant collection of information resources and appropriate current awareness and information retrieval services, manual or mechanized, adequate physical facilities, and financial support."

By the foregoing, the hope of the special libraries may be said to be clear and strength. The service of any special libraries is strictly prohibited but flexible clienteles. In this case the coverage in terms of services rendered may only be highly specialized. The fact that special library can exit independently, serving the bibliographic and information needs of government departments, learned societies, professional associations, research institutes, or companies or industrial establishments and also as parts of other types

of libraries speaks volumes of its scope. Based on the aforementioned categories the rise of special library may depend upon the types of organization it exists and solve. Where the organization is large, the size of the special libraries may expected be large and vice versa. While the size may not necessarily be a relying print, funding of course plays a vital role in the effort of the special libraries to identify, acquire and process information materials for its users.

V. Types of Information Resources Found in Special Libraries

The raison D'etre of any special library is according to Aguolu (2002:253) "the provision of the information needed or requested by its users" Since the materials or information demand is not necessarily what is actually needed by the user, it is therefore the fundamental restorability of the special libraries to elicit from the information sector through reference interview what he or she exactly needs.

Basically, there are four (4) major categories of resources that are of value to special libraries:

1. Primary publications: These groups of publication are made up of information resources such as journals, research reports, conference papers and proceedings these provide current information on demand.
2. Secondary sources: These categories of information resources are made up mostly or monographic especially in from of text books. These unlike the primary sources provide detailed information their subject matter unlike primary sources they are not current. They do not give problem in terms of organization.
3. Tertiary Publication: This group of publications includes reference sources such as encyclopedia, indexes, maps, directorate dictionaries etc. as the name implies these group of information resources are purely for information purposes. They cannot be directly read as either primary or secondary sources. Generally these groups of publication are important to the special librarian in answering reference queries. They also toward providing further information in sources to be consulted.
4. Non book materials: These group of publications comprises of library resources that are not in printed formats they are classed under 3 categories:
 - a. Audio like audio types audio cassettes.
 - b. Visuals such as microfilm, microfiche slides, transparence etc.
 - c. Audio visual such as sound films television, video, tapes video cassettes and video discs these non-book materials are very important in special libraries that deal with media. They also provide current information without necessarily going through the pages volumes of books.

VI. Services Rendered By Special Libraries

The emphasis on special libraries is highly place on information and research functions. The following are some of the function of the Special Libraries:

1. **Current awareness services (CAS):** In special libraries environment library is expected to constantly acquaint all his clients with current information that has been newly acquired in to the library such as preparation of library bulletins, press release etc.
2. **Selective dissemination of information (SDI):** this is a technique of informing users of arrival of new materials on their fields. The SDI can be done by the special librarian indemnification of special need of client by creating and opening of files of the special needs of the clients in their respective subject areas.
3. **Bibliographic services:** This is a function where the librarian skillful in art of compiling a bibliography that is meant to bring together all published in the field or interest to the user in an environment where users don't have much time to spend in the library.
4. **Inter-library cooperation:** This is a relationship established between two or more librarians in order to assist on another in all areas scope need to liaise with other libraries in order to get those materials considered useful to its parent bodies.
5. **Reprographic services:** A special library environment can't function effectively without guaranteed photocopying services. This is because the publication purchased is usually limited it is therefore necessary for the librarians to reproduce more copies of some publication in order to make them available to its users. Photocopying is very useful because it enhances the reproduction of information resources for wide usage.
6. **Translation services:** it is a duty of special libraries to translate some of the materials to language that will suit the parent organization for its effective and efficient services. This will go a long way improving the standard of its parent body.
7. **Provision of reference services:** a special librarian is expected to provide reference to services to its clients because the specialists are normally busy persons. So, a special library must provide the required information irrespective of the form or place from where it may be got. Thus he/she may be required to work under pressure.
8. **Provision SO anticipated information:** one of the major responsibilities of special libraries is not only to provision information but also in anticipated. This may be required to use manual or computerized SDI system for keeping users well information through document or piece of information.

VII. The Application of information and communication technology (ICT) to special libraries.

With the advent of information and communication technologies to libraries, special libraries have gradually advanced towards the use of these technologies to services their parent organizations. Most special Libraries of today use computer internet and telecommunication facilities to select acquire, preserve and disseminate information in order to made the needs of their parent bodies computers are now of accessing information from remote a access and retrieves such information within the shortest possible time. According to Onyekweli (1998), the capability of can be manifested in the following areas:

- a. Share and retrieve
- b. Manipulate information
- c. Ideal with large volume of data
- d. Work quickly and accurately

- e. Make decisions supplied from alternatives
- f. Provide result in printed form and desired first
- g. Work with minimum human intervention

Summation of all these factors according him led to the efficient transmission of large data and information from one point to the other. Similarly, Tedd (1980) and Rowlay (1986) enumerated the benefits of computers in enhancing productivity. In charged output, more productivity task in document and information processing network e enhancement. Based on these measurements therefore special libraries are therefore expected to explicit the use of these modern technologies to enhanced their services to the private advantage of their parent bodies.

VIII. Problems Affecting the Growth Special Libraries

A special library whether in a profit making or nonprofit making organization usually affected by certain factors.

1. Financial factors: Finance is very essential factors in running an organization on matter how good your goals and objectives maybe they cannot be realized without funding, Most of the parent bodies of these special libraries having a lukewarm attitude funding these libraries. This therefore affects the development of the library.

2. Categorization: the existence of special libraries determines what that library is in the librarian can see as profit makers. Such librarians and library must draw up it goals and objectives in accordance with goals and objectives of the parent bodies profit making. In a situation where library is unable to contribute its quarter. It might be seen to have failed in performing its duties and when this happens the parent body right loose confidence in the library and the librarian. On the other hand, if the library is established by a nonprofit parent body. Yu will find out that librarian is only responsible in providing services to the staff.

3. Competition: This is mostly found among the pro fit making organization because profit-oriented organization are always in continued competition with one another. There are therefore some implications with the kind of information services provided in the library. Here the librarian faces a lot of challenges from his parent body.

4. The implementation of the goals and objectives: every organization has its goals and objectives based on which such organization were established in such a situation the special librarian must ensure that all services provided by the library tally with the goals and objectives his/her parent body.

IX. Conclusion and Recommendations

We have attempted to discuss the concept of special libraries, their Scope, size and activities to the Nigeria state, special libraries stand out clearly as library can provide information to those who want to use it. We encourage, therefore, special libraries not to relent in their efforts until the objectives for which these libraries were established for are accomplished.

There is an urgent need for all special libraries to intensify effort toward application of information and communication technologies so as to provide quick access to information in their parent bodies.

- a. There is the need for special libraries to engage in meaningful research so as to provide new information that will be useful in their parent bodies.
- b. There is the need for continuous training and retraining of library staff in order to meet the challenges modern librarianship particular in information and communication technologies.

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