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INCLUSIVENESS AND ACCESSIBILITY IN THE PROVISION OF INFORMATION SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTHWEST, NIGERIA.

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Introduction

- The advent of Information and Communication Technology has revolutionised the activities and services of academic libraries to support the provision of services that encourage digital inclusion and accessibility of people with disability.
- Digital inclusion and accessibility are an approach deployed to ensure that the web and other digital technologies are barrier-free for everyone.


DEVELOPING an Inclusive Library

It's not just about which books are on your shelves.
A Takes A Holistic Approach.



Introduction Cont'd

- The essence of digital inclusiveness and accessibility is to guarantee that those with learning disabilities have equal access to information and services.
- In most cases, especially in developing countries people with disabilities face digital divide because most academic libraries fail to plan and provide services that will benefit people with disability.

A black stick figure stands in the center of a library. The library has bookshelves on the left and right, and tables with chairs in the foreground. An open book lies on the table in front of the figure. The figure has a speech bubble on the left and another on the right. Above the figure's head are two question marks. The entire scene is framed in a rounded rectangle with a pink background.

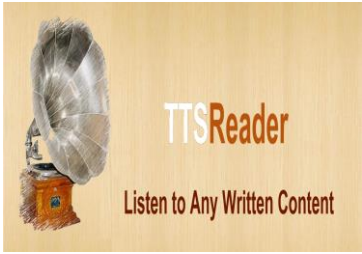
Is my
library

Really For
Everyone

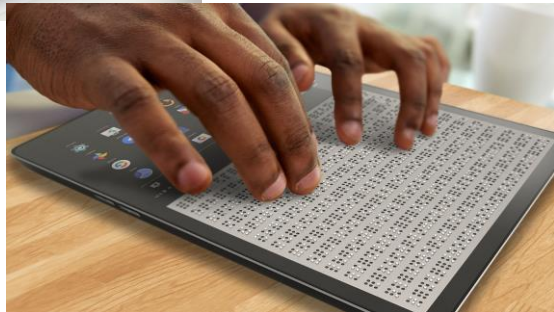
Introduction Cont'd

- Library resources and facilities should be designed to accommodate people with disabilities. This is possible with the use of Information and Communication Technology that will make available Assistive Technologies (ATs) to enable information resources accessible to students with disabilities in an equitable way.

PICTURES OF SOME ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES



3X Magnification
3X magnifying glass is considered to be the most comfortable magnifying glass for reading documents, maps and small fonts, lightweight and suitable for long-term reading.



Introduction Cont'd

- According to Small, Myhill and Herring-Harrington (2015) accessibility and inclusion are at the very core of what libraries are all about and libraries and librarians have an essential and catalytic role to play in facilitating the full participation of people with disabilities in society.
- Consequently, academic libraries should endeavour to make information resources accessible to all users by deploying assistive tools and technologies.

Research Objectives



- Investigate digital accessibility and inclusion in academic libraries in Southwest Nigeria.
- Find out the availability of assistive technologies in academic libraries in Southwest Nigeria.
- Ascertain the challenges of implementing digital accessibility and inclusion in Southwest Nigeria.

Literature Review



- The responsibility of academic libraries is extended to include the provision of information to support the university education, students, researchers, lecturers, and other scholars.
- This can only be achieved through equitable provision of information resources to all categories of users and by also making information resources available in alternative formats to include individuals with disabilities since they are exposed to same opportunities in education.

Literature Review Cont'd

- It is therefore imperative that different kinds of disabilities need to be identified and catered for by academic libraries in the provision of information services. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2023) 1.3 billion people experience significant disability, and this represents 16% of the world population.
- In the same vein the World Bank (WB) (2023) in their disability inclusion report states that one billion people or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disabilities and disabilities prevalence is higher for developing countries.

Literature Review Cont'd

- While report on disability in Nigeria by Lulu (2023) the executive secretary, National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD), asserts that about 35.1 million Nigerians are currently living with disabilities according to a report by the WHO.
- It is palpable that these 35.1 disabled Nigerians are prone to experience adverse educational and socio-economic outcomes than their abled counterpart.

Literature Review Cont'd

- Academic libraries, therefore, ought to have it at the back of their mind that people with disability cannot fully benefit from the usual information resources available in the library and therefore, need to provide information resources in formats that could be readable by them, but the information needs of those with disability seems to be neglected when academic libraries are planning for their services.
- According to Sambo (2016), the physically challenged students encounter barriers in their quest for education.

Literature Review Cont'd

- Non-inclusiveness is one of the major problems people with disability face in Nigeria universities, access to information that will help them achieve their academic goals are lacking. Though this problem is not peculiar to Nigeria academic libraries, the study conducted by Rowland (2008) noted that of all the countries in Africa, only South Africa has a well-developed, functional library for the visually impaired.

Visual impairment is just one out of the existing disabilities given attention in most academic libraries in African.

Literature Review Cont'd

- According to the Nigeria Institute of Advance Legal Studies (NILS) (2010) out of every 10 persons living with disability in Nigeria, 9 live below the poverty level.
- This implies that majority of people living with disability cannot afford the special tools needed to access information in the library and therefore, depend on the library for their information needs.

Literature Review Cont'd

- This could be achieved by providing Assistive Technologies (ATs) designed for diverse form of disabilities in academic libraries to guarantee accessibility and ensure inclusiveness of people with disabilities and make them level with their peers.
- The Nigerian Discrimination Against Persons with Disabilities (Prohibition) Act, (2018), part v (17) (3) stated that commission shall provide educational assistive devices for people with disabilities, but this law seems to be neglected by academic libraries in Nigeria.

Literature Review Cont'd

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- In the academic libraries there are several assistive technologies that can be provided to make the traditional library resources accessible and usable by people with disabilities.
- For example, there are software and hardware ATs for the blind/sight impaired, deaf/hearing impaired, locomotive impaired and general ATs that could be deployed in the academic library to achieve inclusive and accessible services and information resources.

Benefits Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

- Digital inclusion and accessibility in academic libraries will enhance increased academic participation of people with disability.
- It will encourage exchange of ideas, interaction and bridge gap between people with disability and people without disabilities.
- Digital inclusion and accessibility will help people with disabilities overcome difficulty in learning.
- Digital inclusion and accessibility will engender spirit of self-belonging and improve communication between the disabled and the abled people and even among the disables.

Challenges of Accessible and Inclusive Services in the Library

- Lack or inadequate assistive devices to help them gain access to existing information resources in the library.
- Lack of professionally trained librarians to guide them as well as fund not being available to purchase suitable equipment to meet their specific information needs.
- Paucity of fund to ensure library facilities suites all categories of users.
- Weak financial strength to get the ATs necessary to meet the different needs of heterogeneous users.
- Assistive devices are very expensive to be provided individuals, they depend on academic libraries.

Research methodology



- The study investigated digital inclusion and accessibility of information resources in academic libraries. This study adopted mix methods research design as it employed survey and in-depth interview. The study covered four academic libraries in Southwest Nigeria. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as data collection instruments. Both instruments were pretested at the University of Ibadan, to determine their effectiveness before they were used for the study. The researchers administered the questionnaires and conducted interviews to students with disabilities and some librarians in the selected academic libraries. Open-ended questions allowed the interviewer, to probe deeper into the initial responses of the respondent to gain a more detailed answer to the questions.



Findings



Table 1: General Assistive Technologies Available for People with Disabilities in Academic Libraries in the Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	NAME LIBRARY	Braille Books	Braille Machine	Braille Embosser	Talking Books	Tape Recorder	Playback Machine	Magnifying Glass/sheet	Text to Speech (TTS) Reader	Epub	Single Handed Keyboard
1	University of Lagos	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
3	University of Ibadan	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 1: Shows that 3 out of the 4 libraries surveyed have Braille Books, Braille Machine, Braille Embosser and Text to Speech (TTS) Reader. Only 1 library has Talking Books and Tape Recorder. 2 of the libraries have Playback Machine. 1 library has Single Handed Keyboard. None of the libraries have Epub. While none of the libraries does not have any general Ats for people with disabilities.

Table 2: Assistive Software available for the Blind/Sight Impaired in Academic Libraries in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	NAME OF LIBRARY	SAFA Software	JAWS Software	Window – Eye Software	Zoom – Text Magnifier	Document Readers Software	Kurxweil Software	Multilingual/Bilingual OCR	Duxbury Software	Screen Enlargement Software
1	University of Lagos	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES
3	University of Ibadan	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
4	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 2: Shows that 3 of the libraries have JAWS Software, Zoom – Text Magnifier, Document Readers Software, and Multilingual/Bilingual OCR. 2 libraries have Duxbury Software and Screen Enlargement Software. None of these libraries have SAFA Software, Window – Eye Software and Kurxweil Software.

Table 3: Assistive Technologies Software available for the Deaf/Hearing Impaired in Academic Libraries in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	NAME OF LIBRARY	TTY Emulating Software	Dragon Dictate or Convert Software	Big Mac Software	Cheap Talker Software	I Communicator	Video Captioning Software	Dragon Natural Speaking	Voice Recognition	On Screen Keyboard	Word Predictor	Abbreviation Expansion	I-Learn
1	University of Lagos	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
3	University of Ibadan	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
4	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 3: Shows that 2 of the 4 libraries surveyed have Video Captioning Software and On-Screen Keyboard. 1 of the 4 libraries has Dragon Dictate or Convert Software, Big Mac Software, Cheap Talker Software, Dragon Natural Speaking, Voice Recognition and Word Predictor. While none of the libraries have I-Learn, TTY Emulating Software and I Communicator.

Table 4: Assistive Technologies Hardware Available for the Blind/Sight Impaired in Academic Libraries in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	NAME OF LIBRARY	Scanner/Reader	Talking Calculator	Voice Recorder/CD Player	Braille Printer/Embosseser	Tactile Image Enhancer	Speech Synthesizer	Magnifying Glasses
1	University of Lagos	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
3	University of Ibadan	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
4	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

Table 4: 3 of the libraries Scanner/Reader and Braille Printer/Embosseser. 1 of the libraries has Talking Calculator, Voice Recorder/CD Player, Tactile Image Enhancer, Speech Synthesizer and Magnifying Glasses. One of the libraries does not have ATs.

Table 5: Assistive Technologies Hardware Available for the Deaf/Hearing Impaired in Academic Libraries in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	NAME OF LIBRARY	TTY/TTD	Portable Speech Synthesiser	Assistive Listening Systems	Alarming Devices/Signal Systems	Closed Captioned Decoders	Hearing Aids/Cochlear Implants
1	University of Lagos	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO
3	University of Ibadan	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
4	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO

Table: 2 of the libraries surveyed have Assistive Listening Systems. 2 of the libraries have Alarming Devices/Signal System.

Table 6: Assistive Technologies Hardware Available for the Locomotive Impaired in Academic Libraries in Southwest, Nigeria

S/N	LIBRARY OF LIBRARY	Prosthetic and Orthotic Devices	Simple/Electric Wheels	Walking Frames/Rotators	Adaptive Keyboards	Speech Input Devices	Cursor – Control Devices	Television/Projection on Tricycle	Cervical Collar
1	University of Lagos	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES
2	Obafemi Awolowo University	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO
3	University of Ibadan	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
4	Ajayi Crowther University	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO

Table 6: 2 of the libraries have Adaptive Keyboards, Cursor Control. 3 libraries have Television/Projection Tricycle. 1 of the libraries has Cervical Collar

Interview Responses from Librarians on the challenges they Face

- Interview conducted by the researcher on some librarians to ascertain the challenges they face in rendering equal service delivery to all categories of users.
- Respondents seem to have similar challenges of poor power supply, lack of funds and none of the librarians have been professionally trained to handle people with disabilities in the library.

The interview question on if there are any plans to enhance inclusiveness and accessibility in academic libraries in the future.

- One of the respondents complained that one of the problems the library has that seriously affects achieving all-inclusive library services is the problem of funds as the assistive devices are very expensive.
- Two of the respondents were of the view that the different categories of users, especially those with disabilities are not considered when planning and in collection development.
- One of the respondents hoped that future library acquisitions will take holistic approaches that will encompass diverse kinds of users.

Interview responses from some of the students with disabilities

- showed that most of them are not satisfied with the services of the libraries.
- The worst hit being those with deaf/hearing and locomotive impairments, according to some of the respondents, they don't boarder going to the library but depend on their course mates for information.
- They expressed deep concern over the libraries negligence over the provision of information in alternative formats to suite all categories of users.
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Conclusion

- People with disabilities are an essential part of academic library users. Library services and information resources should encompass different forms of disabilities in the society. People with disabilities in the university have the same information need like the abled people but requires information to be provided in alternative formats to make the information accessible to them. This study shows that certain disabilities are neglected, though none was adequately provided for.
- Academic libraries should take into consideration the specific assistive technology required to provide information to different kinds of disabilities and ensure that their needs are met. ATs facilitates services and provision of information in a manner suitable to make people with disabilities access information as at when needed, have a sense of belonging and feel at home when in the library.

Recommendation

- Academic libraries should provide various services to persons with disabilities like they do for the abled users; this will motivate users with disabilities to utilise the library resources.
- Librarians should be trained in the library school on how to handle and render services to users with disabilities.
- Adequate funds should be made available to academic libraries to purchase necessary technologies and resources to enable them to achieve inclusive services.
- Information resources in alternative formats should be made available and accessible to users with disabilities through the provision of ATs to enable them access needed information resources freely.



efharisto

gracias

grazie

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merci

dankie

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THANK YOU

mahalo

merci

mahalo

efharisto

danke

merci

arigato

gracias

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