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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ACCESS TO AND USE OF LIBRARIES AMONG STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA AND KUMASI POLYTECHNIC, KUMASI

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to investigate access to and use of libraries among students with special needs at two tertiary institutions in Ghana. They are the University of Education, Winneba and Kumasi Polytechnic, Kumasi. A total of 40 participants comprising 20 students with special needs and 20 library staff were selected for the study. Questionnaire was used as the main research instrument for gathering data. Purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used to sample the students with special needs and the library staff for the study. The study revealed that though both institutions' libraries have students with special needs who sometimes use the library, there are no specialised facilities in terms of equipment and reading materials for them. Also, the libraries do not have a policy which takes care of the needs of these groups of students. Finally, the staff who assist these students with special needs are not specially trained to assist them. Based on the problems identified above, it was recommended among others that the library must have separate rooms stocked with modern equipment and other materials for use by students with special needs. Also staff who assist these students with special needs must be given some training to be able to offer better services to them. Finally, there should be a policy governing access and use of the library of which students and staff would be educated on.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries and librarians play an important role in providing access to information by organizing and helping users find the information they may need. One key element of libraries is the reference service, where librarians interact with users to find out information source or the information that meet their individual needs. Over the last decades libraries have also started providing access to information in electronic formats, such as CD-ROMS, the internet and online databases; this has become necessary due to technological advancement. In order to perform their duties and functions effectively and efficiently libraries and librarians should always be fair to all kinds of people who use their services and facilities, especially people with special needs, such as blind, deaf, and physically challenged. Library service for students with special needs is an ever expanding phenomenon precipitated by both the innovative and spirit of the community and the advances of technology (Eskay and Chima, 2013). Libraries and librarians provide access to essential information that people need to participate in the emerging information society. Friend (2009) cited in (Eskay and Chima, 2013) opined that less than 5% of the information materials available to sighted library patrons

are accessible to the visually impaired. The same can be said of the deaf and other students with different forms of disabilities. It is therefore the moral duties of libraries and librarians to make sure that they provide information materials in all formats to all categories of their users.

Handicapped students in all forms suffer and face challenges in their attempt to access library facilities and information in their academic pursuit. Some of these challenges include social discrimination and cultural bias. The library facilities in some academic institutions were constructed without taking into consideration the needs of handicapped students and thus limit their access to information in libraries which affect their information seeking behavior. Advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), have made information now available in different formats that can be accessed through various media. Some of these information available to students with special needs include:

- Braille books
- Talking books
- Talking newspapers
- Large printed materials
- Screen magnifier
- Screen reader

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- Voice recognition software (**Babalola and Haliso, 2001**) cited in **Eskay and Chima (2003)**.

It is therefore the responsibility of librarians to make sure these facilities are available in their libraries for use by their physically challenged students. Besides lack of library materials such as Braille books, talking books, screen magnifier etc for physically challenged students, libraries buildings especially those in developing nations such as Ghana are not disability friendly. There are no ramps for wheelchairs, no lifts and the staircases to these libraries are too stepped which hamper access and use of library facilities by students with special needs.

The surrounding of a library, the entrance, restrooms, stairs, elevators and special rooms should be accessible for persons with different kinds of disabilities. A person in a wheelchair should be able to reach all departments, a visually impaired person should be able to walk with a cane or a guide dog and find his or her way without bumping into obstacles. Surely, deaf person should be able to communicate with library staff. Also, a person with an intellectual impairment should be able to easily find books and other materials. In the same way, a person with dyslexia or other reading problem should be able to find his or her way around (**Norlin, 1995**).

Statement of the problem

The University of Education, Winneba and Kumasi Polytechnic like other academic institutions, admit students with special needs, but little or nothing is done to meet their information needs as far as their course work and other research activities are concerned. The two institutions' libraries do not have any policy on access and use for students with special needs. Also, the personnel who assist these groups of students do not have the requisite training to assist them. What makes the situation worst is that these institutions' libraries are on storey buildings making access to users with movement challenges difficult. These facilities are in effect not disability friendly. There are no materials in Braille or special computers connected to the internet for use by visually impaired students; no gadgets for the hearing impaired, the shelves are not accessible to students in wheel chair. The physical structures of both libraries are clear manifestation that much emphasis is placed on the able persons rather than physically challenged patrons. The designs of the buildings do not have special entry and exit for persons with visually impaired as well as those in wheel chair. It is important therefore to examine how students with special needs have access to and use of the library at the University of Education, Winneba and Kumasi Polytechnic.

Objectives of the study

The main purpose of the study was to investigate access to and use of libraries among students with special needs and the role the libraries play in making information accessible to them.

Other specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Investigate if there is a policy on the provision of library services to students with special needs.

- ii. Examine the problems faced by students with special needs in their access to and use of libraries.
- iii. Examine the competency level of library personnel who assist students with special needs.
- iv. Examine the materials and other facilities available for students with special needs.
- v. Identify the challenges physically challenged students face in their attempt to use library facilities.
- vi. Make recommendations to all stakeholders on how to enhance access to and use of the library among students with special needs.

Significance of the study

The results from the study will help the library staff to give students with special needs the needed service to get whatever information they need in the library. The findings will serve as a buffer from which other universities with similar problems will tap in order to overcome the challenges they face with these categories of students. It will also help librarians in other higher institutions to reconsider the way the library buildings designed so as to accommodate students with special needs. The study will again inform the authorities to employ Library Staff who are knowledgeable in attending to such students with special needs and also organize in-service training programmes for those without the skills for attending to such students to promote their studies.

Literature Review

Academic libraries of all over the world deal with students with various physically challenged for example, there are students who are wheelchair bound, some with clutches and those who have visual, auditory and learning challenges. The key to ensure high-quality library services that meet the present and future needs of the diversity of students with impairments is the development of a close relationship between library users and the staff who work with the students in the library. Ghana's **Disability Law (2006)** sections 21 and 22 state that all public libraries shall as far as practicable be fitted with facilities that will enable persons with disability to use the library. This statement applies to all academic libraries which are public facilities, especially public universities and polytechnics in Ghana. Libraries and librarians in Ghana are aware that the new law required them to provide physically challenged students with equal access to services, collections and facilities. According to **Eskay and Chima (2003)** "Libraries and Librarians provide access to essential information that people need to participate in the emerging information society. Therefore, they have a moral obligation to make information available to all categories of users regardless of their gender, age, race, political affiliation or disability"

Students with special needs cannot access traditional library materials and facilities due to various kinds of disabilities such as low vision, blind, deaf and physically handicapped. It is therefore the duty of libraries and librarians to provide materials and facilities in formats that meet the needs of these groups of people.

Special needs education is the practice of educating students with special needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help learners with needs achieve a higher level personal self-sufficiency and success in school and their community, than may be available if the students were only given access to a typical classroom education. The Internet introduced interactive technologies, such as e-mail, chat, and instant messaging to the reference desk. The potential use of these services has been further enhanced by newer resources, faster transmission speeds, and the need for a patron-focused reference service (Penka, 2003).

Most libraries do not have equipment that is specifically designated for use by persons with disability. However, there is a wide range of adaptive equipment used for a variety of disabilities that could be adapted for use with this population as well as equipment and programmes designed for this use. In "levelling the playing field: the role of libraries in providing online services for people with disabilities", Williamson *et al.* (2000) tested different types of equipment and software with participants with disabilities ranging from intellectual, visual, physical, and auditory. They suggest the following criteria to be considered when choosing a technology:

- i. Ability to enlarge fonts, buttons, dialog and drop-down boxes, and scroll bars.
- ii. Keyboards which offer large letters, QWERTY and ABC arrangement, and choice of flat or raised positions.
- iii. Simplified browser format or keyboard adapted commands.
- iv. A trackball which is stable and solid with click buttons not too far from the ball. A ball which is not too high.
- v. An audio browser which is sufficiently useful for users who are blind, but which is sufficiently simple for support to be provided in busy public settings (Williamson *et al.*, 2000)

In addition, Williamson *et al.* (2000) indicated that libraries would want to avoid equipment that looks like a toy, which could be considered patronizing, and keyboards that are too unlike a standard keyboard. The equipment and software that were deemed successful in Williamson *et al.* (2000) study are still valid, and in all cases have been updated and improved over the years. The following are their selections for the most useful technologies a public library could offer for patrons with Disability. Enhancing Internet Access (EIA) is "a specialised Web browser, suitable for touch screen systems, with fully integrated web awareness, assessment and training modules". This browser also has a pop-up keyboard that can be used instead of a standard keyboard. The most useful keyboard was intellikeys, which is a large keyboard with overlays for various disabilities. Custom overlays are also available. Trackballs are the best alternative for persons without the coordination necessary to use a standard mouse. In addition to these findings, there are other technologies that may be used to assist persons with disabilities in libraries. Software that reads computer screens or detects speech, such as PW Web Speak

and Dragon Naturally Speaking can be successfully used for people with a wide range of disabilities. As technology progresses, there will undoubtedly be new and exciting ways to assist patrons with disabilities in libraries, so it is important for librarians to be up-to-date and thoroughly trained on available equipment (Williamson *et al.*, 2000). Libraries are all about information and for some people with disabilities and other impairments, information needs to be available in alternative formats. Also library buildings and facilities should be made accessible to all library users.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A descriptive survey was used as the design for the study, so that inferences could be made about characteristics with respect to the sample size. Descriptive survey deals with interpreting the relationship among variables and describing their relationships. The target population was made up of all those students with special needs (37) and all the library staff (60) in both institutions giving a total population of 97 (Students' Records Office, 2012). A sample size of 40 was used for the study which was conducted in May 2014. The sample consisted of 20 students with special needs and 20 front desk library staff. Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting twenty (20) students with special needs because they were regular students who were available when this study was being conducted. The remaining seventeen (17) were made up of twelve (12) sandwich and five (5) distance education students who were not resident on campus when the study was being conducted. A simple random sampling technique was used to select (20) front desk library staff. The main instrument used for data collection was questionnaire. Two sets of questionnaires on problems faced by students with special needs and library policy, facilities that students with special needs patronize and competency level of library staff were used for data collection. One of the questionnaires was designed to collect data from students with special needs, while the other was meant to gather data from the front desk library staff.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tables were used for simple frequency distribution

Background Information of the Special Needs Students

The background information for the research was collected from students with special needs of both tertiary institutions. In all, a total number of twenty (20) students with special needs responded to the questions.

Gender characteristics

The data revealed that out of the 20 students with special needs, 12 representing (60%) were males while the remaining eight (40%) were females. This means that the majority of the students with special needs sampled were males.

Age of the special needs students

Table 1 below shows the ages of the students with special needs.

Table 1. Age of characteristic of the respondents

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
21- 25	5	25
26 - 30	8	40
31 - 35	7	35
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey, May 2014

It is observed from Table 1 that eight respondents (40%) of them were within the age range of 26-30 years, seven (35%) were within the age range of 31-35 years, while five (25%) were in the age range of 21-25 years. Thus, there were more young adult respondents in their twenties as far as this study is concerned.

Academic level of the respondents

The results in Table 2 shows the academic level of students with special needs involved in the study.

Table 2. Levels of the Respondents (year group)

Level of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
100	1	5
200	7	35
300	10	50
400	2	10
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey, May 2014

Table 5 indicates that, 10 (50%) of the respondents were Level 300 students, seven (35%) were in Level 200, two representing (10%) were in Level 400, while one (5%) was a Level 100 student. Thus, the majority of the respondents has been in the institutions for more than two years (i.e. Level 300) and could give the researcher the information needed for the study.

Nature of Disability

It can be observed from Table 3 that nine (45%) of the respondents had low vision, six (30%) had a disability of hearing impairments, four (20%) were blind while one (5%) was deaf. This means that almost half of the students with special needs involved in the study were of low vision.

Table 3. Nature of the disability of the respondents

Nature of Disability	Frequency	Percentage
Blind	4	20
Deaf	1	5
Hearing Impaired	6	30
Low vision/Poor Sight	9	45
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey, May 2014

Frequency of visits to the library by students with special needs

The results from Table 4 show that 11 (55%) of the respondents said they visit the library in the evening, five

(25%) indicated afternoon while three (15%) indicated morning. Thus, the majority of the student respondents visited the library in the evening. This could be because that is the only time of the day that they could be assisted by their colleagues.

Table 4. Time of the day that special needs students visit the library

Time	Frequency	Percentage
Morning	3	15
Afternoon	5	25
Evening	11	55
Night	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey, May 2014

Problems faced by Respondents on access to and use of these Libraries

Series of statements were used to find out problems that students with special needs in the University of Education, Winneba and Kumasi Polytechnic, Kumasi, encounter when accessing the libraries and their facilities or resources. These statements were answered using items 8–15 on the questionnaire by the students. Each of these items was coded as Disagree = 1, and Agree = 2. All the twenty respondents responded to all the items. Their responses are indicated in Table 5. From Table 5, it is observed that majority (75%) of the students with special needs faced several problems in using the library. These included poor access to the library which manifested in a number of ways such as difficulty in reaching the shelves, difficulty in locating books and poor access to library staff for assistance. The visually impaired students complained about inadequate reading materials with large prints and Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), while students with deaf and hearing impairment also complained about lack of hard-wired devices and closed caption decoders. This means that UEW Library does not have facilities and equipment for use by these groups of students. When respondents were asked to indicate if there were any sources that were not presently available to them in the library, all of them 20 (100%) responded in the negative. Also, 20 (100%) of the respondents sampled for the study said that they had no knowledge of any external agencies that support efforts provided to them with library and information services. This means that these are faced with a lot of challenges with their information needs. This confirms the responses that the respondents gave when they were asked to indicate the means through which they get reading materials, sixteen (80%) said they get them from their lecturers, while four (20%) said they get their reading materials from friends who are past students. It came to light that 16 (80%) of the special needs students indicated that library staff are helpful in availing to them the information they need, while four (20%) said that library staff are not helpful. This means largely that library staff assists special needs students with their information needs when they visit the library. The results from Table 5 also revealed that 14 (70%) of the respondents had to leave the library without getting what they were looking for, while six (30%) did not give any response which indicates that majority of the respondents did not get the satisfaction they want.

Table 5. Problems faced by Respondents in accessing the library

Item	Nature of Disability							
	Low Vision		Blind		Hard of Hearing		Deaf	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
Easy access to the Library		9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%
Easy access to shelves		9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%
Little or no difficulty in locating books		9 5%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%
Easy access to library staff for assistance		2 10%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%
Closed caption decoder						1 5%		6 30%
Reading materials with large print	2 10%	7 35%	4 20%					
CCTV to read notes and other materials	2 10%	7 35%	4 20%					
Hard-wired devices						1 5%		6 30%

Key: A = Agree D = Disagree; Source: Field survey, May 2014

Table 6. Use of library Facility by Respondents

Item	Nature of Disability							
	Low Vision		Blind		Hearing Impaired		Deaf	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
CCTV to help students read note and other materials	2 10%	7 35%		4 20%				
Telecommunication Devices for the deaf						6 30%		1 5%
Use of closed caption decoder						6 30%		1 5%
Personal FM system						6 30%		1 5%
Reading materials with large print		9 45%		4 20%				
Reading materials with Braille		9 45%		4 20%				
Reading materials with tape recording		9 45%		4 20%				
Hard-wired devices						6 30%		1 5%

Key: A = Agree D = Disagree; Source: Field survey, May 2014

Table 7. Services that Library Staff should render to Respondents

Item	Nature of Disability							
	Low Vision		Blind		Hearing Impaired		Deaf	
	A	D	A	D	A	D	A	D
Locate shelves for specific books	9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	
Locate index on publishers	9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	
Use the Library catalogue	9 5%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	
Locate periodicals	9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	
Use reference books	9 45%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	
Use Internet facilities	9 5%		4 20%		1 5%		6 30%	

Key: A = Agree D = Disagree; Source: Field survey, May 2014

Library Facilities used by the Respondents

The researcher wanted to find out the facilities available to these respondents in the study areas that they use more often in their search for information in their libraries.

It is observed from Table 6 that out of the twenty (20) respondents, 2 (10%) respondents with low vision agreed that they use CCTV to access information from the library, while seven (35%) of them disagreed that CCTV help them to read notes and other materials. This means that few students with low vision (2) use CCTV in reading. When the respondents were asked to indicate whether they use reading materials with large print, Braille, and tape recording in the library as one of the facilities provided, as many as 13 (65%) of the respondents (low vision and blind) responded that that facility is not available and so in the Library disagree completely to the statement. Thus the library does not have information in large print, Braille and tape recording for use by students with low vision and blind. A further question posed to respondents to find out whether they patronize the use of closed captioned decoder, personal FM system, and hard-wired devices showed

that all the respondents with hard of hearing six (30%) and one hearing impaired (10%) indicated that they do not use them for reading, hence disagreed to the statement. This indicates that the libraries studied are not equipped with hard-wire devices, personal FM system and closed caption decoder for use by students with hearing impairments. This put these students at a disadvantageous position in accessing and using the library. The results in Table 7 indicate that all the respondents advocated that the library staff should be trained specially to render services for students with capping conditions in the areas of locating shelves for specific books, locating indices on publishers, use the library catalogue, locate periodicals, use reference books as well as use internet facilities for students with special needs so that they can also benefit like those "normal" students. It can thus be inferred from the above results that students with special needs would want the University authorities to train Library Staff to render the needed specialized services to them.

Background Information of the Library Staff

The background information for the research was collected from Library Staff of both institutions. In all, a total number of twenty (20) Library Staff responded to the questions.

Gender

The data revealed that of the twenty (20) Library Staff 14 representing (70%) were males while the remaining six (30%) were females. Thus, the majority of the Respondents were males.

Age of the Respondents

It can be observed from Table 8 that, nine (45%) of Library staff were within the age range of 31-35 years, five (25%) were 41-45 years, three (13%) were 46 years, two (10%) in the 26-30 years while only one (5%) fell in the age range of 21-25 years. Thus, most of the respondents (85%) were above 30 years, an indication that Library Staff were in the most active and vibrant stage of their lives.

Table 8. Age of the Library Staff

Age range	Frequency	Percentage
21 - 25	1	5
26 - 30	2	10
31 - 35	9	45
41 - 45	5	25
46 and above	3	15
Total	20	100

Source: Field survey, May 2014

Status of Respondents

The results in Table 9 show the designation of Library staff involved in the study.

Table 9. Status of Library Staff

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Principal Library Assistant	1	5
Senior Library Assistant	3	15
Library Assistant	8	40
Junior Library Assistant	8	40
Total	20	100

Source: Field Survey, 2014

The results show that, eight respondents representing 40% were Library Assistants, another eight (40%) were Junior Library Assistants, three (15%) were Senior Library Assistants, while one (5%) was a Principal Library Assistant. The results thus indicate that the majority (60%) of the library staff were Senior Staff.

Number of years Served by Respondents

The number of years that the respondents have spent in the libraries are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Number of years of active service by Library staff

Years in the service	Frequency	Percentage
0-5	1	5
6-10	13	65
11-15	5	25
21 and above	1	5
Total	20	100

Source: field survey, May 2014

The results in Table 10 show that 13 (65%) of the respondents have been in active service for 6-10 years, 5 (25%) have been working for 11-15 years, one (5%) of the library staff have been working for 0-5 years and 21 years and above. Thus, majority (65%) of the library staff have worked at both libraries for 6 -10 years.

Library Policy on the Provision of Services to Students with Special Needs

The researchers wanted to find out if the libraries had a policy on access and use of services to students with special needs, and whether or not the Library Staff are better equipped with the necessary skills to meet these demands. The results indicate that 17 (85%) of the respondents said that the libraries did not have a policy, while the remaining 3 (15%) of the respondents said the library did have a policy on access and use. This is an indication that the majority of the respondents were unaware of the existence of a library policy on access and use. Again, all the 20 (100%) of the respondents stated that the library did not have any policy which takes care of students with special needs. This result also shows that there is no library policy on access and use of the resources for disabled students in both institutions.

Media through which Information is provided to Students with Special Needs

The respondents were asked to indicate the medium or media through which information is provided to the students with special needs. It was discovered that, apart from 4 (20%) of the library staff who admitted that they provide information to students with special needs in the form of large print, all the others were emphatic that they did not provide students with information on Braille, tape recording, books on CDs and personal FM system. This goes to buttress the point that the libraries are not well resourced as most of the materials and resources needed to cater for the needs of the students with special needs were not available. It was therefore not surprising that when the respondents were asked to list the facilities available and state their quantities, all the respondents 20 (100%) could mention only CCTV.

Competency Level of Respondents who assist Students with Special Needs

The researcher also sought to find out the competency level and the type of skills or training that are given to Library Staff who assist students with special needs in their libraries. It was revealed that all the respondents, 20 (100%) were not trained to offer such service to these group of users. This the researchers see as very serious since, these groups of users were relegated to the background.

Discussion on Findings

This section discusses the major findings of the study, which are discussed under the following sub-headings:

1. Library Policy on the provision of library services to students with special needs
2. Problems faced by students with special needs

3. Facilities that students with special needs patronise
4. Competency level of library staff who assist students with special needs

Library Policy on the Provision of Library Services to Students with Special Needs

It was found out that the majority of the Library Staff were not aware of the library policy that caters for these groups of users. Out of the 20 respondents sampled for the study, only 3 (15%) of them were aware of the existence of such a policy. The implication of this finding is that it could be either the institutions may have such policies but not been made known to the staff or the libraries do not have them at all. **Kumar (1987)** posited that policies are general statements or understanding used to guide and channel the thinking of subordinates in making decision. These must be consistent with library objectives. Whatever the case, the library attendants should not be ignorant about the policy in the library.

Problems Faced by Students with Special Needs

The study revealed that the majority of the students with special needs in both institutions do not have easy access to their libraries. In addition, materials and facilities that are available in the libraries are not suitable for them. **Murphy and Johns (1977)** claim that all library collections should be available to all who have the need and the ability to use them. They further acknowledge that the realities of costs and demands continue to curb such a liberal "philosophical standpoint." They submit that the only practical access then, is to match availability to usage patterns. **Wright (1979)** emphasized that the goal of making information services "available to the handicapped individual in a manner which does not stress the individual's handicapping condition or ignore the consequences of that handicap for information access". These problems make students with special needs lose the interest in visiting the library for information. One will thus not be far from right that then nature of personnel coupled with the available facilities in the libraries, not forgetting its accessibility could determine who should enjoy the services of the libraries.

Facilities available to Students with Special Needs Patronize

One of the findings of the study is that majority of the students said that the libraries do not have facilities that will help them access information. Few of them with vision impairment said that they use the CCTV to read their notes, text books, read materials with large print and also, read materials with tape recording. This means that both libraries have only the CCTV. Other equipment needed by these groups of students to facilitate their studies is non-existent. It was again evident that students with hearing impairment and low vision have not got any equipment to help them learn with or facilitate their learning.

The responses by the Library Staff confirmed the students' responses. When they were asked to list the facilities available and state the quantity, all them listed only CCTV.

Williamson et al. (2000) reported that most libraries do not have equipment that is specifically designated for use by persons with disability. However, there is a wide range of adaptive equipment used for a variety of disabilities that could be adapted for use with these groups of users as well as equipment and programmes designed for this use.

Competency Level of Library Staff who assist Students with Special Needs

Another finding of the study was that both libraries do not have specially trained staff who assist students' with special needs. Even though the staff sometimes assists those who visited the library, they have not been given any formal training in the form of workshops, in-service training, seminars or short courses. Asked to comment on what should be done to improve on the services provided by the library staff to these special group of users, they suggested that they would want the authorities concerned to train some of their the Library Staff in the areas of locating shelves for reference books through to the use of Internet services for them. This, they believe, will go a long way in motivating them (students with special needs) to use the library's facilities because there are personnel to assist them. Unavailability of Library personnel to help these users hinder the services that are provided to them. This confirms the assertion by **Pandey (1995)** that libraries need managers who are up-to-date and are aware of the latest developments that are likely to have profound effects on their services which depend largely on the continuous upgrading of staff through training on regular basis. **Jordan and Powel (1995)** also indicate that "to be competent is both to have set skills and be able to employ them using a flexible responsive set of higher order strategies that may bring the desired outcomes".

SUMMARY

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- i. The two institutions' libraries do not have any policy on access and use of the library by students with special needs. A majority of the Library Staff were not aware of the existence of any access and use policy.
- ii. Apart from the Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), the libraries have no other special facility for use by students with disabilities, especially the deaf and hearing impairment. This was revealed in the study when both students with special needs and the library staff indicated that the only facility for use by these groups of users in the libraries is the CCTV.
- iii. Students with special needs do not use the libraries regularly and the medium through which information is provided to them is large print for students with vision impairment.
- iv. Both institutions do not have specially-trained library staff to attend to students with special needs. All the staff in the libraries were not specially trained to provide special services to these groups of users.
- v. Students with special needs are faced with various forms of disabilities such as blindness, deafness, hearing and vision impairments.

Conclusion

It is said that disability is not inability. This is why a lot of persons with special needs pursue higher education. But it appears the institutions studied have not put in place the necessary measures to facilitate the education of persons with disabilities. Their access to and use of libraries have been hampered by a host of challenges some of which are difficulty in locating shelves for reference materials, in contacting library staff for assistance, unavailability of equipment for use by them thereby affecting their studies negatively. There is, therefore, the urgent need for management of both tertiary institutions to re-design their libraries to cater for both the physically able and disabled to access and use the libraries to promote teaching and learning.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. The two institution libraries should come out with a policy on access and use which will cater for the information needs of students with special needs and also disseminate the policy to all categories of library staff so that they would be well informed of the policy. This will enhance its implementation for the benefit of these users.
2. The libraries should be stocked with modern equipment like computers with JOS connected to the Internet, books in Braille, books on cassette or CD's, for use by students with visual impairment, and also, closed caption decoder, hard-wired, personal FM system and telecommunication devices for the hearing impairment.
3. In-service training in the form of workshops, seminars, or short courses should be incorporated into the training programmes of the two institutions' libraries by Management to enable Library Staff acquire the requisite skills in handling students with special needs.
4. Managers of the Libraries should create a special hall with all the materials and equipment for use by students with special needs. This will make them feel more comfortable in using the library for their academic work.
5. Management of the institutions and that of the libraries should collaborate and re-design the physical structure of the building to enable students with disabilities, who will be admitted into the institutions have easy access to it.

This will enable students with special needs get easy access to the building and their facilities for use.

6. Special funds should be allocated to the libraries by the Management of these libraries to enable them acquire the required logistics to support students with special needs. These funds would help in purchasing the required materials and equipment for use by students with special needs as well as training of the Library Staff.
7. Resource sharing with other university/ polytechnic libraries can occur so that lending of books in Braille or on tape can be made with ease. It is also ideal if when purchasing books, the library found out what other format the books available in and increasing the supply of electronic books can also be advantageous, especially for physical disable students.

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