



**USE OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS BY POST GRADUATE STUDENTS IN
SELECTED UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH WEST NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

Special collections are usually library material selected for specific purposes to meet specific needs. They are rare books and manuscripts which provide resources for the increasing needs of the research community in an academic or research institution. The study covers three universities in South West Nigeria. These universities are Lagos State University (LASU), Bowen and Covenant University. The descriptive survey and stratified random sampling method was adopted for this study. A self developed questionnaire was used to gather data from one hundred and ninety three respondents. One hundred and eighty eight copies of the questionnaire were found usable. The results of the study are shown in tables using simple percentages. The study showed that there is a high level of utilization of special collections in the selected universities. The respondents however pointed out poor bibliographic details of these special collections as a major hindrance to their quick access.

Introduction

Special collections are usually library materials selected for specific purposes to meet specific needs. These collections are special categories grouped together and different from conventional materials usually found in the library. Igbeka and Ola (2010) are of the view that, depending on their mandate and policies, different libraries have different types of special collections. According to Agyven-Gyasi (2008), special collections are rare books and

manuscripts which provide resources for the increasing needs of the research community in an academic or research institution. Their missions to preserve, develop, promote, and facilitate access to the nation's or university's heritage collections, which, by virtue of their rareness, provenance, or special physical features, require secure closed access storage and supervised use. Special collections seek to raise the profile of the University and its Library by achieving recognition of the regional and national significance of its collections.

University libraries are established with the primary goal of providing information to the students, staff and workers of the university community. Yusuf and Iwu (2010) asserted that a University library is an indispensable instrument for intellectual development being a store house of information both for students and staff. One of the objectives of academic libraries in Nigeria is to develop and maintain collections of information resource in all formats print and non –print and to make these information resources available and accessible to all. Ogbuiyi and Okpe (2013) posited that an academic library provides information resources for post graduate students to carry out effective learning and research, to the teaching staff resources to support teaching and research; in all, the library is expected to provide information resources for extra-curricular activities.

Agboola and Bamigboye (2011) asserted that the quality and strength of any educational program lies on the library; it does not depend on how magnificent the building is, but on the proper use of it. The main goal of an academic library is to support the objectives a university, which are generally in the area of teaching, research and service (Aina, 2004; Mabawonku, 2004; Johnson, 2006). It is pertinent, therefore, that university libraries facilitate information resource to meet academic staff members' research needs. Supporting this objective, Chisenga (2006) observed that the central purpose of libraries is to provide a service: access to Information, and modern information and communication technologies, especially computers. Nwezeh and Shabi (2011) outlined books, journals, government publications, indexes, abstracts as some of the resources to be made available and accessible to library users. To achieve these objectives of satisfying the information needs of the user community, the library needs to acquire current and relevant materials in both print and non-print formats. It is the duty of the library to identify the information needs of its users and ensure their presence in libraries for immediate use (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002; Aina, 2002). The use of information resources is indispensable to the teaching, learning and research activities of postgraduate students in any university system.

Statement of Problem

An academic library is the hub on which teaching, learning and research of any institution of higher learning revolves. Acquiring and processing of information materials is not enough, there must be a conscious effort made to make these information resources accessible and utilized by library users. Most University libraries house their special collections in a separate place. This, sometimes, is responsible for non-usage of such information resources as the users might not be aware of their existence. Most University libraries still use card catalogues. These card catalogues are often if not always in disarray and most times it is difficult going through to get the desired information required. It is against this backdrop that this paper attempts to find out if special collections in the selected universities are well utilized

by postgraduates since their major assignment is in carrying out research and if not, to find out the reasons why the resources are not being well utilized.

Objectives of the Study

1. Determine the degree of utilization of special collection materials by postgraduate students in the selected university libraries in south west Nigeria;
2. Find out the challenges encountered by postgraduate students in making use of special collections in the selected university libraries.

Methodology

The study covers three universities in South West Nigeria. These are Lagos State University (LASU), Bowen and Covenant University. One hundred and ninety-three respondents were sampled for this study. The descriptive survey and stratified random sampling method was adopted for this study. According to Akinsola (2005), correlation studies are used to quantify the magnitude of the relationship between variables being studied. This design was considered appropriate, because the independent variables were not manipulated instead, the variables were investigated. A self-developed questionnaire was used to gather data from the respondents. The results of the study are shown in tables using simple percentages and mean.

Table 1: Demographic details of the respondents

Age		No	%
	20-30	18	21.4
	31-40	23	27.4
	41-50	29	34.5
	51-60	14	16.7
	61-70	1	0.5
Sex	Male	83	44.1
	Female	105	85.9
Level of Study	Masters	147	78.1
	PhD	41	21.8

Findings

What is the degree of utilization of special collection materials by postgraduate students in selected University libraries in Nigeria?

Table 2: Degree of Utilization of Special Collection in University Libraries

S/N	Special collection	Very low		Low		High		Very high	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Journals	16	8.5	10	5.3	34	18.1	128	68.1
2	Theses and Dissertation	5	2.7	14	7.4	62	33.0	107	56.9
3	Technical Reports	13	6.9	41	21.8	92	48.9	42	22.3
4	Conference proceedings	8	4.3	54	28.7	99	52.7	24	14.4
5	Manuscripts	17	9.0	63	33.5	61	32.4	47	25.0
6	Inaugural/Faculty lectures	15	8.0	49	26.1	102	54.3	22	11.7
7	Africana materials	42	22.3	47	25.0	29	15.4	70	37.2
8	CD-ROM	59	31.4	27	14.4	30	16.0	72	38.3
9	Gazettes	30	16.0	67	35.6	42	22.3	49	26.1
10	Maps and atlases	27	14.4	73	38.8	45	23.9	43	22.9
11	Patents	31	16.5	59	31.4	75	39.9	23	12.2
12	Annual reports	18	9.6	82	43.6	71	37.8	17	9.0

13	Government publications	20	10.6	86	45.7	59	31.4	23	12.2
14	Occasional papers	24	12.8	91	48.4	52	27.7	21	11.2
15	White papers	28	14.9	70	37.2	82	43.6	8	4.3
16	Blue prints	31	16.5	86	45.7	59	31.4	12	6.4

The table above shows the ranking of the degree of utilization of special collection materials by postgraduate students in selected academic libraries in Nigeria as follows: Journals had the highest frequency with score of 68.1%, followed by Theses and Dissertations with 56.9% blue prints and white papers had the lowest score of 6.4% and 4.3% respectively. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but it might still be impossible to access and make use of such resources. One may identify citations in indexes, but not have access to the sources containing the relevant articles. The more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used. Users tend to use information sources that are least effort to access Availability of an information source does not necessarily imply its accessibility, because the source may be available but access to may be prevented for one reason or the other. It is therefore important for librarians to create awareness of information resources available for use in the library by engaging in extensive user education of their users and to place signage where necessary.

Table 3: What are the challenges encountered by postgraduate students in making use of special collections in selected University libraries in Nigeria?

SD- Strongly Disagree D—Disagree U—Undecided A—Agree SA—Strongly Agree

S/N	Problem	SD		D		U		A		SA	
1	Problem with the citation in bibliographic reference	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
		10	5.3	14	7.4	14	7.4	70	37.2	80	42.55
2	Poor bibliographic information make the citation difficult	10	5.3	15	8.0	11	5.9	76	40.4	76	40.4

3	Non standard organization of the materials	9	4.8	16	8.5	16	8.5	99	52.7	48	25.5
4	Problem of illumination in the storage area	14	7.4	10	5.3	10	5.3	117	62.2	37	19.7
5	Non-professional layout and format of the special collection	11	5.9	15	8.0	15	8.0	107	56.9	40	21.3
6	Inadequate use of special collection by the postgraduate students	7	3.7	17	9.0	35	18.6	79	42.0	50	26.6
7	Out-dated collection	12	6.4	32	17.0	21	11.2	91	48.4	32	17.0

From the table above, it is revealed that majority of the respondents (42.55%) claim that they have problems with the poor bibliographic information which made the citation of the special collections consulted difficult. This could be considered to be too high. University libraries need to organize special seminars and workshops encouraging publishers to list special collections in catalogues and to also make bibliographic citations available in national databases so as to create easy access for utilization of special collections in university libraries. Other respondents indicated that there were no standard organizations of the materials (25.5%). This implied that there is poor organization of special collections in the university libraries sampled. This finding is in line with the outcome of previous study by Balabkins (1984) where he found out that organization of special collections is simply difficult.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is discovered that the selected University Libraries have special collections. However, the selected respondents still encounter some problem in the area of utilization, such as problem with the citation of bibliographic references, non-layout of format of the special collection and out-dated collection. This has reduced the level of effective use.

Recommendations

1. Postgraduates, no matter their status, need special collections for their research. The fact that lots of primary and very recent information could be derived from special collections should be an incentive for using them. Librarians in university libraries should be more committed to meeting the needs of these postgraduates by organizing these special collections in such a manner that will make their retrieval and utilization easy for the users.
2. Internet connectivity offers a lot of opportunities to harness networked information. There are many tools online that could be used to access special collections therefore Librarians should avail themselves the opportunity to identify, use and interact with all these tools. They should also make training and re-training a priority so that they can update themselves and acquire new skills required to serve their users better.



3. It is also of paramount importance that special collections available in the University libraries that are not born digital to be converted to digital. This will make it easier for users to access and make utmost use of them. Converting such collections to digital will also solve the problem of space and would also afford the opportunity of several users accessing the same material at the same time.

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