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Volume 7, Numbers 1&2, 2013 ISSN 2141-4394

A Publication of Nigerian Library Association Delta State Chapter Subscription information:

Delta Library Journal is published twice yearly by Nigerian Library Association, Delta State Chapter. For subscription, please contact the business manager, Mrs. O. N. Alakpodia, Department of Library and Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Annual subscription: №1000.00.

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#### Books

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#### **Edited Book**

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Article or chapter in an edited book

Bojork, R. A. (1989). Retrieval inhibition as an adaptive mechanism in human memory. In H.L. Roediger & F.I.M. Crack (Eds.). *Varieties of memory & consciences* (pp. 309-330). Hissdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Article in a journal

Adomi, E.E. (2006). Job rotation in Nigerian university libraries. Library Review. 55 (1), 66-74.

#### Internet Source(s)

Rodriguez, H. (1998). Activity theory and cognitive sciences. Retrieved 2005 from http://www.nada.kth.se~herny/ActivtyTheory.htme.

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A Publication of Nigerian Library Association, Delta State Chapter Volume 7, Numbers 1 & 2. 2013. ISSN 2141-4394

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# Availability and accessibility of special collections in university libraries in South-West, Nigeria

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#### Abstract

It is believed that availability and accessibility of special collection would encourage utilization irrespective of the medium in which it is presented. This study therefore examined the level of availability and accessibility of special collections in university libraries in southwest Nigeria. These Universities include the Lagos State University, University of Lagos and Covenant University Ota. Postgraduate students were sampled because it is perceived that they require these special collections for research effectiveness. The total population for the study was one thousand five hundred and thirty two. The study adopted the descriptive survey method. A random sampling method was used to select three hundred and seven (307) respondents. Simple percentage scores and tables were used to present the output of data. Data was collected through the use of a self-designed questionnaire. Two hundred and two (202) copies of the questionnaire returned and were found usable for this study. The study revealed the availability and accessibility of special collections such as theses and dissertations, journals, Nigeriana, government publications, gazettes, CD-ROM, maps and atlases and conference proceedings. The accessibility of special collections by postgraduate students in the university libraries was adequate. The special collections were used for research activities. The availability of these special collections and having access to it for utilization has positive influence on research productivity in the university libraries.

#### Introduction

Special collections are usually library materials that are selected for specific purposes and 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 has different types of special collections. Most public libraries house materials such as artifacts and artwork that are of heritage and cultural importance. Research and university libraries house collections with academic and research values. For example, the Kenneth Dike Library houses Africana collections and other special collections that include theses, maps and manuscripts, rare books, and non-book materials with historical significance.

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 are 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. The impact of special collections has become so important that they have attracted the attention of librarians and information scientists.

He went further to say that documents kept in special collections are typically stored there because they are unusually valuable and rare (possibly unique), or fragile, or because they should not, for some particular reason, be allowed to mix with the library's other holdings. The documents are usually non-circulating and the items are mostly accessible only to qualified researchers and interested students. The researchers who must usually present Identity cards, letters of reference, and credentials to gain full access are generally faculty and postgraduate students.

#### Literature review

Stoica, (1977) cited by Abiola, 2010 posited that libraries from time immemorial have been essential constituents of scholastic enterprise and have been established alongside with academic institutions; in providing information. The library is the center-point around which academic activities revolve. The history of many universities throughout the world point to the library and the laboratory as the ideal setting for great examples of self devotion to science and society

The main goal of an academic library is to support the objectives a university, which are generally in the area of teaching, research and learning (Aina, 2004; Mabawonku, 2004; Johnson, 2006). It is pertinent, therefore, that university libraries facilitate information resource to meet the research needs of their users. As the volumes of special collections are constantly increasing, search skills—are require not only in order to gain access to the available collections, but also to sift from the large quantity and utilize the most appropriate resource. Pezeshki-Rad and Zamani (2005) assert that the real challenge of our time is not producing information or storing information, but getting people to gain and use information resources. To gain access and use special collections resources effectively, postgraduate students must learn to overcome information anxiety in order to explore the available information to enable them interpret and utilize information for research purpose.

# Importance of special collections in university libraries

Special collections fall into the non-conventional stream of information carrying material or formats. Nonetheless, studies by Mason (2003), Owenn (2003) and Weintraub (2003) show that special collections play an important role in university libraries, in providing resource for research work of postgraduate students and has in fact become a specialized branch. In some discipline such as engineering, aeronautic and the sciences, the bulk of information flow comes in the form of special collections like grey literature for these users to satisfy their information needs.

Ibenne (2010) posits that special collection like grey literature was for many years synonymous with reports literature. At the turn of the century, documents evolving out of research and development particularly from the aircraft and aeronautic industries were a very important means of communicating the result of research testing. Librarians must therefore pay attention to the availability accessibility and use of special collections by post graduates in university libraries.

Other sources of special collections, have however, started emerging. As in today's electronic information environment, the internet has become a major source of dissemination and retrieval of special collections and often serves as user's initial introduction to a topic area. Well designed website give users' access to a body of digitally produced special collections which complement the existing body of print materials. It is a major source of

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information accessibility and dissemination there is growing acceptance to include reference to relevant website in scholarly papers and journal articles (Weintraub, 2003)

Ibenne (2010) states that, the advantages of special collection over other means of information dissemination are, quick access, great flexibility, and the opportunities to go into considerable details when necessary. Thus, special collections like grey literature, covering nearly every aspect of the sciences, serve scholars and lay readers alike with research summaries, facts, statistics, and other data that offer a more comprehensive view of the topic of interest. This make grey literature very important especially to the postgraduate's researchers as it is a primary source of information.

The importance of an accessible, reliable and comprehensive resources base to researchers cannot be over-estimated. Special collections provide a means of meeting these needs of researchers in a more convenient manner. By 1970s, it was a recognized dissemination vehicle for many organizations and considered important reading throughout the world (Mason 2003).

Information consolidation or repacking can be done effectively with the use of special collections because special collections are very flexible and adaptable to local situations. Sturges and Chimseu (1996) and Ibenne (2010) are of the view that for an effective consideration process, there three main requirements: first, special collections should be collected and organized efficiently; second, that there should be the capacity to research their content and create new information packages from them; and third, that these new products should be disseminated efficiently.

Ibenne (2010) went further to say that special collections like original research results, in the form of raw and totally unpublished data can be used for information repackaging, but this is uncommon, because of the sheer difficulty off using material of this form. Downloading information from database or from CD-ROMs is efficient use of scarce funds, and has the advantage that the downloaded material is almost instantly usable, in the desk-top publishing system to create new products. Of all categories of potential sources materials, special collections offer perhaps the greatest possibilities. It is not, however, as much appreciated as it is. Appreciating the importance of special collections in information provision in academic libraries, the relevance of its base lies in its accessibility, usability, currency, and relevance to the information needs of the user community. There must be conscious effort to ensure that this is the case in academic libraries.

# Statement of the problem

It has been observed that some libraries put their special materials in the closed access collection which restricts the users from direct access to the collection. There is also the problem of lack of awareness on the part of the users to these resources in the library and this prevents the users from gaining access to and using the materials for academic and research purposes. It is against this backdrop that this study is carried out to investigate the availability and accessibility of special collection in selected academic libraries in southwest Nigeria.

# Purpose of the study

This study sets out to:

- 1. find out the available special collection materials in selected university libraries in South-West, Nigeria;
- 2. find out the level of accessibility to the special collection materials by postgraduate students in the libraries; and
- 3. explore the perception of postgraduate students on the value of special collections for their learning and research activities in university libraries;

#### Methods

The study population comprised of postgraduate students in the three selected Universities. These Universities are Lagos State University (LASU), University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Covenant University.

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The total population was one thousand, five hundred and thirty two (1532) postgraduates. A random sampling method was used to select three hundred and seven (307) respondents. Simple percentage and mean scores were used to present the output of data in tables. Data was collected through the use of a self-designed questionnaire. Two hundred and two (202) copies of the questionnaire returned and were found usable for this study,

Table 1. Study and sample of the study

Universities	Population	Sample size	Response rate
LASU	187	38	30
UNILAG	960	192	117
Covenant	385	77	55
Total	1532	307	202

The Table 1 represents the data of the respondents' population. Random sampling technique was adopted for this survey. Therefore, one (1) out of every five (5) of the population was sampled.

### **Findings**

Table 2: The availability of special collections in the selected university libraries

s/n	Items on special collection	Not available		Hardly available		Available		Highly av	ailable	Mean	S.D
		No	%	No .	%	No	%	No	%		
1	Theses and dissertation	6	7.1	0	0	38	45.2	40	47.6	3.33	0.81
2	Journals	8	9.5	3	3.6	28	33.3	45	53.6	3.31	0.93
3	Nigerian publications	6	7.1	1	1.2	45	53.6	32	38.1	3.23	0.80
4	Government publications	6	7.1	3	3.6	44	52.4	31	36.9	3.19	0.81
5	Technical Reports	6	7.1	1	1.2	51	60.7	26	31	3.15	0.77
6	Gazettes	7	8.3	6	7.1	45	53.6	26	31	3.07	0.85
7	.CD-ROM	7	8.3	14	16. 7	30	35.7	33	39.3	3.06	0.95
8	Maps and atlases	6	7.1	1	1.2	63	75	14	16.7	3.01	0.69
9	Conference proceedings	6	7.1	14	16. 7	38	45.2	26	31	3.00	0.88

10	Inaugural/Fa culty lecturers	8	9.5	7	8.3	50	59.5	19	22.6	2.95	0.83
11	Occasional papers	8	9.5	12	14.	42	50	22	26.2	2.93	0.89
12	Annual reports	6	7.1	.16	19. 0	40	47.6	22	26.2	2.93	0.86
13	White papers	7	8.3	7	8.3	56	66.7	14	16.7	2.92	0.76
14	Blue prints	6	7.1	10	11. 9	55	65.5	13	15.5	2.89	0.74
15	Patents	8		8	9.5	56	66.7	12	14.3	2.86	0.78
16	Manuscripts	6	7.1	12	14.	57	67.9	9	10.7	2.82	0.71

The ranking of the available special collection materials in the selected academic libraries in Nigeria is as follows:- Thesis and Dissertation (Mean=3.33) was ranked highest by their mean score rating and was followed in succession by Journals (Mean=3.31), Nigerian materials (Mean=3.23), Government publications (Mean=3.19), Technical Reports (Mean=3.15), Gazettes (Mean=3.07), CD-ROM (Mean=3.06), Maps and atlases (Mean=3.01), Conference proceedings (Mean=3.00), Inaugural/Faculty lecturers (Mean=2.95), Occasional papers (Mean=2.93), Annual reports (Mean=2.93), White papers (Mean=2.92), Blue prints (Mean=2.89), Patents (Mean=2.86) and lastly by Manuscripts (Mean=2.82) respectively.

The result of the analysis show that 78(92.8%) indicated that theses an dissertation available in their libraries while 7(7.1%) indicated that theses and dissertation are not available in their libraries. In all the universities studied, the level of availability of information resources (special collections) was high. Thesis and dissertation, journals, Nigerian materials, government publication, gazettes CD-ROM, maps and atlases, conference proceedings, inaugural/faculty lecture, Occasional papers, annual reports, white papers, blue prints, patents and manuscript were readily available in the various library studied. The number of the available special collections was fond to be adequate. The result of this study is in line with Sharma (2009), who identified library resources at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (India) to include journals, data archives, manuscripts, maps, books, magazines, theses, newspapers, e-mail, research reports, and bibliographic databases.

Other studies carried out within Nigerian university libraries which are in line with the findings of the study are Abolade (2000); Jagboro (2003); Oduwole and Akpati, (2003); Iyoro (2004) Ani and Ahiazu(2008); Popoola and Halison (2009).

Table 3 Level of accessibility of special collection in the university libraries

s/n	Special collection			NA	NA		RA			Mean	S.D
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		
1	Journals	12	14.3	2	2.4	0	0	70	83.3	3.52	1.08
2	Theses and dissertations	10	11.9	4	4.8	7 ,	8.3	63	75	3.46	1.03

3	maps and atlas	10	11.9	3	3.6	17	20.2	54	64.3	3.37	1.02
4	Occasiona 1 papers	10	11.9	0	0	23	. 27.4	51	60.7	3.37	0.98
5	Conferenc e proceedin gs	10	11.9	4	4.8	23	27.4	47	56	3.27	1.01
6	Governme nt publicatio ns	10	11.9	2	2.4	30	35.7	42	50	3.24	0.98
7	Annual reports	11	13.1	3	3.6	25	29.8	45	53.6	3.24	1.03
8	Technical Reports	21	25	2	2.4	1	1.2	60	71.4	3.19	1.31
9	Inaugural/ Faculty lecturers	10	11.9	0	0	40	47.6	34	40.5	3.17	0.93
10	Nigerian Publicatio ns	19	22.6	0	0	15	17.9	50	59.5	3.14	1.22
11	Gazettes	14	16.7	5	6.0	22	26.2	43	51.2	3.12	1.11
12	White	12	14.3	13	15.5	15	17.9	44	52.4	3.08	1.12
13	Patents	12	14.3	12	14.3	17	20.2	43	51.2	3.08	1.11
14	CD-ROM	12	14.3	13	15.5	20	10	23.8	46.4	3.02	1.10
15	Manuscrip ts	18	21.4	3	3.6	24	28.6	39	46.4	3.00	1.17
16	Blue prints	12	14.3	20	23.8	12	14.3	40	47.6	2.95	1.14

The ranking of the level of accessibility to the special collection materials by postgraduate students in selected academic libraries in Nigeria is as follows:- journal (Mean=3.52) was ranked highest by their mean score rating and was followed by theses and dissertation (Mean=3.46), maps and atlas (Mean=3.37), Occasional papers (Mean=3.37), Conference proceedings (Mean=3.27), Government publications (Mean=3.24), Annual reports (Mean=3.24), Technical Reports (Mean=3.19), Inaugural/Faculty lecturers (Mean=3.17), Nigerian materials (Publications unique to Nigeria) (Mean=3.14), Gazettes (Mean=3.12), White papers (Mean=3.08), Patents (Mean=3.08), CD-ROM (Mean=3.02), manuscript (Mean=3.00) and lastly by Blue prints (Mean=2.95) respectively

Based on the result, journals have the highest accessibility which is followed by theses, dissertation, maps and atlases. Most of the respondents (83%) agree that they have access to special collection for utilization and that special collections serve as valuable source of information to them (postgraduate). However, this claim is contrary to Aguolu and Agoulu (2002), who note that availability of information source does not necessarily imply its accessibility, because the source may be available but access to it may be prevented for one reason or the other.

Also, the outcome shows that ability to locate and access information resource has greatly influenced the research output of postgraduate university library this finding aligns with Idiodi (2005), who noted that ability to locate and access information will enable

Table 4. Perception of postgraduate students on the value of special collections

s/n	Perception	SD		D		U	U		A		SA		S.D
		No %		No %		No %		No	%		0 %		
1	The special collection serve as valuable	4	2.1	0	0	4	2.1	66	35.1	114	60.6	4.52	0.74
	sources of information to the												
me -	postgraduate students							,					
2	They are primary sources of research information to the postgraduate students	3	1.6	3	1.6	12	6.4	61	32.4	10.9	58	4.44	0.82
	Special collection materials play important roles in disseminating research results	3	1.6	6	3.2	16	8.5	- 88	46.8	75	39.	4.20	0.85
4	Special collection materials often carry more detailed research than other sources	4	2.1	8	4.3	21	11. 2	78	41.5	77	41.	4.15	0.93
5	Enhance the scholarly nature and quality of research works of postgraduate students	7	3.7	3	1.6	16	8.5	100	53.2	62	33.	4.10	0.90
6	I rarely make use of special collection except these and dissertations	12	6.4	12	6.4	11	5.9	102	54.3	51	27.	3.89	1.07

The ranking of the perception of postgraduate students on the value of special collections use as enhancing their teaching and research activities in academic libraries is as follows:- The special collections serve as valuable sources of information to the postgraduate students (Mean=4.52) was ranked highest by their mean score rating and was followed by They are primary sources of research information to the postgraduate students (Mean=4.44), Special collection materials play important roles in disseminating research results (Mean=4.20), Special collection materials often carry more detailed research than, other sources (Mean=4.15), Enhance the scholarly nature and quality of research works of postgraduate students (Mean=4.10) and lastly by I rarely make use of special collection except these and dissertations (Mean=3.89) respectively.

The result indicated that postgraduates perceive special collection as useful resources in their research activities. This study also shows that most postgraduates indicated that they use special collections in enhancing the quality of their research work. 162(83.2%) One could therefore expect that since postgraduate have positive perception about the usefulness of special collections they will use the material more often. The study has reveal that special collections serve as valuable source of information to the postgraduate students. Also, in support of this findings Kreithner and Kinicki (2004) opine that perception is the "process that enable us interpret and understand our surroundings". Thus, perception relates to the process of using the sense, to make judgments about something surrounding or environment whether the judgment is right or wrong. The cheering news is that postgraduates' positive perception of special collections could be a pointer to greater use in the future; librarians only need to intensify efforts to improve on the level of accessibility of these collections for use.

#### Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, the following conclusions were drawn: Availability of special collections in the university library was relatively adequate. The availability and accessibility and use of special collections aid research productivity of academics in Nigerian university libraries.

Postgraduates make use of special collection available to them in the various university libraries. Besides, the research shows that university libraries have special collections. The predominant ones are these and dissertations, journals, Nigerian material, government publications, gazettes, CD-ROM, maps and atlases, conference proceedings and so on. The availability of these special collections and having access to it for utilization has positive influenced on research productivity in university libraries.

The following are recommended in the light of the findings:

- ICT has changed the way and manner in which things are done therefore, the use of
  information technology to access special collections in the university libraries would be
  helpful. This would solve the problem of users having to queue to use a particular
  material. This will be achieved if the special collections available that are not born
  digital are converted to become digital.
- 2. In line with the above, university administration should provide more computers with internet access in their universities with adequate bandwidth that would solve the problem of slow or limited connectivity.
- 3. Postgraduates, no matter their status, need special collections for research effectiveness. The fact that a lot 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 making these materials available and easy to access. This will be achieved by properly organizing these collections for easy access.

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