



UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN
ILORIN, NIGERIA

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE USE OF LIBRARY

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AN OVERVIEW OF THE LIBRARY

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Perception of the Library

To the layman, the word library refers to a building in which books (used and unused) are kept to prevent them from being stolen or destroyed by insects, rodents, water or fire. Other people perceive the library as a building where one can go and read books for leisure or when preparing for an impending examination. The implication of these perceptions is that the library is just a storehouse of books for the purpose of reading. Contrary to this, the library is such a vital part of the education process that its roles as both a learning and information centre cannot make it just a building housing books for the purpose of consultation. What you will learn in this chapter include universally accepted meanings of the library and its primary responsibilities within the ambit of its concepts.

The library is perceived by Sharr. (n.d.) as an organization of one or more trained people who carefully select(s) and organize(s) books, periodicals and other familiar materials for the use of those who require the materials for information and knowledge acquisition. This perception emphasizes the presence of librarians to select, process and manage the entire library collections. It is to be emphasized, however, that the library cannot just be a place where books are dumped on tables or shelves. Library materials have to be properly organized in a manner that will enable their users have easy access to them.

Meaning of Library

The origin of the meaning of the word library has been traced to the Latin word "liber" meaning "books". On the basis of the Latin interpretation, early professionals saw the library as a place where important records of human ideas were organized, processed and disseminated to users for the purposes of posterity and preservation from human and non-human damages. Subsequent library and information science scholars defined or explained the concept of the library based on the prevailing experience at the time such definitions emerged.

The Glossary of Library Terms defines the library as a collection of books and other literary materials kept for reading, study and consultation. Furthermore, the library can be a building, a room or rooms containing a collection of books for use of the public, a portion of the public, members of a society, a public institution or an establishment charged with the responsibility to consult such books. According to

Awolola and Jatto (2003), the library is a collection of information materials such as books, films, magazines, maps, manuscripts, phonograph records etc for use. Some people see it as a collection of books, serials and non-book materials kept for the purpose of reading and consultation. The library is further regarded as a collection of books and other literary materials properly arranged in a building or rooms for the promotion of human knowledge. Nnaji (1986) defined Library as a collection of books and other forms of records housed, organized and interpreted to meet broad and various needs of the people for information, knowledge, recreation and aesthetic enjoyments. The various definitions in this paragraph perceive the library as containing information-bearing materials in different formats and manner of communication and these materials can be collected and put together in a place for purposes other than just to use them where they are kept.

Social Role of the Library

Library as a Resource/Information Centre

The library serves as a resource centre for all its users. It provides book and non-book materials that can assist users to learn, prepare for examinations, write projects or engage in research work. In this respect, library users should be able to go into the library and find the necessary tools required to assist them in the search for knowledge. As an information centre, the library provides opportunities whereby its users will be able to access information freely without stress. In this case, the library must be adequately equipped with information-bearing resources on diverse fields of human knowledge, particularly, the materials that fall within the scope of the setting in which the library is located.

Library as a storehouse of information

The library is a storehouse of information when it is stocked with a collection of written, printed, graphic and visual materials that are organized for the use of the clientele. Materials are usually arranged in the library according to a standard form so that users can find it easy to retrieve information from the items. As a physical plant dedicated to the storage of information materials, the library assumes the role of a workshop where people can seek information and acquire knowledge. In doing so, the library will be helping to share or transmit other people's experiences by reading through their thoughts which are contained either in book or non-book form.

Library as a house of collections

The responsibility of the library is to develop its collection of varied materials found in the reference, reserve, open shelves, audio-visual, serials and documents sections. These collections, which have been carefully selected to meet the peculiar needs of users, however, differ from one library type to the other. This is because libraries are set up to serve different set of people either in an academic environment,

in the research setting, in the public, school or special contexts. The collection in each of the groups must be relevant to the needs of the users.

Objectives of the Library

The main objective of any library is to disseminate information. However, specific objectives of the library vary from one type to the other. These may be

- (a) To enrich curriculum
- (b) To promote the development of reading skills.
- (c) To support teaching/learning within the school system.
- (d) To encourage research and independent study among students and teachers.
- (e) To cultivate a reading habit at early stage of learning among pupils and students.

Basic elements of the Library

According to Fola-Adio et al (2009), a library requires certain elements to be considered so. These include accommodation, organization, personnel, collection development system, users, rules and regulations.

- (1) **Accommodation or Space:** A space must be reserved for no other purpose than a library. The space provided must be conducive for carrying out library routines and services. The space provided must not be a vacuum; there must be library materials such as books, tables, chairs, computers etc to occupy the space.
- (2) **Organization of materials:** The information materials in the library must be properly organized. In essence, they must be catalogued i.e described pointing out bibliographic information such as author, title, edition, place and year of publication etc. They must also be classified i.e assigned to appropriate subject group(s) and arranged on shelves for easy accessibility and retrieval in a particular order of location.
- (3) **Personnel or Staff:** The library must have people who are trained in the field of librarianship. These are Librarians who have acquired sufficient knowledge and skill on how to acquire and organize library materials. They could be holders of Diploma, Bachelor, Master or Doctoral degree in library or/and information science or library studies. Usually, the Librarians are assisted by other non-professional Library Staff
- (4) **Users:** The major objective of the library is to provide information materials that meet users' needs. Therefore, there must be users to patronize the library and utilize its resources.
- (5) **Collection Development System:** The library is a dynamic organization with a collection development system. New materials are

- acquired to replace the obsolete ones. Relevant and current books and other library materials should be made available to users at all times.
- (6) **Rules and Regulations:** For proper operation and administration of the library, rules and regulations are normally formulated to be observed by the library patrons. See chapter 3 on rules and regulations for the University of Ilorin Library.

Types and functions of library

A modern library has different materials on diverse disciplines in its stock. It also offers a wide range of services to different categories of library users. On the basis of its stock, services and users, the library has been categorized into 5 main types. These are: Academic, School, Public, National, and Special Library.

Academic Library: According to Olanlokun and Salisu (1993), an academic library is a library that is found in tertiary institutions of learning such as the university, the college of education, the polytechnic, the school of nursing, the school of legal studies, etc. Academic libraries usually acquire materials and design services to meet the curriculum of their respective parent institutions. That is, a typical academic library acquires books, journals and other non-book materials and also offers services that are required to support the academic, research and recreational needs of its primary clientele, namely, students, academic and non-teaching staff while interested members of the larger community may be permitted to use the library facilities.

Academic libraries differ from one institution to the other in terms of users, materials, and sundry considerations. However, all academic libraries irrespective of the type of institution in which they are located perform similar basic functions to facilitate the realization of the goals and objectives of their parent institutions. For instance, the University of Ilorin Library performs the under-listed functions similar to what other academic libraries in Nigeria do:

1. It selects and acquires book and non-book materials, through purchases, gifts, exchanges, and legal deposits.
2. It processes these materials for the use of students, lecturers, faculties, and others who require them. The processing includes cataloguing, classifying, filing, stamping, pasting, and lettering, etc of the materials.
3. It makes these materials easily accessible physically through the provision of catalogues, indexes, bibliographies, lists, etc.
4. It allows materials from its general collection and the reserve collection to circulate among the users.
5. It offers reference services to its clientele.
6. It conducts user education and orientation activities for its users.
7. It lends out materials to users directly or through inter-library loans.
8. It provides adequate and comfortable physical facilities for private or general study.

9. It makes bibliographic searches electronically (i.e through computer) possible for its users. Hence, computer terminals are usually provided so that students can make their own searches through internet and data bases.
10. It administers the total library programmes, including budget preparation, organization and supervision of various library activities and also ensures the maintenance of library building and equipment.

School Library: School libraries are libraries in the nursery, primary, and secondary schools. The main purpose of a school library is to encourage reading habit and to develop in students' ability to learn from books without a teacher (Olanlokun and Salisu, 1993). According to Ogbonna (2009), school libraries are libraries established in the primary and secondary schools mostly by the authorities of the schools to serve the pupils/students, the teachers, and other staff members of the schools. In a school library, learning resources such as books and audio-visual materials are systematically collected and organized for the use of the students and teachers. The new educational trend requires the utilization of non-book resources such as flash cards, slides, filmstrips, records, and computers in the teaching and learning process. This is because emphasis is no longer on the subject matter but on the learner.

A school Library performs the following functions, among others:

1. It provides relevant materials to enable students and pupils improve on their academic standard.
2. It makes materials available to complement the teaching activities of teachers and also to enhance the achievement of the goals and objectives of the school.
3. It puts in place activities and resources capable of developing and sustaining the habit and enjoyment of reading and learning independently in the pupils/students.
4. It supports students/pupils in learning and acquiring practical skills required to evaluate information and become sensitive to the modes of communication within the community.
5. The school library assists students/pupils to recognize information in books and other library resources.

Public Library

Public Libraries are those which are established by government to serve all categories of people in the society. Public libraries can be owned by Federal Government, State Government, Local Government, or a community. These libraries are usually located at the State or Local Government Headquarters but can also have branches sited in other parts of the districts, wards and communities as the case may be.

A library that is owned or established, by individuals or corporate/nongovernmental body is termed a private library. Such library is not usually open to every user but can only be used through the consent and approval of the owners. However, such library becomes public when it is made open for community or general public use. Examples are Late Dr. Nnamadi Azikwe Library, Late Chief Adeniran Ogunsanya Library, Lagos, and Afolayan Memorial Library, Iludun-Oro, Kwara State. Such library provides relevant materials to friends, members of the owner family and the community.

Functions of Public Library

1. A public library stocks books and other resources on diverse human knowledge for the use of members of the community where the library is located.
2. A public library often has a section meant for children and another part for the adult users. Public utilities such as conference facilities, restaurant, café, viewing rooms and media section may be found in a large public library.
3. Government-owned public library promotes mobile library services for people in the rural communities by using mobile vehicles to move library materials to the people.
4. It preserves the cultural monuments and even artifacts of a people. It also stocks the indigenous literature and audiovisual materials about the people.

National Library

National Library is a library established by the Federal Government and it is maintained by national resources through tax payers' money. National library strives principally to collect and preserve the nation's literature though it strives to be much as international in the range of its collections as possible. National Library is to other libraries what the Central Bank is to all other banks in any country. It is therefore referred to as an apex organization for libraries in its country. For example, the National Library of Nigeria has branches in many states of the federation namely, Kwara, Ondo, Ogun, Kaduna, and Oyo States. Examples of National Library include National Library of Nigeria, National Library of Ghana, National Library of Scotland etc.

Functions of National Library

- (1) It receives, by law through legal deposit obligations, copies of all publications, books and periodicals.
- (2) It has the responsibility of publishing a National Bibliography of its country.
- (3) It serves as the National Agency for the issuance of ISBN (International Standard Book Number) and it serves as the National

Serials Data Centre (NSDC) for ISSN (International Standard Serials Number) of its nation

- (4) It is responsible for the control of the National Union Catalogue and National Union List of Serials (NULOS) of its country.
- (5) It also acquires foreign documents of national importance and interest.

Special Library

This is a library or information centre for specialized body of knowledge/discipline for a specialized audience/group of users, which is established and maintained by an individual, corporation, association, government agency or any other group.

It can be defined as a specialized or departmental collection within a library for services to a specialized clientele through the use of varied media and methods (Special Libraries Association, 1985). This kind of library can be found in the school for the physically challenged, or special training, research institutes, private homes and organizations, ministries, government agencies, religious organizations, or owned by individuals. According to Issa (2003), a special library is set up by business, professional and religious organizations. Special libraries keep extensive files of unpublished research, reports, journals, manuscripts, newspaper clippings and government or corporate reports. They have staff with specialized training to be able to serve specialized body of users. The special library is remarkable in the provision of individualized services, which reflect the purpose of its existence. Consequently, it is said that a special library often goes to offices or laboratories of its users rather than waiting passively. It operates proactively rather than retroactively by anticipating users' needs and making provisions to meet the needs well in advance. Sopolu Library, Ikenne (owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo); Agricultural and Rural Management Training Institute Library, Ilorin; Cocoa Research Institute of Nigeria Library, Ibadan; International Institute of Tropical Agriculture Library, Ibadan; National Institute of International Affairs Library, Lagos; Yaba Medical Center Library, Yaba, Lagos; and Federal Institute of Industrial Research Library, Oshodi, Lagos are a few examples of special libraries in Nigeria.

Special Library can be a research library when it is attached to a research Institute as those mentioned above. When a Research Library is set up by its parent Institute, it acquires resources that are meant to reflect the peculiar nature of the Institute's programme. The primary users of special library are members of staff of the particular institute and other researchers who have particular interest in the field(s) covered by the programmes of the Institute. Research libraries are commonly referred to as Documentation Centres. A private library may also be a special library when such library is owned, stocked and organized by an individual, a corporate body (private/non-governmental organizations) and its collection is geared towards the specialized interest of its owner(s). Such materials are basically for research work.

Examples are Akanbi Oniyangi Law Library, Ilorin; Lambo Foundation Medical Library; Sopolu Library (owned by Chief Obafemi Awolowo), Ikenne.

Functions of Special Libraries

1. *Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)*: Special libraries have a special relationship with their users. Information is given to individuals according to their areas of interest. For example, when the library receives journals, reports, conference papers etc, they are taken to the users as the need be.
2. *Indexing and abstracting*: Special library indexes and abstracts information contained in books, journals, reports, and conference papers produced by parent bodies or similar institutions. e.g. ERIC (Educational Resource Information Centre) produces indexes and abstracts for a database.
3. *Current Awareness Service (CAS)*: Special library provides current literature service which is designed to acquaint library patrons with recent publications that might help them in their research work.

THE STRUCTURE OF A LIBRARY

There is no universal structure that is prescribed for libraries. Each library develops and operates a structure that best meets its needs. Emphasis is on the University of Ilorin library structure in this section.

The University of Ilorin library presently operates three broad divisions in addition to the office of the University Librarian which is responsible for administering the entire library. The divisions are: Technical Services Division, Readers Services Division and Electronics Support Services Division.

Technical Services Division

The primary role of the Technical Services Division of the University of Ilorin library is to acquire and process library materials ready for the use of library patrons. The Division is made up of the following sections and unit:

1. **Acquisitions Section**: The section has the responsibility to acquire materials for the library. It performs its responsibility through purchases, gifts, donations and endowments. Such materials could be books, serials and non-book materials.
2. **Cataloguing and classification Section**: This section receives books that have been accessioned by the Acquisitions Section for further processing. The main duty of the section is to provide bibliographic information of the library books and assign subject headings and location (class) marks to the books before they are sent to the Readers Services Division for shelving and library patrons' usage..

3. **Serials Section:** The serials section handles journals and related serial materials that come into the library. The section catalogues, classifies and makes the serial materials available to library users.
4. **Bindery Unit:** The role of the Bindery Unit of any library is to bind or mend library materials that are torn for the purpose of reclaiming the originality of the materials, in terms of shape.

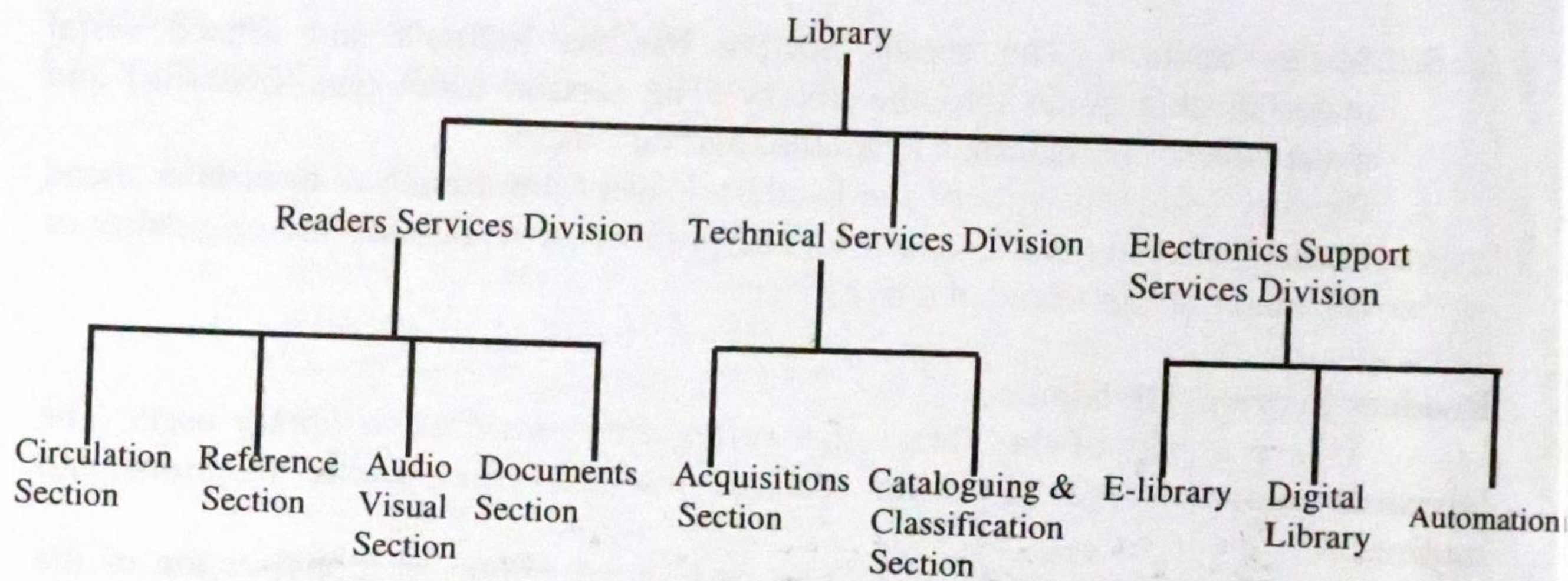
Readers Services Division

This is a part of the library that offers direct services to library users. The Division comprises the following sections that perform specific functions and routines:

1. **Circulation Section:** This is more or less the public relations section of the library. It is at the Circulation Section that library users register to become bonafide library clientele. The section is also an avenue for users to borrow and return borrowed books. The section houses books that are on the open shelves.
2. **Reference Section:** Like the Circulation Section, the Reference Section performs public relations functions. The section houses Reference materials which can only be consulted in the library. It also performs inter-library lending on behalf of library users. The section also has the responsibility to provide answers to directional and non-directional queries from library users.
3. **Audio-Visual Section:** The section handles the non-print library materials. It processes the materials and makes them available to users on demand. Photocopy service is a unit under Audio-Visual Section.
4. **Documents Section:** Documents, government and corporate publications on diverse interests are in the custody of the Documents Section. The section acquires, processes and makes the materials available to library clientele.

Electronics Support Services Division

As the name implies, the Division has the responsibility to provide services in electronic format to library users. Presently, the Electronics Support Services Division of the university of Ilorin library operates three inter-related sections: e-library section, Digital library section and automation section. Detailed Information on the activities of the Electronics Support Services Division of the University of Ilorin library is provided in chapter four of this book.



Organizational Structure of Unilorin Library
Fig. 1

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