

## Library Services for the Physically Challenged in South-East, Nigeria: Origin and Challenges

Pauline C. Iroeze<sup>1</sup>, Gertrude C. Umannakwe<sup>2</sup>, and Jacintha U. Eze<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Library and Information Science, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Principal Librarian, University Library, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria

<sup>3</sup>Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Nigeria

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**Abstract** The study delved into the establishment of library services for the physically challenged in south-East Nigeria in November 1989 and examined the forces which have been posing challenges, interview and observation for data collection. Challenges towards their sustainability were investigated using 2 available public libraries for physically challenged in Imo State library Board, Owerri, and Abia State library Board, Umuahia. The study found among others, that there were only 2 libraries for the physically challenged in the South-East, that Braille books, large print, books talking book, twin vision books, sign language books are the most accessible information resources in those libraries. The study concluded that number of available libraries for the physically challenged in the South-East is inadequate, resources and services are inadequate and mostly outdated, also mainly traditional library services are provided inside poor architecturally designed buildings. Recommendations were made to improve library and information services to this group.

**Keywords** *Library Services; Library Resources; Physically Challenged People; People with Disabilities; South-east Nigeria*

### 1. Introduction

The future begins with the present. Put in its simplest sense, history is an account or record of the past (Clement, 1968 as cited in Okiy, 2014). A lot of people may wonder what use there is in knowing the past. Experience has shown that the past helps people to understand things better and widen their knowledge about how things develop from early times to modern times. Reading about such experience can really be interesting and fascinating. One is able to know about the struggles and efforts of the missionaries in times past, in their efforts to improve the lives of others, especially the physically challenged. Knowing about the past according to Okiy, (2014) enables people realize fully the value of things around them and perhaps be inspired to try improve upon them in later years.

The need for a study of the development and growth of libraries for the physically challenged in the South-Eastern Nigeria from the earlier time to the present day cannot be overemphasized. The study of the origin of libraries for the physically challenged is important in the sense that it would enable us

to know and be familiar with the history and various categories of physically challenged in the South Eastern states of Nigeria. This will enable us to assess the level of improvement in the establishment of physically challenged libraries and the provision of information resources and services for various categories of such groups.

There are persons with physical challenges/disabilities in all parts of the world and at all levels in every society (Anjiode, 2010). The physically challenged has a substantial long-term adverse effect on one's ability to carry out normal day to day activities. In Nigeria according to Adamu (2009), there are more than 19 million physically challenged persons. Between 75 and 90 percent of them live below poverty line due to years of neglect by the society, especially their lack of access to paid employment.

Many misconceptions of the physically challenged were expressed by Alamu (1991), when he stated that Nigerian society often regards physically challenged persons as unwell, unable to work or read, in need of help, and as people that deserve pity. Research by Okoli (2005) corroborated this and in his findings, he revealed that disabled people in Nigeria are living in an environment that is hostile to their yearnings and aspirations. However, through the use of library, they can be rehabilitated, thereby cease to be liability to the society.

Libraries as centre of knowledge, whose basic role is to educate the population cannot leave out the physically challenged. The physically challenged needs special library services to limit their obvious inhibitions in the use and exploitation of the information contents of the library. This could be the reasons why library for the handicapped was established, to provide information support services to the less privileged in the society. These disabled persons by all means need to satisfy their special information needs in their special ways.

The need for library services for persons with special needs cannot be over emphasized, Obasi (2004) defined handicapped library services as activities or programmes undertaken in order to satisfy the information needs of the handicapped. Library services for the handicapped is therefore defined as collection of information resources and services consisting of alternative formats organized for use by the handicapped, (Lawal-Solarin, 2012). According to Momodu, (2013) physically challenged is the term used to describe those individuals with various forms of disabilities like, blindness, deafness, loss or weakness of limbs and mentally retardation etc. However, within the context of libraries, the handicapped are defined as those whose health problems interfere with learning to such an extent that special services, training equipment, materials or facilities are required. The term currently in use to denote such people is physically challenged. On the other hand, Hornby, (1974) define origin as the point, or place where something is beginning or created, as the beginning of libraries for the physically challenged in South-Eastern Nigeria. According to universal dictionary of the English language, challenge is a hindrance, obstacle, to stand in the way of impediment, an obstruction in the management of libraries for the physically challenged in South-Eastern Nigeria.

Consequently, for libraries for the physically challenged in South-East, Nigeria to cope with challenges of meeting users information need, this paper tends to describe the events that leads to establishment of libraries for the physically challenged in the South-Eastern geographical zone of Nigeria, and examine the challenges that have threatened its sustainability.

### **1.1. Origin of Library Services for the Physically Challenged in South-East, Nigeria**

The study of Anaba (1991) provided an insight into the development of handicapped library in South-East Nigeria. Library for the physically challenged started in the early 1900's. There is no doubt that there was a governmental element as the proclamation informed the populace that the physically

challenged was the right and responsibility of the close and immediate families and missionaries. This was seen from the fact that the missionaries from 1952, established schools for the blind in Gindri, Jos, School for the blind and the deaf/vocational centre, Oji River established in 1958 and later the school for the blind Lagos. Later on, four training centres for the adult disabled were established in Ogbomosho, Ikeja, Oshodi and Kaduna. The Gindri school possesses hundreds of various tracts in Braille. Anaba, (1991) emphasized that the Pacelli and Oji River School had libraries dedicated mostly to teaching grades 1 and 2 (Primary school level). The teaching books were in Ghanaian and South African languages. In the mid 1960's, the Pacelli school library was significantly upgraded. Gifts from the Israeli, Canadians, and American government introduced blind children to David Copperfield, A. A. Milne, history and geography of North Africa and Europe. In many respects, many former students of Pacelli School relied on the Pacelli school library up to their university years.

Anaba (1991) further stated that Gindri School started a pilot Braille project, a move that was later copied in Ogbomosho (Yoruba Braille) and Kaduna (Hausa Braille). Also in the **1960's**, according to him Inlacks foundation established at that time the most advanced library for the blind in South East. It had a recording studio, Braille production facilities and audio reading rooms, as well as shelves for about three thousand books but its patronage was small because of its location.

Giving the vast information about the origin of library for the handicapped in South East, Anaba (1991) stated that the Federal Government established in **1963**, the National Library for the Blind in Lagos, its first collection was made up of novels and manuals produced in Braille. By Late **1970's** its stock had been enhanced by the addition of many American printed religious works, which the library management had never had. The Victoria Braille Press ordered in **1968**, when delivered in **1979** was obsolete and parochialism reared its ugly head. When in **1983** the Federal Government ordered from Germany the computer Aided Braille Press into the country, the machine ordered could only be used by one Nigerian who was already due for retirement.

Furthermore, the Imo State recognized the fact that despite the handicapped condition of the disabled, these individuals with deformity have a right to information as stated by the United Nations General Assembly in **1975** and as reflected by the Federal Government of Nigeria National policy on education. It was in conformity with this situation that in **1975**, the Imo State Government established a special school at Orlu to train the hearing impaired, the visually impaired and mentally retarded. In **1981**, the special school for the blind was opened at Umuhia and the blind children at Orlu special school were transferred to that place (Amadi, 2014). The year **1984** saw the establishment of the Imo State secondary school for the deaf at Ofekata, Orodu (Ugochukwu 2014). Special education primary/secondary school centre, for the blind Opefia Iboko, Ebonyi State established in **1998** (Amadi, 2013). Also established in **2009**, special education primary schools centre for the blind and deaf Isulo, Anambra State, (Obueze, 2013).

According to Uchime (1998), there are also such institutions established by non-governmental organizations such as, the Orlu Chetia Home, established in **1970** by the Cheshar Foundation London. Another according to him is the Akpodim Rehabilitation centre, established in **1978** by Christopher Blinden Mission Benshekim, Germany and the Anglican Diocese of Owerri, located at Aboh Mbaise, Imo state. Another according to Ogbonna (1991) is Hopeville Rehabilitation centre, Uturu, established by Marist Brothers Christian organization, a move by the need to rehabilitate the disabled war victims. It has been observed that not all of these institutions have libraries. The existing ones are not functional to help impart knowledge to these less fortunate citizens.

## 1.2. Library Service for the Physically Challenged in the South-East

Writers on the establishment of library services for the physically challenged in the South-East generally regard the year **1989** as the beginning of modern libraries for the handicapped, not because they are unaware of the existence of libraries before that historic date but because it was with establishment of library for the handicapped in the public library board Owerri South-East acquired a public library for the physically challenged in the fullest sense, equipped for reference and research, permanently established, professionally directed, and staff, and provided with an assured budget and an appropriate building. Ogunsheye (1979) opines that every well-established library must possess these qualities.

## 1.3. Imo State Library for the Physically Challenged Owerri

The genesis of public library for persons with disabilities in the South-East according to Anaba (2013) started in Owerri, Imo State by Mrs. Anyahie, an American married to a Nigerian who worked in Imo State library board, Owerri. Realizing that one basic role of any library is to educate the population and given that this population consists of different groups of people including the handicapped, made Imo state library board to conceive the idea of building a library dedicated to the special needs of the handicapped. She ordered from United States, India and United Nations, Braille books, large prints and disc publications. Though Mrs. Anyahie left Nigeria in 1987, her dreams were translated by Dr. E.M.O Adimorah into a customized building located in the premises of Imo State library board, Owerri which was aimed at enhancing the reading needs of persons living with disabilities.

The realization of this laudable objective by Imo State library board made the library very unique as a public library. On 21<sup>st</sup> November, 1989 the library for the handicapped in Imo State library board, Owerri was born to fulfill that basic role of the library- “to satisfy all groups of people in the society” (Adimorah, 1989). The library seats about 50 readers at full capacity and has a total of seven (7) sections. The sections are administration, public services, lending/security, reference, research, statistics, technical services and audio/equipment section. The collections at Imo State library for the physically challenged (ISLPC) stands at 160687 volumes of largely outdated books (ISLPC, 2013).

## 1.4. Abia State Library for the Physically Challenged, Umuahia

It was refreshing to have documentary evidence from Nwosu (2013) which had it that library services for the handicapped in Abia state was a direct off shoot of the Imo State Library. With the creation of Abia State in (1991), Imo State Library Board was split and Abia State library for the handicapped inherited about one hundred titles in all formats, Parkins Braille Writer, multi-formal recording machines, tactile large print books amongst others. The library is located in the building of the Abia State library Board Umuahia, Abia State.

Establishment of library services for the physically challenged (LPC) was triggered by two events. Firstly, the recognition of the handicapped basic rights to education as stated by the United Nations General Assembly in (1975) and reflected by the Federal Government of Nigeria policy on education. The second pivotal event was the awareness of the handicapped right to and need for information. Libraries have key roles to play in building an “inclusive society”- serving all kinds of users in line with the specifications of the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994). These libraries are entrusted with the following responsibilities as itemized by Ogba (1993):

- (i) Providing a wide range of information resources and services - both books and non-book resources that serves the various categories of physically challenged example, Braille books, large print books, audio tapes, moon type books, twin-vision books, tactile, sign language books, Braille machines, adaptive technology, assistive device for mobility etc.

- (ii) Providing translational services and copying of text into Braille.
- (iii) Offering advising services to the physically challenged on subject areas or professions.
- (iv) Organizing seminars, lecture, symposia and exhibitions to broaden the mind and knowledge of the physically challenged in the use of library and
- (v) Supplying suitable resources which may uplift and sooth the mind of the physically challenge.

## 2. Objectives of the Study

The study generally intends to look into the origin of libraries for the physically challenged libraries in South-east Nigeria, their challenges/problems and prospects. The study specifically intends to

- 1) Find out the categories of physically challenged users of these libraries
- 2) Investigate the information resources available in these libraries for these special users
- 3) Find out the information services provided for these physically challenged
- 4) Look into the challenges faced by these libraries and ways of improving their services.

## 3. Benefits

The goal of the library for the physically challenged is to enhance the resources and improve the services to its clientele. Libraries for the handicapped or physically challenged strive to undertake beneficial activities of defined rights of this group. The basic premise of library services is that through the establishment of library services for the handicapped, they can achieve more which they ordinarily would not have achieved. This is reflected in IFLA (1967), that library is the centre of knowledge whose basic role is to educate the population.

Several reasons back up the establishment and maintenance of libraries for the physically challenged in South-East. In the view of Bosimo (2011), amongst the reasons is the exponential growth of information, increasing demands by the physically challenged library users who require the same accessibility to information as their non-handicapped colloquies. Above all, the pervasive growth of the internet and the world wide web has created opportunities for a wide variety of electronic resources and services which are fast becoming the dominant medium of scholarly communication which the physically challenged as an integral part of the population can benefit from, as they are packaged in alternative formats to satisfy their special information needs.

The benefits of library services for the physically challenged are remarkable. It is one sure way of effective integration of the persons with special needs into the larger society for their meaningful development and contribution in the society where they belong (Iroeze, 2004). It serves as a practical conviction to the society on the acceptability of the handicapped. They don't limit their scope to just reading, rather, this library for the handicapped empowers persons living with disabilities to come to form organizations to trash out community problems, like in jobs, schools and in placements. They also try to be an ear for the deaf, an eye for the blind and advocate for the weak, amongst others.

## 4. Challenges in Managing Libraries for the Physically Challenged

Though library services for the physically challenged can be traced to the early 1900's, it was in November, 1989 that the public library for the handicapped was established (Adimorah, 1989). Library for the physically challenged started with financial crises and has always battled with this ever since even though the Library Board according to Nnadozie and Anyanwu (2008) received legal backing through the edict no 12 of 1977. Federal Government of Nigeria on National Policy on Education (1975) mandated public libraries, (the library for the handicapped parent body) to seek other sources of fund. However, sources of finance have been mainly donations by government, non-governmental

organization (NGO'S) and individuals. The edict entrusted the public library board amongst others, the responsibilities to develop library services to the generality of the inhabitants and visitors to the State including the physically challenged.

The above citation indicates that state-established public libraries have an expansive job specification. Such public libraries in the south-east have not been playing their statutory assigned roles effectively for various reasons. Olanlokun (2001) identified some of these reason as: economic problems, lack of support from the populace, lack of interest by government and neglects by policy-makers who put handicapped library services at the lowest priority due to ignorance of the roles they play in the country's development. In a bid to obtain immediate funding for such library services, Adegbite (2007) adds that there should be allocation of financial resources to enable them continue to exist.

With the present information explosion, the progressive impoverishment of developing countries, the high unemployment rate, the massive failure of students in university entrance exams, there is greater likelihood that there may be paucity of physically challenged library personnel qualified to provide the expected library services to meet the information demands of the physically challenged in the nearest future.

Another problem which the physically challenged libraries have had in sustaining the library services concerns the culture or social lag of the government. According to Ogbun (1965), there is always a time interval between the initiation of change in one spore of human activity and adjustment to solve a particular problem and how long it takes the recipient to accept the change. These issues are necessary factors in social lag. Adequate provision of information resources and services in libraries for the physically challenged in the south-eastern Nigeria is another problem. The existence of this problem has been long and the government seems to keep mute to it. Moreover, when the government begins to do something, how fast can the change be accepted by the recipients is another thing. Although government had previously accepted the logic of enhancing access to information through provision of information resources and services, funds etc, only lip service was paid to the reality of implementation.

Also, from interaction with the personnel in charge of libraries for the physically challenged, they elucidated some of the problems which restrict success in library for the physically challenged as: bulky nature of Braille resources, the expensive cost of these resources, spaces occupied amongst others.

Another challenge faced by these libraries comes from the kind of relationship that exists between some of them and their management. Some managerial bodies do not see any need for libraries to subscribe for information resources especially the internet and digital resources packaged in an attractive format for persons with special needs. They appear to be preoccupied with the task of paying staff salaries from the subventions they receive from government and fail to appreciate that these e-resources are major tools for learning in the modern age. On the other hand, it is conceivable that many personnel of this library for special people are unable to articulate clearly, continuously and convincingly the role and importance of these adaptive internet and digital resources which enhance personal communication techniques of the physically challenged.

In addition, the architectural design of South-Eastern Libraries for the physically challenged does not meet the various demands of individuals who need these library services. Of particular interest, is the fact that individuals with disabilities encounter physical access limitations as indicated by Viney (2006) cited in Lawal-Solarin (2012) and (Okoli, 2010). Also corroborating this, earlier research by Knezevich (1975) as cited in Momodu (2013) emphasized that physical academic needs are met through

provision of safe structure, adequate sanitary facilities, a balanced visual environment, appropriate terminal environment, and sufficient shelter space, while emotional academic needs are met by creating pleasant surroundings, a friendly atmosphere and an inspiring environment. In a nutshell, absence of customized architectural design affects patronage.

Inadequate fund is the greatest amongst all the challenges facing library services for the physically challenged in the south-east Nigeria. Finance as we all know is the life wire of every organization and libraries for the physically challenged are no exception. Almost all the problems enumerated above cannot be solved without adequate finance. Finance allocated to physically challenged libraries from their funding agencies is very small to cater for the various activities in the library. Therefore, there should be allocation of financial resources and provision of wider variety of funds to these libraries, to enable them continue to exist, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their services.

Another challenge that LPC is facing is, poor accessibility and utilization of library resources and services especially digital resources. In line with this Okpe and Unegbu (2012) affirms that accessibility of internet and digital resources has been recognized as a barrier for those who access information using adaptive technology. Reasons for non-usage/inadequate utilization could be, non-use of library services in general, dissatisfaction with the range of resources available, lack of awareness, and the preference for other formats such as traditional use of Braille. To bridge this communication gap, reading materials are provided in alternative formats; large prints, tactile, formats, electronic texts, sign language, Braille etc. for the listening and viewing pleasure of the physically challenged.

The non-availability of resources has been a challenge and cause of concern to LPC, collections at ISLPC and ASLPC presently stands at 160687 and 600 volumes respectively, and of largely outdated books coupled with infrequent acquisition activities and paucity of ICTs and other working tools. The development of these libraries has however witnessed steady decline in terms of information resources since its inception owing largely to paucity of fund, occasioned by diminished budgetary allocation for capital projects. (Ofoegbu, 2013) (Anaba, 2014).

## 5. Methodology

This study was carried out using the two public libraries for the physically challenged in South-Eastern Nigeria, and they are: Imo library for the physically challenged Imo state Library Board, Owerri and Library for the Physically Challenged, Abia state Library Board, Umuahia. These are the existing libraries for physically challenged in south-east Nigeria. Official documents and oral interview was used to elicit information from the heads of the libraries, other librarians and support staff of the libraries as well as the physical challenged users of the libraries. On-the-spot observation was made to confirm the information obtained in the cause of the interview. Data from observation schedule was analyzed quantitatively in line with the objectives of the study while details of the interview data was presented and discussed logically.

**Table 1:** Categories of physically challenged Library users in the PLPC

Categories	ISLPC Established 1989	ASLPC established 1991
The blind	√	√
The visually impaired	√	√
The deaf	√	√
The hard of hearing	√	√
Those using assistive devices for mobility (wheelchair, crutches, brace etc.)	√	√
Students	√	√

Researchers	√	√
Workers	√	√
Parents	√	√
The mentally retarded	√	√

Table 1 revealed that the blind, visually impaired, the deaf, the hearing impaired, those using assistive devices or mobility such as wheelchair, crutches, brace etc, students, researchers, workers, parents, and the mentally retarded, were the patrons of Imo state library for the physically challenged (IS) and Abia State Library for the Physically challenged (ASLPC).

The patronage of these libraries by these groups of people as indicated in the table shows they have different groups of physically challenged as their clients.

**Table 2:** Information Resources Available in the Public Libraries for the Physically Challenged

Information resources available	ISLPC		ASLPC	
	Provided	Not Provided	Provided	Not Provided
Braille books	√	X	√	X
Large Prints	√	X	√	X
Talking books	√	X	√	X
Moon books	√	X	√	X
Twin Vision books	√	X	√	X
Tactile	√	X	√	X
Sign Language books	√	X	√	X
Text books	√	X	√	X
Theses/Dissertation	√	X	x	√
Thermphom machine	√	X	√	X
Braille writing machine	√	X	√	X
Braille Slates	√	X	√	X
Cassette recorder	√	X	√	X
Radio	√	X	√	X
Internet and Digital Resources	√	X	√	X
Computers	x	√	x	√
General Scanner with software CCTV Magnifying aid unit	x	√	x	√
Kuzwell reader (a text to speech reading machine with synthesized speech output)	x	√	x	√
Sub-titled DVD and Video (for the deaf)	x	√	x	√
Audio descriptive videos	x	√	x	√
Telatouch	x	√	x	√
Assistive devices				
For mobility (wheel chair, crutches and Braces)	x	√	x	√
Walking stick	x	√	√	X

From the Table 2 it can be seen that Braille books, large prints, talking books, twin vision books, moon books, tactile, sign language books, text books, theses/Dissertations, Thermophom machines, Braille writing machine, Braille slates. Cassette recorder, radio etc. were provided by the 2 libraries. Internet and digital resources, computers, general scanner with software CCTV magnifying aid unit, Kuzwell reader, sub-titled DVD and Video (for the deaf) audio descriptive videos, telatouch, assistive devices for mobility etc. were not provided by these libraries.

The non-availability of these electronic information resources can be attributed to the backward state of these libraries in the technological age. They have not adopted electronic library resources and

services which are supposed to enhance lots of improvements on the traditional library resources, services, information access and utilization.

**Table 3:** Information services available in the Libraries for the Physically Challenged

Information services	ISPLC		ASPLPC	
	Provided	Not provided	Provided	Not provided
<b>Library Services</b>				
Sign Language	x	√	X	√
Advisory services	√	X	√	x
Consultancy services	x	√	√	x
Reference services	√	X	√	x
Use of Braille	√	X	√	x
ICT Services	x	√	X	√
Library Literacy skill services	x	√	√	x
Organizing seminars, lectures symposia, exhibitions	X	√	√	x
Adjustable furniture	X	√	X	√
Training on the use of Braille	X	√	X	√

Table 3 revealed that ISPC provides advisory services, reference and use of Braille services, while ASLPC provides advisory services, consultancy, reference, use of Braille, use of library literacy skills and organizing services, lectures, symposia, and exhibitions services.

**Table 4:** Physical Access to Buildings

Physical Access Available	ISPLC		ASPLPC	
	Provided	Not provided	Provided	Not provided
Entrance with suitable clear opening doors	√	x	√	X
Ramps	x	√	X	√
Barrier-free hallways	x	√	X	√
Adjustable table/ideal shelves of about 750-2000mm from floor level	x	√	X	√
Level				
Public service desks	√	x	X	√
Accessible Public areas such as toilets	√	x	X	√

From Table 4 it can be seen that entrance with suitable opening doors, public service desk and accessible public areas such as toilets were provided by ISPLC, while only entrance with suitable clear opening doors is provided by ASLPC

## 6. Discussion of Findings

The obvious general observation is the rather poor establishment of libraries for the physically challenged in various States in South-East, Nigeria. In terms of users, almost all forms of physically challenged users make use of the available libraries. The usage of these libraries by all categories of physically challenged in Imo and Abia state libraries as indicated in the table clearly show the need for the well establishment of these libraries for the handicapped.

Braille books, large prints, talking books, moon books, twin vision books, tactile, sign language text books, thermophom machine, Braille writing machine, Braille state and styles, available walking sticks, cassette recorder and radio were available at both Imo and Abia state library for the physically challenged. The availability of most of the physically challenged resources in these libraries can be

attributed to the fact that they cater for the needs of almost all the physically challenged as indicated in the table.

From Table 11, it can be seen that the case of general scanner, with software, CCTV magnifying aid unit, Kuzweil reader, sub-titled DVD and video (for the deaf) audio descriptive videos Telatouch, Adjustable wheelchair crutches braces, ICT services, were not provided in any way of these libraries. This may not be unconnected with the lack of accessibility of internet and digital resources which has been recognized as a barrier for those who access information using Adaptive Technology.

The Library staff response indicated that ISLPC provided readers services, advisory services, consultancy, reference, use of Braille, while ASLPC provides readers services, advisory, consultancy, reference, use of Braille, library literacy, seminars, lectures, symposia and exhibition services in Table 3.

The provision of entrance with suitable clear opening doors, ramps, barrier-free hallways, public service desk and accessible public areas such as toilets by ISLPC as indicated in the table, might be connected with the high caliber of professional and specialized library staff of the library. The table indicates that only public service desk and access to public areas are provided by ASLPC, this could be as a result of or total neglect by the managed.

It is particularly worrying that only two (20) public libraries for the physically challenged could be traced in the history of the public library for the physically challenged in the South-East. Though there are services provided but the information resources are less than expected as they are out dated, dating 1950's and 1960's. According to the table, ISLPC has more information resources, services and physical accessibility to the libraries. It is not surprising therefore that amongst the public libraries in South-East, it is the first to establish a library for the physically challenged (Adimorah, 1989).

From the interaction with the crippled library users, it could appear that the wheelchairs, crutches broles which are not found in the library were much preferred by those who use assistive devices for mobility.

Amongst the information resources and services provided by these libraries, for the different forms of physically challenged, information resources for the blind were more because in considering their handicapped conditions in which many people unfortunately find themselves, blindness is more dreadful.

In an effort to boost the sustainability of the existing libraries, the libraries holds a service of informative workshop aimed at alleviating some of the perceived problem with handicapped. Though these libraries for persons living with disabilities come to form organization and trash out community problems, they tried to be an ear to the deaf, an eye to the blind and advocate for the weak.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study investigated the beginning of the libraries for the physically challenged in South-East Nigeria. The study showed that there are only two (2) of such libraries in the South-Eastern Nigeria. It was also concluded that the information resources and services available for the physically challenged in Imo and Abia state Libraries for the physically challenged were inadequate and outdated. This stemmed from series of challenges faced by these libraries amongst which lack of fund took the lead. The researchers therefore recommend as ways forward that;

- There is an urgent need for establishment of more libraries for these persons with special needs.
- Imo and Abia state libraries should be provided with book scanners with software, general scanner, Kuzwell reader, CCTV magnifying aid unit and other related facilities.
- The use of ICT's should be introduced to the libraries for the physically challenged.
- There should be provision of adequate required information resources and services in the libraries to enable maximum satisfaction of the various categories of the physically challenged patrons.
- There should be provision of physical accessibility to library buildings like entrance with suitable clear opening doors, rooms, barrier-free hallways, adjustable tables/ideal shelves of about 750-200mm from floor level etc in these libraries for the physically challenged.
- Since funding is the most important factor threatening the existence and sustenance of these libraries, the government and the board of directors for these libraries must devise strategies for improving budgetary allocations to these libraries. This is to enhance adequate provision of current information resources and services, and possibly, facilitate the establishment of more libraries for these peculiar groups of people. Improved funding wider of the existing libraries will enable them to continue to exist, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate their services.
- There should be training and retraining of library staff that can effectively man these libraries to enable them have professional touch.
- The public needs awareness of such facilities so that their services should be extended to many that are physically handicapped or challenged

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