Changing Scenario of Library Facilities and Services to Disabled Users in Law Institutions: A Study

Bagavathi A
The Tamil Nadu Dr Ambedkar Law University
Chennai – 600 113
bagavathiaru@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: *Educational Institutions are service organizations, with the aim of imparting high standard of knowledge, providing an environment for doing valuable research for the upliftment of the human and society at large. It is one step above the temple where everybody are treated in equal without any discrimination in the name of origin, country, color, race, religion, gender, physic, disability, etc. The Educational institution library is a service department of the institution. Hence library has more responsibility in the institution which should have required facilities for all type of users and to provide indiscriminate, unbiased service to its users. In the era of information explosion and rapidly changing ICT environment, with technology and digitization the above requirement of the library can be fulfilled without much difficulty. The main purpose of this study is to explore the use of library resources and the facilities by the disabled users in TNDALU library and its affiliated institution libraries and to discover whether the TNDALU library and its affiliated institutions are satisfying the various requirements of disabled users in the digital era. To assess the facility, services and electronic resources in the Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University library and its affiliated law colleges for the disabled users, a short Questionnaire method and interview method data collection techniques was done. It consists of twenty three questions regarding facilities and services provided by the university library and its affiliated institutions on the following parameters: a. Availability of Digital resources and facilities for the disabled users. b. Usefulness of Digital resources and library facilities for disabled users in Institutions and Opinion on library facility. The data collected from seventy users are analyzed and it was tabulated using percentage tabulation to draw inferences and findings.*

1. Introduction

The Educational institution library is a service department of the institution. Hence library has more responsibility in the institution which should have required facilities for all type of users and to provide indiscriminate, unbiased service to its users.

The days are gone where physically challenged people are stigmatised and discriminated by others and they mostly confine themselves within their house. The physically challenged are encouraged and are actively participating in all areas of development such as education, employment, sports, etc. and are shining very well. In this scenario, a large number of physically challenged people are perusing higher education and their numbers are growing rapidly. The library management in the institutions must understand the change. This situation warrants a serious self assessment of the library professionals. The advent of New Information Technology augmented the development of the libraries into various avatars such as hybrid libraries, digital libraries and virtual libraries etc. Along with the changing scenario of libraries, the metamorphosis and the library professionals have been taking place gradually. The mere 'Custodian of books' had been gradually transferred into 'Librarians' who were compelled to become ' Information Managers' or 'Information Scientists' by enhancing their profession with the 'High tech' knowledge and compete with the threatening situation due to the encroachment of IT in libraries. The library should equip themselves to provide the same standard of services and facilities similar to the normal users to the physically challenged users.

2. IFLA Checklist

The checklist – developed by the IFLA Standing Committee of Libraries Serving Disadvantaged Persons (LSDP) – is designed as a practical tool for all types of libraries. This is based on the assessment of existing levels of accessibility to buildings, services, materials and programs and to enhance accessibility where ever needed. The checklist emphasizes on "each and every aspect of the library, right from the surroundings of the library, the entrance, restrooms, stairs, elevators and special rooms should be accessible for persons with different kinds of disabilities. A disabled person in a wheelchair should be able to reach all departments, a visually impaired person should be able to walk with a cane or a guide dog and find his/her way without bumping into obstacles. A deaf person should be able to communicate with library staff. A person with an intellectual impairment should be able to easily find books and other materials. A person with dyslexia or any other reading problem should be able to find his/her way around, etc." (Birgitta et al, 2005).

3. Need for the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the use of library resources and the facilities by the disabled users in TNDALU library and its affiliated institution libraries and to discover whether the TNDALU library and its affiliated institutions are satisfying the various requirements of disabled users in the digital era.

4. Objectives

1. To indentify the availability of resources and facilities in TNDALU library and its affiliated institutions for disabled users.

2. To understand the relevant resources to fulfil the needs of disabled users.

3. To find out the frequency of the use of resources and facilities by users.

4. To determine the constraint in use of electronic resources by visually impaired users.

5. To suggest certain recommendations based on the findings of the study.

5. Methodology

To assess the facility, services and electronic resources in the Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University library and its affiliated law colleges for the disabled users, a short Questionnaire method and interview method data collection techniques was done. It consists of twenty three questions regarding facilities and services provided by the university library and its affiliated institutions on the following parameters: a. Availability of Digital resources and facilities for the disabled users. b. Usefulness of Digital resources and library facilities for disabled users in Institutions and Opinion on library facility. The data collected from seventy users are analyzed and it was tabulated using percentage tabulation to draw inferences and findings.

Due to fewer in number of Physically Challenged Library Users the researcher with lot of constrain could involve majority of the Physically Challenged users. There is a total of 71 respondents distributed among the 9 institutions.

Sl. No.	Description	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired	Physically Challenged	Total
1	Dr. Ambedkar Government Law College Chennai	4	1	6	**11**
2	Government Law College, Chengalpattu	3	0	4	**7**
3	Government Law College, Trichy	2	0	2	**4**
4	Government Law College, Madurai	3	0	5	**8**
5	Government Law College, Coimbatore	3	0	4	**7**
6	Government Law College, Tirunelveli	3	0	5	**8**
7	Government Law College, Vellore	2	0	4	**6**
8	Central Law College, Salem	1	0	3	**4**
9	Tamilnadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University	6	1	9	**16**
	Total	**27**	**2**	**42**	**71**

Table 1. Distribution of Physically Challenged Users in TNDALU and its affiliated Institutions

Chart – 1
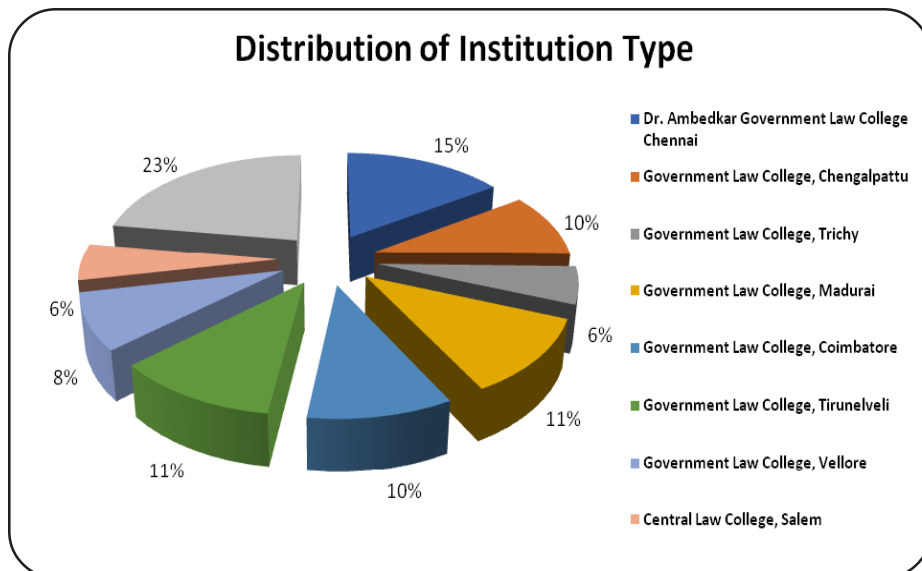
Sl. No.	Description	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired	Physically Challenged	Total
1	Government Colleges	20	1	30	**51**
2	Private College	1	0	3	**4**
3	University	6	1	9	**16**
	Total	27	2	42	**71**

Table 2. Institution type wise Distribution of Physically Challenged Library Users in TNDALU and its affiliated Institutions

Chart-2
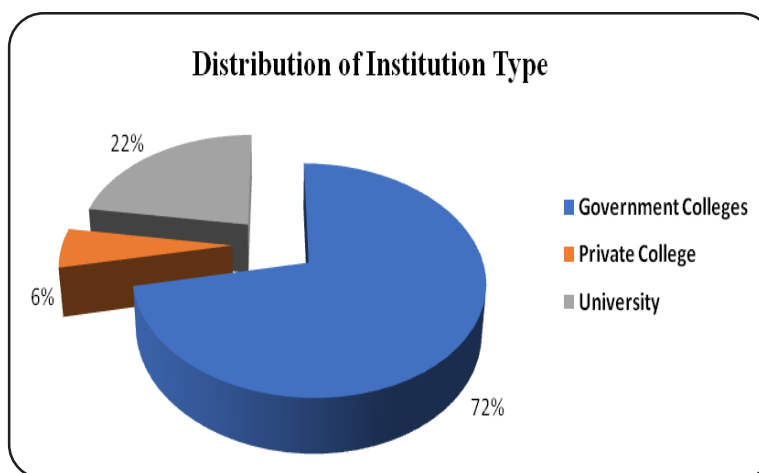
From the above table it is found that among the 71 respondents, 51 respondents 72% are from Government law colleges, 4 respondents 6% is from Private Law College and balance 16 respondents 22% are from TNDALU.

Sl. No.	Age	Visually Impaired	Hearing Impaired	Physically Challenged	Total
1	0-25	5	-	9	**14**
2	25-30	15	-	21	**36**
3	30-35	2	-	3	**5**
4	35-40	1	-	2	**3**
5	40-45	3	1	5	**9**
6	45-50	1	1	2	**4**
above	50	-	-	-	**-**
	Total	**27**	**2**	**42**	**71**

Table 3. Age wise Distribution of Respondents

Chart-3
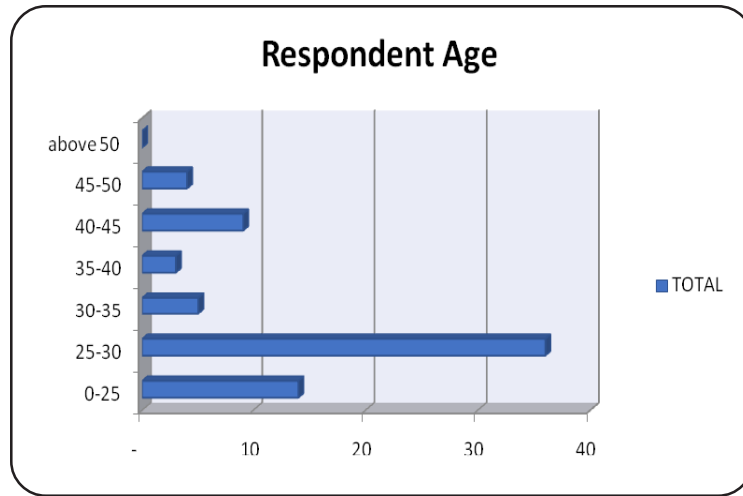
Respondent Age

Among the 71 Physically Challenged respondents a majority of 36 members 51% are of the age group of 25 to 30 years of age and 14 members are below 25 years age. 6 respondents 13% are between 40 to 45 year of age and another 5 and 4 respondents 7% and 6% each are of the age group of 30 to 35 years and 45 to 50 years of age respectively. The balance 3 respondent 4% are of the age group of 35 to 40 years.

Sl. No.	Description	Number
1	Physically Challenged	**42**
2	Visually Impaired	**27**
3	Hearing Impaired	**2**
	Total	**71**

Table 4. Disability wise Distribution of Respondents

Chart-4

Distribution of Disability Type
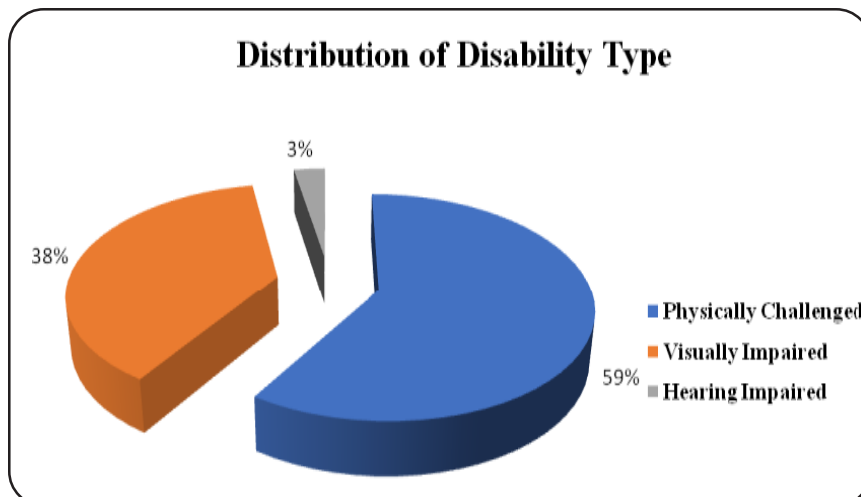
Among the 71 Physically Challenged respondents a majority of 42 members 54% are Physically Challenged and 27 members 38% are Visually Impaired and balance 2 members 3% are Hearing and Speech Impaired.

Sl. No.	Resources	Available	AV%	Not Available	NAV%
1	Screen reader	6	22%	21	78%
2	Braille Translation and printing	6	22%	21	78%
3	Large Print	6	22%	21	78%
4	Audio Books	-	0%	27	100%
5	Tactile Graphics	6	22%	21	78%
6	Online Public Access Catalogue	27	100%	-	0%
7	Large Screen Video with tele-text and sub-title facility	6	22%	21	78%
8	Screen enlargement software	6	22%	21	78%
9	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	6	22%	21	78%
10	Text enhancement software	6	22%	21	78%

Table 5. Availability of Digital resources for Visually Impaired users in Institutions

Chart-5

Availibility of Resources (Visually Impaired)
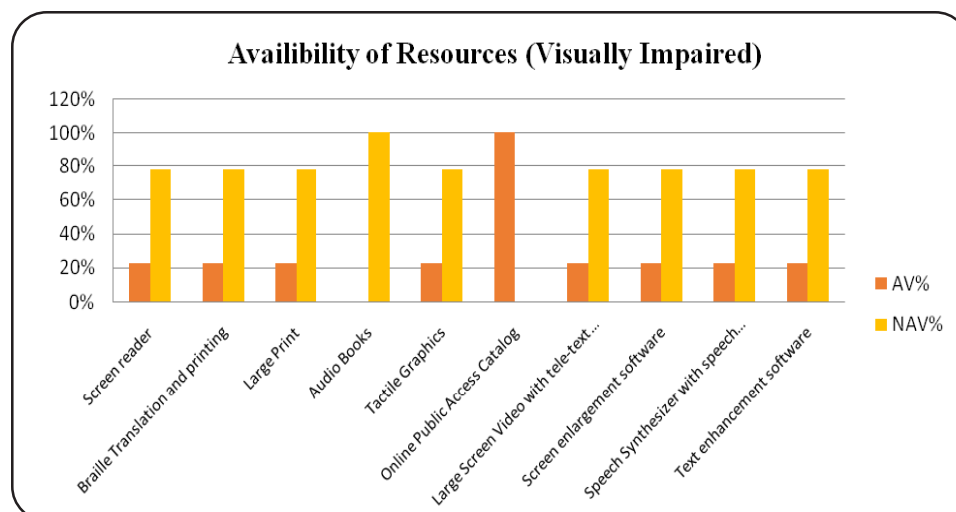
All the 27 Visually Impaired respondents have given their feedback on the availability of the Digital resources for the visually impaired and online public access catalogue is available in all the intuitions and audio books are not available in any of the institutions. other digital facility like Screen Reader, Braille Translation and printing facility, Large print facility, Tactile Graphic Prints, Large Screen Video with tele-text and sub-title facility, Screen enlargement software, Speech Synthesizer with speech output and Text enhancement software are available only in TNDALU.
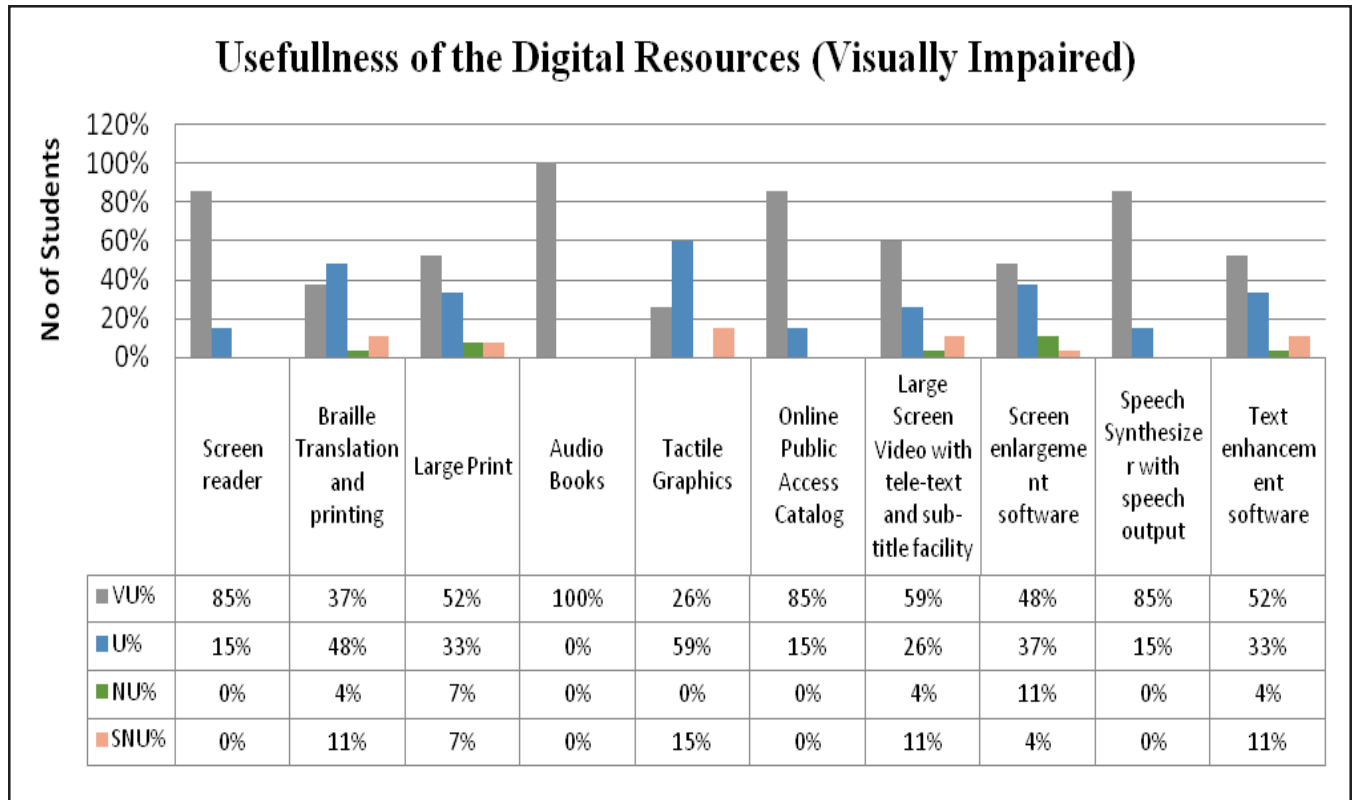
Sl. No.	Institution Name	Very Useful	VU%	Useful	U%	Not Useful	NU%	Strongly Not useful	SNU%
1	Screen reader	23	85%	4	15%	-	0%	-	0%
2	Braille Translation and printing	10	37%	13	48%	1	4%	3	11%
3	Large Print	14	52%	9	33%	2	7%	2	7%
4	Audio Books	27	100%	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%
5	Tactile Graphics	7	26%	16	59%	-	0%	4	15%
6	Online Public Access Catalogue	23	85%	4	15%	-	0%	-	0%
7	Large Screen Video with tele-text and sub-title facility	16	59%	7	26%	1	4%	3	11%
8	Screen enlargement software	13	48%	10	37%	3	11%	1	4%
9	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	23	85%	4	15%	-	0%	-	0%
10	Text enhancement software	14	52%	9	33%	1	4%	3	11%

Table 6. Usefulness of Digital resources for Visually Impaired in Institutions

All 27 Visually Impaired respondents are requested to rate the relevance / usefulness of the various visually impaired digital resources in a 4 point scale as Very Useful, Useful, not useful and Strongly not useful. Among the 27 respondents 100% of the respondents have stated that Audio books are very useful. 85% of the users have stated that Screen reader, Public Access Catalogue and Speech Synthesizer with speech output are Very useful. 59% of the users have stated that Large Screen Video with tele-text and sub-title facility is very useful. Another 52% of the users have stated that Large Print and Text enhancement software are very useful. 37% have stated that Braille Printing and translation are very useful and the Tactile Graphic has the least response with only 26% saying very useful.

All the 44 respondents other than Visually Impaired have given their feedback on the availability of the Facilities for the Physically Challenged. Ramps and online renewal are available only in TNDALU and Central University Salem. Hydraulic Ladder and Physically Challenged Comfortable Tables and Computer tables and facilities are not available in any of the institutions. Lifts, Railings, PHC Friendly Counters Speech Synthesizer and special privileges like additional automatic renewal of books, renewal through proxy etc. are available only in TNDALU.

Chart 6

Usefullness of the Digital Resources (Visually Impaired)

	Screen reader	Braille Translation and printing	Large Print	Audio Books	Tactile Graphics	Online Public Access Catalog	Large Screen Video with tele-text and sub-title facility	Screen enlargement software	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	Text enhancement software
VU%	85%	37%	52%	100%	26%	85%	59%	48%	85%	52%
U%	15%	48%	33%	0%	59%	15%	26%	37%	15%	33%
NU%	0%	4%	7%	0%	0%	0%	4%	11%	0%	4%
SNU%	0%	11%	7%	0%	15%	0%	11%	4%	0%	11%

Sl. No.	Resources	Available	AV%	Not Available	NAV%
1	Ramps	13	30%	31	70%
2	Lifts	10	23%	34	77%
3	Hydraulic ladders	-	0%	44	100%
4	Railings	10	23%	34	77%
5	Separate Toilets with Facilities	10	23%	34	77%
6	PHC friendly Tables / Computer system tables and Facilities	-	0%	44	100%
7	PHC friendly Counters	10	23%	34	77%
8	on line renewal	13	30%	31	70%
9	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	10	23%	34	77%
10	Special privileges	10	23%	34	77%

Table 7. Availability of Facilities for Physically Challenged users in Institutions

Chart 7

Facilities Available
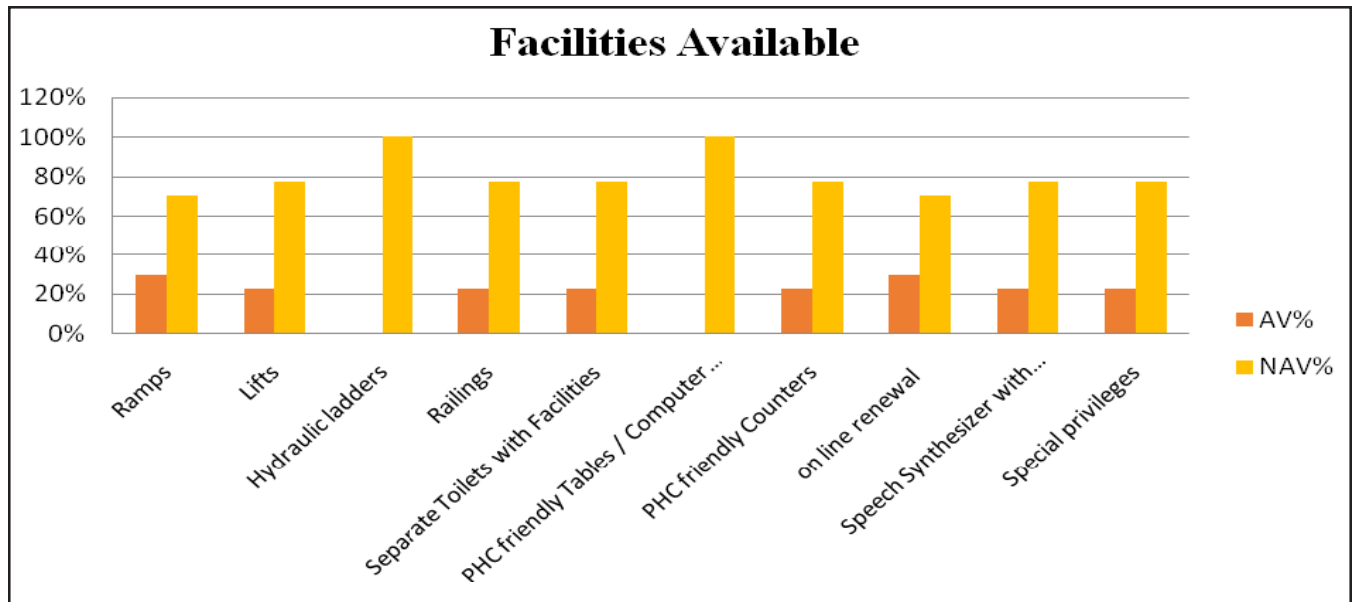
Sl. No.	Institution Name	Very Useful	VU%	Useful	U%	Not Useful	NU%	Strongly Not useful	SNU%
1	Ramps	33	75%	11	25%	-	0%	-	0%
2	Lifts	13	30%	20	45%	4	9%	7	16%
3	Hydraulic ladders	20	45%	13	30%	4	9%	7	16%
4	Railings	44	100%	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%
5	Separate Toilets with Facilities	20	45%	19	43%	-	0%	5	11%
6	PHC friendly Tables / Computer system tables and Facilities	33	75%	11	25%	-	0%	-	0%
7	PHC friendly Counters	24	55%	9	20%	2	5%	9	20%
8	on line renewal	19	43%	14	32%	8	18%	3	7%
9	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	33	75%	11	25%	-	0%	-	0%
10	Special privileges	20	45%	13	30%	2	5%	9	20%

Table 8. Usefulness of Facilities for Physically Challenged in Institutions

Chart-8

Usefullness of the Facilities for Physically Challenged

	Ramps	Lifts	Hydraulic ladders	Railings	Separate Toilets with Facilities	PHC friendly Tables / Computer system tables and Facilities	PHC friendly Counters	on line renewal	Speech Synthesizer with speech output	Special privileges
■ VU%	75%	30%	45%	100%	45%	75%	55%	43%	75%	45%
■ U%	25%	45%	30%	0%	43%	25%	20%	32%	25%	30%
■ NU%	0%	9%	9%	0%	0%	0%	5%	18%	0%	5%
■ SNU%	0%	16%	16%	0%	11%	0%	20%	7%	0%	20%

All 44 respondents other than Visually Impaired are requested to rate the relevance / usefulness of the various facilities for Physically Challenged in a 4-point scale as Very Useful, Useful, not useful and Strongly not useful. Among the 44 respondents 100% of the respondents have stated that Railing is very useful. 75% of the users have stated that Ramps, PHC friendly Tables / Computer system tables and Facilities and Speech Synthesizer with speech output are Very useful. 55% of the respondents have stated that PHC friendly special counters are very useful. 45% of the users have stated that Hydraulic Ladders, separate Toilets and Special Privileges like additional automatic renewal of books, renewal through proxy etc. are very useful. Another 543% have stated that Online renewal is very useful and 32% agrees that it is useful. 30% and 45% stated that the lift facility is very useful and useful respectively.

Chart-9

Opinion on Library Facility

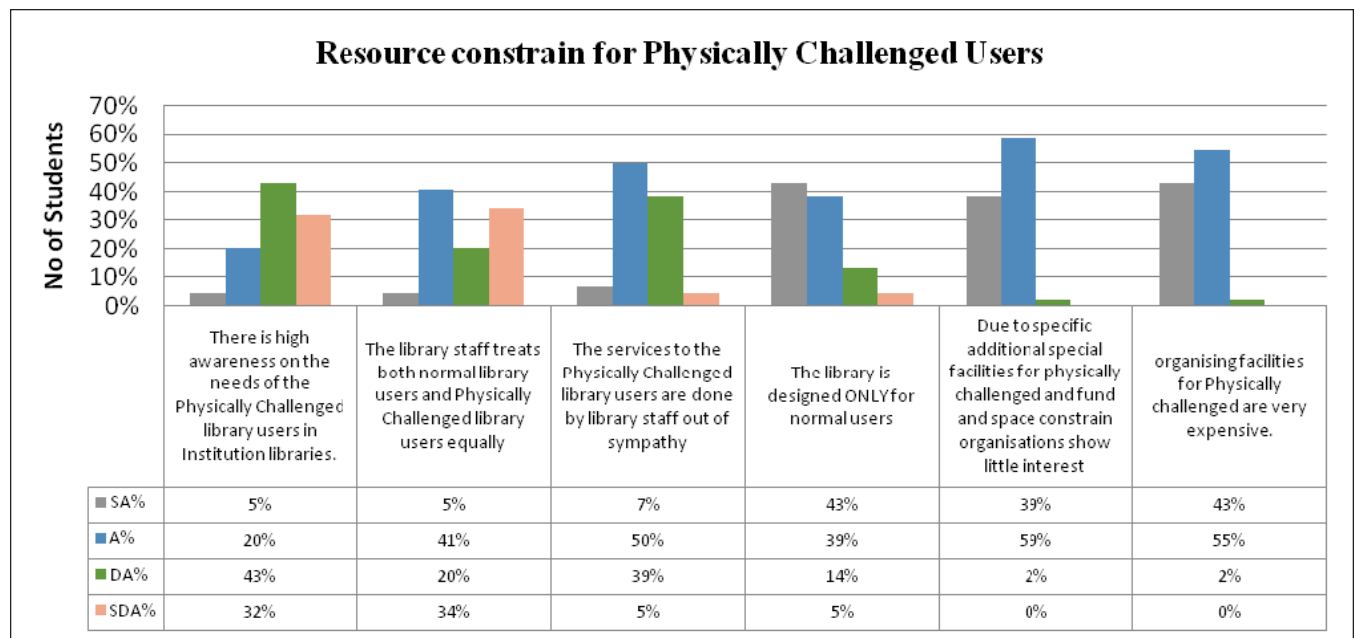|	Library services is only of Non- Physically challenged users	Library facilities are user-friendly for PHC users	Library has proactive well-trained Library staff will to offer helps at any point in time	The knowledge on the needs of Physically Challenged library users is Inadequate.
■ SA%	31%	20%	4%	38%
■ A%	46%	3%	13%	48%
■ DA%	20%	24%	49%	10%
■ SDA%	3%	54%	34%	4%
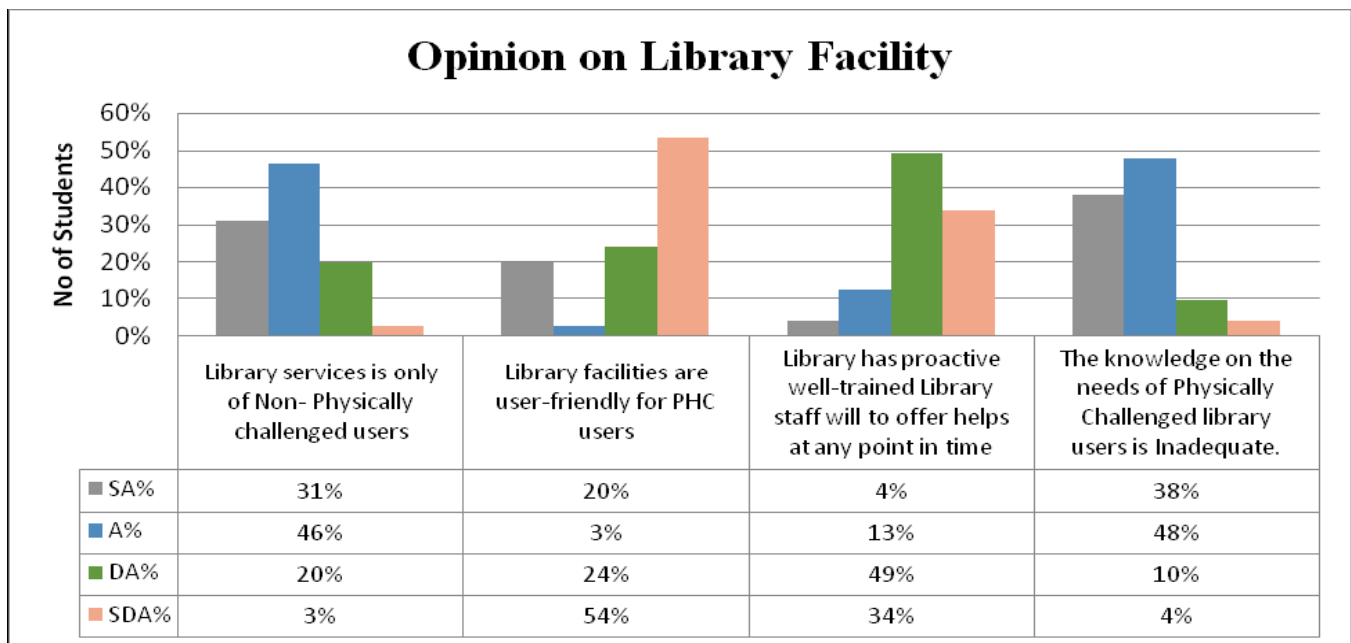
About the Opinion on Library facility and services such as a) Library services are only for Non- Physically Challenged users. b) Library facilities are user-friendly for PHC users. c) Library has well trained and proactive staff who will offer helps at any point in time and d) The knowledge on the needs of the Physically Challenged library users is inadequate among library staffs, the majority of the respondents have stated that the library services are only for non- Physically Challenged users and the library facilities are not user-friendly for PHC users. Further the feedback is that the library staff are less trained and are not proactive and helpful to the Physically Challenged users and their knowledge on the needs of the Physically Challenged users are inadequate.

Sl. No.	Institution Name	Strongly Agree	SA%	Agree	A%	Disagree	DA%	Strongly Disagree	SDA%
1	Library services is only of Non- Physically challenged users	22	31%	33	46%	14	20%	2	3%
2	Library facilities are user-friendly for PHC users	14	20%	2	3%	17	24%	38	54%
3	Library has proactive well-trained Library staff will to offer helps at any point in time	3	4%	9	13%	35	49%	24	34%
4	The knowledge on the needs of Physically Challenged library users is Inadequate.	27	38%	34	48%	7	10%	3	4%

Table 9. Opinion on library facility

Chart-10

Resource constrain for Physically Challenged Users

	There is high awareness on the needs of the Physically Challenged library users in Institution libraries.	The library staff treats both normal library users and Physically Challenged library users equally	The services to the Physically Challenged library users are done by library staff out of sympathy	The library is designed ONLY for normal users	Due to specific additional special facilities for physically challenged and fund and space constrain organisations show little interest	organising facilities for Physically challenged are very expensive.
SA%	5%	5%	7%	43%	39%	43%
A%	20%	41%	50%	39%	59%	55%
DA%	43%	20%	39%	14%	2%	2%
SDA%	32%	34%	5%	5%	0%	0%

Sl. No.	Institution Name	Strongly Agree	SA%	Agree	A%	Disagree	DA%	Strongly Disagree	SDA%
1	There is high awareness on the needs of the Physically Challenged library users in Institution libraries.	3	4%	15	21%	33	46%	20	28%
2	The library staff treats both normal library users and Physically Challe-nged library users equally	3	4%	30	42%	16	23%	22	31%
3	The services to the Phys-ically Challenged library users are done by library staff out of sympathy	5	7%	35	49%	28	39%	3	4%
4	The library is designed ONLY for normal users	29	41%	30	42%	9	13%	3	4%
5	Due to specific additional special facilities for physic-ally challenged and fund and space constrain organis-ations show little interest & Due to low market demand, industries also show little interest	25	35%	44	62%	2	3%	-	0%
6	Organising facilities for Physically challenged are very expensive.	28	39%	41	58%	2	3%	-	0%

Table 10. Resource constrain for Physically Challenged Users

The users were asked about their opinion on obstacles they face while using the library services and facilities among which six were identified by the researcher and the same are asked to the users to respond their opinion by Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. More than 50% of the users have given negative response for a) There is high awareness on the needs of the Physically Challenged library users in Institution libraries. b) The library staff treated both normal library users and Physically Challenged library users equally. Further, more than 50% of the users have strongly agreed or agreed for c) The services to the Physically Challenged library users are done by library staff out of sympathy. d) The facilities in the library are only designed for normal users. e) Due to specific additional special facilities for physically challenged and fund and space constrain organisations show little interest and f. Organising facilities for Physically Challenged are very expensive.

6. Findings

1. It is found that there is very less awareness on the Physically Challenged users library needs and most of the library facilities are designed for normal library users.

2. Further it is understood that it requires the additional expenditure and space requirement for providing specific additional

special facilities for physically challenged for very few users. Hence because of high commercial value most libraries do not have the facility because of budget constraints.

3. The study has indicated that the majority of the Institutions are not having much facility for Physically Challenged users.

4. It is found that for the Physically Challenged users the listed items are available in the university except Hydraulic ladders and PHC friendly Tables / Computer system tables and Facilities and it is also found that all the listed items for Physically Challenged users were not available in any of the affiliated institutions.

5. The study further indicates that libraries were established to serve only normal users and not for Physically Challenged users.

6. It is understood that the library staff provides services to the disabled from sympathies rather than as their equal rights and would only consider serving them after serving normal users.

7. The study illustrates that the well- trained library staff from all institutions are always willing to offer helps at any point in time for the Physically Challenged users.

7. Suggestions

1. Induction program for new users about university library and its various facility.

2. The library should give awareness of the library services, the information needs and the rights of people living with disabilities.

3. Awareness can be provided by in-house training, seminars, workshops, publications and promotional materials.

4. The library authority or administrators can organize training programmes for librarians and other library staff which will include areas of difficulties facing disabled users.

5. The disabled should be given salutation assistance by the library staff.

6. Invite persons with disabilities to talk about their needs with library staff as library users.

7. Distribute e-mails and/or other information to staff on a regular basis about library services to specific disability groups.

8. All special library services must be popularized among the users and motivate them to increase the utilization by creating special user groups.

9. A special training program has to give for staff to be proactive in providing services to Physically Challenged users.

10. Frequent scheduled consultations with Physically Challenged users to know their needs and provide better services.

References

[1] Irvall, Birgitta., Gyda Skat Nielsen. (2005). Access to libraries for persons with disabilities - Checklist, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, *IFLA Professional Reports*, No. 89: 18P, ISBN 9077897046 ISSN 0168-1931.

[2] Digital Libraries: Functionality, Usability, and Accessibility, by Dr Mayank Trivedi, Library Philosophy and Practice 2010, ISSN 1522-0222, http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/trivedi-diglib.htm.

[3] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17148877.

[4] Morgon, Greg. (2003). A word in your ear: library services for print disabled readers in the digital age, *Eletronic library* volume 21 No 3, 234-239.

[5] Shllobe, Gbaje, E. (2007). Provision of online information services in Nigerian Academic libraries. Nigerian libraries 40:1-14

[6] ToAnyakoha, M. W. (2005). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in library services. *Coal City Libraries*, 2(1&2) 2-12.

[7] www.ala.org › ASCLA › Resources & Professional Tools

[8] www.ala.org Keller, S., Brairhwaite, R., Owens, S., Smith, K.(2001) Towards Universal accessibility: including users with a disability in the design process. Acis 2001 proceedings paper 51.

[9] www.scimagojr.com/journalsearch.php?q=14541&tip=sid&clean=0

[10] www.torontopubliclibrary.ca/accessibility/accessibility-services