

## **Difficulties faced by differently-abled students while using the University library – in association with the library of the University of Kelaniya**

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### **Abstract**

*University libraries have a special place in teaching, learning and research activities. The university library should provide maximum support to the users to fulfil their educational needs and special methods should be followed for differently-abled students to use the library. The research problem of this research is the lack of facilities of the university library required by differently-abled university students and its main objective is to explore the difficulties encountered in the use of the university library. Other objectives include studying the use of libraries by differently-abled students in the university, studying the specialised services and facilities and the further exploration of the hardware and software they require. Because of corona pandemic the research is based on the case study methodology and the data were collected from 40 male and female visually impaired, hearing impaired and orthopaedic students as the population of the differently-abled students of the University of Kelaniya. According to the findings of this research, the library's annual budget does not allocate a separate amount for these special needs students. It has been found that there is no hardware or software for differently-abled students. 67.6% have access to all the sections of the library and 32.4% doesn't have access to any section of the library. Therefore, it is very important for the library to pay more attention to the students who find it difficult to travel every section of the library. 44.1% are using only printed sources. But found that, the library has no tools or information sources other than DVDs, CD ROM, computers, braille books. 18.8% stated that they don't have the required information sources in their library. It has been revealed that audio book and e book are not available in the library to meet the needs of visually impaired students. It has been revealed that differently-abled students mostly use both printed and unprinted sources and it is 50% as a percentage. 1% say they are not at all satisfied with library access. The library should pay attention to it, even though it is a very small percentage. 46.9% are satisfied and 40.6% are slightly satisfied. According to this, it is confirmed that a group of differently-abled students have access problems to the Kelaniya university library. 61.8% of the respondents said that, it takes 1 to 5 hours to search for information sources and 38.2% stated that, it takes less than an hour. Accordingly, it has been revealed that they spend more time in the library due to the difficulty in finding the sources of information, the difficulty in understanding the classifications, the difficulty in searching the names of the computerized information sources and the lack of a qualified training officer to serve the differently-abled students.*

*It is clear that differently-abled students do not have the necessary technical tools. Voice recorders have been found to be a priority. Second, the braille machine was found to be an essential tool. It was suggested that information needs should be met through special programs for differently-abled students and steps should be taken to provide the required information facilities efficiently using new technologies. Therefore, this research proposes that technology integrated sources such as braille books, audiobooks and voice recording software should be made more accessible for visually impaired readers by the library.*

**Keywords:** *Visually impaired Readers, Hearing impaired Readers, Physical disabilities, Readers Service, University Library*

## Introduction

It is a basic requirement for all university students to use the University Library and there are students with special needs among these students. Therefore, the library should be in a way that meets their information needs so that they too can receive a university education. The university library should be accessible to anyone. According to the World Health Organization, disability is a "deficiency of physical and mental abilities." Accordingly, persons with physical and mental disabilities are considered to have special needs. There are also students with special needs among the university students who use a university library. Students with disabilities who visit university libraries are more likely to be challenged than other average readers, and the average reader may not need sponsorship, but students with special needs may need more sponsorship within the library. The Universal Declaration of Education for All states: "It is important that society pays special attention to the educational needs of persons with disabilities."

## Objectives

- Identify facilities and services available for students with special needs.
- Study on the use of libraries by university students with special needs.
- Identify difficulties faced by students with special needs in the use of university libraries.
- Proposing measures to be taken by the students with special needs to avoid the difficulties encountered in the use of university libraries with the advancement of modern technology.

## Methodology

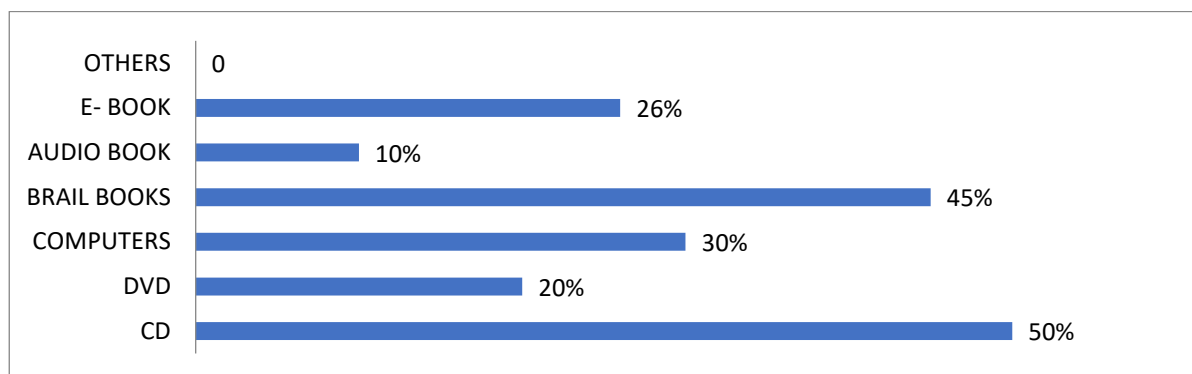
This research uses case study research methods, and h. According to H. Odam, case study is a technology that analyzes the characteristics of an individual or a group. Case study involves a thorough study of the individual or group involved in the research in data collection. "The case study method of data collection is a technique by which individual factor whether it be an institution or just an episode in the life of an individual or a group is analysed in its relationship to any other in the group."

## Results

The research was compiled by 40 students with special needs from the University Library of Kelaniya, who obtained data and information from online quizzes and interviews, including visually impaired, hearing impaired and visually impaired students and hearing impaired students. It is 95% as a percentage.

91.9% of university students with special needs use the university library and 8.1% do not use the library. Accordingly, the highest percentage of students use the library and the number of students who use the library daily with special needs is 6.1% as a percentage, 33.3% as a weekly usage and 27.3% as a few weeks use of the library for a few months. The percentage of people who use the library once is 27%. The percentage that never uses the library is 3%. It has been revealed that students with special needs mostly use both printed and none printed sources and it is 50% as a percentage. 44.1% will use only printed sources. This library has

DVDs, CD-ROMs, Computers, Brail books, Audio Books, E-books. But other equipment and sources of information were also found to be lacking.



*Figure 1: None printed information sources*

The main reason for never using the library is that it is difficult to use the library due to poor eyesight. Although visually impaired students are common print sources, it is important that the font is enlarged and the information source is formatted to suit them. In addition, it has been identified that it is very difficult to get to the library in a wheelchair, that the library does not have the required books in Braille, and that ordinary books in the library cannot be used because of poor eyesight.

The raw material source that most students use is computers, which is a percentage of 60%. The least used source material is the CD. It is 5% as a percentage. According to the findings, 67.6% have access to every section of the library. 32.4% do not have access and Accordingly, it is very important for the library to pay more attention to the students who difficult to travel to every section of the library. As well as no financial allocation will be made to provide services to these students.

It has been found that there is no hardware or software for students with special needs and and no financial allocation will be made to provide services to these students. It has been revealed that 50% of the staff are satisfied. However, it has been revealed that it is essential to have a specially trained officer to serve students with special needs. It is clear that students with special needs do not have the necessary technical tools. It has been found that voice recorders are a priority. Second, the Brail Machine was found to be an essential tool.

## **Conclusion**

University libraries have a special place in teaching, learning and research activities. The university library should provide maximum support to the users to fulfil their educational needs and special methods should be followed for differently-abled students to use the library. The research problem of this research is the lack of facilities of the university library required by differently-abled university students and its main objective is to explore the difficulties encountered in the use of the university library. Other objectives include studying the use of libraries by differently-abled students in the university, studying the specialised services and facilities and the further exploration of the hardware and software they require. Because of corona pandemic the research is based on the case study methodology and the data were collected from 40 male and female visually impaired, hearing impaired and orthopaedic students as the population of the differently-abled students of the University of Kelaniya. According to this, it is confirmed that a group of differently-abled students have access

problems to the Kelaniya university library. It is clear that differently-abled students do not have the necessary technical tools. Voice recorders have been found to be a priority. Second, the braille machine was found to be an essential tool. It was suggested that information needs should be met through special programs for differently-abled students and steps should be taken to provide the required information facilities efficiently using new technologies. Therefore, this research proposes that technology integrated sources such as braille books, audiobooks and voice recording software should be made more accessible for visually impaired readers by the library.

### **Recommendations**

Increasing the number of copies of the most used books. Deployment of a separate trained officer to meet the information needs of students with disabilities. Acquisition of Software for Visually Impaired Students. Technical facilities need to be improved. Display a list of new books. A librarian visits hostels with disabled children and inquires about their information needs. Physical facilities should be improved. Providing information online for students with special needs and introducing a separate telephone number to obtain information from the library. Conducting separate orientation programs in the first year for students with special needs. Giving students with special needs the opportunity to keep books from the library a few days longer than the average reader. Adding audio book and e book to library collection. Allocation of funds to provide services to these students.

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