

# THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY OF NIGERIA LIBRARY: A PROFILE

## INTRODUCTION

The term special library has been variously defined and connoted in recent times that there seems to be as many definitions as there are authors. However, the definition which appeals to the writer most is that provided in L.M. Harrod's Librarian's glossary and I quote: "A library maintained by an individual, corporation, association, *government agency* or any other group for the collection, organisation and dissemination of information and primarily devoted to *special subject* and offering *specialised services* to *specialised clientele*"<sup>1</sup> I have underlined what I consider the operative words in this definition and which *per se* characterises special libraries.

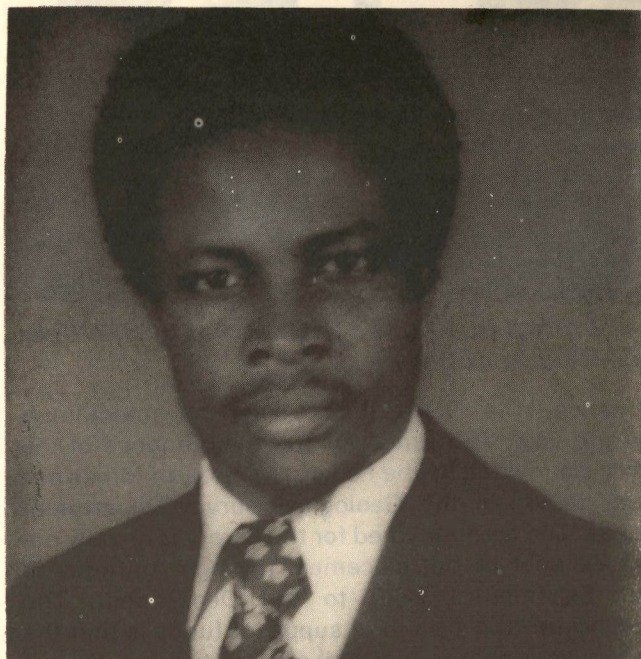
There is abundant evidence to conclude that special libraries, as contended by Mr. E.T.A. Oguara<sup>2</sup> were the first species of the 'library animal' to appear in the Nigerian library scene. However, tracing their genesis and reconstructing their historical development pose much difficulty. Their pattern of development and growth is interesting but that is not the subject of this paper. Suffice it to say that there is hardly any consensus as to the exact date of the establishment of special libraries in Nigeria or which was the first to be established. It is widely accepted that the Law Library of Federal Ministry of Justice, Lagos with a history dating back to 1900<sup>3</sup>, if not earlier, is the oldest special library in the country. Mr. E. B. Bankole<sup>4</sup> writing on special libraries in 1966 gives the names of the older special libraries as the Secretariat, the Medical Research Institute Libraries (both in Lagos), the Agricultural Department Library, Ibadan and the Geological Survey Department Library, Kaduna. This profile on the Geological Survey of Nigeria (GSN) Library will be based largely on the above chosen definition which is all-embracing from the writer's point of view.

## HISTORY

Any meaningful discussion of the history of the Geological Survey Library cannot be made without referring to its parent organisation, the Geological Survey Department (GSD). Therefore, for a contextual view of the history of the GSN library, I will first briefly review the history of the Geological Survey Department.

The history of the Geological Survey Department dates back to 1919<sup>5</sup> when it was set up following the disbandment of the Mineral Survey of Northern Nigeria and that of Southern Nigeria in 1909<sup>6</sup> and 1913<sup>7</sup> respectively. The Geological Survey Department at first had no settled headquarters but in 1930<sup>8</sup> offices were established in Kaduna South which has since then remained the main offices and operational headquarters.

The Geological Survey's activities which have been expanding tremendously include the systematic mapping of the whole country, mineral exploration and consultancy services. All these activities invariably



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resulted in a large amount of literature which since 1921 is being published in the Geological Survey of Nigeria Bulletins, Annual Reports, Records, Occasional Papers, Maps and miscellaneous publications in spite of the wide range of publications issued, an overwhelming amount of reports generated by the Department's activities have remained largely unpublished. These are available as file reports in the GSN Library, Kaduna, and are greatly consulted by professionals and academicians from within the country and overseas.

The GSN Library was established in 1930<sup>9</sup>. Since then it has been basically concerned with assisting the Geological Survey Department to carry out its functions and realise its goals through the provision of relevant materials such as literature and information, that are indispensable in study and research. It is therefore designed to meet the informational needs of the various professional staff whose work and research are directed towards the realisation of the Department's goals and objectives. The GSN Library thus has the primary responsibility of acquiring, organising and disseminating specialised information to specialised clientele.

## RESOURCES

Staff. The GSN Library is headed by a professional Librarian. The clerical staff consists of one Senior Library Assistant and two Library Assistants. The subordinate staff includes two typists, one messenger and two janitors.





**The Librarian, Mr. J.A.N. Okeke handling administrative matters.**

**Finance.** The GSN Library does not maintain a separate vote. The funds for the maintenance of the library is provided by the Federal Ministry of Mines and Power to which the Geological Survey Department belongs. The amount voted for the library is usually not released enblock but piecemeal through Authority to Incur Expenditure (AIE) to the Department. The drawback of this system of supply of funds is that the ministry does not remit money on time and in sufficient amount to enable the library carry out its services. Consequently purchases are shelved pending the release of funds. This obnoxious system whereby money is not released at the propitious time does, in no little way, militate against the execution of the library's well designed programmes and services. It is perhaps necessary to mention here that some printed materials such as periodicals and other serial publications go out-of-print not long after they are published. Besides, the Book-trade and the publishing industry are at present under-developed in the country and steady supply of published materials cannot be guaranteed. It is therefore necessary that money appropriated to the library must be handy at any point in time if the library must meet its obligation of providing the right reading materials to its clientele at the right time.

**Holding.** In cognizance of the indispensability of information in study and research the library places much premium on collection development. The library acquires materials by all known library traditional acquisition methods, namely, purchase, exchange and gift.

Selection usually precedes purchase. Selection is a complex and important process which determines the quality and adequacy of any library collection. The task of selection is less complex here as goals and clientele are clearly delineated in comparison with a public library situation where the clientele is indeterminate and goals keep changing. The GSN Library has no book committee vested with the responsibility of selection and control of acquisition. Rather all the professional staff are directly involved in the selection process to a certain extent. Usually all the professional staff both at the Headquarters and Branch offices are notified when the library plans to make any major book purchase. Suggestions are communicated to the librarian. The Director or his Assistant vets the final selection and

approves purchase. More often than not selection is done from catalogues, publishers' notices and brochures sent in by publishers and book-dealers. Such tools for selection as British Books in Print (BBIP), Books In Print (BIP), Reviews and notices in professional journals and a host of other bibliographical tools are also utilized in selection. Selected books available within the country are purchased while those that are not available are ordered overseas through our overseas agent, Messrs Crown Agents, London. The Crown Agents also service our journals on standing order basis.

The GSN Library utilizes to maximum advantage exchange as a means of acquisition. Exchange, in most cases, is the only way to acquire such rare publications like conference papers and proceedings, reprints, pre-prints, technical reports, on-going research, file reports, etc. which may never find their way into the book trade as published work. The Geological Survey Department issues a number of publications which are the results of the activities and investigations. These are the Annual Reports, Records and Bulletin of the Geological Survey, Occasional Papers, Miscellaneous publications and Maps (geological, minerals and geophysical maps). Armed with these wide range of publications the GSN Library is able to enter into exchange of publications scheme with some 545 libraries and institutions all over the world. Exchange accounts for well over 60% of the library's holding.

The library also receives publications as gift from other institutions and individuals. However, only publications that bear relevance to the Department's interest are accepted and stocked.

The GSN Library has a holding of 30,706 of which over 80% are serials.



**Readers studying and a library staff on routine shelf reading.**

## **PHYSICAL FACILITIES**

The GSN Library is not a separate building but is part of the main office block of the Geological Survey Department, Kaduna South. The library occupies a net area of 182.5m<sup>2</sup> comprising the librarian's office, open/reading space, workspace and stackroom. There are 51 steel shelves providing a total of 56.5m shelf-length. There are in addition 45 steel cupboards used for storing miscellaneous exchange publications. Other



facilities of the library include some equipment, furniture and essential library gadgets. It has a sitting capacity of ten or more. The library is fully air-conditioned for the comfort of readers and the preservation of the collection.

A standard Bindery is attached to the GSN Library and it undertakes the mending of library books and binding of journals.

## CONCLUSION

The Geological Survey of Nigeria Library is the oldest of its kind in the country. Besides, it has the singular reputation of having the richest collection in the earth-sciences in this country. Earth scientists in Nigeria appreciate the service offered by the library and have called on the Federal Government to make it a legal deposit Library for all literature on the geology of Nigeria.

## REFERENCES

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