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**SPECIAL LIBRARIES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
SIERRALEONE
(A CASE STUDY OF WEST AFRICAN MONETARY AGENCY)
(WAMA) IN SIERRA LEONE**

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ABSTRACT

The study explored the role which special libraries play in economic development in enhancing the economic output of member countries of West Africa Monetary Agency (WAMA) especially Sierra Leone.

This study examined special libraries with special reference to (WAMA) and their impact on the business community especially policy makers and stakeholders of

West African Monetary Agency (WAMA). the aim of the study is to examine special libraries with reference to WAMA and their impact on the business community especially policy makers and stakeholders of West African Monetary Agency (WAMA). It also explored the role which special libraries play in economic development in enhancing the economic output of member countries of WAMA especially Sierra Leone.

The sample of this study was drawn from staff and users of WAMA library. One hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires were administered to WAMA library users of which one hundred and forty (140) were returned in usable form. Ten (10) questionnaires were administered to library staff and management of WAMA.. Two types of samples were used in this research work: clientele referring to WAMA staff and researchers. Staffs on the other hand are WAMA library staff and management of WAMA institution.

The study revealed that WAMA library is very frequently used for research and other office operations. And that some kind of positive reading habit is

developed by library users. On the use of the library, a significant majority (65%) indicated using the Internet as a research tool.

The study concludes that WAMA library collection is made up of books and other printed materials specially designed to meet the needs of their institution; and that computer, internet, photo copying and scanning are some of the services provided by the WAMA library for speedy and efficient retrieval of information.

After the researcher's analysis and observations, some problems were identified; it is hoped that this recommendation could go a long way to address these problems. WAMA library should established network with other financial institutions such as Africa Development Bank, World Bank, Bank of Sierra Leone etc for collaborative sharing of information resources and stakeholders' participation.

INTRODUCTION

A special library is a term for a library that is neither academic, school, public or national. Special libraries include corporate libraries, law libraries, medical libraries, museum libraries, news libraries and nonprofit libraries. These libraries are not usually open to the general public, though many are available to specific elements of the public on scheduled appointments. Special libraries are also sometimes known as information centres (Dosett, 2014).

There has been a great deal of research on the area of information and economic development over the last decade. For example the majority of published researches focused on the ways in which information can enhance economic growth/development and provide new and improved forms which enable financial institutions to access effective information. Some potential benefits of information in communities have been explored by writers like Woodward and Sheba (2015) and these include increased economic output; the ability of financial institutions to react to changes in national and international economic environment; alleviate poverty and economic efficiency that can enhance the functioning of markets critical for the wellbeing of the poor and specially in Africa and the world over.

WAMA library was established in 1991 to provide documentary and information support to the operations of West African Clearing House (WACH) and later the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA) after the transformation of WACH into WAMA in 1996. The library provides documents and information that facilitate research for monetary and economic integration in the West African Sub-region. Although WAMA library operates as a special library to meet the needs of staff in the institution, it accommodates other researchers especially lecturers and students from tertiary institutions in Sierra Leone and other ECOWAS countries that may need access to documents available in the library.

This study is significant to economic analysts in developing informed economic policies for a critical and thorough economic analysis and protection and economic policy developers by using it as a reference when the need arises. It provides opportunity for economic tutors, students and economic researchers as a whole for a highly objective and strong economic research for both teaching and studying.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

AIMS

This study examined special libraries with special reference to WAMA and their impact on the business community especially policy makers and stakeholders of West African Monetary Agency (WAMA). It also explored the role which special libraries play in economic development in enhancing the economic output of member countries of WAMA especially Sierra Leone. The study further investigated the methods needed in acquiring skills to retrieve information relevant to decision making.

OBJECTIVES

The study has the following objectives to:

- 1) access information as a tool in special libraries for economic development; especially WAMA library;
- 2) assess the importance of WAMA library in national economic development;
- 3) identify and assess the existing status of the ICT infrastructure, (Internet facilities and services) of WAMA library and how these facilities meet the needs of varied users;
- 4) identify the services provided at WAMA library.

METHODOLOGY

The library is located on the ground floor of the WAMA building at No. 11/13, ECOWAS Street in Freetown. This location provides easy access to staff, lecturers, students and other researchers who either visit WAMA or the library in search of information.

The design for this study is a case study which is an in-depth study of a particular research problem rather than a sweeping statistical survey.

However, the sample for this study was drawn from staff and users of WAMA library. All those used as sample in this study were mostly staff, researchers and students having economic needs to satisfy.

Two sets of questionnaires were developed and administered. The first set was meant for users (staff of WAMA, researchers and students) which sought information on background information of participants, materials used, library services, use of information, relationship with library staff, challenges and general comments.

The second set was meant for library staff (staff and management of WAMA) which required information about the background of participants, library collection, and up-datedness of library stock, ICTs services, and importance of library, relevance and frequency of use, circulation control and general comments.

In this research, data were collected on diverse dates between May and July, 2014. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher had a discussion with the librarian followed by a letter to the Director of WAMA institution some weeks before their actual administration.

The questionnaires were administered to only those users who came and used the library during that period. During the course of administering the questionnaire, one hundred and sixty (160) were completed of which one hundred and forty (140) were returned in usable form. Thus, giving a response rate of 80%

On the other hand, since management is limited in number, (staff of the library and management of WAMA institution) only ten (10) questionnaires were administered and all were returned in usable form. The essence here is to complement the responses to the questionnaire administered to library staff and users.

In support of the questionnaires and interviews conducted data were also gleaned from secondary sources i.e. books, dissertations, magazines, newspapers, journals, encyclopedias, dictionaries and the Internet. The services of some Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals were employed.

First, recorded data were used in order to present relevant facts that related to this investigation. The method of data analysis used in this research work was the simple form of organised data because it helped the researcher to see the similarities and relationship of data. The responses were analysed according to their relevance to the research objectives and research questions. In this research the raw figures were converted to percentages and tabulated. Data were analysed from information collected from questionnaires and interviews. Tables of responses from the different category of participants were prepared using the Likert scale and contents analysed and

discussed using qualitative and quantitative methods. By the use of qualitative data this research attempts to assess the effect of special libraries in financial institutions using a case study of WAMA.

Result and Discussion

Different types of data analysis obtain such as content, discursive, comparative and thematic analysis. For purpose of this study, thematic analyses is used. To recap, the objectives of this study are to:

- i. assess the existing status of the information resources available in special libraries in national economic development; especially WAMA library;
- ii. assess the role of WAMA library in national economic development;
- iii. identify and assess the existing status of the Information Technology infrastructure, the Internet facilities and services of WAMA library and how these facilities meet the need of varied users;
- iv. to identify the services provided at WAMA library .

Qualitative and quantitative methods of collecting data were employed in this study. Data collected are presented as quantitative representation showing the use of Tables and percentages.

A simple way of distribution was employed and the findings were confirmed by the researcher's observation of the organisation.

However sections A and H were not analysed and discussed. Section A of the questionnaire sought bio-data information from participants comprising the name, gender, department and status. While section H provided room for general comments on West African Monetary Agency's library in providing information for economic development. Table 1 illustrates the total number of questionnaires administered and returned plus their ratings.

TABLE 1
INFORMATION AS A TOOL FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Is information an effective tool for economic development/growth	Number of Participants	Ratings (%)
Yes	140	100
No	-	-
TOTAL	140	100

Section A investigated the effectiveness of information as a tool for economic growth/development. The rating in Table 6 point out that all (100%) participants affirmed that information is an effective tool for economic development/growth. No rating was made for the “No” section presumably because, participants clearly understood the role of information in every aspect of life including WAMA as financial institution.

Participants were further asked to suggest to management how to make provision for additional materials on economic development. A good number of participants believed that WAMA library could get more materials on economic development through the establishment of financial institutions network for collaborative sharing of information resources and stakeholder’s participation.

Participants indicated that information is a major source of healthy economic growth especially when it is well organised by professionals for effective use. This finding is in line with Stephen (2012) observed that the economic health of a country is inescapably dependent on the economic health of its communities and healthy community information infrastructure is strongly linked to successful economic environment.

TABLE 2
THE IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARY

Rate the importance of WAMA Library to management	Number of participants	Ratings (%)
Highly Important	5	50
Very Important	2	20
Undecided	-	-
Important	2	20
Less Important	1	10
TOTAL	10	100

Section B sought information on the importance of WAMA library service. Table 2 reveals that 50% of participants viewed the services rendered by WAMA library as “Highly Important” to the day-to day running of the institution. Twenty percent (20%) indicated “Very Important.” While 10% indicated “Important.” On the other hand, only 20% indicated it as “Less important.” No ratings were made for “undecided” presumably because, WAMA staff understands the usefulness of their library and the role it plays in helping them to get the right information needed at all times.

The findings show that the management of WAMA institution relies on the institution’s library as the major source of information to achieve their goals. Hence, its support is top of management agenda. This finding is consistent with that of Yonatu (2014) who stressed the information needs of modern economic life and argued that support of libraries for easy accessibility by communities of users is crucial to the health of business education programmes and economic development to the communities of small business and therefore, the general economic health of a country.

TABLE 3
THE ICTs SERVICES

Does WAMA Library provide ICTs services?	Number of participants	Ratings (%)
Yes	10	100
No	-	-
TOTAL	10	100

Section C sought information on the provision of ICTs service to clientele at WAMA library. From Table 3 it is evident that 100% of the participants agreed that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) services are available to their users at all times. While no rating was made for the “No” column presumably because, WAMA library provides the required ICT services needed by WAMA staff. In another development, participants were asked to state the ICTs service(s) provided to clientele. Participants indicated that computer, Internet, scanning and photocopier services are some of the services provided by the WAMA library for speedy and efficient retrieval of information by staff and researchers. Kuriyan and Ray (2014) agreed that Information and Communication Technologies (particularly computers and the Internet) are widely acknowledged as important resources for socio-economic advancement in both developed and developing countries.

They however observed that there are enormous challenges in their ability to utilise these resources for their growth and development agenda. Limitations, they said, range from infrastructural constraints to an individual’s ability to convert access to Information and Communication Technologies.

TABLE 4
LIBRARY SERVICES

What are the services provided at WAMA Library	Number of Participants	Ratings (%)
Computer services	40	28.6
Manual services	30	21.4
Both manual and computer services	70	50.0
TOTAL	140	100

Section D probed into the services provided by the WAMA library to participants. From Table 4 it is evident that 50% of participants did use both manual and computer services, while 28.6% used computer services. On the other hand, 21.4% admitted using manual services to carry out their research activities.

It is clear from the ratings that the use of computer and manual services in libraries and information centres is a traditional means of research exercise especially in developing countries where the use of such materials alone is still a challenge. This finding complements that of Kuriyan and Ray (2014) who opined that Information and Communication Technologies (particularly computers and internet), are widely acknowledged as important resources for social and economic advancement in both developed and developing countries. They stated that developing countries, however, face enormous challenges in their ability to utilise these resources for their growth and development agenda.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated special libraries in economic development using the library at the West African Monetary Agency (WAMA) in Sierra Leone as a case study.

Section A investigated the effectiveness of information as a tool for economic growth/development. The study manifested that information is a major source for healthy economic growth. However, all the participants agreed that information could only be useful if it is well handled by trained and qualified professional staff for effective and efficient service. This finding is in conformity with that of Zipkowitz (2015) who opined that the capability of the special librarian centres on three considerations: first, the emphasis on the information function requires a strong commitment to, and active promotion of information service; the special librarian needs a strong interest in the subject fields necessary for the organisation; and as manager of the library, the special librarian needs necessary management and interpersonal skills to interact effectively with the rest of the organisation's staff in both services and managerial

Section B focused on the importance of WAMA library. The findings were that, management of WAMA relied on the institution's library as a major source for information. To achieve this goal, all the participants, especially staff and management indicated that support of the library should be top of management's agenda. This finding complements that of Yongful (2014) who emphasized the information needs of modern economic life and argued that support for libraries for easy accessibility to communities is crucial to the health of business education programmes and economic development.

Section C examined the provision of ICT services to users as a means to improving staff productivity and research based activities. Interviews held with selected staff and researchers on the use of the library further revealed that much needs to be done to ensure that more computers are provided by management in the library to facilitate online searches for greater access to information.

This finding is consistent with that of Torero (2016) who maintained that investment in Information Technology (IT) has a visible impact on productivity and economic development.

Section D investigated the services provided by WAMA library. The findings revealed that both computer and manual services are used by the library. This finding clearly indicates that the use of computer and manual services in business and information centres is a traditional means of research exercise especially in developing countries like Sierra Leone where the use of electronic material alone is still a challenge.

Below are some key recommendations for the attention of WAMA library Management and the Board of Directors:

- WAMA library should be stocked with relevant and current materials that could serve the information needs of the institution. It should be followed by user education to improve library use.
- In addition to library collection and ICTs provision needed, library management should endeavour to improve on such services as Current Awareness Services (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), content paging, abstracting and indexing. These will not only keep users abreast of development, in their fields but will also save their time in using the library. There should be improved ICT services. Computer work stations should be increased and the speed of the Internet needs attention. WAMA management should acquire an Internet server that will host a lot of machines with increased speed.
- Since information is vital tool for economic development, WAMA managements should ensure that more websites are provided that could help users in their information search. Users too should be helped in browsing the Internet. To this

end, essential synergy with similar organisations outside West Africa should be established.

- The staff complement in the library should be improved. Currently there is only one professional staff managing the library and with such organisation dealing with different departments and units, it is essential that additional staff are employed according to the number of units and departments of WAMA. Such staff should be computer proficient, well motivated, given capacity building, committed to the job, and willingness to assist users to improve staff/clientele relationship.

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