

Focus on Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University New Library Building

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INTRODUCTION

The Federal University of Technology, Bauchi, was established in 1980 by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The University was renamed the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University in 1988 in honour of Nigeria's first Prime Minister, the late Alhaji (Sir) Abubakar Tafawa Balewa. Universities of technology are a recent innovation in Nigeria's educational development. Six such universities were established in 1980 to facilitate the effective technological advancement of the country.

Bajoga[1] has reviewed the academic programmes and goals of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University and stressed that they are similar to other universities of technology in Nigeria but quite different from the conventional universities. The University's basic academic unit is the School, which is structured on a non-departmental basis. This aims at harmonizing relations between and among scientific and technological disciplines in the University.

The University has approval to run four Schools. By 1990/91 three of the Schools had been established, namely: School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology, comprising Animal Production and Crop Production Programmes; School of Engineering and Engineering Technology consisting of Civil, Electrical/Electronic and Mechanical Engineering Programmes; and

School of Science and Science Education made up of Biological Sciences, Chemistry, General Studies, Geology, Mathematics (including Computer Science), Physics and Science Education Programmes. A Remedial and Foundation Studies Programme is also run by the School of Science and Science Education. The fourth School, that of Environmental Technology with Programmes in Architecture, Building, Estate Management, Industrial Design, Land Surveying, and Regional and Urban Planning began in October, 1991.

The Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library was established in August 1981. It operated in a temporary building until it moved into its new, purpose-built and functional building in April 1990. The available space in the temporary building was 1,007m² with seating capacity for 120 users.

The temporary library building, at peak periods of use, was "crowded by as many as 180 users, several sitting at ends of tables and often cluttering circulation areas"[2, p. 1]. The space available was inadequate for existing collections, especially serials and reference materials. The building also did not have adequate staff space. The inadequacies of the building necessitated a permanent structure to house the University Library.

The new Library project was conceived in 1985, while the completed building was officially commissioned by General Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Nigeria on 10 November 1990. Nwali[3] has

written on the degree of involvement of librarians in the new building of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University. He dwells at length on the involvement of the librarians in such areas as equipment and furniture provision, relocation from the temporary to the new Library and preparations which led to the official commissioning of the Library. This article is basically devoted therefore to the physical structure of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University New Library Building. It describes the main sections of the Library including its facilities and inadequacies.

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN'S BRIEF

The University Librarian, Mrs A.O. Ike, in her brief to the architects, drew their attention to the following salient points:

- (1) The building should fit into the general architectural patterns on Yelwa Campus.
- (2) The structure should be on modular open plan without permanent internal walls (3 metres module adequate).
- (3) The building should be functional and flexible for space use.
- (4) Entrance should allow passage for wheelchairs.
- (5) There should be smoke and fire detectors in the building because of the frequent electricity failure from NEPA supply.
- (6) There should be adequate fire extinguishers in all areas.
- (7) To ensure a pleasant indoor climate for library materials and users in spite of extreme temperature fluctuations between cold harmattan (African wind) and the hot and dry seasons, unit air conditioners should be provided in all rooms in adequate numbers.
- (8) Orientation of the building should avoid direct strong sunlight on the materials because books are brittle and deteriorate under strong sunlight.
- (9) Lighting should be as natural as possible during the day time.
- (10) Cross ventilation which uses natural air especially during the dust-free, cool, wet season should be fully utilized in the building.

- (11) Toilets to be located so as not to constitute a nuisance to users.
- (12) Flooring materials should be acoustically soundproof.
- (13) Ceiling too should aid building acoustics[2, p. 6].

THE BUILDING

The new library building was designed by Benna Associates, Zaria, a firm of Architects. Portalla Consultants, Kano, acted as Quantity Surveyors while the Ahmadu Bello University Consultants (ABUCONS) provided engineering services. Standard Construction Limited, Kano, was awarded the contract in 1988 while the contractor was able to complete work and hand over the new building to the University in November 1989, instead of the stipulated contract date of March 1989. The supervision of the project to completion was undertaken by the Physical Planning Unit of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University. The cost of the building was N4 million and it was funded by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The Library has a seating capacity for 516 users while the maximum stock capacity is put at 200,000 volumes. The total collection, in June 1991, was 34,000 volumes representing a yearly accessions rate of approximately 3,400 volumes.

The master plan of the University rightly recognized the importance of the Library. It stated that the Library has to be given a central dominant location, as befits an institution of higher learning, so that the students can be motivated to use the Library as part of their daily lives and not just for occasional consultation[4]. Consequently the location of the Library is accessible to users. It is very close to the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology and the lecture theatres. It is also a walking distance from the students' hostels and the other schools. There is adequate space to the east, north and west of the building which will facilitate future expansion when the need arises.

FEATURES AND FACILITIES

The new Library is a one-storey building. The ground floor consists of the Entrance Lobby and the Bibliography Hall. The latter houses the public catalogues, while current newspapers and magazines are consulted

here. The circulation desk overlooks the Bibliography Hall. This makes it possible for staff to monitor the use of newspapers and magazines to prevent the incidence of mutilation which was a common phenomenon when these items were consulted by users in the Reference Section. The circulation desk staff also assist users to make maximum use of the public catalogues. The Photocopying Laboratory is adjacent to the Bibliography Hall. The only service of the library which is open to non-registered users is photocopying. This explains why the Photocopying Laboratory is easily accessible to all patrons while at the same time it makes it easier for staff to monitor them.

The other major facilities on the first floor include the following: Exhibition Hall; Reserved Book Room; Reference Stacks; Reference Librarian's Office; Documents Library; Work Rooms and Offices for the Collection Development Division comprising Acquisitions, Cataloguing and Serials Departments respectively.

The ground floor also has provision for a separate staff entrance, but this entrance has been permanently locked for security reasons. This was largely influenced by a study conducted by Antwi[5], into the security problems of the Library. He reported that some of the Library staff and students had illegally taken books belonging to the Library. Consequently, both library staff and patrons use the main entrance which also serves as an exit point. There are two porters on duty at the same time; one guards the entrance while the other monitors the exit. It is worth recording that security has improved considerably, with no cases reported of loss of library books since the Library was opened to the public in November 1990.

The first floor of the Library has two wings for stacks and space for readers at the same time. These two wings together provide the largest proportion of seats for users. The stacks house the circulation materials. Users thus have unhindered access to the collection in these two wings and it is also more convenient for them when they elect to consult the items in the Library. This floor has offices for the University Librarian, two Deputy Librarians and other supporting staff. Two distinct common rooms have been provided for both junior and senior staff respectively. The Audio Visual Section, Computer/Readers Services Unit and Seminar Room are also located on this floor. The Seminar Room can take 80 people,

which has greatly facilitated the monthly seminar series of the Library.

The building, which is a simple modular structure, was designed with a courtyard to provide adequate natural ventilation and lighting. There are separate toilet facilities for both library staff and users, male and female, on all the floors. There is generous provision of air conditioners and fans, *pari passu*, in all the reading areas, offices, workrooms and stores. This is for the comfort of users and also to protect the resources of the Library from deterioration since the climate in Bauchi is either hot and dry or cool to cold, dry, dusty and windy.

All the external windows have been fitted with burglar-proof devices in addition to wire mesh to prevent insects from entering the Library. The wire mesh has made it impossible for any library materials to be taken away via the windows. The University Librarian's Office has a direct telephone line while all the offices, workrooms and the issue desk have been linked to the university intercom. Harms[6] has stressed the importance of guiding shelves, catalogue cabinets and sections of a library to aid the utilization of its resources. To this end, all sections of the Library have been properly labelled. A sketch plan of the whole building has been conspicuously displayed at the Entrance Lobby to help users to locate the various sections of the Library.

The planners and designers of the Library took into consideration a number of safety measures to protect users and the collection that it would house. In this regard smoke detectors and fire extinguishers have been provided in all sections of the Library. Two water hoses have been strategically located on both floors to fight any accidental fire outbreak. The landscape, which was undertaken by the School of Agriculture of the University, makes the Library and its immediate environment more attractive.

INADEQUACIES

Rohlf, a library building and planning consultant concedes that "there has not been a perfect building planned or built, nor will there ever be — at least in this world"[7]. It is therefore not surprising that the new library of the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University has some inadequacies.

The Reserved Section can take a maximum of 16 users, but the current student population is 2,384. The policy of the

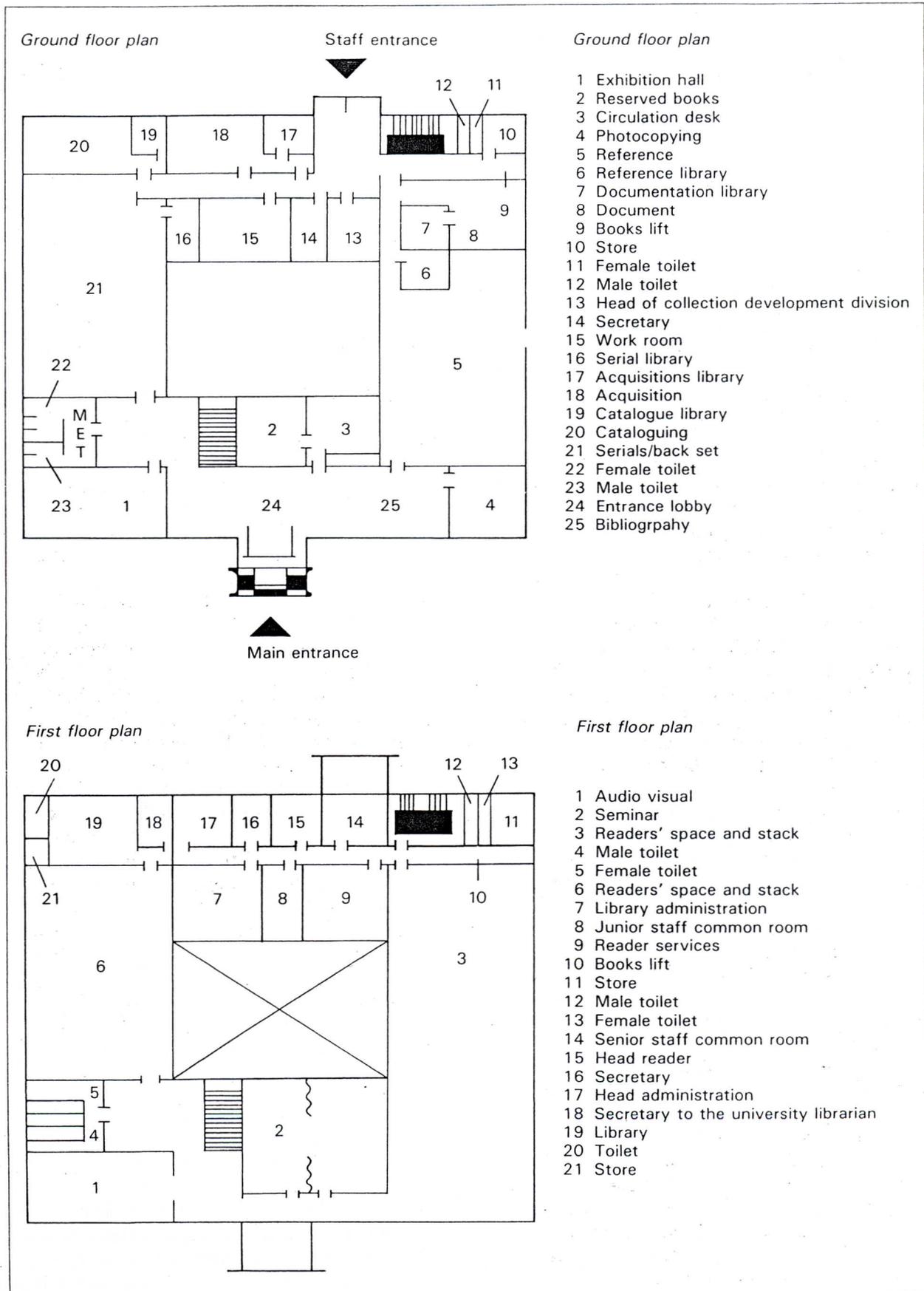


FIGURE 1.
Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Library

Library requires that reserved books can only be consulted in the Reserved Section, which means that only a fraction of users can patronize the section at a time. To maximize the use of the reserved materials, the Library should allow users to borrow the materials involved at the Reserved Section and consult them in any of the designated reading areas in the Library.

The Exhibition Hall is not visible immediately a user gets to the Entrance Lobby. It shares a common wall, which is opaque, with this lobby. This wall could be replaced with a transparent wall such as louvres. In this way items to be displayed could be visible to users from the Entrance Lobby. It was due to this limitation of the Exhibition Hall that the first exhibition in the Library, which consisted of the research results of the University, was conducted at the Entrance Lobby. That was during the official commissioning of the Library on 10 November 1990.

The Research and Documents Section has only eight study carrels. This section which houses government documents, university archives and the Bauchiana collection, is accessible only to lecturers. As the University expands and the academic staff population increases, the pressure on the collection (which is reserved but on open access) will become only too obvious.

There appears to be space for everything except (as in the case of the Kashim Ibrahim Library building[8] and that of the University of Calabar Library building[9]) for the offices of academic library staff. Offices have been provided for only eight of the projected academic library staff of 21. This is an unfortunate omission since librarians in the University have faculty status and they therefore require offices to carry out effectively their professional as well as research functions.

CONCLUSION

There are several second-generation universities in Nigeria, established in 1976, without permanent library buildings. It is therefore a remarkable achievement for the Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, which falls within the domain of third generation universities, to have constructed its permanent building within a decade of its existence. The building, as it now stands, is standard and functional notwithstanding the few inadequacies highlighted in this article.

A building alone does not constitute a library. It has to be equipped with the relevant

resources such as books and journals. Fortunately the Library is a beneficiary of the \$120 million World Bank Credit Facility to Nigerian Federal Universities. This facility is for a three year period from 1991 to 1994. The Library in 1991 placed orders, under this facility, for books, journals and audio visual equipment at a total cost of \$374,188.36[10]. The arrival of these items will, no doubt, increase the range of publications in the Library which will benefit its patrons.

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