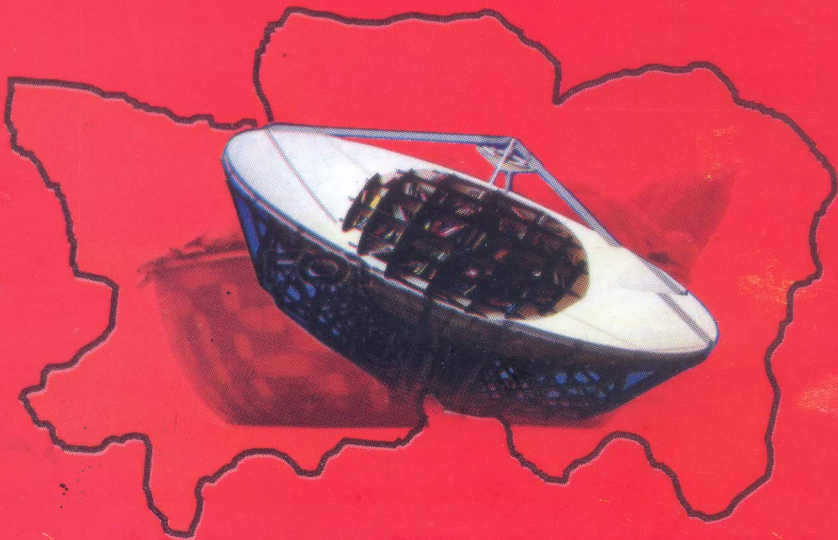


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**Undergraduate Students' Use of Newspapers in
Information Resource Centres: A Case of Bingham
University Library, Karu**

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Abstract

In this age when almost many young people seem to be migrating to the e-platform to tweet and use facebook to connect and share information some students still maintain the virtue of reading newspapers in print. This paper discussed undergraduate students' use of newspapers in information resource centres in Nigeria, using Bingham University Library as a case study. The objective of the paper was to find out the purpose of newspaper utilization and how often the students patronize the Serials Section of the University library to read newspapers amongst others. The design for the study is descriptive survey which used questionnaire and observation as the instrument for data collection. Simple random sampling method was used to select the sample of two hundred (200) students from a population of two thousand (2,000) students in Bingham University. 187 questionnaires were filled, returned and found usable. Results showed that most of the students sampled read newspapers to keep abreast of information that has to do with entertainment, education and current affairs. It is therefore paramount that the library place important emphasis on the acquisition and organization of newspapers.

Keywords: Information, Newspapers, Undergraduate Students

Introduction

Human efforts towards attaining goals depend highly on effective communication of information, and the major ingredient that makes communication possible is information. Information is an important resource for individual growth and survival be it in the political, social, economic and educational spheres of life. The progress of modern societies as well as individuals depends a great deal upon access to the right kind of information, in the right form and at the right time. Information especially when current and accurate enables the user make a right decision and also reduces uncertainty. A business man needs information to be able to improve his existing business just like a specialist also needs information to be up-to-date and well informed in his area of specialization.

Bestowed with the role and responsibility of finding and propagating information that the public wants and has a right to know is the media; this role is played via radio, television, and most importantly newspapers with libraries at the end of the line providing needed access to Newspapers. Newspapers have been defined differently by different authors. They are serial publications originally produced in newsprint, which reports on broad range of current events (Ugwu, 2007 cited Pottier, 2007). She added that newspapers can be targeted to the general public or to a special clientele. Prytherch (1995) defined newspaper as a publication issued periodically, usually daily or weekly, and containing the most recent news. Newspapers constitute a very important source of information in modern societies. Their importance largely lies on the current information they carry. Such information keeps the reader abreast of current happenings as well as educating and entertaining the readers. In other words, the newspaper is useful for education, recreation, entertainment and relaxation. Aina (1978) was able to establish the efficiency of newspapers for educational research in Nigeria. He concluded that libraries should emphasize the collection and organization of newspaper information.

Newspapers began circulating in the 17th century. The first newspaper in England was printed in 1641. However the word

newspaper was not recorded until 1670 as when it was called Caranto' and later became 'news book' (Prytherch, 1995). The first successful daily newspaper in Britain was printed in 1702. The first American newspaper was printed in 1690. It was called Publick Occurrences Both Forreign and Domestick. The first newspaper in Canada was the Halifax Gazette in 1752. The first daily American newspaper was published in 1783. In Nigeria, the first newspaper called 'Twe-irohim' appeared in 1859. It was published in Yoruba and English language by Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS).

Though newspapers are increasingly being used as research material or as a source of current information (Okojie, 1993) yet, one could observe the low patronage of newspapers by users in university libraries. To proffer solutions to this problem and related issues, this study seeks to precisely assess undergraduate students' use of newspapers in information centers, with particular reference to Bingham University Library, Karu.

Statement of the Problem

The research and educational value of newspapers cannot be over emphasized. Garret (1993) noted that newspapers are among the most relevant texts materials available for the classroom. Students like newspapers because they often find something related to their needs inside.

Even though newspapers are valuable, their utilization by staff and students in university libraries has been found to be low (Ola and Ojo, 2006). Despite evident efficiency and value of newspapers, Ojo and Akande, 2005; Oyesiku and Oduwole, 2004, all observed that information resources often used in university libraries have also been found to be limited to catalogues, books, journals, and electronic media. Perhaps newspapers are not considered to carry academic content. This suggests that there are obviously factors affecting newspaper utilization in university libraries especially by undergraduate students who are the major users of academic libraries. Hence, if these factors are not identified and tackled, then there is the possibility that valuable research and educative information imbedded in newspapers could be lost. This motivated

a study on undergraduate students' use of newspapers in university libraries.

Literature Review

Information is a multi-disciplinary concept. It is in-line with this background that Oyeronke (2011) citing Cliss (1986) observed that the data processing manager might conceive it in terms of data, the records manager in terms of records and reports, the librarian or information scientists in terms of document or materials and the rural man in terms of message. She further cited Shera (1972) who defined information as that which is transmitted by the act or process of communication. According to him, it may be a message, signal or stimulus. It assumes a response in the receiving organism and therefore, possessed a response potential. However, Oyeronke (2011) cited Davies' (1976) broader definition of Information as thus, "data that has been processed into a form that is meaningful to the recipient and is of real or perceived value in current or future decisions". Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus (2006) defined information as 'knowledge acquired in any manner'. Consequently and from the preceding definitions of Information, it can simply be said to be "data that is accurate and timely, specific and organized for a purpose, presented within a context that gives it meaning and relevance, and can lead to an increase in understanding and decrease in uncertainty". Information is valuable because it can affect behaviour, a decision, or an outcome. A piece of information is considered valueless in a particular context if after receiving it, things remain unchanged.

The mass media has been bestowed with an essential role and responsibility of locating and disseminating information that the public both wants and has a right to know. "One of the means of transmitting information is through the print media, especially the newspaper" (Onu, 2005 p84). In his blog titled Importance of Reading Newspapers Pratheek (2004) opined that reading newspapers every day is a must for both students and adults for growth and enlightenment irrespective of the class or field of their life. This is indisputably correct because reading newspapers daily is highly educational and provides an important informal education in a way. Olorunshola (1999, p60) further buttress that

"Newspapers help in building a whole man because it educates, informs and entertains" According to Oyeronke (2011,p39), "Newspapers provide essential background information and details on various issues. Of all local media and news sources, newspapers offer the most extensive, up-to-date record of emerging and ongoing local issues, personalities and stories of interest". Bello and Ajala (2004, p54) stated that "newspapers sell a combination of products such as news, features and advertisement. They also posited that "newspapers are also known to contain articles of research value and intelligent reviews which is apart from having the advantage of being up to date which may be lacking in books whose editions cannot be revised quite often". Onu (2005) avers "that newspaper have been accorded a great deal of importance in the transmission of government policy changes, priority changes and even interest changes". She further observed that due to the use of newspapers as a source of primary and up to date information, both students and scholars demand for them through self – acquisition, exchange borrowing from friends and from the library. From the foregoing, one will conclude that newspapers have become an integral part of today's information source because information in newspapers is in the area of investigative, educative, occupational, social, business and recreational needs. Some of the essence of newspaper is that, newspapers can be used to find statistical information, locating people, and/or case profiles. Studies have shown that news keeps us in touch with the environment in which we live. It gives us the insight into the dynamics that form the environment around us, be it in local, regional, national or international level. When we are not current with the news, we are isolated from the world around us and ultimately tend to atrophy. Newspapers are very useful in improving reading skills and language too.

The term undergraduate here refers to a university student who is studying for his/her first degree. After attaining his/her degree, the student can then pursue a Post-graduate Degree which usually refers to a student who has completed their first degree and is studying for a higher qualification such as a master's degree (Dictionary.com, 2013). In view of the foregoing, undergraduate refers to a student currently enrolled in pursuit of an undergraduate

programme, usually a bachelor's degree. A graduate student is a student that has achieved an undergraduate degree. In other words, an undergraduate is someone who is attending university but has not yet earned a degree but is working towards a bachelor's degree. In Nigeria, undergraduate degrees are four-year-based courses (excluding Medicine, Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Engineering, and Architecture). Medicine (MBBS) normally takes six years to complete, while Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Engineering courses and others take five years to complete studies. The Bachelor of Law (LLB) is a four-year program but those who went to practice law as Barristers and or solicitors must follow this up with another year of studies in the Law School.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify the newspapers available in the university library;
2. To identify frequently read newspapers in the library;
3. To identify information sought for in the newspapers;
4. To determine how often students use newspapers;
5. To identify challenges associated with the utilization of newspapers;
6. To proffer solution to the identified challenges.

Research Methodology

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. Considering that the total population is large to be covered for this study, the researcher randomly selected 10% from the total population of undergraduate students registered with the library numbering 2,000, forming a total sample size of 200. The sample size for the study is considered adequate because Nwana (1981), opined that, if a population is in many hundreds, one needs a sample size of 20%, and if a population is in a few thousands, one needs a sample size of 10%, but for a population of several thousands, one needs a sample of 5% or less. Therefore, a total sample size of 200 was selected. Consequently, the total number of questionnaires distributed was 200, and the total number returned was 187(93.5%) which was used for the analysis. Data generated was analysed using simple percentages. 50% percentages and above were regarded as positive and accepted while below 50% were regarded as negative and rejected.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The data generated from the study are presented, analysed, and discussed as follows:

Table 1: Available newspapers in the university library

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	The Nation	94	Accepted
2.	The Daily Trust	97	Accepted
3.	The Punch	95	Accepted
4.	The Guardian	95	Accepted
5.	Nigerian Vanguard	14	Rejected
6.	Daily Champions	14	Rejected
7.	This Day	11	Rejected
8.	Nigerian Tribune	16	Rejected
9.	Nigerian Compass	8	Rejected

Table 1 was specifically designed to test respondent's awareness and knowledge of the newspaper resources subscribed to by the university library. The table revealed that the available newspapers in the university library are: The Nation (94%), The Daily Trust (97%), The Punch (95%), and The Guardian (95%). There was substantive evidence that the library actually subscribes only to these four newspapers for now. The response rate of other newspapers was insignificant (below average i.e.50%). The respondents of the insignificant rate are those who do not know what newspapers are being subscribed to by the library because they do not read newspapers in the library (see table 2 item 5)

Table 2: Frequently read newspapers

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	The Nation	54	Accepted
2.	The Daily Trust	69	Accepted
3.	The Punch	66	Accepted
4.	The Guardian	42	Rejected
5.	I do not read newspapers in the library	84	Accepted

In Table 2 it is evident that the most read newspaper in the library is The Daily Trust (69%), followed by The Punch (66%), The Nation (54%), and then The Guardian (42%). Although, a high rate of the respondents (84%) claim not to read newspapers in the library. Considering the high rate of newspaper readers though not done in the library, it would appear that they read the online editions of the

newspapers as observation reveals that students do not buy newspapers. This position correlates with findings in Table 6. This is the bone of contention which this study wishes to address. The most read newspapers likely contain more information that catches the interest of the students. While those that are least read may not have full details of the information that can meet their needs or they may not contain much information that the students really look out for in newspapers.

Table 3: Information Sought for in the newspaper

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	Business Information	48	Rejected
2.	Cultural Information	16	Rejected
3.	Current Affairs	81	Accepted
4.	Educational Information	71	Accepted
5.	Employment Information	32	Rejected
6.	Entertainment/arts Information	85	Accepted
7.	Health Information	44	Rejected
8.	International Information	34	Rejected
9.	No specific Information	15	Rejected
10.	Political Information	47	Rejected
11.	Religious Information	40	Rejected
12.	Sports Information	46	Rejected

Table 3 reveals the preponderance of respondents look out for entertainment/art information, this scored highest with 85%. It was closely followed by the Current Affairs parameter which had 81% respondents. The need for educational information came next with 71%. From observation, majority of the respondents for this study fall between the age group of 16 to 21 years. This maybe the cause of their attitude towards reading only columns on entertainment and art information; as they still have a knack for fun rather than some other vital issues of life that are reported in the newspapers. No wonder, current affairs and educational information came second and third respectively rather than coming first and second in rate ranking.

Table 4: Frequency in utilizing of newspaper

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	Daily	26	Rejected
2.	Twice a week	29	Rejected
3.	Once a week	28	Rejected
4.	No specific time	86	Accepted
5.	Never	28	Rejected

Table 5 indicates how newspapers are being used by students, specifically how often these students utilize them. The only accepted decision which also has a very high response rate (86%) affirmed that students actually do not have any specific time to when they utilize newspapers in the library. One is tempted to assume that it could be as a result of the ignorance of the importance of reading newspapers and likely due to lack of time as a result of tight schedule of lecture.

Table 5: Challenges associated with the use of newspapers

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	I am not aware of the availability of newspapers in the library	18	Rejected
2.	The newspapers in the library are not current	14	Rejected
3.	I often read newspapers online	78	Accepted
4.	The serial librarian/staff is not friendly/approachable	13	Rejected
5.	The serials section were the newspapers are kept is not conducive for reading	7	Rejected

Table 6 indicates the challenges associated with the use of newspapers in the library. Of all the items listed, only item 3 (I often read newspapers online) had a significant response of 78%. Reading of newspapers online would appear to be through the respondents smartphones even though the university library provides Internet service that would have served that purpose. However, a negligible number of the respondents (18%) claimed that they are not aware of the availability of newspapers in the library. Though, this number is actually negligible but yet valuable enough to give information that could also help the researchers with their recommendations.

Table 7: Preferred strategy(s) for enhancing the use of newspapers

S/N	Frequency	%	Decision
1.	Put current newspapers in the library	48	
2.	Create more awareness on the availability of newspapers in the library	75	Accepted
3.	The serial librarian/staff should be more friendly/approachable	37	Rejected
4.	The serials section were the newspapers are kept should be made more conducive for reading	28	Rejected

Table 7 evidently shows that creation of more awareness on the

availability of newspapers in the library had the highest and only acceptable decision (above 50%). In creating more awareness perhaps via noticeboards, General Studies Courses such as The Use of Library, etc. could go a long way in sensitizing these students in the numerous importance of utilizing newspapers. Although, the students are aware of the library's Internet facility but would probably prefer using their handsets which cannot be used in the library for now.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there are four major newspapers subscribed to by the library namely: The Nation, Daily Trust, The Punch, and The Guardian. The study also discovered that most of the students do not read newspapers; however those who do read newspapers admitted to reading Daily Trust and The Punch. Also, the study also revealed that the information sought for in the newspaper mostly are entertainment information (which had the highest response), then current affairs and educational information respectively. Evidently, from the students sampled, a lot of them do not care about reading newspapers because they are likely not aware of the numerous benefit of it. They claim not to have specific time of reading newspapers, moreover the few who do, hardly frequent the library to read these newspapers because they feel they have the option of reading them online using their smartphones even though this is at a cost to them in terms of data subscription.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address the identified and any forecasted challenges.

- a. The Library management should sample users' opinion on what newspapers they would like the library to add to its existing subscribed newspapers.
- b. The students should be admonished to look out for other information aside from entertainment and arts information. This could be achieved if lecturers engage and give assignments that will prompt them to delve into other areas while reading newspapers.
- c. There is also need to encourage physical usage of

newspapers in the library because most newspapers online have a lot of their pages edited and cut off thus not providing readers access to full content when compared with the physical copy in the library. Internet service should be improved on in the library. Besides, access to newspapers in the library is free because subscription has already been catered for by the university management. This will further boost users' patronage. In addition to this is sensitization via seminars for students.

- d. The library management through the serials librarian should take advantage of the noticeboards within and outside the library environment to displace interesting captions and columns in various fields of study that will stimulate or wet the reader's appetite. This will further boost readers' patronage on newspapers.

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