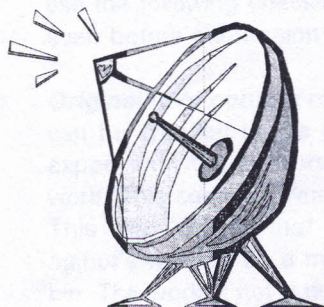
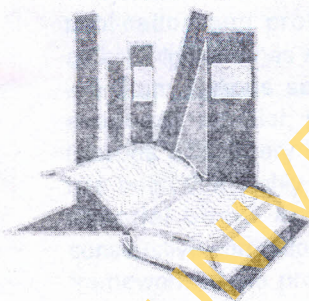
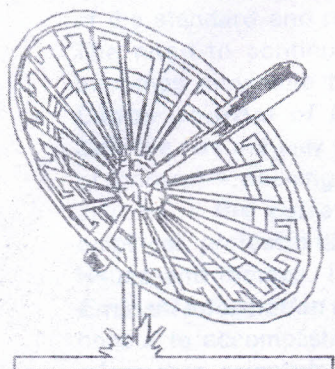
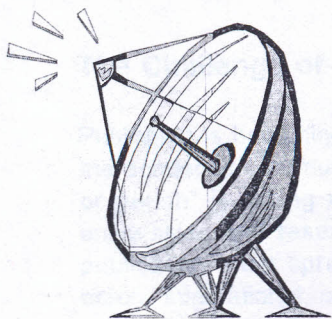
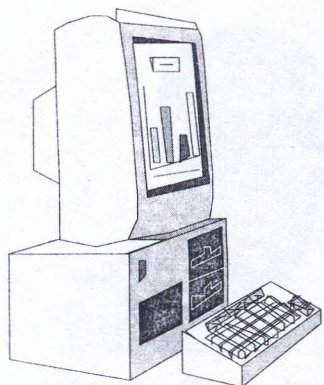


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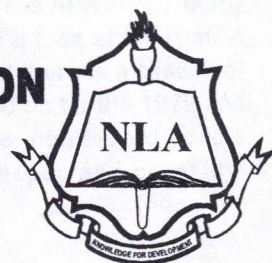
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# Newspaper Collection Utilization Patterns in a Nigerian Academic Library

## Empirical Research

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## Keywords

Academic Libraries; Challenges; Newspaper Collection; Preservative; Use Patterns.

## Abstract

*The study surveys users of the newspaper collection in the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan to find out the utilization pattern of the users and determine the effectiveness of the newspaper provision and services. Ninety six (96) library users were interviewed using questionnaires and direct interview methods. Participatory observation methods were also employed to get the information. The findings indicate that newspaper users in the library are facing some general problems. Adequate space needs to be provided for newspaper readers in academic libraries. Indexing of the newspapers will also help make information retrieval easier. It is recommended that library schools should provide courses that will deal with newspaper indexing, organization of newspaper collections, preservation and dissemination of newspaper information should be taught. A professional librarian, a library officer and a library attendant, for the effective provision of adequate newspaper information services, should man the newspaper section.*

## INTRODUCTION

Newspapers constitute a very important source of information in literate societies. They have a lot to contribute as vehicles for literacy development and good reading habits. Their importance largely lies in the current information they carry. The information keeps the reader well informed of current happenings as well as serves to educate and entertain.

The newspaper is a document set apart from many library sources based on its transient nature for it contains information like news articles, editorials, vital statistics on national issues, syndicated columns and advertisement and treats all subjects that can be of interest to all and sundry. Prytherch (1995) defines a newspaper as a

“Serial publication, which is designed to be a primary source of written information on current events connected with public affairs, either local, national and or international in scope. It contains a broad range of news on all subjects and activities and is not limited to any subject matter”.

Newspapers are intended for the general public. The general public may be further qualified and or limited by geographic location e.g local community, and or ethnic, cultural, racial, political or national group. A newspaper usually has the following characteristics:

- i.) It is originally printed on newsprint;
- ii.) It does not have a cover,
- iii.) It has a masthead, and,
- iv.) It has a format of not less than four columns per page.

Many types of libraries acquire newspapers as reading material for their users. Academic libraries in particular give priority to newspaper acquisition. Since the inception of the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, newspapers have been one of the primary types of materials with which the library has been concerned. The utilization patterns of the readers of newspapers in the library are the focus of this paper.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims to:

- Assess the availability of newspapers for use in Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan.
- Determine the adequacy, relevance and up-to-dateness of the newspaper collection.
- Examine how newspapers are organized for use in the library.
- Determine the accessibility of newspapers to users of the University of Ibadan.

- Determine the extent of the use of newspapers by users.
- Identify problems facing the users of newspapers in the library.
- Offer solutions to the problems identified.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Newspapers as Research Material

Newspapers have high research value even though they are ephemeral in nature. Ladele (1984) particularly noted the research value of newspaper cartoons and suggested ways by which librarians could initiate and organize cartoon collections in a library. Cartoons are just one aspect or section in a newspaper. If cartoons are worth collecting, how much more the newspaper in which they are published.

Peterson (1988) opined that newspapers form an essential resource for historical research in a number of fields, while Ray (1990) observed that in the area of acquisition, some newspapers are difficult to acquire particularly in developing countries, since a change in government can cause publishing interruptions or cessations and delay in mail service. He also commented on the fact that when a library's primary purpose in collecting newspapers is for preservation through microfilming, it is especially important that files be completed and undamaged.

Newspapers are very useful in improving reading skills and in the teaching of English as a Second Language. Cheyney (1992) revealed that students who are taught using newspapers for language enrichment shows positive attitude towards schools improvement in reading skills and attitudes, and improvement in behaviour, motivation and verbal interaction. To further buttress this, Garret (1993) notes that newspapers are among the most relevant texts available for the classroom. Students like them because they can always find something they care about inside the newspaper.

Newspapers are extremely valuable as research materials because they are rich in terms of information covering local, national and international

affairs, up-to-date information on politics, health, music, sports, entertainment, arts, fashion, law, economy, medicine, science and technology. Umoh (1991) quotes Roe *et al* as saying.

"Newspapers and magazines are excellent media for reading instruction because they are readily available and treat a wide variety of subject matters. Newspapers and magazines are highly motivating for students because they focus on the present. They are interesting to students who have been turned off by formal reading materials. Newspapers have the added advantage of providing a fresh set of materials each day."

Lovio (2001) comments on New Porvoo City Library, which has a journal café. The library users have access to Ebsco Masterfile Premier, which contains full text articles from over 1800 English language periodicals. The users of the Ebsco database are mostly young people. He however comments that the changeover from using print periodicals rather than electronic ones is slow.

Hujanen (2000) discovered that in Finland, virtually every household subscribed to a daily newspaper per week in the 1980's and towards the end of 1990's only 70% of the households did. He further stated that both decades saw a sharp decline in the reading of newspapers by young people. However, the number of newspapers subscribed to by libraries also decreased.

Dixon (2001) also reports on a seminar given in London on learning through local newspapers. The newspapers were seen as useful for leisure and learning, and used as a good source for historical research.

Newspapers as such are a very valuable source of current information. They provide entertainment, and can be used effectively in carrying out research. Because they are continuous and often are reliable information sources researchers use them as primary means of information gathering and then verify their findings using other research methods.

## NEWSPAPER ORGANISATION

Peterson (1989) examined the bibliographic access to newspaper, which is another important aspect of their processing. It is important to know, that many libraries do not catalogue their newspaper holdings, but provide some other means of access, by title on the shelves, by check-in records, etc. However, the physical description of newspapers in cases is not as complex as that of other types of serial publications.

Upham (1988) has viewed the need for bibliographic control of newspapers and has concluded that this has always been a difficult task. The difficulty is posed through the volatile nature of the format, frequency, size publishers, place of publication and most importantly title. Also part of the problem of accessibility both to the patron and curator is through use of a combination of geographic location, title and date.

Salaam (2003) in a study on newspapers in some academic libraries, noted that the numbers of newspapers acquired were inadequate and preservation of the newspapers was done by putting them in newspaper boxes. Some were preserved in bound volumes and quite a number also in shelves and cupboards. The trend in newspaper management is shifting to preservation in microfilm form.

## NEWSPAPER PRESERVATION

Hill (1997) has stressed the urgent need for the preservation of newspapers through the use of microfilming. It has helped greatly to allow libraries to withdraw brittle issues for patron use and to reduce the bulk of their newspaper collections, while actually increasing patron utilization. Certainly microfilming has come to be regarded as the most practical preservation technique now available.

Bansa (1986) has emphasized that most library schools leave newspaper library staff ill equipped to deal with the preservation of their collections if training in the maintenance and preservation of newspapers collections is lacking, then the *collection remains disorganized* and may even be destroyed. There are sharp differences between an

ordinary library collection and a newspaper collection, and these differences deserve emphasis on library school curriculum.

Ellen (1989) has opined that most newspapers that libraries intend to preserve are filmed and kept in a micro format because the original paper is rarely designed for longevity. However, the filmed contents are still considered to be newspapers.

It is important to mention that contents of some newspapers are now even posted on the Internet. This is through a process of digitization of the content, which is then stored in electronic format. The newspaper can then be put on CD-ROM for electronic format use. An example is the Gale Group's online subscription service tagged InfoTrac OneFile. The Gale Group (2000) reports that the access to millions of newswire, magazine periodical and newspaper articles are provided in a single interface. Back files for twenty years covering virtually every popular business and professional topic is online. This InfoTrac Onefile allows the library gateway to be more flexible, serving a broad spectrum of needs and is more responsive by delivering richer search results for every query.

Cox (2000) contributed to the discussion on ways and manners newspaper collections are supposed to be managed and preserved for future references and uses. He made reference to the opinion raised by Nicholson Baker who had stood vehemently against the sale or destruction of original newspapers once they have been microfilmed. Baker had summarised his point in four ways thus: a lie foisted upon the public about the care of the newspapers; the insidious destruction of original newspapers; the resultant loss of trust by the public in libraries and archives and a set of wrong priorities leading to the misguided microfilming and destruction of the newspapers. The consensus is thus that microfilming still does not really warrant destruction of original copies of the newspapers. This study however focuses on the hard copy version of newspapers found in the Kenneth Dike Library collection, and users of this collection.

## METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire and direct interview methods were used to conduct the survey. Participatory

observation methods were also used to verify some of the respondents' claims. The researchers sat in with the newspapers readers once in a while to be able to get the information. The direct interviews were conducted randomly either as the readers settled down to read, or just as they were about to leave. Thirty of the 96 readers were interviewed.

Questionnaires were administered on the hundred (100) respondents. Ninety-six (96) of the respondents returned the questionnaire giving a 96% response rate.

### FINDINGS

56 males (58.33%) and 40 females (41.67%) constituted the study population. Thirty two (32), constituting 33.33% respondents were between the age bracket 18-23, forty three (43) 44.79% were between the ages 24-30, nineteen (19) 19.79% were of the age range 31 and above. Two (2) 2.1% respondents did not respond.

**Table 1**  
**Frequency of Consultation of Newspapers**

Frequency	Respondents	%
Often	-	0
Very often	29	30.21
Seldom	22	22.91
Occasionally	45	46.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

From Table 1, it is obvious that most of the respondents (45) 46.88% consult newspapers occasionally, 29 (30.21%) very often consult newspapers while only 22 (22.91%) seldom consult the newspapers. This indicates that adequate publicity and more seriousness of the orientation programmes in the library needs to be focused on to get users to consult newspapers more frequently. The importance of newspapers to the educational growth and well being of library users can be put across at such times. Current awareness services for the newspaper collection in particular can be put in place. The newspaper collection could also be indexed to make it easier for users to find what they are interested in from the collection.

Responses were sought on why uses would or would not read newspapers generally. This was to determine if there was any pattern in the usage or non-usage of the library's newspaper collection. Many of the respondents said that they read newspapers regularly and also for research purposes. 35 (26.46%) of the 96 respondents indicated that they read newspapers on a daily basis but do not use the library newspaper collection regularly and they gave reasons as tabulated below:

**Table 2: Reasons for not reading Newspapers**

Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
Limited time	21	60%
Rarely read newspapers	4	11.42%
Buy Newspapers	8	22.86%
Not Registered	1	2.86%
Listen to Radio	1	2.86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

From the above findings, there is indeed a sizeable proportion of respondents or library users who do not use the newspapers collection because of limited time. It could be implied from this finding that a good number of readers have a nonchalant attitude towards reading newspapers in the library. 60% of the users/respondents attributed limited time to not using the library for reading newspapers. 11.42% of the respondent rarely read the library's newspapers. In like manner, 22.86% of the respondent users indicated that they used to buy, so do not need to read newspapers in the library. 2.86% each of the respondents respectively, signified that they could not register in the library and that they preferred to listen to press reports to have an idea of what is going on in the country.

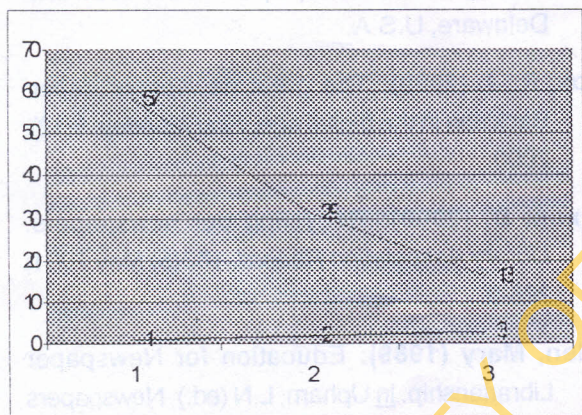
**Table 3: Frequency of getting information needed from Newspapers**

Comment	Respondents	Percentage
Not Always	66	68.76
Always	15	15.62
Never	1	1.04
Nil	14	14.58
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>100</b>

Users were asked to indicate how frequently they got the particular information needed in the newspapers. Analysis of the answers (Table 3) showed that majority of the respondents did not get the information needed. Only 15.62% of the respondents appeared to get needed information from newspapers always. 1.04% of the users never have the information needed from the newspapers. Again, those who refrained from expressing an opinion formed 14.56% of the users.

On the question of newspapers as important sources of information, 68 (70.83%) respondents affirmed that they found newspapers useful to their learning and studies. 28 (29.17%) did not find newspapers useful to their studies.

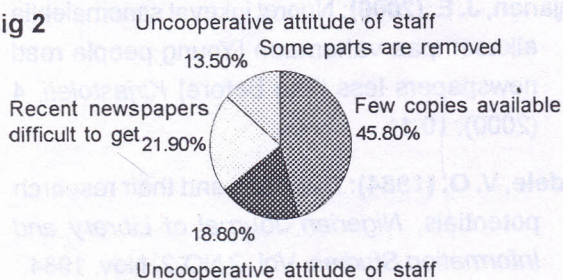
Figure 1



- 1 = Asking from library staff.
- 2 = Use when some other students are using it.
- 3 = Pick them up from where the newspapers are kept.

As evident in Fig. 1 above, 57 (56.44%) respondents come across the newspapers through the library staff. 29 (30.21%) of the users admitted that they have the opportunity when their peers are reading the newspapers, while 13(13.35%) of the users claimed to pick them where the newspapers are kept. See Fig 2 below:

Fig 2



On the issue of locating newspapers, the survey shows clearly that 44 (45.8%) of the users opined that few copies of newspapers are made available to the 18 respondents further indicated that the attitude of some members of staff is not encouraging showing 18.8% of the users. 21(21.9%) of the respondents indicated that current editions are not readily come by in the library. The above analysis shows 13 (13.5%) of the respondents indicated that some pages were torn out by students.

In the Kenneth Dike Library, there are three units or service points at which newspapers are made available to users i.e. the Circulation desk, the Reference desk and the Serials desk. Services to users at the different points are different. The respondents were asked to comment on their level of satisfaction with newspaper services at these points. 54 (56.25%) of the users were of the opinion that the service given to them at the Circulation desk is considerably fair. The users 38 (39.5%) served at the Reference desk viewed that the service rendered was not fair, whereas some users were of the view that they received a very encouraging service at the Serials service desk. This may be because undergraduates are not permitted to use the Serials section and so the pressure on staff is less at this service point. Postgraduate students mostly expressed satisfaction with the Serials desk service.

In response to how possible it was for the users to make photocopies of newspapers, results showed that 64 (66.66%) users encountered difficulties in making photocopies. The remaining 32 (33.33%) found it easy to make photocopies. It is quite clear from this that the library authority should provide urgent solution to the problem of photocopying services in the library. Again, the micro filming of the newspaper collection should be given priority, as presently, they are just gathering dust, and many of them are being torn and mutilated.

### CHALLENGES IN NEWSPAPERS PROVISION SERVICES

From the findings therefore, the challenges to be faced by academic libraries and librarians working in these libraries as well as trainers of librarians and information scientists are that:

- Digitization of newspapers should be explored in order to put them in a format in which they can be more easily presented to users.
- The backlog of Newspapers can easily be microfilmed and, using multiple copying methods, can be circulated to all Nigerian University libraries.
- Most Nigerian academic libraries should have a bindery section to take care of binding current issues to preserve the hard copy version where digitization cannot be speedily commenced.
- Newspaper collections in academic libraries should have a separate section to be fully manned and maintained.
- A Newspaper Librarian or a library officer with one or two supporting staff should man the Newspaper section of academic libraries.
- Library schools should evolve a curriculum that includes newspapers as a course to be taught to students.
- User education programmes should be introduced in all Nigerian Universities Libraries with a focus on proper use of the library, special reference should be made to the advantage of students knowing the collection, the role of librarians and how to maximally use the library.
- The library instruction course taught to the newly admitted students in some Nigerian University libraries should be redesigned with interest placed more on "The Use of Library" and this should be taught for not less than two semesters, for it to be effective.

## CONCLUSION

The study has provided some vital information about Newspapers as being information carriers that could contribute to the development, growth and intellect of its readers. It is also revealed that large numbers of students do not have enough access to the library's newspapers. This implies poor use of the newspaper collections in the library, as despite the apparent utilization of the newspapers only a few of the users actually make use of it maximally. However, majority of the students indicated the cooperation they enjoyed from the members of staff in trying to provide a good newspaper reading service for them.

Newspaper collections have great research and information value and so should not be overlooked in academic libraries. The systematic collection, organization, preservation and dissemination of newspaper information should be prioritised in these libraries. Doing so will ensure an increase in the utilization of newspapers and achieve a lot in improving the reading culture and habit of students in particular, and the general reading public at large.

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