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Introduction

Information is an important element in every sector of life, be it social, economic, political, educational, industrial and technical development. In the present world, information is a very valuable commodity. Flowing through the various media, radio, television, newspaper, internet, information on a wide range of events gets to the public, and as such the mass media have great influence on public perception. Borgart (1981) reported that keeping up with the news establishes and reinforces the connection between the individual and his social environment, narrowly defined as his home or more broadly as his country or the world. The social bond is uniquely expressed by the newspapers amongst other media due to the bulk volume of information contained from which readers could select what is relevant to them. The information contained in newspapers could influence the agenda of the public, by tilting it towards those issues that they decide to cover more extensively (Cohen, 1963). According to Schoenbach (2005), newspapers are known to widen the range of public topics, events and issues their audience is aware of.

Newspapers are a vital source of information in enlightened societies; providing the most recent information to readers. Newspapers serve various purposes for different categories of users. Berelson (1949) described five ways of what newspaper reading means to different people: as respite or recreation (using it to unwind from stress or as a tension reliever), public affairs (using it to develop public opinions), for information (using it to know what is going on in the society) as entertainment (using it for pleasure or to find out about pleasurable activities) and for socialization (using it to feel joined to others beyond the family block in the broader society). The importance of newspapers by the illustrations of Cheyney (1992) is that they are the textbooks that provide

up to date information on local, state, national and world affairs, the most current analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision making, the latest in music, theatre, television, fine arts and even column and comics to make readers laugh. Babalola (2002) opined that newspapers are the most accessible written documents to the largest proportion of people of all categories, young and old, students and workers, elites and peasants, literates and illiterates. Babalola (2002) also highlighted various ways in which newspapers have been used as vehicles for facilitating literacy empowerment. Due to the way people gather daily to discuss contents of newspapers, it inevitably promotes critical thinking, retention of information, problem solving and the querying of information source.

Ayepekun (1982) writing on information utilization by policy makers in Nigeria reported that newspapers and magazines are among the five most used sources of information by policy makers. The importance of newspapers was demonstrated by Oyediran-Tidings (2004) where it was demonstrated that newspaper is the second most sought documents preceded only by textbooks among library users of Yaba College of Technology. A previous study on the use of academic library of Olabisi Onabanjo University revealed that reading the library newspapers is the third most important motivation after reading for examination and book consultation for doing assignments on why students visit the library (Oyesiku and Oduwole, 2004)

In recent times, historic newspapers from years past have risen in scholars' estimation for their unique ability to offer a picture of society and culture from a specific time period. With the proliferation of interdisciplinary studies in the humanities and social sciences, newspapers are now seen as invaluable research resources (Okorafor, 1991) in many areas of study. Only newspapers can offer a "snapshot" of a given time period and cover such a wide breath of political, societal, and cultural perspectives that are unclouded by subsequent reflection, prejudices, and hindsight. The understanding that comes with the passage of time is altogether different from the dynamism of the moment that newspapers strive to capture in regular and frequent intervals. According to Mills (1981) the newspaper is indeed often the only source of information of the social, economic, and political development of a nation, region, or community, and as such is an indispensable resource for researchers in the social sciences and humanities. Hamilton (1992) elaborated further that newspapers are the "first draft of history" and that "through their reporting and commentaries, they influence politics, make or break public careers and even decide the fate of governments, and that "there is no other medium in our history that records every aspect of human life over the last 300 years – on a daily basis – like newspapers.

The cover price of Nigerian newspapers was 20 kobo per copy in the 1980s, thus the average Nigerian was able to purchase minimum of three newspapers per day (Salaam, 2002). However, the cover price of the newspapers has gone up to the extent that that the average Nigerian can not afford the daily purchase, and this has made the libraries important avenues for reading daily newspapers.

This study assesses the extent of use of the Olabisi Onabanjo library newspaper resources by students and their perception of the library services rendered with regard to newspaper provision. The function of academic libraries is to provide services to staff and students and the services could only be of real value if people for whom they are provided value them. To some degree, this could be assessed by the use made of the services. The expected results from this study will assist the library management to plan changes to newspaper provision with a view to better meet demand and expectation of users.

Specifically, the study determined :

- The relative importance of newspapers as source of information to the

students

- The frequency and pattern of use of the newspaper facilities in OOU libraries by the students
- The type of information sought by the clientele from the newspapers
- The impression of the students on the newspaper services provided by the university
- The perceived barriers that may discourage students from using the newspaper sections in the University libraries

Methodology

A survey was carried out from March to June, 2005 on students of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye that visited the newspaper sections of the library, using the questionnaire survey methods and interviews. A stratified random sampling based on the students' faculty was used for the study. There are six faculties in the main and mini Campuses of Olabisi Onabanjo at Ago-Iwoye namely, Arts, Science, Social Sciences Education, Law, and Management Sciences. The University had a Main Library in the Mini Campus which caters for the needs of all students but most especially for students in the Faculties of Science and Education. The library of the Law Faculty is also in the Mini Campus, while the Hassan Odukale library in the University Main Campus takes care of the library needs of students in the Faculties of Arts, Social Sciences and Management Sciences. There are special sections devoted to newspaper provision in these libraries where students could visit and read .

The questionnaire was developed by the authors, based on observations made over time and from discussions with students that patronised the newspaper sections in the libraries. Two specialists in library studies that are accustomed to questionnaire administration reviewed it for content and face validity. Thereafter, it was pilot tested on 25 students that visited the library newspaper sections in February 2005 with a view to detecting unclear and misleading statements. The questionnaire provide options from which respondents could tick the right ones and consisted of questions on demographics, relative importance of newspaper information, purposes for consulting newspapers, types of information sought from newspapers, extent and satisfaction derived from the use of library services of OOU on newspapers, and problems that might constrain students from patronising the newspaper sections.

Copies of the revised questionnaire was randomly given to students who visited the newspaper sections in the different libraries within the survey period. Questionnaire was also administered to students outside the libraries, but the student was first asked if he/she has visited the newspaper desk in the library before, and those that have not been to the sections were excluded from the survey because they were not in a position to assess the activities of library in this area. In the administration of the questionnaire particularly those that came to the newspaper desks, the students were asked if they have been given the questionnaires before to avoid multiple entries by an individual. The completed questionnaire was collected back from the students immediately after completion.

Interviews were also held with a sizeable proportion of respondents to gain further in-depth knowledge on the uses and the problems the students encounter in the use of newspaper services provided by the library. Those students that were interviewed were not part of the study sample that completed the questionnaire.

Results and Discussion

The study sample comprised 456 students, 270 (59.2%) of them in the

newspaper sections of the libraries, and the remaining 186(40.8%) were administered outside the libraries but to those that has used the newspaper section at least once. After scrutinizing the returned questionnaire, 36 (7.9%) were excluded from the analysis due to incomplete responses to the questions, leaving a total of 420(92.1%) to form the basis of analysis of results in this presentation.

Of the total respondents whose returned questionnaires were reported in this work, 307(73.1%) were males, while 108 (25.7%) were females, and a small fraction five (1.2%) did not indicate their sex. Since the questionnaire administration was randomly given to students that visited the library within each faculty, the sex distribution of the respondents showed that male students predominantly read newspapers in the University libraries compared to the females. This is to be expected since a heavy number of men is often seen congregating around newspaper stands and vendors every morning in Nigeria reading and discussing issues raised in newspapers. Stanley and Niemi (1998) had observed that women are less intensive consumers of news from varied sources particularly newspapers and magazines, but are more likely to watch television news special and documentary.

The mean reported age of respondents in this study was 21.5 years, with a range of 17 to 29 years.

Table 1 presents the cross tabulation of the Faculty of respondents and year of study.

Table 1. Respondents survey of use of newspaper provision of library services by Faculty and level of study.

| Level | Arts | Science | Education Soc. | Sciences | Law | Man.Sciences |
|-------|------|---------|----------------|----------|-----|--------------|
| 100 | 14 | 23 | 08 | 15 | 09 | 18 |
| 200 | 25 | 36 | 20 | 20 | 16 | 37 |
| 300 | 17 | 26 | 16 | 19 | 14 | 29 |
| 400 | 08 | 14 | 11 | 09 | 05 | 08 |
| 500 | - | - | - | - | 04 | - |
| Total | 64 | 99 | 55 | 62 | 48 | 92 |

Note Soc. Sciences is Social Sciences and Man. Sciences is Management Sciences

To be able to know how important newspapers are to the students, the respondents were requested to assess the degree to which various sources of information contribute to their overall daily information needs on a likert 5-point scale ranging from 1=do not use this method to 5= very important.

Table 2 shows that the most important source of information through which the respondents meet their daily needs is by personal contact with friends, colleagues-peers (3.90). Television with a mean score of 3.82 out of a total maximum of 5 emerged as the second major source through which the students satisfy their daily information needs (Table 2). The newspapers ranked third with a mean score of 3.44 even ahead of the radio, which placed, fourth with a score of 2.93. That the newspaper placed third shows how important it is to the students and the priority its provision should be given by the management of the University library.

Table 2. Contribution of various information sources to respondents overall daily information needs.

| Information sources | Mean scores | (SD) |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------|
| Personal contact/colleagues | 3.90 | (0.65) |

| | | |
|------------|------|--------|
| Television | 3.82 | (0.97) |
| Newspapers | 3.44 | (1.37) |
| Radio | 2.93 | (1.43) |
| Internet | 2.47 | (1.29) |
| Magazines | 2.16 | (1.05) |

Note: scoring of each item was done on a 5-point scale ranging from

1. Not important
2. Slightly important
3. Fairly important
4. important
5. Very important

by each of the students, and the data presented are the arithmetic means of the sum for the various information sources with standard deviations in parenthesis

On the frequency of respondents use of the newspaper sections, approximately one third (33.8%) of the respondents read library newspapers daily (Table 3), while 21.4% respondent further indicated that they visit the library newspaper sections at free periods, and these category could also be classified as regular users too. Those that visited the newspaper sections once and twice per week constituted 12.9% and 7.6% respectively, while the occasional users accounted for 20.2%.

Table 3. The respondents' frequency of visit to the library to read newspapers

| Rate per week | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------|-----------|------------|
| Daily | 142 | 33.8 |
| Once | 54 | 12.9 |
| Twice | 32 | 7.6 |
| At free periods | 90 | 21.4 |
| Occasionally | 85 | 20.2 |
| Not indicated | 17 | 4.1 |
| TOTAL | 420 | |

To obtain data on the various purposes for which the respondents visit the newspaper sections in the library, the five reasons highlighted by Berelson (1949) were listed while the students also had the benefit of including additional factors not listed in the questionnaire. Majority of the respondents read newspapers in the libraries to obtain information (89.3%), while 58.6% cited the use of newspapers as recreation or respite to remove stress when they feel bored (Table 4). Above 50% use newspapers for public affairs, while 44.8% use newspapers as entertainment and 37.4% for socialization. That a large proportion of students use newspaper as recreation or tension relievers further points to the necessity and importance of these services being rendered by the library. The provision of recreation facilities is crucial in minimizing negative activities such as cultism and indecent sexual relationships on campuses. In a survey carried out in the University of Botswana, one of the major factors cited by the students which drive them into sexual activities is when they feel bored or stressed, they resort to sex to relieve themselves form stress (Seloilwe, 2005).

Table 4. Purposes for which the respondents visit the newspaper section in the University library

| Purposes | Number of Respondents | Percentage |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| as recreation or respite | 246 | 58.6 |
| Public affairs | 219 | 52.1 |
| for information | 375 | 89.3 |
| as entertainment | 188 | 44.8 |
| for socialization | 157 | 37.4 |
| Safety/Security | 31 | 7.4 |
| To pass time | 22 | 5.2 |

Note: multiple responses were possible as there were no limitations set up for the students' choices

When asked on the specific information sought from newspapers, Table 5 shows that the highest percentage (84.8%) of the students read newspapers to obtain information on politics/governments, followed by those who consult to obtain current information on sporting events(76.4%). Information on entertainment (63.8%) ranked third, while health information placed fourth on the list. Nearly half of the respondents (48.8%) consulted newspapers to know happenings in different parts of the world. Approximately one third of the respondents indicated that they used newspapers to obtain information on their academic work, while about 30% mentioned that they use newspapers to gain knowledge on the latest discoveries in Science and technology.

Table 5. Information needs sought from newspapers

| Information needs | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Politics/Government | 356 | 84.8 |
| Academic | 246 | 58.6 |
| Sports | 321 | 76.4 |
| Entertainment | 268 | 63.8 |
| Health/Fitness/Medicine | 223 | 53.1 |
| World news | 205 | 48.8 |
| Scholarship/Employment | 186 | 44.3 |
| Food/Nutritional | 137 | 32.6 |
| Science/Technology | 126 | 30.0 |
| Business/Economic/Finance | 79 | 18.8 |
| Religion/Spirituality | 46 | 11.0 |
| Family/marital issues | 73 | 17.4 |
| Obituaries | 24 | 5.7 |
| Fashion/Beauty | 86; | 20.5 |

Note: multiple responses were possible as there were no limitations set up for the students' choices

When the respondents were asked to rate the services rendered in the newspaper section of the libraries, only a very low proportion (3.6%) rated the services to be very good (Table 6), while 17.4% respondents indicated that the services rendered by the library is good. The highest proportion of students (44.8%) was of the view that newspaper services rendered by the University library is fair, while 31.4 % respondents rated the newspaper provision to be of poor quality. The addition of those that rated the services to be very good and good is 21.0%, implying that the services provided fall below the expectation of the users.

Table 6. Impression of students on newspaper services rendered by the

| Response | Number | Percentage |
|-------------|--------|------------|
| Excellent | - | - |
| Very good | 15 | 3.6 |
| Good | 73 | 17.4 |
| Fair | 188 | 44.8 |
| Poor | 132 | 31.4 |
| No response | 12 | 2.9 |
| Total | 420 | |

When the respondents were asked to indicate the barriers that may hinder students from patronizing the newspaper sections, top on the list is that the sections are often overcrowded (63.1%), followed by a somewhat similar reason which is the fact that only limited spaces (57.4%) are provided for newspaper consultation (Table 7). Forty nine percent of the students were also of the view that the newspapers are not available on time, and from the interview the students indicated that sometimes, the newspapers for a day might not be available for readers up to 12.00noon. The fourth reason is that few copies of these materials are made available in the library for users (37.4%). In the interview, the respondents further expressed that one will have to queue at times up to one hour before it could come to your turn to read your desired newspaper. Another reason cited by 35.2% of respondents is that the non-awareness of the newspaper service provision by some students may account for non patronage. It is equally significant to note that 25.2% of the students indicated difficulties in retrieving old issues of the newspapers which ought to have been well organized in order to make retrieval easy. In the interview conducted, it was indicated that one will have to consult a library staff to get a back issue of newspapers and often, you will be given appointment to come back at a later date and you are not too sure of getting your requests on return.

Table 7

| Reasons | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|------------|
| Limited space | 241 | 57.4 |
| Usually crowded | 265 | 63.1 |
| Students listen to newspaper headlines on radio | 124 | 29.5 |
| Newspaper not available in time | 206 | 49.0 |
| Few copies of newspapers | 157 | 37.4 |
| Limited time | 29 | 6.9 |
| Lack of awareness | 148 | 35.2 |
| Difficult to get back issues of purchased newspapers | 56 | 13.3 |
| Information obtained from other sources | 128 | 30.5 |

Note: multiple responses were possible as there were no limitations set up for the students' choices

Conclusion and Recommendations

The present study has shown that newspapers are vital information sources preceded only by personal contact with colleagues and peers and

television through which the students that responded to this questionnaire satisfy their daily information needs. Majority of the students read newspapers to obtain information and as recreation, thus serving as a way of taking their mind off the negative activities such as cultism. The range of specific information sought by the students from the newspapers include information on politics/governments, sporting events, entertainment, health matters, world affairs and their academic work.

The students' rating of the newspaper services being rendered by OOU libraries shows the need for considerable improvement to better meet the needs of the users. It is noteworthy that the space in the main library that has been in use in the 1980s when the students population was less than three thousand is still the space used basically by faculties of Science and Education with population of over 12,000 students, and students from other faculties that also randomly visit the main library, though the latter have their own branch libraries where newspaper services are provided. Other reasons why the students may not patronize the newspaper sections are that the newspapers are not available on time, few copies of the newspapers are provided for library users and that some students might not be aware of the newspaper services in the library. This study thus shows the need for the library to seriously address the lapses that have been identified by the students to make their services more relevant to the students.

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