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## Newspaper management in Nigerian university libraries: a case of Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO) Library

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# NEWSPAPER MANAGEMENT IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES: A CASE OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY OWERRI (FUTO) LIBRARY

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## *Abstract*

*The work discusses the management of newspapers in Nigerian university libraries with reference to the Library of the Federal University of Technology Owerri. It notes that newspapers are acquired by subscription through a well-established vendor or directly from the publishers. Political, economic, social and intellectual problems hinder the continuous subscription of newspapers. The processing of newspaper involves stamping and recording using standard forms and registers or loose sheets. Such processing requires adequate work surface. Newspapers are made available for use on display racks or newspaper folders while articles are located using in-housed developed indexes. The preservation of newspapers poses some problems due to the brittle nature of the newsprint, which make it amenable to decay. The use of microfilms for preservation is not made in FUTO library. A new trend of management is expected with the availability of newspaper information on the Internet and CD-ROM.*

## INTRODUCTION

Information (news) is very vital for the survival of man. He desires to keep abreast of the societal news within the shortest possible time. To achieve this, people are glued to radio and television stations of national or international interest. Others rush to magazine stands along the street to get first hand information on daily basis.

Members of the university environment are not left out either. Staff and students troop into the library daily to catch a glimpse of the national news of which the nature of their environment and programme limit their interactions with. The general purpose of reading newspapers notwithstanding, they play vital role in the teaching and research activities of the university. According to Johansson (1992), newspaper "speaks more directly to the future researcher than any other

original source material" due to its coverage of all subject fields and the ability to provide record of the ordinary life of communities. Along the same line Cumming (1999) mentioned that newspapers serve as a source of information, provide for general education and historical documents of current information dissemination.

The characteristics of newspaper which classified it as serials notwithstanding some peculiarities are identified: the articles contained are not scientifically researched hence may not be highly authoritative; the bulky and fragile nature of the prints present a unique handling condition.

Johansson (1992) explained that the selection and acquisition of newspapers are part of the collection development policy of any library and should always consider that the materials are collected for the information

content and "as a primary record of the national and development of different countries. Consideration should be given to their news coverage and reliability, political stance, circulation and geographical coverage and design. Use and users opinion are very necessary". Hodge and Ivins (1987) positioned the consideration for acquisition of intended newspaper in university libraries to include Journalistic reputation and representative geographic origin. He outlined potential selection criteria for international newspapers in university library. These include quality, reputation, language, and political stance, perceived use, actual use, cost, availability of airmail. Reasons for collecting such materials were given as:

- a Supporting country curricula requirements;
- b Providing broader coverage of current request and international events;
- c Providing news from home countries of international students and faculty; and
- d Supporting continuing research interest.

Johansson listed selection tools for international newspapers to include the *Encyclopaedia of the World's Press*, *Benn's Media Directory* and help from expert and library users.

The processing of newspaper, which involves stamping and recording requires more space and large surfaces than ordinary book and periodical due to the large and fragile nature of the material. Krišep (1992) reported the absence of Library of Congress Classification Schedule for newspapers though a modified scheme is available at Washington State University Libraries. A

guide to cataloguing of newspaper has also been produced by IFLA working Group on Newspaper called *International Guidelines for the Cataloguing of Newspaper*.

Though access to content of national and international newspapers is difficult, Johansson (1992) mentioned that well known published indexes, those of the *Times* and *Economist* could help users in the library. Afolabi (1992) mentioned some of the published indexes namely: *New York Times Index*, the *Palmer's Index to the Times*, the *Times Index* etc.

Effective use of current and preserved newspaper requires the presence of a knowledgeable staff to help users; space and large tables; and large trolleys for movement of bound ones (Johansson, 1992). Conditions and steps for photocopying were explained. Methods of conservation and storage were also mentioned by Johansson (1992) to include decision to use a :

- Microfilm to store back issue and destroy the original;
- Good binding system;
- Chemical treatment of deteriorating issues (deacidification) He also mentioned minor local repairs like rebinding, replacement of missing pages with photocopy.

In spite of the widely accepted view of the importance of newspapers in the world of information provision and librarianship, not much has been written on its acquisition, processing and use in Nigerian University libraries. As a result of this, the work with focus on the library of the Federal University of Technology Owerri intends to:

- \* Identify the acquisition situation of

Newspapers in Nigeria University Libraries with respect to FUTO Library;

- \* Examine the mode of processing;
- \* Discuss the use made of these materials;
- \* Discuss the prospects of newspaper management in university libraries;

### *Research Question*

1. How are newspapers acquired in the Federal University of Technology Owerri?
2. What are the requirements for the processing of newspapers?
3. By what means are the contents of newspapers made available for use in FUTO Library?

The work will also test the following hypothesis: **There is no significant difference in the average use made of the four most used newspapers in 2001 in the FUTO Library.**

### **Methodology**

Data for this work was collected using the following sources:

- a Oral interview of FUTO Library staff in charge of newspaper acquisition, processing, use, and preservation;
- b Documents and working materials used in the management of newspapers in the library;
- c Observation of the activities in the newspapers' management unit of the library.

Newspapers in this work are used to refer to the daily newspapers and Magazines.

Information gathered were analysed using tables, graphs and Measure of central tendency. ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis.

## **ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Newspaper Acquisition**

The acquisition of newspapers in Nigerian university libraries is basically through subscription. Depending on the arrangement, subscription could be made through the publishers or well-established newspaper vendors. For convenient purposes, many libraries use vendors while others purchase directly from publishers on daily basis. These materials are also acquired through gifts and donations from individuals and publishers of newspapers.

Like other serials, once a title is selected for subscription the Library is expected to ensure continuity.

Result from the data on acquisition of newspapers shows that the FUTO Library started the newspaper collection with 35 titles (1981). In the first ten years (i.e. by 1991), a total of 11 titles were dropped while 6 were added leaving it at 30 titles. Of the 35 initial titles, only 12 titles sustained their presence in the Library till year 2000. None of the titles added newly to the subscription list of 1991 are continuing. At the time of this work, the titles being subscribed to by FUTO Library included *Newsweek*, *Business Times*, *The Punch*, and *Daily Times*. Others are: *The Nigerian Statesman*, *NewsWatch*, *Daily Champion*, *National Post* and *This Day*. These present titles are pioneer titles as far as newspaper acquisition in FUTO is concerned except the following: *NewsWatch* acquired



<b>TITLE</b>				
<i>Verso Side</i>				
<i>Title</i>				
<i>Country of Origin:</i>				
<i>Publisher:</i>				
<i>Frequency of Publication:</i>				
<i>Agent:</i>				
<i>Order No:</i>				
<i>Gift/Exchange</i>				
<i>Price:</i>		<i>Year</i>		
<i>Earlier Holdings</i>				
<i>vols.</i>				
<i>Inclusive Year</i>				
<i>Breaks/If any</i>				
<i>Location</i>				

<i>Year</i>	<i>Vol.</i>	<i>Date Sent</i>	<i>Date Returned</i>	<i>Cost</i>

*Notes:* \_\_\_\_\_

Fig. 1: FUTO Newspaper Recording Card

recording. FUTO uses both register and standard format. The register holds daily information consisting date of receipt, title of the paper, issue date and price of such paper. The form is a 20cm by 15cm card with a front and a verso side Fig 1 reveals the content of the newspaper-recording card. The essence of the recording materials is to enable the library management see at a glance the standing of each of the title and be able to take decision.

Newspapers are displayed for use after recording. Some libraries use newspaper rack of different form for display while others use newspaper folder. The arrangement requires that current issues should be on top while earlier issues will be below. The use of folder which is also adopted in FUTO requires that ample space be reserved in the library for the display. The titles are arranged in alphabetical order on display.

## USE OF NEWSPAPERS

The use made of newspapers in the university library is in line with the presentation of Hodge and Ivins (1987) and Johansson (1992). Access to the contents of current newspaper is usually easy due to the limited number and display method. Problem arises when newspapers are tied or sent to the bindery a usual practice in many libraries at the end of a time frame. Unavailability of a published indexed to both local and foreign newspapers have compounded the problem of sourcing information from the back issues. Many university libraries tend to solve such problems through the production of an in-house index to the newspapers in their libraries. In most cases, such indexes are not comprehensive but are helpful. In FUTO Library, articles indexed are of three categories namely: those related to higher education which are denoted (HE); those

related to science, technology and agriculture (STA), and topical issues (TI). In other words not all articles are indexed and any article outside the three groups may not attract the attention of the indexer. The indexes provide access to back issue of newspapers, which are bound and arranged on the shelves using both alphabetic and chronological sequencing.

Statistics of consulted newspapers are

kept daily to enable the library take management decision on title selection, cancellation and binding. It also shows the satisfaction users derive from the contents of the papers. Fig. 2 shows the average annual use of weekly newspaper in the Library. It reveals that library users are very much interested in the contents of *Time Magazine* for the two years observed (2000&2001). The

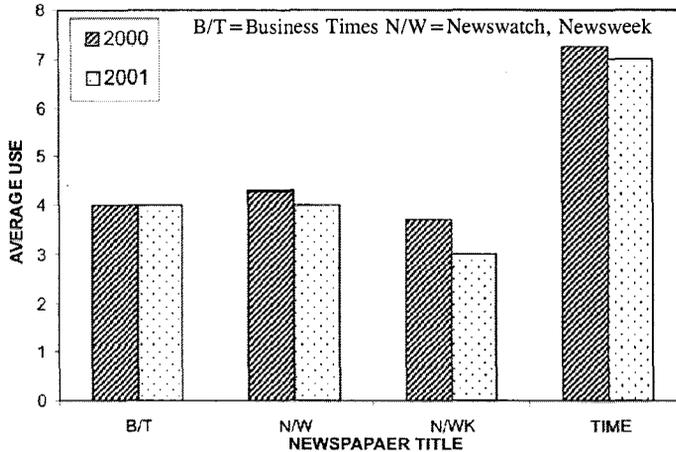


FIG. 2: AVERAGE ANNUAL USE OF WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS IN FUTO LIBRARY

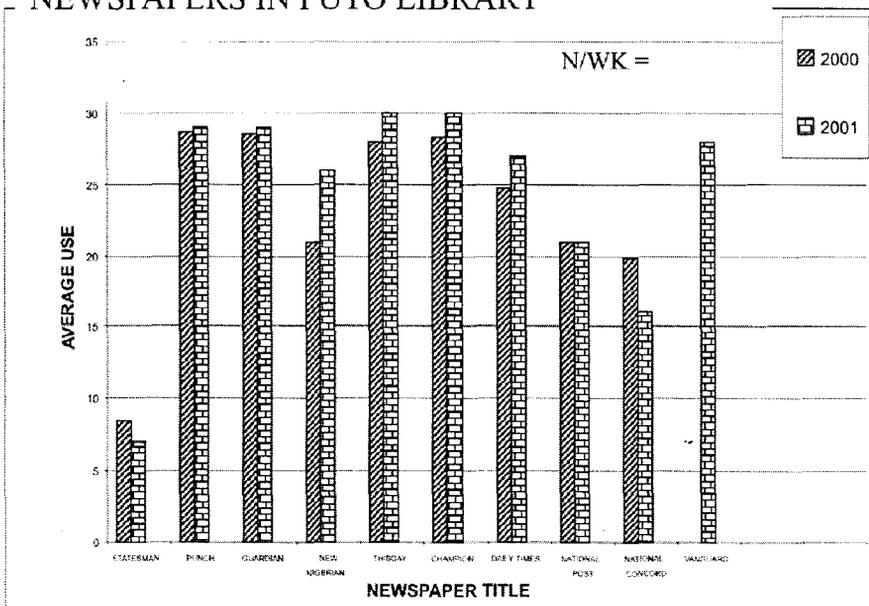


FIG. 3: AVERAGE ANNUAL USE OF DAILY NEWSPAPERS IN FUTO LIBRARY

implication is that library consideration to drop some of the international newspapers will not include *Time Magazine*. *Business Times* and *Newswatch* are both local newspapers with almost of equal interest to the users as *Time*. Decision will be difficult as *Business Times* carries information on business and finance while *Newswatch* present news on topical issues.

Fig 3, which statistics is based on daily newspaper, shows that *Punch*, *Guardian*, *This Day* and *Champion* are leading other papers in their use, having shown an average of 28.0 and above for the two years. *Vanguard* newspaper though no longer being subscribed to received a good measure of use: 28.0 in the year 2001. Users have divided interest in the *Statesman* and *National Concord* hence a move to cancel subscription will consider them first. Furthermore a decision to increase title subscribed will consider the *Vanguard* given the users interest in its contents.

## PRESERVATIONS

The chemical component of the present day newsprint makes it more fragile than the condition observed in the eighteenth century. Consequently they easily turn brown and brittle which make them amenable to easy breakage. Bound issues break away from the sewing thus posing a great challenge to the library. Johansson (1992) noted that the most important factor in the preservation of newspapers is the storage method. He

emphasised that during storage whether in bound or cased form, they should be kept "flat, sealed from air, in a dark store with constant humidity and temperature". Though such standard is found in some "Model University libraries", they are not considered in other Libraries. However many libraries with adequate finance bound or case their back issues, the less privileged libraries tie and store the newspaper. The practice in FUTO library is usually to bind back issues, which are stored vertically on the shelves. The use of microfilm and microfiche to preserve newspapers is not very common in Nigerian university libraries despite the space advantage it offers. The effect of the non-conventional preservation practices in Nigerian university libraries is the continuous deterioration of this important research material in such libraries. Hence a library may be rich in newspaper information collection only to loose it due to chemical and physical deterioration.

## PROSPECTS

As the university Library of tomorrow (at least from the developing world parlance) will be different from that of today such is the newspaper management of tomorrow. The world of information having been reduced to global village has had great impact on the collection, processing and dissemination of information. The CNN, which could only be viewed/ watched over the television is now

S/N	Newspaper Title	Web Address
1.	Daily Champion	htt: www.champion.newspaper.com
2.	Daily Times	http://www.dailytimesof-nigeria.com
3.	Guardian	http://www.ngrguadianneos.com
4.	New Nigeria	www.newnigerian.com
5.	Thisday	www.thisdayonline.com

**Table1: Nigerian National Newspaper and their Web Addresses.**

available on the computers via their web site. In the same way many newspapers publishers have websites through which readers will have access to them. Table 1. shows the web addresses of five national newspapers used in the FUTO library. Further to that, the Virtual Library Project Nigeria with web address [www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com](http://www.nigerianvirtuallibrary.com), has made it possible for anybody anywhere to read Nigerian newspapers on-line. The implication of this development is the future

**The summary of the four groups Analysis of variance (ANOVA) examining the difference in the use of the four newspapers in FUTO Library for the year 2001.**

Source of Variance	Sum of Squares	Degree of Freedom	Mean sum of Squares (Variance)	F
Between Groups (Major)	13.08	3	4.36	
Within Groups (Error)	268.84	44	6.11	0.71
Total	281.92	47		

**Critical F. value at 0.05 significant = 2.7581.**

abandonment of print newspapers for electronic or CD Rom form. Rigours of processing will be eliminated, display and storage spaces will be conserved and the problems experienced with preservation will take another dimension. The mode of newspaper use will change from physical handling to electronic handling. As a prerequisite to enjoying the opportunities provided by this already visible development is the training and re-training of university library staff for effective information handling. The acquisition of the required facilities becomes another step. Many university libraries have taken a transitory step from the traditional newspapers management to the electronic through the use of scanners. University libraries with such facility are not far from the online subscription of tomorrow.

## TESTING OF HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant difference in the use made of the four most used newspapers in FUTO Library in 2001.

The four most used newspapers in FUTO library as shown in fig 4 are *Champion, Thisday, Punch* and the *Guardian*.

Since the F. value obtained by calculation (0.71) is less than the critical F. value, it means that there is no significant difference between the use made of the four newspapers.

The implication of this is that the effect of cancellation of any of those titles will be equal. It also shows that those four titles have equal acceptance to the library users.

## CONCLUSION

The case of newspaper management in the FUTO library has given rise to the

following suppositions:

- a. The acquisition of newspapers in Nigeria university libraries is bedevilled with economic, political, social and intellectual problems resulting to discontinuity in the titles subscribed to;
- b. The processing of such newspaper requires ample space and adequate recording using various tools in order to provide management information when needed;
- c. The users are exposed to difficulties when searching for newspaper information due to unavailability of comprehensive index to newspaper articles. Efforts to alleviate such problem led to the production of in-house newspaper index in various libraries. The *Champion*, *Thisday*, *Punch* and *Guardian* are shown to be the most daily used newspapers in Futo Library while *Time Magazine* (an international Magazine) is the leading weekly newspaper;
- d. Except for the use of binding precaution FUTO library does not adopt the use of microfilm and fiche for the preservation of newspaper.

It is expected that newspaper management of tomorrow in the university libraries will shift from the handling of newsprint to CD-ROM and electronic news. This is made visible with the provision of information from the various news media on the Internet.

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