# INFORMATION TRENDS

Vol. 3 2006 ISSS 01 89-4404

A JOURNAL OF NIGERIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

KADUNA STATE CHAPTER

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**Information Treads is published twice yearly (January and June) by Nigerian Library Association Kaduna State Chapter.**

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***Subscription rates:***

**Nigeria (Individuals N600, Institutions N1,500)**
**Overseas (Individuals $50 Institutions $70)**
**Postage (Nigeria N500, Overseas $20)**

**ISSN 01 89-4404**

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# NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES AS INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR ACADEMICS: **AN** OVERVIEW OF **THEIR** USAGE BY ACADEMICS IN AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The study investigated the use of newspapers/magazines as Information resources for teaching and research purposes by lecturers of Ahmadu Bcllo University, Zaria. Questionnaire was administered to lecturers. Using more than newspaper/magazine titles found in the University library, lecturers were asked various questions aimed at meeting the objectives of the study. The response rate was 122(93.85%). The study found out that majority 56(45.91%) read newspapers/magazines occasionally while 84(67.81%) read more than 3 titles. Equally, majority read for information on general news and subject areas and news items on subject areas very useful for teaching and research. The study concludes that newspapers/magazines are very valuable primary information resources and that libraries should continue their subscriptions to them.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The great changes in (he contents of newspapers/magazines have indeed transformed them into valuable sources of information. Okoli (1999:3) noted that it is important to state here that newspapers/magazines are just ephemeral records. Much of what they report on constitutes the raw materials for further researches. Gone, therefore, are the days when newspapers/magazines were only purveyors of social gossips, commercial news, and opinions of the editors, their friends, parties and financial bankers. Gone also are the days when newspapers and magazines were concerned almost entirely with business and political news; thus appealing largely to the privileged class. It is now a fact as opined by many scholars such as Peterson (1988), Cheyney (1992) and Garret (1993) that modern newspapers/magazines have become omnibus carriers of facts, research break throughs, opinions, ideas, experiences and current information in various subject areas such as medicine and health, banking and finance, etc.

The Industrial Revolution and the expansion of the definition of news to include crime and violence, features and entertainment items by Benjamin Henry Day (2005) has no doubt revolutionized and added value to newspapers*magazines publications. The use of drawings, comic strips and the inclusion of more features for children have made them to appeal more to those who consult them.

The modem newspapers/magazines have not only become omnibus carriers of facts, they have also, in order to cope with the competition of instant news reports on radio and TV. become more analytical as they now provide extensive background information on the news. The inclusion of special features, which may be articles on various subject fields such as Agriculture, Education, Health, Economics as well as Science and Technology, and editorials, has made newspapers/magazines more appealing to academics. Even the comic strips and cartoons that are meant for amusement have become of educational and research values to some scholars. l.adele (1984).

Therefore, the immense potential of newspapers magazines as primary sources of information can be seen in the recognition accorded to them by libraries and librarians. Not only newspapers/magazines are included in the acquisition policy of libraries, by policy also each day articles are clipped from

newspapers/magazines and filed in libraries as background material for future researchers and a number of retrieval devices have been created by librarians in order to help researchers effectively and efficiently retrieve information in media that is published daily, weekly, bi-monthly and monthly.

The growth in the number, size and contents of newspaper/magazine articles have made clipping services offered by libraries very difficult and almost impossible. Therefore, in order to help readers and researchers keep track of newspaper/magazine articles; librarians have adopted indexing and abstracting services of newspapers/magazines. Thus, newspaper/magazine indexing and abstracting services have become essential reference and information services to researchers. Computer technology provided a boost to indexing and abstracting of newspaper/magazine. Many library application software have been designed to perform newspaper/magazine indexing and abstracting. The application software gives the opportunity to create, retrieve and print information from newspaper/magazine in computers and other databases.

The provision of effective access to various information sources is perhaps the most important goal of libraries because information sources are not an end in themselves; they are means to the broader end of helping individuals to attain their goals and to improve their performances. Also, the rising cost of newspaper/magazines and the means of getting to articles in them (indexing and abstracting), and the dwindling budgets of academic libraries call for: first, re-assessing the importance of newspapers/magazines as information resources to academics, so as to justify their retention in the acquisition list; secondly, determining those newspapers/magazines that are most useful to the academics; and thirdly, determining whether the news items reported in newspapers/magazines have any significant bearing to academics' teaching and research.

It is in view of the above that this research work set out to investigate the use of newspapers and magazines as information resources by the Academic Staff of the Ahmadu Bello University Zaria. The significance of this study lies in the fact that over the years, there have been remarkable improvements and innovations in the ways articles are published in newspapers/magazines. Even though such articles are ephemeral in nature, they are adjudged to have high research value. Therefore investigation of this nature will confirm or refute this assertion.

## 1.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To investigate why academics in A.B.U. Zaria read newspapers/magazines
2. To determine the most frequently read newspapers/magazines by academics in A.B.U. Zaria
3. To find out the most frequently read news items reported in newspapers/magazines by Academics in A.B.U. Zaria
4. To investigate whether Academics in A.B.U. Zaria use news items reported in newspapers/magazines for research and teaching purposes
5. To find out how useful news items reported in newspapers/magazines are to academics in A.B.U. Zaria for research and teaching purposes.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY

Survey method of research was employed for this study. Consequently, 130 lecturers teaching in all the departments in the two campuses were surveyed with the aim of collecting data that would help to achieve the objectives of the study. Questionnaire was the main instrument used for the data collection. One hundred and thirty copies of the questionnaire were randomly administered to the academic staff.

## 1.3 FINDINGS

Out of the 130 questionnaires administered, 122 (93.85%) were returned duly completed. The data collected with regards to the background information of the respondents' show a lot of interesting findings. The academics that responded came from ten out of the twelve faculties in the university. Equally important is the fact that the respondents cut across all the ranks; from professors to graduate assistants. However there was more responses from the lecturer II (60 i.e. 49.18%). In terms of

response by gender, like other similar researches such as one by Oyovwevotu (1996:53), this research has also recorded low readership of newspapers/magazines by females. Out of the 122 respondents, 110 (90.16%) were male and only 12 (9.84%) were female.

Other characteristics analysed in this study include how often academics in A.B.U. read newspapers/magazines and where they get the new2spapers/magazines to read? Fifty-six (45.91%) indicated that they read newspapers/magazines occasionally, while substantial number 48(39.34%) read daily. Eighty-four (68.85%) read 3 or more different titles of newspapers/magazines. And 74(60.66%) purchase their copies. Surprisingly, only 30(24.59%) indicated that they read copies from the library. The implication of this finding is that while it is encouraging for individuals to buy their copies of newspapers and magazines, the libraries should do more to attract readers. This is because libraries are known to subscribe to as many titles as possible. For instance, the main library in the Ahmadu Bello University buys not less than twenty titles daily and weekly. Additionally, the libraries provide special information services, such as clippings, indexing and abstract ting services as earlier mentioned using large sums of its annual budget yearly.

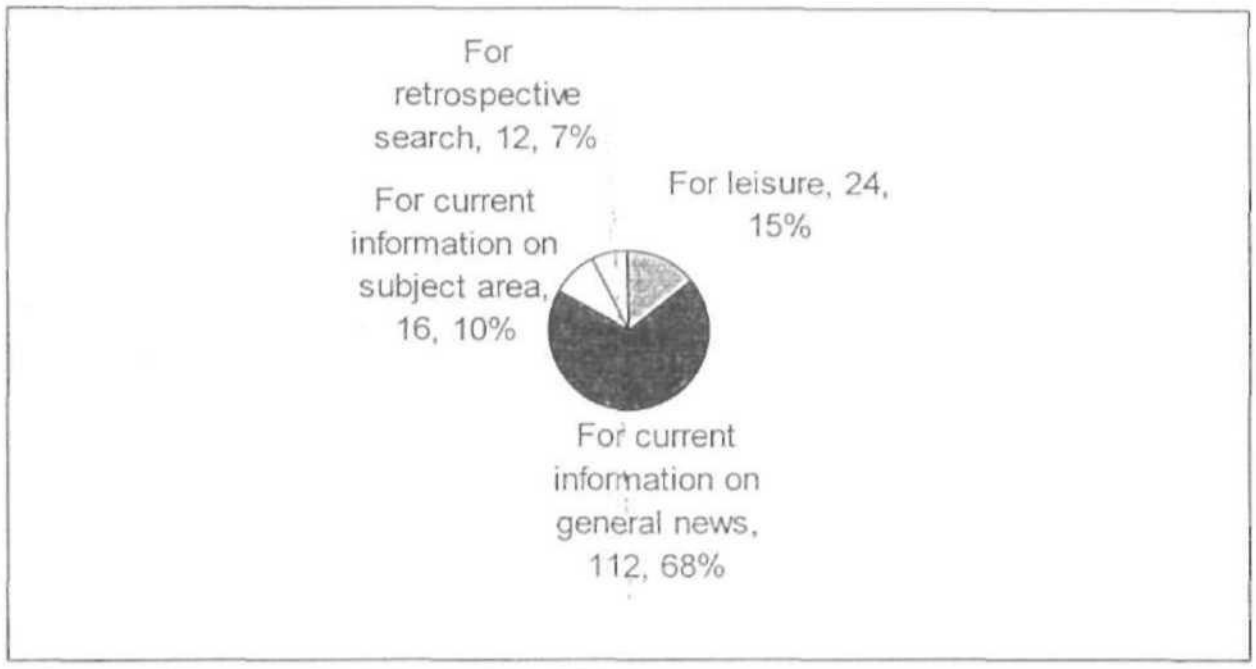
## WHY ACADEMIC STAFF READ NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Table 1 and Figure 1 below show that majority 112(68.29%) of academics in A.B.U. read in order to get current information on general news. Current information on subject areas and related retrospective search are also highly sought for by the academics. As the literatures of librarianship reveal, there are many reasons why users read newspapers and magazines. Generally, these reasons have been categorized as entertainment, educational and informational. The table 1 and figure 1 below demonstrate this.

**TABLE 1: REASONS FOR READING NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES BY ACADEMIC STAFF IN A.B.U.**

| S/N | REASON FOR READING NEWSPAPER/ MAGAZINES | FREQUENCY | PERCENTAGES % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | For leisure | 24 | 14.63 |
| 2 | For current information on general news | 112 | 68.29 |
| 3 | For current information on subject area | 16 | 9.6 |
| 4 | For retrospective search | 12 | 7.32 |
| | TOTAL | 122 | 100 |

Figure 1: REASONS WHY ACADEMIC STAFF IN A.B.U. READ NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES BY




MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWSPAPERS/MAGAZINES

One of the objectives of this study is to find out the most frequently read newspapers and magazines by academics of A.B.U. From the data analyzed as shown in table 2 and figure 2 below, it is clearly seen that New Nigerian is leading with 88(15.68%). It is not surprising that New Nigerian is leading because it one of the oldest papers in the country. This is closely followed by a much relatively new newspaper, the Daily Trust with 84(14.95%). This Day 60(10.68%) and The Guardian 56(9.96%) also fared well; coming 4th and 5th respectively after the weekly published the Weekly Trust with 68(12.10%). The same publisher publishes the Daily Trust and Weekly Trust. Therefore, their preferences no doubt demonstrate their acceptability despite their newness

.

TABLE 2: RANK ORDER OF MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES

| NEWSPAPER | | | | MAGAZINE | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S/N | Name of Newspaper | Frequency | Rank | S/N | Name of Magazine | Frequency | Rank |
| 1 | New Nigeria | 88 | 1 | 1 | Newswatch | 87 | 1 |
| 2 | Daily Trust | 84 | 2 | 2 | Tell | 68 | 2 |
| 3 | Weekly Trust | 68 | 3 | 3 | The News | 54 | 3 |
| 4 | This Day | 60 | 4 | 4 | Newsweek | 51 | 4 |
| 5 | The Guardian | 56 | 5 | 5 | Time | 48 | 5 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | The Sun | 48 | 6 | 6 | This Week | 44 | 6 |
| 7 | Vanguard | 42 | 7 | 7 | Hotline | 42 | 7 |
| 8 | The Punch | 40 | 8 | 8 | Readers' Digest | 40 | 8 |
| 9 | Daily Times | 32 | 9 | 9 | West Africa | 38 | 9 |
| 10 | Tribune | 20 | 10 | 10 | Africa Today | 35 | 10 |
| 11 | Champion | 14 | 11 | 11 | Focus on Africa | 30 | 11 |
| 12 | Others | 10 | 12 | 12 | Others | 25 | 12 |
| | Total | 562 | | | Total | 562 | |

FIGURE 2(a): MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWSPAPERS

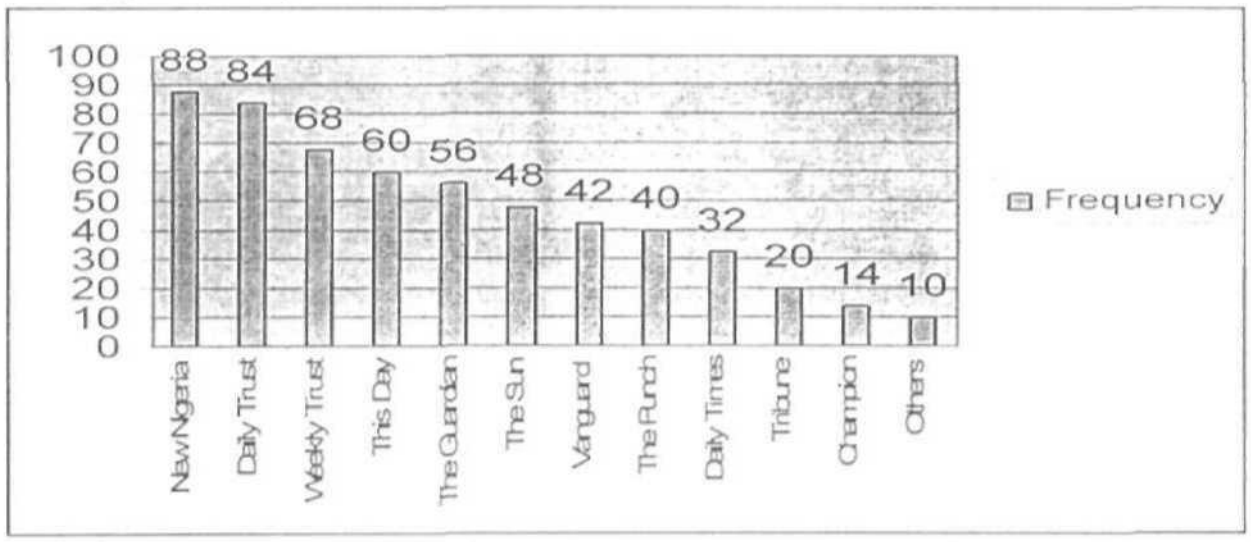
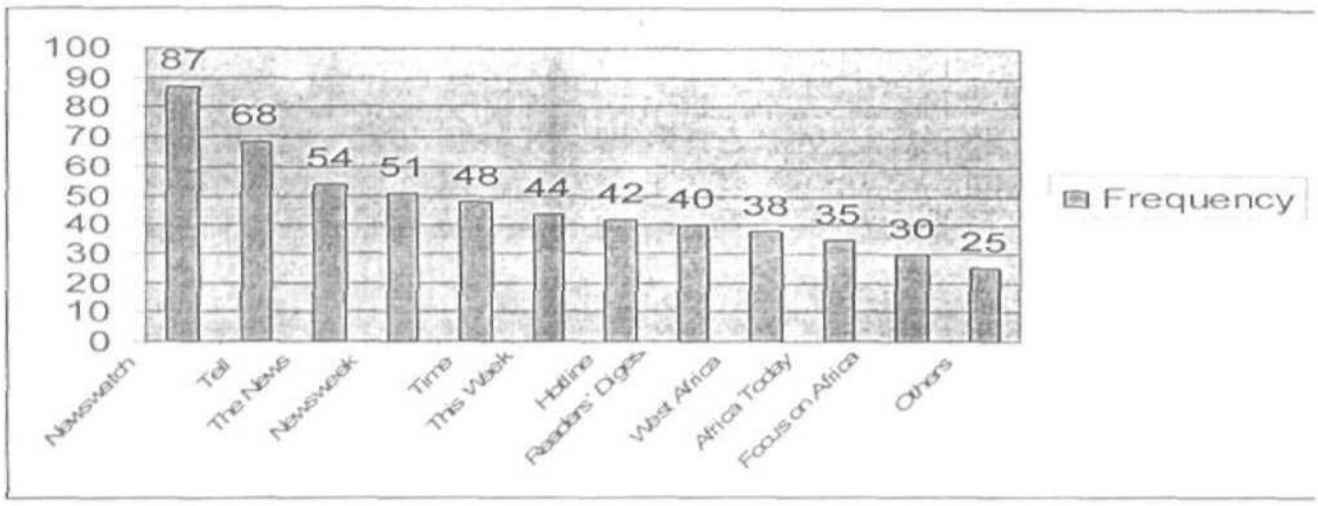


FIGURE 2(B): MOST FREQUENTLY READ MAGAZINES




With regard to magazines, the analysis shows that one of the most popular news magazines, the Newswatch, comes first with 70(12.46%). Closely following are: Tell and The News with 49(8.72% and 48(8.54%) respectively.

Among the foreign published magazines that academics of A.B.U. read, Newsweek International topped the list with 44(7.83%), followed by Time International 41(7.30%) and Readers Digest 40(7.12%) respectively.

MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWS ITEMS IN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Data analysis as presented in Table 3 and Figure 3 below goes to confirm earlier findings that academics of A.B.U. read newspapers and magazines in order to get current information on general news. Consequently, news, i.e. national, regional and world recorded as high as 129(17.43%) altogether.

As earlier found out by Oyovwevotu (1996:53), this research also found that academics of A.B.U. also read newspapers and magazines in order to get current information in the respective subject fields, such as Education 41(5.54%), Politics 38(5.14%), Religion 35(4.73%), and Health and Medicine 31(4.19%), etc. Put together, information on various subject areas accounted for the highest 358(48.89%) response. This finding has clearly indicated that academics in A.B.U. heavily use newspapers and magazines articles as information sources in their subject areas. This also goes further to confirm that modern newspapers/magazines are used for academic purposes in addition to leisure and entertainment.

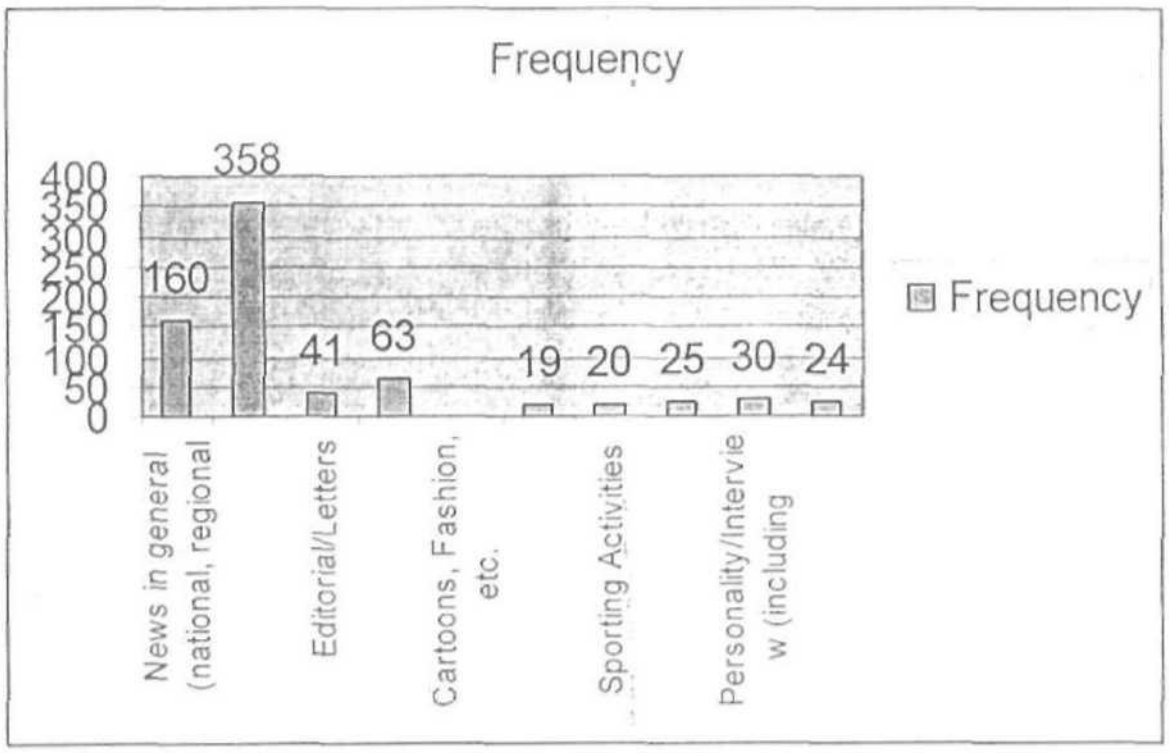
With regards to editorials 33(4.46%) and other features such as cartoons 31(4.19%), personality/interview 20(2.70%), etc. the study also found that they are highly valued by A.B.U. academics.

TABLE 3: NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES' MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWS ITEMS

| S/N | News Items Read | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | News in general (national, regional and world) | 160 | 21.62 |
| 2 | Information on various subjects e.g. Education, Politics, Infotech, Science and Technology, etc. | 358 | 48.38 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | Editorial/Letters | 41 | 5.54 |
| 4 | Entertainment/Leisure, e.g. Travel & Tourism, Cartoons, Fashion, etc. | 63 | 8.52 |
| 5 | Advertisements | 19 | 2.57 |
| 6 | Sporting Activities | 20 | 2.70 |
| 7 | Property and Environment (including Energy) | 25 | 3.38 |
| 8 | Personality/Interview (including Perspective) | 30 | 4.05 |
| 9 | Others (including Photo news, Kitchen/Diet, etc.) | 24 | 3.24 |
| | TOTAL | 740 | 100.00 |

Fig.3 NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINES' MOST FREQUENTLY READ NEWS ITEMS




USEFULNESS OF NEWS ITEMS IN NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING PURPOSES TO ACADEMICS IN A.B.U. ZARIA

As earlier indicated in Table 2 and Fig. 2 that 358(48.38%) of academics read newspapers/magazines to get information in their subject areas, analyzing this finding further, the study reveals that 78(68.93%) and 76(62.30%) of academics in A.B.U. have used newspaper/magazine articles for teaching and research. Of significant importance is the fact that 98(80.33%) and 94(77.05%) have found the articles useful for teaching and research. This therefore means that, as concluded by Oyelude and Oshinaike (2001:51), newspapers/magazines have become extremely valuable as research materials.

## 1.4 CONCLUSION

From the above findings and discussions, it can be concluded that newspapers/magazines have today assumed a very important role as primary information resources. Apart from being informatics and providing general education and entertainment to the general public, their wide subject coverage and in-depth analysis have made them very useful for both teaching and research among

lecturers in Nigerian universities. In view of the findings above, libraries should intensify their efforts in making newspapers/magazines available for the teaching and research needs of academics.

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