

USE OF NEWSPAPERS BY STUDENTS OF EBONYI STATE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, IKWO, EBONYI STATE

By

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Abstract

This paper examined the use of newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education. The study provided background information of the institution and its library under study; The objectives of the study include: to establish the type of newspapers available for use; find out the frequency of use of the newspaper resources in Ebonyi State College of Education Library; ascertain the reasons for their use of newspapers; and examine the challenges students encounter in their use of newspapers and proffer possible solutions. Descriptive survey research design was adopted with questionnaire and checklist as instruments for data collection on a population of 156 registered library users. The researcher used all the population since it is a manageable size. Data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics. The result revealed the newspapers available in Ebonyi State College of Education Library, which include the Guardian, the Punch, the Sun and the Vanguard. The study also revealed that the students use newspapers on daily basis, twice, at free period and occasionally. It also revealed that the students used newspapers for recreation, general information, entertainment, socialization, safety/security, health /fitness/medicine and for scholarship. The study revealed some challenges encountered by students in their use of newspapers with limited copies of the newspapers supplied as the major challenge. The study recommended that Ebonyi State College of Education Library and, indeed, libraries should continue to acquire, organize, and preserve newspapers in print form for effective use by students; and that newspapers continue to be useful source for the academic, recreational, and information needs of students hence publishers should endeavor to publish informative and educative newspapers. Also, that the Library should supply more copies of the newspapers to enable many users to have access to them at any given time.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Use of Newspapers, Students, Ebonyi State College of Education

Introduction

Newspapers have long been regarded as a reliable source of printed news. They provide up-to-date information on topics affecting the local, state, national, and international communities. They are among the most widely read publications, with most individuals of various professions and ages having access to them. Every newspaper reader must locate an article or series of articles that may be of interest to him at the time. Newspapers cover a wide range of topics, including politics, education, law, economics, health, religion, sports, fashion, music, theater, television, the fine arts, and so on. To reaffirm the importance of newspapers, Ola and Ojo (2007) posit that newspapers are crucial because they carry current information and keep the readers informed of events and activities within and outside their immediate environments. They also reiterated that they can be used for learning, pleasure, and relaxation.

Academic libraries according to Akphorhonor (2005) are libraries attached to tertiary institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges. Academic libraries are mainly established to

provide information services to students, lecturers and researchers, to support teaching, learning and research needs. Academic libraries acquire resources in broad terms (books, journals, newspapers, abstracts, audio and video) of quantity and quality in the form of prints and electronics to support the teaching, learning, research and recreational purposes.

With the emergence of information and communication technology, library users make use of library resources that are available online especially newspapers that are published on daily basis for current news and up to date information. Even with development, libraries continue to provide hard copies of newspapers for patrons to utilize as part of the library's broad collection of information to enrich users with current information.

Notwithstanding the availability and provision of the hard copies of these newspapers, it has been observed that the use of these newspapers in Ebonyi State College of Education has recorded low patronage. This may be as a result of some challenges especially with the advent of information and communication technology and the emergence of internet and easy access to online newspapers and the likes. Therefore this study tends to examine the use of newspapers by the students of Ebonyi State College of Education Library.

Brief History of Ebonyi State College of Education

The College was formally established by the Ebonyi State of Nigeria Law No. 3 of 6th March, 2001 as an institution for the training of teachers as well as for research and study on education. Prior to its conversion to a College of Education, it was a College of Agriculture, having its origins in the Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP), which began at Ikwo in 1962 as a Missionary Rural Development Project.

The project, with all its assets was voluntarily handed over to the Anambra State Government of Nigeria in 1980, who subsequently converted it to an Agricultural Training School in 1982. In the 1999/2000 academic year, it evolved into the current Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo. The College has developed in human and infrastructure and has adequate number of academic and non-academic staff aimed at providing the teaching and academic services to the students.

The College has five schools which are; Schools of Arts and Social Sciences, Education, Languages, Sciences, and Vocational Education, twenty one Departments, and over fifty course combinations. In 2003, the College undertook the usual Resource visitation aimed at accessing the resource level of the college, with a view to registering it as a College of Education. The exercise was positive and the College was approved as one of the Colleges of Education in Nigeria in 2004.

About the College Library

The College Library came into existence as soon as the institution transcended from College of Agriculture with its origin in the Norwegian Church Agricultural Project (NORCAP) founded as a Missionary rural development project in Ikwo in 1962. The College of Education was formally established in 2001 and simultaneously, the Library was established to support the teaching, research and learning functions of the institution. Since then, the library has been acquiring both books and non-book materials for the use of the Library users, which include lecturers, students and the College community. The College Library acquires on daily basis some Nigerian newspapers such as the Vanguard, The Punch, The Sun and The Guardian, in addition to over 12,000 book titles of various subjects related to the programmes of the school for the use of

students and staff. The College Library acquires virtually the prominent national newspapers with wide coverage in news and current information.

Statement of the Problem

Since the evolution of the Internet, accessibility to online newspapers has become popular because of the advancement of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Online newspapers accounts have been on the increase as many students and library users seem to have relied on the Internet for newspaper information. Notwithstanding the online use of the newspapers, libraries continue to subscribe to daily hard copies of the newspapers for the use of their patrons who, for some reasons, may not have access to newspapers online. Unfortunately, despite the professional considerations of the Library in making available hard copies of the newspapers, it has been noted that these publications acquired are under-utilized at the College Library. Therefore, this study was set to examine the use of newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the use of newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education, Ikwo in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. establish the types of newspapers available for use at Ebonyi State College of Education Library.
2. find out the frequency of use of the newspapers by students in Ebonyi State College of Education Library.
3. ascertain the reasons for their use of newspapers in Ebonyi State College of Education Library.
4. examine the challenges students encounter in their use of newspapers and proffer possible solutions.

Research Questions

The following four research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are the types of newspapers available for use at Ebonyi State College of Education Library?
2. What is the frequency of use of the newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education Library?
3. What are the reasons for the use of newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education Library?
4. What are the challenges encountered by students in the use of newspapers in Ebonyi State College of Education Library and possible solutions?

Literature Review

According to Cheney (et al) (2006), newspapers are serials that provide up-to-date information on local, state, national, and international affairs, the most up-to-date analysis and criticism on executive and legislative decision-making, the latest in music, theater, television, fine arts, and even columns and comics to make readers laugh. Ugwu (2007) adds that in literate civilizations, newspapers are a vital source of information. The value of newspapers is more appreciated based on the current information they provide. He reiterated that the material in the newspaper informs, educates, and entertains readers. Newspapers, according to Babalola (2002), are the most accessible written texts to the broadest range of people, including young and old, students and laborers, elites and peasants, literates and illiterates. On the contrary, Rubin (1998) argues that,

newspapers are one of the few media that have not seen an increase in usage. Despite their low usage, newspapers have been used as vehicles for literacy empowerment, even as Babalola (2002) adds that newspapers are written to disseminate information to a large audience.

According to Reitz (2004), academic libraries are integral part of a college, university, or other institution of postsecondary education, administered to meet the information and research needs of its students, faculty, and staff. Academic libraries are responsible for providing services that support the parent institution's teaching, research, and learning goals. These are accomplished by utilizing their information resources, such as newspapers and other sources of information. Where the end-users for whom these are intended use them, these services may be of actual value. They can be judged to some extent based on how these services are used.

Utilization of resources is the extent to which the resources and services of the library are used for teaching, learning and research. The philosophy of utilization in librarianship entails that no matter how large and well stocked a library is, if the resources are not accessed and utilized, such library is meaningless. Therefore, it is the utilization of library resources and services that infuses life into library observed, Odu services and Edam-Agbor (2018).

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted with questionnaire and checklist as instruments for data collection. The population of this study consists of 156 registered library users. The researcher used all the population since it is a manageable size. The researcher distributed the questionnaires personally to the library users at Newspaper unit of the College library. This was to ensure maximum return and correctness of the data collected. Data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the types of newspapers available for use at Ebonyi State College of Education Library?

Table 1: Newspapers available for use

Newspapers Available	Available	Not Available
The Guardian Newspapers,	√	
The Punch Newspapers	√	
The Sun Newspapers	√	
The Vanguard Newspapers	√	
Daily Champion Newspapers		√
This Day		√
Daily Times		√
New Nigeria		√

Table1 above revealed the newspapers that are available in Ebonyi State College of Education Library. The table shows that the Library understudy subscribes to the Guardian newspaper, the Punch newspaper, The Sun newspaper and the Vanguard newspaper.

Research Question 2: What is the frequency of use of the newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education Library?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The frequency of use of newspapers by students

S/N	Rate per week	Respondents	Percentage
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1	Daily	18	11.54
2	Once	22	14.10
3	Twice	28	17.95
4	At free periods	26	16.67
5	Occasionally	62	39.74
	Total	156	100

The data in table 2 above reveals the percentage of respondents' responses on the five (5) identified items on the frequency of the use of newspaper in the library. The above findings revealed that the 18 respondents representing 11.54% indicated that they use the newspapers on daily basis, 22 (14.10%) indicated that they use the newspapers once in a week, 28 (17.95%) indicated that they use the newspapers twice in a week, 26 respondents representing (16.67%) use the newspapers at free periods and 62 respondents representing 39.74% use the newspaper occasionally. It was revealed that all the respondents indicated using the newspaper, but a greater percentage uses the newspapers occasionally. This finding corroborates the works of Rubin (1998) who observed that newspapers are one of the few media that has not seen an increase in usage.

Research Question 3: What are the reasons for the use of newspapers by students of Ebonyi State College of Education Library?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Reasons for the use of newspapers

S/N	Reasons	Respondents	Percentage
1	Recreation	22	14.10
2	Writing Assignment	33	21.15
3	General Information	28	17.94
4	Entertainment	21	13.46
5	Socialization	13	8.33
6	Safety/Security	9	5.76
7	Health/Fitness/Medicine	18	11.53
8	Scholarship/Employment	12	7.69
	Total	156	100

The data in table 3 above reveals the percentage of respondents' responses on the eight (8) identified items on the purposes for consulting newspapers in the library. The above findings revealed that the 33 respondents representing 21.15% indicated that they use newspaper to write assignment. Also 22 respondents representing 14.10% of the respondents use newspaper for recreation. They use newspapers to reduce tension especially when the lectures are becoming so tedious, 28 respondents representing 17.94% use newspapers for general information, and 21 respondents representing 13.46% use newspapers for entertainment. While 13 respondents representing 8.33% use newspapers for socialization, 9 respondents representing 5.76% use newspapers for safety and security. Also 18 and 12 respondents representing 11.53% and 7.69%

respectively use newspapers for health/fitness/medicine and scholarship/Employment respectively. It can be deduced from the table that the highest respondent use newspaper for writing assignments. This finding is in agreement with the works of Ugwu (2007) which revealed that newspapers are vital source of information.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges encountered by students in the use of newspapers in Ebonyi State College of Education Library and possible solutions?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in the table below.

Table 4: Challenges encountered by students in the use of newspapers

S/N	Challenges encountered	Responses	Percentage
1	Limited copies of the newspapers supplied	107	68.58
2	Lack of chance for discussion	66	42.30
3	Preference for online access to newspapers	34	21.79
4	Limited space	25	16.02
5	Insufficient lecture free periods	96	61.53
6	Newspapers not available in time	56	35.89

Note: There was no restriction on the options the students may choose from, therefore several answers were allowed.

The respondents were asked to indicate the challenges they encountered in the use of newspapers in Ebonyi State College of Education Library. Top on the list is that the library has limited copies of the newspapers supplied with 107 responses representing (68.58%). This was followed by insufficient lecture free periods with 96 respondents representing (61.53%). Another challenge faced by the students was lack of chance for discussion which has 66 respondents representing a percentage of (42.30%) They are not allowed to discuss in the newspapers room, interact and share information derived from the newspaper the way it was done at the newspaper vendors' stands. 56 respondents representing (35.89%) indicated that newspapers are not available on time. Preference for online access to newspapers and limited space were 34 (21.79%) and 25 (16.02%) respectively.

The respondents were asked to proffer solutions to the challenges in an open ended question. The respondents suggested that the library should supply more copies of the newspapers to enable many users to have access to them at any given time. Also, the library should not be so strike as to observe the library rule of silence to the letter at the newspaper section of the library, this will enable users of the newspaper to interact among themselves and discuss on the news of the day. The library users also requested that the library should make the newspapers available in time so that the library users can lay their hands on them for current news.

Conclusion

This study has shown that newspapers are vital information sources for students. This is observed from the responses to the questionnaires that the students of Ebonyi State College of Education consult newspapers to satisfy their daily information needs. Majority of the students read newspapers for writing assignments. Students often utilize newspapers to relieve tension from classes and to divert their attention away from any vices common among students. Recreation, writing assignments, general information, socialization, safety/security, health/fitness/medicine, and scholarship/employment are among the specific information sought by students from

newspapers. The study also revealed some challenges encountered by students in the use of the newspapers and solutions were proffered to enable effective use of newspapers.

Recommendations

This study made the following recommendations:

1. Ebonyi State College of Education Library, and indeed libraries should continue to acquire, organize, and preserve newspapers in print form for effective use by students despite the fact that they use the newspapers occasionally.
2. Since newspapers serve academic, recreational, and information needs of students, publishers should endeavour to publish informative and educative newspapers.
3. The Library should supply sufficient copies of newspapers to enable more student users to have access to them at any given time.

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