



## ***THE PLACE OF STANDARD LIBRARY IN RUNNING A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY NEWSPAPER ORGANIZATION***

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**Abstract:** The paper seeks to examine the importance of a well organized library system in the operation of a modern day newspaper organization. It dwells on the history of newspaper business in Nigeria, factors critical to running a modern day library and its positive implications in enhancing the journalism profession, contemporary library services and operations that influence quality information management and dissemination, changes and trends in news libraries were also discussed.

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### **1. Introduction**

Information is a critical and unique source of life. Every member of the society needs information for survival. Whether at work, at home, in the market or for other important purposes, one cannot definitely do without information. As individuals, our level of growth and development are hinged on access to useful and veritable information. The dominating countries whom we call the world economic powers today achieved economic and political hegemony because they have inequitable access to information.

The importance of useful information to individuals and society is enormous. Information is not independent of our social practices. It serves as a reliable basis for adequate and successful behavior. Without information, no individual or business can anticipate circumstances. Information feeds anticipation. The more information, the better an individual or business can anticipate, and therefore make an informed decision (Ojedokun,2008). As citizens of a country we need information to be aware of issues and happenings transpiring on a daily basis in our society and beyond, so that we are adequately equipped to better anticipate the consequences of such situations and actions and poised to make informed decisions that benefit us. To satisfy our thirst for information, it is believed that the common medium of information for many individuals is the news media. The news media which comprise of newspapers, television stations, radio stations, online news platforms and websites, blogs, social media etc., have availed people access to information from a commonsense theoretical framework which opines that information should be available to people even when unsolicited. Thus, various news media organizations work effortlessly and professionally to ensure that they bridge the information divide that occurs between the government and the governed.

A newspaper has been defined as a written publication containing news, information and advertising, usually

printed on low-cost paper called newsprint. General-interest newspapers often feature articles on political events, crime, business, arts, entertainment, society and sports. Most traditional papers also feature an editorial page containing columns which express the personal or corporate opinion of the writers or publishers. Supplementary sections may contain advertising, comics, coupons, and other printed media.

According to the New York Department of Taxation and Finance (1979), 'In order to constitute a newspaper, a publication must conform generally to the following requirements: (i) it must be published in printed or written form at stated short intervals usually daily or weekly; (ii) it must not, either singly or, when successive issues are put together, constitute a book; (iii) it must be available for circulation to the public ; (iv) it must contain matters of general interest and reports of current events'. The Department went further to state that 'notwithstanding the fact that a publication may be devoted to primarily to matters of specialized interest, such as legal, mercantile, financial, theatrical, religious, or sporting matters, nevertheless, if in addition to the special interest it serves, the publication contains general news, it is entitled to the classification of a newspaper.

The printed newspaper as it is known today has a history of almost 400 years. During that span of time, over most of the world, the daily events that affect the lives of ordinary people have been written, discussed, photographed, satirized, praised and analyzed. It is a fascinating, first- hand source for not only history, but also fashion and art, commerce and values, culture, politics and thousand seemingly trivial things that people want to know about. In every language, the newspaper is an irreplaceable primary source not only for today's information needs, but especially for historians of every discipline (Ronan, 2005)

Newspapers are still the most iconic outlet for news and other types of written communication. Newspapers record, print and publish stories of events that are of importance to the society at any given time. They are authoritative and credible records of the significant issues and events as and when they occurred. They provide excellent memories of a country's historical events and landmarks. They are sources of textual evidence useful to students, researchers, journalists, administrators, lawyers. Politicians, and the larger society (Nakiganda, 2007)

Newspapers according to Onwubiko (2005) have been accorded a great deal of importance in the transmission of government policy, priority changes and even interest changes. Newspapers are noted as regular sources of primary and up-to-date information. Student, scholars, administrators, the barely literate, and so on, have high demand for newspapers through self-acquisition, exchange, and borrowing from friends, relatives and from libraries. According to Smith (1979;2001) 'newspapers have become an integral part of today's information sources so much that students and scholars who want to be afloat in their social and academic interaction always look for and make use of them'. Howell (1996) describe them as 'irreplaceable documents which provide vivid account of local places, events and people'. West (1983) maintains that 'there is no resource of local history as evocative of the atmosphere of any 19<sup>th</sup> century town as its local newspaper'. Hence they are regarded as the memory of the society. In that they capture and retain significant occurrences that are of historical importance.

The major thrust of newspaper information of today has been in the areas of 'investigative, educational, occupational, social and business information' that explains why Curras (1997) holds that the newspapers have an intrinsic element in wagging social revolution or campaigning for change and academic excellence in the social structures. He pointed out that newspaper readership has been on the increase following an upsurge in the literary level and reintroduction of printing in local languages. Above all, newspaper houses have themselves employed various marketing strategies as means of attracting and sustaining the interest of their readers, often with eye-catching cover titles, adequately researched academic articles etc. Increasingly, researchers, professional, and academicians are finding a treasure trove in newspapers. (Onwubiko, 2005 and Onu, 2005)

Newspapers form the chief instrument of communication through which people debate their problems and speak their minds on public issues. Okorafor has outlined their importance to various sectors of society. He states, 'newspapers are useful in teaching reading skills to students and to help them learn to distinguish between fact, opinions and propaganda. Newspaper reading is an important means of maintaining literacy, particularly among young people who leave school early (Okorafor,1990). Adeyemi (1987) stresses the importance of newspapers with particular reference to the developing countries where newspapers publish analysis of current trends in politics, government, arts and sciences; a role played in the developed countries by primary journals. He says that information in newspapers is of value and benefit

to industry, government, publishers, the media, banks, labour unions, political organizations, legislators, insurance companies, legal practitioners, researchers and the general citizenry. This implies that the newspaper is a major information source to the citizenry.

Newspapers provide up -to -date information on local, state/provincial, national, and world issues. They are among the most widely-read periodicals that are available and accessible to the vast majority of people of all ages and walks of life in any community. Every category of reader can find some important, current, interesting information in newspapers. Today's newspapers use design elements that make information easily accessible to the reader. For example , important stories have large bold headlines, while graphics appear next to related stories (Ola and Ugbeka,2010).

### **The Brief history of newspaper in Nigeria**

The history of the Nigerian press dates back to 1859, when Rev. Henry Tennsend released *Iwe Iroyin fun Awon Ara Egba ati Yoruba* (The Newspaper for the Egbas and Yorubas ) in Abeokuta. It was bilingual (published in both English and Yoruba). This was followed in 1863 by *The Anglo African*, edited by Robert Campbell. It carried both local and international news. With the increase in political and social activities in Nigeria, came a bimonthly newspaper used to aggregate public opinion on topical issues, the *Lagos Times*, which emerged on November 10, 1880. The *Lagos Observer* hit the newsstands fifteen months later, followed by *The Eagle* on March 31, 1887. Adolphus March started *The Mirror* at this time. Other newspapers began to emerge afterwards: *The Nigerian Chronicle* in 1908, and *The Nigerian Pioneer*, founded by Kukoyi Ajasa.

In 1926, the Nigerian Printing and Publishing Company started the *Nigerian Daily Times*. The *West African Pilot* of Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe was established in 1936. This brought an increase in national consciousness. Chief Obafemi Awolowo started the *Nigerian Tribune* in 1946 (Ola and Igbeka, 2010).

Most recently, the newspapers in circulation include: *The Vanguard Newspaper*, *The National Concord*, *The Punch*, *The Nation*, *The Guardian*, *This Day*, *Comet Newspaper*, *Daily Sketch*, *Monitor*, *Alaroye*, *The Post Express*, *The Nigerian Herald*, *The National Compass*, *The National Mirror*, *Leadership*, *Daily Independent*, *Daily Trust*, *Business Day*, *Premium Times*, *The New Telegraph*, *PM News*, *The Sun*, *This Day*, *Leadership*.etc. It is to be noted however that there are other newspapers that are regional based, some restricted in circulation to their areas of publication.

Libraries stand as vital sources of information and as invaluable adjunct to the print media, i.e. Press. The effectiveness of the press largely depends upon the efficient and well organized library services. Just as, the effectiveness of a corporate body's business mostly depends upon the right information at a right point of time from a system for its decision making; similarly, the successful functioning of the press largely relies upon information and how well it is organized and efficiently disseminated in its library. Deficiency in right information to the right media person at the right time may, therefore,

lead to severe loss to the quality of news generation (Mahapatra, 2007).

Library is considered as the memory of the newspaper and consequently, the memory of the community it serves. The services it provides to the journalists directly is the services it renders the whole newspaper user community. From this, the magnitude of the library's place in the press can be easily presumed. The well organized news library of a daily newspaper undoubtedly plays a crucial role in the production of news. Ward, Hansen and Mclead (1988, p.146), therefore, the library is the path that reporters and editors routinely take as they conceptualize, develop, write, and edit the day's news. It is thus an acknowledged fact that good library is the source of a good newspaper, and the journalists keenly using the library can enrich themselves and can effectively serve the media for a better society. Hence, the roles of libraries in newspaper organizations cannot be overemphasized. Thus, the study examines the place of libraries in Newspaper organizations.

### **Need for Libraries in Newspaper Organizations**

With the rapid growth of newspaper industry in Nigeria, the information requirements of the journalists as well as the concerned newspaper organizations have witnessed a dramatic change. In that the production of news primarily depends upon firsthand events molded by circumstantial information.

A news item is made more colorful and relevant with the background information provided by libraries. three vital advantages of establishing libraries within the newspaper organizations: (1) centralization of resources; (2) access to both traditional and the new information skills of libraries and (3) provision of background information for news stories, accuracy in reporting and editing, saving time for reporters and editors, and recycling of information the newspaper has paid to acquire (ibid).

Hence, it is believed that the news library attached to the newspaper is increasingly significant not only in the production of news but also building appropriate information infrastructure for the journalism profession.

The establishment of libraries within the newspaper establishments can be attributed to the following factors:

- Every newspaper organization requires access to real-time information that aids in effective journalistic endeavours. Hence the need for proper archival and organization of stored knowledge becomes critical;
- Easy and quick retrieval of grey literature and other special materials that are rare to come by
- Libraries as necessary ingredients rather than a mere formality.

According to Mahapatra, (2007) when a publisher decides to set up a newspaper organization, he initially projects the existence of a library. Although, a library does not immediately grow with the purchase of machinery or

printing of newspapers within the organization, its necessity came as spontaneous one when the quality and contents of news are required. The owner as well as editor of the newspaper usually decides to start a library. After the smooth start of the newspaper, the information requirement of the newspaper began to grow and arrangement

for a library is activated. However, the place of the library in all newspaper organizations is increasingly felt and the necessity is turned into a reality that ultimately leads to the emergence of a library, be it small or large.

Libraries attached to newspaper organizations in Nigeria range from small to mediocre in respect to their sizes, staff and services. Most of the newspapers are small whose circulation does not exceed more than one lakh (except four newspapers). The smallness size of the newspaper and the proprietorship being privately managed, there is a tendency not to build a large library. Even if, there are news paper establishments who do not have library of their own, libraries are managed by single person in whom most of the librarians are not professionals.

In certain cases, journalists themselves manage the library within a small compact room. However, the availability of library and its services help the journalists to use the information they need. And this simplifies easy access to valuable information that will aid in the production of a rich content for the reading public.

### **Collection Development**

News libraries perform their roles more effectively as a reference library than the designated reference libraries held in institutions and government establishments. The collections of those libraries are mostly confined to reference sources that primarily serve and suffice the information needs of the journalists. However, a good collection of reference materials in journalism and mass communication begins with a foundation based on the acquisition of the standard reference sources usually found in any good general reference section in an undergraduate or graduate library. Only those specialized reference sources that are available are added to the collection. (Block;1984; p.53). These may include directories, bibliographies, directories, encyclopedias, guide literature etc.

Another vital factor that contributes to a good collection development is journalists' aptitude towards wider area of knowledge for which information concerning to these subject areas are collected. To develop an understanding and appreciation of other traditional subjects as well as some new emerging subjects, the libraries used to acquire information sources in economics, history, politics, anthropology, sociology, forestry, environmental science, computer, etc.

Although secondary documents appear to be of paramount importance to journalists to keep abreast with the latest development in their respective subject interest, these do not have their places in the news libraries in Nigeria. Indexes, abstracts, and databases are not normally found in these libraries. Even the basic and useful professional

journals in journalism and mass communication are not subscribed in these libraries except few popular magazines which are subscribed to make them aware of the current events. The largest collection of the news libraries is the newspapers of all kinds which are essential to the journalists as well as the organization. However, some text books on communication, journalism, mass media, advertisement, publication, radio and the television broadcasting, photography and the photo journalism and information science are found in these libraries for the reference of journalists. Most recently, news libraries have also grown to encompass electronic databases, computer files, multimedia resources, footings, online articles, blog posts etc.

## **Users**

Users from news libraries range from the chief editor to the rural correspondents. Editorial staff used to consult the information sources to check the facts, refer press clippings of particular events or issues and verify the essential documents to ensure the correctness of the editorial comment. The middle level journalists use most of the library resources. A lion share of information sources are actually being handled and exploited by them. One of the vital factors which has impressed us enormously is the dexterity with which the editors and journalists sort through the incoming materials, swiftly disseminating between the disposable and the worthwhile (Harris, Nicholas, Erbach; 1987, p.77). the above is true of the users of Nigeian News libraries. Users are mainly individuals evolving within the confines of News organizations, Journalism and Mass Communication profession.

Newspapers are generally considered as authoritative sources and any wrong or unchecked fact (s) or misleading information reflected on the newspaper may damage the reputation of the concerned newspaper organization. To cope up with the task of citing correct and the latest information, it is the duty of the editorial staff to quickly verify the entire facts for complete and accurate news item or an article. Here, the library plays a critical role.

## **Library Services**

Libraries belonging to the newspaper organization serve a limited clientele and are usually confined to the in-house editorial staff. The services to which newspaper libraries provide are primarily confined to reference or referral. From organization point of view, data processing is done manually. The application of information technology is yet to spread its influence much on these libraries. Normally, processing of library collection remains confined within the framework of classification and cataloguing only. Even in most of the libraries, these processing works have not been done.

These libraries generally provide information more on 'fact checking' type of information spelling, dates,

bibliographical information and background information as a part of their reference services. However, the news librarians used to provide potential information sources, identifying information from other source libraries in the locality. Journalists frequently visit other libraries near vicinity to refer various newspapers subscribed by them so as to keep themselves abreast of the day-to-day events (Mahapatra, 2007).

A 21<sup>st</sup> century newspaper library is such that should exist to serve the urgent and dynamic needs of its users with variety of information resources which should includes prints and non prints, digitized materials , online catalogues, online databases and special materials which are very rare to come by. Hence, newspaper libraries of today should live up to expectation.

The basic consideration for a standard library in any organization is enhanced by the following assumptions:

(i) Its subject, scope and retrieval facilities can effectively be tuned to the specific needs of users;

(ii) It offers very direct and usually speedy access to the document replica and special materials of great value;

(iii) Librarians of newspaper libraries maintain individual cutting files on subjects of interest which are frequently used by the journalists. But oday, this is gradually phasing out. With the availability of digital technologies like computers, Scanners, it is very easy for such clippings to be either programmed as a webpage on the library website or a collection of scanned documents saved and organized on a computer or backed up on a cloud facility like , Google Drive, Drop Box etc. for easy access at the time of reference.

## **Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)**

It is also noteworthy that, news library services also include selective dissemination of information (SDI), which involves customizing information services for selected group of users. Through this, journalists will be provided adequate information on their specific need areas. This will help the library to maintain a complete database of services designed to suit the specific needs of a group of people.

## **Indexing and Abstracting**

These are yet another essential service of the newspaper libraries. They must ensure that specific important facts and information are properly abstracted and indexed for organizational use. These constitute the core of the library's services. When newspapers are indexed and abstracted, it make for ease of access of useful information within the quickest time possible.

Newspaper libraries in Nigeria have their services limited to the basic few listed above. But it is to be noted that, the newspaper libraries should perform all the core services of any standard library so far they aid effective and efficient delivery of useful information that enhance the services of their parent institutions.

## Conservation and Preservation

This is one of such services key to the sustenance of a balanced newspaper library collection. This is key, in that many newspapers are made of paper and are susceptible to deterioration. Paper deteriorates with time, newspapers are published indefinitely and as such they carry relevant information in them. Hence, conservation and preservation measures are to be applied by library professionals to ensure that these materials are fit for use for a longer time.

Pictures, video clips and grey literature of great value to the library could be digitized to create duplicate copies for ease of reference and use as and when due. This is of utmost necessity because many of these special materials are susceptible to damage and quick deterioration.

## Digital Library services

*"Carl Sagan, the late astronomer, raconteur and television personality, once wondered aloud how many books an individual could read in a normal lifetime. "From here, to here", was his estimate, as he walked the length of a single, not very long, shelf of books in a US library. Sagan's point was that our capacity to read was nothing compared with the vast volume of editions contained in a normal library."*

Today, with the Internet, the librarian's job of sorting and providing access has become even greater. Not that paper-based information has been replaced; in fact, there is more printed paper produced today than 20 years ago. But the real changes have been brought about by the so-called digital revolution.

Fortunately for librarians, the new developments in information technology that have led to such explosive growth in information have also come to their rescue by revolutionizing the way information is stored and accessed. The creation of bibliographic databases, and digital catalogues to complement the trusty Kardex, and the use of barcodes to store books, are just a few valuable innovations. The new challenge is how to manage and alleviate the already existing problem for researchers of "information overload".

The Internet and search engines like Google or Yahoo may have brought sorting and retrieval of front-line information into the living room, but deeper searches demand patience. Given the plethora of information available, the Internet has heightened the need for more and better librarians to filter the wheat from the chaff.

In addition to the more traditional information portals like library catalogues, librarians now use resources like RSS (Really Simple Syndication), which uses XML tagging to stream current news stories or information directly to the client's desktop, mobile phone or handheld computer.

With the current trends in Information management, news libraries are expected to effectively and efficiently harness the potential of the ICT to improve service delivery.

The organization of electronic resources such as; online databases, eyewitness reports, images, videos, recordings have all taken newer dimension. Today we have podcasts, this could be used to organize audio files like interviews on a radio programme, and this can effectively help in the process of transcribing interviews, news reports and live broadcasts. News librarian are expected to take proactive steps in striking a balance between ICT and the specialized needs of users

More importantly, the news library in the current digital age must take up newer challenges resulting from information explosion. Hence, users of these libraries tend to have problems filtering the pool of information sources available. This however, necessitates a much comprehensive user education on information search and retrieval, online literature search etc.

In this regard, a newspaper library of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should effectively integrate relevant digital initiatives into its core housekeeping operations.

## The Role of the News Librarian

The role of the newspaper librarian is not only amazingly important, but also much crucial for the concerned newspaper organization. But it is surprising to note that newspaper librarianship in Nigeria is yet to gain proper recognition. The existing newspaper library scenario in Nigeria is in a state of melancholy. In most of the libraries, either one journalist is asked to look after the library or a non professional is entrusted the job of the library.

In this critical situation, the library and its services are ignored considerably.

A librarian usually acts as an intermediary between the journalists and the formal sources of information. Because, a newspaper is often considered as an information system. Out of the vast information generated in the newspaper, it is the librarian who goes through the different news items, scrutinize them, classify them, and prioritize the process of the specific items for retrieval. The newspaper librarian, therefore, gets involved not only in the mere dissemination of the information but also in providing a logical explanation and the contents of information retrieved. Stimulating search to answer the various information privations of the working journalists is probably carries out to a far greater degree than is generally recognized by librarians who tend to formalize requests and expect inquiries to be refined to a manageable level of specificity.

The onus lies with the proprietor and the editor of the concerned newspaper to realize the importance of the library and essence of recruiting a professional librarian in a newspaper organization. Unless and otherwise a good library is developed, the information flow to the journalists cannot be properly achieved and the quality of the news items will remain disinteresting (Maharapatra, 2007).

## Conclusion

Libraries are essentially good inputs for news generation. While preparing a news item the journalists need background information to make their news interesting and readable. It is only the libraries attached to those newspaper organizations that can provide the much needed reliable and veritable information for the clientele. Besides, newspaper libraries render a lot of information support to make the news production qualitative. Users group of newspaper libraries range from the Editor to the rural reporter who can make proper use of the library in process of their news preparation. Collection development of those libraries should be mainly in reference in nature so that it helps to build the good collection for reference purposes.

The newspaper library being a specialized library ,the foremost service is the newspaper clipping service. All other library services are to be practiced by the professional librarian. The role of the professional librarian is significant since one is to organize a good library and provide appropriate information services with the best facilities , be it manual or digital needed by the working journalists.

More so, newspaper libraries in Nigeria are encouraged to keep abreast of the changes in news dissemination caused by the influence of Information and Communication and Technologies (IC T). Thus, library collection must cut across a wide variety of information resources in different formats to meet the changing needs and preferences of the users. The digitization of old editions of newspapers should be implemented by libraries, so that easy reference could be made to such newspapers even when their physical copies were deteriorated. This simply emphasized the preservation and conservation role of the Newspaper library.

Newspaper libraries are sine-qua -non to qualitative and veritable news production. Hence efforts should be made to ensure that adequate resources are invested and qualified personnel enlisted to ensure that the best interest of the organization is premiumly served.

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