

Access and Use of Newspapers at Makerere University Library

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Abstract: The study examined access and use of newspapers at Makerere University Library (Maklib) as well as justifying the need for and against print newspaper subscriptions in light of the available online versions. The objectives were to: establish the most consulted newspapers, identify the type of information sought by newspaper users, determine users' preferences for print or online newspapers, and to identify challenges encountered by newspaper users. The study adopted a mixed methods research design. Data was collected using documentary review, questionnaires and interview methods. Convenient and purposive samplings were used to collect data from newspaper users who were assumed to be well versed with the topic under study. The study established that participants had different reasons for their preference of certain newspapers and versions. Reasons ranged from the quality of information provided to the language of the newspaper, the ease of access of a given newspaper and the infrastructure at Maklib. The study recognised the general IT infrastructure improvements at Maklib in recent years, such as the Learning Commons and the extended Local Area Network that has greatly increased online access, although the number of students tends to overwhelm the existing facilities. The study recommended that Maklib should reconsider its expenditure on print newspapers vis a vis subscription to online versions. A Return on Investment study on print newspapers at Makerere University was recommended as an area to consider for future research.

Keywords: *Makerere Library, Print Newspapers, Online Newspapers, Access, Use, Academic Libraries*

1. Introduction

Newspapers record and publish stories of events that are of importance to the society at any given time, provide excellent memories of a country's historical events and landmarks, as well as being sources of textual evidence useful to the academia, journalists and the larger society (Nakiganda, 2008). They are therefore integral information collections in the university library because they hold a special place among the most important and accessible sources of information about the present and the past for researchers (Oyewumi,

Alegbeleye & Onifade, 2015). Academic libraries collect a wide range of information including newspapers both in print and electronic to meet all user needs. The invention of digital technology has however revolutionized not only the way information is packaged, processed, stored, and disseminated, but also how users seek and access it. The shift in collection development in university libraries from print materials to e-resources has also indicated the importance of e-resources in information retrieval and instructional delivery which support teaching and research activities acknowledged worldwide (Egberongbe, 2011). This revolution has led to popular demand and use of newspapers in academic libraries (Onwubiko, 2005; Onu, 2005).

In view of the above, academic libraries no longer restrict themselves to print services, but have extended their efforts to interdisciplinary concepts and digital technology. Furthermore, newspaper publishers have also been able to transform production processes with an output in Portable Document Format (PDF). However, due to the limited budgets in academic libraries (Lugya, 2011, p.1), librarians are constantly faced with challenges of deciding formats of newspapers to acquire in order to satisfy the needs of their users and remain relevant in the digital age. The continued expenditure on print newspapers at Makerere University therefore needs to be justified

1.1. Back ground

Makerere University is the oldest university in East Africa founded in 1922 as a technical School and later established as a University College of London in 1949. At the heart of the university is the Main Library founded in 1949 that serves the entire university community to ensure that it meets its mission; “To meet the study, teaching, research and outreach information needs for sustainable development”. In addition to its primary role as an academic library, it also serves as a legal deposit centre enacted by Uganda’s Legislature in 1958, and was made a National Reference Library in 1972 by the 3rd year of the five year development plan of Uganda (Musoke, 2012)

Makerere University Library (Maklib) comprises of the Main Library, eight specialized College libraries and one School Library that extend the services nearer to the users with computers and internet services at each library. On-campus libraries include: the College of Business and Management Studies (CoBAMS), College of Education and External Studies (CEES), College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT); College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHUSS); College of Natural Sciences CoNAS); College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-Security (COVAB) and Makerere University Law School. Libraries located off campus are: The College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES) at Kabanyolo and Albert Cook Medical Library at Mulago under College of Health Sciences (CHS).

The Main Library has however undergone numerous renovations and extensions since 1959. The most recent being the opening and commissioning of the new

Library extension in 2012 during the celebrations of Makerere@ninety and Uganda@fifty (Musoke, 2012). To date, Information Technology (IT) facilities and services have gradually improved in quality and quantity at Makerere and most Ugandan Institutions (Musoke, Semtamu and Mwesigwa, 2014). In addition to the already existed IT, facilities at Maklib, funded by Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Uganda Telcom and Makerere University, following the Carnegie Corporation IT grant, Maklib was able to procure 323 computers (PCs) that facilitated in setting up of the Research Commons (100 PCs) for postgraduate students and researchers, Learning Commons (150 PCs) for undergraduate students, a multi-purpose training laboratory (32 PCs), Multi Media unit (10 PCs), OPAC terminals (20), Computer laboratory (lab) for users with disabilities (08 PCs and 03 laptops) (Musoke, Semtamu and Mwesigwa, 2014). Such facilities have greatly improved online services at Maklib.

Additionally, the various sections at Maklib have specialised collections. Newspapers are part of the information materials collected within Africana and Periodicals sections of the Makerere University Library.

1.2. Africana and Special Collections Section

The section contains materials related to East Africa, general texts and books on Africa and documents published in Uganda as legal deposit copies. These include; newspapers, reports and publications from individuals, private and official organizations dating from the 19th century to date. Examples include copies of the first newspapers in Uganda, church files, UN publications and diaries and journal entries from explorers, travellers, missionaries, military and political figures.

1.3. Periodicals Section

The section houses materials published periodically, these include: Journals, magazines, newsletters, newspapers e.t.c, and is also in charge of the management of the library electronic resources. The electronic resources are accessible online where there is Internet (e.g. from the computer labs, wireless network spaces and mobile devices) through the Maklib website; <http://mulib.mak.ac.ug> and internet search tools. However, print newspapers are accessed manually at the service window by use of Identify Cards (IDs) and users' registers.

2. Specific Objectives

The study looked at the students, researchers and Maklib staff working in the Newspaper Section with the objectives to:

- i. Establish the most consulted newspaper by the users of Maklib.
- ii. Identify the type of information sought by newspaper users.
- iii. Determine users' preferences for print or online newspapers.

- iv. Identify any challenges encountered by newspaper users while consulting print or online newspapers and develop strategies to address them.

3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

Newspapers are major channels of communication and main sources of information on current topics on all aspects of a country's social environment, agricultural growth, business and industrial sectors, political and cultural life (Oyewumi, et al. , 2015). The news medium is not of much importance (Leckner, 2012, p. 163) but the content, design and interface that support readability like simple and consistent layout cues to provide orientation and structure (Lemken, 1999) to the content. News are thus new events that are timely and relevant to inform, educate, guide and entertain the reader (Turpeinen & Akatemia, 2000, p.22) including news sites and the various forms of written news publications considered as newspapers.

3.2. Newspapers in Africa

The first African owned newspapers were published way back in the 1880s largely in English until the 1940s and 1950s (Newell, 2013). Different reporters poised it to the arrival of missionaries nearly a century and a half ago who embarked on teaching new converts how to read and write. It is believed that the initial press publications carried religious materials and to date the church is still engaged in newspaper publishing (Ikoja-Odong, n.d), for example, The Voice published by the Uganda Catholic Church. It is further claimed that African nationalists adapted the press very much for their struggles. In that regard, the West African Press was more popular in Nationalism, whereas the East African Nationalist Newspapers were less popular and largely published in vernacular languages, commonly Swahili, Kikuyu or Luganda (Sommerlad, 1968; Scotton, 1973, p. 211). To date, newspapers are still published in several languages to cater for those who cannot communicate in English, and have wider coverage in the areas of political, educational, occupational, social, business information as well as leisure and entertainment.

In Uganda, Newspaper publishing is traced to 1897 (Isoba, 1980), although information on the name of the first newspaper is not readily available thereby making Mengo Notes which was first published in 1900 as the first Uganda newspaper and later followed by the Uganda Herald that appeared in 1912 (Ikoja-Odong, n.d).

3.3. Newspaper types in Uganda

The Uganda newspaper market largely comprises of the compact (blacktops) and tabloids (redtops). The 'compact' format is fit for the high-quality journalism standard but use a smaller format similar to the tabloid, for example The Observer, Daily Monitor, The New Vision and The East African. The tabloids are often perceived to have poor journalism and regarded as

sensationalist in contrast to broadsheets, and compact newspapers, for example the Red pepper, Kamunye, Onion etc. These newspapers usually feature gossip and crime stories, with a much heavier emphasis on gossip and sexual stories (Wasserman, 2010, p.43).

3.4. Relevance of Newspapers in Academic Libraries

Ugah (2009) and Onu (2005) observed that academic libraries endeavour to keep their place as one of the major source of inquiry on current information and awareness. Students at university must prove their academic levels to society not only by emulating the knowledge they acquire at university but should also be very informed of the political activities, policies e.t.c of the country in order to intrigue their desire for further research. Critical thinking skills are emphasized in higher education in order for students to coordinate complex and competing activities as well as solving problems. Thus, newspapers give intuitive knowledge to the student community to brush up their IQ and social awareness, and provide current information to the students who are preparing for competitive exams and interviews (Aggarwal & Akhter, 2015, p. 371). Consequently, newspapers play key functions of informing, educating and entertaining the public and supporting students' academic work. It is however important to note that some newspapers may contain articles that are not reliable and therefore not good or useful for the academia as they may lack authenticity for example, the tabloids.

3.5 Print Vs Online Newspapers

Isaacson (2009) observed that online newspapers have more readers than ever in terms of content especially among the youth of today. They are convenient and easily accessible for those who spend most of their time on their computers in offices, cheap for those with free Internet access and also allow simultaneous access to similar news-sites to find out the view point of different newspapers on the same issue (Vyas, Singh & Bhabhra, 2007). To Martin and Copeland (2003), the fate of print newspapers had long been predicted, although they continue to survive globally despite competition from other news media. However, print newspapers, like network television, hold a major advantage over internet sites because they still reach a large audience as compared to the Internet that is fragmented (Veronis, 2006). At the same time some users would prefer to touch and read or even move with their print copies in their cars or bags unlike the online where the user is limited to internet access, especially in developing countries like Uganda. Skogerbø and Winsvold, (2011) study in Scandinavia commended that the printed newspaper was more popular than its online counterpart, for instance, 82 percent of the population read the print edition; whereas 12 percent read the online newspaper daily (another 48 percent read it weekly or less often). Few readers substituted the online for the printed newspaper thereby confirming the dominance of the print version in Scandinavian countries.

On the contrary, (Ani & Ahiauzu, 2008; Sharma, 2009) asserted that print news medium was increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials. Although Skogerbø and Winsvold (2011) opined that both the general and the elite audiences expressed that the online newspaper was a valuable add-on when it came to rapid updating and search for news and historical information.

Therefore, the relevance of print newspapers in academic institutions is perhaps undisputed, though there is need to embrace technology so as to address the unanticipated user changing needs.

3.6. Challenges in Access and Use of Newspapers

Like any other information sources, challenges exist in access and use of newspapers in Libraries. The print newspapers are physically heavy and yet subscribed to and collected daily; besides, they take up valuable space within a short period (Aasre-Kyire, Borteye & Teye, 2013). Lending credence to this, Oyewumi et al. (2015) opined that it was difficult to provide access to back issues of print copies of newspaper in Nigerian university libraries because of the poor nature of the paper they were printed on and their storage, and also to current issues which were limited to a few print titles and copies. The British Library study findings on print newspapers by Fleming & King (2009) research reaffirmed (Aasre-Kyire, et al., 2013; Oyewumi, et al., 2015) indicated that the factors that pushed for immediate refurbishment of the British Library (BL) were based on; insufficient storage, poor storage conditions, deterioration of hardcopy newspapers, fragmented reader experience, separated business processes, collections security, and researchers' changing needs.

The online and printed newspapers have different characteristics in terms of accessibility, price, digital competence and media habits, and attract audience groups divided by age, gender, education and income (De Waal and Schoenbach, 2010). It is further noted that online newspapers provide fewer cues concerning important news, thus, readers of online news may acquire less information about important topics (Tewksbury & Althaus, 2000); De Waal, Schönbach & Lauf, 2004).

In a nutshell, academic libraries continue to subscribe to print newspapers and provide facilities to enable online access. Although they are in a dilemma on whether or not to continue with print subscriptions due to the meagre budgets. The limited budgets further hinder their ability to provide enough ICT infrastructures for users to access online newspapers and yet, some users lack the requisite ICT skills to browse the internet.

3.7. Strategies to Improve Access to Newspapers

E-resources licenses allow for publishers and vendors to provide digital copies of newspapers. Fleming and King (2009) suggested providing the digital infrastructure to enable the collection of both digitised and born digital

newspapers. To meet the demands of the newspaper readers, Makerere University Library would follow a similar trend by digitising its newspapers collection. Of significance would be working with the newspaper publishers to obtain born digital copies and archived for immediate and future use. Resources today occur in hybridized form; print and electronic, and therefore services provided and skills possessed by professionals in these libraries should reflect the trend.

4. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed approach employing both the qualitative and the quantitative methods. The qualitative approach helped the researcher to explore the knowledge and views of the participants about the current patterns of access and use of newspapers at Maklib. In order to avoid the biases of one approach, the quantitative method was used to collect quantifiable data. The choice of using both the qualitative and quantitative approaches was motivated by the assertion of Johnson and Christensen (2012) who argued that when different approaches are used to focus on the same phenomenon and they provide the same result then you have "corroboration", thus superior evidence for the result.

Sampling: Convenient and purposive sampling methods were used to collect data from newspaper users who frequently visited the newspaper sections and Maklib staff who worked in the newspaper sections.

Data Collection: Data was collected using documentary review, questionnaires and interview methods.

Data analysis: Qualitative data was categorised into themes while quantifiable data was analysed using excel tabular percentages and graphical representation.

5. Discussion of Findings

The section presents an overview of the findings derived from the data collected. The descriptive analysis and quantifiable data discussions were presented concurrently. A total number of ninety (90) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and of these, seventy (78) responded with properly filled out questionnaires. Of the sample of seventy (78) questionnaires that were properly filled out, forty four (44) responded as readily available for the in-depth interview hence leaving out thirty four (34) respondents who were not readily available for the in-depth interview. From those who were willing to participate further, twenty one (21) interviewees participated in the comprehensive and thorough interview. Maklib staff interviews were also carried out and they included three (3) library assistants; (1) male from Africana section and two (2) females from Periodicals section.

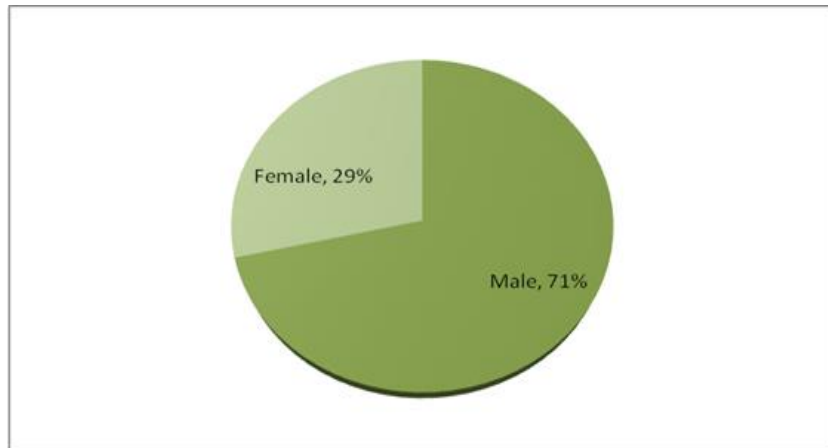
6. General Findings

6.1. Gender Distribution

Findings indicated that out of 21 interviewees 71% were male while 29% were female. This was in tandem with the overall distribution of the students who accessed the periodicals section (Section for current newspapers) as per records in the month of April 2014 which showed that of the 544 total newspapers

readers in the month 57 (10.5%) were female while 487 (89.5%) were male, the study was therefore unbiased to gender.

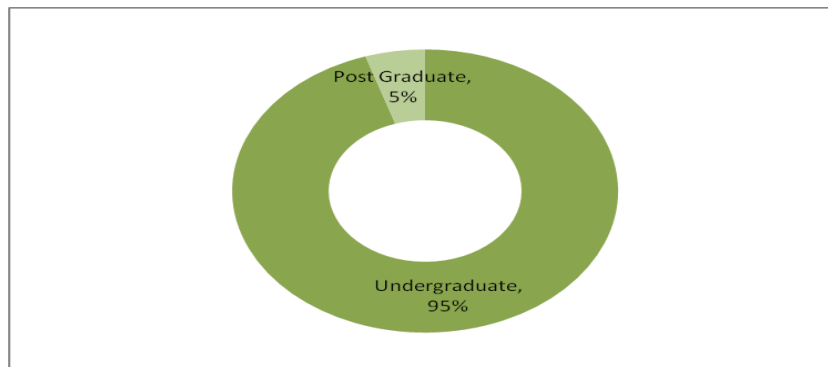
Figure 1. Distribution by Gender



6.2. Distribution by Academic Level

Ninety five percent (95%) of the interviewees were undergraduates as compared to five percent (5%) who were post graduates, indicating that undergraduate students were more willing to participate in the study. The majority of postgraduate students contacted to participate in the study feigned the excuse of lack of time. Nevertheless, as compared to the distribution of the students in the university by academic level, 4% are post graduates and 96% are undergraduate (Makerere University fact book 2012/2013). Ironically this is commensurate with the results in figure 2, indicating a relatively normal distribution of the readers of the newspapers in Maklib.

Figure: 2. Academic Level of Interviewees



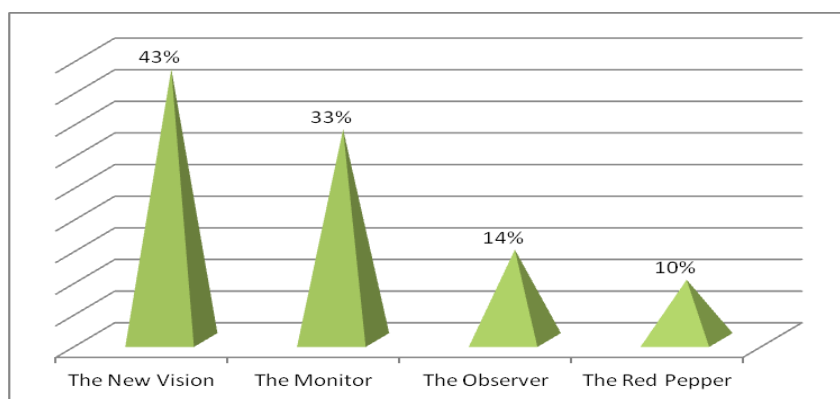
7. Specific Findings

Answers to the specific questions are presented in this section

7.1. Newspaper Title Preferences

The study findings showed that the New Vision (43%) and Monitor Newspapers (38%) (Compact/Black tops) were the most preferred as compared to the Tabloids (Red pepper) with 10%, mainly because of their broad coverage and objectivity. However, some users preferred reading the tabloid for leisure and relaxation from the demanding coursework thus making all newspapers relevant in an academic environment irrespective of the content they delivered. The findings are in line Ugah's (2009) assertion that newspapers play an important role in the academic, social and cultural life of the members of academic community in their information seeking behaviours.

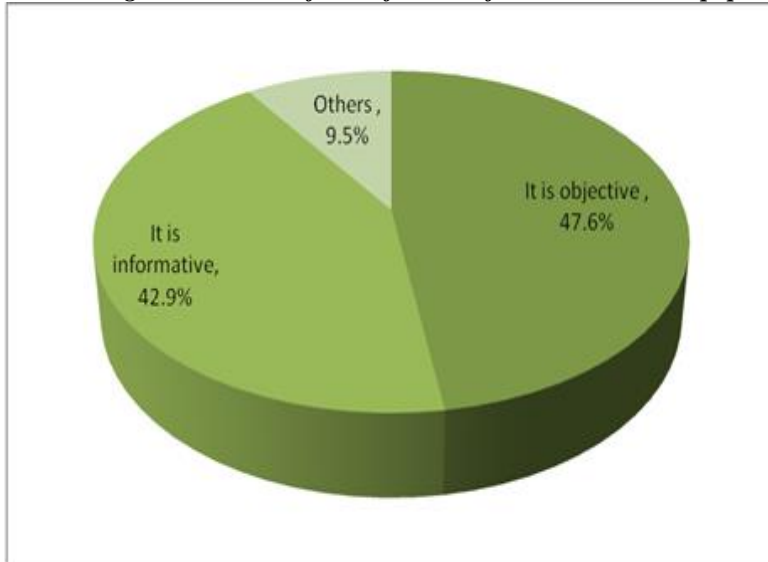
Figure 3. Newspaper Title preference



7.2. Reasons for Preference of a Particular Newspaper

The reasons for the preference of a particular newspaper varied, forty seven point six (47.6%) of the interviewees preferred a newspaper because it was objective, while 42.9% of the interviewees preferred a newspaper because it was informative and 9.5% had varying reasons from preferred sections/articles such as Job adverts, and favourite authors.

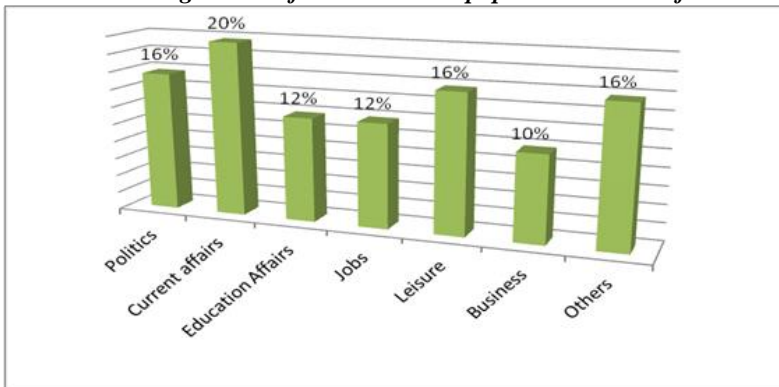
Figure 4: Reasons for Preference of a Particular Newspaper



7.3. Information Newspaper readers seek for

Library users read newspapers for various reasons with the majority (20%) reading to get information on current affairs, politics (16%), Leisure [fashion & life style & dating] (16%) jobs (12%), education or academics (12%), business (10%), and others (16%). Information is key in an academic environment, therefore regarding the information students seek from newspapers, reading newspapers triggers the students' critical thinking which may contribute to the students' future research and public presentation, as noted in (Ugah, 2009 and Aggarwal & Akhter, 2015)'s study that newspapers are major sources of inquiry that help students prove their worth to society and also trigger the IQ and social awareness as well as preparing them for competitive interviews.

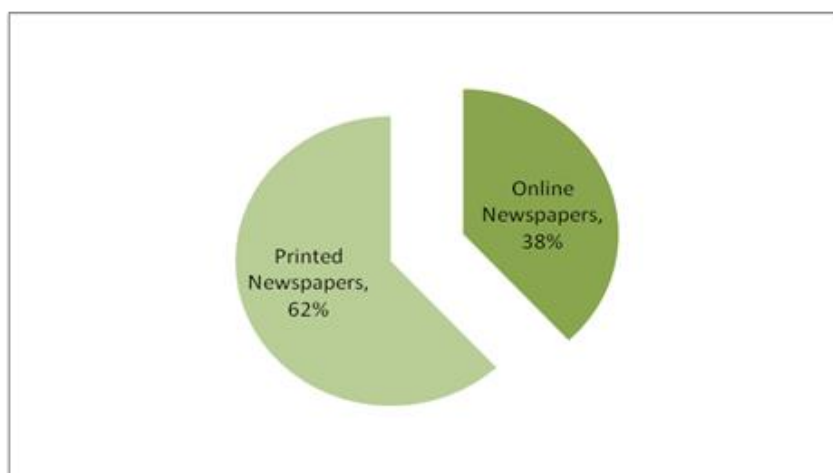
Figure 5: Information Newspaper readers seek for



7.4. Users' Preference for Print or Online Newspaper Versions

Majority (62%) preferred printed newspapers as compared to 38% who preferred online newspapers. Reasons for the preference of the printed version varied from easy access, some details missing online, not affected by technological problems, among others. The reasons for preference of online newspapers included, simultaneous and multiple access, use of key words to search for the articles and easy reference to other related articles as well as instant public opinion. The findings conform to (Vyas, et al., 2007) study that online newspapers enable simultaneous scanning of news sites to find out the view points by various newspapers on the same issue unlike the print newspaper. On the other hand, the researchers asserted that, regardless of the advantages of the online newspapers, many newspaper readers stuck to print newspapers. Thus, students preferred reading the print newspaper as compared to the online newspaper, however, they suggested that if online newspaper services were improved it would reduce on challenges faced in accessing the print newspapers and would bring newspaper services nearer to the users.

Figure 6: Preference of Print or Online Newspapers

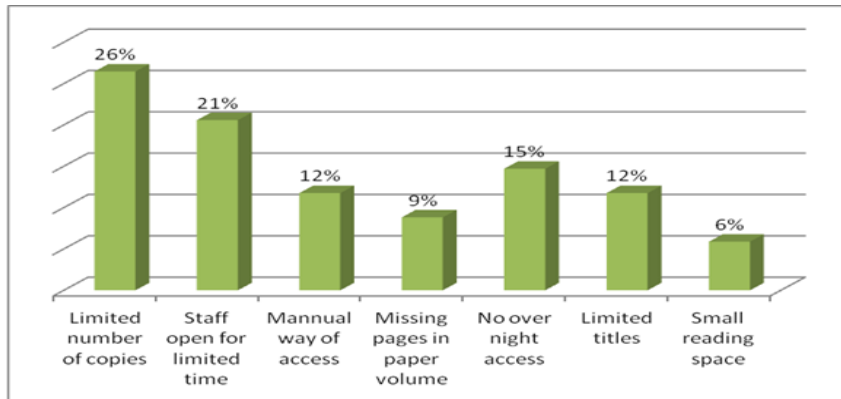


7.5. Challenges to Print Newspapers

The major challenge for access and use of print newspaper was limited copies for many users (26%) Other challenges included; staffs open for a limited time (21%), no overnight access (15%), limited titles (12%), manual way of accessing papers (12%), missing papers and/or articles in volumes (9%), small reading space (6%). The findings agree with (Fleming & King, 2009; Aasre-Kyire et al., 2013) studies. In addition, library assistants who work in the newspaper sections also noted mutilation of newspaper pages e.g. job advertisements and University entries, heavy bond newspaper volumes and lack

of indexes to guide users in retrieving old or archival copies which made the service very strenuous.

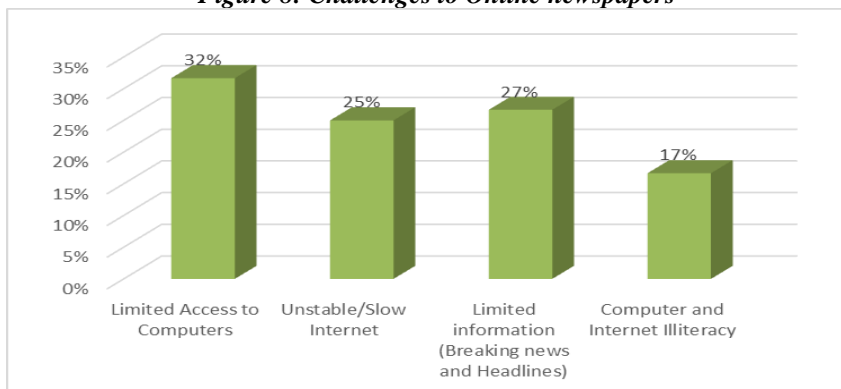
Figure 7: Challenges for print newspapers



7.6. Challenges to Online News Papers

Thirty two percent (32%) of the interviewees noted limited access to computers to them for only two hours in the Learning Commons (for undergraduate students), twenty seven percent (27%) noted slow and unstable internet, twenty five percent (25%) said the online news was not comprehensive and was limited to breaking news and headlines whereas seventeen percent (17%) said they lacked computer and internet skills. Findings are in agreement with De Waal, et al (2004) findings that online newspapers provide fewer cues concerning important news.

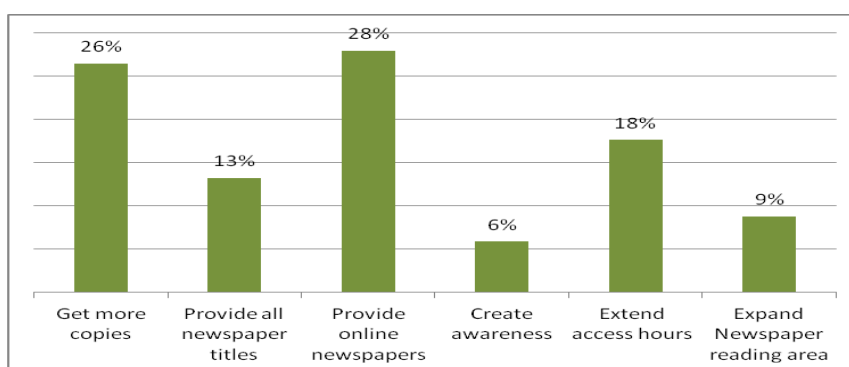
Figure 8: Challenges to Online newspapers



8. Strategies

Interviewees suggested various strategies to the above mentioned challenges which included the following: (i) the library should get complete issues of newspapers available online (28%); (ii) get more newspaper copies (26%); (iii) extend newspaper access hours and not to close sections during the lunch and dinner breaks (18%); (iv) provide all newspaper titles in the periodicals section (13%); (v) expand newspapers reading area (9%); (vi) create awareness of the existence of newspapers to the library users (6%). This is in agreement with Fleming and King's (2009) assertion that a digital infrastructure would improve library newspaper services.

Figure 9: Strategies to Newspaper access challenges



9. Recommendations

Maklib should liaise with Newspaper publishers and provide complete fulltext online PDF versions for easy reference and access. Maklib should also improve her digital infrastructure to enable the collection of both digitised and born digital newspapers. More ICT facilities should be set up at Maklib and Colleges, students should be trained in order to gain skills in using computers and the internet, lab attendants should be made more available by improving on the lab time and students should be made more aware of the availability of online newspapers.

Generally, Makerere University should revisit its expenditure on print newspapers university-wide versus online newspaper access as the savings would be spent on other more academic library resources.

In order for Maklib to meet all the user needs it is important that Maklib endeavours to provide all newspaper titles in Uganda and East Africa. This is in line with Ranganathan's second library law that every reader his book. Thus, all users should be able to find newspaper titles they wish to read when they visit the Periodicals Section for current news.

Maklib should also produce subject (e.g. health, agriculture, education) newspaper indexes and distribute them to students and staff emails/listservs to create awareness of important current information to all the library stakeholders for all newspapers so that users are made aware of the availability and relevance of other newspapers.

10. Area of Further Research

To support the above findings and recommendations, there is need for a Return on Investment study on print newspapers at Makerere University. Secondly, given the paradigm shift in library user needs, a study on hybrid collections and user preferences in academic libraries should be carried out.

11. Conclusion

It suffices to note that a substantial number of the interviewees had a strong preference for online newspapers sighting that online newspapers enabled simultaneous access and immediate sharing of views and opinions on twitter and facebook as well as giving immediate updates unlike the print newspaper. They further noted that online newspapers promoted instant public reviews concerning a particular topic, and access procedures to print newspapers were very cumbersome combined with congestion at service windows which was noted to be very inconveniencing especially during peak hours. Findings further indicated that improving the online newspaper services would provide multiple access if internet services were improved as well as providing special computer services specifically for newspaper users. Generally, the study recognises the need for appropriate planning for newspaper digitization services for both archives and born digital issues.

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