

# Awareness and Use of Current Awareness Services by Users of Three University Libraries in North West Nigeria

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper looked at the extent Current Awareness Services have influenced the use and access to information resources by the users of university libraries in North-Western Nigeria.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** Descriptive survey research approach was used. A Sample of library users from three university libraries in North West Nigeria was used. Copies of the Questionnaires were administered on the library users (students and staff) to collect data on the awareness and use of current awareness services in the library. The data collected were analyzed using table and simple percentage calculation.

**Findings:** It was found that, users visit the library daily in order to read, carryout research and update their knowledge. Again, list of new arrivals, shelve display, library bulletin newspaper and email and bulletin board services were the most available current awareness services in the library and mostly used.

**Implication:** The paper suggested for the adoption of digital technologies in university libraries that will enhance timely distribution of information needs of the users. The study therefore, encourages the library users and to acquire ICT skills that will enable them adequately utilize digital current awareness service tools.

**Originality/Value:** The originality of this study is found in its perspective on the need to give more publicity and awareness. Therefore, email and mobile SMS services should be introduced that will distribute current information to library users on time.

**Keywords:** Awareness, Current Awareness Service, library users, Nigerian University libraries, North-West, Nigeria

## Introduction

Librarians in the Nigerian University Libraries (NUL) are being faced with challenges in keeping patrons up-to-date with current literature and potential new services occurring in the library. Information needs of library users demand for a specialized timely information delivery instruments in various formats that will keep them abreast to their daily functions and research work. Roussouw and Fouries (2007) defined current awareness services as the purpose of informing the users about information in their libraries. Current awareness services are key elements in libraries and information centres since the ancient times. Its vital role in keeping library users up-to-date is increasingly becoming a measure of the library's contribution to the transformation and development of a society and the nation at large. The use of

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) has facilitated a transformation in the users' perception from what is being hosted in the library to how and when services are rendered to fulfil their requests Kpakiko & Shehu, 2013).

Consequently, the importance of libraries is now being measured in respect to the fulfilment of the users' requests and needs. The materials libraries acquired and traditionally hosting them for "just in case" some users will need them is nowadays being replaced by delivering such materials "just in time" to answer the user's needs. However, this transformation in timely information delivery system has brought a challenge in the field of library and information services in dealing with the ever-increasing complexity of information, differentiating useful information from miss-information and safeguarding the rising

needs and expectations of the users Johnson, Osmond & Holz, 2009).

One of the fundamental functions of a library is to scrutinize publications immediately after receipt, and make a selection of publications pertinent to the programme of the organization and bring individual item to the attention of the users to whom it concerns. This is generally known as 'current awareness' service. Encyclopaedia Americana (1976) defines current awareness services as the purpose of informing the users about information in their libraries. Current awareness service is referred to as dissemination of information that will keep clientele well informed and up to date in their field of interest as well as their related subjects or disciplines.

Current awareness service includes the selective dissemination of information, publication of current contents, and publication of list of new arrivals, information retrieval and online services. The objective of current awareness service is to make available current information to those who need it, usually for current researcher and to sustain the interest of the library user in the services rendered by the library to make them lively and active readers for their benefits. Provision of information on recently required materials benefits all the users in several ways such as providing maximum exposure and utilization of the library information resources.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Librarians use various methods to provide current awareness services to keep current with academic and professional literature. However, Nigerian University Libraries still engages in traditional methods of providing these services such as routing print journals, distributing photocopied journal tables of contents, and simply

browsing professional publications. In addition, newer methods include conducting saved searches in preferred databases and creating email table of contents alerts. Each of these methods has disadvantages: Routed print material moves slowly, distributing photocopies is labour intensive, and browsing material requires extra time and active participation. Saved searches involve expert users and continual search amendments. Email alerts flood in-boxes already overflowing with unread items. It is based on these thresholds that this study is set to look at how the interplay of these different component affects current awareness service practices in Nigerian university libraries.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This research was carried out with the following objectives in mind:

- i. To identify the availability of current awareness services in Nigerian university libraries;
- ii. To find out the level of awareness and;
- iii. To determine the most used current awareness services in Nigerian university libraries;
- iv. To assess the user satisfaction on the current awareness services being used by Nigerian university libraries and
- v. To recommend effective and appropriate latest current awareness service(s) that can provide timely awareness to library users current additional resources in the library.

### **Literature Review**

Current awareness service generally means the information in brief regarding any particular topic or specific area of that topic. It depends upon the users specifications of information need lodged in the library profile. This information can further be expanded depending upon user's

requirements and the ability, skill and eagerness of the library staff to serve. Rossouw and Fouries (2007) revealed that the mode of CAS in university libraries was traditionally on print form by making photocopies of the table of contents and brief reviews served to the users. In that case the users are mostly benefited by being physically present in the library.

Meanwhile, Naqvi (2013) typified that current awareness services exists in many ways in university libraries as follow:

- i. Library bulletin and newsletters
- ii. List of latest resources acquired(New arrivals)
- iii. Topical bibliographical on demand
- iv. Contents page service
- v. Routing of periodicals
- vi. News clipping service
- vii. Abstract bulleting
- viii. List of microform documents
- ix. Commercial current content service
- x. Telephone service
- xi. E-mail and bulletin board services
- xii. Display among others

These are generalized kind of awareness services where the users have to scan through their own relevant information.

On the other hand, Johnson, Osmond and Holz (2009) asserted that due to advent of technology, especially, internet current awareness services are being –delivered through personalized mail, list serves and other bulletins. Presently the users need not to be present in the campus while availing the service.

Leatherman and Eckel (2012) revealed that only in the current Internet era with the advent of saved searches, e-mail alerts, and

RSS feeds, have CA services become relatively convenient for users to set up and maintain on their own updates. Really Simple Syndication (RSS) and Rich Site Summary are XML files that enable users to track new updates to a web site without having to visit that web site over and over. RSS is now widely used by scholarly publishers and database companies to syndicate database and tables-of-contents alerts.

Kpakiko and Shehu (2013) opined that university libraries should emphasize on user friendly, modern and dynamic technological tools such as university website, library portal, Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds, mobile Short Message Service (SMS), email services, facebook, whatsapp group, library blogs, twitter, online discussion groups among others in carrying out current awareness services for timely information delivery.

### **Research Methodology**

A survey research design was used. A total of 150 copies of questionnaire were designed and distributed randomly among the users of three university libraries under study. A total of 136 copies were completed and returned and found worthy for analysis. representing (90.6%) of the total population sampled for the study. The responses presented were analyzed using frequency table and simple percentage calculation.

## Data Analysis and Findings

The data collected through the questionnaire is analyzed and interpreted as presented below.

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents**

Universities	Respondents	
	Number	%
Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto	48	35.3
Bayero University, Kano	45	33.1
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	43	31.6
Total	136	100

It has been observed that out of 136 users that responded to questionnaire received, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto recorded the highest number of respondents 48 (35.3%). This was as a result of the researcher's familiarity with the library staff who assisted in collection of questionnaire from the respondents. Bayero University,

Kano got 45 (33.6%) and 43 are from Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria representing (31.6%). Bayero University, Kano and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria also recorded relatively high number of respondents due to some reasonable level of cooperation enjoyed by the researchers during the period of data collection.

**Table 2: Respondents status**

Status	Respondents	
	Number	%
Undergraduate students	86	63.2
Postgraduate students	38	28
Staff	12	8.8
Total	136	100

The number of undergraduate students tops the table with 86 representing (63.2%). This signifies that undergraduate students are more in number of library users than any other category of library users at the time of data collection. This was followed by the postgraduate students with 38 (28%) while

the university staff recorded 12 (8.8%). This might be attributed to the fact that these categories of staff are versatile in the use of online and electronic resources which do not require them to be physically present in the library

**Table 3: Frequency of visit to the library**

Frequency	No. of Respondents					
	Students	%	Staff	%	Total	%
Daily	71	57.2	5	41.6	76	55.8
2-3 times a week	33	26.6	4	33.3	37	27.2
Weekly	20	16.1	3	25	23	17
Once fortnightly	0	0	0	0	0	0
Occasionally	0	0	0	0	0	0
Never	0	0	0	0	0	0

From the table above it was find out that about 124 Students sampled for the study 71 (57.2%) stated that they visit the library daily. This may due to the fact they are always reading and researching for their academic obligations. On the other hand, out of 12 staff sampled for the study only 5 (41.6%) visit the library daily to update their knowledge and to read newspapers. Other students 33 (26.6%), 20 (16.1%) and staff 4 (33.3%), 3 (25%) indicated that they visit the library 2-3 times a week and weekly respectively. This might be because of the availability of other means of accessing information

**Table 4: Availability and awareness of current awareness services**

Types of CA services	Institutions and No. of Respondents																			
	UDUS						BUK						ABU						Total	
	A	%	NA	%	UD	%	AV	%	NA	%	UD	%	A	%	NA	%	UD	%	Total	%
	V											V								
List of new arrivals	-	-	36	75	12	25	29	64.5	-	-	16	35.6	39	90.6	-	-	4	9.4	136	100
Shelve display	40	83.3	-	-	8	16.7	38	84.4	-	-	7	15.6	39	90.6	-	-	4	9.4	136	100
Library bulletin newspaper	-	-	40	75	8	16.7	33	73.3	-	-	12	26.7	43	100	-	-	-	-	136	100
Email and bulletin board services	-	-	40	75	8	16.7	-	-	31	68.9	14	31.1	40	93.0	-	-	3	7	136	100
Telephone services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Abstract bulletin	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Topical bibliographical on demand	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contents page service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Routing of periodicals	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
News clipping service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
List of microform documents	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Commercial current content service	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
University website	17	35.5	-	-	31	64.6	31	68.8	-	-	14	31.2	37	86.0	-	-	6	14	136	100
Library portal	28	58.3	15	31.3	5	10.4	27	60	11	24.4	7	15.6	33	76.7	-	-	10	23.2	136	100
RSS feed	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
XML files	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social medial groups	37	77.0	3	6.2	8	16.7	34	75.5	5	11.1	6	13.3	39	90.6	-	-	4	9.4	136	100
Mobile SMS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	136	100
Online discussion group	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Library blog	34	70.8	-	-	14	67.2	28	62.2	7	15.5	10	22.2	37	86.0	-	-	6	14	136	100

Table 4 shows that list of new arrivals, shelve display, library bulletin newspaper as well as email and bulletin board services among others recorded highest number of respondents. This indicated that they are the CA services that are available and users are aware of in the university libraries under study. They are also the frequently used by the library users. Those that were not scored are neither available nor the users are aware of the existence of such services in the university libraries under study.

**Table 5: Sources of Awareness**

Sources	No. of Respondents					
	Students	%	Staff	%	Total	%
Through library news bulletin	72	58.0	9	75	81	59.5
Through social media group	66	53.2	5	41.6	71	52.2
Through university website	58	46.7	5	41.6	63	46.3
Through library portal	47	37.9	5	41.6	52	38.2
Through library tour/orientation	43	34.7	0	0	43	34.7
Through email	0	0	0	0	0	0
Through print resources	0	0	0	0	0	0
Through colleagues	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 6 shows that 81 (59.5%) respondents indicated that they learned about the CA service through library news bulletin while, 71 (52.2%) pointed out that they learned about CA service through social media group. These two sources recorded highest number of respondents because most university libraries update their users through news bulletin and library technology such as social media groups like whatsapp groups, blog, facebook, twitter

among others. University website, library portal and library tour/orientation had 63 (46.3%), 52 (38.2%), and 43 (34.7%) respectively. These sources were scored low because they require some specialized technical skills that is inadequate in Nigerian university libraries. Also, email, print resources and colleagues are poorly or not being used by the Nigerian university libraries

**Table 6: Current Awareness Services being used**

CA SERVICES	No. of Respondents									
	MU	%	U	%	SU	%	RU	%	NU	%
List of new arrivals	119	87.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shelve display	117	86.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Library bulletin newspaper	89	65.4	0	0	24	17.6	0	0	0	0
Email and bulletin board services	89	65.4	41	30.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
University website	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	15.4	93	68.4
Library portal	0	0	0	0	66	48.5	41	30.1	0	0
Social medial groups	0	0	0	0	55	40.4	0	0	0	0
Library blog	59	43.3	44	32.3	0	0	0	0	23	16.9

**KEY:** MU = Most used, U = Used, SU = Somewhat used, RU = Rarely Used, NU = Not Used

Table 6 shows that majority of the respondents make use of list of new arrivals with 119 (87.5) followed by shelve display, library bulletin newspaper and email and bulletin board services with 117 (86.0%), 89 (65.4%) and 89 (65.4%) respectively. The highest number of score recorded can be attributed to their ease of use and long time existence in the library as traditional

means of providing current awareness services in Nigerian university libraries. university website, library portal and social media groups are either not used or used because they involve the use of technology that require some skills.

**Table 7: Users level of satisfaction**

CA SERVICES	No. of Respondents									
	SS	%	S	%	SWS	%	N	%	DS	%
Shelve display	122	89.7	26	19.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
List of new arrivals	101	74.2	14	10.3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Library bulletin newspaper	89	65.4	0	0	47	34.5	0	0	0	0
Email and bulletin board services	0	0	41	30.1	0	0	95	69.8	0	0
University website	0	0	0	0	0	0	77	56.6	59	43.4
Library portal	0	0	0	0	66	48.5	41	30.1	0	0
Social medial groups	0	0	0	0	55	40.4	0	0	0	0
Library blog	0	0	0	0	54	39.7	77	56.6	23	16.9

**Key:** SS = Strongly Satisfied, S = Satisfied, SWS = Somewhat Satisfied, N = Neutral, DS = Dissatisfied

Table 7 shows that users derive more satisfaction with use of shelve display 122 (89.7%), list of new arrivals 101(74.2) and library bulleting newspaper 89 (65.4) had the highest number of respondents. This can be attributed to their availability, accessibility and ease of use. Email and bulletin board services, university website, library portal, social media group and library blog are somewhat satisfied, neutral or dissatisfied by the users. These can be associated with technical skills required in managing them.

**Findings**

The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the library users visit the library daily 71 (57.2%) in order to read, carry out research and to update their knowledge. That list of new arrivals 136 (100%), shelve display 136 (100%), library bulletin newspaper 136 (100%) and email and bulletin board 136 (100%) are available in Nigerian university libraries and which users are more aware of and are more frequently used as a result of the ease of use and accessibility. It was discovered that users learned about CA service through the library news bulletin 81 (59.5%) and social media group 71 (52.2%). Findings have also revealed that utilize more of list of new

arrivals 119 (87.5%), shelve display 117 (86.0%) and library bulletin newspaper 89 (65.4%) among others are mostly used. It was again found that user are strongly satisfied with the use of shelve display 122 (89.7%), list of new arrivals 101 (74.2%) and library bulletin newspapers with 89(65.4%).

**Conclusion**

The mode of CAS traditionally was on print form by making photocopies of the table of contents and brief reviews served to the users. In that case the users are mostly benefited by being physically present in the library. Due to advent of technology especially internet these information are being delivered through personalized mail, list serves and other bulletins. Presently the users need not to be present in the campus while availing the service.

**Recommendations**

The need for Current Awareness Services have gone beyond the use of traditional tools such as display shelves, list of new arrivals, use of library newspaper bulletin among others to keep the library users up-to-date. The following trends should be adopted by Nigerian university libraries to meet up with the information services provision in 21<sup>st</sup> century.

- i. Current Awareness Service needs more publicity and awareness therefore email and mobile SMS services should be introduced that will distribute current information to library users timely;
- ii. Library newsletter and newspaper should be published regularly and hosted on the university's website and library portal;
- iii. List of new arrivals and other current information should be published on the library social media platforms such as instant messaging, facebook, whatsapp, twitter, blog among others;
- iv. New tools for information delivery should be developed by the library such as Document Delivery Service (DDS), Really Simple Syndication feeds (RSS feed) so as to be more responsive to the needs of the profession.
- v. Librarians should be more active and dedicated to acquire skills that will enable them manage technologies in information delivery;
- vi. University libraries should organize orientation regularly for users on the needs and importance of CAS.

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