

# NEWSPLAN (CYMRU)

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## NEWSPLAN (CYMRU) SURVEY OF NEWSPAPER USE, 2002

### 1. Introduction

As a condition of funding the Newsplan 2000 project, the Heritage Lottery Fund stipulated that the use of newspapers before and after the project should be assessed by means of surveys in each of the Newsplan regions. Within Wales, fifteen libraries or library authorities agreed to take part in the survey, which they were asked to carry out for a period of at least one week. By the closing date (28 March 2002) 246 completed questionnaires had been received from ten library authorities.

Respondents were asked to tick all the boxes which applied to them. The overall responses are summarised below and are followed by a commentary on the findings of the survey in which the returns are given as percentages of the total number of forms received.

### 2. Survey returns

Total number of forms received by 28 March 2002: 246

#### 2.1 How far have you travelled to use the newspapers?

189	under 20 miles	11	over 100 miles
42	20-100 miles	3	from outside the UK

#### 2.2 What sort of papers are you using?

180	local newspapers	54	UK national
70	Welsh national newspapers in English	8	evening
27	Welsh language newspapers	7	Sunday
8	other		

#### 2.3 How old are the newspapers you are using?

110	up to 20 years old	80	50-100 years old
57	20-50 years old	45	over 100 years old

#### 2.4 What information are you hoping to find?

64	family history	33	sport	24	legal or crime
93	local history	27	pictures	29	business or financial
12	house history	20	adverts	43	political
40	obituaries	32	other		

#### 2.5 What do you intend to do with your findings?

151	personal or family interest only	37	use in a publication
42	information for somebody else	12	educational (eg. school project)
26	use in a talk	33	use in academic research

2.6 How often do you use old newspapers?			
30	first time user - no plans for further use	70	occasional user
41	first time user - and intend to use again	66	regular user
2.7 How easy do you find it to use newspapers?			
134	simple	9	difficult
84	fairly easy	15	tedious
2.8 Have you found what you were looking for?			
113	yes, exactly that	18	no
101	yes, to some extent		
2.9 Have you used any indexes or guides?			
21	yes, today	81	no, never
103	yes, but not today		
2.10 What format were the newspapers you used?			
149	paper copies	5	CD-ROMs
103	microfilm	1	on-line
2.11 Which format did you find easiest to use?			
123	paper copies	9	CD-ROMs
64	microfilm	1	on-line
2.12 Have you had any problems using newspapers of any format?			
191	no	25	yes

### 3. Commentary on the survey

#### 3.1 Distance travelled

77% of users travelled less than 20 miles and 17% travelled 20-100 miles. 4% travelled over 100 miles and a further 1% (three respondents) had come from outside the United Kingdom.

#### 3.2 Types of newspapers used

Local newspapers were by far the most popular, being read by 74% of users. The other categories read, in order of popularity, were Welsh national newspapers (28%), UK national newspapers (22%), Welsh language newspapers (11%), evening newspapers (3%) and Sunday newspapers (3%). 3% said they read other categories of newspaper.

#### 3.3 Period of newspapers used

The age of the newspapers used was widely spread, although recent newspapers were the most heavily used. 45% of users read newspapers less than 20 years old, 23% read newspapers 20-50 years old, 33% read newspapers 50-100 years old and 18% read newspapers over 100 years old.

#### 3.4 Information sought

Topics in order of popularity were: local history (38%), family history (26%), obituaries (16%), sport (13%), business or financial (12%), pictures (11%), legal or crime (10%), advertisements (8%), house history (5%). 13% of users sought other information, and specified topics such as the history of radio, war deaths, coal-mining, music, tourism, Eisteddfodau, the armed forces, the influenza pandemic of 1919 and poetry.

### **3.5 Purpose of research**

Most research was for personal or family interest (61%). 17% noted that they were looking for information for somebody else. Some users intended to use the information in a publication (15%) or a talk (11%), in academic research (13%) or in other educational work (5%).

### **3.6 Frequency of use**

29% of respondents were using newspapers for the first time, including 12% who said they did not intend to use newspapers again. 27% described themselves as regular users and 28% as occasional users. 16% did not respond to the question.

### **3.7 Ease of use**

Most people found newspapers easy to use, either simple (54%) or fairly easy (34%). Only 4% found the use of newspapers difficult, but 6% found it tedious.

### **3.8 Success**

87% of people said they were successful in their work. They either found exactly what they were looking for (46%) or found it to some extent (41%). Only 7% did not find what they wanted. 4% did not respond to the question.

### **3.9 Indexes and guides**

Only 9% used indexes or guides on the day of the survey, although a further 42% said they had used them in the past. 33% said they had never used indexes or guides and 17% did not respond to the question. It would appear that in general indexes and guides play only a small role in newspaper research, possibly because there are not many indexes and guides of good quality.

### **3.10 Format**

61% of readers used paper copies and 42% used microfilm. Only 2% used CD-ROMs and only 0.5% (a single respondent) used newspapers on-line.

### **3.11 Preferred format**

50% preferred paper copies and 26% preferred microfilm. 4% preferred CD-ROMs and 0.5% (a single respondent) preferred newspapers on-line, while 20% did not respond to the question. There was a tendency for users to note as their preference the format which they were using at the time. Of the small number of people who used CD-ROMs or on-line newspapers, a high proportion noted that format as their preference.

### **3.12 Problems**

78% reported no problems in using newspapers. 10% did report problems and a further 12% did not respond to the question. The problems encountered in all formats included missing pages, issues, or gaps in runs, problems getting the correct edition or complete editions (e.g. the Welsh edition of the News Chronicle) and difficulty in obtaining copies of the newspapers. Problems with microfilm included film that was blurred or unclear, and difficulty with microfilm readers or reader printers. Problems with paper copies included the weight and awkwardness of paper volumes.