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Newspapers and historical research: a study of historians and custodians in Wales

Jane-Louise Secker

FOR
REFERENCE
ONLY

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Information and Library Studies
Department of History and Welsh History

University of Wales,
Aberystwyth

November 1999

Declaration

This work has not been previously accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Summary

Examines the historiographical and practical problems of using newspapers in historical research. Studies the methods of different types of professional and non-professional historians, to evaluate the value of newspapers as historical documents and the problems particular to them. Examines the difficulties associated with newspapers in library collections from both the perspectives of newspaper users and custodians. Seeks to provide recommendations for both groups to facilitate the use of newspapers.

The research adopted essentially qualitative methods. Using questionnaires and interviews, the opinions and experiences of historians in Wales were studied. Case studies of newspaper collections in Wales were undertaken to examine current policies and strategies at a local level. The research was also undertaken with collaboration from the British Library Newspaper Library and with specific reference to the work of the NEWSPLAN project.

Concludes that newspapers are an important source for all manner of historical enquiries, but that historians often require further guidance in order to search, use and evaluate them. Different patterns of use were observed among different types of historians. Also suggests that newspapers are unlike other historical documents, because of their nature and role in society. Specific techniques are provided to assist the historian using newspapers. The use of newspapers is also shaped by the policies and strategies of both local and national newspaper collections. Thus, guidelines and recommendations are provided to assist these organisations. Further work is urged, to understand the needs of historians and the specific problems that newspapers present, following the five million pound Heritage Lottery Fund Award for the NEWSPLAN project in March 1999.

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List of Abbreviations

BLNL	British Library Newspaper Library
HLF	Heritage Lottery Fund
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LINC	Library and Information Co-operative Council
LIS	Library and Information Science
LIC	Library and Information Commission
NLW	National Library of Wales
OCR	Optical Character Recognition
OPAC	Online Public Access Catalogue

Introduction

Newspapers are not written or produced with the historian in mind. The press is primarily used as a source of current information and news, having little further value once events have moved on. However, the accumulation of knowledge in newspapers, each day, creates an important resource of information, highly valuable for historical enquiry. In many instances the newspaper report will be the only surviving record of events, and even where other sources do exist, the newspaper will provide a uniquely accessible summary. In Britain, news publications date back to the seventeenth century, providing historians of the modern period with a detailed and unbroken commentary of events as they occurred. The wealth of titles, from mass circulation national titles, to local weeklies serving small communities, make newspapers a rich and varied source for all manner of historical research. This thesis examines the problems associated with using the press as a historical document. Partly these problems are historiographical, associated with the construction of newspapers and their role in society. However, the methods used by libraries to store, preserve and make available newspaper collections, also create difficulties.

Academic historians began to realise the value of the press as a historical document in the latter part of this century. However, newspapers have formed part of many library collections since the nineteenth century. Moreover, until around the 1950s, many libraries had newspaper reading rooms in which current copies of titles were made available. Considerable effort has also gone into the storage and preservation of newspapers and today, both current and retrospective collections are held by all manner of libraries and information units. Furthermore, a national collection has been maintained through legal deposit legislation, since 1869. The British Library Newspaper Library (BLNL) at Colindale receives copies of almost all UK and Irish newspapers. It is a highly valuable research centre and, despite the emphasis on Wales, was important to this thesis. Surprisingly little research has examined the role of newspapers in libraries, or the users of these collections. Furthermore, the available research often relies upon anecdotal rather than empirical evidence.

The research for this thesis was undertaken during a transitional period both for libraries and other information units and for policies towards newspaper collections.

When this research project began in 1995, newspapers in local and national collections were generally not given the status they deserved. However, attitudes have changed significantly since that time and this change must largely be attributed to the successful completion of the NEWSPLAN project.[1] The thesis will suggest that NEWSPLAN has led to an increased recognition, by libraries and their users, of the value of newspaper collections. Moreover, since the election of a Labour government in 1997, more emphasis has been placed on educational and cultural institutions and issues. Public libraries and record offices play an important role as local centres of learning and cultural heritage. Associated with these changes, the concept of newspaper collections as 'the People's Heritage' has developed.[2] In March 1999 the granting of a £5 million Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) award for NEWSPLAN was a tribute to the project's success. The award also confirmed that the status of newspaper collections had increased.[3] Following the award, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, clearly signalled the new direction:

> Newspapers have been called history's first draft. The conservation of our stock of local newspapers, much of it suffering from acidity and thus difficult to handle, is incredibly important because it forms a considerable part of our nation's archives. The Heritage Lottery Fund's commitment to help save newspapers for the nation will not only prevent the loss of an irreplaceable piece of our history, but will allow far greater access than at present, without further damaging the originals.[4]

The latter decades of the twentieth century have been described as the information age, characterised above all by the Internet and various other forms of electronic information. Newspapers too, are now produced and often archived electronically, although their daily distribution still largely relies upon the printed medium. Online and CD-ROM newspapers have been available since the early 1990s and an increasing

---

[1] The NEWSPLAN project is referred to throughout this thesis. It is a co-operative project between the British Library, National Libraries of Scotland, Wales and Ireland and the regional library system. Full details about the history and background of the project are found in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2 (v).
[2] *The People's Heritage: a new partnership for a national resource.* (unpublished notes from a seminar held at the British Library Conference Centre, 13 November 1998 sponsored by the British Library and the Society of Chief Librarians)
[3] More information about the HLF award is included in Chapter 1, Section 1.4.2 (v) which discusses the NEWSPLAN project.
[4] NEWSPLAN. *Heritage Lottery Fund Award of £5 million.* Hp. 25th Mar 1999 [last update]. Online. British Library. Available: http://portico.bl.uk/collections/newspaper/nplanhlf.html. June 1999.

number of titles are producing a World Wide Web version of their publication. These developments offer enormous potential for accessing the information contained within newspapers, past and present. In order that these new formats meet the needs of researchers, it is both timely and appropriate to investigate the value and problems associated with using newspapers for historical enquiry.

The use of the newspaper for historical research is not straightforward. While it is necessary to question the authority of all historical documents, newspapers perhaps more than other sources, are notorious for inaccuracies and biased information. This can make them problematic as a historical source. Yet, despite these problems, as Chris Smith rightly said, newspapers have been called history's first draft.[5] This study seeks to examine the strategies adopted by historians for using newspapers. All forms of media are likely to become increasingly important for historical enquiry. Yet, their nature and role in society, make the media unlike other evidence available to the historian. In particular, the media presents different historiographical problems, suggesting that the strategies adopted to search and evaluate this type of source should be specially designed. Through examining newspapers this study recognises they cause the historian particular problems, and it seeks to provide a model for using other forms of media as a historical source.

This thesis demonstrates that increasingly historians have come to regard newspapers as an important information resource for their research.[6] Traditionally, sources such as government records have been important and they are valuable for political history. Newspapers however, have become increasingly important with the rise of interest in cultural and social history. They offer an insight into the opinions, reading habits and debates of a period. Through their advertisements they provide a valuable source for trade history as well as offering information on many different aspects of social and political life. Arguably, it would be difficult to write a history of Britain in the 1990s without reference to the output of popular publications such as the *Sun*. The

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[5] This concept is discussed in Peter Hennessy, *What the Papers Never Said,* (London: Portcullis Press, 1985)

[6] See in particular Chapter 1, Section 1.2.2

newspaper is a rich and varied source for historical enquiry and the fact that it arouses debate, and can contain inaccurate and biased material, may be one of the reasons for its value. However, the newspaper must be used with caution for arguably it *is* different from other sources.

Like most historical documents, the survival of newspapers in archives and libraries is largely attributed to chance. Newspapers were incorporated into the Copyright legislation relatively late. However, long before they were considered a valid source by historians, newspaper were collected by antiquarians and 'bibliophiles'. Many of these private collections were later deposited in public libraries and record offices. The newspaper office provides another important source of newspaper collections, again these were often donated to public collections. The policies, individuals and organisations involved in newspaper collection have inevitably influenced the type of material which is available and the way in which it has been organised. Although the NEWSPLAN project has done much to improve preservation and bibliographic control of newspaper collections in recent times, access to this material: both physically and intellectually, remains a problem. Only more recently have librarians begun to understand the research needs of historians and little research has examined newspapers. Thus, NEWSPLAN suggests that collections may not be organised or stored in a manner that effectively serves the information needs of historians.

The digital library seeks to provide improved access to information stored in electronic form, through global communications networks. Increasing numbers of electronic newspapers are available and this format could solve many of the problems associated with both physical and intellectual access. However, without an understanding of the information needs of historians, we could see the creation of electronic archives that may not meet these needs sufficiently. Thus, part of this study provides recommendations for the future of newspaper collections to ensure that they are appropriately managed.

0.1 Aims and Objectives

The thesis has two main audiences: historians and librarians. It is envisaged that many readers of this thesis will already be users or custodians of newspaper collections. However, historians and librarians with little or no experience of this type of collection, are urged to recognise its value. Thus, the thesis aims to:

- investigate the relationship between historians, newspapers and libraries;
- present recommendations for historians to facilitate the effective use of newspapers;
- put forward proposals to improve access to newspapers in libraries and other institutions.

The study seeks to achieve these aims by adopting the following objectives:

- to investigate the use of newspapers by historians, using historians in Wales as a sample population;
- to understand the role of newspapers as a source for historical research and the historiographic problems associated with using this source;
- to examine the collection, storage and access policies at newspaper collections and the effects of these policies on the work of historians;
- to investigate possible solutions to the historiographical and practical problems of using newspapers;
- to study the current and future position of the newspaper in the digital library.

0.2 Research Questions

Establishing the research questions is an important stage in any project and this was primarily undertaken following an examination of the existing literature. These questions are central to the study, therefore they are presented at this stage to identify the direction of the research. They can be summarised as:

1) What is the status of the newspaper as a source?

   How do historians regard the newspaper?

   How do librarians regard the newspaper?

2) Who uses the newspaper as a source?

How important are historians as newspaper users?

Do different types of historians (e.g. professional/non-professional, social/political) use newspapers more or less frequently?

3) How is the newspaper used as a historical source?

What type of information does it contain?

How is the information identified in the newspaper?

How is the information used?

What problems does it present the user?

4) How are newspaper collections accessed?

What bibliographic tools are available?

What other tools are available e.g. indexes of contents?

How valuable are the tools to historians?

5) How is the newspaper stored in the library?

In what format is the collection stored in?

Which storage, preservation and conservation techniques are used?

How appropriate are the storage, preservation and conservation techniques?

6) How do the conditions in (5) affect the work of the historian?

What problems are caused by format?

What problems are caused by storage or preservation techniques?

7) What is the role of newspapers in the digital library?

What is their role currently?

How important are digital sources to the historian?

What is the likely future for digital newspaper collections?

0.3 Definitions

Three key elements are examined in this thesis and it is important to provide definitions which are used throughout the study.

0.3.1 Newspaper

The study originally sought to examine the use of British local newspapers by historians in Wales. Following the results obtained from the first stage of the enquiry, this was found to be too limiting and it was decided to examine historians use of all types of newspapers. This reasons behind broadening the definition are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.5.

The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, identifies a newspaper by its appearance and format, defining it as:

> A printed publication, now usually daily or weekly, consisting of folded unstapled sheets and containing news.

In contrast, the NEWSPLAN report for Wales distinguishes newspapers from other publications by their content, and for the purposes of this project the definition included:

> ... Every publication issued at regular intervals whether for sale or free, containing information and opinion concerning current affairs, international, national and local news, commenting on matters of interest and carrying advertisements.[7]

The term newspaper is difficult to define since it encompasses a wide range of different types of publication. For the purposes of this research the working definition used has sought to be as all-encompassing as possible. Publications containing news, opinion-based information and advertising material, including British and overseas titles were included. Both national and local newspapers, appearing daily or weekly formed part of this study. Free newspapers were also included, as were the Welsh language community newspapers, known as 'papurau bro'. The definition sought to exclude periodicals, however monthly publications with substantial news content, such as *The Spectator* or *New Statesman* present many similar problems to newspapers. While this type of publication was not actively included in the study, occasional references to such sources were made during the research. Newspapers are essentially printed

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[7] Beti Jones, *NEWSPLAN: Report of the NEWSPLAN project in Wales,* (Aberystwyth: Wales Regional Library System, 1994) p.56

publications, however the term 'electronic newspaper' was used to identify online and CD-ROM publications.

0.3.2 Historian

It is important to provide a definition of the term 'historian' as it is to be used in the context of this research. The *Oxford Shorter English Dictionary* defines a historian as a 'writer of history, especially a critical analyst rather than a chronicler or compiler.' Moreover, previous studies have often used the term to identify academic historians. This group would be recognised by their professional status, i.e. having a degree and/or higher degree in history and working in a higher education institution. However, increasingly historical research is undertaken by a variety of individuals without professional qualifications. Both family and local history have become important pastimes, and led to the production of equally valid research. Therefore, this study sought to incorporate the variety of individuals undertaking 'historical research'. Three broad categories were initially identified including local, academic and family historians. As the research progressed it became necessary to refine these categories. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.[8]

0.3.3 Library

The term 'library' has a broad definition for the purposes of this study. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* defines a library as 'an organized collection of books for reading or reference, for use by the public or by a specific group.' However, while books remain an important part of collections, libraries contain an increasing number of different information sources in a variety of formats. The term 'digital library' is also used throughout this thesis, reflecting the increasing importance of electronic sources. This concept is discussed further in Chapter One, Section 1.5.1. Furthermore, the term 'information and communications technology' (ICT) increasingly is being used to replaced 'Information Technology' (IT) and this thesis reflects this changing terminology.

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[8] For a discussion of the sampling methods used for the questionnaire see Section 2.3.3 (i). Further details about the interview participant selection is included in Section 2.3.5 (i).

Newspapers have formed an important part of library collections since the nineteenth century. Currently they are collected by a wide variety of information units and repositories, including public libraries, record offices, and newspaper office libraries. However, to avoid repetition, the term 'library' is frequently used to denote the variety of different organisations. Public collections are primarily the focus of this study, therefore private newspaper collections are not studied in detail. Academic libraries and their newspaper holdings are also not included in the study. There were several reasons for this decision including the fact academic libraries are not strictly public collections. It was also felt academic libraries would warrant a separate study, being funded differently to public collections. They also often have greater resources and increased access to facilities such as inter-library loan. The selection of institutions to be included as case studies is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, Section 2.3.6 (i).

0.4 Scope and context of the research:

While the research was undertaken broadly within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS), the background of the researcher was important to the study. As a graduate of a joint honours scheme in Information and Library Studies and History, and also having training in social science research methods, the approach sought to be cross disciplinary. The researcher was familiar with the methods used by historians, but also as a qualified librarian, was aware of the practical problems newspapers present in the library. The data was mainly collected using social science qualitative techniques.

The period during which the research was undertaken was also significant. The research started in 1995, and while much of the fieldwork was conducted during 1997-8, key developments in newspaper librarianship occurred in 1999. In particular the HLF award received by the NEWSPLAN project was highly relevant to the study and the developments were incorporated into the research.

The study used historians based in Wales as a sample population, however, it did not limit itself to an examination of Welsh historians. Although it became obvious that a higher percentage of historians based in Wales would inevitably be studying an aspect

of Welsh history, this limitation was set purely as a way of restricting the number of individuals to be consulted and not because of a belief that historians based in Wales were inherently different from historians elsewhere, although further research could reveal this to be true. A variety of types of historians were investigated: individuals had to be actively involved in research, consulting a variety of original sources, although they were not necessarily academic historians in a university environment. The study aimed to examine the differing needs of academic, local, family and other historians.

Following an initial investigation of the locations used by the sample population, a study of newspaper collections in Wales was undertaken. Consequently, the National Library of Wales (NLW) was important to the research, although as the main centre for newspaper collection in the UK, the BLNL was also central to the study. The study included publicly accessible collections, rather than public collections, so a newspaper office who welcomed outside researchers was included. Although the BLNL was not included in the case studies, its importance in co-ordinating newspaper collection policies in the UK was recognised. Consequently, the work was undertaken with the co-operation and collaboration of the BLNL and the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel.

0.5 Organisation of the study (chapter outline)

The organisation of the study could have been undertaken in a number of ways. However the arrangement of the chapters was felt to be most appropriate to allow the relationship between historians, newspapers and libraries to be fully understood.

In common with many studies undertaken within the social sciences, Chapter One comprises of a literature review and is presented first. The literature examining the issues relating to newspapers, historians and libraries, is examined to provide context for the study. Although each of the aspects have been examined individually, very few previous studies have examined the relationships between the issues. Studies of historians and their working methods have been undertaken,[9] although there is little specific work examining their use of newspapers. Similarly, only a small amount of

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[9] For example Margaret Steig, The Information Needs of historians, *College and Research Libraries* 42 (6), (Nov. 1981), 549-560. This article and other relevant literature is discussed in detail in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1.

literature examines newspaper collections in libraries. The chapter concludes that a study of this nature is both timely and relevant.

Again in common with theses in the social sciences, Chapter Two outlines and explores the research methods used for the data collection exercise. It also provides a rationale for the adoption of these methods. Social sciences methods were adopted, specifically questionnaires and interviews both to investigate historians. Case studies of newspaper collections were also carried out. In this way it was possible to understand the way in which newspapers are used by a variety of different types of historians. Furthermore, the research examined the way in which the newspaper collection influenced and ultimately shaped the historian's work.

Although the research for Chapter Three was undertaken towards the end of the project, this information is presented at this point, to provide current details of newspaper collection in Wales. The chapter examines two elements of this thesis, newspapers and libraries. Case studies of five different types of collections were undertaken and the research focused on the management structures and policies relating to newspaper collections. It also involves a consideration of the main users of these collections and their current and future plans with respect to information and communications technology.

Chapter Four presents the results and an analysis of the questionnaires and interviews, examining the newspaper and its use by historians. It considers the reasons for using newspapers, the types of information they are valuable for and the methods historians employ when using newspapers. This chapter seeks to examine the historiographical problems associated with using newspapers, therefore it avoids discussing the problems attributed to the library situation or the custodian's perspective. This chapter considers two elements of this thesis: historians and newspapers.

Chapter Five brings together the three issues of the thesis, examining historian's use of newspapers in libraries. It is based upon further results of the questionnaire and interviews and examines the types of collections visited by historians and the problems

they encounter. It also considers their attitudes towards bibliographic control, storage and preservation policies and the format of newspaper collections.

Chapter Six provides conclusions and recommendations for both historians and librarians. It seeks to identify the types of research for which newspapers are the most appropriate resource, and methods to facilitate more effective and appropriate historical research techniques. Understanding the information needs of historians is also of importance to newspaper librarians. Guidelines for local newspaper collections, to promote greater access and exploitation of the source, are provided. However, as the study will show, newspaper collection as an activity requires co-ordination at a national level. Thus, further recommendations, aimed at national policy making bodies, in particular the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel, are also presented.

Chapter 1

Historians, Newspapers and the Library: a review of the literature

1.1 Overview

A vast literature exists dealing respectively with each of the three elements examined in this thesis: historians, newspapers and libraries, but it is the relationship between them that is the focus of this thesis. Previous research has examined historians and their use of sources. Newspapers, and their role in the library have also been studied. However, the literature is dispersed between different disciplines and, as far as can be ascertained, the subject of this thesis has not been studied previously. This chapter attempts to draw together the available previous work, presenting an overview of the literature and placing the thesis in context. Furthermore, this chapter highlights key issues for the thesis and identifies areas worthy of further investigation.

A wide range of bibliographic sources were used to identify relevant literature. The methodology underlying this chapter is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two.[1] Given the different media structure in other countries, literature originating from the UK was most relevant. However, where more current or innovative work has been undertaken outside of the UK, this was examined. Furthermore, where British studies did not exist, other research was examined. Although date parameters were not set, literature produced since the 1970s proved more pertinent to the study. Since this date there has been a more sophisticated understanding of concepts such as user needs.

In order to discuss the literature, for reasons of clarity it has been necessary to arrange it into three main sections, although it was recognised that this division was somewhat artificial due to overlap between the three elements. Research examining historians is first considered, including user studies, to identify patterns of newspaper use and historiographical approaches to using newspapers as a source. The second section considers studies concentrating on newspapers, including a brief overview of press history. Furthermore, various interpretations of the role of the press drawn largely from media theory, are discussed. Finally newspapers in library collections are considered including: their history, role, issues of storage, preservation and exploitation and their future in the digital library.

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[1] See Section 2.3.1 for more details

1.2 Historians, evidence and the newspaper

The research behaviour of historians, particularly in relation to the ways in which they exploit newspapers as sources of historical evidence, will be the principal subject of investigation in this section. Historians have previously been examined as a category of information user in the LIS field, although the work has tended to focus on the research practices of professional academics. Reflections on the value of journalism as an historical source have also been conducted within the discipline of history itself, aspects of which will also be considered in the following analysis. Both the LIS and the historiographical approaches are germane to this study, and each will be considered in turn. However, it is first important to note one study, whose title suggested it may be highly pertinent to this research. *The Newspaper and the Historian* by Lucy Maynard Salmon appeared in 1923.[2] It provided a detailed examination of the value of the newspaper to the historian. Salmon, herself a historian, focused on the authoritativeness of certain parts of the newspaper while highlighting the more problematic information that the source contains. The work was a study of all aspects of newspaper content. It outlined the benefits and pitfalls of using them for research. However it was largely reflective in its approach and did little to examine use more systematically. Furthermore, it was not based upon empirical evidence and did not explore either the practical or historiographical problems of using newspapers. Salmon's study has not been widely cited and appears to have made little impact. Thus, while it has provided some guidance in the issues in need of exploration, Salmon's work was not central to this thesis.

1.2.1 User Studies of historians

The field of 'user studies' or 'information needs' provides some literature relevant to the research. LIS is a discipline that developed during the twentieth century, partly as a result of professional training for librarians, but also to help librarians understand the needs of their users and provide more effective services. Thus, the user needs study has been an important element of LIS research for many years, to help the librarian to understand their users and to determine the effectiveness of a service in meeting those

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[2] Lucy Maynard Salmon, *The Newspaper and the Historian.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923)

requirements. Maurice Line shaped much of the thinking in this field and defined information needs as: 'information [that] would further this job or this research, and would be recognised as so doing by the recipient.'[3] The user needs study attempts to identify the information needs of a defined group. The intention may be to evaluate current performance or provide recommendations to improve an information service. This can be done by establishing the type of information which a user or group of users require. Related to the user needs assessment is research to identify patterns of 'information seeking behaviour'. This has sometimes led to the construction of models of information seeking among groups of users, particularly in relation to evaluating electronic information retrieval systems. For example, Large, Tedd and Hartley identified six stages in the information seeking process, from considering what information is required through to implementing and reviewing a strategy for obtaining it.[4] The LIS discipline recognises that information seeking is a fundamental human function, central to life, thus research in this field is an important part of the discipline.

(i) User needs studies

Early user needs studies examined the use of information by scientists and social scientists. Techniques such as citation analysis were used in an attempt to make this research 'scientific'. In 1975 the British Library Research and Development Department recognised the necessity for this type of investigation to examine the needs of humanities workers.[5] Subsequently an important study was carried out by Corkill and Mann at the Centre for Research on User Studies (CRUS) at Sheffield University in 1978.[6] It consisted of a postal survey of over 800 university humanities lecturers in eight different disciplines, in England and Wales. The results recognised differing patterns of information need and seeking behaviour amongst the humanists, in comparison to earlier studies of natural and social scientists. History was one of the

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[3] Maurice Line, 'Information Requirements in the Social Sciences: some considerations', *Journal of Librarianship,* 1 (1) (January 1969) 1-19.

[4] Andrew Large, Lucy Tedd and Richard Hartley, *Information Seeking in the Online Age: principles and practice.* (East Grinstead: Bowker-Saur, 1999) p.32.

[5] D. B. Smith, ed., *Information Problems in the Humanities: a report on the British Library Seminar,* Report - British Library, Research and Development Department ; no. 5259, (Boston Spa : British Library, Publications Dept., The British Library Lending Division, 1976)

[6] Cynthia Corkill and Margaret Mann, *Information Needs in the Humanities: two postal surveys.* (Sheffield :Centre for Research on User Studies, University of Sheffield, 1978)

disciplines examined and the results suggested this group used a range of monographs and journals, relied on Inter-Library Loan systems and often required back runs or out of print material. Stone's 1982 article also provided an examination of the information needs, uses and seeking behaviour of academic humanities scholars.[7] It concluded that books and journals were the most frequently cited research materials, and that the originality of material was more important than currency. The study also examined the use of computer technologies and suggested they would become increasingly important in the future.

More recently, Watson-Boone's study of the information needs and habits of humanities scholars presented a useful overview of the studies in this field that appeared between 1983 and 1992.[8] It acknowledged the range of methodologies employed, for example analysis of Inter-Library loans requests, as in the case of a study by Broadus.[9] Budd and Cullars both respectively undertook citation analyses.[10] Additionally, questionnaires have been used by several researchers, including Broadbent's 1986 study and Lougee, Sandler and Parker's 1990 examination of humanities scholars.[11] Many of these studies focus on the use of books, journals, indexes, abstracts and computer databases, the material historians would term 'secondary sources' and there is little specific discussion about the use of newspapers. However, Watson-Boone characterises the humanities scholar as working in two particularly distinct ways. The first is the tendency to work alone and the second is the tendency to 'graze' which is characterised as:

> ... Not so much through collections, shelves or catalogs, as through the minds of colleagues and especially within

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[7]Sue Stone, 'Humanities Scholars: Information Needs and Uses', *Journal of Documentation,* 39 (Dec 1982), 292-313.

[8]Rebecca Watson-Boone, 'The Information Needs and Habits of Humanities Scholars', *RQ,* 34, (2), (Winter 1994), 203-216.

[9] Robert Broadus, 'Information Needs of Humanities Scholars: a study of requests made at the National Humanities Center', *Library and Information Science Research,* 9 (2) (1987), 113-29.

[10] John Budd, 'Characteristics of Written Scholarship in American Literature; a citation study', *Library and Information Science Research,* 8 (2) (1986), 189-211 and John Cullars, 'Characteristics of the Monographic Literature of British and American Literary Studies', *College and Research Libraries,* 46 (Nov. 1985), 511-522.

[11]Elaine Broadbent, 'A study of Humanities Faculty Library Information Seeking Behaviour', *Cataloguing and Classifying Quarterly,* 6 (1986), 23-47 and Wendy Lougee, Mark Sandler and Linda Parker, 'The Humanities Scholars Project: a study of attitudes and behaviour concerning collection storage and technology', *College and Research Libraries* 51 (1990), 231-240.

> texts ... all researchers graze to some extent, regardless of their research question. Yet for humanists, the combination of working alone and grazing may account for their belief that part of their creative work comes from directly "interacting" with the research material.[12]

The study also revised the portrait of this group of researchers, recognising that they had a wide range of research interests and that their information needs varied accordingly. Furthermore, it attested that where library services were failing to meet the needs of this group, user education was not necessarily the solution, for:

> ... Humanists will not use what they do not need ... we would provide better support to humanities scholars by laying aside our assumptions about training and about what researchers do and do not do, and going instead to the scholars themselves to learn about their needs.[13]

Nevertheless, specific studies of historians have also been undertaken, although they have tended to concentrate upon the needs and behaviour of academic historians. The research once again examined the range of sources used, rather than focusing on newspapers. For example, in 1967, in the US the Joint Committee on Bibliographical Services to History held at conference which recognised the need to understand more about the research habits of historians.[14] Guides to newspapers and serials were criticised for being out of date, incomplete, unreliable and hard to use. In 1972, Jones, Chapman and Woods examined the characteristics of literature used by historians, by undertaking reference analyses of over 7000 journal articles on English history.[15] The study encompassed both primary and secondary material. It also included two categories examining the use of newspapers. The first investigated London newspapers and found they constituted 2.5% of all references, whereas provincial and foreign papers made up 3.1%. The research concluded that 'history seems to fall somewhere between the humanities and the social sciences'[16] for its use of literature and the

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[12] Watson-Boone, p.212.

[13] Watson-Boone, p.213.

[14] Dagmar Horna Perman, ed., *Bibliography and the Historian: the conference at Belmont of the Joint Committee on Bibliographical Services to History, May 1967,* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1968)

[15] Clyve Jones, Michael Chapman and Pamela Carr Woods, 'The Characteristics of the Literature Used by Historians', *Journal of Librarianship,* 4 (3) (July 1972), 137-156.

[16] Jones, Chapman and Woods, p.152.

reliance on primary materials meant that currency was often not the primary consideration. Furthermore, it suggested that the wide range of materials used by historians, and in particular the use of unique items such as manuscripts, meant that often libraries cannot provide a comprehensive service for this group and that:

> ... If the needs of historians are to be satisfied, therefore an efficient and wide-ranging system of library co-operation is needed.[17]

The research anticipated that the establishment of the British Library (it was formed the year after the article was published in 1973), would bring about changes in this area and that through Inter-library loan systems, historians could gain access to unique or rare materials held in remote locations.

Shepherd examined a variety of sources used by the historian, including both secondary and primary material through the use of a postal questionnaire.[18] The survey concentrated upon academic historians in polytechnics in England and Wales, and built on the work of the earlier study of humanities workers undertaken by CRUS. It considered the types of materials used, the location of references, methods of obtaining material, as well as patterns of library use. The study also examined the type of research historians undertook and their use of computer technology. The section examining different types of material did not include a discrete category for newspaper use, therefore it is difficult to draw any conclusions about this. However, once again the group was found to have different patterns of information use largely because of the need to access unique material. Another study of British academic historians by Steig[19] also utilised the survey method. Difficulties were apparent when studying historians because of the diverse nature of individual research. Moreover:

> History is really an umbrella term covering a wide range of specialization that have little in common with each other but their method.[20]

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[17] Jones, Chapman and Woods, p.156.

[18] John Shepherd, *The Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Polytechnic Lecturers in the Subject Area of History*, British Library Research and Development Department Report: 5743, (Wetherby : British Library Document Supply Centre, 1983)

[19] Steig.

[20] Steig, p.550.

Steig's research asked historians to rank the value of a variety of different sources in their current research project. Newspapers were included as a distinct category and the study found they were the fourth most used format, with books, periodicals and manuscripts being cited before them. The study also found that access to newspaper collections was one of the most common problems experienced by historians, with insufficient indexes and guides and difficulties due to copies often being kept in storage libraries where access was a problem. Furthermore, Steig discovered that historians found newspapers difficult to handle, being bulky and liable to damage easily.

User studies suggest that the format of newspaper collections causes problems to historians who use them. Librarians have long advocated the advantages microfilm provides them - including the reduced storage space and its value for preservation. The benefits were first highlighted in the 1940's in Rider's monograph.[21] However, since this date, many studies have demonstrated that microfilm is an unpopular medium with users and the literature suggests that historians share this opinion. For example, in a general study of the information needs of historians, Steig found they complained that microfilm caused eyestrain and the equipment, particularly the film, could be of poor quality.[22] More recently Sweetland concluded that access time for material on microfilm was slower than hardcopy format.[23] Research examining historians' use of microfilm often mentions newspapers because of their wide availability in this format. Clearly some disagreement exists among researchers, as to the benefits and problems that this format cause. Microfilm causes specific problems for historians, who, because of the nature of their work often need to consult the original source. Stoller argued against the provision of large collections of microfilmed material, leading to a debate in this field.[24] However Bostick claimed that microfilm often makes material available that

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[21] Fremont Rider, *The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library : a problem and its solution,* (New York: Hadham Press, 1944)
[22] Steig, p.552.
[23] James H Sweetland, 'User Access Time: Hard copy and microfilm compared', *Microfilm Review,* 24 (3) (1995), 133-137.
[24] See for example Michael E Stoller, 'Large Manuscript Collection in Microfilm: is there a better way?' *Microfilm Review,* 20 (2) (1991) 51-56.

may not be otherwise be accessible. It also allows researchers to purchase material to work on privately.[25]

(ii) Historians and Information and Communications Technology

The actual and potential applications that computer technology offers the field of history are discussed in this section. Although they are not strictly user studies, they examine historians behaviour systematically. In the last decade the subject has gained limited recognition as a field of enquiry as part of the widening of the remit of academic history.[26] The Association for History and Computing (AHC) was established in 1987 and in 1989 a journal devoted to this subject was launched. *History and Computing* seeks to explore the applications of computer technology in historical research. With newspapers appearing in electronic formats since the early 1990s, research using newspapers could be revolutionised. Experiments with digitising retrospective collections have also been undertaken, however, to date, the journal has not specifically examined the use and value of electronic newspaper sources. Nevertheless, previous articles have investigated the possibilities offered by the digitisation of other historical sources and in 1993 a special edition was produced examining scanning and Optical Character Recognition (OCR) techniques and their value to historical research. Several monographs have also appeared in the field such as that by Mawdsley et al published in 1990.[27]

Research examining history and computing has led to the establishment of various groups, such as the History Data Service (HDS) based at the University of Essex. In 1998 a workshop examined the exploitation of digital resources by historians and the report entitled *Scholarly Exploitation of Digital Resources: a Workshop for Historians,* was made available electronically[28]. The participants met to explore, assess

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[25] Theodora P Bostick, 'Microform: one historian's indispensable assistant', *Microfilm Review,* 20 (2) (1991), 71-73.

[26] See section 1.2.2 for more details.

[27] Evan Mawdsley, Nicholas Morgan, Lesley Richmond, Richard Trainor, *History and Computing III : Historians, Computers and Data : Applications in Research and Teaching,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990)

[28] History Data Service. *Scholarly Exploitation of Digital Resources: a Workshop for Historians.* Colchester: University of Essex, 1997. Online. Available:http://hds.essex.ac.uk/reports/user_needs/final_report01.stm. June 1999.

and prioritise the information, to support and training needs of end-users in the historical community and to evaluate how and by whom, these can be best addressed. A number of the recommendations were relevant to this thesis. In general, it sought more recognition and increased funding to enable electronic resources to be created and used by historians. It also called for the creation of an electronic archive, directed by a central body with established standards in the field. However, perhaps of most interest to this study, was the recommendation for appropriate and discipline-specific training aimed at historians and their problems. The workshop also argued that there needed to be improved access to data. In 1999 the HDS produced guidelines for depositors of electronic information.[29] The guide to creating, documenting and preserving digital resources derived from historical documents, provides a reference work for individuals and organisations involved with, or planning, the computerisation of historical source documents. It was commissioned by the History Data Service and was part of the Arts and Humanities Data Service publication series *Guides to Good Practice in the Creation and Use of Digital Resources,* which seeks to provide guidance about applying recognised good practice and standards to the creation and use of digital resources in the arts and humanities.

This type of research demonstrates that some historians are keen to explore the potentials of information technology. However, historians in the AHC are aware that they are a minority amongst a wider group of more traditional researchers. Kevin Schurer, President of the AHC in 1997-8, was particularly concerned that the body has not made an impact on national organisations. Citing the recent decisions by the Public Record Office to establish a Electronic Records Centre in the UK, he noted that this was undertaken without consultation with the AHC, saying:

> Despite the centrality of both of these developments to the work that we do as computer-using historians, neither the IAHC nor the AHC-UK were formally consulted over these matters, unlike, for example, the Royal Historical Society and the Historical Association.

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[29] See Sean Townsend, Cressida Chappell and Oscar Struijve, *Digitising History: A Guide to Creating Digital Resources from Historical Documents,* Colchester: University of Essex, 1998. Available: http://hds.essex.ac.uk/g2gp/digitising_history/index.html. May 1999.

> In short, as a professional association, we are not always making an impact where it matters.[30]

Despite the endeavours of the AHC, the mainstream discipline of history has not embraced their innovative research techniques and ideas. User studies of historians also suggest that the group are rather traditional in their use of sources. However, LIS research has not examined historians since the early 1990s. Moreover, much of the research used quantitative methods whereas, more recently, qualitative methods are increasingly popular, in common with a shift in the social sciences more generally. From the available studies it can be concluded that newspapers are one of many sources the historian uses and they have not been studied in detail. Newspapers have particular problems associated with the use of microfilm by libraries. Thus, it seems appropriate to investigate this subject in more detail, particularly as digital newspapers become increasingly available.

1.2.2 Historiography and historical methods

Historiography, defined as 'the study of history-writing'[31], examines the ways in which historians work, in particular the questions they address and the principles whereby they identify, verify and use evidence in the construction of historical argument.[32] In effect, history as an academic discipline evolved during the nineteenth century precisely by developing a set of widely agreed procedures for evaluating source material. Early historiographical texts were concerned with the positivistic search for 'facts', underpinned by the belief that, once the appropriate documents had been located, the whole of the past would be knowable. More recently, historians have in the main adopted a more complex approach to historical sources[33], and have a more nuanced understanding of the multi-layered evidence which may be teased from them.

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[30] Kevin Schurer, *The AHC - Towards the Next Millennium.* [no date]. Association of History and Computing. Online. Available: http://grid.let.rug.nl/ahc/intern/dissdoc1.htm. June 1999.
[31]Oxford English Dictionary.
[32]For example J. J. Bagley, *Historical Interpretation 2: sources of English history 1540 to the present day,* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972)
[33] Since the 1960s, when the historians Elton and Carr clashed over their understanding of the nature of historical fact, debate has existed in this field. See Geoffrey. R. Elton, *The Practice of History,* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1967) and E. H. Carr, *What is History?* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1964).

Training in the critical evaluation of sources now plays a major role in the education of historians, undergraduate as well as postgraduate. The 'historical method' thus imparted insists that sources be approached cautiously, and interrogated broadly in the same manner and according to certain strict procedures. These include the accurate dating of a document, the verification of authorship, the reason or reasons for its existence, an identification of its intended recipient or audience, and the range of possible readings which may produce different types of evidence. Thus John Tosh[34] distinguishes between 'external criticism', where the authenticity of a source is tested, and 'internal criticism', where the content of a source is analysed. Such procedures may assist the historian to acquire a more dependable, or at least a more defensible, body of knowledge about the past. Moreover, it is now generally accepted that all historical sources are problematic, and that, where possible, historians should draw on, and cross reference, as wide a range of documents as possible.

It is also relevant to note the impact on history of Foucauldian discourse analysis and of forms of reading derived from literary criticism. In recent years, these have led to a 'linguistic turn' in some aspects of history writing, principally associated with such historians as Patrick Joyce, whose engagement with postmodernism has, for example, led to a revised interpretation of class relations in nineteenth-century Britain.[35] This 'paradigm shift' places even greater emphasis on text rather than social context, on past subjectivities rather than on some notion of a recoverable social reality. Joyce argues that by looking beyond class, the sources of social identity and imagery, such as popular politics and popular art, provide a more adequate vision of the working classes. Whereas Tosh regards the newspapers as the primary published source for the historian of the modern period, containing a wealth of material on a wide variety of topics, it is conceivable that the 'linguistic' and 'postmodern' turns in cultural history may draw many more historians to delve into the 'texts' of the newspapers and other 'ephemeral' forms of communication. This type of research has been undertaken by

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[34]John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History,* 2nd Edition (London: Longman, 1991) p.57.

[35] See for example Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: industrial England and the question of class 1848-1914,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Patrick Joyce, *Democratic Subjects : the self and the social in nineteenth-century England,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994)

organisations such as the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals who publish *Victorian Periodicals Review,* but often falls into the remit of English Literature, rather than history. It is perhaps surprising, therefore, that remarkably few studies of historical method devote much space or critical energy to the newspaper as an important historical source.

Clearly the press presents specific historiographical problems which have been raised by several authors, but not examined in detail. The 1978 monograph edited by J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, *Victorian Periodicals: a guide to research* is one useful source[36] Although a more general study of periodicals, it contains information about newspapers. It tackles some of the practical problems surrounding their use including bibliographic control and the identification of authors. The first chapter, entitled 'Why read Victorian periodicals - the rationale' considers a number of the historiographical issues associated with using this type of publication as a source. It concentrates on the Victorian period and as a study it is now over 20 years old, nevertheless it provides a useful starting point. A variety of issues are also raised by Harris in the opening paragraphs of his article examining the history of newspaper collecting.[37] He highlights the dichotomy between the press on the one hand being regarded as an ephemeral source, discarded once it is a day old, but on the other, being collected and stored by individuals and organisations.

(i) Newspapers as historical documents

History is a constantly evolving discipline. During this century the widening of the remit of academic history, and in particular the increasing importance of social history, has led historians to seek out new forms of documentary evidence. Historical research had traditionally relied on the records of large organisations, such as governments, estates and the church, which were valuable for the political historian. As historical questions changed, however, answers were sought from alternative sources. For instance, histories of individuals or social groups not reflected in more traditional

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[36] J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, *Victorian Periodicals: a guide to research,* (New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1978)

[37] Michael Harris, 'Collecting Newspapers: developments at the British Museum during the nineteenth century' in *Bibliophily,* ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris, (London: Chadwyck-Healey, 1986), pp. 44-62.

records required different sources to draw upon. The growth during the twentieth century of working-class history, women's history and black history, to cite three major examples, clearly reflects this broadening of the base of historical enquiry. Therefore, sources such as private correspondence, estate records and for the post-eighteenth century periods, newspapers, have become increasingly important for historical research. However, amongst some academic historians, the view has persisted that the press is a somehow less valuable source for research than, say, correspondence or official papers. This requires further exploration.

Newspaper historians were the first to use the press systematically as a source. During the nineteenth century, newspaper history became an important subject of enquiry. Arguably this was largely intended to elevate the social status of the press, and may also have raised its profile as a valid source for historical research. The literature in this field is discussed briefly in Section 1.3.1. However, it has often been regarded as unsophisticated and simplistic. Newspaper history has also often been criticised for its tendency to study the press in isolation and not to regard it in the wider context of social change. Far from highlighting the value of the newspaper, the development of press history may have led more traditional academic historians to retain an opinion of the newspaper as a low status source.

Press historians often attempted to highlight the importance of the press as a source for all types of historical research. Their studies have examined the content of the newspaper and often warn the historian that, like many other types of documentation, the newspaper was not intended by their producers to be an historical source. However, despite the more populist notion of newspapers as 'history's first draft,'[38] it took considerable time before the value of the press became recognised to any degree. In 1898 Chaney's article on the historical utility of the newspaper was perhaps the first attempt to articulate the growth in importance of this source.[39] The study by Salmon, discussed earlier in this section, appeared in 1923. However, neither of the

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[38] This concept is discussed in detail in Peter Hennessy, *What the Papers Never Said,* (London: Portcullis Press, 1985).
[39] J. B. Chaney, 'The Historical Value of Newspapers', *Minnesota Historical Society Collections,* VIII (1898).

aforementioned studies led large numbers of historians to begin using newspapers. In 1958 another historian, Read provided an overview of the value of north of England newspapers, outlining the types of information that they contain.[40] The author recognised the value of the local newspaper, while regretting its under-use by his fellow academics. He claimed:

> ... The great number of provincial newspapers has hardly begun to be explored either by national or by local historians. It is high time this omission was repaired. Local newspaper sources have something to contribute to almost every aspect of the local history and to many aspects of the national history of the last 200 years. [41]

Read's rallying cry to utilise local newspapers again fell largely on deaf ears, for over twenty years later Artley recognised the value of Yorkshire newspapers to art historians, again noting their apparent disregard by his contemporaries.[42]

These studies essentially focused on the value of newspapers for academic historians, but their usefulness has also been recognised by other types of historians. In particular there is considerable material that examines their value to local and family historians. Arguably this literature is not classified as historiography, but it is examined in this section as it was convenient and most appropriate. Family and local history has become increasingly popular and is largely undertaken by what could be called 'non-professional' historians. The literature often concentrates on a group of local newspapers in a given locality and while the practical problems associated with the use of the source are examined, the historiographical issues are not. An example is a study of Leicester newspapers by Greenhall which examines newspapers from one town within a narrow time period.[43] More general guides to using newspapers exist for local and family historians, such as the works by Park, Roberts and Green, Manders and

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[40] Donald Read, 'North of England Newspapers, c.1700-1900, and their value to historians', *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society,* VIII (1958), 200-215.
[41]Read, p.200.
[42]A. F. Artley, 'Yorkshire Newspapers 1740-1800 as a source of Art History' (MPhil thesis, Leeds University, 1970-1)
[43] R. L. Greenhall, *The Leicester Newspaper 1850-1874: a guide for historians,* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 1980)

Milne.[44] These studies often contain practical advice, including information as to where to find local newspapers and how to search them systematically.[45] This literature is frequently produced by local and family historians or societies. While these works are highly positive in their recognition of the value of local newspapers, the approach to their use is often basic and largely descriptive.

Despite several attempts by historians throughout this century to remedy the situation, the newspaper has been viewed somewhat sceptically as an academic source. Furthermore, the literature demonstrates that historians have made few attempts to devise specific techniques for handling and evaluating newspaper sources. While local and family historians have been more welcoming in their approach towards newspaper sources, literature from this field tends to concentrate on practical rather than historiographical problems. Clearly it is important to understand the differences in approach taken by academic and non-academic researchers to seek a more sophisticated understanding of the newspaper's role in historical research. This will enable the provision of guidance for using newspapers, valuable to all types of historians. Moreover, librarians will better understand the information seeking behaviour of the group and provide more appropriate services.

1.3 Studies of the press

Newspapers have been the subject of much historical scrutiny during the past century and a half. Yet, press history, understood as the study of the origins and growth of newspapers, while providing a valuable context for this thesis, contributes little to it by way of information or analysis. More recent studies, however, examining the development of electronic newspapers are relevant to this thesis. Furthermore, work undertaken by media sociologists on the relationships between press and society, may provide a more promising set of ideas which may be applied to the problems addressed by this thesis. The following section briefly examines the literature in these two areas.

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[44]Keith Park, *Newspapers and Family History,* (Aberdare: Family History Society, 1994) Jayare Roberts, 'Using U.S. Newspapers for Family and Local History', *Genealogical Journal,* 23 (1995), 45-56 and M. Green, F. Manders and M. Milne, Newspapers and Local History, *Local Studies Librarian,* 1 (2) (Summer 1982), 23-26.

[45]For example John Campbell-Kease, *A Companion to Local History Research,* (Sherborne: Alphabooks, 1989) and David Iredale, *Local History Writing: a manual for local history writers,* (Chichester: Phillimore & co., 1974)

1.3.1 Media History

A large amount of literature exists examining press history, or media history as the subject is increasingly known. Guides to the literature are available including the bibliography by Linton and Boston,[46] and Griffiths' *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press.*[47] For the nineteenth century, the bibliography by Dixon and Madden[48] is valuable and Linton provides an overview of the twentieth century.[49] In the past, press historians have had a tendency to regard the press in isolation. Studies have often fallen within the Whig tradition of historical scholarship, regarding a free press as the ultimate development in a democracy.[50] Nevertheless, more recently there has been an attempt to re-launch press history under the broader umbrella of media history, a subject which is currently gaining wider recognition. Nineteen-ninety eight saw the launch of the journal *Media History* from the ashes of its predecessor, *Studies in Periodical and Newspaper History.*[51] The first international conference held under its auspices, in July 1998, sought not only to integrate press and other media history, but also to accord the history of communications a more central place in the field of historical enquiry.[52] It was not appropriate to examine all the literature in this field, however a brief overview of the following areas is provided: national press histories; local press histories; studies of individual newspaper titles and individuals involved in the press; and the development of electronic newspapers.

(i) National press histories

The national or London-based press has been examined extensively.[53] The first attempt to produce a comprehensive history of British newspapers appeared in 1850 by

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[46]D. Linton and R. Boston, *The Newspaper Press in Britain; an annotated bibliography,* (London: Mansell, 1987)

[47]Dennis Griffiths, ed., *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press, 1422-1992* (Basingstoke : Macmillan, 1992)

[48]Lionel Madden and Diana Dixon, *The Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press in Britain : a bibliography of modern studies 1901-1971,* (New York: Garland, 1976)

[49] David Linton, *The Twentieth Century Newspaper Press in Britain: an annotated bibliography,* (London: Mansell, 1994)

[50]For example Stanley Harrison, *Poor Men's Guardians: a record of the struggles for a democratic newspaper press, 1763-1973,* (London : Lawrence and Wishart, 1974)

[51] This journal was the successor to the *Journal of Newspaper and Periodical History.*

[52]Media History Conference. University of Westminster. July 1998.

[53]See Aled Jones 'Local Journalism in Victorian Popular Culture' in *Investigating Victorian Journalism,* ed. by Laurel Brake, Aled Jones and Lionel Madden, (London : Macmillan, 1990) for the

Frederick Knight Hunt.[54] It was followed in 1859 by a two-volume publication by Alexander Andrews.[55] Since this date interest in the history of newspapers has been steady and numerous studies exist today, charting newspaper development from its origins in the seventeenth century, through to the present day. Despite being 20 years old, the work of Boyce, Curran and Wingate provides a useful and unrivalled overview of the subject.[56] However, most studies are more specialist, such as the literature examining the origins of newspaper publishing, and the development of newsbooks or 'corrantos' in the seventeenth century.[57] The relationship between the press, politics and society has also been the focus of many studies.[58] Furthermore, work has also examined the history of newspaper taxation, and the move towards the repeal of this legislation known as the 'taxes on knowledge.'[59] The impact of technology upon the press has also been studied, for example Northcliffe's revolutionary influence on newspaper publishing at the turn of this century and the changes in the 1980s following increased computerisation.[60] Although work on Britain has been undertaken, individual studies often examine England, rather than Scotland, Ireland or Wales. Notable

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changing definition of the national press. The newspaper market expanded so that a variety of publications were available and in the nineteenth century few newspapers could be characterised as anything but 'local,' for there was little distinction between the coverage of the London papers and those elsewhere. Certainly it would be incorrect to speak in terms of a 'national press' at this point and the flow of information between London and the rest of the country was fairly balanced.

[54]Frederick Knight Hunt, *The Fourth Estate: contributions towards a history of newspapers and the liberty of the press,* (London, 1850)

[55]Alexander Andrews. *The History of British Journalism, from the foundation of the newspaper press in England, to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855 with sketches of Press Celebrities,* (London, 1859)

[56]George Boyce, James Curran and Pauline Wingate, ed., *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day,* (London : Constable, 1978)

[57] For example Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper : English newsbooks, 1641-1649* (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1996) and Joseph Frank, *The Beginnings of the English Newspaper, 1620-1660,* (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1961)

[58]For example G A Cranfield, *The Press and Society : from Caxton to Northcliffe,* (New York : London, 1978), Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: newspapers, power and the public in nineteenth-century England,* (Aldershot : Scolar Press, 1996) and Robert Right Rea, *The English Press in Politics, 1760-1774,* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1963)

[59] For example Collet Dobson Collet, *History of the Taxes on Knowledge : their origin and repeal,* (London : Watts & Co., 1933) and Frederick Seaton Siebert, *Freedom of the Press in England 1476-1776 : the rise and decline of government controls,* (Urbana : University of Illinois Press, 1952)

[60]See for example Joel H. Wiener, ed., *Papers for the Millions: the new journalism in Britain, 1850's to 1914,* (New York : Greenwood, 1988) and Anthony Smith, *Goodbye, Gutenberg: the newspaper revolution of the 1980s,* (New York : Oxford University Press, 1980)

exceptions exist such as Jones' history of journalism in Wales,[61] and Oram's study of Ireland.[62]

(ii) Local press histories

Comprehensive studies of the local press are less common, although Cranfield[63] and Wiles[64] both provide useful accounts of the development and early history of the provincial press in England. Since the late 1960s the importance of the local press was more widely recognised, leading to several studies focusing on the contemporary local press of this period. In particular, studies exist that examine its role in the local community, such as Burke's 1970 study.[65] Jackson provided an examination of the provincial press and the community in his 1971 study, concluding that newspapers reinforce and support attitudes and values on which there is a consensus in the community.[66] Cox and Morgan studied the relationship between news, the local government and politics in the city of Liverpool.[67] However, perhaps the most influential study to emerge from this period is Murphy's 1976 study which emphasised the important role of the local press, but perceived that it was failing in its central duty to oversee local government affairs.[68] Meanwhile, Storry studied the local daily press, rather than the weekly press which had been examined previously.[69] He concluded that availability ultimately governed much of what was published in the local press. Franklin and Murphy provide the most recent account of the local press, following the consumer boom of the 1960's and 1970's which led to the tremendous growth in the

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[61]Aled Gruffydd Jones, *Press, Politics and Society: a history of journalism in Wales,* (Cardiff : University of Wales Press, 1993)

[62]Hugh Oram, *The Newspaper Book: a history of newspapers in Ireland, 1649-1983,* (Dublin : MO Books, 1983)

[63]G.A. Cranfield, *The Development of the Provincial Newspaper 1700-1760,* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1962)

[64] R. M. Wiles, *Freshest Advices: early provincial newspapers in England,* (Ohio State University Press, 1965)

[65]Roger Burke, *The Murky Cloak: local authority press relations,* (London: C. Knight, 1970)

[66]Ian Jackson, *The Provincial Press and the Community,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971)

[67] Harvey Cox and David Morgan, *City Politics and the Press: journalists and the governing of Merseyside,* (London : Cambridge University Press, 1973)

[68]David Murphy, *The Silent Watchdog: the press in local politics,* (Constable: London, 1976).

[69]T. Storry, 'The Local Press: two case studies in the production of news' (MPhil thesis, Leicester University, 1977) p.99.

local newspaper market.[70] The tendency for press historians to concentrate on national newspapers is accounted for by the fact that many authors were retired London-based journalists. However, more recently, general works have recognised the importance of the local press and often contain a separate chapter dealing with this subject, such as those by Seymour-Ure[71] and McNair.[72] However, there are problems associated with writing local press history given its variety, and this may account for the discrepancy.

(iii) Histories of specific titles and individuals

The problems of writing an overview of press history may also account for the large amount of literature tracing the history of specific titles. Dixon and Madden provide a list of studies of individual titles in their bibliography, demonstrating the large amount of literature in this field.[73] A long standing national title such as *The Times*, has a well documented history.[74] Studies of individual local titles or titles within a given geographic area are also available. These have formed part of local history for many years often being found in the transactions of these societies. They are also frequently undertaken on the anniversary of a newspaper's establishment. Another large body of work comprises of research examining editors, journalists and others involved in the newspaper industry. Again the Dixon and Madden bibliography also contains a listing of work in this field.[75] Famous press barons of the early twentieth century such as Northcliffe and Beaverbrook have been studied.[76] Prominent journalists have also been studied, as have proprietors and individuals involved with local titles.

The field of press history was useful as background for this thesis, however it contributed little to the particular focus of the study. It demonstrated that much of the literature examining newspapers is historical. The repositioning of press history into

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[70]Bob Franklin and David Murphy, *What News?: the market, politics and the local press*, (Routledge: London, 1991)
[71]Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting Since 1945*, (Basil Blackwell: Oxford, 1991)
[72]Brian McNair, *News and Journalism in the UK: a textbook*. (Routledge: London, 1994)
[73]Madden and Dixon, *The Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press in Britain*, pp.49-180.
[74] See for example Stanley Morrison, *The History of The Times*, (Volume 1) (London: The Times, 1935)
[75] Madden and Dixon, *The Nineteenth-Century Periodical Press in Britain*, pp.180-263.
[76] See for example Paul Ferris, *The House of Northcliffe: the Harmsworths of Fleet Street*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971) and A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, (London : Hamilton, 1972)

the wider field of media history may lead to a greater consideration of issues such as whether the media is like other historical documents. However, as yet this type of enquiry has not been undertaken.

(iv) The development of electronic newspapers

In studying newspapers this thesis recognises that the term has come to include certain types of electronic publications. Although no specific work has traced the development of electronic newspapers, the subject has been discussed. The advent of electronic newspapers is associated with changes in the newspaper industry following the introduction of new technology. Since the 1970's innovations such as computer type-setting have revolutionised production methods in the newspaper industry. Although in Britain the print unions initially resisted these developments, fearing the inevitable loss of jobs, the 'Wapping Revolution[77]' was the culmination of a process of increasing computerisation that had been in train for many years. Once newspapers were produced and stored in digital format, electronic distribution became feasible.

The need for current or news information in the commercial sector led to the appearance of what could be described as the first electronic newspapers. The introduction of online news service databases in the late 1970s and early 1980s is discussed by Walsh, Butcher and Freund.[78] They distinguish between full text news databases, such as Textline launched in 1980 or World Reporter launched in 1982, and reference/bibliographic databases such as BIS-Informat launched in 1981. Currently a wide variety of news databases are available via commercial online hosts such as Data Star and DIALOG. In 1997 Spencer provided an up to date listing of these services.[79] Some online hosts maintain an archive of material, for example the *Financial Times Full Text* database provided by FT Profile dates back to 1982. However, currency is often important for these databases, and services such as Knight-Ridder's Financial

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[77] This is discussed in both Brian McNair, *News and Journalism in the UK: a textbook,* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.130-136 and James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility: the press and broadcasting in Britain,* (London: Routledge, 1997) pp.102-105.

[78] Brendan Walsh, Helen Butcher and Alison Freund, *On-line Information: a comprehensive business user's guide,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987) pp.56-77.

[79] Nigel Spencer, *News Information: online, CD-ROM and Internet resources,* (London: British Library, 1997) p.1.

News Wire only maintain files for the previous ten weeks. These services are specialist, and cost often means they are not widely available outside a commercial environment.

The development of CD-ROM in the mid-1980s provided an ideal medium for distributing news information. Following the Wapping revolution, increasing numbers of titles used computerised page setting and thus the cost of producing a database on CD-ROM from these files was relatively low. The first CD-ROM newspaper to appear in the UK was the *Northern Echo* in Autumn 1990, closely followed by the *Independent* in 1991. Spencer records 14 British newspapers available in this format in 1997, including national titles such as the *Daily Mail,* and regional papers such as *The Western Mail* and the *Scotsman.*[80] Newspaper CD-ROMs are widely available in all kinds of libraries. They are full text format, although they do not recreate the page layout of the newspaper. Furthermore, the CD-ROM is often an abridged version of the printed title, with photographs and certain copyright material not included.

In 1995 the first newspapers were launched onto the World Wide Web. The number of titles available in this format has continued to grow rapidly since this date. Spencer[81] recorded that over 20 local and national British titles were available in 1997. The BLNL maintains a regularly updated list on its Web site, which recorded 86 local and national titles in the UK in June 1999.[82] One of the first set of titles to appear was produced by *Reed Regional Publishing,* who made their Lancashire titles available on the Web. These are now run by Newsquest and have a searchable archive dating back to September 1995.[83] The *Luton and Dunstable Evening Post* heralded itself as the first UK regional newspaper to publish exclusively on the Internet, with no printed version being made available simultaneously. However, more commonly the Web-version complements a printed edition with slightly different or abridged content. While several titles originally envisaged charging for access, increasingly information is

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[80] Spencer, p.17.
[81] Spencer, p.63.
[82] Christopher Skelton-Ford. *British Library Newspaper Library.* Hp. [no date]. Online. Available: http://portico.bl.uk/collections/newspaper/sources.html. June 1999.
[83] Newsquest Media Group. *This is Lancashire.* Hp. [no date]. Online. Available at: *http://www.thisislancashire.co.uk/.* June 1999.

freely available, although it may be necessary to register use at some sites. A number of the national newspapers offer a searchable archive facility, for example the *Guardian* can be searched back to September 1998. It is difficult to predict the long term impact of web newspapers on formats such as CD-ROM, however at the present time these services have had minimal impact on newspaper sales.

Electronically available newspapers have numerous advantages to researchers over printed titles. Primarily, online and CD-ROM publications have improved access to newspaper information, by facilitating full-text searching. Key-words can be searched, greatly enhancing the value of the newspaper as an information source. This facility is less-widely available for web-based titles. Nevertheless, some titles, such as *The Guardian,* and the Newsquest Lancashire titles offer such facilities and other titles may follow their lead. Online or Web-based newspapers also have the advantage of being accessible from the desktop. People living away from home can stay in touch with events by reading their local newspaper on the Internet.

Since the 1970s, the use of computer technology as a distribution medium has been perceived as a threat to the publishing industry, with individuals predicting the end of print. However, print on paper is invariably the most comfortable format to read and has numerous advantages in terms of convenience for recreational purposes. Increasingly the idea of technological change but not displacement, put forward by Crawford and Gorman, is recognised. Thus:

> ... Print did not destroy the oral tradition - it extended its reach. Cinema did not destroy live theater. Radio news did not destroy newspapers. Even television, which has apparently hurt newspaper circulations to some extent, has changed rather than obliterated newspapers.[84]

In 1994 the British local press was urged to 'greet the revolution' in a report published on behalf of the Newspaper Society.[85] The report investigated the uses of new technology by the local press, comparing the capabilities of various non-print news

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[84] Walt Crawford and Michael Gorman, *Future Libraries: dreams, madness and reality,* (Chicago: ALA, 1995) p.48.
[85] *UK Press Gazette* (26th September 1994)

distribution media, such as CD-ROM and Video on Demand, to the traditional printed format. It concluded that with some improvements, such technologies could at least equal the printed medium in terms of quantity, quality and speed of delivery of the information, and that newspapers should become involved in electronic initiatives to complement, rather than replace printed versions. The development of Web-based newspapers and their more recent moves towards providing a complementary or supplementary service to the printed edition, reflect this trend. For sustained research using newspapers, the electronic format would undoubtedly have numerous advantages, in particular enabling key word searching. These advantages are also discussed in Section 1.5.2. However, to envisage that the daily newspaper, with all its convenience, and after surviving the advent of both radio and television, will disappear seems unlikely. Crawford and Gorman are also sceptical of the idea of a *Daily Me*[86] newspaper, where individuals establish a profile of subjects in which they are interested and receive a personalised edition of the newspaper electronically. Aside from the difficulties of reading online, this idea would remove the central purpose of the newspaper, which should be to inform people of news and information about which they are not aware. While the electronic newspaper is important to this study, the literature (and common sense) suggests that it will add a new element to newspaper publishing, and is not seeking to displace the printed version.

1.3.2 Media Theory

No study of newspapers could be undertaken without some reference being made to the substantial body of literature which has emerged from the fields of media and cultural studies. The key issue in much of this literature is the role performed by the media in society and whether they reflect or influence society. This section outlines some of the important contributions to this field and recognises that the role of the press is subject to interpretation and debate. In order to evaluate sources adequately, it is important to understand their role However, this fluidity suggests that newspapers are unlike other historical sources and the need for guidance in this area is more apparent and significant.

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[86] This is discussed in *PC Magazine* 12, (15) (September 14, 1993) p.29.

Liberal theory has been highly influential in the early writings of press history, placing newspapers in an important role in the rise of modern society. As McQuail states:

> From the seventeenth century onwards, in Europe and its colonies, the newspaper was widely seen as either a tool for political liberation and social/economic progress, or a legitimate means of opposition to established orders of power (often both at the same time).[87]

Liberal theorists claim the press serves democracy in three key ways: by informing the electorate, scrutinising government actions and articulating public opinion. Press freedom is regarded as a property right exercised by publishers on behalf of society and market processes ensure that the press is free, diverse and representative. However, throughout this century disenchantment has been growing amongst theorists and the general public with regard to traditional conceptions of press freedom, and liberal theory has consequently been criticised.

Curran and Seaton identify the determinist and pluralist approaches to media theory as being dominant this century.[88] The former emphasises the media's relationship with the governing classes, arguing that it plays an important role in society. Meanwhile, through examining audience responses to media, pluralists concluded that other social pressures overrule any independent effect. Early determinists of the Frankfurt School perceived the rise of mass American culture as a failure of liberalism and regarded 'the function of the media, whether in the long run or more directly, as controlling the public in the interests of capital.'[89] Through empirical research the Frankfurt model was refuted by pluralists such as Katz and Lazarsfeld, who concluded that the media had limited impact on public opinion.[90] However, their findings have been criticised as pluralists ignored the fact that weaker groups were unable to contribute in this supposedly free market. The new determinist approach, in particular the work of Stuart

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[87] Denis McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: an introduction,* (Sage: London, 1994). p.123.
[88] 'The Sociology of the Mass Media' in *Power Without Responsibility: the press and broadcasting in Britain,* ed. by James Curran and Jean Seaton, 5th edn (London: Methuen, 1997), pp.264-286.
[89] Curran and Seaton, p.269.
[90] E. Katz and P Lazarsfeld, *Personal Influence: the part played by people in the flow of mass communication,* (New York: Free Press, 1955)

Hall, sees the media as having a key political role in shaping public understanding.[91] However, the overall interpretations provided by the media are the least challenging to those with economic power. Curran and Seaton regard Hall's explanation of class manipulation as being too mechanistic. Furthermore, they conclude that the pluralist and determinist approaches are not irreconcilable. Although the media has an independent influence on society, it is not in the sense often assumed:

> The media may not persuade the public directly: nevertheless they affect what people know and what they think is important.[92]

Thus, Curran and Seaton conclude that the relationship between the media and society is complex and yet to be explained satisfactorily.

Raymond Williams was among the first to articulate a redefined notion of what was meant by society. By insisting that '(w)hat we call society is more than a set of political and economic arrangements. It is also a process of learning and communication.'[93] Williams repositioned culture and media as central features of social relations. Others developed this underlying idea in different directions. Benedict Anderson, for example, writing about the development of nationalism in south-east Asia, identified the spread of print as a pre-requisite for a nascent national consciousness, and, furthermore, a means of 'representing' the kind of imagined community that is a nation.[94] The relationship between media and society is explored by the critical theorist Jürgen Habermas. In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* Habermas introduces the notion of the press as being socially constituted, by relating the concept of public opinion back to its historical roots in the idea of a public sphere.[95] He explains how shifting relations between state and society following a growth in trade and industry in the eighteenth century, led to the development of coffee-houses and an increasingly free press as a forum for exchange amongst the literate bourgeois public. The transformation refers to the altered relationship between state and society and:

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[91] See for example S. Hall. C Critcher, T. Jefferson, J Clarke and B. Roberts, *Policing the Crisis: mugging, the state, and law and order,* (London: Macmillan, 1978)
[92] Curran and Seaton, p.276.
[93] Raymond Williams, *Communications,* 2nd edition, (Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1976)
[94] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 2nd edition , (London: Verso, 1992)
[95] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* (translated by Thomas Burger), (The MIT Press: Cambridge, Mass, 1989)

> Whereas the press could previously merely mediate the reasoning process of the private people, who had come together in public, this reasoning is now, conversely only formed by the mass media.[96]

Thus, Habermas not only recognises the power of the modern mass media, but perceives a change in the relationship between press and society since its development in the eighteenth century. This change suggests that the historian using newspapers from the eighteenth century should adopt a different approach to someone using titles from this century. However, the literature in Section 1.2.2 demonstrated that such notions have yet to developed into historiographic thinking surrounding newspapers.

McQuail provides a systematic examination of how the press might in practice effect such social tasks.[97] By employing six metaphors, he explains how the press might be thought of as: a window, where it enables people to see for themselves what is going on without inference from others; a mirror of events in society; a filter or gatekeeper to select and block certain parts of experiences; a signpost, guide or interpreter pointing the way and making sense of things; a forum or platform for the presentation of information to an audience; or a screen or barrier indicating the possibility the media may provide a false view of the world. Thus, each metaphor has different implications on the value attributed towards newspaper information, and the ways in which that information may be interpreted and used. The salience of these theoretical reflections on the social power of newspapers for the present study is that they not only underline their utility, but also highlight their complexity, as a specific dimension of print culture. Whether newspapers are read as a current or retrospective source of information, the readers' own social, cultural or intellectual position will influence their response to the evidence contained within them. However, judging by the published guidance provided for historians of all categories regarding the use of newspapers as historical sources, the understanding of media theories which might enable historians to use the press with greater critical potential is far from being sufficiently sophisticated.

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[96] Jürgen Habermas quoted in William Outhwaite, *Habermas: a critical introduction,* (Oxford : Polity Press, in association with Blackwell, 1994) p.9.
[97] McQuail, pp.65-66.

1.4 Libraries and newspaper collections

Newspaper collections have been maintained since these publications first appeared. However, there has been comparatively little contemporary work examining this phenomenon, as noted in the only monograph on the subject.[98] Tracing a history of newspaper collections also proved problematic and suggested that there is the need for a comprehensive study in this area. More material exists documenting various newspaper digitisation experiments and the role of the newspaper in the digital library. The literature in these three areas was relevant to the study and will be examined in turn in this section.

1.4.1 Histories of newspaper collections

Whereas newspaper histories have often focused on the London and 'national' press, similarly, studies of newspaper collections have focused almost entirely on the developments leading ultimately to the establishment of the BLNL. However, the establishment of a national repository or archive for newspapers did not occur until the 1860s, and although many newspapers originated in the capital and were collected there, local collections have always been important. Therefore, it is important to consider both national and local newspapers and collections. Furthermore, it is also important to consider both England and Wales, despite the focus on Wales in other areas of this research. As Wales was relatively late to develop a newspaper press, and the British Museum was central in co-ordinating newspaper collection, the study would not be complete without examining the British context.

It is clear from the literature that no recent comprehensive study of newspaper collections in the UK has been undertaken and it is not within the remit of this thesis to undertake such a study. However, from the existing literature, particularly in the field of library history and press history, the key developments have been identified and provide the thesis with a historical context. A variety of sources were used to attempt to construct a brief outline of the establishment of newspaper collections outside London. The literature examining the development of a national collection is then

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[98] Lois N. Upham, ed., *Newspapers in the Library: news approach to management and reference work*, (London: Haworth Press, 1988) p.3.

discussed. The literature suggests that the collection of newspapers by public bodies was undertaken for a variety of purposes. Moreover, given that collections were often developed without an awareness of the needs of historians, it is unsurprising that this group experiences difficulties when using newspapers.

(i) The earliest newspaper collections

It is particularly difficult to trace the history of newspaper collecting before the establishment of the British Museum. An article by Michael Harris provides some information about this activity in the eighteenth century[99] and newspaper and publishing histories likewise offer some references. The 1662 Print Act stated that copies of each printed work were to be collected by the royal library and the university libraries of Oxford and Cambridge.[100] However, this legislation was only applied to monograph material and news publications were not included. Harris refers to several specialist centres which collected newspapers in the eighteenth century, and many coffee-houses maintained back-files. However, the survival of early new publications is largely attributed to the work of a few individuals. The most notable collector of newspapers was the London bookseller George Thomason, who built up a collection of two thousand volumes of Civil War publications now held at the British Library. His career and his motives for collecting the material have been examined by several library historians who recognise his foresight with regards to the value of these publications.[101] This was exemplified by his unsuccessful attempts before his death in 1666, to sell the volumes to the Bodleian Library. Not only did he believe the collection to be worth more than the Library was prepared to offer, he was also keen for the collection to be held at the royal library.[102]

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[99] Michael Harris, 'Collecting Newspapers: developments at the British Museum during the nineteenth century' in *Bibliophily,* ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Chadwyck-Healey: London 1986)
[100] Siebert, p.241.
[101] Notably Lois Spencer, The Professional and Literary Connexions of George Thomason, *The Library,* V (13) (1958), 102-118 and Lois Spencer, The Politics of George Thomason, *The Library,* V (14) (1959), 11-27.
[102] David Stoker, Disposing of George Thomason's Intractable Legacy 1664-1762, *The Library,* VI (14) (1992) p.338.

(ii) Eighteenth century local collections

Newspaper histories suggest that during the eighteenth century government legislation had the greatest impact on local collections of newspapers. With the introduction of the Stamp Act in 1712, newspaper offices were required to keep copies of their publications to calculate the duty owing on them. These copies were also kept partly to guard against libel actions. Many of these office files can now be found in public collections throughout the country. Wiles relates how copies of the *Gloucester Journal*, now in the Gloucester public library, were examined by the local distributor of stamps to calculate the advertisement duty owing as early as 1729.[103] Cranfield also cites many similar examples of office files dating from this time, that are now held in libraries, for example runs of the *Liverpool Chronicle* dating from the mid-eighteenth century are now held in Liverpool public library.[104] It is not clear if binding was undertaken to protect the paper during this period. However, Wiles mentions that the receipt of the Newcastle collector written in the margin of the 1741-2 copies of the *Newcastle Journal,* is now partly obscured by the binding, indicating the binding was not contemporary.[105]

Newspaper printers were not the only early collectors of newspapers. In his directory of the book trade published in 1785, John Pendred refers to Mr W Taylor of 5 Warwick Court, London, who is described as an 'Agent to the County Printers and Booksellers.' Taylor kept files of county newspapers which could be consulted by advertisers.[106] Furthermore, throughout the eighteenth century, newspapers formed part of the libraries amassed by numerous individuals. For example, a collection of the *Norwich Postman* was found in the library of the famous eighteenth century bibliophile, artist and poet, Horace Walpole, and is now held at McMaster University Library in Canada. Similarly, there was a small newspaper collection amongst the material gathered by Hans Sloane, that went on to form part of the British Museum

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[103] Wiles, p.156.
[104] Cranfield, p.230.
[105] Wiles, p.157.
[106] Graham Pollard, ed., *John Pendred: The Earliest Directory of the Book Trade,* (London: Bibliographical Society, 1955) p.xiii.

collection following the 1753 act of parliament.[107] Harris argues that newspapers were regarded as unimportant in these private collections, and that:

> Even in such large quantities the newspapers were on the fringes of the collection. For the most part only individual items and representative examples, usually of the earliest forms, were given space by serious collectors. Newspapers when accumulated in a great house are more likely to be located in the attics and cellars than in the library.[108]

Thus, during the eighteenth century, although newspaper collecting was undertaken, it was not usually an important or co-ordinated affair.

(iii) Nineteenth century local collections

Prior to the establishment of public libraries many of the political reform movements operating during this period recognised the importance of maintaining libraries. Groups such as the Chartists and the Anti-Corn Law League saw the industrial revolution had created an urban-based working class, living in appalling social conditions with little education and no political power. They associated this with the rise in social unrest and criminal behaviour, and regarded education of the masses to be the solution. Similarly, working class organisations such as the Mechanics Institutes' and Co-operative Societies established libraries to promote literacy. The literature in this field recognises the importance of newspapers in these collections.[109] Many had separate newspaper reading rooms where people could go to read the daily publications. Although the selection of newspapers was carefully controlled, the newsrooms often included newspapers with a broad spectrum of opinion. Later donations to public libraries also suggest that these organisations also retained back issues of newspapers to build up retrospective collections.

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[107] Arundell Esdaire, *The British Museum Library: a short history and survey,* (London : Allen & Unwin, 1946) p. 209.
[108] Harris, Collecting Newspapers, p.47.
[109]For example R. K Webb, *The British Working Class Reader: 1790-1848; literacy and social tension,* (London : Allen & Unwin, 1955), John Noyce, *Libraries and the Working Classes in the Nineteenth Century,* (Brighton : Smoothie Publications, 1974) and Jean Everitt, 'Co-operative society libraries and newsrooms of Lancashire and Yorkshire from 1844 to 1918' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1997)

Public libraries were established in England and Wales in the spirit of cultural improvement, following the recommendations of the 1849 Select Committee. Moreover, Ewart and Edwards, who spearheaded the public library movement, anticipated they would provide the working classes with suitable reading that could counteract the availability of cheap, immoral publications. Therefore, they certainly did not anticipate the formation of large collections of newspapers these organisations began to accumulate from an early date. The library historian Kelly, and more recently Black, suggest that during this period librarians were keen to provide newspapers to encourage greater numbers of readers.[110] However, this inevitably led to a conflict between the founders of the movement and library staff. In 1869 Edwards was critical of the 'overlarge provision of literature merely ephemeral'[111] at Liverpool reference library. Despite these concerns, newspapers played a significant role in late nineteenth century public libraries. Many libraries had newspaper reading rooms attached to them and provided daily newspapers for members of the public. Kelly tells how the range of titles in Newcastle upon Tyne library, a medium sized library, was extensive. In 1886 they provided '30 weekly or bi-weekly papers, 67 weeklies and fortnightlies, 72 monthlies, and 14 quarterlies, besides 3 colonial papers.'[112]

Public Libraries also recognised the value of acquiring retrospective newspaper collections. The sources of these collections were diverse. Kelly tells how many early public libraries often acquired material from 'defunct mechanics' institutes libraries, subscription libraries, and the like.'[113] Donations of private collections were also a common way by which early public libraries obtained material, and although newspapers were not mentioned explicitly, Brown bemoaned such donations in 1905, as often being filled with 'piles of unbound and ragged periodicals, old guide books, calf bound theology of the eighteenth century.'[114] Therefore, it seems likely that newspapers would be among such donations. Many titles came into existence in the

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[110] See Thomas Kelly, *History of Public Libraries in Great Britain 1845-1975,* (2nd ed) (London : Library Association, 1977) and Alistair Black, *A New History of the English Public Library : social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914,* (London : Leicester University Press, 1996)
[111] E. Edwards, *Free Town Libraries,* (London: 1869). pp.118-119 quoted in Kelly, *A History of Public Libraries,* p.45.
[112] Kelly, p.81.
[113] Kelly, p.188.
[114] J. D. Brown, *Manual of Library Economy,* (London : Scott, Greenwood & co, 1903) p.221.

late nineteenth century, however large numbers also ceased publication. The office files of these titles were also often donated or disposed of to public libraries or archives, as the holdings of these organisations show.[115]

(iv) Twentieth century local collections

While the storage of newspapers for research purposes became standard practice in the early twentieth century, the value of newspaper reading rooms in public libraries began to be questioned during the inter-war period, following the publication of two reports on public library provision. In 1924 the Mitchell Report found that 148 of the 424 libraries in Great Britain spent more on newspapers and periodicals than on books. Following this in 1927, the Kenyon Report recommended that expenditure on newspapers and periodicals should be kept to within five percent of the total.[116] Both reports concluded that excessive funds were being spent on newspaper collections. This trend can be partly attributed to the reduced cover prices of national daily newspapers that made titles more affordable. There was also a belief that newspaper reading rooms attracted less savoury characters and in the early part of the century it became common for libraries to black out the racing results of the titles they took, to dissuade their use for this purpose. Black believes that during the First World War, 'more utilitarian means of storing journals ready for speedy retrieval'[117] were developed, partly as a reaction to the concentration of press ownership. The decline of radical journalism may also have reduced the need for a large variety of publications in a newsroom.

The establishment of public record offices at a county level occurred from the 1930s onwards, however many were established after the Second World War. This created another public body who took on responsibility for the collection of newspapers. With the cessation of many titles during this period they received many donations from newspaper offices. Although libraries had traditionally been regarded as the ideal location for newspapers, being printed materials, many of the bound volumes were by

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[115] For example, Carmarthenshire County Archives have a set of bound volume copies of the *Carmarthen Journal,* which had been the newspaper office copies.
[116] The impact on newsrooms of both reports is considered in Kelly, pp.241-242.
[117] Black, *A New History of the English Public Library,* p.240.

now well over 150 years old and in need of specialist storage conditions. In some counties it was felt the newly established Record Offices were a more appropriate location for the collection. Nevertheless, the storage and location policies for newspapers varied between the counties and was often somewhat arbitrary in practice. Therefore many public libraries continued to hold newspaper collections in this period. No literature exists examining this phenomenon however, and so the observations can only be tentative.

(v) Newspaper collection in Wales

Newspaper collection in Wales was not undertaken in a systematic fashion until this century. The late development in comparison to England is unsurprising given that the first newspaper was not published in Wales until 1801, when the Swansea based publication *The Cambrian* was launched. A specific study of newspaper collections in Wales has not been undertaken, although the case studies discussed in Chapter Three have more details about developments in Cardiff, Carmarthen and Caernarfon. Evidence from the local history literature suggests that newspaper reading rooms were common in a variety of organisations. Lodwick describes how in 1820 in Carmarthen, a public reading room attached to the newspaper office of the *Carmarthen Journal* opened, containing London and provincial publications including daily, weekly and Sunday papers.[118] Similarly, the Carmarthen Literary and Scientific Institution was founded in 1840 and also had a newspaper and periodical reading room.[119] In South Wales, miners' libraries were particularly important and Baggs discusses the importance of newspapers in these collections.[120]

In London, Welsh titles were received by the British Museum from 1832. During this period the Cymmrodorion Society, a literary movement behind the establishment of a Welsh national library, also collected Welsh publications. However its collection, held at the Welsh School at Clerkenwell Green, did not include newspapers.[121] In Wales

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[118] Joyce and Victor Lodwick, *The Story of Carmarthen,* 3rd edition (Carmarthen: St Peters Press, 1994) p.298.
[119] Willian Spurrell, *Carmarthen and its Neighbourhood.* (Dyfed County Council, 1995, reprinted from 1879 edition) p.50.
[120] Christopher M. Baggs, 'The miners' libraries of South Wales from the 1860s to 1939' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1995)
[121] Jones, *NEWSPLAN: report of the NEWSPLAN project in Wales,* p.48.

newspaper collection was not undertaken at a national level until the establishment of the National Library at Aberystwyth in 1907. Along with the other legal deposit libraries, the NLW was granted the right to claim a copy of most British and Irish publications, following the Copyright Act of 1911. After this date it began to claim copies of all known newspaper titles published in Wales or relating to Wales. More information about the history of newspaper collection at the NLW is also found in Chapter Three, Section 3.2.3.

(vi) The development of a national collection

A substantial literature traces the early history of the British Museum and more specifically its library, following its establishment in 1753.[122] In the most recent publication on this subject P.R. Harris makes numerous references to newspapers in the British Museum library, although these are scattered throughout this somewhat lengthy monograph.[123] The BLNL now maintains a bibliography on their web site of more specific items relating to the history of their collection.[124] However, an article by Michael Harris is by far the most useful for the early history of the newspaper collection, demonstrating how 'the acquisition of newspapers was by no means a priority' for the Trustees of the Museum.[125] In 1762 the British Museum acquired its first collection of newspapers when the Thomason Tracts, which has previously been in private hands, were donated to the Trustees by George III.[126] The full value of this collection of Civil War publications was not however, recognised. Harris describes how by 1820 they were separated from the main library and stored in the entrance chamber to exhibition room housing the Elgin Marbles. Moreover, their second major newspaper acquisition, as part of the library of Dr Charles Burney, was not completed until 1818. Harris states that:

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[122] For example P. R. Harris, ed., *The Library of the British Museum: retrospective essays on the Department of Printed Books,* (London : British Library, 1991)
[123] P. R. Harris, *A History of the British Museum Library, 1753-1973,* (London : British Library, 1998) See in particular pp. 260-1, 271-3, and 376-8.
[124] Christopher Skelton-Ford. *British Library Newspaper Library.* Hp. [no date]. Online. Available: http://portico.bl.uk/collections/newspaper/history.html. June 1999.
[125] Harris 'Collecting Newspapers' p.48.
[126] For more details of the holdings of this collection see: British Museum. Dept. of Printed Books. *Catalogue of the Pamphlets,Books, Newspapers, and Manuscripts Relating to the Civil War, the Commonwealth, and Restoration Collected by George Thomason, 1640-1661.* (London : Printed by order of the Trustees, 1908)

> ...the acquisition of 700 volumes of newspapers, mainly London publications of the eighteenth century, was apparently little more than a side effect of the purchase of his notable collection of books in Greek and Latin[127]

Newspapers began to be collected more systematically from the early nineteenth century and there is considerable literature available on the subject.[128] The legislation relating to newspaper taxation was extended in 1798 and 1819, and stated that the Commissioners of Stamps were obliged to hold all copies for two or three years. However, the number of titles published grew enormously during this period and it was not practical for the collection to be stored permanently at the Stamp Office. Therefore, in 1822 it was felt appropriate to deposit the London newspapers at the British Museum after three years. This policy was extended to include English and Welsh provincial newspapers in 1832, and Irish and Scottish titles in 1848. This policy represented the beginning of the national newspaper archive, however it seems at this point there was a limited appreciation of the value of collecting these titles.

Several authors recognise the contribution of the Principal Librarian Antonio Panizzi, towards launching what Harris describes as a 'new dimension in newspaper collecting,' by seeking to extend the range of titles.[129] Studies also highlight the importance of the extension of the Copyright Act in 1869 to include newspapers. However, the policies established by Panizzi and the legislation caused a constant problem to the Trustees of the Museum throughout the nineteenth century, as the newspaper collection grew enormously. Storage space became a recurring problem and several solutions were offered. The literature demonstrates that the development of a national newspaper repository was not an inevitability. The sheer size and expense of the newspaper collection led to serious questioning of the rationale behind its collection, particularly during a period when the quality of journalism was subject to much criticism. On several occasions proposals to limit the newspaper collection were put forward, for

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[127] Michael Harris 'Collecting Newspapers' pp.48-49.
[128] For example Eamon Dyas, 'The Early Development of the Newspaper Library', *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter*, 10 (June 1989) and Geoffrey Hamilton, 'The British Library Newspaper Library' in *The Encyclopaedia of the British Press 1422-1992*, ed. by Dennis Griffiths (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 638-640.
[129] Michael Harris 'Collecting Newspapers' p. 51.

example in 1870, when Earl Stanhope proposed that only a selection of titles should be retained.[130] This proposal was rejected and in 1881 a specially constructed newspaper reading room was opened at the British Museum in Bloomsbury. However, space soon became a problem again and in 1900 when congestion became acute, a Bill was brought into Parliament with the intention of transferring the responsibility for local newspaper collections to local authorities.[131] Once again this Bill failed, and finally in 1902 the Museum obtained permission to hold the newspaper collection in a subsidiary repository. Harris maintains that:

> The principal support of the newspapers, and the force which probably kept them on the Bloomsbury premises so long, was the demand of the readers.[132]

The history of the library at Colindale is well documented.[133] In 1903 the site in north London was acquired and many of the provincial titles were transferred here. However, during these early years Colindale was purely a repository and readers continued to consult material at the Bloomsbury site. Harris describes how a van transported newspapers once a week to and from the repository.[134] By the mid-1920s the repository was full and newspapers were once again taking up valuable space at the Bloomsbury site. Thus, in 1928 the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries recommended the erection of a purpose-built newspaper library, with facilities for readers, at the site. The new building was completed in 1932 and contained a public reading room, a bindery and an additional storage building. Harris describes how eleven miles of shelving were added to the previously existing three miles.[135] Almost all the newspapers from the British Museum were transferred there at this date, with a few exceptions, such as the pre-1801 collections.

The BLNL has become a world centre for research into issues of newspaper storage, preservation and access. It has played an important role in pioneering microfilming

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[130] P. R. Harris. *The Library of the British Museum,* p.53.
[131] P. R. Harris. *The Library of the British Museum,* p.53.
[132] M Harris. 'Collecting Newspapers'. p.55.
[133] See S.Gillies, '90 years of Colindale', *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter*, 20 (1995), 9-11, A. Day, *The New British Library* (London: Library Association Publishing, 1994) pp. 99-108 and E. Ellis 'The British Library Newspaper Library 1973-1986' (MA thesis, Loughborough, 1986)
[134] Harris. *A History of the British Museum Library.* p.378.
[135] Harris. *A History of the British Museum Library.* p.472.

techniques, obtaining their first microfilming camera in 1948. The fragility of the bound volumes had been highlighted during the Second World War, when in 1940 a bomb fell on the 1903 repository building. A large number of the English provincial titles from the nineteenth century were destroyed: in total about 10,000 volumes and a further 20,000 were damaged. Consequently, one of the first collections to be filmed were the bomb damaged titles. The Thomason and Burney collections were also microfilmed very early on to allow researchers to use them without causing damage to the original.

1.4.2 Modern newspaper collections in libraries

Despite the prevalence of newspapers in libraries, and the problematic nature of newspapers as a source, there has been little research in this field. Studies examining the role of newspapers in the library emanate mainly from the US. They are often descriptive in nature, offering very little by way of empirical research. Newspapers in the Library[136] is the only monograph examining this subject, consisting of a series of papers examining the use and handling of the source. The study was over ten years old at the time of writing this thesis and largely written for a US audience, however it still provides valuable information for both the newspaper librarian and user. The value of newspapers to a range of users is examined and their importance in historical research is discussed. Furthermore, the study explores difficulties of locating newspaper collections and the importance of systematic bibliographic control. The role of microfilm as a preservation format is discussed and there is a recognition of the need for newspaper librarianship training and education. The papers examining the potentials of new technology now appear particularly dated, however they demonstrate some attempts to solve the primary management problems associated with newspaper collections. Many of the papers from this study are discussed in greater detail in the appropriate section below.

(i) Public collections in the UK

Developments in public newspaper collections from the 1960s to 1985 are briefly outlined by Gibb, although much of his article concentrates on the launch of the

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[136]Upham, *Newspapers in the Library.*

NEWPSLAN project and changes at the BLNL in the early 1980s.[137] Similarly, Hamilton describes newspaper collections of the 1980s, recognising that:

> Newspapers are difficult material to organize in libraries. There is a fundamental dilemma ... They are designed to have a mayfly existence, but they typically have a limited life as a reference or research material.[138]

A variety of public and private institutions in Britain currently hold newspaper collections, including, the British Library, National Libraries of Wales, Scotland and Ireland, public libraries, public record offices, newspaper office libraries, academic libraries and private collections. The BLNL receive the majority of newspaper publications through legal deposit and much of the expertise for the storage, preservation and exploitation of newspapers in the UK remains here. Collections in libraries are beginning to reflect the changing nature of the source, with the introduction of CD-ROMs and Internet access in the late 1990s. However, at a local level there is a need for clearer policies with regard to the collection of newspapers. Despite the closure of the 'newsrooms', public libraries continue to take current newspapers, albeit in reduced numbers. However, as this study will show, a marked distinction between the status of this collection and the retrospective titles has developed and the collection is often not managed as a single unit.

In 1975 a British Library sponsored research report examined the collection of periodicals and newspapers with a view to sharing collections, to avoid duplication of effort.[139] This was followed in 1989 by a study entitled 'Selection for Survival' published by the British Library[140] and numerous discussion between the Copyright Librarians and the Copyright Libraries Working Group between 1991 and 1994. In

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[137] Ian Gibb, 'Newspaper collections in libraries' in *British Librarianship and information work 1981-1985. Volume Two: Special libraries, materials and processes,* ed. by David Bromley and Angela Allott. (London: Library Association, 1988), pp.36-42.
[138] Geoffrey Hamilton 'Newspapers and newspaper libraries' in *British Librarianship and Information Work 1986-1990. Volume Two: Special libraries, materials and processes,* ed. by David Bromley and Angela Allott. (London: Library Association, 1993), pp.41-57.
[139]B Houghton, *Rationalisation of Serial Holdings and the Use of the British Library, Lending Division (BLLD): final report for the period March 1973-August 1974,* report to British Library Research and Development Department on project SI/G/046, (January 1975)
[140]Brian Enright, Lotte Hellinga and Beryl Leigh, *Selection for Survival: a review of acquisition and retention policies,* (London: British Library, 1989)

1997 the British Library undertook a review of the policy and arrangements for the legal deposit of printed material.[141] The recommendations could lead to substantial changes in newspaper collection and was partly prompted by changes in the press and developments such as the introduction of free newspapers.[142] The recommendations demonstrate the importance attributed to electronic sources, including a carefully costed programme for the selective digitisation of heavily used back files, and the use of microfilm or electronic forms of British and Irish national newspapers. A policy of sharing the collection of national titles between the British Library and National Libraries of Scotland and Wales was also suggested. It was also recommended that formal responsibility for Scottish and Welsh titles should be transferred to the respective national libraries. Finally the Library was advised to cease collecting newspapers which are primarily advertising journals. These recommendations were scheduled to be implemented in 1998-1999, however this would not be undertaken without consultation with interested parties, such as the Newspaper Society, other Copyright Libraries and representatives of the NEWSPLAN project. The review appeared at a similar time to a report from the Department of National Heritage, stressing the need to update the Copyright legislation, so that it should include non-print materials.

(ii) Media Libraries

A considerable amount of literature exists examining the work of newspaper and other types of media libraries.[143] While these libraries have adopted a variety of techniques to exploit newspaper sources, their primary purpose is to serve the particular needs of journalists. Thus, the material is only of marginal relevance to this thesis. Whatmore described how cuttings taken from newspapers can be arranged under subject headings.[144] He recognised the value of organising information in this manner to

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[141] Michael Smethurst. *A review of the policy and arrangements for the legal deposit of printed material in the British Library.* London: The British Library, 1997. Online. Available: http://www.bl.uk/information/legal.html. June 1999.

[142] In 1998 the British Library also commissioned research examining the collection of primarily advertising journals which advocated the retention of free newspapers.

[143] For example Joseph Lewis, *Newspaper Libraries.* (London :Library Association, 1952) and David De'ath, 'A survey of newspaper libraries and their problems'(MSc thesis, City University, 1977)

[144] Geoffrey Whatmore, *News Information: the organization of press cuttings in the libraries of newspapers and broadcasting services,* (London : Crosby Lockwood, 1964)

facilitate quick access for individuals searching for subject-based information. A more recent study, edited by Semonche, also examined news media libraries.[145] While this study includes more recent developments in computer technology, once again the focus is on newspaper office libraries. Consequently, the literature in this field is of limited relevance to the study and does not examine the problems of maintaining retrospective collections.

(iii) Bibliographic control of newspapers

The need for adequate bibliographic control was the first recognised problem associated with maintaining newspaper collections. In the nineteenth century the huge expansion in the number of titles, prior to the repeal of the Stamp Act, made it increasingly difficult for advertisers to obtain current newspaper information. Thus, commercial newspaper directories, first published in 1846, provided access to this information. Charles Mitchell's *Newspaper Press Directory* was aimed primarily at advertisers, and provided an annual listing of the newspapers of the UK, including price, date established and political affiliations. It continues today as *Benn's Media Directory.* Similarly *Eyre's Guide* appeared in 1848. Following the legislative reforms of 1855 and 1861, information such as circulation figures which had been contained in the Stamp Returns, had to be sought elsewhere. Consequently, Jones[146] argues that this prompted the publication of increasing numbers of press directories in the later nineteenth century, such as those published by Browne[147] in 1896 and Wightman[148] in 1887. During this period there were also attempts to improve access to the contents of newspapers. This was partly connected to a recognition that they contained valuable historical information.

Following the more systematic collection of newspapers and an increasing recognition of their value, the early twentieth century witnessed attempts to identify and locate retrospective collections of newspapers. The first initiative in the field came from the press industry itself, when *The Times* published a handlist of English and Welsh

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[145] Barbara P. Semonche, ed., *News Media Libraries: a management handbook,* (Westport, Conn. : Greenwood, c1993)
[146] Jones, *Powers of the Press,* p.69.
[147] T. B. Browne. *The Advertiser's ABC,* (London, 1886)
[148] H. Wightman, *List of Newspapers in Lancashire, Yorkshire and Cheshire,* (London: 1887)

newspapers in 1920.[149] Additionally, listings were produced by historians who had used the press heavily. In 1952, the historian of the provincial press, G.A. Cranfield produced a handlist of English provincial newspapers and periodicals for the period 1700-1760. He subsequently supplemented this in 1958 and 1962 and provided information concerning the title, place of publication, date of publication and location details of surviving copies.[150] The need for comprehensive bibliographic control and guides to locating titles was also articulated in 1954 by the press historian, Stanley Morrison, who recognised the need for a comprehensive guide to the location of newspaper collections, to assist the work of the historian.[151]

Since the 1970s, improving the bibliographic control of newspapers has become increasingly important. In 1973 Dixon recognised it remained difficult to establish the extent of collections at a local level and produced another checklist.[152] In 1975 a printed catalogue of the BLNL's holdings was produced. This catalogue became widely available in libraries and led to greater exploitation of the collection.[153] However, despite the publication of this catalogue, in his study of newspapers in public libraries in the early 1980s, Hovish examined the bibliographic control of newspapers, and concluded that there was a need for standardisation in this area.[154] A 1987 publication, produced for the *Federation of Family History Societies* provided further details of local newspaper holdings in England and Wales, in an attempt to supplement available information.[155]

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[149] *Tercentenary Handlist of English & Welsh Newspapers, Magazines & Reviews,* (London : *The Times*, 1920)

[150]G. A. Cranfield, *A Handlist of English Provincial Newspapers and Periodicals 1700-1760.* (Cambridge: Cambridge Bibliographic Society, 1952) Monograph 2 (Supplemented in 1958 and 1961)

[151]Stanley Morrison, The Bibliography of Newspapers and the Writing of History, *The Library* Fifth Series, IX (3), (Sept 1954) 56-67.

[152] Diana Dixon, *Local Newspapers and Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century: a checklist of holdings in provincial libraries,* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 1973)

[153] British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale, *Catalogue of the Newspaper Library, Colindale,* (1975)

[154] Joseph Hovish, 'The local newspaper in the British public library: problems of storage, bibliographic control and exploitation' (M.Lib Thesis, University of Wales, 1983) pp.221-222.

[155]J. Gibson, *Local Newspapers 1750-1920: England and Wales, Channel Islands and Isle of Man: a select location list,* (Birmingham: Federation of Family History Societies, 1987).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s the British Library became increasingly aware that there was a lack of standardisation in the field of newspaper bibliographic control. This led to the launch of the *Bibliography of British Newspapers,* a project co-ordinated at a county level.[156] To date, six volumes have been produced covering eight counties including Wiltshire, Kent, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Durham and Northumberland and Devon and Cornwall.[157] Each volume lists newspapers according to the main area of news coverage, or principal area of circulation and arrangement is chronological, by date of the first issue. Each entry provides details of the place of publication, details of a complete file and locations of copies in libraries, publisher's office, record offices etc., in the UK and abroad. The bibliography also records the existence of any historical accounts of the newspaper and any indexes that exist or are the process of being constructed. Unfortunately to date the bibliography is incomplete. However, attempts to standardise cataloguing of newspapers were hastened in 1990, with the production of guidelines in this area, by the IFLA Working Group on Newspapers.[158]

Another project which has also improved the bibliographic control of newspapers is NEWSPLAN. This project primarily sought to microfilm and preserve local newspapers, although it has also made them accessible to users, by identifying the location of collections. It is discussed in greater detail in Section (vi).

(iv) Preservation of newspapers

When discussing newspapers in the library, the greatest amount of literature examines preservation issues. Newspapers are ephemeral sources, printed on cheap paper that is not intended to survive indefinitely. This presents obvious problems when they are transferred to a library. For this reason general literature examining the preservation of library materials is often preoccupied with newspapers. For example, Swartzburg discusses newspapers in a chapter on special materials in the library and examines the

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[156] The impetus for the project actually came from the Reference, Special and Information section of the Library Association who continue to edit it (now the Information Services Group).
[157]For example Michael Brook, ed., *Bibliography of British newspapers - Nottinghamshire,* (London : British Library, 1987) and Winifred F. Bergess, Barbara R. M. Riddell, John Whyman, ed., *Bibliography of British newspapers - Kent,* (London : British Library, 1982)
[158] H. Komorous and R. B. Harriman, *International Guidelines for the cataloguing of newspapers.* (Bowker-Saur: East Grinstead, 1990, UBCIM occasional paper, 14)

specific problems associated with their preservation.[159] Whilst newspapers from the eighteenth century were printed on high quality paper made from rags and are not subject to particular problems of deterioration, wood-pulp paper, on which newspapers have been printed since the mid-nineteenth century, causes difficulties. Newsprint is highly sensitive to heat, humidity, air pollutants and light, not to mention handling by users. The paper can easily become brittle and tends to crumble away. Various techniques are now available to treat paper to extend durability and carefully controlled storage conditions in repositories helps preserve sources. For many years newspapers were bound into volumes to increase their lifespan. However, increasingly microfilm has become the standard preservation format, and few libraries undertake binding as the prime means of preserving newspapers. Consequently a considerable amount of literature has examined the use of microfilm.

Commercial microfilming has been available since the 1930s. In 1942, following a recognition of deteriorating collections, the Library of Congress in the US launched a Photoduplication Service of microfilming newspapers. In the UK, The BLNL is the leading research centre in issues relating to newspaper preservation. The fragility of the collection was highlighted during the Second World War. Microfilm provided a solution and a means of preserving information and reducing necessary storage space. The Library obtained its first microfilming camera in 1948. One of the first collections to be filmed was the bomb-damaged collection of titles. The eighteenth century Thomason and Burney collections were also microfilmed to allow researchers to use them without causing damage to the original. In a survey of practice in British libraries undertaken in 1995, 32% used microform for preservation purposes, mainly to provide access to newspapers.[160] However, Lund identified three difficulties that 'threaten the permanence of newspaper collections.'[161] These included: a lack of training amongst librarians in newspaper preservation techniques, a need for established microfilming

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[159] Susan Swartzburg. *Preserving Library Materials.* 2nd edition. (Metuchen, N.J, : Scarecrow Press, 1995) pp.161-165.

[160] John Feather, Graham Matthews, and Paul Eden. *Preservation Management: policies and practices in British libraries.* (Aldershot : Gower, 1996) p.88.

[161] Thomas D. Lund, 'The physical aspects of newspaper collection management: some problems and their solutions' in *Newspapers in the Library;* ed. Upham. p.30.

standards and the need to store microfilm appropriately to ensure it survives. Thus, during the 1980s attempts to rectify this problems led the British Standards Institution to produce a specification for microfilming newspapers for archival purposes.[162]

At an international level the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) formed a Working Group on newspapers in 1980. IFLA has held several conferences and produced publications that deal with newspaper preservation issues, for example, the International Symposium on Newspaper Preservation and Access which published its report in 1987.[163] More recently preservation discussions have explored the potential of digitisation. The literature in this field is discussed in Section 1.4.3.

(v) The NEWSPLAN Project

In the UK, the NEWSPLAN project, launched in 1983, has increased awareness of the issues surrounding newspaper preservation. The project partly originated from a concern about the fragility of many local newspaper collections outside the British Library. It also part of the British Library's recognition of the need to address the problems of bibliographic control and access to newspaper collections.[164] Consequently, the project identified preservation activity via microfilming already undertaken, and recommended priorities for that which was still required. The project was a co-operative programme between public libraries, the British Library and the National Libraries of Scotland, Ireland and Wales. In England it was co-ordinated through the regional library systems. The National Libraries of Scotland, Ireland and Wales took responsibility for their respective countries, with a separate Implementation Committee for Northern Ireland. The first phase of the project was completed successfully in 1996, comprising of ten reports and providing a comprehensive listing of UK and Irish local newspapers, with information on their extent, gaps, condition and location.[165] NEWSPLAN is a Panel of the Library and Information Co-operation Council (LINC). John Byford, Head of the BLNL 1997-9

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[162] BS5847. 1980

[163] Susan Garretson Swartzburg, *International Symposium on Newspaper Preservation and Access : report,* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University, 1987)

and the Panel's Secretary, recognised that NEWSPLAN is 'seen as a model for co-operation between libraries in the United Kingdom.'[166]

Within each of the NEWSPLAN regions an implementation committee was set up to co-ordinate programmes of microfilming, in accordance with the priorities and recommendations of the published reports. Library authorities were encouraged to adopt a funding formula of one per cent of their bookfund to be allocated each year to the preservation microfilming of newspapers. Much of the microfilming has been undertaken at the BLNL. It is estimated that since the late 1980s over 14,000 reels of microfilm have been filmed on behalf of NEWSPLAN participants, as well as a similar amount of current local newspapers filmed on a standing order basis. Since 1992, the BLNL has offered a concessionary rate for NEWSPLAN microfilming in recognition of the importance of NEWSPLAN and the contribution which the work makes to the preservation of our own collections. In the early 1990s, the possibility of funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation of New York led to an increased emphasis upon microfilming standards, to ensure archival quality and longevity. The published Mellon microfilming manual was of considerable assistance,[167] however, Guidelines for the Microfilming of Newspapers were prepared and published under the auspices of NEWSPLAN in 1994.[168]

Arguably NEWSPLAN has raised awareness of the problems of access to newspaper collections. Reid recognised the contribution of the NEWSPLAN project to

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[164] The first volume of the *Bibliography of British Newspapers* was published in 1975 and a British Library internal Working Party on Access to Newspapers was established in 1979.

[165] For example see Alice Mackenzie, *NEWSPLAN: report of the Newsplan project in Scotland,* (London : British Library, 1994) or David Parry, *NEWSPLAN: report of the Newsplan project in the Northern Region*, (London : British Library, 1989)

[166] John Byford, 'NEWSPLAN's one per cent of the first millennium; a singular success,' in *NEWSPLAN, Millennia and grids: The digital challenges.* Proceedings of the 3rd National NEWSPLAN conference held at the Royal County Hotel, Durham, 16 and 17 March 1998. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Information North, 1998), p.9.

[167] *Mellon Microfilming Manual,* (London: Mellon Microfilming Project, National Preservation Office, British Library, 1992)

[168] Jennifer MacDougall, *NEWSPLAN: guidelines for the microfilming of newspapers* (Dublin: National Library of Ireland, 1994; London : British Library, 1994)

bibliographic control, however concluded that the BLNL remains the most important centre for newspapers in Britain and locating titles not held there is still problematic.[169] Feather also maintains that NEWSPLAN highlighted newspaper preservation issues, stating:

> There can be no doubt of the central importance of NEWSPLAN in making public librarians aware of [preservation] issues and providing a strategy for addressing them. It seems to be one of the most influential and widespread initiatives of the last decade, clearly responding to the real needs of librarians and their users.[170]

NEWSPLAN has held three major conferences which have helped to highlight preservation and access issues. The second conference was held in 1994 whilst the project was still being completed.[171] Following the project's completion in 1996, Ann Matheson, chair of the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel, recognised the success of the project at the 1998 conference.[172] The conference focused in particular, upon the opportunities offered by digital technology. In the US the United States Newspaper Project was launched around the same time as NEWSPLAN. It was a similar initiative to preserve and make available newspaper collections to researchers and has also been recognised as a 'laudable national preservation effort.'[173] However, empirical research has not been undertaken to examine the impact that such projects have had on access to newspaper collections.

In April 1998 the NEWSPLAN Panel made an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund to support a UK-wide programme to microfilm local newspapers considered at risk (covering, in the main, the period from 1800 to 1950) to archival standards. The funds would also provide microfilm readers to enable users to have convenient access

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[169] Christine D. Reid, 'News and current affairs' in *Reference Sources Handbook;* ed. by Peter W. Lea with Alan Day. (4th edition). pp.251-271.

[170] Feather, Matthews, and Eden, p.91.

[171] For example Pat Wressell. (report editor). *Current Perspectives on Newspaper Preservation and Access*: report of the 2nd national NEWSPLAN conference held at the Royal Hotel, Durham, 7 & 8 March 1994 (Newcastle-upon-Tyne : Information North, 1994)

[172] *NEWSPLAN, Millenia and Grids: the digital challenges.* Proceedings of the 3rd National NEWSPLAN conference held at the Royal County Hotel, Durham, 16 and 17 March 1998. (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Information North, 1998)

[173] Susan Swartzburg, *Preserving Library Materials,* p.164.

to the text of these newspapers; and to investigate the digitisation of newspaper text through the preservation medium of archival-quality microfilm to provide enhanced online access to them. In March 1999, a £5 million pound award was secured from the Fund. A five-year programme is envisaged covering 3,460 titles, creating 83,816 reels of microfilm, and including the provision of 800 microfilm readers at a total cost of £16.3 million. The award will be the first tranche of the programme; the participating libraries will make contributions in kind and another £2 million is sought from the UK newspaper industry and other companies. Commenting on the success of NEWSPLAN and the recent HLF award the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, Chris Smith, recently stated:

> The conservation of our stock of local newspapers is incredibly important because it forms a considerable part of our nation's archives. The Heritage Lottery Fund's commitment to help save newspapers for the nation will not only prevent the loss of an irreplaceable piece of our history but will allow far greater access than at present without further damaging the originals.[174]

The NEWSPLAN reports have improved access to newspaper collections. However, more recently two of the NEWSPLAN regions have made this information available electronically, including London and South East Region (LASER) information available through the magazine, journal and newspaper finder MagNet, produced by Project Earl.[175] The North-western region have also made the information from their report available on the Internet.[176] In 1999 the NEWSPLAN Panel produced a five year development plan for the period up until 2004. Members were urged to initiate discussions within the regional implementation committees within the following framework:

> a) to take account of changes and reorganisation within regions relevant to newspapers, i.e. to put current and future trends in each region into focus;
> b) to identify strategic ideas within each region of how NEWSPLAN might go forward;

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[174] British Library Press and Public Relations Press Information. 'Local Newspapers in Peril', *http://portico.bl.uk/collections/newspaper/nplanhlf.html* (25th March 1999)
[175] Hugh Marks. *Magnet: magazine, journal and newspaper finder.* Hp. May 1999 [last update]. Online. Available: http://www.earl.org.uk/magnet/. July 1999.
[176] Nigel Rudyard. *NWRLS NEWSPLAN North West Index.* Hp. 1998 [copyright]. Online. North West Regional Library System. Available: http://www.nwrls.org.uk/newsplan/npindex.htm. July 1999.

c) to consider in each region what they would like to see happen and what would be their priorities.[177]

The plan highlighted a number of issues, including, the need for improvements in accessibility to newspaper collections and their contents and greater publicity for the project. The success of the preservation microfilming undertaken to date, was recognised, although a co-ordinated policy for the storage of originals was proposed. The plan regarded digitisation as a positive medium for access, with the creation of digital archives as a long term objective of the project. Current and future funding for the project remained a source of concern and copyright could become an issue as increasing numbers of newspapers appeared in electronic format. Co-operation with the newspaper industry varied across the regions, however the Panel felt closer links were desirable, particularly to co-ordinate initiatives such as microfilming and digitisation. Finally, the plan highlighted the importance of collaboration with the museums/archives sector. This plan suggests that, for the foreseeable future, the NEWSPLAN project will remain the driving force behind UK-wide policies regarding newspaper access and preservation. It also demonstrates the importance of this project to this thesis.

(vi) Managing newspaper collections

Several US studies have been undertaken examining the difficulties associated with the collection and storage of newspapers. For example Lund discusses the physical problems associated with newspaper collection management, although in the main, it focuses on preservation problems.[178] Petersen and Boylan examine the problems of managing newspaper collections at the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), concluding they are 'difficult and expensive to acquire, house and process.'[179] A detailed study is also provided by Martin examining the extensive collection of Indiana newspapers housed at the State Library.[180] The Indiana State Library recognised the

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[177] John Byford. *NEWSPLAN 1999-2004.* (Unpublished development plan: LINC NEWSPLAN Panel, 16 April 1999)

[178]Lund, 'The physical aspects of newspaper collection management'.

[179] Karla D. Petersen and Ray Boylan 'Newspaper collections at the Center for Research Libraries' in in *Newspapers in the Library;* ed. Upham, pp.63-70.

[180] Heidi K Martin, 'Working in a newspaper reference collection' in *Newspapers in the Library;* ed. Upham. pp.43-62.

importance of the newspaper collection and as early as 1933 it was designated as a separate collection in the library. At the time of writing the paper, the newspaper section had three members of staff and well-developed policies specific to the management of the collection. Nevertheless, there was an awareness that the collection was unique and atypical of newspaper collections in libraries. Moreover, the three papers were mainly descriptive studies, relying on observations of staff in the three collections, rather than on empirical research.

The role of the newspaper in US academic libraries was examined empirically by Rutstein who undertook a survey at a sample of university libraries.[181] Recognising the lack of literature on newspaper librarianship and lack of coherent policy in this area, Rutstein highlighted the importance of this source. The paper concluded that the management of newspaper collections was often haphazard, being dealt with by different departments, with no overall conformity of control. Furthermore, newspapers often were not fully integrated into the library service, being stored in a variety of locations and not having entries on the main catalogue. Rutstein concluded that the range and number of titles received by different libraries varied enormously, with most collections striving to provide a balanced coverage of US newspapers. Moreover, academic libraries displayed an ambivalent attitude towards newspapers and ill-defined objectives led to the collections being under-exploited.

In the UK, research has been limited in relation to newspaper collections in libraries. Hovish studied the local newspaper in the public library, identifying problems associated with its storage, bibliographic control and exploitation.[182] The study traced the collection of newspapers by public libraries back to the nineteenth century, when newspaper reading rooms were a central part of library services. It also highlighted the value of both current copies and back-files of local newspapers. However, Hovish concluded that the low cost of acquiring newspapers, was in contrast to the high costs of storing, preserving and exploiting them. He argued that this discrepancy was

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[181] Joel A Rutstein. 'The Role of Newspapers as an Information Resource: a survey of academic libraries' *Library Scene*, 7 (1), 17-21.
[182] Hovish, 'The local newspaper in the British public library'

problematic and he provided eleven recommendations to improve the management of newspaper collections and allow users to exploit them more fully.[183] Clearly a number of these recommendations concerning the exploitation of newspapers, reflect the level of technology in the 1980s and are not as relevant today. However, the recommendations for newspaper collection management are useful. For example, the need to monitor lighting and humidity and temperature in storage places, to input data and exploit the library's main catalogue for newspaper information, to collect fully free sheets as they may be important and to purchase a high quality reader/printer for every major collection on microfilm.[184]

(vii) The newspaper as an information source

Only a small amount of literature in the LIS field examines the role of the newspaper as an information source. Newspapers are considered in the context of the range of sources available in the library and little of the literature is based on empirical research.

Few library staff would question the value of newspapers in a collection. Their value as a current source of news and information is self-evident. Furthermore, they are relatively cheap to purchase and consequently current copies of national and local titles are available in most libraries. Newspapers are invariably classified as reference material, unavailable for loan purposes. The days of newspaper reading rooms are all but over, however many libraries set aside an area of the library where current newspapers can be consulted. While it is difficult to generalise about use, many people read the news or scan job advertisements in the library. The LIS literature examining reference materials often includes a discussion of newspapers. For example, the key textbook in the field, now on its Fourth Edition and edited by Lea and Day, includes a chapter on sources for news and current events.[185] A similar chapter has appeared in each edition of the book, recognising newspapers as essential sources for current information and 'as a general commentary on life at the time.' Reid claims that when seeking current information, newspapers are often the most convenient source.

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[183] Hovish, 'The local newspaper in the British public library' pp.221-222.
[184] Hovish. 'The local newspaper in the British public library' pp.221-222.
[185] Reid, "News and current affairs" pp.251-271.

Moreover, given the transient nature of news, they may contain information that is not published in any other form.

Newspapers are also recognised as having a more permanent value that is in contrast to their perceived ephemeral nature. Many libraries, special collections and archives maintain retrospective newspaper collections with back issues often dating back to the nineteenth century. In a paper presented to the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA), the importance of retrospective collections for historical research was recognised.[186] Furthermore, Hovish recognised the value of retrospective collections, although his work was largely impressionistic and a survey was not undertaken.[187]

A small number of user studies have examined the value of retrospective newspaper collections. Beattie examined the range of users at one archive, concluding that newspapers were an important resource.[188] However, perhaps of greatest importance in this regard are the readership surveys undertaken by the BLNL. Housing the largest collection of newspaper back-files in the UK, the number and variety of people using this collection has grown annually. Figures from the British Library's Annual Report for 1989-1990 indicated that 29,181 reader visits to the collection took place, an increase of 9% on the previous year.[189] The number of readers has continued to rise and in 1995-96, 41,448 reader visits were recorded.[190] Furthermore, the results from the 1993 reader survey showed that while the majority of the users came from London and the Home Counties, 29% were from elsewhere. It also highlighted the importance of the collection for academic and family history researchers.[191]

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[186] 'Uses of the press: current research use of retrospective holdings' in Ian Gibb, *Newspaper Preservation and Access: Proceedings of the Symposium held in London August 12-15, 1987.* IFLA Publication 45. London 1988. 75-118.
[187] Hovish, 'The local newspaper in the British public library' p.181-193.
[188] See in particular D.L Beattie "An archival user study" *Archivaria* 29 (1989/90) 30-50.
[189] *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter,* 12 (Spring 1991) p.12.
[190] *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter,* 21 (Summer 1996) p.12.
[191] Geoff Smith 'Newspaper Library Reader Survey 1993' *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter,* 17 (Spring 1994)

(viii) Retrieving information from newspapers

The retrieval of information contained within newspapers is recognised as one of the greatest problems associated with their use, as Tait suggests:

> Information in newspapers is more or less inaccessible unless a date is known...to provide the key to the extraordinary and fascinating treasury of information otherwise kept locked in a newspaper.[192]

User studies of historians have considered some of the problems related to newspapers. However, one author in the LIS field characterised them in the following way:

> Newspapers and news are very important sources of current and historical information. They can however be frustrating owing to the difficulty of locating the exact information among the vast plethora of information which is being added to with every passing second. Searching through newspapers can be an arduous and time-consuming task. It is also an absorbing and fascinating area of research where much long-forgotten and irrelevant information is scanned before the required information is successfully located.[193]

Clearly the vast amount of information that is contained within newspapers and the organisation of that information, makes research tiring and time consuming. Murphy discussed the value of newspapers in local history and recognised that research can be problematic because of the 'lack of readily available access points.'[194] Date references are essentially the only way of gaining access to information in newspapers without the construction of indexes. As the newspaper industry expanded after 1855, Jones argues that the growing need to provide some form of recognised order was inevitable.[195] This led to the construction of newspaper indexes and the first of these, *Giddings' Index to The Times* appeared in 1863. *Palmer's Index to The Times* was published from 1868 and retrospective indexes that covered the issues back to the paper's launch in 1785 were also produced. Similar attempts were made to index other titles during this

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[192] Frances Tait, 'News and current affairs' in *Printed Reference Material and other sources,* ed. by Peter Lea with Alan Day. (3rd Edition) p.154.
[193] Reid, 'News and current affairs' p.271.
[194]Michael Murphy, *Newspaper and Local History,* (London: British Association for Local History, 199) p.20.
[195]Jones, *Powers of the Press.*

period, for example *Curtice's Index and Register of Periodical Literature* of 1893 which demonstrated 'a growing demand for rapid and accurate means of gaining access to material in past issues of newspapers.'[196] Between July and September of this date, the publication provided an index of *The Times*, the London morning and evening newspapers, 120 weekly newspapers and 31 local newspapers.

Indexes facilitate access to newspaper information, and Friedman described them as 'the indispensable key to the treasure house of facts locked away in newspaper files.'[197] Moreover, Hovish recognised the value of indexes. In particular, name indexes can be useful for family historians. Hovish also suggests a strategy for searching local newspapers, whereby *The Times* index can be used to find the date of an incident that can then be traced in a local paper. Indexes to local newspapers are also sometimes available, often compiled by volunteers. In America, Milner's listing of newspaper indexes constructed prior to 1982 was published in three volumes, to raise awareness of the existence of these indexes.[198] In the 1980s the British Library undertook a survey of newspaper indexing and in 1987 a seminar was held in York examining the subject.[199] The *British Bibliography of Newspapers* also did some work in this area. Furthermore, a number of British studies exist that provide guidelines for newspaper indexers, such as that by Elliott.[200] The literature recognises that there is a lack of standardisation in newspaper index construction methods. However, little empirical research has been undertaken in this field and the value of newspaper indexes is largely impressionistic.

The most recent literature in the field examines the way in which computer technology has made newspaper information more accessible, following the advent of the electronic newspaper. Developments such as the appearance of online and CD-ROM newspapers have been discussed in Section 1.3.1 and they have obvious advantages for

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[196] Jones, *Powers of the Press*, p.70.
[197] H.A. Friedman, *Newspaper Indexing*, (Milwaukee, Wis: Marquette University Press, 1942) p.3.
[198] A.N. Milner, *Newspaper Indexes: a location and subject guide for the researcher*, (Metuchen: Scarecrow) Volume 1 (1977), Volume 2 (1979), Volume 3 (1982).
[199] The BLNL newsletter in this year examined the subject in some detail. See 'Indexing of local newspapers', *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter*, 8 (June 1987), 5-13.
[200] B.Elliott, 'Problems of Indexing a Local Newspaper', *The Local Historian*, 14 (1980), 143-148.

retrieving newspaper information. The promotional literature for the launch of *Palmer's Index to the Times* on CD-ROM in 1998, clearly stated the benefits it would offer researchers, regarding it as 'opening up the history of the last century to far more extensive research.'[201] The advantages of online, CD-ROM and Internet versions of newspapers are also discussed by Reid.[202] Key-word searching brings enormous benefits to the researcher seeking to trace a theme or individual in the press. However, Tait recognised the potential difficulties associated with electronic sources. A limited number of titles are currently available in digital format. Furthermore, these sources are often not complete reproductions of material appearing in the newspapers. Online and CD-ROM newspapers usually only contain the main text of news stories, omitting photographs, illustrations and advertisements. Internet newspapers take a variety of forms, but also are usually not reproductions of the printed newspaper. There are obvious advantages to the electronic retrieval of newspaper information, however there needs to be further research in this field. These developments will be considered in more detail in the following section.

1.5 Newspapers in the Digital Library

Since the 1970s developments in computer technology have impacted upon all areas of human activity, especially in the western world. These changes have led to the concept of the information society, which has been defined as:

> A society in which the quality of life, as well as prospects for social change and economic development, depend increasingly upon information and its exploitation.[203]

The reality of this information society is still being debated, however, developments in information and communications technologies (ICTs) are relevant to this thesis. The Internet has provided a global communication network and increasingly the importance of digital information is recognised. Concepts such as the 'global village' and 'digital revolution' are referred to with increasing frequency by authors. In *The Rise of the Network Society* Castells provides a contemporary account of the economic and social

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[201] New Product Fact Sheet. Palmer's Index to the Times. Chadwyck Healey Ltd. April 1998.

[202] Reid, 'News and current affairs'

[203] William J. Martin, *The Global Information Society,* 1st edition, (Aldershot: Gower, 1988) quoted in William J. Martin. *The Global Information Society,* 2nd edition (Aldershot: Gower, 1995) p.3.

dynamics of the new age of information.[204] The author seeks to formulate a systematic theory of the information society which takes account of the fundamental effects of information technology on contemporary society. This thesis acknowledged that developments in the field of newspaper collection and storage were part of a wider movement towards digital information. The following section briefly examines these developments, and in particular their impact upon public collections in the UK.

1.5.1 The concept of the digital library

ICTs have had an effect on all aspects of the library profession. The phrase 'digital library' is used with increasing frequency and it has been defined as:

> ...the widely accepted term describing the use of digital technologies to acquire, store, preserve and provide access to information and material originally published in digital form or digitised from existing print, audio-visual and other forms.[205]

Crawford and Gorman have questioned the wisdom of this increasing emphasis on digital information when considering the future role of libraries.[206] While remaining advocates of technology, the authors recognise that the library profession and the wider world should not assume that digital means better and:

> Libraries will and should continue to use a mix of book and other linear document collections, paper journal subscriptions, electronic network-based distribution, full-text CD-ROM, CD-ROM indexes will full text-microfiche, tape-loaded databases, Eureka and CitaDel, EPIC, FirstSearch and OCLC delivery services, UnCover, Dialog, Nexis and others.[207]

Rusbridge argues for the concept of the 'hybrid library' as a logical follow-on from current developments.[208] Institutions should remain an important focus for digital library activities, and users in those institutions require the sort of integration of digital library services which the hybrid library promises.

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[204] Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society,* (London: Blackwells, 1996)
[205] Brian Lang, 'Developing the digital library' in *Towards the Digital Library: the British Library's 'Initiatives for Access' programme,* ed. by Leona Carpenter, Simon Shaw and Andrew Prescott. (London: The British Library, 1998) p.227.
[206] Crawford and Gorman, *Future Libraries.* See in particular pp.123-130.
[207] Crawford and Gorman, *Future Libraries,* p.176.
[208] Chris Rusbridge, Towards the Hybrid Library, *D-Lib Magazine,* (July/August 1998)

(i) Global digital library initiatives

A number of large libraries throughout the world have become involved in digital library initiatives, with much pioneering work being undertaken in the US. In 1992 Cornell University formed the Digital Access Coalition to explore the use of digital imagery. This group has now been superseded by the Cornell Institute for Digital Collection (CIDC) which has made numerous resources available in electronic format.[209] Similarly, Project Open Book project at Yale University was another early initiative in the field of digital collections. Launched in 1992, this project sought to convert 10,000 microfilmed volumes of 19th and 20th century books into digital format. Through the Electronic Text Center members of the university can now gain access to digitised original material.[210] The US Digital Libraries Initiative (DLI), launched in 1994, seeks to 'dramatically advance the means to collect, store, and organize information in digital forms, and make it available for searching, retrieval, and processing via communication networks.'[211] Rusbridge defines the DLI as 'research' rather than development and although the 'results are exciting and extraordinarily interesting, ... it is very hard to determine how many of these ideas might be effectively deployed in real life situations.'[212]

Much of the literature has concentrated on the technicalities of the digitisation process. Scanning material to create an image is relatively unproblematic, however the real benefit of digitisation comes from creating access to the text of material. Many experiments using Optical Character Recognition (OCR) have been undertaken, and a large amount of literature exists exploring its benefits.[213] Some recent projects are discussed in this section, however, it is clear that more specific work is required to examine the problems of using OCR techniques with newspaper sources.

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[209] *Cornell Institute for Digital Collections*. Hp. [no date]. Online. Cornell University. Available: http://cidc.library.cornell.edu/. June 1999.

[210] Paul Conway. *Project Open Book.* Hp. [no date]. Online. Yale University. Available: http://www.library.yale.edu/preservation/pobweb.htm. June 1999.

[211] *Digital Libraries Inititative.* Hp. 25 Jun 1999 [last update]. Online. National Science Foundation. Available: http://www.dli2.nsf.gov/. June 1999.

[212] Rusbridge, Towards the Hybrid Library.

[213] See for example Harold C. Ogg and Marlene H. Ogg, *Optical Character Recognition: a librarian's guide,* (Westport, Conn. : Meckler, 1992)

(ii) UK digital library initiatives

In the UK, the British Library is one of the key players in developments and initiatives in digitisation. The British Library's Strategic Objectives, published in 1993, stated that by the year 2000 it would be a major centre for the storage of and access to, digital texts. This led to the launch of the *Initiatives for Access* programme, a series of projects and experiments using ICTs to facilitate access to collections. For example, one of the first projects resulted in the production of a digital version of the *Beowulf* manuscript, now available on the British Library's web site. The programme was regarded as an overwhelming success and is documented in the 1998 publication *Towards a Digital Library*.[214] In developing the digital library, the British Library seeks to improve access, for all users, to their collections. The Library also hope it will have benefits in terms of conservation and preservation of collections, in particular those which are fragile, of high value or heavily used - newspapers fall into this definition.

Public libraries in Britain are also increasingly becoming important providers of electronic information, as recognised by the publication of the *New Library: The People's Network*, in 1997.[215] Commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, and undertaken by the Library and Information Commission (LIC), the report concluded that although printed publications will remain important, the role of public libraries in providing access to, and delivery of electronic information is expected to increase, particularly for educational and reference works and government and local information. *New Library* proposed the creation of a UK Public Library Network, connecting every public library to the Internet. Public libraries are also central to government moves towards the concept of 'lifelong learning' and the *National Grid for Learning*. Furthermore, they have been recognised as fulfilling an important function as repositories for community history. Local newspapers were mentioned as an important source and although these records are currently in printed format, the report proposed digitising this material.

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[214] Leona Carpenter, Simon Shaw and Andrew Prescott, (Editors) *Towards the Digital Library: the British Library's Initiatives for Access Programme*, (London: The British Library, 1998)
[215] *New Library: the people's network*, (London : Library and Information Commission, 1997) Chairman: Matthew Evans. Also available at URL: http://www.ukoln.ac.uk/services/lic/newlibrary/

1.5.2 Newspapers and digitisation

Newspapers are perceived as having an important role in the digital library and a considerable amount of literature examining electronic newspaper sources already exists. Currently, many libraries receive newspapers on CD-ROM, or allow Internet access to newspapers. The range of sources and access to them will undoubtedly improve in the future. However, research has mainly concentrated on exploring the possibilities of retrospective conversion of print copies, through scanning techniques to create digital collections.

(i) The advantages of the digital format

The digital format could bring a number of advantages, providing possibilities for preservation, allowing access to collections across the Internet, and improving access to the contents of collections. However, there are still reservations about the use of digitisation as a means of preservation. In 1995 Geoff Smith, the then Newspaper Librarian at the BLNL, recognised that newspaper collections were experiencing a 'time of change'.[216] He argued that for the researcher requiring access to current and recent issues of major newspapers, a choice of options are already available, however:

> For researchers requiring access to ...pre-1980 newspapers, to most local newspapers, and to newspapers from countries whose production systems are less technically advanced, the options are fewer and the pace of change will be less swift.[217]

Much of this material is held on microfilm, for preservation purposes. However, it is well known that microfilm is unpopular with users and limited in its capabilities. The potential benefits of digitising material currently held on microfilm are discussed by Smith.[218] He cites a number of projects in this field, including the Open Book Project at Yale and a digitisation project at Bibliotheque de France. Smith also recognises that digitised images have the advantages of good quality display and increased access by means of searchable indexes. They would also allow remote access to rare material.

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[216]Geoff Smith, 'Access to Newspaper Collections and Content in a Time of Change', *IFLA Journal,* 21 (4), (1995), 282-286.

[217]Smith, Access to Newspaper Collections, p.285.

[218]Geoff Smith, 'Digitisation of Newspapers - capabilities and limitations' in *Current Perspectives on Newspaper Preservation and Access: report of the 2nd National NEWSPLAN conference, March 1994,* ed. Pat Wressel. (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1994) p.54.

More recently the European Commission on Preservation and Access, which was formed in 1994 and supports collaboration amongst libraries to ensure material is preserved, produced a report examining the use of digital formats for preservation purposes.[219] Despite the advantages that digitisation offers, the report warned that electronic formats can be unstable and they may be a 'wolf in sheep's clothing'. Furthermore, it recommended that endangered material should be microfilmed initially and digitisation should be undertaken from the microfilm. Thus, currently microfilm remains the preservation standard as Feather states:

> For the present, however, digitization is no more than a technologically attractive experimental technique: microfilm on the other hand, is a tried and tested technology.[220]

Electronic newspapers may provide historians of the future with an alternative source to the traditional printed newspaper. Nevertheless, the formalisation of collection and archiving should be established and further research is required to seek a greater understanding of the habits and needs of users of these materials.

(ii) Newspaper digitisation projects

Several digital library initiatives have undertaken experiments with retrospective newspaper and periodical collections. A number of these experiments are outlined and it seems likely that digital newspaper collections will become increasingly common in the future. One of the first newspaper digitisation attempts was undertaken by the British Library in 1993. Known as 'The Microfilm Digitisation Project,' it was launched as part of the *Initiatives for Access* programme.[221] The project used a selection of the eighteenth century Burney collection and the microfilm was scanned, frame by frame. The digitised images were eventually transferred onto disc and experiments using OCR, to convert the digitised image into text, were also undertaken. The quality of the original newspapers and variety of typefaces used meant that these

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[219] Hartmut Weber, Marianne Dorr ; translated by Andrew Medlicott, *Digitisation as a Method of Preservation?: final report of a working group of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Association) (Amsterdam : European Commission on Preservation and Access, 1997)

[220] John Feather, *Preservation and the Management of Library Collections* (2nd ed.) (London : Library Association, 1996) p.122.

[221] This is discussed in more detail by Geoff Smith, 'Digitisation of Newspapers - capabilities and limitations.' and Leona Carpenter, Simon Shaw and Andrew Prescott, (Editors) *Towards the Digital Library: the British Library's Initiatives for Access Programme,* (London: The British Library, 1998)

experiments were unsuccessful and access to words in the text was not available.[222] Following this experiment, the British Library stated that until improved software was developed, this work would be uneconomic and unsuccessful. In 1996 the 'Forum of the electronic archiving of newspapers and newspaper information' which brought together newspaper industry representatives, British Library staff and media librarians, found there was little interest from the newspaper industry in the conversion of back-files.[223] However, the British Library has continued researching this field and hopes to have the digitised Burney collection available on the British Library web site in 1999.

Several projects throughout the world have successfully made digital newspaper collections available, suggesting that the UK could be lagging behind in this field. In Virginia, a project known as the *Valley of the Shadow Project,* has provided access to the text and digitised images of a variety of primary sources, including newspapers from the period leading up to and during the American Civil War. The producers stated that:

> The Valley Project attempts to make history as inclusive as possible, tries to find ways to learn about and portray people who left no records other than a few lines in the census, courts records and newspaper....Newspapers contain the real "meat" of this archive: digital images of the newspapers...have been SGML tagged and are keyword searchable.[224]

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[222]Geoff Smith, 'Conversion of Back Files to Electronic Form at the Forum on the Electronic Archiving of Newspapers and Newspaper Information', *British Library Newspaper Library Newsletter* 21 (Summer 1996) 6-7.
[223]'Forum on the Electronic Archiving of Newspapers and Newspaper Information,' the British Library, 26 March 1996. (unpublished minutes).
[224]Edward L. Ayers. *Valley of the Shadow Project.* Hp. 1999 [copyright]. Online. Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities, University of Virginnia. Available: http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/vshadow2/. June 1999.

This project used the newspapers of Augusta County, Virginia and Franklin County, Pennsylvania from 1857-1865. It provides an index to selected transcribed articles, arranged under topics and a Newspaper Search Page, where customised searches can be undertaken. The project is mainly the product of manual indexing of the newspaper and did not utilise OCR techniques. Nevertheless, it offers researchers tremendous improvements in terms of access to newspaper collections.

Work began in 1995 at Cornell University and the University of Michigan, on a conversion and preservation project on a range of historical documents, including rare journals and books. Known as the 'Making of America,'[225] material from the period 1850-1877 was scanned into digital format and is now available via the Internet. Furthermore, experiments using OCR techniques have provided access to the text of the material, although this work has still been problematic. Although daily newspapers were not included in this study, monthly periodicals with news content have been digitised and demonstrate the problems and advantages this type of work brings.

Another noteworthy venture is the Australian Co-operative Digitisation Project launched in 1996, which seeks to provide both increased access to, and preservation of, a selection of nineteenth century materials through an integrated process of preservation microfilming, digital scanning, network access and selected full-text enhancement.[226] Furthermore, through meeting scholarly research needs the project will be investigating and developing technical benchmarks for similar digital library projects involving the conversion of retrospective print material. The project seeks to make the full content of journals, newspapers, novels and short stories published in Australia from the period 1840-45, accessible through the world wide web via the Internet. The project was met with enthusiastic support during discussions with a focus

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[225] George Kozak. *Making of America Journals Collection.* Hp. 19th Apr 1999 [last update]. Online. Cornell University. Available: http://moa.cit.cornell.edu/MOA/MOA-JOURNALS2.html. June 1999 and *Making of America Project.* Hp. 1996 [copyright]. Online. University of Michigan. Available: http://www.umdl.umich.edu/moa/. June 1999.

[226] *Australian Periodical Publications 1840-1845 - Australian Co-operative Digitisation Project.* Hp. 16th Jun 1999 [last update]. Online. Australian Co-operative Digitisation Project. Available: http://www.nla.gov.au/ferg/. June 1999.

group of scholars in nineteenth century Australian studies, although the material has yet to appear on the Web.

Meanwhile in Scandinavia the Helsinki University Library, the Royal Library of Sweden, National Library of Norway, the State and University Library of Aarhus are co-operating to study methods for the digital conversion of large quantities of material. This project 'Testing digital search methods. Historical newspapers in the Nordic Countries' started in June 1998 and is funded by the participating libraries and Nordinfo, the Nordic Council for Scientific Information.[227] The project is planned to take three years. Nordic newspapers were chosen as an example of an extensive and important source material that can be found in libraries. Thus, the microfilm is used to serve as a platform for digitising the Nordic newspapers up to 1850. The project aims to find economically viable and productive digitisation processes for large quantities of material. The participating libraries tested OCR programmes, and examined productive search methods and access via the Internet. On the basis of these investigations the libraries will create a database of historical newspapers that will serve researchers in all the Nordic countries in a much more flexible way than is possible using existing search methods.

As technology improves newspaper digitisation projects are becoming increasingly successful throughout the world. Furthermore, the government has recognised the important work of the NEWSPLAN project in awarding the Panel five million pounds of Heritage Lottery funding. In February 1998 the Library and Information Commission (LIC) published a report reviewing digitisation and digitisation projects in local authority libraries and archives. One aspect of their recommendations was particularly relevant to newspaper collections. In recognition of the work of the NEWSPLAN project, it recommended that the potential of free text searching of digitised local and regional newspapers should be a research and development priority to be addressed by the Panel. Therefore, although for the time being microfilm remains

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[227] *Testing Digital Search Methods. Historical newspapers in the Nordic Countries.* Hp. [no date]. Online. NORDINFO: The Nordic Council for Scientific Information. Available: http://www.nordinfo.helsinki.fi/common/projekt.html. May 1999.

a standard for preservation, ultimately the British Library and NEWSPLAN will undoubtedly be moving towards digitisation.

(iii) The challenges of digitisation

The increasing importance of electronic information has already posed several difficulties. Changes in the current Copyright legislation to include non-print material are clearly required or else the collection of newspapers in electronic formats will remain haphazard. In 1997 the British Library undertook a review of the policy and arrangements for the legal deposit of printed material.[228] The recommendations demonstrate the importance attributed to electronic sources, including a carefully costed programme for the selective digitisation of heavily used back files, and the use of microfilm or electronic forms of British and Irish national newspapers. The recommendations were scheduled to be implemented in 1998-1999, after consultation with interested parties, such as the Newspaper Society, other Copyright Libraries and representatives of NEWSPLAN. In February 1997 the Department of National Heritage issued a consultation paper seeking views on the deposit of electronic publications, sound recordings, films and video recordings, and microform publications. Following this, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport announced in January 1998, the establishment of a working group, comprising of representatives of the British Library and legal deposit libraries, the British Film Institute, and publishing sectors, to advise on how an effective national archive of non-print material might be achieved. Clearly, this is a transitional period where important decisions about digital collections will be made. For this reason it is important that this research is undertaken and its findings are given due consideration by various policy making bodies.

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[228] Michael Smethurst. *A Review of the Policy and Arrangements for the Legal Deposit of printed material in the British Library.* London: The British Library, 1997. Online. Available: http://www.bl.uk/information/legal.html. June 1999.

1.6 Summary of the literature

This chapter has highlighted a number of important issues for exploration in the thesis. It has drawn from different disciplines, to provide a context for the study. A wide variety of literature was also consulted partly due to the lack of specific research in this field. Previous research appears not to have examined the complex relationship between the historian, newspapers and the library. However, to summarise, the literature suggests:

Historians have diverse information needs, which need to be examined in greater detail to identify patterns of behaviour among a broad term that covers many different types of researcher.

Newspapers are clearly important to historians, although their value has not been examined in detail either with the LIS field or within historiography.

The history, function and nature of newspapers has been studied in detail and this literature suggests that they are different from other types of historical sources and specific techniques may be appropriate to evaluate them.

Newspapers are a problematic resource in the library, particularly because of preservation and storage problems that they present to staff.

Bibliographic control and access to the information in newspapers causes the greatest problems to users.

Information and communications technology may be able to solve a number of the problems associated with newspapers.

Numerous experiments using information and communications technology in newspaper collections are being undertaken currently, and there has been an increasing recognition of the need to provide access to the source.

The above issues formed the basis of the research that was undertaken for this thesis. Given there was a lack of research in this field, it was possible that other issues would arise as the research progressed. This partly influenced the methodological approach adopted, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 2

Research design and methods

2.1 Overview and area of study

This chapter examines the methodological framework which informs the research. It explains the respective roles performed by the three main data collection techniques utilised: questionnaires, interviews and case studies, and it outlines the relationships between them. Data analysis techniques are also explored. The literature review highlighted the cross-disciplinary nature of the field of enquiry, and the methodological approach adopted here reflects that complexity. The approach is situated firmly within the methodology of the social sciences, examining the behaviour and experiences of a group of people within a given social setting. More specifically, although it draws from other fields of study, it is located primarily within the field of Library and Information Science (LIS). LIS research seeks to find solutions to the problems faced by the information profession and those who use the services that they provide. This study investigates both the role of the newspaper as an information source and the users of newspaper collections. However, it also seeks to provide a greater understanding of newspaper collections in libraries and other organisations. Thus, the methodology draws upon work in the area of 'user studies' to identify and examine the ways in which historians use newspapers. The methodology reflects the shift in this area, and more generally within the social sciences, towards a more humanist, interpretivist approach to research, one which relies more on qualitative, than on purely quantitative methods. The emphasis on qualitative methods is also driven by the subject of enquiry.

2.2 Theoretical framework of the research

One of the earliest stages in any research project involves establishing a theoretical framework. The framework informs the research methods employed and influences the nature of the data that is subsequently generated. Two philosophical traditions have dominated the development of research methodologies in the social sciences: positivism and humanism. In practice however, research is often not a straightforward choice between the two approaches and this research has drawn on elements from both traditions, although the humanist approach has proved to be the most salient. This section first traces the development of positivist research in social sciences, comments on the limitations of this approach, and explains why in this particular case it was not adopted as the core methodological approach. Humanism, or the interpretivist

approach, has had a greater influence on this study. However, attempts to reconcile these two approaches are examined. Triangulation was also an important approach used during this research and this is discussed.

2.2.1 Philosophy of the Social Sciences

(i) The positivist tradition

The earliest social science research was undertaken within the positivist tradition and was based upon the assumption that there was no distinction between the study of society and human behaviour and study of the natural sciences. As Delanty states:

> Underlying positivism more fundamentally is the naturalistic notion that science is the study of an objectively existing reality that lies outside the discourse of science.[1]

The realist will therefore argue that subject matter firstly exists, and 'that their existence is independent, or not an artefact of our minds, or our language or conceptual scheme.'[2] Thus, through experimentation and observation it is possible to attain knowledge. Positivist social scientists argue that an empiricist methodology, similar to that used in the natural sciences and based upon observation and hypothesis testing, is appropriate. Another important aspect of this tradition is the view that both the social and natural worlds conform to fixed laws that make prediction possible. Therefore positivism relies on the formulation and testing of theories. Deductive techniques are used to establish facts through objective observation, including the collation of numerical data.

Since the 1950s, there have been attempts to refine the positivist model. Its most important critics, writing from the perspective of science, are Popper and Kuhn who have shaped thinking within social sciences. In *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*[3], Popper attempted to refine the empiricist tradition and establish rules for research that considered the fallibility of humans and the notion of democracy within science. His approach known as 'critical rationalism', argues that science is not proven through experimentation, 'for the very reason that no matter how often a theory is tested there

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[1] Gerald Delanty, *Social Sciences: beyond constructivism and realism,* (London: Open University Press, 1997) p.11.
[2] Simon Blackburn, *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) p.320.
[3] Karl Raimund Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery,* (London : Hutchinson, 1959) (Originally published as *Logik der Forschung*, Springer, 1934)

is always the possibility that it can be falsified.'[4] Popper argues that through attempts to falsify the results of previous theories, science develops deductively, whereas inductive methods are more appropriate. He later refined his controversial theories conceding that 'a theory is discarded not once it has been falsified but when there is a new theory to replace it.'[5] This is similar to the influential ideas of Kuhn, who in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,*[6] argued that in the history of natural sciences there are no gradual changes of theory and that science developed much more radically, by way of 'paradigm shifts.' This research acknowledged the criticisms of the positivist tradition. It recognised that the behaviour and attitudes of historians could not be measured objectively. It also sought to understand the behaviour of historians rather than prove or disprove a theory.

(ii) Humanism and the interpretivist tradition

Humanism and the interpretivist tradition appeared to offer far more scope for research. Interpretation involves the ability to understand the intentions of another human being, and that:

> Observation is not enough since meaning cannot be subject to simple explanation and description, which characterizes positivism.[7]

Furthermore, it argues that positivist social sciences have become sterile and introspective and preoccupied with scientific procedures, hypothesis testing and measurement. Walker[8] provides five reasons why this is so, which include, firstly that the language of theory usually has to be mapped into data, which often relies on incorrect assumptions about that data. He also argues that theoretical concepts are often insufficiently precise to provide appropriate measurement and that the control and simplification necessary for measurement may lead to the fundamental complexity of certain social phenomena being ignored. The objectivity and consistency needed to develop classification systems can be difficult to achieve and finally, Walker maintains that data collection is a socially reactive process.

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[4] Delanty, p.31.
[5] Delanty, p.33.
[6] Thomas S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1970)
[7] Delanty, p.42.
[8] Robert Walker, ed., *Applied Qualitative Research,* (Aldershot : Gower, c1985) p.11.

Moreover, the humanistic tradition perceives fundamental differences between the natural and social worlds, and argues that scientific methods are inappropriate to the study of society. Human behaviour, the subject matter of the social sciences, differs enormously from phenomena in the natural sciences. Humans are 'purposeful, goal-seeking, feeling, meaning-attributing and meaning-responding creatures'[9] acted upon by a variety of forces, not least of which are the researchers themselves. As a social being, the researcher is able to achieve an insight into the subject's world which cannot be achieved if s/he adopts a neutral, uninvolved stance. Similarly, the researcher inevitably shapes and influences his/her research. Qualitative methods are often used in the humanist tradition, to understand particular phenomena rather than to measure them. Understanding attitudes and behaviour was central to this research, and as a consequence this approach was more appropriate.

(iii)Reconciling the two traditions

The concept of reality has been debated by philosophers for centuries. The antithesis of realism can be argued to be constructivism. Constructivists regard knowledge as something that is constructed rather than discovered, and reality is seen as that which people come to believe, rather than that which they can verify through their own experiences. Such beliefs are rarely taken to their logical conclusion - that reality does not exist. A rationalist-constructivist approach accepts that an external reality cannot be discovered and that research attempts to gain a more sophisticated view of people's understanding and interpretations of reality. The methodology used in this research partly reflects the researcher's personal sympathies with the constructivist view of reality. However, it was also developed in recognition of the shift in the social sciences towards more qualitative, interpretative research.

Research design often does not involve a simple choice between humanism and positivism and attempts have been made to bridge the divide between the two approaches. Weber is perhaps one of the most significant voices among those who have attempted to offer causal explanations for social action, whilst recognising the influence of individual motives, subjective meanings and the subjectivity of the

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[9]John A. Hughes, *Sociological Analysis: methods of discovery*, (London: Nelson, 1976) p.24.

researcher. However, the problem of reconciling human consciousness with pre-determined laws has remained unresolved, and Weber's approach was not adopted for this research. Denzin, however, introduced the idea of 'triangulation' which seemed particularly appropriate for this research.[10] He argues that reality consists of competing definitions, attitudes and personal values, and that these require the use of multiple methods and theoretical approaches. Walker summarises the four basic triangulations that can be employed.[11] These include: data with respect to time, place, person and level; a comparison between multiple observers of the same phenomenon; multiple theoretical perspectives with respect to the same set of objects and methodological triangulation, which uses dissimilar methods to measure the same unit. Gorman and Clayton recognise the value of triangulation in LIS research, stating its purposes are two-fold. Firstly, it allows the researcher 'to address different aspects of the same research question, thereby extending the breadth of the project.'[12] Secondly, by using methods from both the positivist and humanist traditions, inherent weaknesses in each approach can be minimised. In particular, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, discussed in greater detail in the next section, are advocated. By combining these two approaches it allows the researcher to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the area of study.

2.2.2 Qualitative and quantitative approaches

The relative values of the qualitative and quantitative approach were considered early in the research design process. This thesis recognised the shift within the LIS field and the social sciences more generally towards a more qualitative approach. However, as will be discussed, quantitative methods were also used in the initial stages of the research, to triangulate and strengthen the validity of the data.

(i) Quantitative methods

Within the social sciences, the quantitative approach has many recognised advantages. It enables the reactions of many people to a limited set of questions, to be measured. These questions often have pre-determined answer categories and the results are often

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[10]Norman K. Denzin, *The Research Act in Sociology: a theoretical introduction to sociological methods,* (London : Butterworths, 1970)
[11] Walker, p.15.
[12] G. E. Gorman and Peter Clayton, *Qualitative Research for the Information Professional: a practical handbook,* (London: Library Association, 1997), p.32.

broad and can be explained succinctly. The quantitative approach relies upon numerical data and has dominated LIS research for many years. Most of the early research in this field between 1930 and 1950 involved descriptive library questionnaires, based on closed questions. Many of these were undertaken in the USA. An early attempt to conduct a user study was carried out in 1938 by Louis Wilson, who studied the distribution and status of libraries using the survey method. Another largely quantitative method undertaken in LIS research is citation analysis. This is a statistical study of the references in a work and this technique comes closer to the scientific approach. In quantitative research the emphasis is placed upon the researcher remaining detached from events and relationships between certain variables can be tested. Its value is widely recognised:

> Drawing on large samples of the populations to be studied, quantitative techniques use statistics to predict how and why people behave as they do under certain conditions. These techniques are useful in studying the causes and consequences of things people experience in library settings.[13]

(ii) Qualitative methods

In common with other social sciences, LIS research is moving more towards the use of qualitative research methods. Patton explains how qualitative enquiry provides 'detailed descriptive data' that deepens 'our understanding of individual variations.'[14] These techniques are drawn from other disciplines that traditionally focus upon the study of people, for example observational research techniques of ethnographers or qualitative methods of sociology. Qualitative studies in LIS attempt to view experiences from the perspective of the user, the librarian or the administrator. Attempts are made to understand why participants in the library setting behave as they do, because :

> If a certain phenomenon is observed and little information is available concerning why or how it happens then meaningful lists of pre-coded answer alternatives cannot be constructed.[15]

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[13]Constancy A. Mellon, 'Library Anxiety: a grounded theory and its development' *College and Research Libraries,* (March 1986), 160.
[14] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods,* (London: Sage, 1990) p.17.
[15]Darlene Weingand, 'Grounded Theory and Qualitative Methodology' *IFLA Journal* 19 (1) (1993) p.18.

Qualitative research involves the gathering and analysis of data in order to visualise a setting or experience from the user's point of view. Unlike the quantitative approach, the researcher does not remain detached from events. In fact, qualitative researchers use a variety of techniques which enable them to view the world through the eyes of their subject. Whilst these techniques are rigorous and often empirical, they nevertheless aim at a full description of the situation under study. The role of the researcher as the enquiry instrument is vital and:

> Validity in qualitative methods, therefore hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork.[16]

Unstructured or semi-structured interviews are an ideal way of obtaining this type of data and case studies, which often incorporate observation, interviews and document surveys are another useful method. Wilson demonstrated how the Department of Information Studies in Sheffield played a leading role in 'shifting the focus of research methods in information-seeking behaviour from the hard science model to new paradigms.'[17] Furthermore he explains how a more humanist approach to user research is useful, where the object of study is regarded as a participant.

Gorman and Clayton have identified the value of qualitative research to the information professional, setting out five reasons why this approach to information issues and problems can be of benefit:

> 1) they are attuned to growing complexity in an information environment that requires flexibility and variability in data analysis
> 2) they facilitate the use of triangulation to enrich research findings
> 3) they are responsive to the need for libraries to fulfil their service imperative
> 4) they are suited to the non-quantitative background of many information professionals
> 5) they fit the social nature of libraries [18]

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[16] Patton, p.14.
[17] Tom Wilson, 'Object or Participant - The information user in information research' *Swedish Library Research*, 3 (1990), 5-16.
[18] Gorman and Clayton, p. 31.

Their work also recognises that qualitative and quantitative approaches are not mutually exclusive and that through methodological triangulation, a combination can be particularly valuable. Patton also acknowledges that:

> Because qualitative and quantitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research.[19]

The combination of quantitative and qualitative methods can therefore be useful, for example a questionnaire used in conjunction with interviews.

2.2.3 Grounded Theory

The field of qualitative research offered the potential for utilising a different model for undertaking research. 'Grounded Theory' outlined by Glaser and Strauss[20], provides an opportunity for generating theory from the data, rather than the more traditional method of formulating a hypothesis and then testing it. Therefore:

> Instead of going out into the field with a prepared theory, derived perhaps from the works of previous writers, the 'grounded theorist' collects the data on the area of interest and then derives the theory from the data.[21]

The researcher investigates a phenomenon and explanatory theories relating to this subsequently are generated from the data. The method can be particularly useful when there is only a small amount of research in a given field and when it is not possible to formulate a theory in advance. It is also useful in the verification and strengthening of research results. Grounded theory techniques have been used by a number of researchers in the LIS field, and in particular by doctoral students at the Department of Information and Library Studies in Aberystwyth,[22] who have recognised the value of grounded theory techniques and provided a model for this research.

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[19] Patton, p.14.
[20] B.G. Glaser and A. L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research,* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1967)
[21] Wilson, p.9.
[22] See for example: Susan Diane Lithgow, 'Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of library provision within penal establishments in England and Wales: research to field test performance indicators and quality assurance programmes' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1994) and Antje Cockrill, 'A comparative analysis of marketing management in British and German university libraries' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, 1996)

Wilson refutes the claim that grounded theory remains rooted within the positivist paradigm, and demonstrates that is part of a shift towards a new approach to information research.[23] The method is often referred to as the 'constant comparative method.' Corbin and Strauss characterise the analysis stage as the continuous process of making comparisons for similarities and differences and asking questions of the data.[24] Grounded theory accepts that most issues are complex and the process is one of continual proposing relationships and verifying them with data. Often qualitative research methods provide the opportunity for this, however there is not a fundamental conflict between the use of qualitative and quantitative methods and both can be used in conjunction with grounded theory. A number of the techniques were therefore adopted, particularly at the analysis stage, to strengthen the results. These are discussed in greater detail in Section 2.4.

2.2.4 The theoretical approach adopted

This research sought to facilitate a greater understanding of the relationship between newspaper users and custodians and to provide practical and relevant recommendations to enhance the use of newspapers in historical research. Thus, the qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate to achieve these aims. The methodology reflects an underlying philosophy that moves away from the positivist model. This partly reflects the researcher's personal sympathies towards the notion that reality and knowledge is something that is constructed, rather than existing independently. It also is in common with a shift in the LIS field towards qualitative methods. Furthermore, the nature of this research advocated the use of mainly qualitative rather than quantitative methods, for the researcher was particularly interested in understanding the behaviour of people in certain circumstances. Thus, it was more important to discover how and why particular behaviour was undertaken, rather counting its occurrence. Nevertheless, some basic factual information of a statistical nature was considered valuable and triangulated, or further validated the qualitative enquiry. Additionally, in line with the belief that reality is constructed of competing definitions, a variety of data collection tools were utilised also as part of triangulation. By examining the problem from different perspectives, the research topic

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[23] Wilson, p.8.
[24] Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: grounded theory procedures and techniques,* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990) p.62.

could be explored holistically. The lack of specific research in this field meant it was not appropriate to begin with a hypothesis and that theory should emerge from the data gathered. The research design thus incorporated techniques outlined by Grounded Theorists.

2.3 The research design

The following section traces the progression of the research, from literature review through to the data analysis. At each stage, the rationale underlying particular approaches and techniques is outlined. Gorman and Clayton regard the research process as both linear and recursive, stating:

> The process certainly moves forward, but there is also movement in the opposite direction as succeeding stages uncover data or suggest ideas that revise approaches decided upon or conclusions in earlier stages.[25]

The research design is difficult to describe, taking into account the development of revisions and new ideas, without leaving the reader somewhat confused. Therefore, the stages of the research have been outlined, although at times progress was not quite as smooth as it may appear.

2.3.1 Literature search and review

A review of the literature is often undertaken at the outset of the research process. While it is initially necessary to identify previous work in a field, this process is usually on-going throughout the project. Three main factors are established during the literature search, including the direction and focus of the research, previous and current research in the field and the main schools of thought in the field. It can also illustrate possible research methods for the study. Before proceeding, the aims and scope of the literature search must be clearly established and the search terms must also be selected, as they are essential in determining the success of the search.

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[25] Gorman and Clayton, p.40.

(i) Undertaking the search and organising the literature

A simple card index was devised to collect all the bibliographic details. As relevant works were identified a new card was completed which was filed alphabetically by author. The literature was arranged under several subject areas and each card was colour coded to identify the subject into which it fell. English language material was used largely for simplification, for the materials needed to be accessible, both linguistically and geographically. In order to identify relevant works the strategy suggested by Gash was employed in the main. This included:

a) consult guides to the literature;
b) consult library catalogues;
c) consult bibliographies;
d) search abstracting and indexing services;
e) search current awareness services
f) consult special indexes;
g) seek assistance from institutions and people.[26]

Several problems were experienced during the literature review stage that were a major characteristic of the subject field. The main difficulty was the cross-disciplinary nature of the subject, falling between media studies, LIS and history. Information is frequently organised into the fields of humanities and social science for the purpose of specialist indexes and this topic also fell between the two. This meant that separate searches had to be undertaken when consulting a resource such as BIDS (Bath Information Database System). Similarly, material was often housed at different sites within the University of Wales, Aberystwyth library system. Library and Information Science Abstracts (LISA) proved to be one of the most valuable sources consulted, although the British Humanities Index (BHI) and a number of specialist bibliographies were also valuable.

(ii) The subject of the literature

The literature could be divided into three broad categories including, studies of the user needs of historians, studies relating to newspaper librarianship and developments in newspaper technology. A small amount of the literature was considered highly relevant to the study, however a larger amount had limited value. Studies of historians and their attitudes towards, and use of sources were examined to illuminate some key

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[26]Sarah Gash. *Effective Literature Searching for Students*. (Aldershot: Gower, 1989)

areas for investigation. 'User studies' of historians or those working in the humanities field were particularly valuable for possible research methods and studies undertaken since the 1980s proved most relevant for the research. Furthermore, a small amount of literature was identified examining newspapers in library collections and the problems associated with them, such as access and preservation. This material was of assistance when formulating the research questions. Although a date limit was not established for this part of the search, material from the 1980s onwards was again found to be most useful. The literature discussing the opportunities offered by new technology was also investigated. For this part of the search the most recent work in the field was required and throughout the research it was important to follow new developments in this field.

2.3.2 Preparation for the research

As only a limited amount of literature was available relating to the use of newspapers by historians, two background studies were undertaken to supplement this material. Initially, time was spent investigating the history and content of the newspaper from 1700 to present day. This not only familiarised the researcher with the subject, but it was useful for a number of other reasons. An overview of press history helped the researcher understand the background and construction of newspapers. Furthermore, it provided an insight into the potential applications of newspaper research. Moreover, an understanding of newspaper sources and their history gave the researcher greater credibility, competence and increased confidence when interviewing historians, which could not have been achieved without this understanding. The study of press history was extensive and during the later stages of data collection this background knowledge proved invaluable.

(i) Content analysis

It was decided that familiarity with press history at a general level was insufficient in order to fully understand the way in which historians worked with newspapers. Therefore, the researcher undertook a brief historical study of one newspaper, tracing its content and development over several centuries. In addition to providing firsthand knowledge of the problems associated with newspaper research, this also gave the researcher an opportunity to visit the BLNL at Colindale at an early stage of the research, and to use this important facility.

Content analysis allows broad comparisons to be drawn between the content of newspapers from different periods. This technique has been used by a number of historians, such as Berridge, who have regarded it as unproblematic for identifying trends in press history.[27] It was also relatively straightforward to undertake, seeking to achieve an 'objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication.'[28] A Coding Frame is first devised to categorise the information in the message. It is then possible to make quantitative comparisons between different communications, as to the nature of their content.

A title in existence since the early eighteenth century and still published in the twentieth century was required as the subject. *The Northampton Mercury* was chosen because of the large number of surviving copies at the BLNL and the researcher's familiarity with the area the newspaper covered. Copies of the newspaper published at fifty year intervals were examined and analysed, to enable more obvious changes in style and content to be observed. Therefore the following dates of the newspaper were examined:

Monday May 2, 1720 (first edition)
Monday January 1, 1770
Saturday January 1, 1820
Saturday January 1, 1870
Friday January 2, 1920

The Coding Frame was devised after examining the approach used in the 1977 *Royal Commission on the Press.*[29] It was based on the five analytical categories applied to local weekly newspapers, although it was modified to differentiate more clearly between national, international and local news coverage.

Content analysis is commonly used to describe the attributes of a message. The results do not make inferences about the sender of the message, the causes and effects of the message or demonstrate cultural changes. Furthermore, content analysis makes several

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[27] V. Berridge, 'Content Analysis and Historical Research on Newspapers' in *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries,* Ed. by Michael Harris and Alan Lee. (London: Associated University Press, 1986)
[28]B. Berelson, *Content Analysis as a Tool of Communication Research,* (New York: Free Press, 1952)
[29]Denis McQuail, *Royal Commission on the Press: analysis of newspaper content,* (London: HMSO, 1977) p.72.

assumptions that limit the value of the study, for example: categories are distinct and mutually exclusive; categories are equally applicable to different newspapers and the amount of space a category takes up in a newspaper is a reflection of its importance. The Coding Frame used for this study is included in Appendix 1, along with an example of the results. While the results were unsurprising and not of great significance to the study of press history, undertaking this type of investigation enabled the researcher to become more familiar with newspaper sources and the problems associated with their use. The value of this part of the study was perhaps not fully realised until later in the data collection process.

2.3.3 The survey

As discussed in Chapter One, the literature search revealed little previous research that had examined historians use of newspapers. Whilst it was possible to make some generalisations about the 'information seeking behaviour' of historians, and the difficulties associated with newspaper sources, little specific information existed about the use and importance of newspapers in historical research. Therefore, the first stage of data collection required a large scale investigation, to gather factual information about patterns of newspaper use, before a more qualitative enquiry could be undertaken. A postal questionnaire was considered to be the most effective way of eliciting this information. The method is suggested by Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias as an appropriate way to gather large amounts of information from a dispersed population.[30] Furthermore, several researchers had utilised this method when studying the information needs of historians. One of the main disadvantages with postal surveys can be a low response rate. However, surveys such as that of Corkhill and Mann[31], targeted professional historians working in higher education, and achieved relatively high response rates. Previous surveys suggested that newspapers were used frequently in historical research, but it was difficult to gauge their relative importance in comparison to other sources. Moreover, much of the previous research had examined only academic historians, whereas this study intended to examine a variety of different types of historians. The structured approach of the questionnaire would provide a broad overview of the topic. The factual data could then be complemented

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[30] Chava Frankfort-Nachmias and David Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. 4th edition (London : Edward Arnold, 1992) p.216, Table 10.3.
[31] Corkhill and Mann, *Information Needs in the Humanities.*

by qualitative data collected at a later stage in the research. In combining these two approaches the research sought to investigate and describe the research topic more accurately.

(i) Sampling techniques

Clearly it would not be possible to examine the use of newspapers by all historical researchers. Furthermore, the research objectives outlined in the Introduction (see Section 0.1) identified Wales as a sample population, rather than taking a more broad study of the UK. However, it would still not be feasible to survey every historical researcher in Wales. Sampling is often an important part of any research project and its importance in user studies is well established as Slater states:

> Studies of users and non-users of libraries and information services do not usually require the participation of the whole clientele or user population. Conclusions about the behaviour and/or view of the whole population can be based upon the responses of a *sample* of respondents.[32]

Before sampling could take place the population needed to be identified and categorised. Thus, some consideration was given to the definition of the word 'historian'. The definition used throughout the thesis is provided in the Introduction (see Section 0.3.2). Three main groups of researchers were identified from the literature: academic, family and local historians. The individuals concerned had to be actively involved in historical enquiry, however, their professional or non-professional status was unimportant. In order to examine whether different types of historians have different needs and patterns of behaviour, it was necessary to consult a similar number of individuals from each group, to gain a balanced overview. The technique known as 'stratified sampling' was used, where a population is divided into distinct groups or strata and a sample is selected from each strata. In this instance the 'stratification factor' comprised of the different types of historians. Slater explains how this technique is unlikely to have a detrimental affect on the results, stating:

> The worst that can happen, when stratification factors are unrelated to the subject of the study is that it will have no effect.[33]

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[32] Margaret Slater, *Research Methods in Library and Information Studies.* (London: Library Association Publishing, 1990) p.24.
[33] Slater, p.29.

Academic historians were clearly the easiest group to identify and locate since this group of researchers are based at academic institutions and recorded on a national register. This may account for the higher number of studies examining these types of individuals. A current list of academic historians in the UK produced by the Institute of Historical Research (IHR) was used to provide an indication of the population size.[34] Historians were identified at the five traditional colleges in the University of Wales, together with those at the new universities who had more recently become part of the federal university. The research also included historians at the University of Glamorgan, (which is not part of the University of Wales), given the size and importance of this institution. This identified approximately 150 individuals in Wales. It was also considered useful to include full-time research students in the study. This group was more difficult to contact and each history department was consulted for information about student numbers. Approximately 50 individuals were identified in this group.

Family and local historians were more difficult to identify, although both groups are well represented by a number of organisations. A list of the Family History Societies in Wales was acquired through the Federation of Family History Societies. Currently these societies are still largely organised according to the Welsh county boundaries existing between 1974 and 1996. The secretary of each organisation was contacted to provide information about their membership. This information was collated to form an estimate of the number of family historians in Wales. Using the societies made a number of assumptions about this group of researchers, and family historians who were not involved with a society could not be included in the population. This factor was felt to be unavoidable and active family historians were assumed to be involved with a society. Furthermore although many societies often had several hundred members, the majority claimed the number of active members was often approximately 40 individuals. If the five county societies were used, this gave a population of approximately 200, which was a similar sized sample to the academic historians.

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[34] Joyce Horn, *Teachers of History in the Universities of the United Kingdom,* (London: Institute of Historical Research, 1996)

Local historians were the most problematic group to identify as they are not always attached to a particular organisation. Furthermore, distinctions between this category and the family historians were often unclear. It was decided primarily to rely upon local history societies to identify these individuals, although several other ways may have been appropriate, for example through Local Studies Collections at libraries. Richardson demonstrates there are a large number of local history organisations in Wales.[35] The British Association for Local History (BALH) also maintain a web site which was used for more current information.[36] Often local history organisations cover fairly small communities or towns and for this reason it was not feasible to survey each one. Following the example of the family history societies, the organisations based at the county (or former county) level, were deemed the most appropriate groups to contact. This ensured that a geographic spread of Wales was surveyed, and one part of the country was not over-represented. Again these groups were contacted to ascertain the size of the membership. Many of the organisations stated that the number of members on their register was often far greater than the number of active members. The number of members was also often far lower than the family history societies. Subsequently, another method was used to identify local historians to provide a strata approximately the same in size as the other two groups. Experience at Aberystwyth suggested that these individuals were often part of university Extra-Mural or Continuing Education departments. Therefore, these departments in the University of Wales were contacted to enquire as to the number of local historians based at each.

(ii) Questionnaire design

The questionnaire design process broadly followed the approach set out by Hague.[37] Designing a self-completed questionnaire requires considerable time and skill and it is advisable to conduct a pilot study to highlight problematic and badly phrased questions. Despite the care taken in wording, layout and overall content of the initial questionnaire, it was expected that, following the pilot study, it would require some modification. Initially a list of questions and issues to be explored were drawn up by

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[35] J. Richardson, *The Local Historian's Encyclopaedia,* (New Barnet : Historical Publications, 1986)
[36] *British Association for Local History.* Hp. 1996 [copyright]. University of Leicester. Online. Available: http://indigo.stile.le.ac.uk/~bon/LOCAL_HIST/frontpage.html. January 1997.
[37] Paul Hague, *Questionnaire Design,* (London : Kogan Page, 1993)

the researcher. Over 20 questions were generated from an examination of previous studies and by closely following the research objectives of the thesis. Local and regional newspapers were intended to be the focus of the study at this point and the questions reflect this. The questionnaire was particularly interested in whether newspapers are of value to the historian, which types of newspapers they use most frequently, the problems they encounter when using newspapers and any strategies they have developed to overcome these problems. It became apparent that the questionnaire could not encompass all these ideas and provide a detailed study of the subject. Thus, the most relevant and appropriate questions were selected for the questionnaire. The selection process was mainly dictated by the decision to use a self-completed questionnaire. Using this type of survey it is unwise to investigate more complicated issues and closed questions often generate more useful results. Therefore, the questions were limited to largely factual questions, to avoid the construction of inaccurate answer categories.

It was essential that the questions were worded in an unambiguous manner. Unlike other forms of data collection, such as interviews, self-completion questionnaires cannot provide alternative explanations or clarification when a respondent does not fully understand the question. If respondents misunderstand a question, they may not respond, provide incorrect information or simply discard the questionnaire. Therefore, the language of the questionnaire had to be appropriate for the respondent. The questions were read to several colleagues to ensure they understood them correctly and where necessary certain questions were re-phrased. Several ambiguous questions were eliminated at this stage and these were reserved for the interviews, where further explanation might be offered.

The length of the questionnaire was limited to encourage respondents to complete it. Furthermore, it was not appropriate to investigate many of the issues using the survey method, because of their complex nature. Additionally, the questionnaire sought to generate largely factual data on the general use and problems associated with newspapers and more detailed qualitative data would be obtained from the interviews. Consequently, certain questions were left for the interview process. The layout of the

questionnaire was important and early drafts were re-designed several times as they appeared too cluttered. The pilot questionnaire used the Arial font as it was hoped this would provide a more formal appearance to the document. Check boxes were generated and the questionnaire was photocopied onto yellow paper to distinguish it from the accompanying letter. The pilot questionnaire appears in Appendix 2.

(iii) The pilot questionnaire study

A purposive group was required for the pilot study and the academic staff and research students of the Department of History and Welsh History at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth were selected. Respondents were asked to complete the survey and also to provide comments on the design and content of the survey. Additionally several colleagues in the Department of Information and Library Studies were consulted for their opinions. Participants were sent a letter of introduction and a copy of the questionnaire, with a return date of two weeks later. The pilot was primarily undertaken to ensure questions were worded appropriately and that the questionnaire generated meaningful data. In total, 32 individuals participated, resulting in a 62.5 percent response rate. This may have been artificially high due to the researcher being well known within the department, and a similar response rate for the main study was not anticipated. The results from this stage were not incorporated into the final analysis, due to the alterations that were subsequently made to the design. The researcher also felt that familiarity with staff, who often had a knowledge of the aims of the thesis, may have influenced some of the responses.

(iv) Questionnaire refinement

Following the pilot, several design changes were incorporated into the survey. Additionally certain questions were reworded and the data was analysed to ensure that it generated meaningful data. It was also decided at this stage that the final version of the questionnaire would be sent to individuals with a pre-paid envelope, which it was hoped would encourage them to return it.

The final version of the questionnaire appears in Appendix 3 and was constructed with reference to other user studies examining the information needs of historians and those

working in the humanities field.[38] The pilot study indicated that more emphasis should be placed on discovering why historians used newspapers, rather than exploring this in the interviews. Furthermore, certain questions were removed from the final version as they were deemed to be inappropriate. Sapsford and Jupp point out that both closed and open-ended questions are suitable for a self-administered survey.[39] Therefore the latter were used at times to provide categories that could then be explored in detail in the interviews.

The questionnaire examined the following issues:

1) general attitudes towards newspapers - why they are read, their value in comparison to other sources for historical research;

2) the use of newspapers for research purposes - how often they are used and why they are used;

3) the problems associated with the use of newspapers;

4) the locations at which newspapers are used;

5) the preferred format for using newspapers;

6) the use of newspapers in electronic formats.

(v) Closed and open-ended questions

The questionnaire sought to provide primarily quantitative information that could be used to construct a broad picture of the value and use of local newspapers to historians working in Wales and identify categories of use. It also sought to provide a starting point for the next stage of the research, which would use a qualitative approach to validate the data. Therefore, where possible, the survey used closed questions. These were pre-coded, although the codes did not appear on the questionnaire as it was felt the layout was fairly crowded and the codes may cause confusion to the respondents. The Coding Frame appears in Appendix 4 and is discussed in greater detail in Section (viii) below. With all closed questions the 'Other - please specify' category was included to validate the responses.

In several instances it was not possible to provide closed questions, without

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[38] For example Jones, Chapman and Woods, The Characteristics of the Literature Used by Historians, and Steig, The Information Needs of historians.

[39] Roger Sapsford and Victor Jupp, D*ata Collection and Analysis,* (London: Sage, 1996) p.102.

invalidating the results by constructing categories. Therefore open-ended questions were used, which would need to be coded after the responses were returned. In other places it was felt that a written response would be of value and would help to develop themes that could be further explored in the interviews. Ultimately a larger number of open-ended questions than originally desired, were included. The literature does not recommend the use of large numbers of open-ended questions in postal questionnaires, as respondents are often reluctant to complete them. However, in this instance there was little alternative, and it was hoped that the brevity of the survey would encourage responses.

(vi) Language

The pilot version of the questionnaire was only produced in English. However, following discussions with key individuals, it was decided that it was necessary to produce the questionnaire in both English and Welsh, in order to ensure maximum co-operation. The University of Wales, Aberystwyth has a bilingual policy and as the survey was to be conducted in Wales, it was deemed necessary to have it translated. The accompanying letter was also produced in a bilingual form. Although data analysis could be further complicated by a percentage of the questionnaires being returned in Welsh, (these required translation, as the researcher was not bilingual), this slight inconvenience hopefully would yield a higher rate of return for the survey and avoided any problems arising from a sensitive issue. Therefore the final questionnaire was produced with English on one side and a Welsh translation overleaf.

(vii) Further layout and design issues

The size of the questionnaire was increased following the pilot study, due to the Welsh translation and a new font was used for increased clarity. The questions were reordered and placed under appropriate headings to divide the questionnaire into three sections. This gave it a more logical structure, also facilitating analysis. Contact details for the researcher were included at the end of the questionnaire to further encourage it to be returned. The return date of the questionnaire was set for three weeks after despatch to avoid it being overlooked, whilst appreciating that it was being sent out close to the Easter vacation.

(viii) Coding

Following a trial analysis of the data generated from the pilot study, the closed questions were pre-coded to facilitate easy analysis. The open-ended questions could not be pre-coded as the study was exploring issues not previously examined. Thus, the coding frame which appears in Appendix 4 was constructed in two stages, one half that was constructed prior to the conduct of the survey, and the second that was constructed subsequently. The pre-coding was subject to refinement during the analysis process. For example the 'Other - please specify' category was examined to ensure that a new category could not be created. A considerable percentage of respondents to question 1, ticked both the Family Historian category and the Local Historian category, suggesting that in some instances a clear distinction between the two does not exist. Therefore, a new category was subsequently created to encompass those individuals who saw themselves as both a family and local historian, while retaining the distinction between individuals who had specified just one category. The language in which the questionnaire was completed was later recorded, and this was appended to the coding frame, to provide another variable.

(ix) Contacting the sampling frame

The sample population was contacted in several different ways depending upon the category of historian in which a participant was classed. Academic historians were defined as those undertaking historical research in higher education institutions in Wales. These were identified most effectively by sending copies of the questionnaire to history departments within Welsh academic institutions. Both academic staff and research students fall into this category and the questionnaire was designed to be completed by both. An individually addressed letter, questionnaire and return envelope was therefore sent to these historians. Research students were approached via the Administrator or Head of Department who provided the researcher with a list of names so individuals could be contacted directly, or else passed on the questionnaires, letters and return envelopes themselves.

Initially it was decided that all historians at the chosen institutions were to be sent a copy of the questionnaire, avoiding the assumption that only those studying periods after 1700 would provide valuable information for the survey. However, the pilot

study, and logic, demonstrated that medievalists could not and did not use newspapers as a primary source. Thus, it was deemed unnecessary to send questionnaires to this group. Nevertheless, where it was not possible to identify the specialism of a researcher, a questionnaire was sent. Inevitably some medieval historians completed the survey, and the results from this group reinforced the theory that had been developed in the pilot study.

Local historians had been primarily identified through local history societies. They were defined as those researchers working on the history of a specific locality, often independent of educational institutions. Local historians do not necessarily have professional training, although increasingly local history is being taught in academic institutions. The selected local history organisations were approached individually and copies of the questionnaire were sent to the chair of the group, who was held responsible for distributing the questionnaires. Local historians identified through university Extra-Mural Departments were also contacted through an intermediary. The Heads of these Departments in Welsh universities were sent copies of the questionnaire for distribution to relevant individuals. Similarly where local history courses could be identified, such as the Masters course in Local History at Trinity College Carmarthen, the course co-ordinator was sent questionnaires for distribution to students. The use of an intermediaries to distribute the questionnaire meant that it was not possible to establish the exact number of copies distributed to this group.

The term 'family historian' encompasses both the professional genealogist and the amateur family historian concerned purely with tracing their ancestry. It was not deemed necessary to distinguish between the two, as the terms are often interchangeable and genealogists, although often more experienced researchers, are not professionally qualified. These individuals had been identified through the Family History Societies, which whilst it may have resulted in a slightly unrepresentative sample, seemed the only practical method. It was anticipated that this group would contain the largest proportion of 'non-professional' historians and perhaps be the most unpredictable in terms of their responses. Each society was contacted individually and questionnaires, letters and return envelopes were dispatched to the Secretaries of those

societies willing to help. Again this method relied on an intermediary to distribute questionnaires to members, although individual respondents were required to complete and return them to the researcher.

Other individuals were also sent copies of the questionnaire through more informal means, often not anticipated by the researcher. For example, in several instances, on return of the questionnaire it was apparent that historians had passed copies on to colleagues whom they felt might be interested. Similarly, the researcher developed useful contacts during the course of this research, which enabled certain key individuals to be targeted and sent copies of the questionnaire. For example a contact at the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments in Wales, agreed to pass copies on to interested colleagues. Similarly, several local and family history societies passed on the names of valuable contacts.

(x) Distribution of the survey

In total 600 copies of the questionnaire were printed for distribution to the three types of historians working in Wales. Most were sent out by 14 March 1997 and the date for return was set at the 7 April 1997, giving respondents just over three weeks to complete and return the survey. Where possible questionnaires were despatched in bulk for distribution to named individuals or willing volunteers. This included approximately 200 academic historians and research students. Given the number of active members recorded in local history societies, it was decided to send 25 copies of the questionnaire to each group. Several societies requested a smaller number of questionnaires, therefore a number of smaller local history organisation were subsequently contacted. Combined with those copies sent to various other individuals in this group, 200 copies were despatched. The family history societies were less problematic. In two instances societies appeared to cover the same area, for example Dyfed Family History Society and Ceredigion Family History Society. A similar situation existed in Montgomeryshire, which was also covered by Powys Family History Society. In most instances the number of questionnaires sent was 25, although the researcher responded to the requests of the individual societies if they required more or less than this number. Again 200 copies were sent out to this group. It was anticipated that the use of intermediaries to contact local and family historians would

be problematic, for in some cases societies were sent a larger number of questionnaires than they were able to distribute. The method also meant it was not possible to calculate an exact response rate for the survey, for although 200 copies were despatched to these organisations, the total number of questionnaires distributed to members was not known. The return of 173 completed questionnaires was therefore considered to be encouraging.

2.3.4 Selecting a qualitative method

From the early stages of the research it was envisaged that the questionnaire, which provided structured, factual information, would be followed by a qualitative enquiry. Having collected some basic factual information about the use of newspapers, the qualitative approach was recognised as being valuable. It enabled the researcher to examine in detail the attitudes and opinions of historians and to understand their motives and experiences when using newspapers. This type of information could not be obtained through a quantitative survey. Although interviews had been suggested, a number of other research methods were considered at this stage. Research methods have been equated to fly fishing, whereby you select the right fly for the fish you want to catch.[40] A variety of research methods are available to the social scientist and the aims and objectives of the project were considered, when formulating the research design. The advantages and difficulties associated with a variety of qualitative methods were considered in order to demonstrate why the particular method was chosen. Practical considerations such as resource limitations were also factors in this decision. Kane identifies four qualitative research methods, including interviews, participant observation, documentary evidence and questionnaires.[41] A number of other methods often used in the LIS context were also considered, including focus group interviews and case studies.[42]

(i) Documentary evidence

The value of pre-constructed documentary evidence was considered at an early stage of the project. Historical research often leads to the production of journal articles,

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[40]E Kane, *Doing Your Own Research: basic descriptive research in the social sciences and humanities,* (London : Boyars, 1985) p.51.
[41]Kane, p.51.
[42] See Gorman and Clayton, pp.50-65, 142-157.

monographs and other publications. The value of newspapers may be gauged from examining this output. This type of study, often known as a citation analysis, where the references of a piece of literature are scrutinised, is frequently undertaken in LIS research. However, it is essentially part of the quantitative approach and does not answer questions such as why and how certain sources are used. The questionnaire had already established that historians use newspapers widely in their research. Therefore, it was not appropriate or necessary to undertake this type of enquiry, for it would not yield the required additional information.

(ii) Participant Observation

Participant Observation forms part of the qualitative approach to research, where 'the investigator attempts to attain some kind of membership or close attachment to the group that he or she wishes to study.'[43] During the research, the investigator assumes either a complete participant role or a participant-as-observer role. The former involves keeping the identity and objectives of the researcher unknown and is often regarded as unethical. However anonymity is used to eliminate bias caused by the group reacting to the researcher. Membership of the History Department at Aberystwyth gave the researcher an insight into the work of historians, as a participant-as-observer. However, participant observation was not appropriate for the study, for it sought to examine issues that could not easily be observed, and the enquiry was in part focusing on an invisible intellectual process. It was therefore more useful to allow historians to reflect on their own experiences of using newspapers, rather than attempting to observe this behaviour.

(iii) Case Studies

Case Studies are often used in LIS research and form part of the qualitative approach. They have been defined as:

> An in-depth investigation of a discrete entity (which may be a single setting, subject, collection or event) in the assumption that it is possible to derive knowledge of wider phenomenon from intensive investigation of a specific instance or case.[44]

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[43] Gorman and Clayton, p.273.

[44] Based on the definition found in H.S. Becker, *Sociological Work: method and substance*, (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), p.75, quoted in Gorman and Clayton, p.50.

Yin refutes the claim that case studies are a 'less desirable form of inquiry than either experiments or surveys'[45] He argues that problems of bias, generalisation and the tendency to yield large amounts of data, are inherent in other research methods. Stake also claims that the approach enables generalisations to be made about phenomena. Furthermore, it allows specific problems to be examined and comparisons to be drawn.[46] Stenhouse identifies three main sources of information used in this type of research: interviews, documents and observation.[47] 'Collective case study' is a technique where several cases are studied. Selection is based on maximising what can be learnt from particular cases and from finding examples which can be said to be representative rather than typical. This approach was not felt to be appropriate for examining individuals, although at this stage its value for collecting information from organisations was noted.

(iv) Asking questions

Questionnaires were used during the first stage in this research, and have been discussed in detail earlier in the chapter. However, there are varying degrees of structure in a questionnaire, and some can adopt a more qualitative approach through the use of open-ended questions which give respondents the chance to express themselves. Unfortunately these surveys often result in low levels of completion and a primary consideration here is the nature of the population being surveyed. People often lead busy lives and finding the time to complete a long questionnaire with open-ended questions is problematic. For these reasons, and because of the need to use a less structured approach to data collection, questionnaires were not deemed to be appropriate at this stage. It was also felt that a number of the issues could not be explored satisfactorily in a questionnaire, given their inability to prompt respondents or elicit further explanation.

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias[48] compared postal and telephone questionnaires with personal interview, evaluating cost, response rate, control of situation, their

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[45] Robert Yin, *Case Study Research: designs and methods,* (Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications, 1994) pp.9-10.
[46] Robert Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research,* (Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications, 1995) p.4
[47] Lawrence Stenhouse, 'Using Case Study in Library Research' *Social Science Information Studies* I (1981) p.225.
[48]Nachmias and Frankfort-Nachmias, p.216, Table 10.3.

applicability to geographically dispersed populations and homogenous populations. They also looked at the detail of information acquired and the speed of the survey methods. A summary is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of postal and telephone questionnaires with personal interviews

Criterion	Personal	Mail	Telephone
Cost	high	low	moderate
Response rate	high	low	high
Control of interview situation	high	low	moderate
Applicability to geog. dispersed pops.	moderate	high	moderate
Applicability to heterogeneous pops.	high	low	high
Detail of information	high	mod	moderate
Speed	low	low	high

These factors were considered when selecting the research methods employed. Both cost and time were limited. Additionally it was necessary to gain access to a geographically dispersed population and to collect detailed information from them. The chart demonstrated that control of the interview situation is high in a personal interview, response rate is better and it is more appropriate for a heterogeneous population. Consequently, it suggested that interviews could be used to gain detailed knowledge of a small sample population.

The interview technique is widely used by social scientists for data construction. Interviews can be undertaken with varying degrees of structure including; highly structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. Structured interviews are ideally used when the researcher wants to find the same information from many respondents. These are most suitable when used with a homogeneous group, where pre-determined categories of data may be collected. The disadvantages are that they allow little variation amongst answers and may lead to invalid assumptions about what people consider to be important. Semi-structured interviews recognise that individual personalities often require slightly different questions, or order of questions, to extract the same information. This technique results in more detailed answers, however they are also more varied and so it can be more difficult to analyse the data compared with the highly structured approach. Finally unstructured interviews have no set order or wording of questions and are useful for obtaining different kinds of information from

different people. These are ideal for use at the start of a research project because they generate the widest variety of information.

(v) Focus Groups

Focus-group interviews are a variation on the semi-structured interview technique. They are broadly defined as 'an interview with a small group of people on a specific topic.'[49] They differ from an interview in that they are led by a 'moderator' who gently steers the conversation, and they are not intended as a question and answer session. Furthermore they rely upon group dynamics to generate new ideas and allow as full a discussion as possible on the subject in question. The technique was popularised by its use by the Labour party in the run-up to the 1997 General Election and its value for collecting qualitative data is widely recognised. Focus groups have been used increasingly in LIS research, partly reflecting a growing interest in qualitative methods. For example, they were used in Denver, Colorado, US to ensure a children's library met the user requirements.[50] Oberg and Easton also made use of the focus group approach as part of a program evaluation in school library education.[51] Given its recent popularity, focus groups were considered carefully when selecting a qualitative approach.

The focus group is typically made up of six to eight participants, who form a homogenous group. Much of the success of the focus group is dependent upon the skill of the moderator. Focus groups are particularly useful for obtaining general background information about a topic. They can also form a stage in the evaluation process of a project or service, as well as providing a valuable role in a user needs assessment. In a recent study by Goulding and Kerslake, the role of the focus group as the key research method for obtaining qualitative data was posited.[52] However, in the past focus groups have been regarded as useful when used in conjunction with other methods.

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[49] Patton, p.335.
[50] P. Sandilan and S. Walters, 'A Room of Their Own: planning the new Denver children's library' *School Library Journal* 37 (1991) 26-9.
[51] P. Oberg and E. Easton, 'Focus Group Interviews: a tool for program evaluation in school library education' *Education for Information* 13 (1995) 117-129.
[52] E. Kerslake and A. Goulding, 'Focus Groups: their use in LIS research data collection' *Education for Information* 14 (3), (Oct 1996). p.225.

Despite the advantages presented by the focus group approach, it was not deemed appropriate for this research. The number of individuals involved would have meant that, unlike in standard interviews, only a small number of issues could be explored. Furthermore, considerable skill is required to act as a moderator, to avoid potential difficulties, and the group can easily become dominated by one or two more vocal individuals. Focus groups can bring together very different individuals and often unexpected divisions may occur, reflecting power struggles or other conflicts. Moreover, the researcher's own experience of focus groups led to a recognition of the practical difficulties that they involve, such as ideally requiring two people to run them. The ability to get around eight people in the same location to conduct a discussion can often be extremely difficult to achieve, whereas individual interviewing is more straightforward to arrange.

Asking questions in both group and individual situations can be problematic. By applying certain interview techniques however, many of these difficulties may be avoided. Sapsford and Jupp stress the importance of the interviewer remaining non-directive and non-judgmental during the interview, as both verbal and non-verbal behaviour can indirectly influence the respondent. They identify two principal problems, 'social desirability' and 'acquiescence'.[53] Social desirability impels a respondent to alter their answers in order to appear in a more favourable light. For example, when a person is describing a situation where they may not have acted entirely appropriately, they may not be honest. Acquiescence responding is where the interviewee responds positively to all questions, again in an attempt to please the researcher. Patton stresses the importance of establishing a rapport with the person being questioned, yet remaining neutral:

> Rapport means that I respect the people being interviewed, so what they say is important because of who is saying it. I want to convey to them that their knowledge, experiences, attitudes and feelings are important. Yet, I will not judge them for the content of what they say to me.[54]

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[53] Sapsford and Jupp, p.99.
[54] Patton, p.317.

(vi) The value of interviews

While the difficulties associated with interviews were recognised, their value as a data collection tool was evident. A variety of the methods outlined above yield large amounts of qualitative data. All techniques have various strengths and weaknesses, but semi-structured interviews were deemed to be the most appropriate method for this part of the enquiry. Although a number of difficulties might arise during their conduct, the method recognises that a group may not be homogenous, and that different questions may be required to extract the same information from different individuals. They also allowed clarification as to the meaning of questions, which may be necessary for some of the more complex issues. As the interview process was planned and undertaken, consideration was given to the problems of this research method at each stage. These are discussed in the following sections, and the techniques adopted to ensure the information was accurate, are outlined.

2.3.5 The interview process

Interviews were used to provide detailed qualitative data to complement the questionnaire results. They also explored certain issues more thoroughly than was possible in the survey. Furthermore, by combining a structured survey with qualitative interviews, the research used what Denzin terms 'methodological triangulation.' This helped the researcher develop a better understanding of the needs and attitudes of historians, and the problems that they encounter when using newspapers. The interviews collected largely qualitative data, and could be classified as what some authors have called 'depth interviews.'[55] This complemented the more structured, factual nature of much of the data obtained from the questionnaire.

The interviews used a far less prescriptive approach to the questionnaire, which made data analysis more problematic. Although an interview guide was devised, there was scope for variation in the questions asked. Patton explains how it is possible to combine the conversational or unstructured approach to interviews, with the use of an interview guide:

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[55] See for example A. N. Oppenheim, *Questionnaire Design Interviewing and Attitude Measurement,* (London : Pinter, 1992) p.65.

> Thus a number of basic questions may be worded precisely in a predetermined fashion, while permitting the interviewer more flexibility in probing and more decision-making flexibility in determining when it is appropriate to explore certain subjects in greater depth.[56]

This approach allowed the interview to progress in a similar manner to a conversation and to focus on the issues that were most pertinent to each interview participant. It was also was in line with the belief that different techniques are required to extract information from different individuals. It was recognised that these methods would make the interview procedure, and the data analysis, more complex, but arguably it would foster a greater sense of understanding of the problems and needs of the historians interviewed. For example, certain questions were phrased differently depending on whether the interviewee was an academic historian or a family historian, and issues were dealt with as they occurred naturally in the conversation, rather than following a prescribed ordering of questions.

(i) Interview participant selection and sampling techniques

It was necessary to undertake a detailed analysis of the questionnaire prior to conducting the interviews, partly to identify potential participants for this stage of the research. All questionnaire respondents who had used newspapers as a source, were asked if they were willing to participate in an interview. It was not felt necessary to interview those respondents who had no experience of using newspapers. While the researcher was aware that this group had been excluded, they were small in number. Furthermore, analysis of the questionnaire revealed that these individuals were often inexperienced non-professional historians or academic historians studying the medieval period. Additionally, as there was a broad range of levels of use among those respondents who did use newspapers, the chosen sample was expected to provide information about why certain historians used them less frequently.

A large numbers of historians agreed to be interviewed and clearly it was not possible to interview all willing respondents. Oppenheim[57] suggests that 30-40 individuals are appropriate for exploratory interviewing, therefore it was decided to identify 30

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[56] Patton, p.287.
[57] Oppenheim, p.66.

suitable participants from the group. As with the questionnaire, stratified sampling was used to identify similar numbers of the different types of historians, to enable comparisons between these groups. Furthermore, resource and time limitations also determined to some degree who would be interviewed, for although the researcher was keen to cover a wide geographical spread of Wales, it was not feasible or economic to travel to certain parts of Wales to conduct one interview. Patton argues that the approach to sampling epitomises the distinctions between the qualitative and quantitative methods, in that:

> Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (n=1), selected *purposefully.*[58]

'Information-rich cases' are selected which allow the researcher to maximise what can be learnt about an issue. A number of criteria were used to determine who would be interviewed, including the location of the respondent, the category of historian type (e.g. family, local, academic), and the level of use of newspapers (e.g. used frequently, used infrequently).

The location of the interviewee was an important consideration when selecting interview participants. The survey respondents were divided into geographic regions. This saved time and resources when travelling to interviews. Thus, seven main cities, towns or regions to visit were identified including: Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff, Carmarthen, mid-Powys, Swansea, Wrexham, where at least two interviewees were based. Following this, potential interview participants were contacted by telephone to discuss a convenient time to hold the interview and a suitable location. Achieving an equal number of the different categories of historians with a variety of levels of use of newspapers proved to be problematic. This was partly caused by many of the academic historians being unavailable during the summer vacation. Arranging the interviews was a process that continued during July, August and September of 1997 and it was often a matter of finding a respondent able to participate rather than a sophisticated sampling technique. It was felt that this method of participant selection may influence the data collected, but given the limited resources and time was

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[58] Patton, p.169.

unavoidable. The selection process would be an important consideration when the data was analysed. Issues such as the participants being more predisposed to having a strong opinion, either negative or positive about newspapers would be considered and are discussed during the analysis.

(ii) Interview guide design

In designing an interview guide, it was first necessary to identify important issues that were to be explored in the interviews. Primarily there were two types of issue to be included in the guide: those that had emerged from the questionnaire and required further elaboration, and those that had been purposely not included in the survey. Thus, a detailed analysis of the questionnaire data was required prior to conducting the interviews in order to generate ideas and themes to be explored in the interviews. For example, one issue that emerged from the questionnaire data was an overall preference to consult newspapers in hardcopy. Although respondents had been asked to explain their preference in the questionnaire, the answers were often insufficiently detailed and it was felt this issue could only be properly explored in an interview.

It should be stressed that this guide served as a point of reference for the researcher alone and was not supplied to the interviewees. The guide was also designed in such a way that it could be tailored to match the responses of individuals from the questionnaire and as the interview progressed. It was then possible to focus on issues that were important to each individual. There were certain key questions that were asked during all interviews, however where an issue clearly was not important or a respondent had very definite views, the guide made provision so that not all questions had to be asked. Some questions also served as prompts and if the interviewee raised a particular subject, these were unnecessary. The order of the questions could be also altered. Although these features raised questions of comparability between the data generated in different interviews, it was felt that by using this approach, the information would be more accurate. Finally, care was taken when wording the questions so that personal bias was not reflected in the questions. Thus the problems associated with social desirability and acquiescence responding were largely avoided.

(iii) Pilot interviews and refinement

In the same manner as the questionnaire, it was important to pilot the interview guide. Sapsford and Jupp identify five reasons why piloting is important before undertaking interviews. These include: ensuring the language of the questions is appropriate, the need for prompting, ordering of the questions, length of the interview and the ability of the questions to discriminate effectively between different respondents.[59] Three pilot interviews were undertaken with colleagues at Aberystwyth. They were also asked for comments on the wording of questions and the general conduct of the interview. Following the pilot study, a final draft of the interview guide was devised. This appears in Appendix 5. The interview guide was divided into five broad sections examining: general attitudes towards newspapers; using the newspaper collection: locating the collection; finding the information in the newspaper; using the information in the newspaper and the format of the newspaper. The researcher also provided a brief introduction to the research prior to the commencement of the interview.

(iv) Conducting the interviews

The locations of the interviews varied, and they were conducted at sites such as the participant's place of work, in the home or in a convenient quiet location such as a public library. This stage of the research was undertaken during July, August and September of 1997 and in total 30 individuals were interviewed. Interviewing is a technique that requires patience and concentration and the researcher found that the pilot interviews had helped to refine these skills. Techniques such as prompting were developed.

Each interview was recorded onto audio cassette. This was felt to be the most convenient and unobtrusive method, as video recording can be off-putting and note taking can distract the interviewer. It also has the advantage of ensuring that a verbatim account of the interview is achieved, which was particularly important for this study. The interviewer is also free to concentrate fully on the discussion not having to make notes. The disadvantages of tape recording are set out by Gorman and Clayton.[60] Their main criticism was the notion that participants may be less likely to volunteer sensitive information when being recorded. Given the subject of this research, this

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[59] Sapsford and Jupp, p.103-104.
[60] Gorman and Clayton, p.135.

concern was not felt to be relevant. Gorman and Clayton also stressed that the recording equipment should be unobtrusive, therefore the researcher invested in a small, portable Dictaphone, with a built-in microphone. As the interview progressed brief notes were made when necessary and after each interview the researcher noted some general impressions. Following each interview, the tape recording was transcribed as a verbatim account, as soon as possible after the event, to ensure the data was accurate. Although this task has been described as 'time consuming and soul-destroying,'[61] given that most interviews were approximately 45 minutes in length, it proved to be manageable. It was also essential to obtain complete accounts of the interviews. More details about the organisation of the data are found in Section 2.4.3.

2.3.6 Case Studies of newspaper collections

Newspapers are collected by a wide range of different types of libraries and information units, including public libraries, archives and numerous special collections. The original objectives of the thesis stated that a study of newspaper collections in libraries would be undertaken to examine the problems that might arise from the librarian's perspective. This is also part of triangulation, where multiple observers of a phenomena are consulted. The need for this type of enquiry became apparent following the questionnaires and interviews. Historians provided a large amount of information about newspaper collections, but it was felt that this information alone was not reliable and needed further verification. Many of the problems historians encountered related to policies and procedures relating to newspaper collections. However, without a study of these organisations, and of their current policies, it would be difficult to provide any relevant recommendations.

(i) Selection of cases

The value of case studies for gathering qualitative data was argued in Section 2.3.4 and a definition is provided. Their use in the LIS field is well established.[62] Since the examination of newspaper collection was not the primary objective of this study, it was not within the remit of the research to undertake a large scale survey. This work was primarily a study of historians and their use of newspapers. However, much of the data

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[61] Gorman and Clayton, p.136.

[62] See for example Chapter 3 'Case studies in information organizations' in Gorman and Clayton, p.50-65.

collected from historians, particularly concerning library policy towards newspapers, required verification. Consequently, by employing what Yin describes as 'multiple-case designs',[63] a range of different organisations holding public collections of newspapers, were studied. This method, called 'collective case study' by Stake, involves the selection of a variety of cases which are thought to be typical or representative. Yin claims that 'replication logic' is the key to understanding multiple-case design.[64] This is distinguished from 'sampling logic', whereby a sample of respondents are assumed to represent a population and researchers 'do not study a case primarily to understand other cases.'[65] Multiple sites can be chosen for the diversity or capacity to generalise the results they produce. Alternatively, however,

> ... if comparison or contrast is the intention, then additional sites should be chosen to highlight whatever is being compared or contrasted.[66]

Due to the range of different types of libraries and archives who collect newspapers, a multi-site case study was regarded as the most appropriate technique to gain an overview of current policies at these different collections and to compare these policies.

Stake regards the need to maximise what can be learnt from a case as central in the selection of a case and Yin stresses the importance of selecting appropriate cases. The case studies were intended to illuminate the range of different public collections in which historians use newspapers. The selection of cases was largely dependent upon results from the questionnaires and interviews, which indicated the important locations used by historians in Wales. Organisations with large newspaper collections were particularly valuable, although there was an appreciation they may be atypical. Balance, variety and the opportunity to learn were all important selection criteria. Similarly the case needed to be geographically accessible, given the limitations of time and resources for the project. Consequently, the following cases were chosen for this stage of the research: Caernarfon Archives, Cardiff City and County Library,

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[63] Yin, p.44.
[64] Yin, p.47.
[65] Stake, p.4.
[66] Gorman and Clayton, p.54.

Carmarthenshire County Library, the National Library of Wales and *Western Mail and Echo* Library (Cardiff).

Each of the five organisations were identified as important locations for consulting newspapers during the interviews and questionnaires. They also provided a variety of different types of publically available institutions holding newspaper collections. An academic library was not included in the study, partly because of the decision taken at an early stage in the research to concentrate upon public collections, (discussed in Section 0.3.3). However, of greater significance were the findings from the interview and questionnaires, which indicated that the sample population did not consider academic libraries as an important location for consulting newspapers. Thus this type of collection was not examined for this reason.

(ii) The Case Study Protocol

Yin outlines the standard approach to formulating the 'case study protocol' and the final version of this document appears in Appendix 6.[67] Case studies differ from standard interview or surveys in that the questions are posed to the investigator. In essence the protocol reminds the researcher of the required information although it may include specific questions for staff at an organisation. However, it also includes cross-case questions, such as a comparison of different policies at a large or small public library. Finally, the protocol includes possible sources for the required information. Stake divides this process into two stages - the formulation of research and topical questions. This approach was followed.

Good case study research relies on discipline and conceptual organisation. Areas for investigation are highlighted to provide a conceptual structure, which draw the researcher towards observing the problems of the case. Research questions are often cause and effect questions, rather than eliciting information or evaluation. Issues identified at an early stage in the research, often arising from existing literature, are known as 'etic' issues. These are important, but also important are the 'emic' issues which emerge as the research progresses. This is what Parlett and Hamilton call

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[67] Yin, p.63-73.

'progressive focusing.'[68] In this case study research the important issues to be investigated included: the collection and bibliographical control of newspapers in public collections; the storage, preservation and conservation of newspapers in public collections and access to newspapers in public collections. The case study aimed to look at these three issues over a historical framework: to examine their past, present and future implications for the organisation.

Stakes argues the development of 'topical questions' is an important stage in case study design. A pre-designed topical outline is useful for cross-site analysis and the data can even be pre-coded to facilitate analysis. In accordance with this, a list of questions was drawn up which implied the types of information required by the research. These were divided into the following categories: the nature of the newspaper collection; the bibliographical control of the collection; storage, preservation & conservation of the collection; public access to the newspaper collection; ICTs and the newspaper collection and other problems with the newspaper collection.

The case study sought to investigate the content of the newspaper collection at each organisation, including the history of the collection and current collection policy. The availability of different formats was also examined. The storage and preservation of the collection was also important and any specific conservation or preservation policies were recorded. Bibliographic control was investigated, and any accession or cataloguing policies of the organisations were recorded. Access to the collection was one of the most important issues to be examined. Any policies relating to access, including storage, preservation and bibliographic control were investigated. Furthermore, attempts to improve access to the collection, such as through greater publicity or the construction of indexes, were recorded. The perception of library staff as to the main users of the collection was examined. Moreover, policies on copying and access to both hardcopy and microfilmed titles were investigated. The study also examined the use of ICTs to exploit the newspaper collection, including the

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[68] I. M. Parlett and D. Hamilton, 'Evaluation as Illumination: an approach to the study of innovative programmes', in *Evaluation Studies Review Annual,* ed. by Gene V. Glass, (London: Sage, 1976) p.148.

organisation's current and future plans. The availability of newspapers on CD-ROM and on-line catalogues was of particular interest. Finally, any specific difficulties the library were aware of relating to the newspaper collection, were investigated, including problems the staff or the user may have experienced.

(iii) Data collection

Yin outlines six possible sources for case study information, including: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts.[69] Given the type of information required, three main methods were used to collect the data. These included, observation, interviews and document review.

The first two methods required the researcher to visit the organisation to collect the data. However, the documents relating to the newspaper collection could be obtained by postal enquiry, and examined over a longer period of time. The first stage prior to beginning data collection was to seek access to and permission from, the organisations to be studied. An introductory letter was sent to each of the chosen organisations requesting their co-operation. Once this had been secured, each organisation was contacted by telephone and arrangements were made to obtain the necessary documents and to set a date for a visit. Each organisation was asked to identify a contact who had the greatest knowledge of, and specific responsibility for, the newspaper collection. It was hoped that this individual would participate in the interview part of the case study.

(iv) Observation

During the visit to each site, direct observation was undertaken with a view to answering the questions on the case study guide. In all cases, the researcher was given a guided tour of the library or organisation. There was also ample opportunity to observe the surroundings as most visits lasted for several hours and staff often left the researcher unattended. Additionally, because all the organisations were public bodies apart from the *Western Mail and Echo* Library, in most cases the researcher was free to gather as much information as possible.

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[69] Yin, p.79.

(v) Interviews

An interview was conducted during each of the visits. The researcher had requested an interview with the person with most responsibility for newspaper collections. Often this was found to be several people, therefore the interview often involved more than one person. This process was less formalised than the interviews with historians and varied considerably in each organisation. The case study guide was used here to assist the researcher and provide information that was not apparent through observation. All the case study interviews were audio tape-recorded to facilitate analysis and notes were taken throughout the discussion.

(vi) Document review

Where possible documents were collected from each of the organisations to assist in the case studies. These were often in the form of leaflets, although the World Wide Web sites for some of the organisations also provided valuable additional information. Printed material in the form of monographs and journal articles was also used to acquire details such the history of the various organisations.

2.3.7 Follow up to case studies

The case studies demonstrated the importance of tracing the history of newspaper collection in England and Wales to provide this section of the research with historical context. Few previous studies have addressed this subject. It was not within the remit of the study to use archival material to trace the history of newspaper collection development, but the case studies highlighted an area of relevance to the study that provided a useful context to the current situation. Therefore, using largely secondary sources, a study of the development of newspaper collection was undertaken. This further emphasised the important role of the BLNL. The BLNL takes overall responsibility for newspaper collection in the UK and its development and history were important to the study. It was also essential that the research considered the work of the Library in providing leadership for newspaper librarianship in Britain.

Chapter One demonstrated how much of the history of newspaper librarianship in Britain has focused upon the BLNL. Throughout this research project developments, initiatives and policies at Colindale were monitored. However, in seeking to provide conclusions and recommendations for library policy regarding newspapers,

consultation with the BLNL was felt to be appropriate at this final stage of the research. The NEWSPLAN LINC Panel was also a key policy making body and the reactions of this group were sought. Consequently, a meeting was arranged with the Newspaper Librarian at the BLNL while the conclusions and recommendations were in the process of being formulated. The Librarian was also the Secretary of the NEWSPLAN LINC Panel and so was able to offer advice in this capacity. An outline of the issues that were discussed is included in Appendix 7. The meeting was found to provide a useful indication of the feasibility and relevance of the emerging results. Many of the resource implications and research interests of the BLNL could be incorporated into the research. The recommendations and conclusions also were drawn up with reference to the NEWSPLAN five year development plan, which was in draft form at the time of the meeting. Undoubtedly this meeting strengthened the validity of Chapter Six, making it more relevant to the library profession.

2.4 Data analysis

Analysis is the process whereby through detailed examination and organisation of the data, patterns are identified which enable summaries to be made, and findings communicated. A variety of methods may be utilised, and this section attempts to demonstrate how the results and conclusions of this thesis were reached. However, when qualitative data is collected, as was largely the case with this research, Patton states that:

> There are no formulas for determining significance. There are no ways of perfectly replicating the researcher's analytical thought processes. There are no straightforward tests for reliability and validity. In short, there are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study.[70]

The data collected from the questionnaires, interviews and case studies, was analysed using a variety of techniques. The interviews, which yielded the largest body of data, relied on the 'Grounded Theory' techniques outlined by Strauss and Corbin.[71] The questionnaire data combined both the quantitative and the qualitative approaches. The

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[70] Patton, p.372.
[71] Strauss and Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research: grounded theory procedures and techniques.* (Newbury Park, CA. : Sage Publications, c1990)

case studies used qualitative techniques. The data collected by each of the different methods was analysed separately and a report was written for each procedure. Once these were complete the reports were examined and the relevant information is presented together in Chapters Three, Four and Five.

2.4.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative analysis is widely used in research, particularly in the science disciplines where statistics are used to predict how and why subjects behave as they do under certain conditions. They form a central core of the positivist research tradition and are frequently used 'to test hypothetical-deductive generalizations.'[72] Numerical data is sometimes regarded as more precise than qualitative data. However, this research adopted a largely qualitative approach and a statistical enquiry was not part of the aims of this research. Therefore, in the main, these techniques were not used and any quantitative data from the questionnaire was presented simply as percentage responses.

A range of tests can be performed on quantitative data, although they were not appropriate or necessary in this research. The questionnaire data would have allowed tests such as correlation to be undertaken. This could determine whether a relationship exists between two variables, for example historian type and the importance they attributed to newspapers. Correlation Coefficients are used to express the relationship between two variables to gauge if a form of correlation exists. Regression analysis is another means of manipulating data to derive further, unobserved information. If the value of one of the observed variables is specified, it is possible to determine the expected corresponding value of the other variable. These methods were not used however, for the distinctions between various answer categories in the survey were broad. Furthermore, there was a belief that a greater understanding could be achieved through collecting and analysing qualitative data. These techniques were also not appropriate given the aims of the questionnaire, which sought to collect basic statistics and factual information.

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[72] Patton, p.37.

2.4.2 Questionnaire data

(i) Organising data

Due to the large amount of data it was anticipated the survey would generate, a database was constructed in *Microsoft Access*, to record the questionnaire responses in electronic form, to facilitate data analysis and provide an alternative to paper storage. As copies were returned they were given a sequential number and recorded on the database. As stated previously, much of the data was quantitative and had been pre-coded. (See Appendix 4). These codes were transferred into the database, for ease of analysis later. Using *Microsoft Access*, it was a simple process to export the database into *Microsoft Excel*, where the statistical analysis could take place.

(ii) Generating categories, themes and patterns

Almost half of the questions were open-ended questions and the data could not be coded prior to collection as no previous research had been done in this field. Therefore this data was initially entered into the database in textual form and the responses for each question were printed out to facilitate the generation of categories for analysis purposes. Using the literature and with close examination of the responses, a coding frame was generated for the open-ended questions. It was then possible to enter these in the spreadsheet for statistical analysis. Several questions, such as Question 2 concerning the nature of historical research being undertaken, were not coded, for they would require either broad categories, which would not be meaningful, or they would require an extremely complex coding frame to encompass all the variables. In the instance of Question 12(c) the number of responses was so low that coding was not felt to be meaningful.

Using the various functions of *Excel*, simple analytical tests were performed on the coded data. The temptation may have been to perform sophisticated statistical analysis using *Excel* because they are available. However, the questionnaire was not designed to provide information suitable for such analysis, giving the qualitative nature of the study. For each question the number of occurrences of each categories were totalled. This information was then transformed into percentage, which were displayed as pie charts and graphs as appropriate. A number of the charts provided clear

representations of the data and patterns could be observed. Some of the questions however, were deliberately more ambiguous, and it was apparent that these would require further investigation in the interviews.

2.4.3 Interview Data

(i) Organising Data

The first stage of analysis involved organising the interview data in a manner which facilitated this process. Computers have greatly enhanced the ability of researchers in this field. In this instance, the data was collected on audio tape, and was transcribed into word- processed files. Each interview was transcribed as verbatim records, with the researcher's questions and the responses from the historians included. All thirty interviews were transcribed as soon after the interview was conducted as possible. Notes had also been made on the individual interview guides that were used with each interview and these provided supplementary data. The researcher also referred to the individual's responses to the questionnaire for clarification at times, especially if the tape was slightly unclear. Once this process was completed the researcher obtained a hardcopy print out of the interview transcript files so they could be examined more conveniently. An example of an interview transcript is included in Appendix 8.

(ii) Coding the Data

Qualitative analysis is the process by which large amounts of data are refined to enable the salient points to be observed. It also allows comparisons to be made, so that patterns or variations in the data become visible. Often it is useful to create conceptual tools, such as a coding frame or 'categories', to describe the data and assist in the analysis. The process of categorisation makes it possible to identify conceptual and empirical distinctions between different parts of the data. There are a variety of techniques described in the literature although the researcher was using grounded theory as a basis for the research. The analytical procedures set out by Corbin and Strauss were therefore broadly followed.[73]

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[73]Strauss and Corbin, pp.62-113.

Strauss and Corbin describe the first stage in the analysis as 'open coding.'[74] Most qualitative analysis techniques begin with a study of the 'raw' data to familiarise the researcher with it. Conceptualising data is an important first stage in the analysis, thus each interview transcript was examined thoroughly and questioned, to allow the meaning of each sentence or paragraph to be understood. The process was undertaken with reference to the research questions. The interview guide was also studied to help provide a conceptual framework for the analysis. Once this was completed, and all the phenomena were identified, the next stage involved grouping together similar concepts. This process is known as categorising, and possible relationships between the concepts begin to emerge. It is important to name categories in order to enable quick reference to the concept to be made. Occasionally these phrases arise from the literature, while others may derive directly from respondents' comments. For example, the concept of scanning a newspaper as a search strategy was mentioned by numerous respondents and so one category was named 'Scanning'. 'Open coding' of all the data is not always undertaken, and a sample of interview transcripts might have been used. However, the researcher chose to open code the entire thirty interviews, as they were so wide-ranging and it was felt it would be difficult to select a representative sample. Some early theories and patterns began to emerge at this stage, and these were noted as memos, to be return to later in the analysis. The open coding frame devised during this process is included in the Appendix 9, and emerging patterns in the interview data may be observed.

Following the formulation of an open coding frame, the transcripts were examined again in greater detail. Larger categories of response were subdivided where appropriate and some of the data was re-coded into more precise categories. Corbin and Strauss call this second stage of analysis 'axial coding', where the fractured data is reassembled in new ways by making connections between a category and its sub-category.[75] This allows the relationships between these categories to be observed, such as causal and consequential conditions. The axial coding frame is included in Appendix 10 and by comparing this to the earlier coding, more specific relationships can be

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[74] Strauss and Corbin, p.62.
[75] Strauss and Corbin, p.98.

observed. For example, if the section coded as (1) 'General attitudes towards newspapers' is compared between the open and axial coding a number of differences can be observed:

Figure 1: Comparison between Open and Axial Coding

1 General Attitudes towards newspapers
Enjoy newspapers
Aesthetic factor
Interest factor
High yield
Ease / convenience
High quality

General problems using newspapers
High volume of information
Time consuming
Tiring
Inaccurate
Biased
Not indexed
Get side-tracked
Less 'academically sound'

1 General Attitudes towards newspapers
1.1 Enjoy / like using newspapers
Interesting
Useful

1.2 Dislike using newspapers
Quantity of information
Time consuming
Tiring
Difficult to read
Not indexed
Get side-tracked
Quality of information
Less 'academically sound'
Biased / selective
Problems of format
tiring
time consuming
difficult to read

In the above example, the general reasons for preferring newspapers have been refined to include just two broad categories. However, the reasons for disliking newspapers have been expanded, to include three broad categories concerning the quantity, quality and format of the information, each having a number of sub-categories beneath this. Thus, the relationship between the data can be observed. For example, associated with the quantity of information in newspapers are consequential factors which make them time consuming, tiring and difficult to read. The categories devised at this stage formed a tool that could be employed to analyse the data.

(iii) Generating theories

Following the coding process, the data was physically assigned to a category. Each interview transcript was examined in turn and the appropriate sections were cut and pasted as verbatim quotes, into word processor files to store the data. It was particularly important that the material remained verbatim, for the interpretavist approach often uses direct quotations. This process fragmented the interview data and at this stage it was arranged under the facets of the coding frame. The files served as

the basis for the analysis documents that were initially written. Each category and sub category and the verbatim quotes from the interviews were examined in turn. The number of quotes in each category and the type of historian they originated from were considered. It was then possible to summarise the sentiments behind each category and where necessary provide a verbatim quotation from the interviews. A large number of these quotes were used in Chapters Four and Five to allow the attitudes and experiences of historians to be observed.

(iv) Coding the historians

Part of the research examined the patterns of use amongst different types of historians. Therefore, detailed consideration was given to the coding of the respondents. Five types of historians were pre-coded for the purpose of the questionnaire, including academic, research student, local, family and other. Following analysis, a sixth category was created for local and family historians, as a substantial number of respondents checked both boxes. Once the interview data was collected, the distinctions between certain categories were found not to be relevant. The objective of this part of the research was to examine the behaviour of different types of historians. Consequently, a distinction between academic historians and research students was not necessary. It was more useful to create a general category for academics, which was then sub-divided into social and political historians. Although this distinction was broad, all the respondents were accommodated within these categories. It was devised in such a way that each respondent had a unique code, identifying the type of historian that they were. The coding frame used for the respondents is found in Appendix 11, which lists each individual interviewed, the type of research they undertook and the code which they were assigned. Identifying details have been removed to keep the information confidential, however the codes provide a convenient way of citing comments from individual historians, used in Chapters Four and Five.

2.4.4 Case Study analysis

The case study data was analysed using a less prescriptive approach to the interviews, although it was based to an extent on the 'constant comparative method' outlined by

Glaser and Strauss.[76] Yin recognises that techniques for analysis in this area are less developed than for other research methods. He outlines two general strategies for analysis - relying on theoretical propositions and developing a case description.[77] The second approach was more appropriate as the purpose of the case studies was essentially descriptive. The Case Study Protocol (available in Appendix 6) identified various issues that were to be explored and these were refined as the research progressed. Most of the data collected was structured around the issues in the guide.

(i) Organising the Data

The data generated by the case study method was varied in nature, comprising of observational notes, interview notes and a collection of documents. The three data types were gathered together to form a 'case record'[78] for each site. The interviews undertaken at each site had been recorded, therefore it was necessary to transcribe these, although it was slightly different to the semi-structured interviews with historians. The information was often factual in nature as the member of staff was supplying details about policies and procedures relating to the newspaper collection. Therefore the transcription was not verbatim, although it was word processed into detailed notes. Observational notes taken during the visits were appended to the interview data to form a report from each site. Finally, any documentation collected during the visit was collated to form part of the case record.

(ii) Generating Categories

The Case Study Protocol identified the important issues, therefore analysis was largely based around this document. Gorman and Clayton describe how the constant comparative method is most suited for the collection of data from multiple sites. They also show how through using this technique much of the analysis is structured by the time data collection is complete.[79] The main issues from the case study guide were identified as:

- the content and history of the newspaper collection;

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[76] Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: strategies for qualitative research,* (Chicago: Aldine, 1967)
[77] Yin, pp.103-4.
[78] Lawrence Stenhouse, 'Using Case Study in Library Research' *Social Science Information Studies* 1 (1981) 221-230.
[79] Gorman and Clayton, p.57.

- storage, preservation & conservation policies and issues;
- bibliographical control of the collection;
- access and users of the collection;
- current policies and future plans with respect to ICTs.

Each case record was examined thoroughly to identify any further issues that had not been anticipated and several other themes were identified to describe the data. At this stage, Stake claims it is useful to return to the topical questions generated prior to data collection.[80] For example, the questions which explored the nature of the collection raised topical questions such as the range of titles held at each site, the year the collection was established and whether a member of staff had responsibility for the collection. By asking these questions, and comparing the responses from the different sites, a more complete understanding of the issue could be achieved.

(iii) Generalisability of the case study method

Generalisability is a concern in the conduct of any research, however, it can be a particular criticism of the case study approach. Quantitative studies utilise random sampling techniques, large samples and standardised methods to enable an assessment of the extent to which results are representative of the wider population from which the sample has been drawn. However, Stake maintains that 'the purpose of case study is not to represent the world but to represent the case', underlining the need to design a case study to 'optimise understanding of the case rather than generalisation beyond'.[81] Clearly, the case studies provide only an indication of policies and strategies relating to newspaper collection in Wales. However, by choosing a range of organisations and by using the NEWSPLAN report, arguably the results are valid. Yin suggests enlisting key informants to read a draft of the case study report, as a form of validation and to ensure its quality. For this reason, participants at each site were sent the first draft of the case study report. Additionally, the recommendations resulting from the report were formulated after consultation with the BLNL and the

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[80] Stake, p.25.
[81] Stake, p.104.

NEWSPLAN LINC Panel. Therefore, through these two forms of validation it was possible to generalise, to some extent, about newspaper collection in Wales.

(iv) Writing the report

The use of narrative, the vignette and analysis are important approaches to writing the case study report. Vignettes help to illustrate a point by providing examples, however, in this instance the report relied mainly on the use of narrative and analysis. The data was largely descriptive and examples from the different organisations were worked into the report. By comparing the responses of the different organisations, patterns began to emerge and it became possible to make generalisations about newspaper collection in Wales. The purpose of the case study was not simply to make generalisations, and often the response varied at each of the sites. The different approached taken by many of the organisations to their newspaper collection proved to be an important feature of this part of the research. A brief introduction to each site was also prepared, often requiring an examination of existing literature. For larger institutions, such as the NLW, this was more straightforward to obtain, whereas it was more difficult to find information about the history of the *Western Mail and Echo* library, for example. The data was then presented under the five main headings and another section was added incorporating further information.

2.5 Evaluation of the Research Design

The success of any research project is not guaranteed, although a rigorous and carefully planned methodology will help ensure that meaningful results are produced. The research design was evaluated as the work progressed, and techniques were refined or developed as appropriate. This was in part associated with the use of grounded theory. However, once all the data had been collected and analysed, the limitations and problems associated with the overall research design could be observed. The comments in this section are part of a retrospective assessment, which seeks to highlight parts of the methodology known to be problematic. While an awareness of these problems does not detract from their significance, it demonstrates that consideration was given to devising the research methods, and that some difficulties were unavoidable. Furthermore, the methodology was appropriate for the research objectives and no serious problems were encountered.

Sampling methods used for both the questionnaires and the interview participant selection were, to some extent, problematic. Identifying academic historians was relatively straightforward, but the methods used to identify both family and local historians raised several difficulties. In the case of both family and local historians the use of intermediaries to distribute the survey meant that an exact response rate could not be calculated. The population sizes were also more difficult to ascertain, and any generalisations made about these groups were more tentative. Nevertheless, the study provides a comparison of different types of historians, and for this reason their attitudes and opinions were considered valid. The results also provide a more fully developed picture of the use of the newspaper in historical research. Although historians in Wales constituted the population, the findings are of relevance to all historians using newspapers in Britain. The study contributes to our understanding of this area of research, however suggests that further study is required in this area.

Problems surrounded the design of the survey, which largely arose from it being undertaken at an early stage in the research, when the research issues were less clear. The initial research objectives were to study the use of local and regional newspapers by historians in Wales. Consequently the questionnaire reflected the emphasis of these type of publications. Once the survey was complete, the data suggested that it was too limiting to examine only local and regional newspapers. Many of the problems associated with their use were found to be equally applicable to all types of newspapers. The decision was therefore taken to examine the use of all types of newspapers during the interviews. While there were no major consequences of this decision, as it reflected the natural development of a project, it may have been more straightforward if this decision had been made before the survey was undertaken.

The categorisation of the sample population into different types of historians was another problem caused by unclear research objectives. The categories created for analysing the questionnaire data had to be refined when analysing the interview data as they were found to be inappropriate. When further thought was given to the objectives of the categories, the distinction between research students and academics was felt to

be irrelevant. The categories were primarily used to distinguish between different types of historical research, and consequently academic historians were sub-divided into social and political historians. Although this decision did not invalidate the results from the survey or the interviews, it required some further work to reinterpret some of the questionnaire results, which may have been avoided if more consideration had been given to the development of the initial categories.

The use of the case study approach to examine newspaper collections in Wales was also not straightforward. Although it was not within the remit of this study to undertake a large scale survey of newspaper collections, a broader picture of the situation may have been achieved in this way. Furthermore, although academic libraries were not included in the study for numerous reasons that have been outlined, there was a recognition that a study of this type of institution would have added another dimension to the findings.

Nevertheless, the various research methods used were successful and no major changes or variations would have been undertaken with the benefit of hindsight. At the start of the project, a large amount of time was spent in preparation for the research, which made it difficult to focus on the key research questions at this stage. However, this preparation proved to be highly valuable once the researcher began data collection. In particular, during the interview stage, this knowledge gave the researcher confidence to discuss many aspects of newspaper format, history and storage which may otherwise have proved challenging.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research methods used in the thesis. It offers the rationale for the adoption of the particular combination of research methodologies used. Although undertaken within the context of the social sciences, and more specifically the within field of LIS, the underlying philosophy of the research was broadly humanistic. Consequently, the data collection methods were largely qualitative in nature, although the value of quantitative methods was recognised. Triangulation was an important concept in this research and a variety of data collection

techniques were used to triangulate the data. The research was also undertaken broadly within the framework of grounded theory, so that rather than beginning the research with a hypothesis, theory was generated from a close examination of the data. Throughout the methodology, the practical limitations of this research have been recognised and emphasised.

Chapter 3

Newspaper collections in Wales: policies and strategies

3.1 Overview

Most modern libraries collect newspapers in some shape or form. This chapter presents the results of five case studies of newspaper collections in libraries and other organisations, in Wales. Case studies were used to provide detailed, current information examining the policies and strategies at a variety of different types of collection. Although the case studies were undertaken after the questionnaires and interviews with historians, the findings are presented at this point in the thesis to provide a context for the attitudes and opinions of historians. The literature suggested that some of the problems experienced by historians were associated with the methods used to store and preserve newspaper collections. It also suggested that a study of newspaper collections was timely, given the lack of research in this field. Further details about the case study methodology are included in Chapter Two (see Sections 2.3.6 and 2.4.4) and the Case Study Protocol, used to help collate this material, is included in Appendix 6. Stake argues that we 'do not study a case primarily to understand other cases.'[1] However, case studies enable generalisations to be made by examining typical or interesting systems at a micro level. Furthermore, they allow specific problems to be examined and comparisons to be drawn between the experiences of different institutions. By combining data collected in this manner, with information in publications such as the NEWSPLAN report for Wales, this contributes to forming a more complete picture of the policies and strategies that relate to the bibliographic control and storage of newspapers in Wales.

3.2 The chosen sites

The five cases were carefully chosen to provide an example of the main types of public institutions holding newspaper collections, and that were used by historians in Wales. Selection of the cases is discussed further in Chapter Two (see Section 2.3.6 (i)). The NEWSPLAN report for Wales concluded that the main repository for local newspapers in England, outside of London, appears to be the county library system. However, newspaper collection in Wales is slightly different and policies vary between different library authorities.[2] For this reason a description, brief history and examination of the nature of the newspaper collection at each site was first undertaken.

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[1] Stake, p.4.
[2] Jones, Report of the NEWSPLAN project in Wales, p.50.

3.2.1 Cardiff City and County Library

Cardiff Free Library was established in 1862, making this organisation the oldest of those studied. Cardiff was the first place in Wales to adopt the Public Library Act of 1855.[3] As with all early libraries, newspapers formed an important part of the collection. In fact, the service began with a newspaper and periodical reading room, which took a large percent of the finance.[4] The library was established prior to the NLW and consequently sought to provide material from the whole of Wales. During its early years, the Library took newspapers from all parts of Wales and built up, among others, a good collection of north Wales newspapers. Most of this material was later donated to the NLW. However, currently the library authority has a stock of 458 serial titles, although figures specific to newspapers in the central library were unavailable.[5]

Over the years local government reorganisation has altered the remit of the main library in Cardiff. In 1975 it became the county library for South Glamorgan. Following further reorganisation in 1996, the library came under the remit of the City and County of Cardiff and since this date has formed part of the directorate of Education and Cultural Services. The largely urban-based population of the city is recorded as 315,000 in 1997, with a mix of ethnic minorities.[6] Thirty four professional library staff are employed by the authority, which held a total of 389,251 books in 1996-7.[7]

3.2.2 Carmarthenshire County Library

Carmarthenshire was the last county in Wales to adopt the Public Library Act of 1919 and the first library centre opened in 1931, although Carmarthen town library was not established until 1935.[8] From this date it is likely that the library took current newspapers, although they are no longer in the collection and were probably disposed

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[3] The Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1855 followed the Public Libraries Act of 1850, which had led to the first rate-supported libraries in several towns of England.
[4] John Roe, 'The Public Library in Wales; its history and development in the context of local government' (MA Thesis, Queens' University of Belfast, 1970) p.36
[5] Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996-7*
[6] 1997 Mid Year Office of National Statistics. Population and Census figures.
[7] Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996-7.*
[8] David Francis Griffiths, 'History of 'Public Libraries' in Carmarthenshire' (FLA thesis, 1980) p.251.

of after several years. Therefore, the retrospective collection was not built up until much later this century, following the receipt of a donation of bound volumes from the *Carmarthen Journal* office. More recently the library has acquired microfilmed copies of back issues of many of the newspapers from the surrounding area. The bound volumes are now held at Carmarthenshire Archives however. Although figures are not available for the library itself, the authority is recorded as receiving 487 serial titles in 1996-7.[9]

Prior to the 1974 local government reorganisation, the town of Carmarthen was home to the county library. Following the creation of Dyfed County Council, the library became known as Carmarthen Area Library. However as of April 1996, the unitary authority of Carmarthenshire was formed and the library again became the county library, falling under the remit of Carmarthen County Council Library Authority. In 1997 the Authority was recorded as serving a population of 169,100,[10] and employed 14 professional library staff, five of which were based in the main library.[11] During this period the total bookstock for the area was recorded at 148,095.[12]

3.2.3 The National Library of Wales

The NLW is one of six Copyright Libraries serving the UK and Ireland. As the national collection for Wales the importance of this library is paramount, therefore much of its development was discussed in Chapter One. The NLW has held the right to obtain Legal Deposit copies of most British and Irish publications since 1911 and hitherto has received newspapers. It is selective in its acquisition of British titles and does not collect local titles for England, Scotland and Ireland. It does however, acquire copies of all Welsh newspapers and has attempted to augment its collection of pre-1911 Welsh titles.

3.2.4 Gwynedd County Archives, Caernarfon

Gwynedd Archives was first established in 1947 and is currently based at two locations, Dolgellau and Caernarfon. During the 1930s there was a general recognition that public libraries were not always suitable repositories for archival material and

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[9] Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996-7.*
[10] 1997 Mid Year Office of Population and Census figures.
[11] Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. *Public Library Statistics 1996-7.*
[12] Dewi Thomas. Private Correspondence with Carmarthen Area Librarian. 12/11/98.

Public Record Offices began to be established. This study only included the Caernarfon office which is now housed in a modern, purpose built, building. The collection is extensive and many newspaper titles have been collected since around the 1960s. The Archives Service also received a large part of its collection as donations from newspaper offices backruns. Local government reorganisation has affected the content of this collection, for example in 1974 when the county of Gwynedd was formed, Caernarfon Archives, which had previously served Caernarfonshire, became the county record office for Gwynedd. However, following further reorganisation in 1996, it currently serves the unitary authority of Gwynedd Council. It is one of the most important record offices in Wales and serves an urban and rural population given in 1997 as 117,800.[13]

3.2.5 Western Mail and Echo Library

The *Western Mail and Echo Ltd* was the only private library studied and its development was more difficult to trace. It currently serves the needs of journalists working on a number of titles including *The Western Mail, The South Wales Echo* and a group of titles known as the Celtic Newspapers, which serve the South Wales valleys. However, the library originally served *The Western Mail,* a Cardiff-based daily title established in 1869, and an informal library service was available. A number of cuttings from this original service have been discovered, dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however the majority were destroyed during the Second World War.

The *Western Mail* did not have a formal library service until the late 1940s. From this date cuttings files were systematically maintained and the bound volumes of the newspaper were kept to fulfil the organisation's legal obligation. Staff also maintained a detailed index for newspapers from this period until it was discontinued in the 1980s. Subsequently, the index was donated to the NLW and around this time, a decision was also taken to deposit the bound volumes of the newspaper at the NLW after two years. Therefore, the office no longer keeps back files. The move to a new building in the early 1960s led to the designation of a purpose built area for the library collection and more recently the library has acquired a higher status. For many years the *Thomson*

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[13] 1997 Mid Year Office of National Statistics. Population and Census figures.

group owned the *Western Mail*, however since the mid 1990s it has been part of the multi-media corporation *Trinity International.*

3.3 The nature of the collections

At each of the sites some general information about the newspaper collection was first established, including the content of the newspaper collection, to identify the range of titles held, the length of the runs, and any obvious omissions and the organisation's current collection policy. Staffing arrangements at each organisation were investigated, to establish if an individual had overall responsibility for newspapers. Additionally, the format of the collection was established, to ascertain the availability of hardcopy, microfilm and electronic sources.

3.3.1 Content of the collections

The varying size, location, and role of the five organisations meant that their respective newspaper collections differed. The differences between the two public libraries were immediately apparent. Carmarthen public library serves a smaller and more dispersed population than the Central library in Cardiff and consequently is housed in a smaller building. Although the CIPFA figures record the total number of serials received by Carmarthenshire Library Authority as greater than those received by Cardiff Library Authority, the visits to the two libraries demonstrated otherwise. There were fewer titles available at Carmarthen library, which was largely attributed to the differences in size and population served. The format of the collections also varied between counties, with Cardiff library retaining bound volumes and microfilmed newspapers. This was in contrast to Carmarthenshire, where the Record Office held the bound volumes and the library retained the microfilms.

The role of the institution also affected the nature of newspaper collections and some obvious differences were observed. For example, the NLW has an important role in Welsh bibliography and seeks to provide a comprehensive collection of Welsh newspapers. In contrast, the *Western Mail & Echo* library is a private collection housing backfiles of the group's publications and serving the needs of the newspaper's employees. Consequently, the *Western Mail* only kept reference copies of the South Wales newspapers produced by their newspaper group. Caernarfon Archives and the

NLW were also quite distinct organisations because of their archival role. Current newspapers are not available on open shelves in the same way as a public library, although most titles were received at the NLW within a few days of their publication.

Where possible the content of each collection was recorded. An example of the material available at Carmarthen and Cardiff libraries is included in Appendix 11 to demonstrate the wide range of newspaper material. However, it was not necessary to provide complete listings from each organisation in this report, as these can be obtained elsewhere.[14] Nevertheless, where possible the research investigated the number of titles currently and previously collected by each organisation. At Caernarfon, Carmarthen and Cardiff in particular, it was noteworthy that the range of newspaper titles had been more extensive in the past. This was partly attributed to newspaper collections having a higher status in the earlier part of this century. Moreover, higher levels of public funding in the past allowed acquisition policies for all library materials to be more extensive. Thus, this study acknowledged that in local public collections the range of titles was more limited than in previous years.

3.3.2 Collection policies and acquisition

The study investigated the existence of a written collection development policy statement. Only the NLW and Caernarfon Archives were found to possess such a document, which is perhaps a reflection of the archival role of these organisations. Furthermore, only the NLW has a comprehensive policy that specifically related to newspapers. It stated it would:

> ... acquire and retain all newspapers published and/or distributed in Wales and the immediate Border areas. To acquire and/or retain a limited selection of essential newspapers published outside Wales, to be held in microform.[15]

They collect a selection of UK national newspapers, local newspapers, community newspapers or 'Papurau bro' and free newspapers. As funds become available the

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[14] See for example, Jones, *NEWSPLAN: report of the NEWSPLAN project in Wales.*

[15] Department of Printed Books, National Library of Wales. *Statement of Collection Development Policy.* Aberystwyth: National Library of Wales, Feb 1999. Online. Available: http://www.llgc.org.uk/lp/lp0051.htm. May 1999.

NLW also purchases microfilmed titles missing from its collection. This provides it with copies of material currently otherwise only held in local collections.

The NLW acquires material through legal deposit, the purchase of microfilm and CD-ROM copies of UK and non-UK newspapers and occasional donations. The Copyright Agency collects most of the non-Welsh material and it is sent to the NLW on a weekly basis. Microfilmed newspapers are purchased in the main from the BLNL, with some exceptions. For example the *Irish Times* and *The Times* are both purchased directly from the publishers. The copies of all Welsh newspapers are kept in hardcopy and microfilmed. Several titles are acquired on CD-ROM, but these are in addition to the microfilm copies. Recently there have been discussions among the Legal Deposit Libraries about the overlapping responsibility for newspaper collections. These suggestions were discussed in Chapter One, (see Section 1.4.2 (i)) and may lead to minor changes in the collection policy of the NLW in the future.

Caernarfonshire Record Office also has a formal collection policy document, which is based on guidelines from the Royal Commission for Historical Manuscripts (HMC). It receives both editions of the local newspaper, the *Caernarfon and Denbighshire Herald* directly from the newspaper publisher in hardcopy format. The Record Office does not receive any free newspapers, although it collects the 'Papurau Bro', from the county. It also has a co-operative arrangement with the public library in Caernarfon for some newspaper titles. A selection of current national newspapers are received by the library, which welcomes users from the Record Office. The library keep these titles for three months and since 1976 has collected a microfilmed version of *The Times*.

Neither of the public libraries had a printed collection policy document at the time of the visit. They acquired a range of local, national and foreign titles, either directly from the publishers or, if the material is on microfilm, from the organisation responsible for filming. Microfilmed titles were usually purchased from the BLNL rather than the NLW. Both libraries recognised that the range of titles could alter from year to year and selection was dependent upon decisions made by various library committees. Furthermore, both libraries had separate acquisition policies for the current and retrospective collections. Consequently the case studies suggested that newspaper

collection in public libraries was not a clearly defined area and varied considerably between different authorities.

The role of the *Western Mail* library means that titles are not selected in the same way as was the practice at public collections. The library automatically received copies of all the various editions of the group's newspapers, as they were produced. The hardcopy newspapers were bound into volumes for archival purposes. Another copy of the newspaper was used for producing the cuttings files.

3.3.3 Management and staffing of the newspaper collection

At all the organisations, newspapers formed only part of a more extensive collection and consequently they were not managed as a discrete entity. Both the public libraries managed the current titles in separate departments from the retrospective collection. Furthermore, the study found that none of the current newspapers were kept permanently to augment the retrospective collections. For example, both Carmarthen and Cardiff took *The Times* daily, however these copies were only stored for a limited period before being destroyed. The retrospective collection of *The Times* was purchased on microfilm, and both libraries also received *The Times* on CD-ROM. These policies reflect a recognition of the need for the acquisition of different formats of newspapers to serve different purposes. The retrospective collection will be more durable on microfilm and *The Times* is relatively inexpensive to purchase in this format. However, for general reading purposes hardcopy is more appropriate and for more recent research purposes the CD-ROM is also highly valuable. Nevertheless, it could be argued that at both public libraries there was little evidence that these decisions were based on the needs of users or on a clearly thought-out policy. This often led to the newspaper collection being dispersed throughout the library and not managed as a coherent unit. Consequently, resources were perhaps not always be utilised effectively and collection may not be fully exploited by users.

The disparate nature of the collection was particularly apparent at Cardiff public library, where newspapers were dispersed between three departments and three floors of the library. The Local Studies collection held the retrospective titles on microfilm and in bound volumes. The reference library, known as the Information Department,

housed newspapers on CD-ROM, newspaper indexes such as the *Index to The Times* and *Clover's Newspaper Index* and microfilm back issues of *The Times*. Current daily and weekly newspapers were held by the Leisure library. Staff in the three departments dealt with a range of information sources of which the newspaper was one. While funding levels may not justify a separate newspaper library, even in a large public library such as Cardiff, the collection could have been more co-ordinated. For example, the separation of resources such as *The Times* microfilms and local newspapers may not serve the needs of the users most effectively. This study suggested that public libraries require a greater understanding of the patterns of use in newspaper collections.

Management and staffing arrangements at the *Western Mail* were different to the other libraries. Newspapers in bound volumes, electronic format and cuttings files formed a central component of the collection, along with a small number of reference books. Consequently, the management of the newspaper collection was not distinct from the other sources. At the time of the visit the library had recently been placed under the responsibility of a new Media Department, whereas prior to this it was directly under the Editor. The library was housed in a small space, close to the journalists. It was heavily used and often chaotic, reflecting the needs of journalists, who usually require information immediately. The library employed four members of staff, and was staffed for seven days a week and open overnight with a security guard present. Users were requested to record any material they removed from the library. However, because it served journalists from competing newspapers in the same 'stable', (The *Western Mail*, *South Wales Echo* and *Wales on Sunday*) the librarian commented that this procedure was not always adhered to. Under-staffing of the library was a constant problem and the staff were not professionally qualified, unlike at other institutions.

Newspapers were not managed independently at Caernarfonshire Record Office although they were stored in separate strong rooms. This was partly due to the format of the material and the special conditions in which it needs to be kept. Again there was not a member of staff with overall responsibility for the newspapers and they were managed as part of the overall collection. However, the staff felt the newspapers were

perhaps one of their most important collections and attached considerable value to them.

The literature studied recognised that newspaper collections personnel often require specific training, which is rarely undertaken.[16] For this reason, it was unsurprising to discover that none of the organisations had a member of staff with sole and specific responsibility for newspapers. Although professionally qualified staff clearly had some knowledge of handling newspaper collections, without an individual taking overall responsibility for the collection, this would be more limited. This finding was perhaps most surprising at the NLW, where the newspapers fall under the remit of the Department of Printed Books. The Department is the largest curatorial department at the library, has around 70 members of staff. The staff recognised that the NLW is unusual among national libraries, in not having a separate newspaper division. Several members of staff of the Department of Printed Books were more experienced in newspaper collections and with greater resources, staff training opportunities were greater at the NLW. However, at the other collections, staff had learnt many of the techniques for dealing with newspapers 'on the job,' dealing with a wide range of sources, of which newspapers were just one.

3.3.4 Format of the collections

The research examined the format of the collection at each of the organisation. The majority of retrospective collections were either bound volumes, loose-leaf copies or microfilm. Current newspapers were generally made available in hardcopy, although electronic access to a number of current titles was available via the Internet, at one library. At Carmarthen library, the retrospective collection was held entirely on microfilm; the library did not store bound volumes, as they were donated to the County Archives. A small selection of CD-ROM newspapers was available and current newspapers were available in hardcopy in the reference library. However, the situation was quite different in Cardiff, where there was a large number of bound volumes in the retrospective collection. The reasons for this are historical, for prior to the formation of the NLW, Cardiff public library maintained an important collection of Welsh

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[16] Mary Ellen Soper, 'Education for newspaper librarianship' in *Newspapers in the Library*, ed. Lois Upham, pp.93-98.

material. The library used to have its own bindery for periodical material. It now collects a smaller number of titles, limited almost exclusively to newspapers from Cardiff and its vicinity. These were mainly collected on microfilm, although some CD-ROMs were available. The differences of format availability at the two public libraries partly reflects the haphazard development of newspaper collection in Wales. It also suggests a lack of standardisation still exists.

At the NLW the collection also comprised of a combination of the three formats. All Welsh newspapers were collected in hardcopy and were then microfilmed. Since the mid-1980s, newspapers from outside Wales have usually only been held on microfilm to save storage space. However, the hardcopies for files prior to this date are still available. The NLW has their own microfilming unit and as well as filming for its collection, it also undertakes work for other libraries in Wales. A large percentage of the newspaper collection is kept in bound volumes, however binding has not been undertaken at the Library since 1990 and from this date hardcopy newspapers are available in loose leaf format. A large number of CD-ROM newspapers were also available in the Library.

The majority of the newspaper collection at the *Western Mail* library consists of cuttings files. There are approximately 3 million cuttings in the library. The material is arranged under subject headings which were devised by BBC Data.[17] A general information file housed the largest number of cuttings, a picture file contained material by subject and a biographical file was available, containing information on more prominent people. At the time of the visit three titles were scanned and cuttings taken daily. However, since the loss of a member of staff, redundant material was no longer systematically removed from the files. Bound volumes of the three main titles were also available for a minimum period of two years before being deposited at the NLW. This is part of newspaper offices' legal obligation to retain hardcopies of their publications and all the different editions of the newspapers are available as a

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[17] Geoffrey Whatmore, *BBC Data's Thesaurus of Terms: for general, news and current affairs collections,* (London: BBC Data, 1983)

consequence.[18] A number of microfilmed copies of titles were also available in the library, although it appeared that these were not library copies and are produced by the advertising department of the paper. The library staff were unsure as to whether microfilmed copies were stored more permanently or disposed of. Electronic formats, including CD-ROM and a digital archive were also available in the library.

The collection at Caernarfon is mostly in hardcopy format, although the service has acquired some microfilmed titles to augment its collection. Most of the volumes acquired in the 1970s were bound into volumes by the newspaper offices who donated them. The conservation department at the Record Office binds newspapers now or re-bind any damaged material. However, at the time of the visit only the main local titles were bound and the community newspapers received by the Archives Service are stored in loose leaf format. Electronic formats were not available.

3.4 Storage, preservation & conservation of the collection

This section examined a number of factors including, the storage methods employed by the organisations, preservation or conservation policies at the sites, including the use of microfilming for preservation and ways of minimising further damage to the collection. The organisation's contribution to the NEWSPLAN project and the condition of newspaper material was also examined.

3.4.1 Storage of the collections

The location and storage conditions of newspaper material were compared at the five sites. The four public organisations ensured that the storage conditions for the retrospective collections were appropriate to sustain the durability of the source. The high level of awareness amongst staff as to the fragility of both hardcopy and microfilmed newspapers was evident and must partly be a tribute to the NEWSPLAN project. The same level of care was often not taken with the current newspaper collection, as these titles are often discarded after a short length of time. At the *Western Mail* storage conditions were less important. Here material was stored largely to facilitate ease of access, reflecting the different role of this library.

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[18]The 1869 Newspapers, Printers and Reading Rooms Repeal Act (32 and 33.Vict.c.24) stated that all printers were required to keep copies of all their publications. This law was updated in 1961 by the Printer's Imprint Act (9 and 10.Eliz.II.c.31).

The three public collections with hardcopy retrospective collections all took steps to store them appropriately. At Cardiff public library the bound volumes were stored on special shelves in the stacks and kept flat to avoid further damage to them. At the NLW storage conditions were maintained to a particularly high standard. Bound and unbound newspapers were stored in the new wing of the NLW in purpose-built stacks, where temperature and humidity is carefully controlled. They were stored horizontally for preservation purposes and on movable shelving to maximise space. Loose leaf newspapers were stored in standard archival boxes and those that had been dis-bound were carefully wrapped prior to this. Material was also stored under closely controlled, archival conditions in two strong rooms at Caernarfon Archives. The majority of the local titles were kept in the first strong room. Here the bound volumes were stored horizontally on shelves and wrapped in acid-free paper. Unbound material was kept in standard archival boxes and material deemed extremely fragile was marked accordingly. The majority of enquiries at the Record Office are for the *Caernarfon and Denbighshire Herald* or the *North Wales Gazette*, therefore these titles were kept nearest the door for ease of access. The second room had London titles or titles that circulated either in the whole of Wales or more widely in Britain. Many of these titles were donations to the Record Office, therefore, the collection was somewhat unusual in its content. There was also less care taken to preserve this collection as the volumes were often not shelved horizontally or wrapped in any way.

Microfilm is also subject to deterioration and needs to be stored appropriately. At both Carmarthen and Cardiff each film was kept in a box and the collection was stored in metal filing cabinets. Staff usually assisted users requiring access to the microfilms, for they commented that damage can often occur when loading or unloading a film from a microfilm reader. At the NLW the microfilms were stored in the stacks, although two copies were kept in separate locations. The master copy was kept in a locked safe and was not available for consultation. The working copies of the microfilms were kept in metal cabinets, much nearer to the Reading Rooms, for ease of access.

Current newspaper collections are usually stored in a manner to facilitate access, rather than to preserve the format. The current newspaper collection at Carmarthen was

stored on shelves where it could be freely consulted by members of the public. Five months of back issues were kept on these shelves before being discarded. In contrast, at Cardiff, the current issue of newspapers, housed in the leisure library, were placed on display shelves. If previous issues were required, a member of staff retrieved them from storage. Back issues were kept in the stacks for 18 months and were available for consultation before they were pulped.

3.4.2 Preservation and conservation policies

With the exception of the NLW, none of the institutions had a written conservation or preservation policy for newspapers. However, preservation was important to all the public bodies, who relied on appropriate storage conditions, some conservation work and microfilm to extend the life of the collection. Both public libraries received newspapers on microfilm rather than the current newspapers being retained to form the retrospective collection. Both libraries purchased microfilms from the BLNL. However, Cardiff library was also involved in a consortium with seven other south Wales libraries for microfilming the *Western Mail.*

The record office at Caernarfon had its own conservation department, employing a full-time conservator. However, it was the only public organisation not to use microfilm as a means of preservation. The storage conditions of the collection allowed material to be closely monitored, with gauges to provide temperature and humidity readings. The conservator also inspected the collection daily and reported any changes in the condition to the Archivist. The Archives had an in-house microfilming unit, however at the time of the study it was not used to film the newspaper collection.

Issues of preservation and conservation were considered to be of great importance at the NLW and it co-ordinated the NEWSPLAN project for Wales. It has a Conservation Unit with one senior conservator and seven conservators involved in the treatment of all archival material. The Reprographic Unit also provides a range of internal and external services, including preservation microfilming. In-house preservation awareness training and environmental monitoring formed part of the recently created Preservation Development Unit. This unit also processed conservation statistics. High quality storage conditions at the NLW have meant that much of the

material is in a reasonable state of preservation. However, to minimise further damage to hardcopy collections, microfilming was undertaken. Wherever possible users will be supplied with microfilm in preference to the original. Many libraries in Wales donated their bound volume newspapers to the NLW to ensure they were correctly preserved; these have also been microfilmed. Although this process has made it necessary to dis-bound some volumes to film the full page, ultimately it should ensure that the information these newspapers contain survives for many years.

The newspaper office was the only organisation not to attach value to issues of preservation, although in binding the volumes the durability of the newspapers is improved. The *Western Mail* did not consider preservation to be their responsibility. Furthermore, as the volumes were donated to the NLW after several years, the survival of this material is ensured.

3.4.3 NEWSPLAN and the condition of material

The NEWSPLAN project arose from a concern about the poor condition of many newspapers in public collections. The literature has recognised the success of the project, although the observations are not based on empirical evidence.[19] Consequently, this study examined the impact of the NEWSPLAN project. All four public institutions involved in this study participated in NEWSPLAN, providing information for the report for Wales.[20] The *Western Mail* was the only organisation not to participate in the project or have a level of awareness about it. In general, newspaper material in public collections at the time of the study was high quality and microfilm was used extensively. Thus, the findings concurred with the literature, and concluded that NEWSPLAN had made a substantial contribution to issues concerning newspaper collection and management in Wales.

A number of the libraries mentioned that they had found minor inaccuracies in the NEWSPLAN report for Wales and they felt that the information was in need of updating where collections had altered since its publication. Despite the small errors, staff regarded the project as a welcome addition to newspaper preservation initiatives.

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[19] See for example Reid, 'News and current affairs' pp.251-271.
[20] Jones, *NEWSPLAN: report of the NEWSPLAN project in Wales.*

Since undertaking the case studies, staff at the NLW reported that the NEWSPLAN information for Wales has been transferred to a database system, which enables the work of updating and correction of inaccuracies to continue, as information is received from the various sites.

The organisation of the NEWSPLAN report by newspaper title made it difficult to investigate the condition of all the newspapers at one repository. Thus, this aspect was investigated during the case studies, through discussions with staff and inspection. Hardcopy newspapers can be highly fragile and the study found a number of bound volumes at Cardiff in such poor condition that users were unable to consult them. However, the majority of hardcopy material at Cardiff was in good condition. Similarly, at the NLW, the storage conditions have resulted in many of the bound volumes being in good condition. At Caernarfon the condition of the newspapers was found to be generally good, although the Archivist was concerned about disrepair to one or two editions. Material was closely monitored for damage or deterioration and the conservator took steps to rectify any problems. The material at the *Western Mail* was also generally in good condition, although some of the more heavily used cuttings were subject to deterioration.

Microfilms are also subject to wear and tear through heavy use. Furthermore, in the past filming was not undertaken to such high standards and the quality of older films may be poor. Some of the early microfilms at Carmarthen were found to be damaged, including the filmed copies of volumes donated by the *Carmarthen Journal.* In the past, these copies had been used extensively by journalists, and have articles missing and writing on them. Additionally the films were produced during the 1960s and 1970s when microfilming standards were not established and consequently, their condition had deteriorated from heavy use. Carmarthen library agreed that it would usually purchase a replacement if a film was in particularly bad condition. The NLW reported that a number of their microfilms, particularly those produced many years ago, were poor quality. Where financial constraints allow, this material was being re-filmed.

3.5 The bibliographical control of the collection

The literature suggested that bibliographic control of newspapers has been less than adequate in the past.[21] NEWSPLAN provides a useful addition to this information, however the report is not arranged to establish the range of titles held at one location. Therefore, local catalogues of newspaper collections are often a valuable method for researchers seeking to identify and locate newspaper titles. The current level of bibliographic control was investigated at the five sites, and it was concluded that despite a recognition of the problem, local cataloguing of newspaper collections remains limited. Newspaper information was not included in the main library catalogue and basic printed catalogues of the collection were often unavailable. For example, at Carmarthen the staff felt that the storage arrangements made their holding self-explanatory. A list of microfilms was provided on the front of each microfilm cabinet. At Cardiff, information about the collection had to be obtained by questioning the staff. They also had a list on the side of the microfilm cabinets. The *Western Mail* did not have a catalogue of its resources although the range of titles and the years held was more limited than at the other institutions.

Two of the organisations had printed catalogues of their newspaper collections. At the NLW there was a newspaper card catalogue that users could consult, available in the reading room. It contained information about the title, the holdings and any gaps in the run and was arranged alphabetically by title. The staff consulted a separate catalogue to that available to users and it appeared there were some discrepancies between the two which caused confusion. The NLW was the only institution with an online public access catalogue (OPAC). Newspaper titles were planned to appear on this catalogue, which would then be accessible to users throughout the world. Unfortunately at the time of the study there were problems with these records not being displayed, although the Library hoped to rectify this temporary difficulty.

The newspaper catalogue at Caernarfon was available in both book form and in a card catalogue, although both contained identical information. Both copies were freely

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[21] See for example Diana Dixon, *Local Newspapers and Periodicals of the Nineteenth Century: a checklist of holdings in provincial libraries,* (Leicester: University of Leicester, 1973) and the reasons for the publication of this checklist.

available to staff and users alike. Staff commented that the catalogue was heavily used and during the visit the researcher had to surrender the catalogue several times, as users wished to consult it. The catalogue has been amended and revised many times, with hand-written alterations to many of the entries. As new material was acquired and titles were removed from the collection, the changes were incorporated into the document. The catalogue also included lists of the Caernarfon and district newspapers held at the BLNL and the titles held at the nearby Llangefni Record Office (Ynys Môn County Council). The catalogue indicated that the majority of the newspapers held were from two newspaper groups: *Caernarfon Herald and Associated Newspapers Limited* and the *North Wales Chronicle Co. Ltd.* It was arranged alphabetically by title and noted the dates available at the Office, the format and other miscellaneous information. Miscellaneous information included things such as the location of multiple copies of an edition, if a newspaper was particularly unusual or whether a title change has occurred. Missing volumes were also noted. The catalogue was in Welsh and English in places, although it was not fully bilingual. At the time of the study the archives were considering conversion of the catalogue to electronic form, although there were no firm plans.

3.6 Access to the newspaper collection

The case studies investigated the level of access to the newspaper collection. This included: any services for users unable to visit the collection; the impact of the storage and preservation policies on user access; the availability of services such as photocopying; the perceived users of the newspaper collection and any attempts to raise awareness of the collection, such as publicity material.

3.6.1 General access issues

Members of the public were, in theory, free to use all four of the public newspaper collections, although it was usual practice at the public libraries to acquire a readers' ticket. The NLW also requires readers to register as users, which can be obtained as a daily or five year ticket. At the Record Office access was similarly unrestricted, providing an individual was a genuine researcher and acquired a readers' ticket. Newspaper office libraries are private collections and therefore usually only available to employees. However, the *Western Mail* offered services to outside researchers and

companies. This innovation was launched in 1996 and the Librarian felt it has a two-fold benefit. Firstly, it provided a valuable public relations exercise for the newspaper, to answer queries and offer a service to the general public. Furthermore, the service also generated extra revenue for the library. At the time of the study the service was not advertised and was marketed on a word-of-mouth basis. The Librarian felt that the service could not operate if the demand became too high. External users were divided between those requiring information for commercial purposes, such as other media, businesses and professional researchers, and non-commercial researchers such as students and academic historians. The former were charged for the use of the facilities, at a rate of around 25 pounds per hour. Non-commercial researchers were not charged if they visited the library in person. However, visitors to the library were expected to arrive knowing their requirements in some detail, for random searches of the files were not permitted.

Geographic location plays an important role in access to material. Some newspaper collections are only held at one location, such as the NLW, and this can cause problems to users based elsewhere. The literature defines newspapers as reference material and unsurprisingly the study revealed they usually could not be removed from any of the collections. Consequently, users were required to travel to collections and undertake research using newspapers in the library. Even when multiple copies of material exist, the fragility of newspaper collections means it is necessary to consult them under carefully controlled conditions. During the research, the idea of an inter-library loan system for microfilmed newspapers was discussed. While the NLW was receptive to this idea, it concluded it would cause problems, particularly if users travelled to the library to use material that they then found was on inter-library loan. Nevertheless, all the institutions were willing to assist those users who were unable to visit the library in person, although the level of service varied. For example, the NLW provided a postal service to supply users with copies of newspaper articles. Users were required to provide the approximate date and title of the article and a charge was made for copies of material. All the organisations sought to assist users with general postal or telephone enquiries relating to newspaper information. Furthermore, at the *Western*

Mail subject searches of the cuttings files could be undertaken and charged at a commercial rate if researchers were unable to visit the library.

At all the sites the level of staff supervision of retrospective newspaper material was relatively high, in common with archival sources. At both the Record Office and NLW security was an important consideration, because of the value of some material. Bags could not be taken into the area where sources are consulted. The two public libraries were generally less security-conscious than the Record Office. The exception to this was the local studies collection at Cardiff, which carefully monitored the use of the retrospective collection. A member of staff issued users with the bound volume or microfilm which then had to be used in the local studies collection, where the layout of the room meant users could be supervised. In contrast, at Carmarthen the newspaper microfilms were housed in a public area of the library and were freely available to members of the public, although staff preferred users to book the microfilm reader in advance. The layout of this library made supervision more difficult. However, as the library was smaller, the number of users was reduced. At both libraries access to the current collection was less restricted. For example, in Cardiff Leisure Library, users were able to remove current newspapers from display shelves freely.

Chapter One found a large amount of literature was available discussing the importance of newspaper preservation. For this reason it was surprising that a formal policy restricting access to hardcopy did not exist at any of the sites. Where microfilm and hardcopy were available, the film would usually be supplied. However, most organisations, including the NLW said they would not strictly enforce this policy if a user felt it was crucial to see the original. This situation often did not arise at smaller libraries or archive services, for they rarely held titles in multiple formats, thus the newspaper would be provided in the only format available. Cardiff Public Library had several bound volumes they would not present under any circumstances, because of their poor condition. However, the *Western Mail* was happy to allow access to material in any format.

3.6.2 Extracting information from newspapers

Extracting information from the newspaper is one of greatest problems for users. Photocopying is usually the most straightforward method to achieve this, therefore policies in this area were examined. These were found to vary considerably, although photocopying from bound volumes was not permitted at any of the sites. Microfilm reader-printers can be one of the easiest way to produce copies, however the experiences at Carmarthen highlighted the problems associated with these machines. Several years prior to the study, the library had purchased a microfilm-reader printer and staff reported that it was a complicated machine to operate. The machine had been expensive to purchase, however, and at the time of the study it lay redundant in the library. If copies of newspapers were required, requests were sent to the NLW. The process was far more time consuming for users were required to complete a form giving the exact edition, page number and column number. Additionally it could take up to three weeks for copies to arrive and a charge was made for this service. The Reference Librarian arranged to post copies to users if they are unable to return to the library. However at this site, the copying process was not straightforward and the staff felt it restricted the number of copies that users requested.

Cardiff by contrast, had a reader-printer in the local studies collection. The machine was coin operated and available for use by members of the public, although the Librarian also commented that it was difficult to use. The machine only produced A4 size copies which caused problems when copying broadsheet newspapers. Bound volumes could not be copied because of the likelihood of damage to the source. However, the Library allowed people to photograph the bound volumes. The NLW also only allowed copying of microfilmed newspapers, and this was undertaken by staff using a microfilm reader-printer. Users were required to complete a form to order copies. At Caernarfon only photographic copies could be made of bound volumes. Extracting newspaper information was particularly problematic here. The Archives Service does not have a large microfilm collection, or a reader-printer, consequently users were often required to transcribe material by hand. The *Western Mail* was the other extreme and access to the material was almost unlimited. Photocopying of the cuttings files was common-place and the electronic sources allowed print-outs to be

produced easily. It was not clear whether the Library allowed copying from bound volumes, but it was suspected that this was permitted, given the low emphasis placed on preservation.

3.6.3 Users of the collection

None of the five institutions collected user statistics relating specifically to the newspaper collection. Consequently, this section relies mainly on impressions gleaned from the Librarians and other members of staff. Carmarthen had a booking register for the microfilm readers, which proved the collection was popular. However, it did not distinguish between different groups of users. The staff here concluded that the main users of the newspapers were local and family historians, school children, students and professional genealogists. They also commented that newspapers were used for a variety of types of research, with people looking at court cases, obituaries for family history and researchers undertaking paid research. Family historians were recognised as a particularly important user group at Carmarthen Library.

Cardiff also appeared to have a similarly wide range of newspaper users, spread throughout the different departments, although again they did not keep statistics. Staff in the Information Department commented that many children used newspapers for school projects. More generally they felt that academics, students and ordinary users curious about events on the day they were born, used the newspaper collection. The Local Studies Librarian observed that the number of users of this collection was increasing and there were many family historians using newspapers. At both public libraries it was difficult to generalise about the users of the current newspaper, although they formed a group distinct from the users of the retrospective collection. Current newspapers were often used to read the news, or search advertisement pages, rather than in conducting research.

A general impression of the type of newspaper users at the NLW was also obtained during the study. The issue system, where users have to complete request forms for material, meant that the type of material being consulted could be monitored. The Reader Services' Department also occasionally undertook surveys of users, although no current information was available during the visit. However, in the past these

surveys demonstrated that academics, students and local and family historians were the main users of the newspaper collection. The staff interviewed felt it would be difficult to make a judgement about whether the volume of use of the newspaper collection was increasing without any statistics. However, they concluded that the collection was used by individuals such as academics, family historians and professional researchers and that visitors to the Library did not, in general, use the newspapers to obtain current information.

The users of the *Western Mail* Library were primarily the journalists and other staff of the newspaper group. The Library did not keep statistics, so again the information was dependent upon staff impressions. Library staff felt the collection was heavily used and during the visit, the Library was busy. Requests for current information from the hardcopy or CD-ROM newspaper were common amongst the journalists. External users consisted of a variety of different groups such as other media personnel, businesses and professional researchers, and non-commercial researchers such as students and other researchers. They were sometimes using the collection for current information, but staff agreed the files were mainly consulted for historical research.

Caernarfon Archives have on average 8,500 searches undertaken annually, which make it a heavily used Welsh Record Office. Although it produced statistics each month to reflect the types of people using the collection, the sources being used were not recorded. Caernarfon is the only Record Office in Wales to have an Education Officer based on site. This meant that school children and students made up a large percentage of the users. Newspapers do not have any of the palaeographic problems, often associated with other sources. Therefore, the Education Officer included newspaper cuttings in the document packs produced for this group. The Education Officer also provided a service for trainee teachers who, following the launch of the *Newspapers in Education* Project, increasingly use this source in the classroom.[22] Academic historians were also an important user group at the archives, as were local historians. The catalogue suggested the importance of these groups, when it stated that newspapers:

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[22]For more information see: *Newspaper in Education.* Hp. [no date]. Online. Northcliffe Newspapers Group Limited. Available: http://www.nie.northcliffe.co.uk/index.html. July 1999.

> ... have been deposited for safe-keeping and for the purposes of historical research at Caernarfon Record Office at various dates since 1957[23].

The Archive Service considered itself to be part of the community, and prided itself on the fact that people were not nervous about using the collections. Therefore, a large number of non-professional researchers, in particular family historians, used the archives. The County Archivist maintained that newspapers had always formed an important part of the collection and that in recent years the use of newspapers had increased in line with an increase in the use of all archival material.

3.6.4 Improving access to the collection

The research examined the methods employed at collections to improve access to newspapers, both in terms of locating material and providing intellectual access to the source. In general, the study concluded that the level of publicity for the newspaper collections was low. Carmarthen had a general brochure for the library service, which mentioned the newspaper collection, but no specific publicity material existed. Nevertheless, the Library was an important research centre for family historians and Dyfed Family History Society produced a book of resources, including information about the collection.[24] Similarly, although Cardiff did not have any publicity material specifically about newspapers, occasionally the Local Studies Librarian gave lectures about the collection to groups such as local history societies. A general leaflet about the Library was also available.

Somewhat surprisingly perhaps, the NLW did not have any promotional material about its newspaper collection. The staff maintained that the NEWSPLAN project and its publications were the best way users could learn about their collection. The NLW also has a corporate World Wide Web site which contains some promotional information about the newspaper collection.[25] However, at the time of the study the Library was recognising that publicity for the collection would be valuable. Staff had examined the approaches taken by other National Libraries to promote newspaper collections, with a

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[23] Caernarfon Record Office. Unpublished Newspaper Index.
[24] Dyfed Family History Society. Unpublished listing of resources available at Carmarthen Library.
[25] National Library of Wales. Hp. July 1999 [last update]. Online. National Library of Wales. Available: http://www.llgc.org.uk/. July 1999.

view to improving this area. The lack of publicity at the *Western Mail* was quite deliberate, as the Librarian felt that he would be unable to cope with a large demand for the service. In fact, Caernarfon Archives was the only organisation to produce a large amount of publicity material and leaflets to assist researchers, which is a common practice amongst Record Offices throughout the UK. Although specific information about the newspaper collection did not exist, newspapers were mentioned in several of the leaflets. The County Archivist had responsibility for promoting the collection and gave talks to a range of local societies. Groups were also encouraged to visit the centre.

Chapter One indicated that the serial nature of newspapers made them a time consuming source to search. Indexes and cuttings files are, therefore, a useful way of providing access to the contents of newspaper collections. The availability of both locally constructed indexes and files and commercially produced indexes was investigated at each site. Most collections had a number of newspaper indexes available, although locally constructed indexes often relied upon voluntary initiatives. Caernarfon Archives were the only institution without any newspaper indexes. The Archivist felt that they are often not valuable to researchers, because of the lack of standardisation when compiling them. Chapter One reflected this problem and acknowledged that searching an index and not finding a reference was not a guarantee that information was not available. However, in general the other organisations felt that the creation of indexes could be useful for research.

Carmarthen had an example of an extensive locally constructed index. The work was mainly undertaken in the late 1970s, when the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) supported two schemes based at the Library. Both projects involved training young people to index the *Carmarthen Journal.* Initially an index to travel and communication for the years 1810-1899 was constructed. A second scheme was curtailed by the MSC before completion, but covered births, deaths and marriages, properties for sale and serious crime from 1810 until about 1856. The index was held on cards and provided details to enable researchers to locate references. The project was supervised by the Library staff and therefore the index cards were in a

standardised form. Staff at the Library reported that the indexes were often used by a range of researchers and were a valuable way of accessing newspaper information.

Indexing was more limited at Cardiff public library. Copies of the *Times* index from 1785 to present day, and the *Clover Newspaper Index* from 1986 to present day, were available and housed in the Information Department. There were no indexes to the retrospective newspapers available in the local studies collection. However, in more recent times, staff have scanned newspapers and taken cuttings on certain subjects to compile their own resources file. For example, they have a file on the development at Cardiff Bay, including cuttings from national and local newspapers. The card references were placed in the main card catalogue so they are widely accessible to the public. Although its value to historical research is currently limited, this facility could provide a valuable resource in the future.

The NLW have several indexes available for newspapers such as the *Times* and the *Guardian*. It was also donated the working index of the *Western Mail* which was constructed for the journalists at the newspaper. The index is held on microfiche, but it is notoriously difficult to use, due to the entries being written in pencil and therefore difficult to decipher. The NLW has also collected copies of some local indexes, constructed either by local newspapers or organisations in Wales. For example the *Amman Valley Chronicle* index of people who have contributed poetry to the newspaper was available. At the time of the study the Library was hoping to obtain access to an index produced by the Cambrian Indexing Project, based at Swansea Library and recognised as a valuable computer based source. The NLW has not undertaken any indexing itself however.

The arrangement of material at the *Western Mail,* in cuttings files under subject headings, facilitates intellectual access to the newspaper. The CD-ROM of the newspaper from 1995 was also available in the Library. The Library no longer maintains an index to its publications, however it can be accessed at the NLW. The *Western Mail* also hoped that intellectual access to newspaper material would be improved once its digital archive was fully established.

3.6.5 Other problems relating to access to the collection

Library staff interviewed during this part of the study were asked to identify any other problems associated with access to the newspaper collection. This part of the research produced a wide range of responses. At Carmarthen Library the staff felt that users experienced difficulties with the print and language of old newspapers. The Reference Librarian observed that many users found the small, dense newsprint of the later nineteenth century difficult to read. She also felt that people expected newspapers to be similar to modern newspapers. Family historians in particular, were often disappointed that the death notices of their relatives were not in the newspaper, as those from poorer backgrounds would not have been able to afford this. Staff also observed that people were surprised by the lack of local news in nineteenth century Welsh newspapers.

At Cardiff the staff of the Information Department felt that there were difficulties relating to the current newspaper selection. The Library strove to achieve a political balance and its policy of collecting tabloids as well as broadsheet newspapers varied in the past. The staff were concerned the collection was not meeting the needs of its users and although user surveys were not undertaken, the newspaper collection policy was reviewed regularly. The Library has particular problems ensuring that the newspapers reflect the ethnic make-up of the population who live in Cardiff and who use the library. Meanwhile, the Local Studies Collection experienced problems with users being unfamiliar with the operation of microfilm machines. The Librarian commented that it was often necessary to closely supervise users to avoid inadvertent damage to the microfilm reels. Furthermore, problems were sometimes experienced by staff when transporting the bound volumes from the ground floor where they are stored, to the Local Studies Collection, as the material was heavy. This problem was also mentioned by the staff at Caernarfon. Although the Archivist was more concerned about having sufficient space to store the expanding newspaper collection.

At the NLW staff were particularly concerned that the collection was not comprehensive. Often local and national newspapers produce regional editions of their titles and the Library has found it does not always receive the same regional edition

from the suppliers. All editions of Welsh newspapers are collected, although the Library usually receives the London edition of most British national newspapers, rather than the edition circulated in Wales. Often the Welsh or West edition of a national paper focuses on Welsh events, therefore it would be important for the NLW's collection. The Library has discussed possible solutions with the Copyright Agency and the British Library, but has yet to resolve the situation. Material was also sometimes missing from the *Western Mail's* collection. However, the Librarian commented that this was often caused by journalists forgetting to return material. The competition between two of the group's publications also meant material could occasionally be removed deliberately, to prevent another title covering a story. It was hoped that the introduction of the digital archive would avoid this problem.

3.7 Information and Communications Technology and the newspaper collection

The case studies investigated the current policy and future plans of the organisation with respect to information and communications technology (ICT). The use of computers and the impact that they have had on the newspaper collection was examined. The research found ICT provision at the five newspaper collections varied considerably. The *Western Mail* Library had clearly invested the greatest amount of resources in ICTs and considerable thought had been given to exploiting the newspaper collection electronically. In contrast, computers had a more limited impact at the public libraries and Record Office, partly reflecting the limited resources available to public collections.

3.7.1 Current level of provision

Computers had made the least impact at Caernarfon Record Office, which partly reflects the archival role of this centre. It was the only organisation to have no CD-ROMs available. The catalogues were in card or printed format, although the staff recently received computers on their desks. At the time of the visit meetings were taking place concerning the construction of a Web site and a member of staff to manage this resource joined the Archives Service in April 1998. Although developments in ICT had been slow at the Record Office in the period leading up to this study, change was expected as the authority developed its facilities.

At both public libraries developments in ICTs were restricted by resources. It was clear that Cardiff had greater resources than Carmarthen, serving a larger population. Neither of the library catalogues were computerised, although both held a number of newspapers on CD-ROM. CD-ROMs were introduced at Carmarthen Library in 1996 and the *Western Mail* and the *Times* were available at the time of the study. Staff commented that these sources were popular with users. Following Central Government's pledge to connect all public libraries to the Internet, with the publication of *New Library: the people's network,*[26] Carmarthen hoped to have an Internet connection in the near future, but did not at the time of the study. At Cardiff, Internet access was available to members of the public in the Information Department. It had a more extensive collection of newspaper CD-ROMs than Carmarthen, and also found that these sources were popular with users. Neither of the libraries had established Web sites at the time of the study, although staff had computers on their desks.

At the NLW, ICTs were more prevalent than at the public libraries. A wide range of CD-ROMs were available, including a large number of newspaper titles. As mentioned earlier, the Library also has an OPAC, available on-site and via the Internet, containing bibliographic information about a large amount of the Library's holdings. The newspaper catalogue has been computerised. However, at the time of the study it was not possible to display this information, as indicated in Section 3.5. Access to the Internet was not available at the Library at the time of the study, although an intranet had been established for the staff, who have computers on their desks. Furthermore, the NLW had an extensive Web site containing a large amount of information useful to researchers.

At the *Western Mail,* computers have made a considerable impact on the work of the journalists and Library staff. During the early 1990s a consultant was brought in to examine the potential applications of computers in the library. The consultant recommended the Library should establish an electronic archive and since this date it has been working towards achieving this. The archive will eventually replace the manual cuttings files in the library and was installed in May 1997, although at the time

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[26] *New Library: the people's network.* (London : Library and Information Commission, 1997)

of the visit there were some teething problems. Since the late 1980s most newspapers have been produced using desktop publishing software, therefore the creation of a searchable archive is theoretically straightforward. The *Western Mail* purchased a database package called *Media Sphere*, which is specially designed for storing newspaper information electronically. It is used by several other large newspapers such as the *Daily Telegraph*. The newspaper is produced in the usual way by designers and then loaded into the database software. The software stores the newspaper information in three formats; pictures, text and pages stored in a high resolution graphic format. Once staff have added keywords to the pictures, it becomes possible to search for pictures and text. The page layout of the newspaper can be displayed, which has distinct advantages over a text-based database. *Wales on Sunday* and the Celtic Newspapers were being archived successfully using the system at the time of the study, and cuttings files were no longer maintained for these publications. In January 1998 the library experimented with archiving the *Western Mail* on the system. Both the manual cuttings files and electronic system were maintained initially to ensure the system was working correctly. It would not be possible to convert the manual cuttings files retrospectively, however staff intended to incorporate material onto the system as the technology allowed.

The *Western Mail* has been produced on CD-ROM since 1995. It is produced independently to the electronic archive and was widely used in the *Western Mail* Library to identify and locate more recent material. The CD-ROM contains low resolution pictures, which cannot be used in the newspaper. However, a disk containing high resolution pictures was available in the Library. Both text and pictures can be accessed using keywords. Material from 1995 on the CD-ROMs was being added to the electronic archive.

3.7.2 Future developments in ICT

The research also examined the future plans of each organisation for utilising ICT in the storage, preservation or exploitation of the newspaper collection. The literature review suggested that ICTs can be used to improve access to newspaper collections, however at many local collections the resources for these initiatives were not available. The NLW had some plans for experiments using computers to store and preserve

newspapers, possibly as an extension to the NEWSPLAN project. The Library had been involved in experiments to digitise other parts of its collection. However, Chapter One demonstrated that experiments in the field of newspaper digitisation suggest microfilm is currently more appropriate for preservation, (see Section 1.5.2 (ii)). At Carmarthen, the Chief Librarian was following these developments and experiments at the British Library. Although both public libraries had an awareness of these developments they were not involved in the work themselves.

Electronic newspapers have several limitations as a preservation format, as discussed in detail in Chapter One, (see Section 1.5.2 (i)). Therefore, it was unsurprising that none of the libraries received CD-ROM titles in place of microfilm. Both Cardiff Library and the NLW continued to take titles such as the *Western Mail* in hardcopy, microfilm and on CD-ROM. Staff at the NLW recognised a number of the problems associated with CD-ROM newspapers, such as not being complete reproductions of the printed newspaper, the loss of page layout and concerns about the long term stability of the format. Some of the staff at the NLW also felt the CD-ROM was not always easy for researchers to use, although the facility for key word searching was invaluable.

At the *Western Mail,* Library staff anticipated that in the future journalists would have access to the electronic archive via their desktop computer. At the time of the study the organisation was in the process of establishing an intranet to facilitate communication and information exchange within the organisation, using Web Browser technology. This would allow access to the electronic archive and all textual material, although the high resolution pictures would still need to be obtained from the library. Similar initiatives have led to a cut in the number of library staff at other newspaper offices; however, this was not anticipated at the *Western Mail,* as staff will be required to carry out numerous other duties that could not be accomplished by the system.

Despite the lack of ICT currently available at the Record Office, there were a number of plans for future developments in this field. The County Archivist believed that digitisation would be an important development in the future and at the time of the

study the Archives Service was considering digitising the cemetery records. These records were the first source to be microfilmed and the plan was to digitise from the microfilm. Nevertheless, the Archivist did not believe there would be a demand for newspaper back-issues to be digitised. In the future the Archives Service was hoping to create computer catalogues and to make these available on a planned Web site. It was anticipated that the newspaper catalogue would be made available in this way, to enable researchers from around the world to access this information.

3.8 Summary

The case studies examined a range of different types of newspaper collections in Wales. The policies and strategies at each site varied and consequently it is difficult to make generalisations. However, Chapter One demonstrated that few studies of newspaper collections have been undertaken in the past. Therefore, this study provided a valuable insight into the field of newspaper librarianship and identified a number of current issues.

The case study research and the information available in the NEWSPLAN report for Wales provides a basis on which to make the following general observations about newspaper collections in Wales:

- the NLW is the most important centre for newspaper collection in Wales;
- the NLW acquires the majority of Welsh newspapers through Legal Deposit, however some back files are only available locally and comprehensive collection is difficult;
- current newspapers are available in many types of public collections;
- retrospective collections of newspapers are widely available in public libraries, record offices and various other special collections;
- newspaper offices also provide important collections of newspapers;

The literature recognised several problems associated with the management of newspaper collections, such as the tendency for the total newspaper resource to be managed by different parts of the library and a lack of staff training. The case studies corroborated this evidence, and inferred:

- collection policies at a local level vary considerably and may rely on indiscriminate decisions of what to purchase, rather than a formal policy;
- newspaper collections may not be managed as a discrete entity and often several departments may take responsibility for collection management;
- a member of staff with responsibility for the newspaper collection rarely exists;
- staff who deal with the collection are not usually trained in newspaper librarianship.

A substantial body of literature has been devoted to the lack of bibliographic control of newspapers. While NEWSPLAN has made a recognised contribution to bibliographic problems, the case studies concluded:

- NEWSPLAN has improved bibliographic control, however cataloguing at local collections is often limited;
- Newspapers are rarely integrated into main library catalogues.

Storage conditions and preservation techniques form an important aspect of newspaper librarianship. The case studies found:

- storage conditions at most public collections are currently to a satisfactory and often high standard;
- most newspaper collections contain an element of highly fragile material;
- NEWSPLAN has highlighted awareness of the fragility of newspapers and importance for microfilming;
- microfilm is most commonly used for preservation reasons;
- preserving the information in newspapers is often more important than preserving the format.

The study of access to newspaper collections and the information they contain concluded that:

- a significant number of titles are still only available at one location;
- access to original newspapers is usually possibly unless it is highly fragile;
- newspaper collections are often not well publicised;
- locally constructed indexes may be available to collections, however they are of variable quality and information about their existence is limited;

- extracting information from newspapers is difficult and photocopying cannot always be undertaken.

Although statistical information was not available, staff impressions of the main type of users of the newspaper collection allowed the following conclusions to be drawn:

- the current and retrospective collections have very different patterns of use;
- current newspapers were mainly used for news information and advertisements;
- various types of historical researchers used the retrospective collections;
- academic historians were identified as an important user group;
- an increasing number of family and local historians were using the collection.

The current and future policy of each organisation with respect to ICT was examined. The results suggested:

- ICTs have made a limited impact on newspaper collections with the exception of CD-ROM;
- lack of funding in public collections appears to be the main obstacle to further developments;
- the newspaper industry has the financial resources to invest in new technology, but does not have the commitment or incentive to develop retrospective collections;
- most organisations recognised the potential of exploiting new technology in the newspaper collection and hoped to be able to offer more services in the future.

This chapter complements the information provided in Chapter Five, which is a study of the experiences of historians and the problems they encounter using newspaper collections. When viewed together these two chapters can be used to highlight the problems associated with newspaper collections from the perspective of both the user and custodian. The findings enabled the formulation of recommendations, included in Chapter Six, that should be of value and interest to both the user and the custodian of newspapers.

Chapter 4

The newspaper as a source: historical uses and historiographical problems

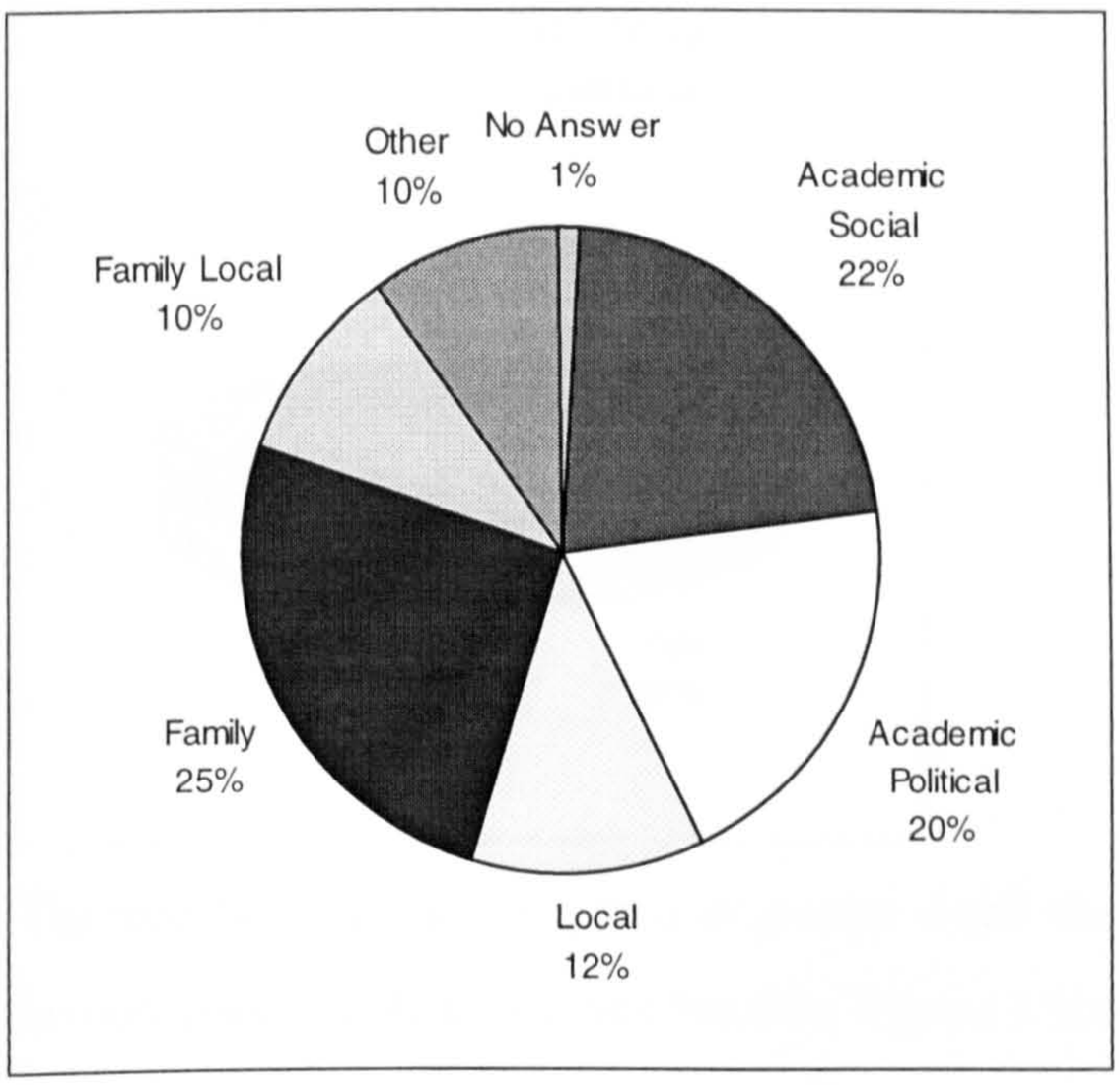
4.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the newspaper and its use as a historical source. It examines the value of newspapers and historiographic problems associated with them. It also investigates the methods adopted by historians when using newspapers. The problems associated with the library are not discussed here, but are examined in Chapter Five. The chapter is based on questionnaire and interview data collected from historians. The design and conduct of the research is discussed in Chapter Two. The data provided both quantitative and qualitative results examining the use of and importance attached to newspapers as a historical source, comparing patterns of use amongst different types of historians; the techniques and problems associated with searching newspapers; the nature of information in newspapers and the use of newspaper information, including issues the historian should consider before using newspapers. The chapter concludes by providing examples of the types of historical research for which newspapers are useful. It also outlines some strategies for using newspapers and the information which they contain. The findings from this chapter are developed further in Chapter Six as recommendations for historians.

4.2 The sample population

Chapter Two outlined the sampling methods used to identify questionnaire and interview participants. The research sought to examine three main types of historians: academic, family and local. It was also interested in comparing the behaviour of professional and non-professional historians. In total 173 historians completed the survey, although because of the use of intermediaries to distribute the survey, an exact response rate could not be calculated. Forty-two percent of the group could be considered to be academic or professional historians. Thus, 58% of the questionnaire respondents were classified as non-professional historians. Figure 1 provides more details about the questionnaire respondents by type.

Figure 1: Types of historians completing the questionnaire



Thirty individuals participated in the interviews and more information about this group is included in Appendix 10, although their identities have been concealed. It demonstrates that a variety of different types of historians were consulted including a mixture of both professionals and non-professionals.

4.3 The use and value of newspapers In historical research

The research investigated the use of newspapers by historians and the value attributed to the press as a historical source. Newspapers were compared with other sources used in historical research. Different categories of newspapers and the patterns of use by different types of historians were also compared.

4.3.1 Historians' use of newspapers

The questionnaire investigated the number of individuals who used newspapers in their research.[1] The pilot study indicated a high percentage of academic historians were newspaper users and perhaps unsurprisingly the questionnaire revealed that all types of historians made use of the press. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the majority of historians did use newspapers.

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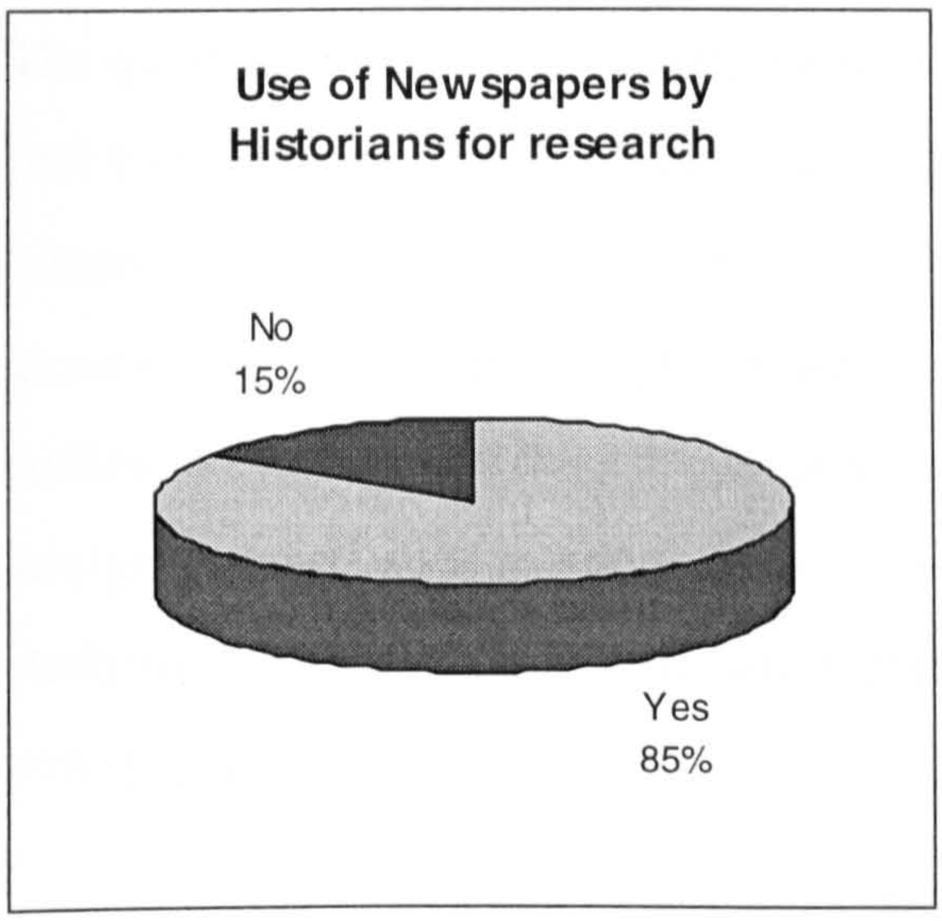
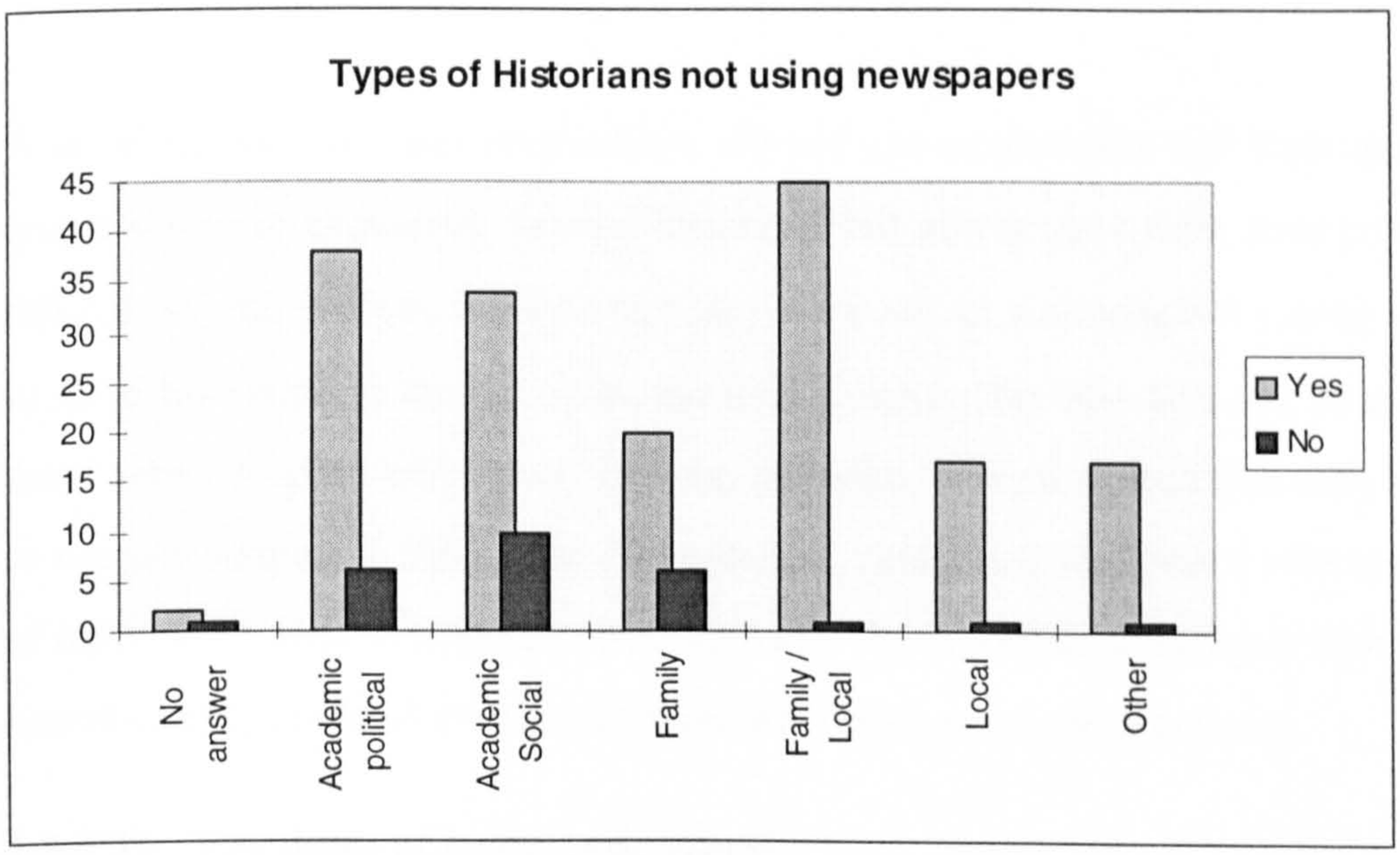
[1] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 6(a).

Figure 2: Percentage of historians using newspapers



The questionnaire investigated in greater detail the types of historians who did not use newspapers and their reasons for this. Figure 3 shows the percentage of each historian type who do and do not use newspapers.

Figure 3: Percentage of historians using newspapers by type



Perhaps of greatest significance is the relatively high number of academic social historians who did not use newspapers (29% of this group). This is in contrast to 16% of academic political historians who claimed not to use newspapers. Family historians were least likely to use newspapers, with 30% of this group not using them. However the chart shows most family/local, local and other historians were newspaper users.

4.3.1 Why historians do not use newspapers

The questionnaire investigated the reasons why historians might not use newspapers, in part to highlight difficulties associated with this source.[2] It sought to examine whether historians were deterred from using newspapers for particular reasons, or if certain groups felt they were inappropriate sources. The questionnaire results provided sufficient evidence for this part of the investigation and many of the reasons cited were straightforward, such as newspapers not being relevant to the period an individual was studying. Consequently, it was not necessary to interview historians who did not use newspapers.

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A large number of non-newspaper users were medieval or early modern academic historians. The pilot study and common sense, suggested that this group would not use newspapers and the survey had attempted to avoid questioning this group. Thus, the comments such as, newspapers were 'not applicable in the medieval context' or that there were 'no newspapers in the sixteenth century' were unremarkable.

A small number of other respondents did not use newspapers and their questionnaire responses were examined. Several historians felt newspapers were time consuming or difficult to use, and one thought that they were not an authoritative source. The family or local historians in this group stated that hitherto, they had no need to use them, as they were occupied with other sources, although, several agreed that they were likely to use newspapers in the future. Nevertheless, this group comprised of a small number of individuals and the research concluded that the problems associated with newspaper sources rarely deterred the sample population from using them entirely.

4.3.3 The problems of using newspapers

Interview respondents discussed a number of problems associated with using newspapers. Findings suggested that while no historians actively disliked using newspapers, many experienced difficulties with the source. The volume of information and variety of subjects contained within the newspaper were problematic. Three

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[2] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 7.

problems identified in this part of the research are discussed elsewhere in the thesis. This allows these problems to be examined in greater detail. It was deemed more appropriate to discuss indexes and problems associated with their use, in the context of historians' information seeking behaviour, (see Section 4.4.2). Information quality is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.5.3. Finally, the issue of newspaper format was considered to be a problem associated with the library and thus, is examined in Chapter Five.

(i) Time consuming

Newspapers by their nature, inevitably require patience and a considerable amount of time to use. Many surviving newspaper runs exist in libraries, containing vast amounts of information. For this reason, many respondents expressed difficulties:

> If you are in a hurry and you want a quick source they are very difficult ... if you know the date of the incident you want a report on, then that is fine, but if you are doing a general search ... that's very difficult, because you really need hours and hours of reading. *(FL1)*

Some respondents suggested that their time consuming nature made them an unappealing source, dissuading researchers from using them. This problem was perhaps more pertinent to those undertaking research in their spare time:

> I would say that they were important and very under-used - for reasons of problems in ... having the time and the zeal to pursue people through years and years of newspapers. *(AS6)*

(ii) Tiring

Newspapers are a tiring source for the historian to use, because of the large amount of material they contain. Papers from the later nineteenth century are particularly difficult to read, due to the large amount of small text on each page. The format, in particular microfilm, can also make them exhausting to use, leading relevant material to be overlooked:

> You can really only do about three days work on the newspapers a week, otherwise I'd get too tired, mentally tired, to appreciate a paper and I'd skip stuff. *(AS8)*

(iii) Not indexed

Newspapers are rarely indexed and so searching for information can be problematic. Indexes are tackled in more detail in Section 4.4.2, however, many cited this as a general difficulty with using the source.

(iv) Distracting

Perhaps one of the greatest problems with using newspapers was cited by several historians as a reason for liking them. The distracting nature of the source could cause individuals to become side-tracked by fascinating, but nevertheless irrelevant material. This feature could increase the amount of time spent undertaking research. Historians became distracted by a variety of different types of information, but crime reporting and scandals seem to cause the most distraction. This historian described:

> ... the problems of reading all the murder cases, because [newspapers]are a fascinating source if you are interested in human history, a history of people. They are a fascinating source obviously and research has to be very, very disciplined. *(AS8)*

(v) Biased / selective

The quality of newspaper information, in particular its biased and selective nature, required further investigation and is discussed in greater detail in Section 4.5.3. However, this problem was cited as a general difficulty. Newspapers are known to be partial, and sometimes valued for this reason, however, it is often important to investigate the construction of newspaper sources. Where these details are unavailable, research can be problematic, as one said historian:

> They are frustrating. On top of that obviously is the question of who is writing the reports and attitudes and sometimes they are unnamed people, they are just people who have been out there somewhere, in previous centuries, in the past. *(AS8)*

(vi) Less authoritative

The literature suggested that newspapers are sometimes regarded as less authoritative than other source, such as government records. This opinion was held by a minority of academic historians, and the researcher suspected that an element of snobbery concerning the value of certain sources, may exist among this group. However, there

was clearly a problem with the status of newspapers as a source, as this researcher recognised:

> Newspapers are generally seen by historians as a slightly inferior source for parliamentary material compared to some of the other sources available. *(AP6)*

Another academic historian was more forthright in his opinions, saying:

> I am quite sceptical about people who become heavily reliant on the press. In fact I just suggested that a major journal reject an article on the political culture in a county, because its principal source was the press. It seems much too narrow a base. *(AP3)*

(vii) Format

The format in which newspapers are stored proved to be a contentious issue and aroused strong opinions from many interview participants. Clearly microfilm causes many difficulties to researchers and the issue is explored in greater detail in Chapter Five. Microfilm exacerbated all the problems mentioned previously, for example making the source more tiring to use and more time consuming to search. One historian said:

> You very often see very distinguished men ... actually going crazy or half mad in the National Library of Wales when they are told to go and sit at a microfiche *(sic)* machine and not actually being able to handle the papers. *(AS4)*

Some respondents actually cited the format as being the main cause of problems with using newspapers. When asked if they liked using newspapers one historian stated:

> It depends where they are and what medium you have got to look at them, and then if it is a microfilm or microfiche, then on the whole how good the reproduction is of that film. *(FL5)*

4.3.4 Motives for using newspapers

The interviews sought information about the motives which lead historians to consult newspapers initially. The results suggested that once newspapers were 'discovered', the experience of using them often led to a recognition of their value. Some responses indicated an element of surprise in discovering the usefulness of this source. However, in other types of historical enquiry the value of newspapers was clearly more established.

(i) Only source

In certain areas of historical enquiry, such as local history, newspapers were often regarded as the only source for the particular type of information required, thus motivating historians to use them:

> It's the obvious source, the newspapers are the only sources that you could look to really, for a full picture of the locality. They are probably the closest you can get to how people thought and felt concerning aspects of culture and local politics. *(AS4)*

(ii) Tradition

The findings suggested that in some areas there is an established tradition of using newspapers as a source, reflected in the literature of that field, with citations and references to newspapers. The value of newspapers in social and cultural history was evident, as one historian stated:

> [Newspapers] presented themselves as the obvious source really. I started off looking at the secondary texts and looking at some of the footnoting in the secondary stuff just led me directly to newspapers. *(AS1)*

Another said:

> I came from a background where newspapers were accepted as a very good source and consequently it was entirely natural for me to use them. *(AP1)*

A tradition exists for using newspapers in both family and local history and many of the reference works in these fields steered researchers towards the source, as this quote demonstrates:

> Most people start off their local history research by looking at some of the guides you see published, guides of how to trace your ancestors, most of these will refer you to newspapers. *(FL4)*

(iii) Perceived as valuable

For other historians, the notion existed that newspapers were a valuable source. In particular, interviewees with experience of a wide range of sources, had an awareness of newspaper content and believed they would be of use in their research. One historian said:

> I think any historian who is working in all sorts of areas of late eighteenth century history will end up in

> newspapers at one time or another, just because they are such a dense and rich source. *(AP3)*

(iv) Guidance of experienced newspaper user

It was also not uncommon for historians to be directed towards newspapers by other researchers with more experience. In the case of local and family history, classes are often held which present the unfamiliar researcher with possible sources they can consult. Several interview participants had learnt about newspapers through attending such courses. Similarly, several academic researchers were often guided towards newspapers by another more experienced historian, possibly their PhD supervisor, as one said:

> I had a supervisor ... and he said you have got to go through the newspapers. So being a good student, I went to go to the newspapers, and I think then once you do, you realise pretty quick that they are important. *(AP2)*

(v) Unclear motives

Motivations behind the use of newspapers were not always clear and several historians concluded they had come across newspapers almost by chance. For example, one historian told how the accidental discovery of a large collection of newspapers motivated him to use them:

> I was in Brecon library, I pulled out a drawer for the Census returns, I pulled out another drawer which was full of reels of microfilms for newspapers. So there they were. *(FF6)*

Others could not clearly state why they were drawn to newspapers initially:

> ... well it became natural really. I had been interested in newspapers along the years, you get a lot of information, I knew that there were local newspapers ... like the *Cambrian News* goes from Aberystwyth right up north and the *Carmarthen Journal* here and then different areas in north Wales. *(FF1)*

4.3.5 Reasons for valuing newspapers

The interviews investigated the aspects historians valued about using newspapers. Respondents often talked of the enjoyment of using the newspaper and when asked directly, far fewer respondents stated conclusively that they disliked using newspapers. Enjoyment appeared to be derived from two characteristics of the newspaper: their

interesting nature and their usefulness for research. Furthermore, the difficulties mentioned in Section 4.3.3 often did not detract from the overall enjoyment of using the source.

(i) Interest

The intrinsic interest of the information in the newspaper made many historians enthusiastic about using them, as one respondent said:

> One of the most enjoyable things is an afternoon in the National Library. It can just whiz by and you end up reading stacks of stuff that you shouldn't be reading and perhaps get one or two small pieces that are relevant to you. Yes [newspapers] are very enjoyable ... I find them absorbing. *(AS1)*

Newspapers also provide an insight into the past, and this could make them a pleasurable source:

> I think anybody who has used newspapers as a source would say that they enjoy the work because it is so fascinating when you come to look at the small detail involved with a locality. Sometimes, of course, within a locality that you have lived in yourself. *(AS4)*

The inherent interest of the source meant that invariably the temptation was to become side-tracked. Although for some this was mentioned as a problem, for others it added to their enjoyment:

> I love the way you can get distracted .... things like the *Radio Times*, or something like the *Daily Mail*. You don't just get your story, you can see everything that is going on, you can see the small ads, you can see the advertisements, you get such a good feeling of the general ambience of the period *(AS2)*

Although this enjoyment was generally undisputed, it was often clarified by a recognition of some other difficulties associated with their use:

> I totally enjoy using them and I find them very exciting, but also very tiring, it is very wearisome. *(LL3)*

(ii) Valuable

The value attributed to newspapers varied depending on the nature of the research being undertaken, however the information which they contain was often useful. Sometimes newspapers could provide the most useful source, yielding unique or large

amounts of information. This is discussed in greater detail in the next section, however it could make newspapers a satisfying source to use, as one historian indicated:

> I enjoy using them because there is a fair chance you are going to find something of importance. You know you have got to find something that no-one else has found. *(AS6)*

4.3.6 The importance of newspapers

The survey sought to compare the importance of the newspaper in relation to other sources used by historians.[3] Some broad categories of source material were devised, following an examination of the literature and the data generated. The results are displayed in Table 2. They demonstrate that among the population surveyed, newspapers and private papers jointly formed the second most important source. The survey population was largely modern historians, due to selective sampling, therefore the low value attributed to manuscripts is evident. The results may also reflect the fact that those historians who used newspapers may have been more predisposed to complete the questionnaire. However, the chart provides a valuable quantitative study.

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[3] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 5.

Table 2: Types of primary sources used by historians

SOURCE	Number of Citations	Ranked Importance
Central government records - census, parliamentary proceedings, Royal Commissions etc.	86	1
Newspapers	56	2
Private papers - diaries, correspondence etc.	56	2
Church records	46	4
Estate and family records	44	5
Other printed material including novels, directories, memoirs	27	6
Local government records	27	6
Records of associations e.g. political parties, guilds	12	8
Journals	11	9
Printed ephemera	11	9
Maps	11	9
Oral history	10	12
Archaeology	9	13
Art including photos	7	14
Manuscripts	6	15
Business records	3	16

The interviews examined the reasons why newspapers were considered important and how this related to the use of other sources. Initially, many historians recognised that this factor varied depending upon the subject of historical enquiry which may seem discernible to state. However, part of this chapter seeks to identify the particular types of research for which newspapers are most valuable. Therefore, by considering the type of historian, some patterns of use emerged from the data.

Four patterns of importance were identified from the interview data, including research where the newspaper is the only source for particular information; is the most appropriate source of information; is used equally with other sources; and is used after other sources have been consulted.

(i) Only source

Often newspapers contain information unavailable in other sources, leading them to be highly valuable. Sometimes newspapers are the only source recording a particular type of information. This was often the case with academic social historians, as one said:

> I was looking at popular culture and popular protest and there was no obvious body of sources that you would look through and then write a thesis about what you had found. I was trying to sort of mesh together all sorts of different snippets of information in order to piece together people's attitudes at a particular point in time ... the newspaper had to be the one thing that I was able to angle it on. *(AS3)*

A variety of reasons explain why some information found in newspapers is unavailable elsewhere. Newspapers may contain information that is simply not available in other sources. For example, a subject such as local politics is often only covered in detail in the local press. Newspapers are useful for providing contemporary opinion, from both an individual and a wider perspective that may be equated with 'public opinion.' Opinions are often difficult to find in other sources, for although private correspondence and diaries can provide useful information, they are more time consuming to search and not always available. As these academic historians said:

> Certainly things like the letters, the opinions expressed in the letters and the leader columns, comments on events of the day as they were happening, ... those things were quite unique. *(AP1)*

> I am trying to think of another source that would give me this information. Letters maybe in the manuscripts department ... but the vast majority of information that I need is in newspapers. But for the newspapers I can't really imagine anywhere else that I could get the information from. *(AS5)*

The value of preserving newspapers was recognised relatively early on, whereas the survival of other records has often been more haphazard. Consequently some sources have been destroyed, for example minutes of meetings and coroner's records. Nevertheless, this type of event was often recorded in the local newspaper, providing an account where the official record has been lost or destroyed. Coroner's reports in

particular were private papers, and have often not been deposited in archives, as one historian said:

> ... Coroner's inquest records are very poorly preserved across the country generally. There are some in local county record offices but they tend not to be very extensive... I wrote to the Wiltshire Record Office and they passed my letter on to the local library in Trowbridge. They very kindly looked at the local newspaper, found a press report of the coroner's inquest and sent me a photocopy of it. *(FL4)*

Similarly the Quarter Sessions Rolls have been preserved haphazardly throughout Britain and crime reporting is often best traced in the local newspaper. As one respondent, who undertook commissioned work as a genealogist, said:

> My clients often ask for information from newspapers, which isn't available in other sources [for they] haven't survived. For instance, the corner's reports, reports of accidents, flower show, agricultural show reports, photographs. *(FL5)*

(ii) Best source

For some research newspapers may not be the only source available, but historians regard them as the most important source. The comments below reflect their value for cultural and social history in Wales:

> The newspaper was the only record which I looked at systematically for the whole of that period, because what I was looking at didn't really have an obvious source ... It was a thematic thesis, it wasn't a thesis that stemmed from a particular source. *(AS3)*

> They were the most important single category for my own particular work ... If you are concerned with the history of a writer as a public figure ... you are interested in his or her reactions with a readership, and an informed readership through reviews, and also with a general readership through correspondence. *(AS6)*

This opinion was not confined to academic social historians. The availability of newspaper sources and the high level of detail they provide makes them particularly valuable for other researchers, such as this local historian, who compared the level of detail available in official minutes with a newspaper report:

> The town council minutes are in hand-written form, but when you look at the same, identical thing in the newspaper, it is much better in the newspaper, because you get far more of what they're abusing each other [about] and shouting at each other. *(LL3)*

Respondents frequently mentioned that other sources provided the 'bare bones' for their research, but it was the newspaper that added some colour and life to the events. Government records are often brief and many family historians mentioned the value of the General Registers Office (GRO) indexes which provided them with essential details about a person. However, it was the newspaper that brought the person to life and filled in details about his/her character:

> That was in his obituary, all of the different things he had [done] with the church and that he had an interest in Friendly Society work and [that] he had been chief Ranger and Treasurer for the thirty years and was a member of the Oddfellows. So it gave you a tremendous background. *(FL3)*

The detail in newspapers could often be superior to that found in other sources. This was particularly true of sources such as Quarter Sessions Rolls, which when available, may only provide a brief account of the proceedings. Whereas the newspaper may in fact contain a more vibrant and detailed account:

> ... reports of trials, the quarter sessions, the assizes, if you go to the actual records, in the record office, they will usually tell you very little. They will tell you what happened, the bare facts really, but they won't give an indication of the testimony of witnesses or the reaction of the court. The newspaper reports on the hubbub of excitement. *(AS8)*

The same researcher also complained about surviving minutes of meetings, in particular about their brevity, whereas the newspaper report included detailed discussions:

> I did look at county minutes, but minutes themselves don't tell you very much. They tell you the decisions that were reached; they don't tell you the discussions that were carried on while a decision was being reached and it was often those discussions that were much more interesting than the decision. So you would find in the local paper sometimes actually verbatim accounts of

> these discussions. So it was the fullest source and the most obvious and direct source. *(AS8)*

(iii) Used with other sources

Newspapers were often used in conjunction with a variety of other sources. They can provide additional details and verify information found elsewhere. Through using a variety of sources a more complete understanding of a subject can be achieved. Techniques for evaluating newspaper information are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.6.1 However, family historians appeared to use newspapers slightly differently to other researchers. Although government records were usually consulted first, the newspaper provided detail which was not available in other records, as one researcher claimed:

> [Newspapers] are complementary. I mean provided your family are mentioned in the newspapers. And for somebody who dies a violent death, I mean newspapers ...will give you the story. *(FL1)*

The information in newspapers is often used to verify information in other sources and a number of historians could not place it as more or less important that the variety of other sources they consulted. This researcher said:

> I use letters and diaries and that sort of thing, so the newspapers I would say are no more or less important than the other sources but they are in there as just one of the things I use. *(AP4)*

(iv) Used after other sources

For some types of research newspapers were considered of secondary importance and were used after other sources have been consulted, often to provide supplementary details. In particular, when undertaking historical enquiries examining national or international political issues, newspapers are regarded as less important. Members of this category, often relied more heavily on government records, as one historian indicated:

> I would have said in descending order of importance, the Foreign Office papers first, his private papers are second and possibly looking at the papers of people who worked with him or knew him would be third and the newspapers would be fourth. *(AP2)*

Furthermore, for certain aspects of local history the newspaper might not regarded as important, particularly where other surviving sources are rich:

> In the local history I have been doing, newspapers are more [of] secondary importance really, for example I did some work last year on the Poor Law and how the Poor Law was implemented in Cardiganshire in the last century and [the] backbone of that research was using the Poor Law Guardians Minute Books and the Poor Law records, the official records themselves. The newspapers were more tangential. *(AP1)*

Some family historians also felt that newspapers were of little value to their research. A few commented that lower class people would not usually appear in the newspaper and therefore columns such as the births, deaths and marriages would not be useful. Newspapers can be of particular value once the family historian has identified a large number of their ancestors and want to investigate further details about their life. However, not all family historians interviewed were interested in this form of research or had reached this stage. Consequently they regarded newspapers as less useful, as one said:

> I have used newspapers rather less than you might think, seeing as its social history that becomes a part of this. But I am very interested in that fact, - of actually discovering a group of people's relation to the next, so I haven't looked at as much social history perhaps as some. *(FF5)*

(v) Important for detail

What emerges clearly from the data, is the importance of newspapers in providing detail and colour to events. In particular, nineteenth century newspapers are remarked upon for the level of detail they contain on a variety of contemporary events. The ability to provide 'flesh on the bones' was remarked on by family historians particularly:

> ...When you are researching your family you just don't want to know when they were born, when they died and when they were married or whatever. Most family historians end up being drawn into local history because they want to fill out the flesh and find out how their ancestors lived. *(FF4)*

Although the phrase is almost exclusively used by family historians, other types of historians also commented on the importance of the newspaper for detail. Speaking of other sources one historian said:

> They don't actually give you the detail that you would get in the local newspaper. You know you can read a local newspaper and very often they will even talk about the sweat on the singers' brow, the numbers of people who were there, there are all sorts of statistics that they give that the actual musical press will not give. *(AS4)*

(vi) Important for opinions

One of the characteristics of newspaper information is its biased and selective nature. Newspapers provide opinions in their letters pages, in editorials and even in the slant of their reporting. Therefore for some, again particularly cultural and social historians, they impart an insight into contemporary opinion and attitudes, which can add to their importance:

> Newspapers are the main source for me, its important because different newspapers represent different aspects of Welsh society then, certain aspects, the Tory viewpoint in different areas, industrial areas for example like Aberdare and Merthyr they respond totally different to the rural areas which are more Tory newspapers.... so the newspapers then represent the views of the majority of the people in Wales. *(AS5)*

The potential problems of using the newspaper to provide opinion are discussed in greater detail later. Nevertheless, their value for this type of information was widely recognised.

(vii) Important for social and cultural history

The research suggests the newspaper provides an essential source for social and cultural history. In many ways the press is unique, providing value on several levels. Partly the newspaper serves as documentary evidence like other sources, for the commentary it provides on contemporary events. However, it is also as a product of a society and culture and consequently imparts a valuable insight into the make-up and structure of that society. One historian stated:

> The newspaper was an attempt by journalists to give something approaching a comprehensive portrayal of society and therefore it usually contains information on quite a number of topics of interest to the project.

> Whereas other sources only contain information on only one aspect of the project. So it is a fundamental source. *(AS8)*

(viii) Valuable for students

A number of academic historians considered the newspaper to be a valuable source for undergraduate students. The emphasis on using source material in history teaching is widely recognised. The project, *Newspapers in Education* introduces school age children to the source and may increase the value attributed to newspapers. There is also a shift in the methods of teaching history at undergraduate level, with more emphasis on the use of primary sources, and academics recognised the value of newspapers for this purpose:

> They are very useful for students. They give the student an eye, a sort of window into a period. Students don't use newspaper enough I think, but when they do they have to use them carefully. *(AS2)*

Another academic historian also advised caution for undergraduate use of newspapers, saying:

> Because they have a limited amount of time and they have very little expertise and although local newspapers are a huge mine of information for them, it is very difficult for staff to direct students towards them and projects based on newspapers, simply because they could quite easily find a lot or they could quite easily spend an awful lot of time turning pages trying to find that relevant scrap of information. *(AP1)*

4.3.7 The importance of different types of newspapers

Newspapers were categorised into five different types and the research sought to investigate their use and perceptions of their relative value. The categories included: UK national dailies; UK local dailies; UK local weeklies; free local newspapers; and newspapers from outside the UK. Both the interviews and questionnaires examined the respective importance of each type of newspaper. The survey asked respondents to specify which types of newspapers they used and the importance each category was attributed, to provide some form of comparison.[4] Figure 4 provides a summary of the results of this part of the survey:

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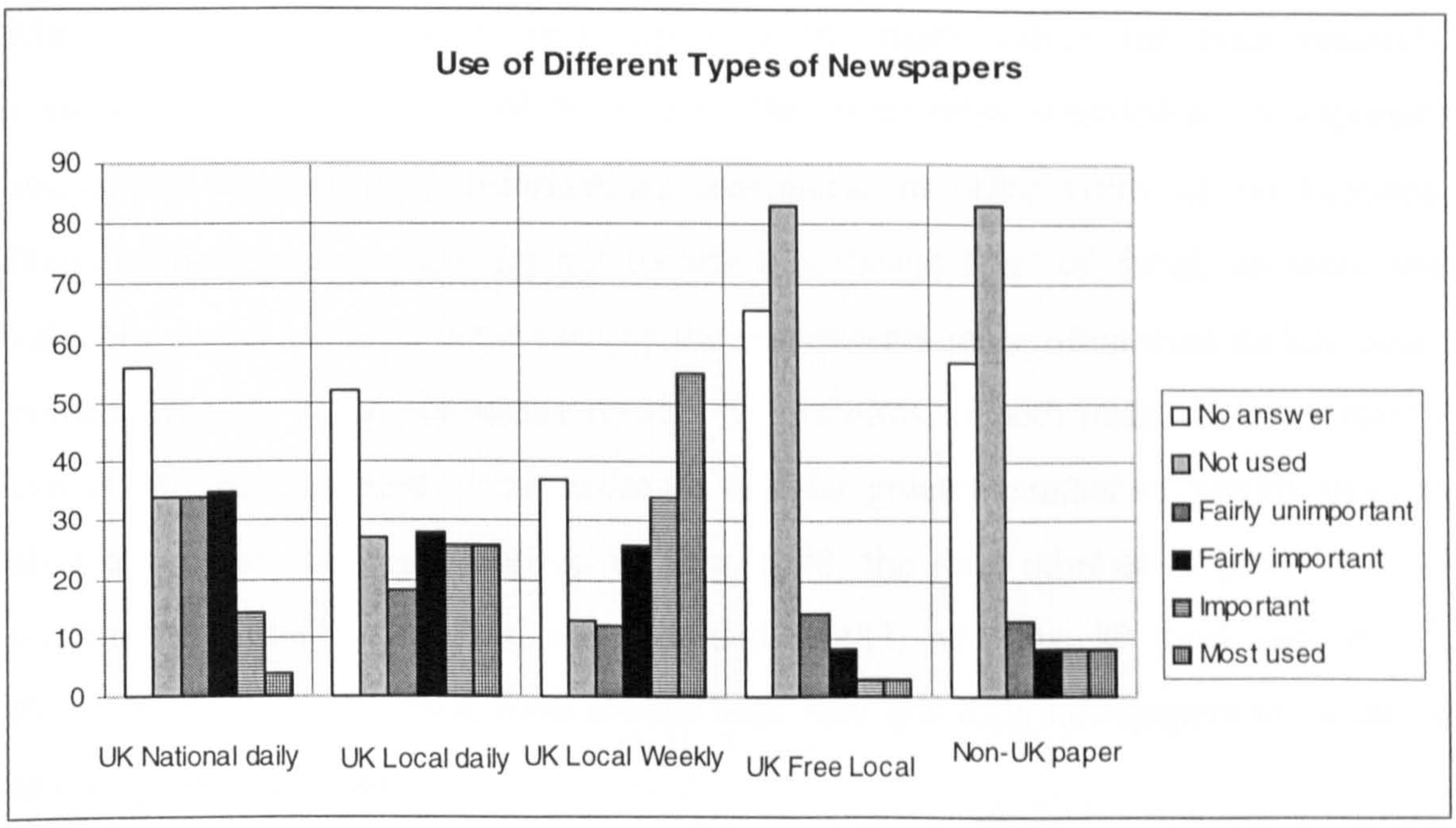
[4] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 8.

Figure 4: The use and importance of five categories of newspapers



Despite the rough distinctions between the categories, it is clear from the graph that the highest number of people ticked the 'most used' category for local weekly newspapers (54 respondents, 31%). Local dailies appear to be the second most important source with 27 respondents (16%) classifying them as fairly important, 26 (15%) as important and 26 (15%) the most used source. Free local newspapers are clearly the least important source, with 65 (38%) respondents not answering the question and 80 (46%) specifying that they did not use them. This could partly be attributed to the fact that free newspapers have only been in existence since the 1960s. 'Newspapers from outside the UK' came a close second as the least used source with 56 (32%) respondents not answering the question and 79 (46%) specifying they did not use them. National dailies were essentially the third most important category with 33 (19%) respondents classifying them as fairly important, 15 (9%) as important, and only 4 (2%) as the most used.

The interviews explored the value of the different types of newspapers further. A wide variety of opinion was elicited, and patterns emerged suggesting that the subject of historical enquiry related to the type of newspapers used.

(i) The value of local newspapers

Many historians cited local newspapers as the main source for their research, correlating with the findings of the survey. They were often regarded as an important source of detailed local information, unavailable in other types of publications. National newspapers often did not include a sufficient level of detail, so were less valuable. Local weeklies were used by the respondents more often than dailies, again correlating with the questionnaire results. Nevertheless, in both instances these results can in part be attributed to the existence of a far greater number of weekly titles in circulation than daily newspapers. In June 1998, the total number of paid-for local weeklies published in the UK was recorded at 483, with just 89 local daily titles[5]. Furthermore, in Wales there have always been very few daily newspapers in existence as one academic stated:

> All the newspapers, the local newspapers were weekly, or monthly ones that were non-conformist, their newspapers were printed every month. For this period I think in Wales itself there wasn't any daily newspaper. *(AS5)*

The importance of local newspapers in comparison to other newspapers, but particularly the London dailies, or nationals, was contrasted by many researchers. Family and local historians may traditionally be perceived as the largest users of the local newspaper. However, the following comments demonstrate their importance for all types of historians:

> If you are looking at the local impact of something, you are more likely to look at the local newspaper. Or if you are specifically looking at what a local paper said, like there is a student who did Liverpool newspapers and the peace movement, so they were looking at opinion in one city. *(AS2)*

In the past local newspapers have received fairly little attention for their value as a source. However, the research demonstrated their value for political and social history:

> They were a very useful way of building up some sort of sense of the political and public culture of a county community and I think when you are unused to eighteenth and nineteenth century newspapers, seeing

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[5] Newspaper Society Intelligence Unit 01 Jun 1998, ABC/VFD/Independent audit figures.

> how they work is also quite interesting. Relatively little work has been done on the provincial press. *(AP3)*

The importance of local newspapers to local and family historians is more widely recognised, particularly in the literature aimed at this audience. Local titles provide a level of detail not present in national newspapers, for unless there is a major incident or famous person attached to a family, national titles rarely cover events and people of interest to these groups:

> I wouldn't try a national newspaper unless somebody was connected with something very, very major at a recent date, I don't think there would be any point. *(FF5)*

Consequently, when national newspapers are used, they tend to be searched far more selectively than local newspapers. When asked if he had used national newspapers, this local historian responded:

> Yes but much more selectively, for obituaries or for reports of speeches, Gladstone's speech. *(LL2)*

The level of detail that local newspapers contain make them a highly valuable source. Furthermore, local newspapers of the nineteenth century were commented on as being highly detailed and especially useful:

> In the nineteenth century, print was cheap and you would get a fuller, especially obituaries, you had everybody's aunty and uncle and how they were related whereas now it is just cut to a minimum in the last twenty years. *(LL1)*

Free local newspapers, which the questionnaire found to be the least used source, emerged as an unimportant source from the interviews. Of the participating individuals, only one had used this type of newspaper, according to the questionnaire data. When questioned further, the respondent concluded the response was a mistake as he did not in fact use them. Free newspapers were established in the 1960s which partly explains their irrelevance to many historians. Their content is also mainly advertisements, therefore limiting the types of research that they can be used for. However, advertisements form an important component of the newspaper and the value of free newspapers for economic and trade history, may be more widely recognised in the future. Furthermore, free newspapers are read by large numbers of the population, and

play an important role in providing people with local news and opinion. For this reason they may become an increasingly important historical source.

(ii) The value of regional newspapers

Regional papers were discussed in the interviews, although they did not form a separate category in the survey. These papers are usually based in a large city but serve a wider population, such as the *Yorkshire Post,* based in Leeds, which serves much of the county. Another example from the nineteenth century is the *Manchester Guardian,* which exists today as the *Guardian* and is now based in London. In Wales, the *Western Mail,* based in Cardiff, serves much of South Wales. This title is also sometimes referred to as a Welsh national title. Several regional papers were mentioned as being important:

> As far as my field is concerned the local papers are very important. They would be first on the list, but I suppose by local I mean the local national papers, the Welsh national papers, supremely the *Western Mail*, which for this period is absolutely fundamental, it is a tremendous cultural resource. *(AS6)*

(iii) The value of national newspapers

Arguably national newspapers did not exist prior to the twentieth century, with Britain having a largely London-based national press until this date.[6] However, for simplification, titles such as *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* are covered by this definition. The interview respondents clearly used national newspapers to a lesser extent than local titles. Family and local historians frequently stated that they did not use national newspapers at all, for they did not contain information relevant to their research. Therefore, national titles were mainly valuable to political historians and historians studying a national issue, as this view demonstrates:

> Usually national newspapers are the easier ones to deal with ... But even if you are doing something like the BBC and looking at it nationally you can't actually spend too much time looking at local papers because it is too small and it would just take forever, even though it might be useful. *(AS2)*

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[6] See Chapter One, Section 1.3.1, Note 50 for a definition of national newspapers.

This historian acknowledged that although national newspapers were useful, local titles were consulted more frequently:

> I have used national newspapers for a variety of things; opinion on the events, current events, I have used national newspapers also for evidence of where various opinions were, major players in the game of politics were trying to mould opinion and national journals, intellectual journals, the *New Statesman* and that sort of thing, for policy discussion and debate so yes. Not a lot, but I have. *(AP1)*

One family historian recalled using national newspapers for a specific purpose, however this example was quite rare:

> I got information from a national newspaper, I have only used British Library once, and that was by the post and was information about Cecil Rhodes, the founder of Rhodesia, because my Granny, or my Great-Granny said there was a connection, because her maiden name was Rhodes and from Sheffield. So I had to look into Cecil Rhodes' family. *(FL6)*

Historians using newspapers from the early eighteenth century often had distinct research patterns. Many researchers, aware that the news content of early local newspapers was frequently derived from the national press, used national newspapers from this period, rather than local:

> Quite often you would find the local newspapers were scissors and paste affairs, they borrowed stuff from the national newspapers so you'd turn to a local paper and think I think I've seen this somewhere before and they'd just lifted the pages and they might just have one page that they had designed themselves. *(AP1)*

The Times clearly emerged as the most used national newspaper, demonstrating the value of an easily accessible and well indexed newspaper. In previous years this paper was regarded as 'The Newspaper of Record' although the contemporary paper is perhaps less highly valued. The newspaper was established in 1785 and is well indexed back to this date.[7] Microfilmed copies of *The Times* are relatively inexpensive to purchase and for this reason many larger libraries and archives maintain back copies.

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[7] *Palmer's Index to the Times* covers the period from 1790-1941. A separate index covering 1785-1790 is available. *The Times* produced their own printed index from 1906-1972. Since 1973 this has been produced by Research Publications and appears monthly with an annual culmination.

Consequently, it is perhaps unsurprising that a wide variety of historians had used this title. One historian said how national newspapers were not useful for his research, then added:

> ... The only exception is of course *The Times* which is well indexed. Most major research libraries have got a copy of *The Times* on microfilm or microfiche and it is indexed fairly thoroughly. If you are interested in the sort of families who were more important then yes you might get a lead. *(FL4)*

Another historian frequently used *The Times* for the obituaries, which are well indexed:

> I did an article for the *Dictionary of National Biography*, on one of the Gladstones and got his obituary from *The Times*. *(LL2)*

The high quality of the nineteenth century publication was also commented upon:

> I used *The Times*, I think I went to 1860, 1861, 62. This is the Victorian *Times*, very useful, very, much, much better than the present *Times*, in terms of news, much less gossip. *(AP2)*

(iv) The value of overseas newspapers

For research with an overseas connection, newspapers from outside the UK can be an important source, although few interview respondents undertook such studies. The value of overseas newspapers was recognised by some academic historians, such as one studying emigration from Wales to the United States:

> It is not just the importance of newspapers here in Wales but also wherever I study the Welsh. For example I have done a monograph on the Welsh in Scranton in Pennsylvania. For that local newspapers were an essentially important source, the local Scranton newspapers, as well as the local newspapers in Wales. *(AS8)*

Another was researching Anglo-Irish relations in the eighteenth century:

> I have used the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Dublin Mercury* and they are both Dublin, national Irish newspapers, but focusing mainly on Dublin.... you have got to go through newspapers like the *Freeman's Journal*, which is probably one of the most well known Dublin newspapers of the time. *(AP6)*

Family historians also occasionally find their research takes them overseas and they have used newspapers for this:

> I don't use newspapers from this country because my last British ancestor left Edinburgh apparently before 1861, according to the Census, born of Irish parents and went to New York city and my father's family were all Protestants... and we visited the County Archives which had a newspaper index, on microfilm. *(FF5)*

4.3.8 The use of newspapers by different categories of historians

The survey examined the use of newspapers by different categories of historian. Although the distinctions between each category were somewhat arbitrary, patterns of use could be observed.

(i) Academic political historians

Figure 5: Chart showing use of different categories of newspapers by academic political historians

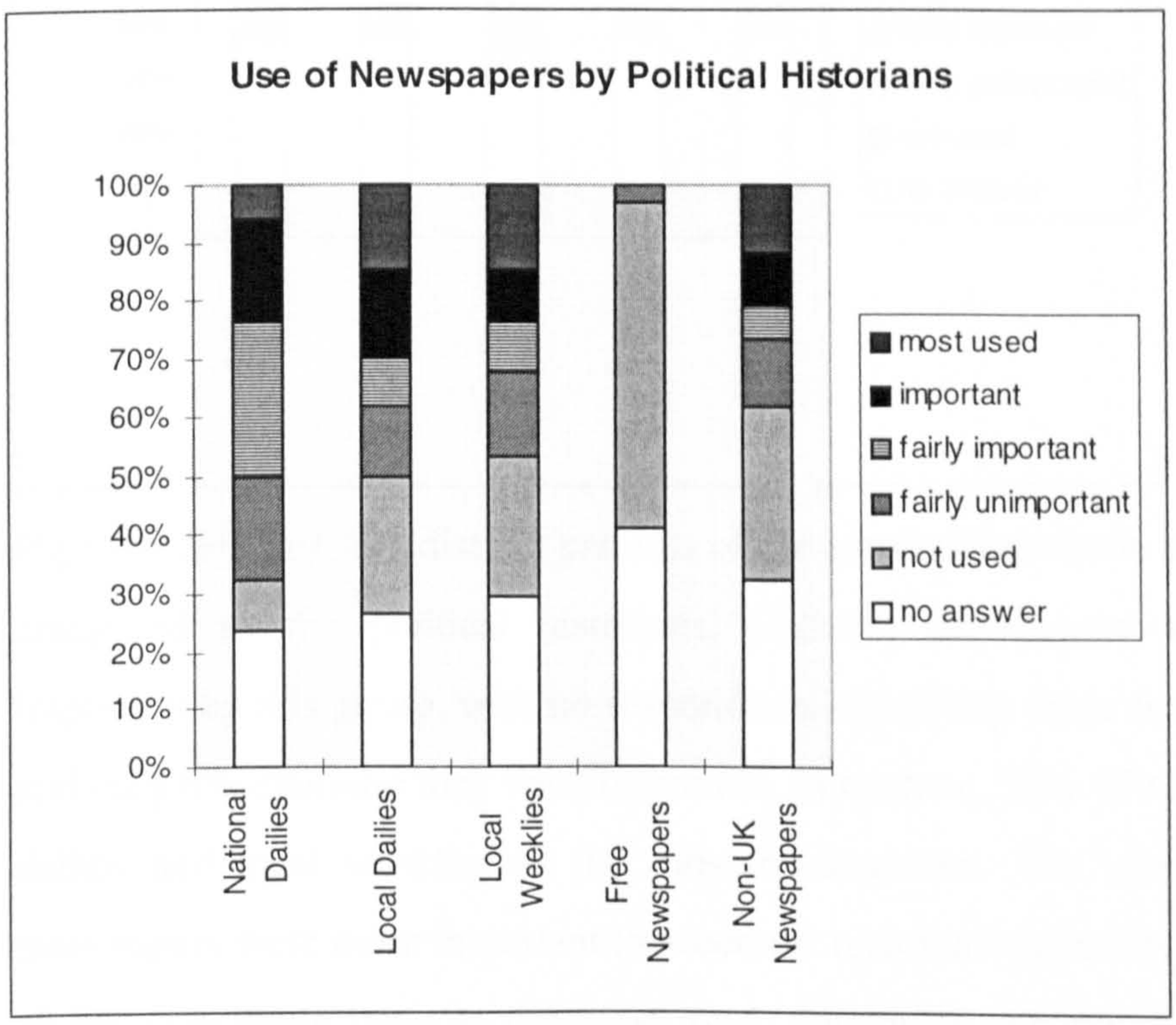


Figure 5 displays the results from the questionnaire and suggests academic political historians use national newspapers to a greater extent than the other groups. Although only six percent of respondents classified national dailies as the most used source, 25% regarded them as fairly important and 18% as important. Only nine percent said they did not use them. These results do not detract from the importance of both local daily and weekly papers to this group, of which 15% said they were the most used category.

However, the patterns of use were distinct. Non-UK newspapers were also of greater importance to this group, with 12% of respondents saying they were the most used category. However, free newspapers were clearly of little value .

(ii) Academic social historians

Figure 6: Use of different categories of newspapers by academic social historians

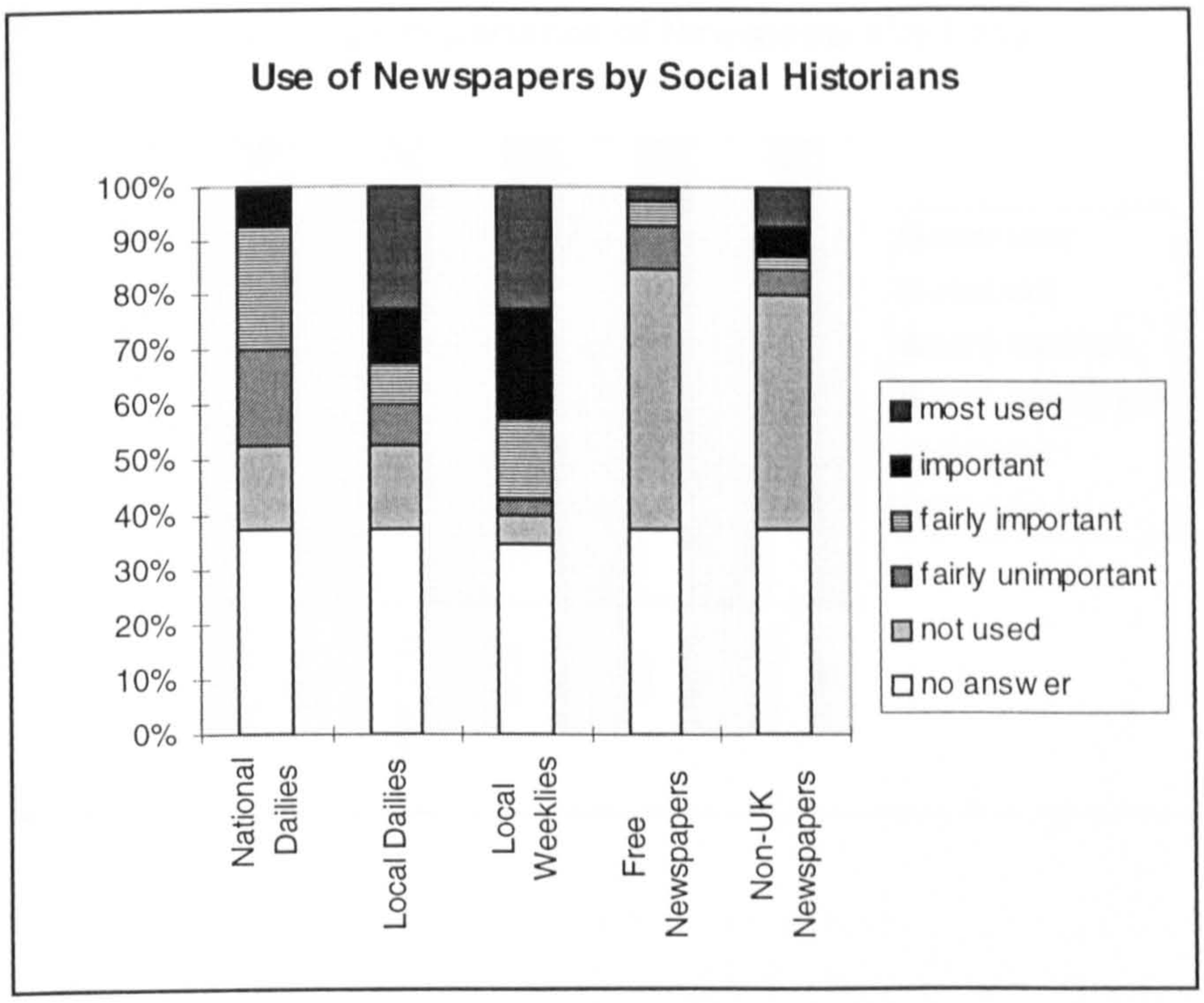


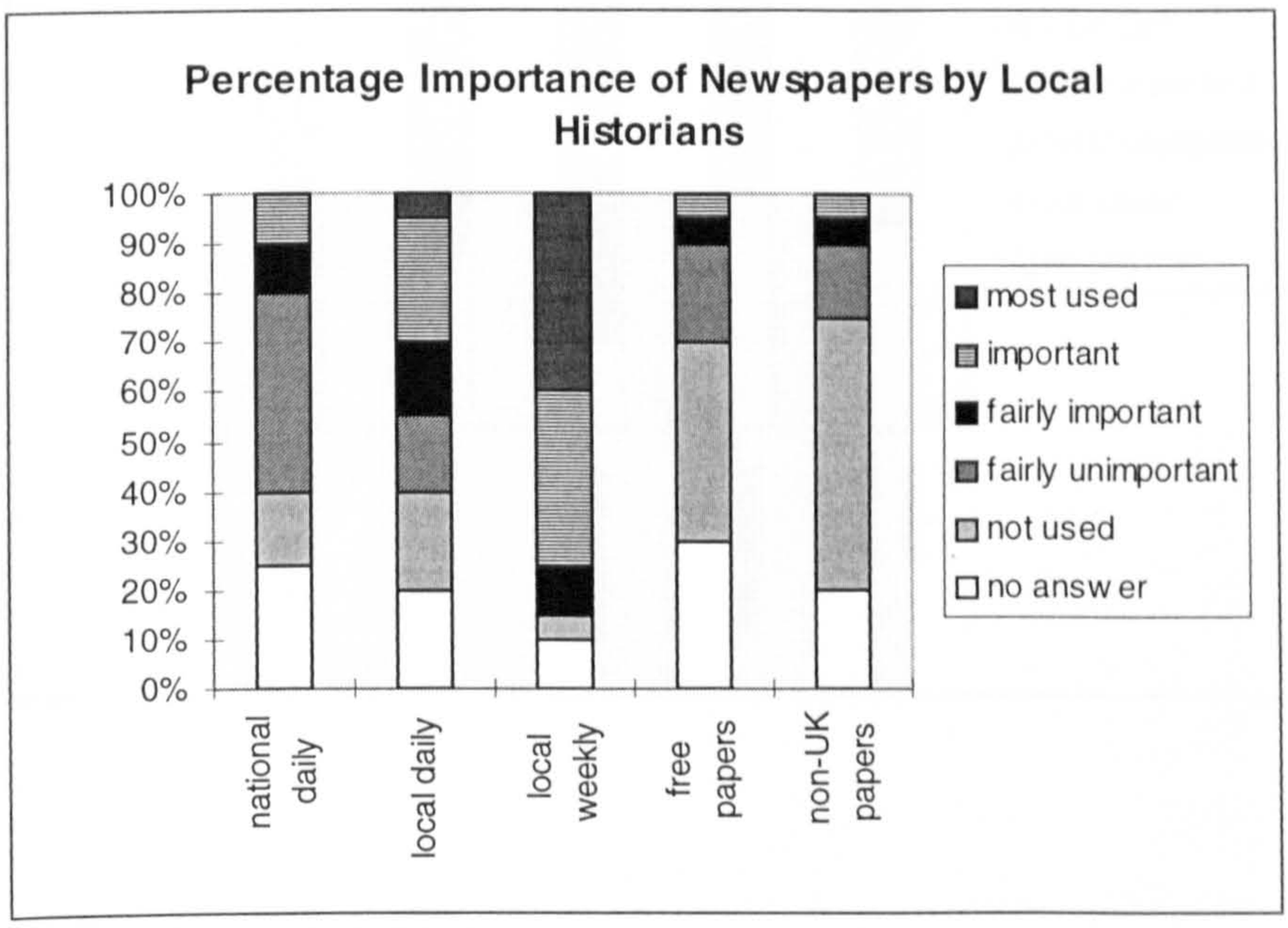
Figure 6 demonstrates distinct patterns of use amongst academic social historians when compared to the political historians. National newspapers were not considered important by this group, with no respondents classifying them as the most used source and only 8% claiming they were important. In contrast, 23% of respondents rated local dailies and local weeklies as the most used source. The results suggest Non-UK newspapers were more important to academic historians generally, with a similar figure of 8% classifying them as the most used. Somewhat surprisingly 3% of respondents recognised the value of free newspapers, although 43% stated they did not use them.

(iii) Local historians

The results from the local historians clearly reflect the importance of local weekly newspapers to this group, with 40% of respondents regarding them as the most used newspaper source and 35% as important. However, this result is not mirrored by the importance of local dailies, which only 5% of respondents regarded as 'most used' and

25% as important. National newspapers were ranked third by this group, who had little use for either Non-UK newspapers or for free newspapers. The lack of importance attached to daily newspapers was noteworthy, and possible explanations may be the fewer daily newspaper titles available and an unfamiliarity with the source.

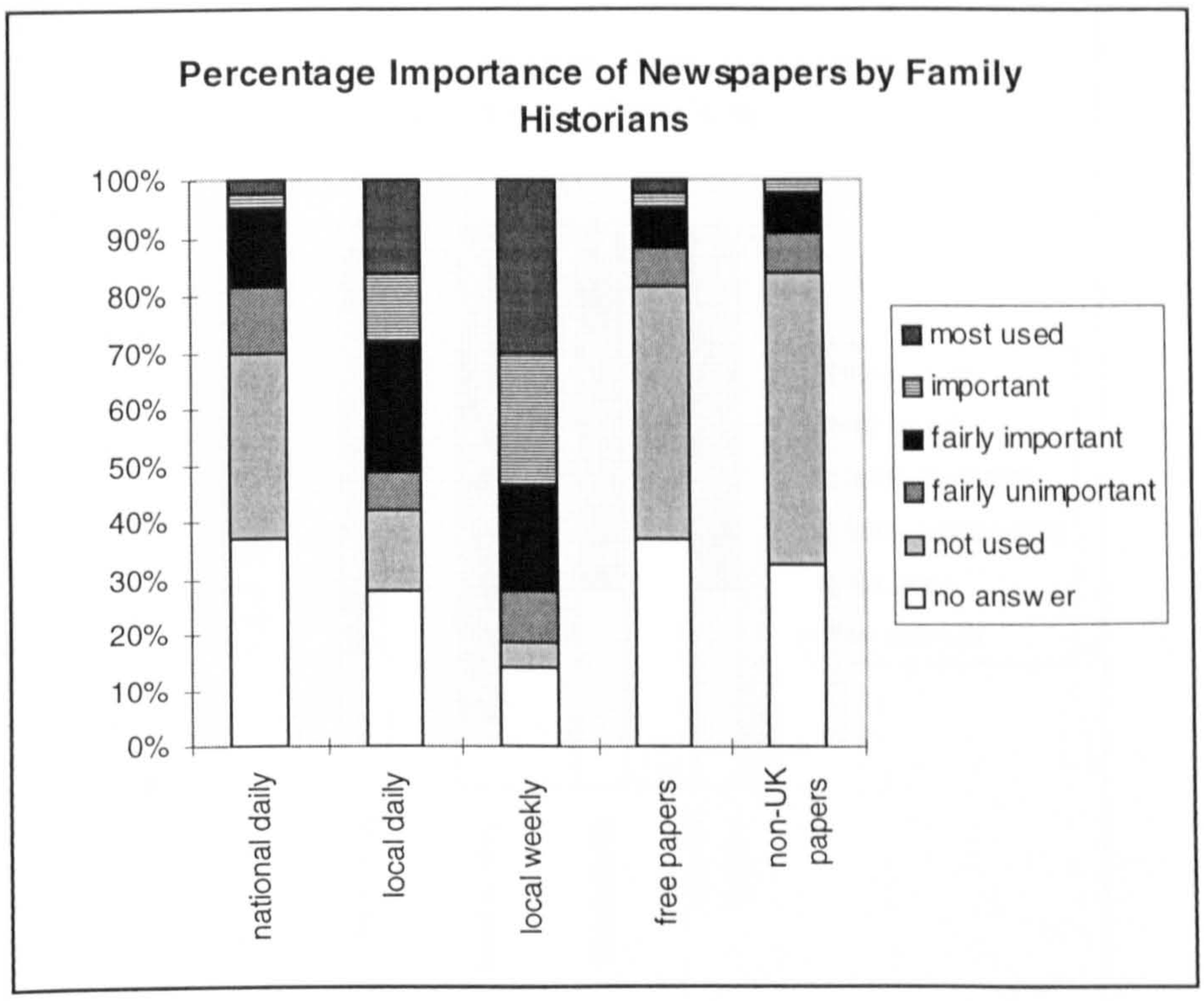
Figure 7: Use of different categories of newspapers by local historians



(iv) Family Historians

Newspapers appear to provide the family historian with a less important source than they do the local historian, which is perhaps a reflection on the nature of the research and a heavy reliance upon sources such as births, deaths and marriage registers. However, local weeklies were still the most important type of newspaper with 30% of respondents stating that they were the 'most used' category and 23% as 'important'. Correspondingly, local daily newspapers were placed as 'most used' by 16% of family historians and important by 12%. Family historians placed national newspapers in third place, with free newspapers in fourth. No family historians categorised non-UK newspapers as the most used and only 2% saw them as important, leaving them as the least important newspaper source.

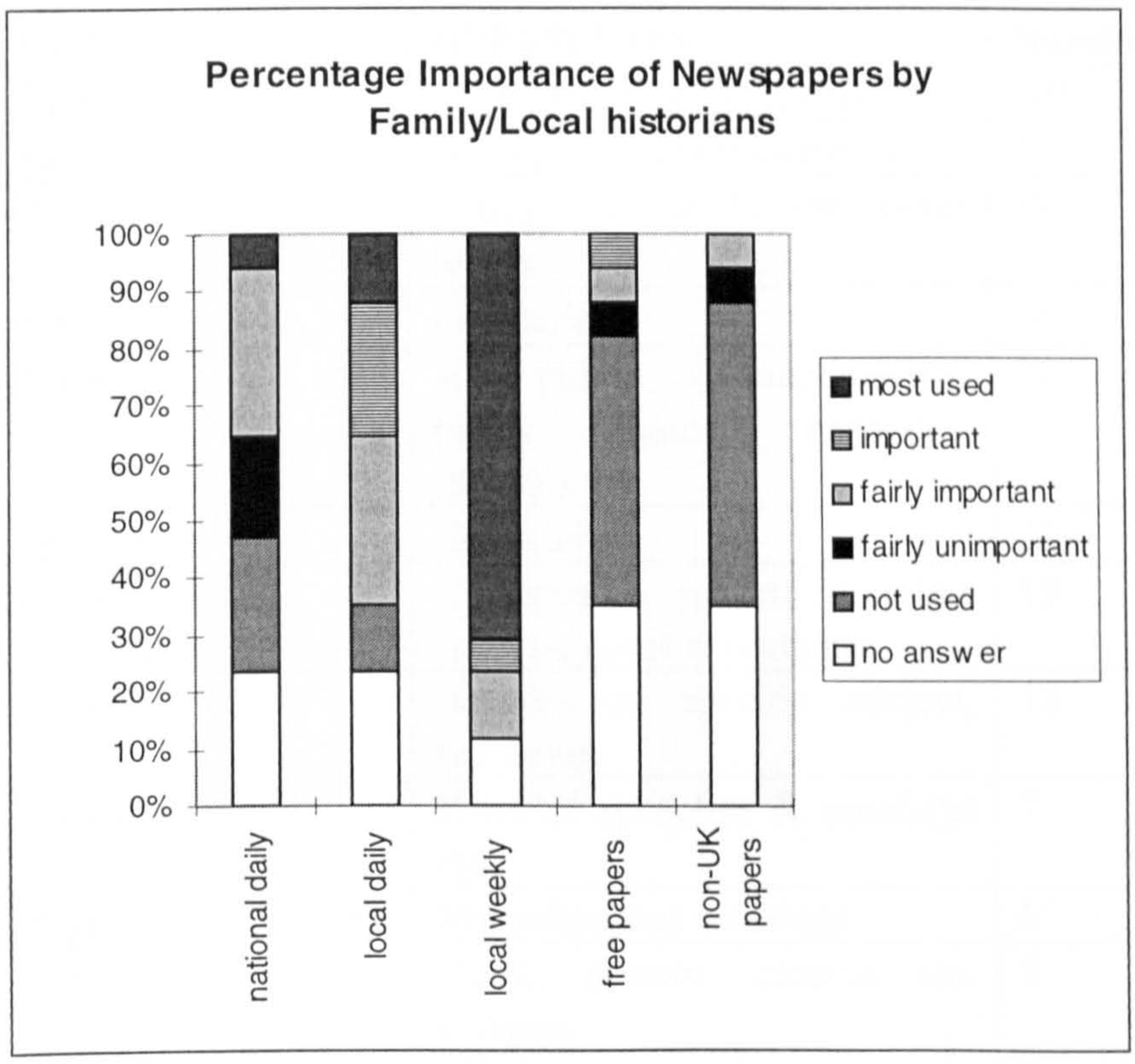
Figure 8: Use of different categories of newspapers by family historians



(v) Family/local historians

The category 'Family/local historian' encompassed those who undertook both types of research. It was suspected the patterns would be similar to the two previous categories. The results demonstrate that local weekly newspapers are by far the most important newspaper source and in this instance a surprising 71% of respondents specified that they were the most used source. Local daily newspapers were the second most important source with 12% stating that they were most used. National newspapers were ranked in third place, with 6% of the category placing them as their 'most used' source. Free newspapers were placed as 'important' by 6% of respondents and non-UK newspapers were generally felt to be unimportant, with the majority of respondents (53%), claiming not to use them at all.

Figure 9: Use of different newspaper categories by family/local historians



Thus, the findings suggested that different types of historical researchers utilised different types of newspapers.

4.3.9 Significant components of the newspaper

Both the survey and the interviews investigated the various components of the newspaper used for historical research. The questionnaire provided advertisements, news stories and correspondence as examples, but used an open-ended question to obtain a response.[8] The responses were transformed into categories and analysed. These are listed in Table 3, with a definition of each category and the number of citations which they received.

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[8] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 9.

Table 3: Significant components of the newspaper

CATEGORY	DEFINITION	Number of Citations
General News	All types of news reports	101
Advertisements	All types of advertisements	38
Correspondence	Letters to the Editor, other letters	38
Obituaries	Obituaries	36
Notices	All public announcements: births, deaths, marriages, funerals etc.	31
Editorials	Editorials	22
Legal Reports	Coroners' reports, police reports, court reports etc.	15
Features	Articles on specific subject, not news	12
Political Reports	Political speeches & meetings etc.	7
Reports of Meetings	Miscellaneous meetings	6
Reviews	Book, theatre, cinema etc. reviews	5
Illustrations	Photos, Cartoons, drawings	4
Literature	Poetry, short stories	4
Church Material	Parish news, other religious reports	3
Shipping Notices	Shipping notices	2

Unsurprisingly the 'general news' section of newspapers was the most cited category, with almost all respondents mentioning it. Advertisements were also cited frequently, as were all forms of correspondence. The top three sources correspond to the examples given, suggesting they might have influenced the results. However, it seems likely that these three categories would be important and other parts of the newspaper were cited, such as obituaries and notices. Although further analysis was not undertaken, the results suggested family historians were more likely to use certain parts of the newspaper, such as obituaries and announcements, whereas material such as editorials, features and political reports tended to be used by academics and local historians.

(i) All parts important

The interviews explored this issue in greater detail, to verify the questionnaire results. The interview results correlated with the most frequently cited categories in the

questionnaire. General news, advertisements, announcements (including obituaries), correspondence, editorials and features were all important. Furthermore, the importance of a particular part of the paper often varied depending upon the type of historical research being undertaken. However, a number of historians could not identify a particular part of the newspaper that was valuable and stated that it was all useful. These comments mainly originated from academic historians, as one said:

> I have used a lot of radio reviews, and critical responses, radio critics, television critics. And letter pages are useful. But editorials are quite useful and news stories are, it's more to confirm things rather than find out things, but adverts occasionally, for adding colour. *(AS2)*

(ii) News stories

News stories were mentioned by a large number of respondents as providing valuable information. 'News' covered a wide variety of different subjects and was defined as reporting of current events, although some researchers mentioned specific types of news reporting, for example political reporting or shipping news. Therefore, because of the variety of subjects covered, this part of the newspaper was used by all types of historians, for different purposes. News information could be used for factual information about events and it also could be used as an attitudinal source, as this academic social historian said:

> ...Whatever is being reported is of interest to you anyway, it might be a riot, an election whatever, sometimes it's the way in which something quite insignificant is portrayed, because again it might shed light on attitudes. *(AS8)*

Family historians used news reporting, in particular if a member of their family was more prominent. Reporting of major events in which family members participated, could provide useful colour and background information about a person. Although it was unfortunate, if a person had been involved in some kind of accident or criminal activity, the news reporting could be highly detailed. It was unsurprising to discover that for local historians, local news reports were often important:

> If I was looking for a particular event then I would go through the local news for Cardiganshire. That was one strategy - I would look through all the local news columns. *(AS3)*

(iii) Correspondence

Correspondence columns, or 'Letters to the Editor' form an important part of local and national newspapers and were widely used by a variety of historians. Family historians were the only notable exception, who rarely used this part of the newspaper. Correspondence columns are particularly useful in providing contemporary opinions on issues or occurrences. When investigating public or individual perceptions of events, they provide a valuable insight. The opinions are also conveniently gathered together, whereas searching for similar information in private papers would be far more difficult. Nevertheless, many researchers were aware of the problems with using correspondence columns as a source:

> Correspondence is generally very revealing but you don't know who wrote it. And quite a lot of correspondence is actually editorialising under a different guise. *(AP3)*

The opinions in correspondence columns are often in tune with the paper's political stance and with the beliefs of the editor, as the same historian continued:

> ... newspapers have a fairly strong political stance and the debate remains within the stance of the newspaper. *(AP3)*

Therefore, although the correspondence is valuable, many researchers recognised that it had to be placed in context with other sources. There would often be no way of knowing if a letter was genuine or how representative it was of wider public opinion.

(iv) Editorials

Editorials are a useful part of the newspaper, again for the opinions that they provide on contemporary issues and events. They were not used by family historians, but all other researchers made use of them. Many were aware that editorial opinion should not be confused with public opinion or be seen as representative of it, nevertheless editorials offer a useful insight:

> They are giving opinions on controversial matters so they do reveal more of the mind set of the era, than just the news items. So that can be very important for the opinions in the way historians make an assessment of local opinion. *(AS8)*

Furthermore, several researchers recognised that the editorial was often a simple way of accessing information about the political stance of the paper and the editor at the time, both of which have tremendous influence on its content:

> ... the editorials are important because they give the slant of the newspaper then and sort of articles and letters that they would publish. *(AS5)*

(v) Advertisements

Advertisements were widely used by a variety of different types of researchers. They are often recognised as a valuable source for trade and economic history:

> I am doing a study of brewing history and again newspaper sources are very interesting because adverts are a copy of social history of the time because they can contain vast amounts of information regarding pricing and occupation of premises and who owns what and the volume of trade. *(LL1)*

There is quite a large body of research evidence in this field and several respondents appreciated the value of newspapers for this type of research, despite not having used them personally:

> You could quantify things from adverts and particularly the miscellaneous columns, the classified columns. I didn't actually do any of that quantitative work, but I can see you could have used them in a quantitative way to get insights into economic history *(AS1)*

Adverts from local trades-people were also often valuable to family and local historians for tracing people's background in a town:

> My grandfather came to Wales in the 1880s from Sheffield, that was interesting to find in an advert. He was a florist and a grocer, and his telephone number, ... in an advert in the paper, it is useful, because you know they were in that town or village at that time. *(FL6)*

Advertisements can take several forms and those for forthcoming events also provide valuable details for the researcher:

> You can gain quite a lot from looking at advertisements as well. Quite a lot of advertisements are placed not by people who wish to make sales but by people who wish to convey information. *(AP3)*

(vi) Announcements

Announcements were used almost exclusively by family historians. Births, deaths and marriage announcements appeared in newspapers from the nineteenth century onwards, and although initially submitted by more wealthy people, individuals from

less well off backgrounds did use them increasingly. Many family historians regarded them as the most important part of the paper and yet they were rarely mentioned by other researchers. As one researcher said:

> Inevitably with family history you look at newspaper obituaries, because it is surprising [that] even ordinary people ... have interesting information in an obituary who they are, and where they are from. *(FL6)*

One type of announcement, the obituary, was particularly valuable. In Wales where the funeral was an important event in a community, obituary notices in the local papers were often very lengthy and detailed for more prominent people. This practice was increasingly common during the early part of this century, and researchers told how it also helps identify information about other relatives:

> My paternal grandfather died in Rhyl, Flintshire in 1915 and his younger brother in Mold in 1918.... because of their positions in the county there were quite lengthy obituaries and appreciations of them. They died some years before I was born so I have been anxious to find out as much as I could about them - information about their personalities and about their career. The list of family mourners were particularly interesting and helps me to identify some relatives. *(FL6)*

Furthermore, obituaries in national newspapers, particularly *The Times* were invaluable for details on the lives of more prominent people. *The Times* was used most frequently because of the indexing listing the obituaries. This type of announcement was cited by a variety of different types of historians.

(vii) Features

Features and essays on contemporary issues were cited by a smaller number of respondents, who were almost exclusively academic historians. In a similar manner to correspondence and editorials, this part of the newspaper illuminates contemporary opinion. This historian of the socialist movement found features rewarding:

> Most of the socialist newspapers on a weekly basis would carry some sort of theoretical writing which helped to contextualise the wider strategic debates that I was looking at within a wider frame and ... locate the movement I was looking at within the wider ideological frame. *(AS1)*

Another social and cultural historian found features the most valuable part of the newspaper, providing a readily available condensed version of events and opinion, saving hours of searching the newspaper. He said:

> Features often seem to be the most rewarding, if you have a feature article that is written by somebody local about a local event, then it is almost like a mini essay about this event, which for you to get that information yourself ... from a whole series of news stories, would take a lot of work. And you'd also be quite lucky to find the sustained commentary of a number of issues over a number of years, so it can offer you a much stronger insight into local opinion than from anywhere else. *(AS8)*

(viii) Other parts

It was not possible to generalise about other parts of the newspaper cited during the interviews. Some information appears infrequently in the newspaper. Other material is useful for specific types of research. For example a literary historian found the literary section of the newspaper to be most valuable to his work as it could reveal previously unknown contributions from a writer, interviews with the author or reviews of works. Political historians made use of division lists which were printed in local and national newspapers from the eighteenth century onwards. Illustrations, photographs and cartoons were also cited by researchers as being useful in their work. They have a wide variety of uses. Illustrations and later photographs are useful for factual information, whereas cartoons often shed light on contemporary opinions, particularly on political issues. This part of the research demonstrated the importance of newspapers. It suggested that certain types of newspaper were more valuable for some researchers and particular parts of the newspaper were useful to different categories of researchers. The patterns of use are discussed in greater detail in Section 4.7.

4.4 Information seeking behaviour

Chapter One identified a number of general characteristics of historians' information seeking behaviour, such as the tendency to use material irrespective of age and the habit of 'grazing'.[9] However, this section examines the specific techniques and problems associated with searching newspapers. The tools available to assist the

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[9] See Chapter One, Section 1.2.1

historian, such as indexes were also evaluated. The investigation was undertaken in part, to in develop research strategies of value to historians. These strategies are presented in Section 4.7.

4.4.1 How historians search newspapers

The information seeking behaviour of historians, with respect to newspaper sources, was examined in the interviews, in an attempt to identify particular strategies they might adopt. It was not assumed that historical enquiry was always undertaken systematically. Consequently, those historians who did not appear to employ a specific technique are first discussed. While the group comprised of a small number of individuals, a considerable number of respondents recognised the value of general scanning and serendipity when searching the newspapers. Furthermore, it was possible to identify a number of research methods including techniques such as date searches, sampling, and cross referencing.

(i) No strategy

Not all newspaper users employed a specific technique and some historians scanned through long runs of newspapers to find the information they required. Often their research involved tracing a theme over a period and usually only one title was scanned in such detail. The work was often extremely time consuming and consequently this type of searching was frequently undertaken by academic historians, who could devote a large amount of time to research:

> My first use of newspapers was the *Gentleman's Magazine* and I looked through every issue all the way through it, just to find out anything I could glean on my topic and that was very time consuming obviously. Every issue from the 1750s to 1780s but I just went through every single issue, every page. *(AP6)*

Becoming familiar with the entire contents of newspapers for a limited period could be important in order to gain an understanding of a theme or community:

> The time I did the bulk of the work on newspapers, it was much more trying to build up a sort of general picture of how the political community worked in the county. So that meant I would read most of it. *(AP3)*

Scanning newspapers from the eighteenth century was far easier due to these publications having fewer pages and larger print. Scanning was often an important method for historians using newspapers from this period:

> There is no substitute for going through whole the thing. And it isn't all that difficult because they used different types of typeface, often they used italics, so that the key words do stand out of the page so you can sort of scan through it. *(AP4)*

The discovery of relevant material by chance occurs fairly frequently when using newspapers. All types of historians mentioned the importance of serendipity. Although this is not a strategy, many historians were aware this could occur and made notes of unexpected information as it arose. Several historians advocated general scanning because it is often difficult to predict where and when useful information would arise:

> That's what I mean by hit and miss. I quite often browse around anywhere, to see what else there is. Quite often you find things, such as when I was looking for something else I found quite a lot about the appointment of Robert Runcie. That will be incredibly useful in the future so I have all that written down ready. *(AS2)*

From interviewing historians a number of methods for searching newspapers emerged. Approaches included more selective searching of the newspaper, searching particular parts of the newspaper, or for a particular piece of information. Date references were used frequently to locate information on known events or occurrences. Similarly, searching between specific dates was also undertaken, as were sampling techniques. Other researchers spent some time familiarising themselves with the format and organisation of the newspaper to identify relevant sections to search. Again the nature of the historian's research altered their information seeking behaviour.

(ii) Selective searching

Many historians undertook selective searching of the newspaper due to the volume of material in many publications and a lack of time for research:

> I don't think unless you are actually researching the newspaper itself, you would ever be just looking and seeing what's coming out of it, just generally, otherwise you end up noting everything. *(AS7)*

It can also be important to have a set of questions or particular theme in mind before approaching the newspaper, otherwise the enquiry can become overwhelming:

> I think it is necessary to have a theme, a project. Otherwise you are just spending so much time just taking down little bits of interesting things that catch your attention. *(LL3)*

(iii) Date references

Date references provide the historian with an obvious access point into newspapers, given the inadequate indexing of most titles. Knowing the date of a person's birth or death is crucial to the family historian searching for a mention in the newspaper. Consequently, this group often consult newspapers after obtaining a date from records such as registers of births, deaths and marriages. Dates of events are important to all types of historians trying to locate relevant material, due to the wealth of information in the newspaper:

> In my experience whenever we have used newspapers for enquiries or something like that, its nearly always when we have the dates. In fact if you haven't got a date there isn't much you can look for. If it is the opening of a chapel or a church or something, if you have got a date, you know the sort of time to look. The date is everything. *(LL2)*

(iv) Searching between dates

Another technique sometimes employed is searching between specific dates. This technique was used almost exclusively by academic historians, who are often interested in a short period of time. This group often have more time to devote to research and they can search titles within a narrow time frame thoroughly:

> The official papers are good, his papers are good, his diary is superb, but I thought you know, just see how did the press report this..... So what I have done with Lampson, it is very selective scanning of the press, just looking at the period from October 1919 to February 1920, that sort of thing. *(AP2)*

Sometimes particular years were chosen from a period, that were felt to yield relevant material. Background knowledge or other sources could often help to identify the most suitable years to search:

> I looked at every year where there was a general election, because I was quite interested in electoral

> politics, I have published on electoral policies as well. And then I took years where there were key policy debates so as far as the Oxfordshire press is concerned I looked at about 25 years quite carefully of the selected years. *(AP3)*

(v) Sampling

A sample is defined as 'a set of examples selected in some way from a population.'[10] In this instance the population would be the newspaper collection and using a variety of techniques particular volumes would be 'sampled'. Sampling was often necessary because of the large number of newspaper titles in existence:

> I couldn't possibly look at ... every newspaper, every year, for a hundred years. So it was a case of looking and picking perhaps ten years and saying well right what is happening with so and so and not bothering with the previous ten years. *(FF2)*

Nevertheless, surprisingly this technique was not used widely and little true sampling was actually discussed. Consequently the term was widened to include the selection of one or two titles from a collection. The approach was used mainly by academic historians, although it was often unstructured, as one said:

> I would just try to get a cross section of newspapers, I chose some English language ones, some Welsh language ones, some weekly, some dailies, and just briefly skimmed through them on an alternate year basis, just to get a random sampling of people's attitudes at that point in time. *(AS3)*

(vi) 'Familiarise and skim'

Often information was required from particular sections of the newspaper and the layout of many titles remained static for several years, making it easier to search rapidly. 'Familiarise and skim' was the name given to one technique used to search newspapers that was mentioned by approximately half of the interview participants. It consisted of becoming familiar with the format, structure and layout of the newspaper, thus allowing the researcher to skim through it, searching only the relevant parts. Academic, family and local historians all mentioned using this technique. It could be useful when looking for both specific details, such as a funeral report, or tracing a

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[10] Sapsford and Jupp, p.25.

theme across a period. This cultural historian used the *Western Mail* specifically because of its user friendly format:

> There is a feel about a particular newspaper, which is related to its layout and design. I think one of the reasons why I like the *Western Mail* as opposed to something else is that the *Western Mail* fixed on a very, what I would call user friendly format, it disposed its information in a way which is easy to understand. *(AS6)*

Nevertheless, the layout of newspapers is not always standardised: for example new proprietors often altered their design. Several historians were concerned that the 'familiarise and skim' method would lead them to miss relevant material:

> You become familiar with the layout of the paper and you know you don't have to bother with the sports pages and that sort of thing. But that's risky because you never know when you might tap into something. *(FL2)*

(vii) Cross referencing

Cross referencing between different titles was important, in order to compare reporting of the same event for bias. The sheer volume of newspapers available in archives and libraries constitutes part of their value. The proliferation of titles that occurred during the nineteenth century often meant even small towns had several rival papers. Consequently the historian is able to cross reference reporting and opinion between titles. This technique was mentioned by a variety of different respondents. The nature of historical enquiry often influenced the need to cross reference, and academic historians were usually more interested in comparing reporting in newspapers from opposing political viewpoints. One respondent said of the Socialist press:

> If there was a particular debate coming up in one faction newspaper I'd make sure I tried to look in the other groups' newspapers to see what their views on that particular matter was. Sometimes that was successful, other times what one group was looking at or up in arms about, at any one minute, would be of no relevance to the other factions. But I did try to cross reference as closely as possible. *(AS1)*

Other researchers were using different titles to gain a more comprehensive understanding of an event or issue:

> This mining disaster at the beginning of the century got reported here dramatically, but it also went into the

> national newspapers and it is useful then to compare because they haven't used the copy from either paper, they will have used their own reporters who come in and got other information ... You could perhaps cross reference and see exactly which parts they've got in common and build a picture of what is actually happening. *(FL5)*

Regardless of the nature of historical research, cross referencing was considered important in gaining a balance of opinion and a more accurate interpretation of events.

(viii) Developing a guide

Another technique similar to 'familiarise and skim' was mentioned by several historians. Historians who regularly used particular titles, sometimes developed their own guide to the newspaper. This could be particularly useful for those respondents who often relied upon chance finding of material. In a few instances this developed into a detailed guide to different volumes with notes on the contents, as one local historian described:

> I have got a year index and I have the newspapers in years. Some of it, some particular years I have taken down in detail, others I have just a one line reference. And it is absolutely invaluable. *(LL3)*

4.4.2 Tools to assist searching newspapers

There are essentially two ways that newspaper information can be made more accessible. The printed newspaper index is the most commonly available tool, constructed either retrospectively or contemporaneously, as a newspaper is published. References to the information are arranged under subject headings and names, and a number of the national newspapers, most notably, *The Times* make their index commercially available.[11] The alternative is creating newspaper cuttings files, which again arrange the information under subject headings, however a cutting or copy or an article is placed in the relevant subject file. Both these tools are compiled by humans and thus, are subjective, limiting their value.

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[11] The *Index to the Times* and other indexes are discussed in Chapter One, Section 1.4.2 (viii).

(i) Cuttings files

Some institutions keep cuttings from newspapers arranged by subject. These are rare, but provide a valuable access point to the newspaper. Cuttings files are particularly useful for journalists and are maintained by most media libraries. They often include cuttings from a variety of publications, therefore allow cross referencing between titles.[12] One researcher mentioned using them at a newspaper office and a media historian noted the BBC archive at Cavendish as a valuable source:

> It is a collection of cuttings arranged by subject and by year, so all the researcher has to do is sit down and read through the scrapbooks and the cuttings. They are all dated and named and you can get a picture of what's going on. You can read a whole story, a response to a programme or a policy from every newspaper in Britain, national and local. So from *The Times* or even sometimes from the *New York Times* right down to the *Birmingham Evening News* and the *Glasgow Herald. (AS2)*

Several family historians owned personal cuttings files, which they had compiled themselves or had inherited. In the past people often collected newspaper cuttings of relevance to the family. Two family historians interviewed owned quite remarkable collections, which had been the catalyst for their interest in research. One individual said:

> My grandmother on my father's side plus her aunties and sisters, kept newspaper cuttings and they were also interested in Royalty at the time ... I have got their newspaper cutting books but also inside those newspaper cuttings books are cuttings that relate in some respect to the family. *(FF3)*

(ii) Indexes

Indexes are the primary tool for accessing newspaper information. The interviews investigated their use by historians, and their value and problems associated with them. Indexes were highly regarded by most historians. They facilitate newspaper searching, allowing subject and name searching, and providing the researcher with an alternative to date access. However, they are often not available, with the notable exception of

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[12] More details about these files is found in Geoffrey Whatmore. *News Information : the organization of press cuttings in the libraries of newspapers and broadcasting services.* (London : Crosby Lockwood, 1964)

The Times index. The thoroughness of *The Times* index makes it highly valuable, however it serves to highlight the lack of a comparable tool. Nevertheless, a minority of researchers were reconciled to the absence of newspaper indexes for other newspapers, sometimes finding local indexes badly constructed and of little benefit.

(iii) The value of indexes

The majority of interviewees regarded indexes as valuable. They provided a key to unlocking a difficult, detailed and time consuming source, which would otherwise only be accessible by date references. All researchers who undertook subject or name searches recognised this value. Many respondents had used *The Times* index and found it useful, however a variety of indexes to local newspapers were also mentioned. This academic historian's response was typical:

> I have used *The Times* index, and I have used the index to ... *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, which is the major Oxford newspaper. It is indexed for certain years. It's basically a twenty year index although only ten years of it is any good. But again it depends what sort of strategy you are using but if there is an index I will use it. *(AP3)*

Several local indexing projects were also mentioned. The case studies identified two useful projects in Wales. In Carmarthen, a project to index the *Carmarthen Journal* in the early 1980s has created several decades of well indexed runs. Similarly a more recent initiative in Swansea, indexing the *Cambrian*, has made newspapers more accessible.

The main benefit of the newspaper index is the alternative access points that it provides. *The Times* index contains a list of approved subject headings, which is helpful. One historian found it particularly valuable for locating information on Wales:

> I have used newspaper indexes for some things, like *The Times*, because you couldn't wade through *The Times*. There is a great deal about Wales in *The Times* and it is quite easy to look up under different aspects, things that have to do with Wales. *(AS4)*

Name searches are also facilitated by an index and again *The Times* provides a valuable example. Tracing people through newspapers is extremely difficult for family historians. Furthermore, biography is popular with local and academic historians, and

an index to the births, deaths and marriages columns provides an invaluable tool. Again some local examples were cited and family and local history societies are often important in co-ordinating the construction of names indexes. However the value of *The Times* was again evident:

> *The Times* is very useful, for instance following this particular individual in south Wales who was the miner and the MP, you just look up his name and for every year you can find various snippets of information. There would be no way of tracing someone in *The Times* cover to cover, every year so that is very good. *(AS8)*

Moreover, newspaper name indexes can also save many hours of fruitless searching:

> Somebody had been indexing birth, marriage and death notices in the *Warwick Advertiser* in the early nineteenth century and had tens of thousands of entries for marriages and burials ... but she didn't have a single Welsh surname. So, it saved me rather a lot of enquiring. *(FF5)*

(iv) The problems of indexes

Several problems associated with indexes were discussed in the interviews. The retrospective construction of newspaper indexes requires a large investment of time and effort, particularly when a paper is well established, therefore the numbers of indexes is fairly low. Milner provides a rather dated guide to locating newspaper indexes.[13] However, the lack of indexes was clearly a problem, and the level of awareness of the existence of indexes was low. More recently, local and family history societies have been involved in their construction, improving the situation, however many researchers felt more indexes and information about their availability was required. One academic historian spoke of using *The Times* and *Guardian* index but had not come across another:

> I specifically went to Manchester to use the *Manchester Guardian* index. I regularly used to use *The Times* index to find out when things happened then I'd look it up in a more local newspaper ... I knew of one or two local newspapers which had been indexed by various people, but I never came across one. *(AP1)*

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[13] Anita Cheek Milner, *Newspaper indexes : a location and subject guide for researchers,* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1982)

However, this family historian had made extensive use of the indexing project carried out at Swansea library, but felt this work had not been publicised enough:

> It is very good running an indexing project but unless you know it is there, you can't use it. I mean *The Cambrian* Indexing Project is the best thing I have ever used, but I don't know how many other people know about it. *(FF4)*

The construction of indexes is not always a standardised process undertaken by an information professional. While the modern index to *The Times* index is highly regarded, many local newspaper indexes are compiled by volunteers. Consequently several researchers were concerned that the information they contained was not always accurate, as this respondent said:

> You don't rely on them, you use them as much as possible obviously and then again like any index it only shows you what the questions of the person compiling the index asked, so sometimes you have to go back again and have a look at the paper. *(AS7)*

Many researchers agreed that it was often necessary to look at the newspaper itself in addition to the index and one researcher had even found errors in *The Times* index:

> I did a check of a sample of ten references in which I couldn't find three. The page and column numbers weren't correct, so some things need to be rechecked. If that is just a sample of ten random things that I picked up, that is 30 percent inaccuracy. *(FF6)*

Although there are several publications detailing procedures of newspaper indexing,[14] there is clearly a lack of standardisation in this field. It is hard to criticise the efforts of many newspaper indexers who are volunteers, as without this work fewer tools would be available. However, the need for standardised construction procedures was recognised if researchers are able to exploit these tools fully.

There was also a recognition amongst more forward thinking historians that the age of printed indexes was ending, with the growth of electronic mediums, including online

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[14] See for example Harry A. Friedman, *Newspaper indexing,* (Milwaukee, Wis : Marquette university press, 1942) and Esther Perica, *Newspaper Indexing for Historical Societies, Colleges, and High Schools,* (Monroe, N.Y: Library Research Associates, 1975)

and CD-ROM newspapers. The advantages of electronic formats have been discussed in Chapter One[15] and these were recognised by the group:

> I think the period of indexing is probably coming to an end, because of the availability of other forms of access. And an index is a sort of pre-electronic form and an index, the utility of all indexes is constrained by who is doing it and what questions they think are salient. *(AP3)*

A minority of historians did not use newspaper indexes, finding them inappropriate for their research needs. Invariably these historians were academics examining a theme across a narrow period. Often they wanted to scan the entire run of newspapers and therefore an index would be redundant. Furthermore one researcher explained how the type of information she required could not be covered by an index, saying:

> I would have still have to actually look through the newspaper selectively. I mean obviously if you are looking for events that kind of approach is fine, if you are looking for riots you could put in key words for events. But if what you are looking for is attitudes, for example when I was looking at attitudes towards the Welsh language, it would be quite difficult to search for that. *(AS3)*

4.4.3 Problems finding information

Although techniques for searching newspapers were not discussed in the survey, respondents were asked to list any problems they may have encountered when gaining access to the information within a newspaper.[16] The question generated a variety of responses that were categorised as problems associated with finding and extracting information. The results are presented in Table 4 and suggest that finding information is often the greater problem.

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[15] See Section 1.5.2 (i)

[16] See Appendix 3, Final version of questionnaire, Question 13(b)

Table 4: Problems historians encounter when gaining access to newspaper information

CATEGORY	Number of Citations
Lack of Index	63
Time consuming / too much information	15
Index inadequate / wrong	9
Print not clear	6
Poor condition of paper	3
Issues not standardised	3
Problems making copies	3
Total Number of Problems	**103**
No problems	12

'Lack of index' was provided as an example problem to clarify the meaning of this question. The example may have influenced the results for it was the most frequently cited response. Another problem linked to the lack of indexes is the time consuming nature of newspaper research, which was another important problem. Difficulties in reading the print, the poor condition of the paper and problems making copies could be regarded as problems when extracting the information, although they are inter-related. Only twelve historians stated that they had no problems gaining intellectual access to the newspaper, suggesting this issue caused difficulties.

Several problems were cited during the interviews, associated with searching the newspaper. The primary problem is, however, caused largely because newspapers were not designed as a source for historical enquiry. This fact was accepted by many historians who saw it as inescapable:

> The trouble is there are so many people trying to research so many things ... you can't expect it to be all laid on like that. They are a difficult source to use, the way they are set up. You know newspapers weren't written for historians, so it is difficult to get around that. *(AS2)*

(i) Lack of time

A lack of time coupled with the time consuming nature of searching through newspapers caused problems to many historians. Difficulties could be exacerbated when researchers had to travel some distance to newspaper collections. The newspaper often requires many hours of study and when research time is curtailed, it is not always possible to find information. The problem of location is examined in further detail in Chapter Five. Newspapers are inevitably a time consuming source because of the volume of the information they contain. The newspaper could be regarded as an example of 'information overload,' an increasing problem today where it becomes difficult to identify relevant material amongst large amounts of irrelevant material. Historians are often searching for 'nuggets' of useful information, but frequently when using nineteenth century newspapers, they are confronted with pages of superfluous text. Again this is largely accepted as a shortcoming of the source:

> It is just the case that because of the nature of the source there is such a large volume of material you just have to work through and that is the nature of the beast and you can't get round that really. You either face that or don't use newspapers. *(AS1)*

(ii) Uncertainty concerning the title

The proliferation of titles in the nineteenth century causes problems to historians. Often they were unsure which newspaper best covered the geographic area sought, or the subject that they are interested in, leading them to scan several titles to find the required information. Several local and family historians focused on this point in particular:

> I am not quite sure what newspapers to try, again that is one of the problems because you are not quite sure which newspaper to look in because ... back in the last century you had several newspapers covering one area, a bit like you do now I suppose, do you look in the *Western Mail* or the *South Wales Echo*? *(FF4)*

(iii) Problems extracting information

Some of the problems identified in the interviews concerned the methods used for extracting information from the newspaper. Several of the points raised in the survey were expanded upon. For example, historians found it was not always easy to read newsprint, a problem partly connected to the format of the newspaper. They also

experienced problems when wanting to make copies of newspaper material. These problems were sometimes associated with the format of the newspaper and poor quality microfilm and readers accentuated them. Nevertheless, some newspapers were printed on poor quality paper or the paper has deteriorated, making them difficult to read. Reading problems were also caused by the small size of the typeface in the nineteenth century when newsprint was at a premium:

> The age of the newspapers is a pain as well, because of the size of the print ... because at the time it was expensive to print newspapers and so to keep the printing costs as low as possible ... the print [was] very small then. *(AS5)*

Historians frequently require some means of extracting the information from the newspaper, so they can consult it away from the library. At its most basic, this involves copying the information out by hand, although researchers often now prefer a facsimile copy of the newspaper best achieved through photocopying. More sophisticated techniques involve scanning the newspaper to produce a digital copy. Copying newspapers is problematic because of the damage it can cause to them. Microfilm reader-printers are less invasive and are increasingly common in libraries, but they can be expensive to use and difficult to operate. A satisfactory means of providing the researcher with a copy of the newspaper, that does not damage the original, is so far elusive. This family historian saw it as the greatest problem:

> Getting the information physically out, either the typing time or copying things by hand. The really off putting thing is if you do find something really terribly interesting, it can take you the rest of the afternoon to copy it out. We are collectors of sources family historians and when we do find something we want all the details. *(FF5)*

This also emerged as a potential point of conflict between the user and the custodian, when librarians primary concern is to preserve material:

> A lot of librarians are not that happy of photocopies being taken, mainly because of the frailty of the actual newspaper. *(FF3)*

4.5 The information in the newspaper

In order to identify the types of research for which newspapers are particularly valuable, an examination of the attitudes of historians towards newspaper information was undertaken. Issues such as, the value of opinion-based and factual information, and the level of detail and quality of the source were considered.

4.5.1 Uniqueness and detail of information

When discussing the nature of newspaper information it is important to recognise that the press records a large amount of material that may never appear elsewhere. Newspapers also often provide the most detailed information on a subject. This feature was examined in detail in Section 4.3.3. However, when discussing the nature of newspaper information, it's uniqueness and the high level of detail were often mentioned.

4.5.2 Opinion-based and factual information

Newspapers typically provide a blend of factual and opinion-based material that is difficult to quantify in percentage terms, as the definitions are subjective. Although theorists debate the role of the media as the vehicle of public opinion, and there is a danger in equating newspaper opinions as public opinion, the press provides a testimony as to the attitudes and opinions that people were exposed to at a particular time. Using the newspaper for factual information is perhaps more problematic because of the subjective nature of the source. However, the newspaper does contain a large amount of historical material which can be cross referenced with other sources.

Historians recognise that press reporting is partial, however the opinions are valuable, whether they represent the attitude of an editor or the ideas expressed in letters pages. Attitudes expressed in a newspaper cannot be assumed to provide simply a reflection of public opinion, and the ability of the press to create reality was recognised:

> I am interested in the opinions of those people who were the leading lights and figures in the town in the Nineteenth century ... the newspaper is not just a one way reflection of reality, it is also creating ideas and images of the society as well, in its own right so it is worth it in its own right, as well as being a media to gain an understanding of the history behind it. *(AS8)*

Newspapers demonstrate the range of contemporary opinions that individuals were exposed to and particularly when the opinions expressed are those of more prominent people, their importance becomes magnified. Furthermore, by examining a range of newspapers, the spectrum of opinion can be seen and more useful conclusions drawn. The important role of the press in shaping public opinion means that press opinions can be valuable for their own sake as one media historian pointed out:

> I am using it for its own sake usually. So I can say the *Daily Mail's* opinion is this, *The Times* is. I use it in a different way. So it is important to me which newspaper said what about a certain thing. *(AS2)*

However, another researcher advised caution when using opinions in the newspaper for:

> What one doesn't know is what people made of the information. Because sometimes, in letters, people will comment on how they received the news but that's what one doesn't know, is how the public reacted. *(AP4)*

Reviews are a way of gauging contemporary reactions to a work of literature, a play, or a film. These can be important to researchers, as can the opinions in the letters pages:

> In terms of attitudes towards how to be Welsh in the United States. "What do we do now [that] we are in a new country? Do we become American or do we hang on?" ... So newspapers, in terms of the ethnic newspapers, shall I then call them, are very important for attitudes as well as for the news. *(AS7)*

However, opinion is not confined to more obvious parts of the newspaper such as the letters pages and editorials. Almost all parts of the newspaper are subjective and can shed light on contemporary opinion:

> There might be a street disturbance and the attitude of the editor can be quite revealing you know, as I say ... attitudes, class attitudes or gender attitudes often show through in the way in which something has been reported. It wasn't the event that was of interest it was the way in which it was reported by the journalist or the editor. *(AS3)*

The newspaper can also be used for acquiring factual information, although more traditionally academic researchers establish 'facts' from other historical documents. However, for some information there is not an alternative source, therefore it can be essential to use the newspaper. This political historian spoke of how he used the newspaper for details of political events:

> There is no national compendium of news from election results..... So very local newspapers [for] straightforward information on electoral results, the only source. Secondly I used local newspapers for details of election campaigns, annual reports of political parties, annual meetings, this sort of thing. *(AP1)*

Family historians also used newspapers for details of ancestors that they could not easily obtain from elsewhere. These details are usually more factual in nature, rather than opinion-based, for example details of court cases are often more accessible in the local newspaper, rather than obtaining court records. Other researchers also used newspapers to access a variety of different types of factual information. This literary historian relied on the newspaper to trace the career of Welsh writers:

> I have also found newspapers useful in establishing fundamental facts on the life and career of writers, this is probably not so important in an English context where a lot of work has been done,... that isn't true of the people I am interested in. Dylan excepted I suppose, all the others we very rarely have full account as yet of their life and career. *(AS6)*

4.5.3 The quality of newspaper information

Quality is an important issue for all users of information, for research based on inaccurate information is of limited value. Historians should consider the quality of the sources they are using to guard against false interpretations. An important aspect of academic history develops the ability of the historian to evaluate sources critically. When questioning professional historians in particular, the research sought to investigate what methods the historians actually used, not what methods they believed they ought to use. Therefore a variety of approaches were adopted. [17]

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[17] See Appendix 4, Interview Guide. Questions 4-7.

(i) Accuracy of information

The interviewees were initially asked to comment on the accuracy of the information they found in newspapers. A significant minority of the group felt that on the whole it was accurate. These respondents turned out to be mainly family historians, speaking particularly of local newspapers. Some mentioned that they had verified the information and found it to correlate with other sources. Others felt there was no reason for doubting the accuracy:

> I think they have been fairly accurate. The information that I have found I have chased up and found as being so. With the reporting of things in the war, like Dunkirk, obviously that was all done [under a] sort of censorship, so perhaps all the details weren't recorded. But in a sense as I said before, that gives you a greater sense of how people viewed it at the time, rather than how you view it from fifty years hence. I haven't found any great inaccuracies truthfully. *(FF4)*

This opinion could be regarded as naiveté amongst non-professional researchers, however several academic historians also agreed that newspapers were accurate for certain types of information. One historian studying Anglo-Irish relations in the eighteenth century made the distinction between parliamentary reporting and reports on incidents, which during this period were often exaggerated:

> The parliamentary reporting is usually very accurate and the division lists again are pretty accurate, so there is a big difference between parliamentary reporting and a report on ... incidents in either Dublin or London. *(AP6)*

A greater number of historians spoke of problems with the accuracy of newspaper material. Sometimes information was found to be obviously wrong, other details however, could be open to ambiguities, often due to bias and the selective nature of the newspaper. Inconsistencies sometimes existed between newspaper information and other sources, making it difficult to judge the accuracy of material. Many historians also commented on the decline in the quality of newspaper reporting, and a variety of other problems were presented.

Judging accuracy is never an easy task, nevertheless on many occasions researchers were able to point to factually inaccurate material in newspapers. Sometimes an

individual would have personal knowledge of a subject or event and could point to errors in the newspaper report:

> It's amazing, whenever I read something about my own subject or what I know something about, it doesn't matter what they say, it is simply wrong. *(FL2)*

Moreover, comparing reports in different titles is a common way of uncovering inaccuracies:

> ... you find inaccuracies can occur. You find the same event described, but maybe the dates are different or maybe the names are different. Simply because of bad reporting or inaccurate reporting. And there is nothing you can do about that. *(AS4)*

Newspapers are also frequently accused of sensationalising events to such an extent that the reporting becomes inaccurate. In many cases it becomes obvious when this has occurred, as the example below demonstrates:

> Sometimes, of course, newspapers go into very sensationalist reporting and one has to take that with a pinch of salt. If a newspaper starts writing about the streets being infested with prostitutes or something like that, and you are than able to check whether or not convictions for prostitution were going up or down at the time, that may be quite useful. *(AS8)*

The level of accuracy could also be found to vary throughout the newspaper and sometimes historians found it difficult to know which parts of the newspaper were accurate and which were not. This could be seen to be connected to the method of producing newspapers. Speaking of accuracy one historian said:

> ... well that's terribly varied really, even within a newspaper because very often as you know there are no by-lines and stories are clearly amalgams of ... a combination of information drawn from various reporters and various sources. So within a particular story, though much of what it says is reliable, then one particular area may be much less reliable. *(AP3)*

Errors were often regarded as genuine mistakes on the part of journalists, rather than deliberate misrepresentations. One researcher felt these details were often insignificant when studying trends in culture and society across a long period:

> They are discrepancies of an understandable nature, someone may get something wrong. It's one of those

> things. If an event is advertised one week in the newspaper and all the details are set out, you obviously cannot assume that it happened in that exact way, because you will read a report a month later about that event, and there will be a lot of discrepancies. *(AS4)*

(ii) Biased / selective information

One of the greatest problems cited by historians was the subjective and selective nature of newspaper information. Although this can make newspapers highly valuable, it could alter the meaning of a piece of information dramatically and make it less accurate. During the nineteenth century newspapers became highly politicised and frequently towns established rival papers supporting the Tories and the Liberals. These political rivalries are well documented by newspaper historians. In Wales, religious conflict was often fought out between rival papers and Jones has described how 'Carmarthen in the 1890s was a bitterly divided journalistic community.'[18] Recognising this conflict, one historian said:

> ... sometimes the *Welshman* will report something and the *Journal* won't and visa versa, because that's there political angle that they are following up and .... you would have a write up for a church in the *Journal* and perhaps not mentioned in the *Welshman*, because they were the reformed paper. *(LL3)*

Cross referencing the same event in two newspapers, at either end of the political spectrum, can illuminate discrepancies in news reporting. Where some doubt lies about accuracy of a report, it can be important to check other sources:

> These newspapers are going to have a certain bias ... so that is precisely why I used those two Irish newspapers, one for government, one for opposition. That is the only way I really cross referenced. I made sure I got as big a picture as I possibly could. *(AP6)*

Subjectivity is not confined to politics and religion, newspaper proprietors and editors often held strong opinions about a variety of issues they wished to convey to their readers, from bread prices to conditions down the mines. Even crime reports could be influenced by particular likes and dislikes of the editor at the time. Furthermore, newspapers are selective in their reporting and the editorial policy of a title could mean

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[18] Jones, *Press, Politics and Society*, p.188.

that some material would not be included in the newspaper, while other information would get an unwarranted high priority. Censorship of news has also operated since the beginnings of the press, although historians often focus on this policy during the First and Second World Wars. One researcher told how during the Dutch Revolt in the sixteenth century, early news pamphlets that circulated in Britain and the continent, were censored. Dutch successes were emphasised and Spanish victories not mentioned:

> Censorship is a very difficult problem in the period. Historians disagree quite a bit about the extent to which there was either state censorship or self censorship, but on the whole what is fairly apparent is things that get reported in print are successes so far as the English [were concerned], who ... on the whole sympathised with the Dutch as fellow Protestants. *(AP4)*

Deciding where news reporting is selective or subjective can be a difficult task for the historian. However some researchers felt that it was often fairly easy to assess where material was fair comment:

> ... a journalist might say such and such party has won an election and it seemed to mobilise a great deal of support from the council estate which dominated a particular kind of ward and I would think, well that sounds kind of reasonable and at that point I will see if I can find some other evidence to infer that. *(AP1)*

Furthermore, the political slant of most twentieth century national newspapers is widely known and this can make assessing their comments and reporting easier:

> If one wanted to understand what is going on inside the Labour Party, one would be best off reading perhaps a paper like the *Guardian* rather than the *Daily Telegraph*, which is going to adopt a much more critical line from the start. That is not say you swallow what is being fed you in the *Guardian*, I don't, you have got to bear in mind where are you going to get the best insights. *(AS8)*

Many of the more prominent local titles, such as the *Western Mail,* have also been written about by press historians and their editorial slant is more widely known:

> ... anyone using the *Western Mail* is aware that it was radically out of sympathy with Welsh aspirations for many, many years because it was a conservative newspaper. But it was remarkably hospitable to other viewpoints too. *(AS6)*

(iii) Inconsistent information

When different newspaper reports were cross referenced, inconsistencies sometimes arose and this presented the historians with further complications. This may not be through any apparent editorial policy, and could make it difficult to decide which report to rely upon. Some researchers mentioned that these discrepancies could be useful, allowing them to choose the source which best suited their research needs. Inconsistencies also made the research more interesting, leading the historian to question their source more thoroughly. One researcher said:

> One account of this [event] said that as he came out he was hoisted on the shoulders of some of the audience and carried a few feet, which is a significant event, you know. But that was not commented upon [elsewhere] and if it happened, it was something that other reporters witnessed. But it was only in one account ... I myself used that. It is too good to miss. I would use that and I would quote my source and probably suppress the fact that it wasn't mentioned elsewhere. *(AS6)*

However, another historian made a clear distinction about which sources s/he would rely upon when conflicting accounts existed. This suggested a hierarchy of source material:

> Obviously if you have court records and you have various newspaper reports that conflict with each other you would go by the court record, you'd go back to the original court proceedings as it were. So yes you do have discrepancies and that is a problem then, knowing which newspaper you should plump for then if there are discrepancies between them. *(AS3)*

(iv) Accuracy difficult to judge

The accuracy of the newspaper is not always easy to judge, particularly when other sources are unavailable with which to cross reference the information. When there is only a small amount of information about the authorship of an article this can be problematic:

> There were some very good correspondents in the Far East, people like Morrison and a man called Valentine, Church, I think Ransom was good..... But I think you have to say really, the integrity of the account depends very much on the integrity of the journalists. *(AP2)*

(v) Declining quality

The decline in journalistic standards, in particular since the Second World War, has been commented upon by many media historians.[19] A large number of the interview respondents believed that contemporary newspapers concentrated on trivial gossip, rather than on serious news and were prone to sensationalise stories. Family historians felt that there were fewer personal names mentioned in contemporary local papers, making them less valuable for their work. Furthermore, many historians felt that newspaper reporting style has altered dramatically since the development of radio and television. A perception exists that prior to this date, the quality of the material in newspapers was higher:

> Arguably in the 1860s the newspapers were the only source of information. In the 1920s radio was in its infancy. Today, I suppose it has all got to be short, sharp, ... they are competing with the box, so it is all very different. *(AP2)*

Different types of historians felt there had been a decrease in newspaper quality and many of those interviewed held contemporary newspapers in low regard. This comment applied to both national and local newspapers. This researcher spoke of the decline in quality of *The Times:*

> [It] is pretty good in the inter-war period, much better than it is now, that is an obvious choice, but not as good as it was in the 1860s. There is a falling off in both the extensiveness of the news coverage and in the quality of the reports. *(AP2)*

Local newspapers were also mentioned as having declined in quality in more recent years. One literary historian felt that until the 1950s, the *Western Mail* had been an authoritative source for cultural affairs:

> If you look at the *Western Mail* now, it doesn't really compare with the *Western Mail* as it was up until the 50s or so, it was pretty heavy weight really. It was remarkable the way it opened itself up to writers, and to cultural issues *(AS6)*

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[19] In particular Curran and Seaton, *Power Without Responsibility* pp. 71-108 and Seymour-Ure, *The Press and Broadcasting since 1945*. The decline in standards in the local press in discussed by Murphy, *The Silent Watchdog*.

Local newspapers of previous years were also regarded as a better source in terms of their reporting of local affairs, particularly of council reporting:

> Local government affairs is one of my hobby horses and one of the reasons for the decline in local government today is that newspapers just don't report it, its almost as if there is an unspoken silence. If you look at local newspapers 20, 30 years ago it was, county council meetings, half a page, sometimes three quarters, sometimes a whole page and now there is absolutely nothing, apart from one or two things that they pick up. *(LL2)*

Moreover, one historian went so far as to state that newspapers of today would be less useful as a source for future historians:

> I am sure that local newspapers of today will not be as important as a source as newspapers of 50 or 100 years ago. They are just so selective, so biased and journalists today have a very perceived idea of what the public wants and that's what they provide to a certain extent. *(LL2)*

(vi) Other problems

A number of other problems associated with the quality of material in newspapers arose from the interviews. One point made by several researchers is worth reiterating. The role of the press in both the creation and reflection of public opinion is particularly important. A number of historians were concerned at research that regarded the opinions in the newspaper as an indication of public opinion:

> The danger is if you then extrapolate out and then say because the *Daily Mail* said this, this meant that middle class suburbia said it ...You have got to be careful, it is obvious, it's the kind of things really you think about with any source. Who is doing the writing for what audience and what is their agenda. *(AS2)*

Nevertheless, clearly the newspaper is unlike other sources for this very reason, and it can perhaps be used in ways that other sources cannot. Like a piece of literature from a period, newspaper sources are not simply records of the past which need to be assessed for accuracy. The final section of this chapter explores these issues in greater detail, discussing the types of historical enquiry more suited to newspaper research.

4.6 Using newspaper information in historical research

When using all historical documents, critical evaluation is necessary to establish their reliability. Within the LIS profession evaluation criteria are often devised for such purposes. The process is not as formalised within the discipline of history, although various evaluation methods are set out in the historiographic literature.[20] However, the literature does not include specific techniques for evaluating newspapers. Increasingly this study is suggesting that newspapers, as a form of media, are unlike other sources. They are not simply a commentary or interpretation of the past, and often form an important part of the culture they seek to reflect. This suggests that historians should have a basic understanding of media theory and the role of the press before using it. This section examines how historians use the information found in newspapers, including the methods employed to evaluate material that can be inaccurate, selective or subjective. Understanding the background and construction of newspapers is necessary in order to evaluate them. Hence, this study investigated the instances where this type of research was undertaken and the type of information that was considered important. The research also sought to compare the methods of different types of historians, in particular, to compare academic and non-academics to observe any differences in approach.

4.6.1 Evaluating newspaper sources

This study found that the accuracy of newspaper information concerns many historians. Most historians accepted that all sources are flawed, although there were certain steps they could take to minimise misrepresentations. The interviews revealed the most important evaluation technique was the verification of information by cross referencing with other newspapers and other sources. Nevertheless, many historians accepted that bias and inaccuracies were inevitable. These problems did not invalidate the information, if the researcher was aware of them and treated the source accordingly.

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[20] See Chapter One, Section 1.2.2

(i) Newspapers similar to other sources

The research was interested in any evaluation techniques developed by historians that were specific to newspapers. While all historical documents have bias and errors, the research investigated whether newspapers were treated in the same manner as other sources. The interviews revealed that a number of researchers believed that newspapers were no different to other sources. These researchers felt that all sources should be treated in a rigorous manner. They should be verified with other sources and scrutinised to uncover any bias:

> I wouldn't say they were particularly reliable, but then I wouldn't say that any historical source is reliable, every source has its own bias, every creator of every source have their own axe to grind so they are just another source really. *(AP1)*

(ii) Importance of cross referencing

Sources can be evaluated by cross referencing the information they contain with other sources to verify accuracy and guard against bias. Where possible, most historians prefer to use a variety of sources to provide a more complete understanding of a subject. For example, the history of a political movement could be traced through minutes of meetings, newspaper reports and the diary of its founder. Where two or more accounts of an event exist it becomes possible to gain a more complete interpretation of a subject or event. Most historians cross referenced the information in newspapers with sources such as government records. Government records were often regarded as more accurate than the newspaper, once again suggesting that in a hierarchy of sources, newspapers came below other sources:

> If you have court records and you have various newspaper reports that conflict with each other you would go by the court record, you'd go back to the original court proceedings. *(AS3)*

The subject of enquiry affected the source hierarchy. For some research another source may be more useful than the newspaper. Some political historians clearly did not pay particular attention to the opinions expressed in a newspaper:

> Journalists say the reason this party lost an election was X and you can't pay much attention to that very often unless it was a widely held opinion that I could confer with other sources. For example I would pay a lot of

> attention to the views of people like election agents who I know had their noses close to the ground. *(AP1)*

The accuracy and bias of newspaper sources could often be overcome because of the large number of titles in existence. Where other records were unavailable, historians compared reporting in several different newspapers, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of events or opinions. Accounts in different newspapers often varied tremendously:

> If you wanted to know the number of people in a crowd at a riot, then you would need to look at several newspapers to find out. Because one might say 10,000, another might say 100,000. *(AS2)*

(iii) Minor inaccuracies / bias irrelevant

Some historians felt that minor inaccuracies or bias did not always compromise the integrity of the information, depending upon the nature of historical enquiry. In the previous paragraph the interviewee discussed conflicting accounts of the number of people at a riot. One newspaper reported that 100,000 people were involved, while another said the figure was 10,000. However, at the time, people who read the account stating that 100,000 people had been at a riot may have believed this to be true. For many historians interested in people's attitudes and beliefs, the information in the newspaper helps to reconstruct a previous form of reality:

> It is a good indication of what people were reading at the time anyway, so if it was inaccurate, then nevertheless that is what people were reading so when you are looking at people's reactions to things, then even if it was an inaccurate information that is still more useful than worrying about whether it was actually accurate or not - it is what influenced people. *(AS7)*

Minor inaccuracies were also less relevant to researchers studying broad themes across a period:

> I don't think there would be much point in questioning the validity of them as a record of what happened, even if there are minor inaccuracies. Does it really matter if something happened on one day or the day after or the day before, I don't think it does if what you want isn't the minor detail but the overall pattern of cultural development. *(AS4)*

The majority of the examples in this section came from academic historians, However non-professional historians were aware of the need to scrutinise different titles to gain a closer understanding of the truth, as this family and local historian said:

> You have to use them as witnesses, one will give you one impression and the other will give you another. But if you look between them you can see the similarities and draw out what actually happened. *(FL5)*

Nevertheless, it would be fair to say that in general, academic historians considered these types of issues to be more significant. However, this was partly due to the large number of non-academic historians studying family history. Problems such as political bias were often not important in this type of enquiry and it would be untrue to say non-academic historians were less rigorous in their methods.

4.6.2 Background research on newspapers

The literature states that in order to evaluate historical documents it is necessary to gain a full understanding of their construction. The study of press history and developments in newspaper publishing can provide the historian with a better understanding of the construction of the source. Thus, the level of knowledge in this field was examined. Furthermore, the types of historians who undertook background research on newspapers and the information they gathered were examined.[21] The research found that many historians undertook background research to evaluate reporting and opinions in newspapers. This type of investigation made it possible to identify, more clearly, material which contained bias and that which was fair comment. Findings indicated that the need for background research was dependent upon the nature of historical enquiry, rather than the professional status of the historian.

(i) Background research too difficult

A number of historians did not undertake background research on newspapers. They cited several reasons for this, including: difficulty in undertaking the research, lack of relevance for their study and prior knowledge of the subject. Some historians had unspecified reasons for not undertaking background research. A number of individuals found it difficult to undertake this type of study, and claimed the information was not

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[21] See Appendix 5. Interview Guide. Section 5: Questions 8 and 9.

available without extensive research. Several mentioned a lack of available research in the field of Welsh press history, and it was recognised that newspaper histories are often not widely available in libraries. Consequently, a range of historians cited this response.

(ii) Background research not relevant

Some researchers believed background studies of newspapers were not relevant to their research. This opinion was more common amongst family and local historians. Often the nature of their research led them to regard information such as the political slant of the newspaper as unimportant:

> In the event of political reporting, the points of view of an editor are probably very much more important to the historian going down that line rather than the reporting of general local news. And as I have never gone down the political line I have never really had to question the ideology of an editor or even the pressures the editor may have been under by the owners of the paper. *(LL1)*

When a historian is only using the birth, deaths and marriage announcements, as was often the case with family historians, it may not be necessary to investigate the political slant of a newspaper. However, when using the newspaper for any other kind of information, research may be necessary. Selectivity and bias often extended to many different parts of the newspaper.

(iii) Adequate background knowledge

A number of historians felt their research interests were broad enough to encompass a general knowledge of the background to the newspapers they were using. Historians researching a locality in which they lived often knew many details about the local press, so felt that specific research was unnecessary. This attitude was common amongst local and family historians:

> My husband's family ... knew about it, they used to take the *Aberdare Leader* when they lived in Aberdare so they ... knew that that was the place to go. *(FF1)*

The political stance of many national newspapers is widely known and many researchers considered this factor when using a source. Similarly, many academic historians had an understanding of press history through their wider knowledge:

> I don't think there is any guide to political orientation of newspapers is there? It is something you get to know from general reading and understanding of the history of a particular country. *(AS6)*

Sometimes detailed research was unnecessary as a brief examination of the newspaper revealed details such as political stance:

> It is usually pretty obvious from looking at it. A lot of papers' political view are known vaguely. Such as the *Daily Telegraph* was Liberal for the best part of the nineteenth century. The *North Wales Observer* I looked at the other week was a Liberal paper. I think you just know that sort of thing. *(LL2)*

(iv) Background research not undertaken

Some historians did not specify or articulate reasons why they had not undertaken research on the newspaper. Arguably this may demonstrate a lack of rigour in their methods, and all historians should endeavour to discover some basic details about a newspaper before they use it in their research. It was not possible to say that one type of historian was less likely to undertake background research, although the majority of the quotes in this section and Section 4.6.3 originate from academic historians. Family historians were least likely to undertake this type of enquiry. However, the findings suggest this is related to the nature of their research, rather than their non-professional status. Family historians mainly use newspapers for the announcement columns and information such as the editor or political slant of a title is often not necessary. Consequently, it would be unfair to generalise about non-academic historians based on the evidence provided from family historians, who have recognisably different patterns of use. The nature of historical enquiry dictated the need to undertake background research and the type of information required. However, usually it is necessary to have at least a basic understanding of the newspaper's construction.

4.6.3 Types of background research

Those historians who investigated the background and construction of newspapers required a variety of different types of information. To have some kind of background knowledge of the newspaper is advantageous to all researchers, and the following areas were considered important for all types of historical enquiry: the geographic coverage of the newspaper (particularly local titles); a basic history and life-span; the

title's readership (perceived or actual) and the news production methods. A number of other areas were also considered important by respondents, although it was often dependent upon the area of historical enquiry. These included: the paper's political stance, its ownership, editorship and authorship.

(i) Geographic coverage

Investigating the geographic coverage of a newspaper is valuable, for it provides a guide to the area in which a title circulated. This can be particularly useful when using local newspapers. Often a large number of titles exist in an area, so this information helps to identify the most relevant titles. Knowledge of the circulation area of a paper, such as the *Western Mail* in the nineteenth century, helps a researcher decide if a title is likely to contain relevant information, and it can save many hours of fruitless searching. Different editions of the same newspaper can also exist, and several historians felt it wise to research this information at the start of a project.

(ii) History and coverage dates

If one newspaper title is used heavily it may be valuable to briefly trace its history. In particular the year a title was formed and, if it no longer exists, the year it closed are important. Several respondents recognised the value of identifying the coverage dates of a title. This type of research is straightforward to undertake and can save time:

> I have found out when it came into print. If you are looking for a particular item you'll often find that the newspaper wasn't around at that particular time. *(FL6)*

(iii) Circulation and readership

It is often important to have an understanding of the circulation and readership of newspapers, particularly when studying public opinion and reactions to events. One researcher considered readership as one of three important facts to establish before using a newspaper:

> I think ... those three factors, editorship, funding and readership, well the perceived readership at any rate, I would consider the most important things to establish before embarking on using the newspaper. *(AS1)*

However, establishing this type of information can be difficult. Circulation figures give an indication of the numbers of people reading a title. However, they are notoriously

unreliable and impart nothing about the types of people reading newspapers. The social make-up of the readership is usually closely related to the content of the newspaper, and newspapers often included material to appeal to a particular audience. Consequently 'working class' or Labour newspapers, which developed in the later nineteenth century, have a very different content to earlier newspapers that were aimed at a more middle class audience. The distinction exists today between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, which have very different audiences and tailor their material accordingly. By examining the content of a newspaper, a reasonable indication of its likely audience can be obtained. The price of a newspaper may be another indication of its perceived readership and the falling newspaper prices during the later nineteenth century are equated with titles targeting the lower classes. However, newspaper readership is a complex issue and a basic understanding is often sufficient for most research purposes.

(iv) News production methods

Knowledge of the methods used for producing news was recognised as being important by several historians. This type of information is usually gained from wider reading and an understanding of press history. For example, early local newspapers were largely derivative and often relied upon other newspapers for their information. In contrast, by the late nineteenth century news agencies had become an important source of information. Whereas, in the provinces, stereotyping[22] was used for many local titles. These developments affect the variety and content of newspapers and several historians were interested in researching this area to help evaluate the material they contain. One academic stated of eighteenth century newspapers:

> ... the way they gather information, how stories, narratives come together, where they have local correspondents, how their correspondence columns work is another thing, how they incorporate editorial matter. They are all very interesting questions as to the workings of the press. *(AP3)*

A greater understanding of the construction of newspaper titles can assist historians using the information they contain. The range of sources available providing news

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[22] Stereotyping was used to distribute partly printed newspaper sheets to towns.

information varied in different periods. Therefore, news reports from the later nineteenth century should be treated differently to those from the eighteenth century. For example, foreign news reports in the eighteenth century would often be taken from foreign newspapers. By the early twentieth century some national newspapers had overseas correspondents whereas others were reliant upon news agencies. Thus when evaluating foreign news reports, the origins of a news report and its author, are crucial when evaluating its reliability.

(v) Political stance

Many respondents sought to establish the political stance of a title before using it for their research. Academic historians often felt this was important, although one or two family and local historians also felt this was important. This form of investigation facilitated a comparison between newspapers from opposite ends of the political spectrum, to gain a more balanced view of a subject. One historian researching emigration from Wales, looked at several newspapers of different political viewpoints:

> If one particular paper is a Tory paper, for example, then let's have a look at what a Liberal one might say, even what a Labour one might say. They might be saying different things, in terms of the subject. *(AS7)*

Political stance was equally important to social and political historians. Nevertheless, the reporting of certain subjects, such as local elections, could be altered more dramatically depending on a paper's stance:

> I was reading different newspaper accounts about John Bachelor, a friend of the local Liberals, a slightly Chartist worthy in Cardiff and you wouldn't think that they were talking about the same person, in the opposing newspapers. He was devil to one and an absolute hero to the other. *(FF5)*

Other historians identified issues they believe to remain unaltered by political bias, for example culture. One historian said of nineteenth century South Wales local papers:

> The interesting thing is that, culturally, the events are written up in pretty much the same way. That is quite interesting, there is no political slant, no real slant from paper to paper. *(AS4)*

Some historians used newspaper directories or other guides to investigate the stance of a newspaper. This type of information is often easily accessible for national newspapers and the political stance of other titles is apparent. However, it can be problematic investigating the political stance of local newspapers, as it can vary with changes such as a new editor or owner. If a paper is short-lived, as many nineteenth century titles were, it can also be problematic:

> Anything that is around for more than a few months, its stance its pretty well known, and by the second quarter of the nineteenth century the majority of newspaper almost proclaimed their political identity much more loudly. *(AP3)*

Several historians felt it would be beneficial if this type of information was more widely available in reference works, because of its importance to their research, and difficulties associated with finding it.

(vi) Ownership

Ownership often largely dictates the political stance of a title, therefore several researchers investigated details about the owner, prior to using the newspaper. This group was again comprised mainly of academics, although one or two family historians did report this practice. The personal interests of an owner often provide the rationale behind the slant of a newspaper concerning a range of subjects. There has been a substantial body of work published examining more prominent national newspaper owners, such as Northcliffe and Beaverbrook.[23] Local newspaper ownership can be more difficult to trace. However, this information is often equally valuable to the historian, demonstrating why some material was excluded and biases existed:

> In this Pontypridd newspaper, it was obviously owned by a non-conformist, because of the way in which certain subjects were talked about. He was ... a very strong temperance man, which at the time was very important. But the problem you can get then is that certain stories were ignored. *(FL5)*

Newspaper owners were often important individuals, not just reporting on political events, but sometimes participating in and shaping them. Therefore, it can be important

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[23] See for example Richard Bourne, *Lords of Fleet Street : the Harmsworth dynasty.* (London : Unwin, 1990) and A. J. P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook,* (London : Hamilton, 1972)

to study these individuals, as this academic said of the founder of the *Freeman's Journal*:

> It was quite important knowing his background because he is very important in Irish politics in the first ten fifteen years and the *Censor,* which is the first newspaper he publishes and the *Freeman's Journal*, they are extremely important in the history of Irish Protestant patriotism. *(AP6)*

Again several respondents mentioned this information was often difficult to locate and it would be useful to have a guide to help them.

(vii) Editorship and authorship

Newspapers were often not owned and edited by the same person. However a further problem with research of this nature is that sometimes this information was purposefully concealed to avoid repercussions:

> With eighteenth century newspapers often you don't know who the editor is. You know who the proprietor is and the proprietor may edit or may not, so it is not always possible in the provincial press to know who is editing a particular title. *(AP3)*

Similarly, professional journalists came into existence during the nineteenth century and discovering the authorship of specific articles can be a difficult task. Researchers also commented that it was not easy to ascertain who had overall control over the content of the titles. Contemporary newspaper proprietors often keep a tight leash on their editors and journalists, but little is known about this aspect of press history. Therefore, some historians felt it was important to thoroughly investigate the people involved in a newspaper's production, as this historian said of early twentieth century Labour newspapers:

> Before I consulted the newspaper I would try to find out about that kind of source ... details about the organisation that formed the newspaper, the editor or who's publishing the newspaper. *(AP1)*

Reporting in nineteenth century newspapers was often anonymous, but some researchers attempted to identify individual journalists. For example, a media historian felt that the identity of radio critics helped to place opinion in context and establish whether an individual had particular reason to be biased in their review.

Although historians did not always undertake background research on newspapers, this study concluded that there were few instances where it would not be valuable. Historians complained this information was often not readily available and often required further research. However, when using newspapers, establishing certain basic facts about their history, geographic coverage and readership, is valuable. A more extensive study may also be necessary, although the need for this was related to the nature of the historical enquiry. For example, the accuracy of a political news report may be evaluated more easily when details such as the political slant or the identity of the editor are known. The findings suggested that both academic and non-academic historians needed some guidance in this area. The importance of background research needs to be highlighted to less experienced historians. However, some experienced professional historians were also not familiar with this type of investigation and the sources available.

4.7 Techniques for using newspapers

Historians' use of newspapers is problematic: as a source they can be time consuming to search and evaluating the quality of information they contain is a complex process. The findings suggest these difficulties may act as a barrier deterring some types of researchers from utilising newspapers. In the past some academic historians have been biased against using newspapers as a key primary source. Only those historians who have used newspapers were interviewed during this study, however, respondents often ranked newspapers below other sources in terms of their reliability. The research suggested that once historians began using newspapers, they recognised the value which they have. Furthermore, experienced newspaper users develop specific searching and evaluation techniques to overcome the associated difficulties. This chapter has highlighted the value of newspapers to encourage those historians who do not use them, and to recognise their importance. It also provides strategies to overcome some of the difficulties associated with both searching and using newspapers, based on the information seeking behaviour of historians.

4.7.1 The value of newspaper information

Newspapers provide information on a wide range of different subjects. News information covers the range of human experiences, from crime and politics to fashion and gossip. Advertisements provide a useful source for trade and economic history. Editorials and letters pages often provide valuable contemporary opinions. Newspaper information is incredibly varied in both its nature and its quality, and consequently, generalisations are difficult to make. However, this variety is also perhaps a source of great strength. Respondents found the following characteristics of newspaper information of particular value:

Uniqueness - newspapers often contain information that is unavailable in other sources, many local newspaper collections have been well preserved, whereas other sources have not always survived. Newspapers also record details about people who do not appear in other 'official' sources and contain information that is not found in other sources, such as contemporary opinion.

Detail - newspaper information can be highly detailed, which is partly because of the verbosity of the source. Local titles often report minor events that would otherwise remain forgotten. The prolific number of titles mean a highly detailed record of life in the localities is often available. Newspaper reports can also be more comprehensive than other sources. For example, court proceedings and minutes of meetings are often reported in more detail in the newspaper.

Subjectivity / Opinion-based - newspapers are particularly rich in opinion-based information. When examining a contemporary reaction to an event editorials and letters pages can be highly useful. Historians interested in opinion often have problems locating source material, as there is a paucity of surviving personal papers and diaries. This is particularly true for people from lower classes. Therefore, newspapers often contain the opinions of people which would otherwise go unrecorded.

Factual - the newspaper is also valuable for factual information, although often this information may also be available in other 'official' sources. However, by cross-referencing newspaper information with other sources, the newspaper may prove to be highly valuable. Moreover, where other sources are

unavailable the newspaper may be the only record of particular events so are extremely useful for this reason.

Selectivity - the particular stance of the editor or 'news values' of a title may mean some material is ignored while other information is given prominence. When reporting in different titles is compared this enables a more complete picture to emerge. It also increases the range of information contained within newspapers.

4.7.2 Types of historical research for which newspapers are most suitable

Social / Cultural history - newspapers are often used for social and cultural history which does not have an alternative and obvious body of source material. They are highly valuable, containing reports, features and adverts relating to recreational activities, sport, cinema, music etc. Attitudes towards cultural activities are contained in letters, editorials. Local newspapers can be highly detailed and weekly titles are often more useful for this type of research.

Intellectual history - local newspapers and newspapers produced by specific organisations can be particularly valuable, providing opinion and perceptions of current events in letters pages and editorials. Features may provide a discussion of issues.

Labour / working class history - many working class movements published their own newspapers which are invaluable for this type of enquiry. Newspapers also provide contemporary opinion on labour movements which may not appear in other records.

Economic / trade history - advertisements appearing in newspapers are a valuable source for this type of research. Newspapers also include prices at markets, and features and editorials relating to economic matters. Both local and national newspapers are useful depending on the focus of the research. Financial publications are also available.

Political history (international / national level) - national newspapers provide valuable news reports, minutes of political meetings, election results, and features on this subject. However, they will often need to be cross referenced with other sources.

Political history (local level) - local newspapers may be the only available source for the minutes of local political meetings, local election results and features. They also provide a useful indication of local public opinion on political issues.

Family history - basic factual information about families can be traced through births, deaths and marriage columns, this may need to be cross referenced with other sources. Obituaries are often useful, providing detailed information about family members. Significant events such as accidents or criminal activity that family members were involved in, may appear in news reports.

Media history - newspapers are an obvious source for press history, they also provide valuable comment and opinion being notoriously self-obsessed. They are also valuable for the history of other forms of media, containing both factual and opinion-based information. Television and radio listings appear in newspapers and reviews and news reports also contain useful information about the media.

4.7.3 Strategies for searching and using newspapers

Newspapers present the historian with a variety of information retrieval problems largely caused by the lack of readily available access points. Indexes are often not available and the sheer volume of information contained within a large number of titles can easily be overwhelming. Historical enquiries using newspapers are often extremely time consuming. Without specific date references, research can be tiring and only resulting in a small amount of relevant information. The inexperienced newspaper user often will not know how or where to begin the search, and may be deterred from using newspapers for this reason. However, more experienced newspaper users often develop a variety of techniques to assist them in their search. By examining the behaviour of these researchers it has been possible to outline a number of strategies that may assist less experienced newspaper users to exploit them more effectively. These are developed further in Chapter Six as recommended models for using newspapers, however at this stage some search strategies are summarised below.

(i) Before beginning the search

Researchers should:

- formulate research questions before beginning project to establish specifically what is required from newspapers;

- ensure as many date references as possible are available by first using other sources if available;
- establish the titles in existence in the chosen period and details such as the geographic coverage and a brief background to the newspapers;
- establish the availability and location of surviving newspaper runs;
- check whether any newspaper indexes are available.

(ii) Using indexes and cuttings files

If any indexes and cuttings files are available for the chosen titles, these will provide a valuable starting point for the research. However, newspaper indexes are frequently compiled by amateurs and volunteers. The index terms may not be standardised and the information can be unreliable. The only comprehensive index available is for *The Times,* although there are even occasional errors in this. If a local newspaper does not exist, it can be useful to use *The Times* index to identify dates of events or brief information. This material can then be cross referenced in the local press, which undoubtedly will be more detailed.

(iii) Searching for specific date references

Date references make newspaper research far more straightforward. Wherever possible other sources should be used to attempt to identify the date of an event as accurately as possible. Searching for an event when the exact date is known is relatively unproblematic. When only the month or year is known this can be more difficult and it is often useful to begin using a weekly newspaper to reduce the number of editions to be searched.

(iv) Searching a wider period for information (greater than 50 years)

This is the most difficult type of research to undertake and it is often advisable to narrow the time frame. Where indexes and cuttings files are available these can provide valuable assistance, although they may not always be reliable. Sampling techniques can also be useful when searching across a long period, to avoid the need to consult every publication. Selecting particular months each year will reduce the volume of material to be examined. It can also be useful to familiarise oneself with the format and layout of a newspaper to facilitating scanning. This will avoid the need to examine pages

containing irrelevant information. However, across a long period, the format of the paper may alter dramatically so care should be taken.

When searching in this way it is advisable to use only one or two titles, as otherwise the research could become overwhelming. If local newspapers are used, weekly titles rather than dailies are more time efficient, although as relevant material is found, the daily newspapers may be cross referenced for more detail. Serendipity can be an important feature in this type of newspaper research. It is possible to find relevant material with random searches, although the work will be time consuming and tiring. More experienced newspaper users learn to scan newspapers quickly. However, this can be difficult when using microfilmed titles. Therefore, if only microfilmed titles are available, it may not be wise to attempt this type of research.

(v) Searching a more narrow time period (less than 50 years)

This technique is far easier than searching a longer run of newspapers, and it should be possible to search several titles more thoroughly. Again sampling techniques are highly advisable to reduce the quantity of information. Fifty years of a run of newspapers is still a large amount of information. It is also useful to become familiar with the layout of the newspaper. This may remain fairly static for the period and will avoid the need to examine pages containing irrelevant information. It should also be considered that this type of research will be more time-consuming and tiring if microfilmed newspapers are used.

(vi) Extracting information from newspapers

The following points are offered as a practical guide:

- always record the date, edition, page and column numbers to cite any information used and help locate material again if necessary;
- take photocopies of relevant material if possible;
- if photocopying is not possible make full notes of information;
- make notes of any relevant 'snippets' of information found by chance so these can be referred back to at a later date.

(vii) Using newspaper information

Once the information has been gathered from newspaper sources, there are a number of ways the historian can guard against inaccuracies and bias in the source. Depending on the nature of the enquiry, a variety of techniques may be appropriate in order to evaluate the information.

Basic background research about the newspaper should ideally be undertaken before beginning the research. For all types of research the following details about the newspaper will be useful: a brief history and lifespan, geographic coverage, the readership, and the source of the information in the newspaper e.g. stories from news agencies, use of corespondents. The extent to which this is undertaken is related to the research project and the importance of the newspaper as a source. For example, where newspapers are the only source, these details should be researched thoroughly, whereas when it is supplementing other information, they are less important.

More detailed background research may be required if newspapers are the main source for a project. Furthermore, when the newspaper is the only source available containing the information, more detailed research may be necessary. Certain subjects also necessitate a greater understanding of the newspaper to assess its bias. The obvious example is political history where details such as the political stance of the paper and information about the owner or editor are important. The authorship of articles and letters can also be important.

When other sources exist it is useful to cross reference the information found in newspapers to assess its accuracy. Many historians expressed an opinion that there was a hierarchy of sources and that newspapers were often less reliable than other source. However, it is not always the case that official sources, such as parliamentary proceedings, are more accurate. Consideration should be given when conflicting information is found, and if background research has not already been undertaken, this may need to be undertaken at this stage.

If newspapers are the only source for a particular subject it is often possible to cross reference the material with other newspapers. The enormous number of titles in existence means there is rarely an instance where other titles cannot be found. This can be particularly useful when the reporting in two rival newspapers of opposing political persuasions is compared.

4.8 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated the value of newspapers in historical research. They are used by a variety of types of historians. The findings indicate that the nature of historical research being undertaken, rather than the professional status of the historian, is closely related to the perceived and actual value of newspapers. The subject of enquiry also affects the types of newspapers used, and the importance of the various components of the paper. Furthermore, their importance is attributed to the wide range of detailed information which they contain, often unavailable elsewhere.

Chapter 5

Newspapers in the library: practicalities and the experiences of historians

5.1 Overview

Newspapers are a problematic library resource. Through case studies of newspaper collections in Wales, Chapter Three indicated that policies and strategies in this area are often not formalised. The study also suggested that library policies often leave users unable to fully exploit this valuable resource. User studies of newspaper collections are rare. Chapter One demonstrated that many of the documented problems that users experience are not based upon empirical evidence. Thus, this study sought to examine the attitudes and experiences of historians and to identify the problems associated with undertaking historical research at newspaper collections. This chapter examines the techniques for locating newspapers and problems associated with these activities. It investigates the use of different types of libraries and archives that hold newspaper collections and the problems experienced by historians associated with the storage and preservation techniques employed by libraries. The impact of newspaper format upon the work of the historian is investigated, as are the attitudes of historians towards electronic newspapers and the opportunities and problems new technology may bring to their work.

When examined together, the results from both this chapter and Chapter Four were used to formulate guidelines for newspaper collections (see Chapter Six, Section 6.2.2 (i)) and offer wider recommendations for policy makers at a national level (See Chapter Six, Section 6.2.3). Both the guidelines and recommendations were based on the study of historians. However, policy changes require co-operation at a national and local level and may take some time to implement. Thus, in the meanwhile, a variety of strategies were devised for the consideration of historians, to enable the more effective exploitation of newspaper collections. (See Chapter Six, Section 6.2.1)

5.2 Locating newspaper collections and bibliographic control

The literature suggested that in the past bibliographic control of newspapers has been problematic, with little standardisation. More recently the NEWSPLAN project has contributed towards addressing these difficulties. However, its contribution has not been explored empirically. Consequently, this study investigated the methods employed by historians to identify and locate newspapers, the problems associated with this

activity and the impact of the NEWSPLAN project. The results suggest a number of techniques based on those used by more experienced newspaper users, to assist historians when locating and identifying titles. Nevertheless, the findings conclude that bibliographic control in local collections requires improvement and that the admirable work of NEWSPLAN requires increased publicity.

5.2.1 Methods used to identify / locate newspapers

The interviews investigated the methods used to identify and locate newspapers, to evaluate current bibliographic control. This part of the study also led to the formulation of guidelines for historians. The findings suggest that historians used a variety of methods to locate newspaper titles, although it was not assumed all historians undertook research in a systematic way. Nevertheless, identifying the existence and location of titles was often a key early stage in a research project. Library catalogues, the reports of the NEWSPLAN project and other guides to locating newspapers all provided some assistance. However, staff at institutions and more experienced newspaper users were often of greater assistance to the majority of respondents. These findings suggest that cataloguing and guides to locate newspapers are often less than satisfactory and although NEWSPLAN has made a recognisable contribution towards bibliographic control, many historians were unaware of its existence.

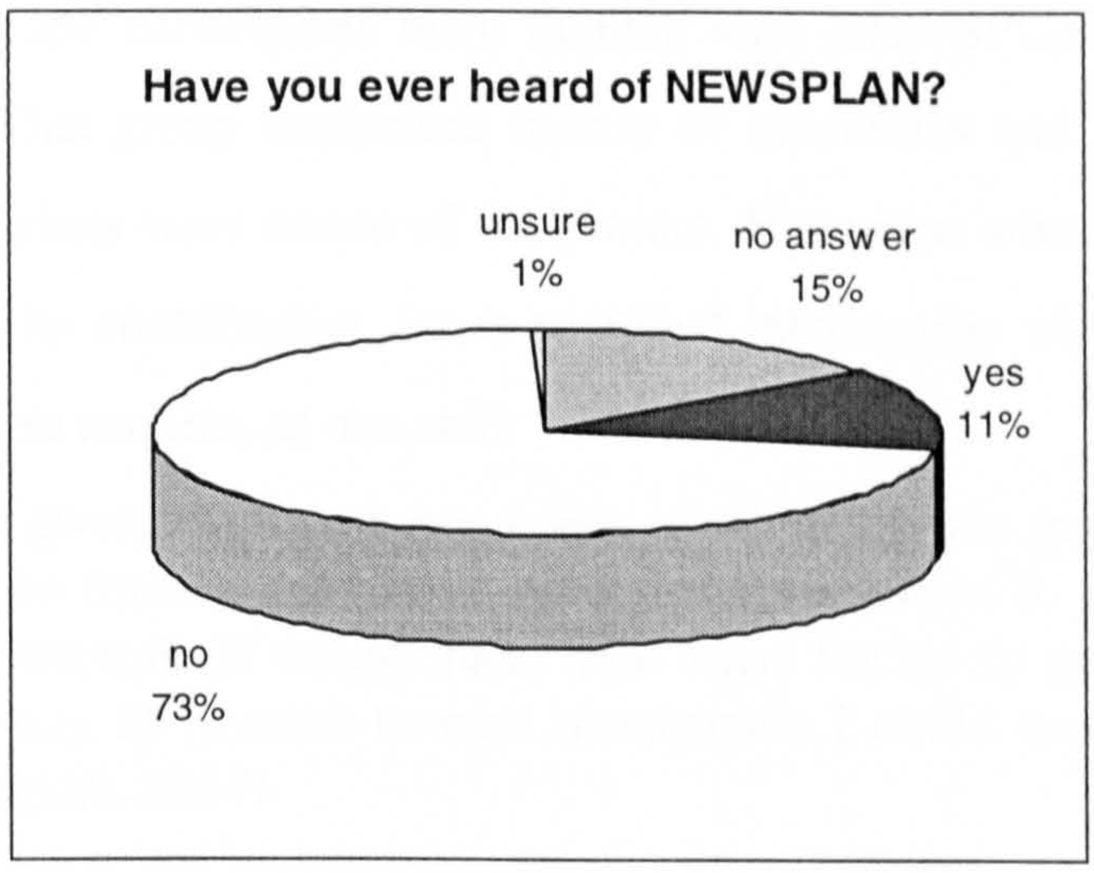
(i) Library catalogues

Few interview participants found library catalogues to be of value for newspaper enquiries. These sources were frequently found to have insufficient detail and were not widely available outside the institution in question. The catalogue of the BLNL proved to be an exception, being both detailed and widely available in libraries. Additionally some historians found the NLW catalogue to be useful, although this is only available in the Library. Both the BLNL and the NLW were often assumed to have comprehensive collections and usually served as a 'last resort' for researchers in Wales, because of the need to travel to these locations. Consequently, it was important that information about holdings in local collections was available and knowing a title was held in London or Aberystwyth was often not entirely useful.

(ii) NEWSPLAN

The bibliographic control of newspapers was recognised as a problem by the British Library in the late 1970s. The NEWSPLAN project was partly launched to tackle this problem and its contribution towards this field has been discussed in Chapter One.[1] Although the project's primary purpose was newspaper preservation, the NEWSPLAN reports provide a guide to the locations of newspapers. Both the questionnaire and the interviews investigated the impact of this project upon, and its value to, historians. Figure 10 demonstrates that the project has made a limited impact to date upon the work of historians, with almost three quarters of all respondents unaware of its existence.

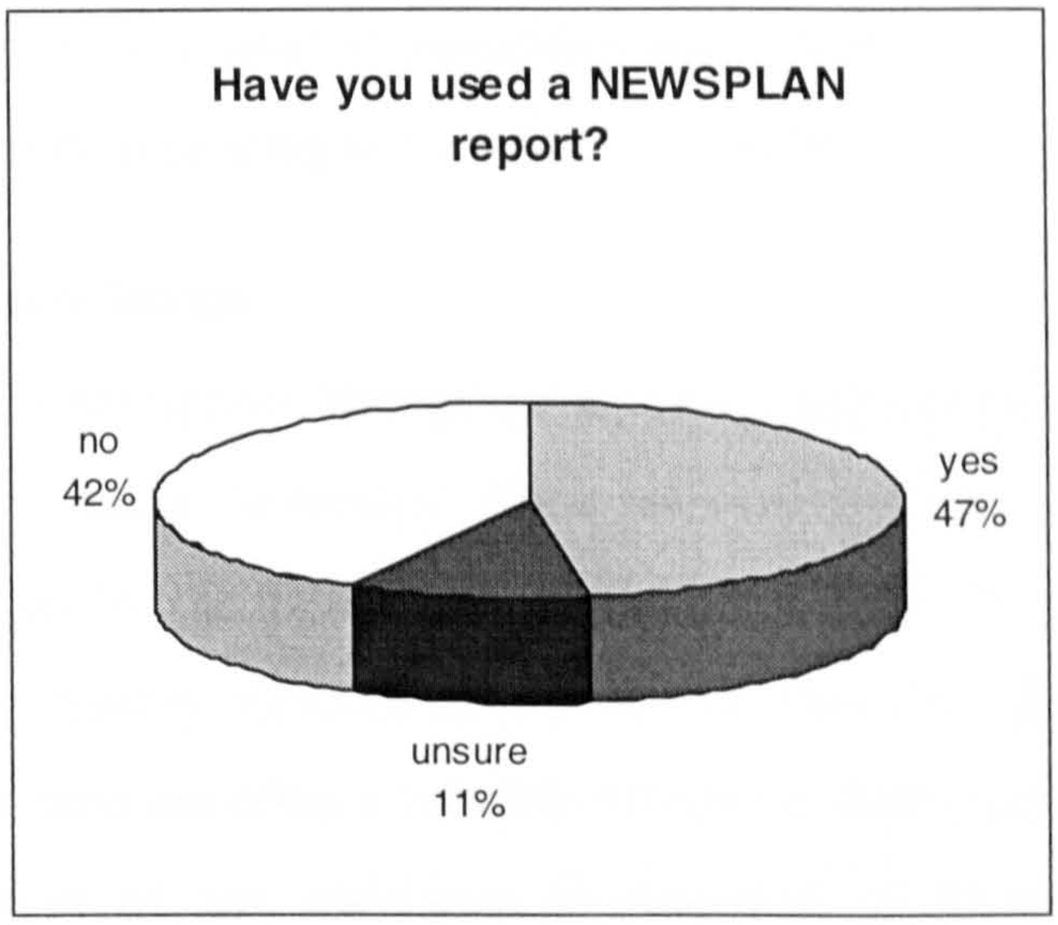
Figure 10: Questionnaire respondents awareness of the NEWSPLAN project



The questionnaire asked the small number of respondents who were familiar with the project, if they had made use of any of the reports. Figure 11 demonstrates that almost 50% of this group had used a report, mainly for the purpose of assisting them in locating copies of newspapers. It was concluded that those survey respondents aware of NEWSPLAN found it to be of value.

[1] See Section 1.4.2 (v)

Figure 11: Percentage number of survey respondents who had used a NEWSPLAN report



A number of interview participants were familiar with NEWSPLAN and several had used the reports. This group comprised mainly of academics and only a few of the other types of historians were aware of the project. Historians who were aware of the project recognised its contribution, for it provided information which previously had been more difficult to acquire, as one said:

> ... it gives you a very good idea of where certain papers can be found, and I have used that information to plan my research. It would make little sense for me to go all the way to London to read newspapers I could read at Newport. *(AS8)*

Information on missing titles in runs of newspapers is contained in the NEWSPLAN reports and this is of value:

> NEWSPLAN is immensely helpful, I found. It lets you know where full sets or partial sets can be found and how much is contained. *(OO1)*

Several local and family historians were unfamiliar with the name NEWSPLAN, however they mentioned using a guide to newspapers at the NLW. It seems likely that this was the Report for Wales:

> You know they have got a list of newspapers ... there is somebody at the National Library who has published a list of newspapers, haven't they? *(LL3)*

The study concluded that NEWSPLAN could be a valuable research tool for historians, however the low level of awareness meant that it had made only a limited impact on the information seeking behaviour of the group.

(iii) Specialist newspaper listings

A range of specialist newspaper listings are available and several historians had used these publications. Family historians often mentioned using the guide to local newspapers produced by the Federation of Family History Societies.[2] Additionally, some local or family history societies have produced their own guide to the resources in their locality and these are often a valuable source for their members:

> As part of our assistance to members of Glamorgan Family History Society, years ago one of our members in consultation with the Local Studies Librarian produced two pages of A4 with a basic list of material which they have got there of value to family historians, they produced a list of what newspapers they have got and the dates they had got. *(FL4)*

Similarly library authorities also occasionally produce a checklist of their newspaper holdings, such as one produced in the late 1970s by Dyfed County Council.[3] Several other guides to more specific newspaper titles were cited by historians, for example the one version of the *English Short Title Catalogue* was mentioned as a useful source for many early news pamphlets[4] and the *Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals* contains information on Labour newspapers.[5] None of the group mentioned using the *Bibliography of British Newspapers,*[6] a project launched around the same time as NEWSPLAN. However, this may be because only a small number of volumes have been produced to date and a Welsh edition is unavailable. No other specialist listings were mentioned as being important.

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[2] Jeremy Gibson, *Local newspapers 1750-1920, England and Wales, Channel Islands, Isle of Man : a select location list,* (Birmingham : Federation of Family History Societies, 1987)
[3] Dyfed County Council. Archives Department, *A Guide to Local Newspapers in Dyfed,* (Carmarthen: Dyfed County Council, 1978)
[4] Carolyn Nelson and Matthew Seccombe, *British Newspapers and Periodicals, 1641-1700 : a short-title catalogue of serials printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, and British America : with a checklist of serials printed 1701-March 1702 and chronological, geographical, foreign language, subject, publisher, and editor indexes, 1641-1702,* (New York : Modern Language Association of America, 1987)
[5] Royden Harrison, Robert Duncan and Gillian B. Woolven, *The Warwick Guide to British Labour Periodicals, 1790-1970 : a check list,* (Hassocks : Harvester Press, 1977)
[6]This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter One, Section 1.4.2 (iii)

(iv) Library staff

Staff at libraries and other institutions were found to provide an invaluable source of information relating to the extent and limitations of their respective newspaper collection:

> I have got to know roughly what they have got and also the staff have got to know where things are, which has helped a great deal obviously, because if you don't know and they don't know then it is difficult. *(FL5)*

Furthermore, a number of researchers relied heavily on the staff and they would be the first port of call for information about the collection. Some historians felt that members of staff with a detailed knowledge of the newspapers, were often far more useful than any of the locating tools available:

> The Reference Librarian ... is always so helpful and co-operative. For instance, somebody has taken the Rebecca papers from the *Journal*, for that year aren't there, but she got [them]. I don't know whether she sent to Colindale to replace them, or whether she got the *Welshman* in for those years. *(LL3)*

(v) Other newspaper users

More experienced newspaper users could provide a valuable source of information when locating newspaper collections. Sometimes personal contact with an individual was initiated, while other times references and the bibliography of a published piece of work provided a valuable indication of the sources and locations available:

> I think I had seen a reference in somebody else's thesis or secondary material to the use of the *Freeman's Journal* from the National Library of Ireland, so that is probably where I got that information from. *(AP6)*

The notion of an 'interchange of ideas' amongst researchers in similar fields was mentioned by several historians. During the interviews a well-defined network of contacts amongst family and local historians was apparent in several of the towns visited:

> There is an interchange of ideas isn't there? If you go to the archives or the records office there is a circle of researchers who almost know each other on a friendly basis because of their interest in family history societies or whichever history societies in the area. *(LL1)*

This also occurs amongst academics working in similar fields and can be a valuable way for less experienced researchers to gain an understanding of the source material.

(vi) No method

Historical research is not always a carefully planned affair and some of the methods for locating newspapers cited were haphazard and relied somewhat on chance. A number of respondents assumed that the NLW or the BLNL at Colindale have the most comprehensive collection and would visit on this basis. However, often these historians were based in close proximity to these locations:

> I assumed Colindale had everything and they have had everything I have wanted so far... I mean the advantage of being near London was I knew Colindale would have everything and so I would go straight there. *(AS2)*

Nevertheless, one historian recounted a research horror story that serves as a word of warning to others. Assuming that the BLNL was the place to consult newspapers, the researcher spent a considerable period of time, and money, based in London, using the collection. Towards the end of the research however, he made the discovery that copies of a large part of the collection he had been working on had been deposited in a local Welsh university library and his stay in London had been quite unnecessary.

5.2.2 Problems locating newspaper collections

Part of the questionnaire sought to examine the problems associated with physical access to newspaper collections.[7] Somewhat surprisingly, only a small number of individuals mentioned problems of bibliographic control or locating newspapers (see Table 5). The majority of this group were not familiar with the NEWSPLAN project. One respondent commented that he had used a NEWSPLAN report and had found it to be incorrect. However, this question proved to be an ineffective way of evaluating bibliographic control, as most of the responses related to the location of the collection. Thus, this issue was explored in greater detail in the interviews.

(i) Inaccurate information

The information in newspaper listings was sometimes found to be inaccurate, causing problems for some respondents. A number of those who had used the NEWSPLAN

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[7] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire, Question 13 (a)

report for Wales found inaccurate information. This was often due to collections updating their holdings since the publication of the report, as this historian said:

> ... perhaps [NEWSPLAN] needs updating annually or [requires] a supplement list. For us here in Cardiff there are some here; the last thing you want to do is go all the way to somewhere like Aberystwyth and then find it is not there. Or that they are actually filming it at the time, which means you can't get [access] to it at the time. *(AS7)*

Nevertheless, sometimes genuine errors had been found in NEWSPLAN which made some researchers reluctant to rely upon it:

> A run of one of the Cardiff newspapers, that NEWSPLAN said Cardiff library had the whole run of. They don't have it, a vital period was missing ... I am very wary to use NEWSPLAN. If it has got inaccuracies in one place, has it got more inaccuracies? *(FL5)*

Similarly some library catalogues were not always clear on their holdings:

> There were a few problems at that point because the [catalogue] that I was looking at was not as comprehensive as the one that the staff had access to. Very often someone had to actually get down to the stacks to actually check whether they had a particular volume. *(AS3)*

Furthermore, although staff were usually very helpful, they occasionally gave inaccurate information:

> That's a problem I come across where staff just don't know the collections. It would be nice if that was all on computer, it used to be a huge massive card index. *(FL5)*

Additionally several researchers mentioned that the unhelpful attitude of members of staff at various libraries and institutions could hinder them when locating copies. Although generally staff were agreed to be helpful.

(ii) Insufficient information

Tools to assist in the locating of titles are not always available and cataloguing of newspaper collections is often not undertaken by libraries and other institutions. Where these are available the catalogue may not be comprehensive or available outside the

institution. This problem was mentioned by several respondents in respect of the newspaper catalogue at the NLW:

> The catalogue outside the National Library of Wales is very difficult to access. There isn't one, whereas in the British Library there is ... a vast set of catalogues. *(FL5)*

Other libraries were also mentioned as not having sufficiently detailed catalogues, which left researchers dependent upon the knowledge of the staff at the institution. This caused a variety of problems, particularly when knowledgeable staff retired or left:

> The librarians both know what they have got, but they are elderly. Are they going to be able to pass that information on? Have they left that information so that someone following on can take over? It is one of my fears, this is ... because you rely on people and the catalogue. *(FL5)*

Similarly some interviewees were not aware of the existence of guides to assist them in locating titles:

> It's more publicity or making potential users aware of what is where. This was the big problem I think. I want to look at a newspaper on such and such material, where do I go? Do I go to Colindale, traipse all the way to Colindale? It would be nice to have a directory, I don't know - one might exist. *(AS1)*

This section concluded that despite initiatives such as NEWSPLAN, bibliographic control of newspaper collections was still inadequate. Guides and listings that are available need to be updated more regularly and checked for accuracy. They also need to be more widely available to all types of historians. Not all the responsibility lies with the libraries however. When identifying and locating newspapers historians would be well advised to consult an experienced newspaper user or librarian before commencing the research. They should also check with the libraries to ensure holding information is accurate. More detailed guidance in this area is provided in Chapter Six.

5.3 Use of Newspaper Collections

This section examines the use of various types of newspaper collections and their associated problems. The questionnaire returns provided quantitative data about the most frequently used sites for consulting newspapers.[8] Meanwhile the interviews highlighted reasons why these locations were used and any particular difficulties experienced.[9] This enabled the formulation of recommendations to facilitate the effective use of collections at different locations, which are presented in Chapter Six.

5.3.1 Use of different newspaper collections

The questionnaire examined the various locations visited by researchers to use newspaper collections and the number of times they had used them in the proceeding year. The main newspaper repositories were identified as: the BLNL at Colindale, the NLW, County Record Offices, Public Libraries, newspaper office libraries, private collections and an 'other' category for validation. Figure 12 represents the percentage of respondents who specified that they had used the collection at least once in the proceeding year, those who had not used the collection and those who did not answer the question. It was not assumed that those respondents who did not answer the question, did not use a particular location.

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[8] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 11.

[9] See Appendix 5. Interview Guide. Section 3, Questions 2, 4, 5 and 6

Figure 12: The use of different types of newspaper collections

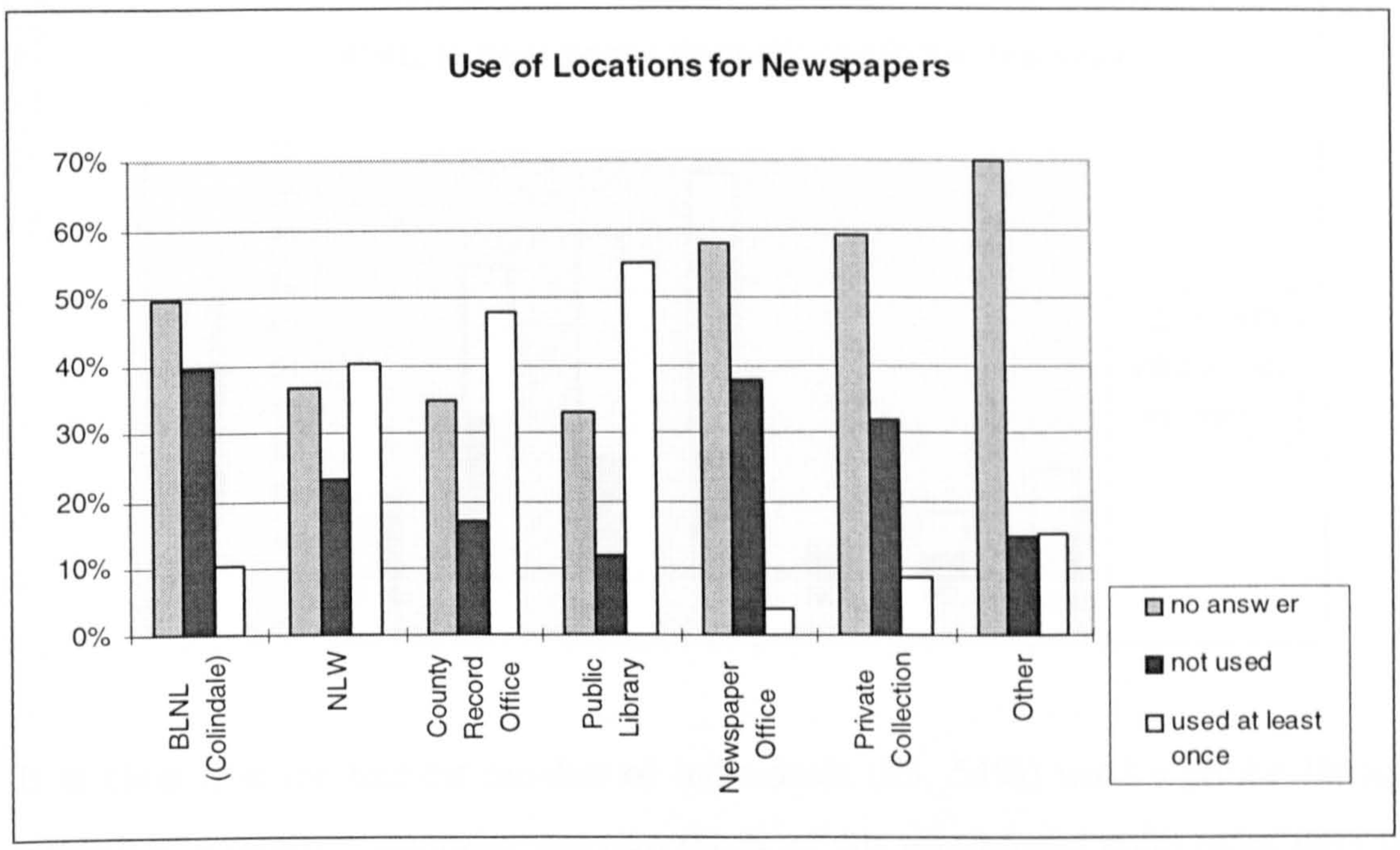

Figure 12 demonstrates the wide range of locations used by historians. Public Libraries, (used by 55% of all respondents) County Record Offices (48%) and the NLW (40%) were ranked as the top three locations. The least used location was newspaper office libraries which are often unavailable to researchers. Private collections were not heavily used either, possibly for similar reasons. Unsurprisingly, few historians had used the BLNL (11%), possibly due to its location in London. The 'other' locations used included various university libraries and several respondents (often family historians) stated that they had personal collections of newspapers or newspaper cuttings.

The survey also asked respondents how many times in the proceeding year they had visited a particular location, to facilitate a comparison between locations used frequently and those used only occasionally.[10] Figure 13 shows the number of respondents using each collection in the last year and the bar is divided to indicate the frequency of visits.

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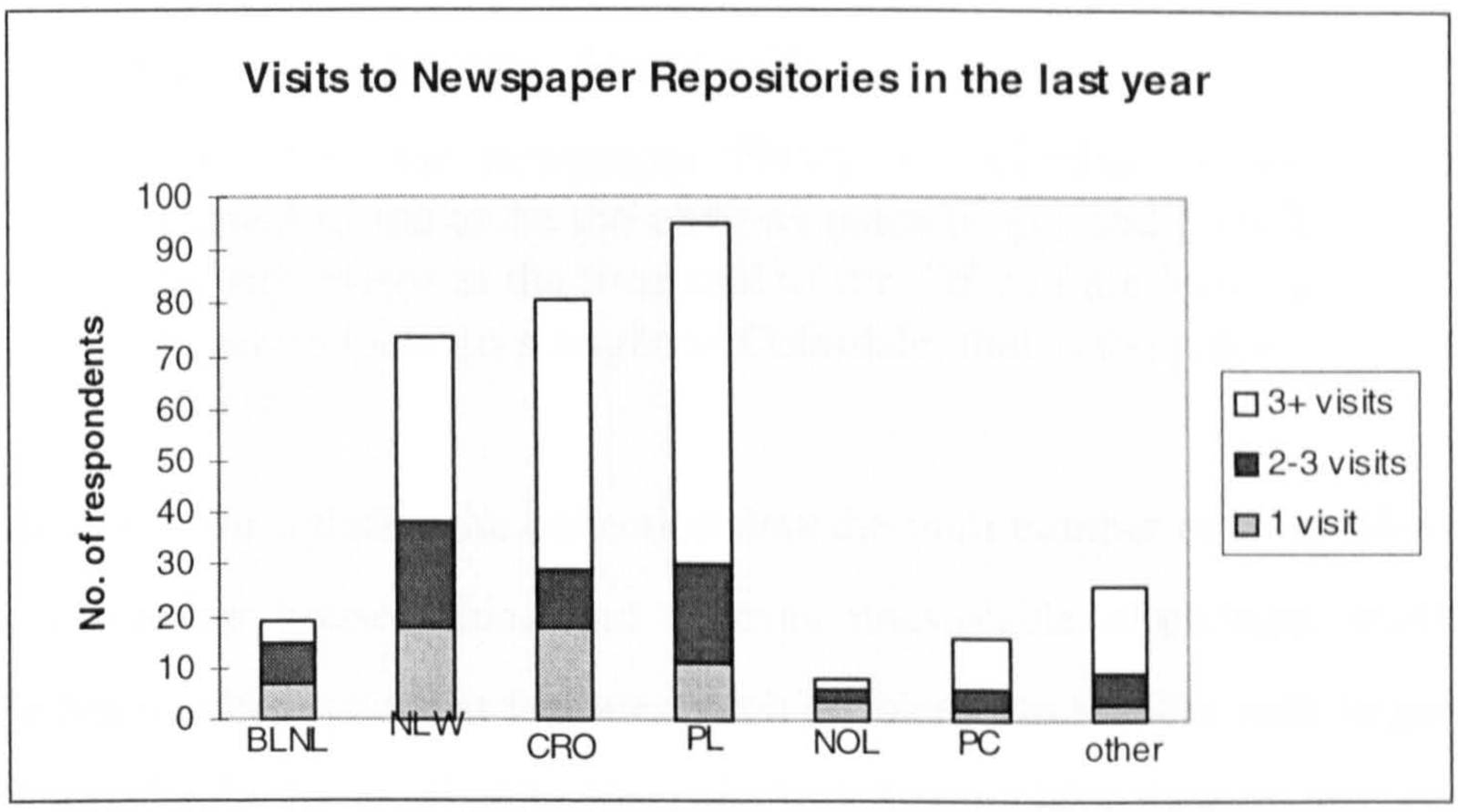
[10] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 11.

Figure 13: Frequency of visits to newspaper collections



It is clear that the highest number of individuals (93, 54%) used a public library to consult newspaper collections and two thirds of this group used them more than three times in a year. A high number of respondents (71, 42%) consult newspaper collections at a county record office with over half visiting more than three times in the year. In comparison, 68 respondents (40%) have used the NLW in the last year, with 32 (18%) using it more than three times. Perhaps surprisingly only 18 respondents (11%) had used the BLNL in the proceeding year; it houses one of the greatest newspaper collections in the world. Many claimed that again the time and expense of travelling to London was too great to justify. The findings suggested that ease of access to a collection was an important factor when historians were using newspapers. This was investigated further in the interviews.

5.3.2 Value of different collections

The main types of institutions holding newspapers were categorised for the purpose of the questionnaire. However, it was felt that more detail was required about why particular locations were used and the problems associated with them. Consequently, during the interviews the value of the different types of collection was discussed.

(i) British Library Newspaper Library

Despite the small percentage of respondents using the BLNL, the interviews revealed that all participants were familiar with this extensive collection. The majority of actual

users were often academics or other historians undertaking research as a full-time occupation, rather than as a hobby. As one said:

> I went to the newspaper library at Colindale, which seemed to me to be the obvious place to go, and I think my supervisor at the time said to me, "if you are looking at newspapers go straight to Colindale, that is the place". (AS1)

The main reason for utilising the collection was the high number of available titles, but also the collection houses titles and indexes unavailable elsewhere. Furthermore, Colindale has modern specialist facilities, such as microfilm readers with larger screens designed specifically for reading newspapers, which many historians appreciated:

> I prefer to go to Colindale [rather than] the local library because you can actually use the newspapers, at least you could the last time I went, but they were putting more and more on film. And they have also got a lot of indexes there, which you can use. I also prefer the readers at Colindale. *(FL3)*

As mentioned above, the majority of historians had not used Colindale however, largely because of the library's location in London:

> I promised myself that one of these days I will go to the Colindale newspaper library in London, but I don't know if I will ever get there. *(FL4)*

Nevertheless, many respondents expressed a desire to visit the Newspaper Library in the future. Its value was widely recognised for those historians with the time and money to visit the collection. Furthermore, for historians using particularly rare or specialist collection, a visit to Colindale might be unavoidable.

(ii) The National Library of Wales

The NLW was quite naturally used by a large number of the interview participants. A considerable number of the sample population were researching an aspect of Welsh history. When large numbers of newspapers from different parts of Wales were required, the NLW was often the most convenient location. Although several interviewees were based in Aberystwyth, others were prepared to travel some distance to use the resources. Many historians felt the collection ought to be based in Wales, and were pleased that they did not have to travel to London for these titles. The

general feeling towards the National Library's collection seemed to be positive, as one historian said:

> We are very lucky in Wales, rather than in England where we'd be travelling about the different counties. Oh I think the library in Aberystwyth is just fantastic, there is no other word for it. *(FF1)*

(iii) Public libraries

Public libraries were the most important location cited during the interviews, with almost every respondent mentioning visiting at least one. It was not possible to say that one type of historian utilised public libraries more frequently than others. Many historians had experience of using several different public libraries, and provided a useful comparison between different sites. Respondents commented that the number of titles and facilities available varied considerably, as this historian said:

> I have used Newport reference library, I have used Cardiff Central Reference Library, upstairs and downstairs, because it varies. And I have used Brecon library. *(FF6)*

Certain large libraries, such as Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, were mentioned more frequently during the interviews, as having valuable resources:

> [Swansea] is absolutely amazing. You only have about four newspapers that are actually on film. The rest are all unbound editions ... ask for any newspaper from any period and they will go and get you the bundle of newspapers. *(FL5)*

The same historian contrasted two large libraries, saying:

> Newport library ... have got a very good system whereby they do have a proper catalogue and you access it and ... the most common ones at least are readily available. This is the difference between Cardiff and Newport. *(FL5)*

Other smaller libraries were also used heavily, in particular, Carmarthen was mentioned as housing a particularly impressive newspaper collection, by respondents based both in the town and further afield:

> I have specifically used the town library in Carmarthen, which has a very very good set of newspapers on microfiche. *(AS4)*

Local libraries were particularly valuable because of their accessibility to historians. They also frequently contain titles unavailable elsewhere:

> I did have to go down to the central library in Cardiff to do some research there for some of the Cardiff

> newspapers which they didn't have in the National Library. *(AS3)*

(iv) County record offices

Newspapers are also held in county record offices and many historians mentioned visiting various archives to use collections. No specific policies relate to the collection of newspapers by Welsh Record Offices, therefore the collections vary considerably. Some historians preferred to be able to consult newspapers from the county in one location, while others were happy to visit different libraries. In accordance with the questionnaire results, these were cited less frequently than the National Library and public libraries, however they were an important location. Their use by family and local historians was more apparent, although they were important to academics as well:

> I have used archive offices all over Wales, Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, Merthyr, Pembrokeshire, Haverfordwest and in North Wales as well. *(AS4)*

No particular comments were mentioned in relation to specific problems at record offices, although there often appeared to be some confusion over whether the record office or the public library was responsible for newspaper collection.

(v) Newspaper offices

Newspaper offices often hold complete runs of their publications and although not public collections, sometimes they are available to researchers. There seemed to be little knowledge about their availability, which may have led them to be used infrequently. However, a small number of interview participants had used this type of collection:

> We went to the actual newspaper itself, the head office of the paper and they had got more or less a complete run. *(FL1)*

They often have the advantage of housing a complete run of their publication. Furthermore, the newspaper office usually collect all regional editions of a newspaper as part of their legal obligation.

(vi) Other locations

Only 16 percent of questionnaire respondents had mentioned using other type of collections. These included academic libraries, which were used in the main by academic historians, collections overseas, again used by academic historians, and the

main British Library collection, which was cited by a variety of respondents. However, the results concurred with the survey findings and public libraries were clearly the most heavily used type of collection. The convenience of public libraries was clearly an important consideration, influencing the use of different collections.

5.3.3 Problems concerning the location of newspaper collections

Section 5.3.2 suggested that remote locations and incomplete collections may be problematic for historians. This issue was investigated as part of the questionnaire[11] and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Problems associated with access to newspaper collections

CATEGORY	Number of Citations
Travel problems / distance to collection	43
Incomplete collection / missing pages	23
Problems using / booking microfilm readers	11
Lack of time / Inappropriate opening hours	8
Problems locating collections / bibliographic control	4
Total Number of Problems	**89**
No problems	30

The survey confirmed that travelling to collections caused greatest difficulties, with 43 respondents mentioning this problem. The complaints included the fact that the BLNL is based in London, and the NLW is in Aberystwyth. Researchers also found it inconvenient when collections were housed at central county repositories rather than local libraries. The problem of 'unsuitable location' was provided as an example to clarify the meaning of the question, and possibly, as with other examples used in the

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[11] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 13 (a).

survey, it could have influenced the results. However, it does not invalidate the results, as many respondents did not use the exact term and many other problems were also listed.

Incomplete collections were also found to cause problems to historians. Survey respondents complained that runs of local newspapers were often fragmented in Wales, frequently being dispersed between the NLW, county record offices and public libraries. Invariably the only complete collection of a sought title was housed at Colindale, which created difficulties of its own. Other difficulties included the limited numbers of microfilm readers at some repositories, and general problems of access to the source in this format. Another problem cited was the lack of time and unsuitable opening hours of the collection. These two problems were often exacerbated when respondents lived a considerable distance from the collection.

(i) Place of collection

More detailed problems concerning the location of newspapers were identified from the interview data. The interview data mirrored patterns observed in the questionnaire, with the location of collections being cited most frequently. In particular, the collections at the BLNL and the NLW created difficulties for researchers based elsewhere, although varying degrees of difficulty were observed. For some, locations such as these were avoided due to their inaccessibility and the fact that material could be accessed in local collections:

> ... it is obviously easier for me to go up to Merthyr to see them, than it is for me to go to Aberystwyth. It is an hour on the train as opposed to a two and a half hour drive, so I have gone to places like Merthyr, because it is just easier to go there, to see the ones they have got there, [rather] than to go up to Aberystwyth or to Colindale. *(AS7)*

Other researchers found that the material they required was only held at one location, and consequently travel to London or Aberystwyth was unavoidable. Therefore, they often combined their visit with other research, which inevitably reduced the amount of time spent on newspapers, as this academic historian stated:

> When I go to London, because it is further and more expensive I try to combine a whole lot of other things so

> I'll probably be using newspapers at some time, but some of the other time I may be spending looking at recent publications. *(AP4)*

Local and family historians voiced more complaints about the expense incurred travelling to collections. This group is invariably undertaking research in their own time and using private funds, so this claim is perhaps unsurprising:

> Not everybody wants to go to the Public Records Office or the British Library or other institutions, I know that lots of people do. But it can swallow up an awful lot of money if you are doing it out of a general [interest in] historical knowledge, rather than a commercial attitude where there may be publications or books at the end of the research. *(LL1)*

Fewer academic historians mentioned this problem, however there were some comments, in particular one from a research student who found travel expensive:

> ... to stay in Aberystwyth, to stay in the University Halls or something like that, I just couldn't do that, especially not for a long time. So that is a pain ... that information is in the library and they don't share the knowledge. *(AS5)*

Perhaps of greater significance was the impact the location of collections had on the work of the historian. This academic historian demonstrated how the availability and accessibility of newspaper collections had, in part, dictated the type of research he undertook, because he was now based in North Wales:

> I go to London specifically to work at Colindale, or a week here and there, but I can't do big projects that rely largely on that kind of source material. I can only do projects in which that kind of material is an aspect in smaller stuff. I will go to Manchester to look at newspapers there and I will look at some stuff in Aberystwyth. *(AP1)*

This point was particularly significant, clearly demonstrating how the storage and management of newspapers in libraries impacts upon the work of the historian.

(ii) Incomplete holdings

The interviews also found that incomplete collections inconvenienced historians, with editions, volumes or even pages missing from runs affecting the research progress. At

locations such as public libraries, it was not uncommon for volumes to be missing from runs. This problem varied from being mildly frustrating for some historians, who could manage without a complete run, to extremely inconvenient to others, requiring a visit to Colindale or another collection. This problem was cited by all types of historians:

> ... in the listings they will say they have got a lot of newspapers, and it is in such and such Record Office and covers such and such dates and you get there and there are gaps all the way through it. *(FF5)*

Another historian said:

> I think the most problematic core thing still is ... so many gaps in collections, like this business of the *North Wales Observer* for 1892 which the National Library doesn't have. I have to wait until I go to Bangor to look at it. *(LL2)*

Missing pages was another equally frustrating problem, as collections could sometimes be damaged:

> There is nothing more frustrating than turning an original page over and finding that half the page is missing. *(LL1)*

Many newspapers produce different regional editions of their publication and libraries rarely collect all of these. This problem was a concern to some historians who found that collections were not comprehensive:

> One problem with the *Carmarthen Journal* is the fact [that] there are different editions for different areas and if you go to the library you will get one edition, probably they have the same problem at the National Library. *(FF2)*

This difficulty suggests that local collections should be more clear about which volumes and editions are available and to ensure that wherever possible, gaps in the run are filled.

(iii) Other problems

A range of other problems were identified from the interview data. For example, the unhelpful attitude of some staff at various sites was discussed. This not only hindered locating copies, but it also could make a library less amenable to work in. Other problems concerned the various systems for issuing material and booking microfilm

readers at libraries. Several historians recognised the importance of having a choice of location, at which titles could be consulted. This section concluded that, ideally, complete runs of newspapers should be available in both national and local collections, to meet the needs of historians.

5.3.4 Solving location problems

During the interviews, various solutions to location problems were discussed. The formal recommendations included in Chapter Six were devised giving due regard to these discussions. However, at this stage these proposals are presented without reference to any of the practical problems they may cause. The findings demonstrate the lack of access to newspapers causes the greatest problems. This led to a number of suggestions to improve access, such as an inter-library loan system for microfilms. Networked access to digitised archives was also discussed. The group clearly preferred to have newspapers in a local collection to avoid the need to travel. However, this is not always possible given the limited resources of public collections. Some copies are only held at the NLW or only held at a local library, when the ideal situation would be to have copies housed at both. Many historians in Wales were pleased there was a comprehensive collection at the NLW, and there was also a strong feeling that Welsh newspapers should be held in Wales, in addition to the BLNL.

The idea of loaning newspapers held in microfilm was raised by several respondents during the interviews. It was felt that the NLW and/or the BLNL could operate an inter-library loan service of microfilm copies to alleviate travel problems. As one researcher said:

> The newspapers I am looking at, I am sure there is only about two or three people who have been looking at [them] in the last ten years ...Why can't they loan them to Cardiff University or Cardiff town hall or something like that? I can't understand that. It's a pain then to have to go to Aberystwyth. *(AS5)*

Electronic format improves access to newspapers. The increasing numbers of newspapers available on CD-ROM and online was recognised during the interviews.

Some historians had the foresight to predict the possible solution this would bring to location problems:

> I think the other problem for lots of researchers is the problem of access and an electronic medium solves that problem. *(AP3)*

These observations were used to assist in the formulation of recommendations and are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Six. The findings demonstrate that historians are well aware of the difficulties caused by the location of newspaper collections. They also indicate that as the main users of newspapers, historians, have ideas about seeking solutions to these problems, and should be consulted about decisions to be made in this field.

5.4 The format of newspaper collections

The literature suggested that format would be an important issue in this research, as it affects the way historians use newspaper sources. Essentially three types of format are available; hardcopy, microfilm and electronic. Original newspaper are easily damaged. Therefore, for the purposes of retrospective collection it became common practice to bind them into volumes. This served to both protect the newspaper and assist in its storage in the library. Today, it is more common to microfilm newspapers for preservation purposes. Additionally, contemporary newspapers are now increasingly available in electronic formats, including both CD-ROM and online versions. The survey demonstrated that the format of the newspaper was almost always pertinent to the work of historians. It could alter the effectiveness of their work and change the way in which they conducted their research. A detailed investigation of this issue was also undertaken during the interviews and many respondents were found to have strong opinions about this issue. The value of hardcopy, microfilm and electronic newspapers are examined in turn in this section, and the advantages and problems associated with the use of each format are discussed. Overall most historians preferred to consult newspapers in hardcopy, although they accepted this was not always possible.

5.4.1 The relevance of format

This study did not assume that format was always an important issue. During the interviews, a small minority of historians (two) felt that the newspaper format was not relevant to their research and did not cause them any difficulties. The survey revealed a number of respondents who believed that there were advantages and disadvantages to each format and that it did not unduly affect the way in which they undertook research. This opinion tended to be expressed by historians who did not use newspapers frequently. Moreover, the belief was expressed that ultimately it was the information that was important:

> At the end of the day it doesn't really matter, you still get the information from it, and no I don't think the way that it is stored is really an issue. *(AP1)*

Whereas many historians spoke of the feeling of relief when a hardcopy was brought out to them rather than a microfilm, one said, 'whether I get either, it doesn't really bother me.'(AP5) However, in general this opinion was not widespread and researchers often felt format was a crucial factor. The fact that both the respondents were academic political historians was not deemed to be relevant, and their attitude was believed to be related to the fact that neither were heavy users of newspaper collections.

5.4.2 The use of hardcopy

The questionnaire examined whether respondents would rather use newspapers in hardcopy.[12] Figure 14 demonstrates that quantitatively, most respondents preferred to use hardcopy, with 56% stating 'yes' and only 11% saying 'no' to this question. Twenty percent of respondents did not answer this question and their responses was categorised accordingly.

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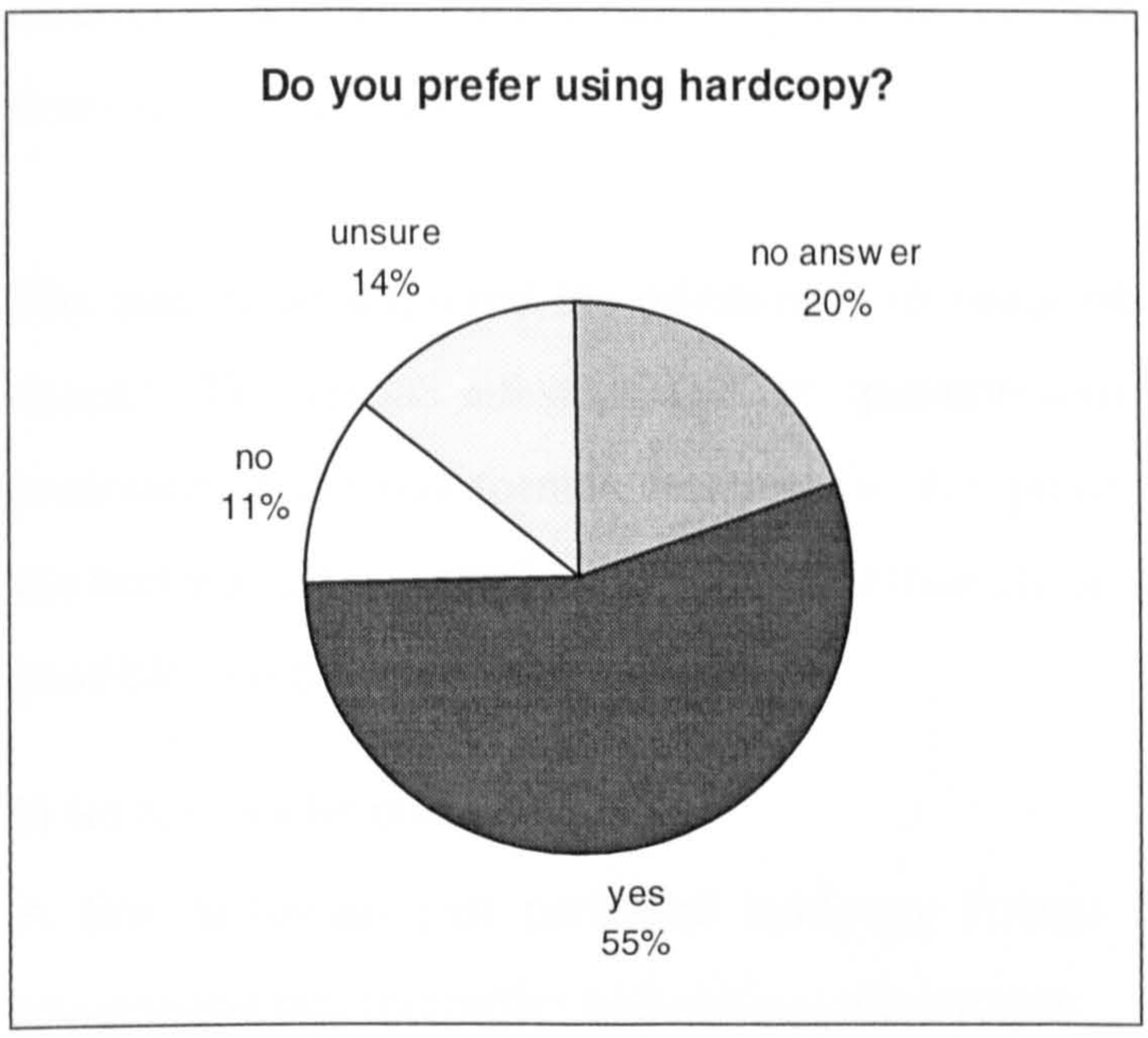
[12] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 10 (a)

Figure 14: Historians preference for hardcopy newspapers



5.4.3 Advantages of hardcopy

The survey asked respondents to explain their reasons for preferring hardcopy. The comments were developed into five categories, which were ranked by the respective number of citations. They are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Reasons why historians prefer hardcopy newspapers

CATEGORY	**NUMBER OF CITATIONS**
Easier to scan/locate	23
Less tiring on eyes, back etc.	19
Text easier to read	15
Feel more 'real'	11
Easier to make notes	2

Table 6 shows that the largest number of respondents claimed that it was much easier to scan hardcopy and locate relevant material. Many individuals cited the advantage of being able to see the whole newspaper so that page layout was visible. Another important consideration was the ease of use of the source. Most historians commented that it was less tiring to read newspapers in hardcopy, compared to reading microfilm and that the text was also much clearer to read. A number of individuals also

commented that hardcopy newspapers were more 'real' than using microfilm or electronic sources. Finally two respondents commented that it was easier to make notes using hardcopy.

The interviews explored the advantages to using newspapers in hardcopy in greater detail.[13] The results substantiated the questionnaire data and found most historians preferred to use this format. Reasons for this preference included: aesthetic reasons; the text was clearer and less tiring to read than on microfilm; the fact that scanning was possible and page layout was visible.

(i) No reasons for preference

A few historians just preferred hardcopy format for no specified reasons, while recognising that microfilm had obvious advantages:

> ... if I had a choice I would always prefer to use hardcopy. They spoil as well and they tear and there are all sort of reasons why you don't want you to use them. You can see librarians wanting to put them on microfilm, but it just isn't as much fun.(AS2)

One academic felt the desire to use hardcopy was particularly pertinent to historians, who need to be able to interact with their sources. Once again this suggests that historical researchers have different information needs to other users. Hardcopy allowed the source to be seen in full:

> I think it is partly the general response you get from any historian talking about any source, that having whatever source it is in front of you and being able to inspect it in its totality. (AP3)

(ii) Aesthetic reasons

A number of historians spoke of the pleasure of using original newspapers. They found the experience of turning the pages evocative and aesthetically pleasing. Hardcopy newspapers were also often described as a 'fun' source and contrasted favourably with microfilm. One academic historian accepted that using microfilm prevented damage, but still felt:

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[13] See Appendix 5. Interview Guide. Section 6: Questions 1 and 2

> ... from a purely pleasurable point of view, the pleasure in picking up a bound volume of newspapers in Colindale and going through it and feeling it fall apart in your hands almost, what you get out of it isn't the same as working with a microfilm. (AP1)

Family and local historians also enjoyed using newspapers in hardcopy, and one felt that s/he received 'a greater sense of history' (FF4) when turning over the original pages. One academic felt that at some point during research, all historians should use the hardcopy, saying:

> After all somebody else has touched those newspapers, somebody else has been in direct contact with those papers, perhaps two centuries ago, who knows, and there is this feeling that somehow the microfiche is a little bit remote. (AS4)

(iii) Text more clear / less tiring

Many respondents felt that it was easier to read the newspaper in its original form. This feature was contrasted, in particular, with microfilm where many of the problems associated with its use were visual, despite the advantage of allowing magnification. The advantages of microfilm are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.4.6.

(iv) Scanning possible

Scanning was an important search technique identified in Chapter Four, and many researchers claimed that this was extremely difficult when newspapers were available only on microfilm. The technique was only really possible using hardcopy. Consequently, newspaper research could be difficult when this format was unavailable, as they could not scan the pages thoroughly. Additionally the screen of the microfilm reader was rarely large enough to display the entire page, and where it was, the text was too small to read. Historians also felt microfilm that may result in potentially relevant material being overlooked. This point was made by a variety of different types of historians, for example:

> It is much easier and quicker to scan it on hardcopy than going to a microfilm. You can scan a whole page for a headline or a paragraph that might be of interest much more quickly than you can on microfilm. (FL4)

(v) Layout visible

Hardcopy was sometimes preferred because it made the layout of the newspaper visible so that articles and reporting could be placed in context. This point was made almost exclusively by academic historians who were using the newspaper for both social and political history. One historian felt it was difficult to reproduce newspapers in easily readable form. He also felt that because the newspaper is not used purely for straightforward information, the material needs to be contextualised, and it becomes:

> ... quite difficult to work, to reconstruct from the microfilm what the page might look like, looking at the page and where information is being placed, or where comment is being placed within the totality of the publication. The automicrology of the newspaper is important and if you can't see that or if you can't see that easily, then you are missing something. (AP3)

5.4.4 Problems of hardcopy

The low number of negative responses cited in the returned questionnaires meant that it was not possible to develop categories for the problems associated with hardcopy at this stage. However, several problems were discussed during the interviews, many of which were unfavourable comparisons with microfilm. Therefore, these have been discussed in greater detail under the section on the advantages of microfilm (see Section 5.4.6). One historian complained how using original newspapers for extended periods of time actually brought on an asthma attack from the dust. However, in general, the difficulties associated with hardcopy were not insurmountable and it was usually preferred by respondents.

5.4.5 The use of microfilm

The survey investigated whether individuals preferred using microfilm.[14] The results in Figure 15 show that a larger percentage of respondents were undecided or did not answer this question, (44% in total). However 41% stated that they did not prefer microfilm, with only 15% saying that they did.

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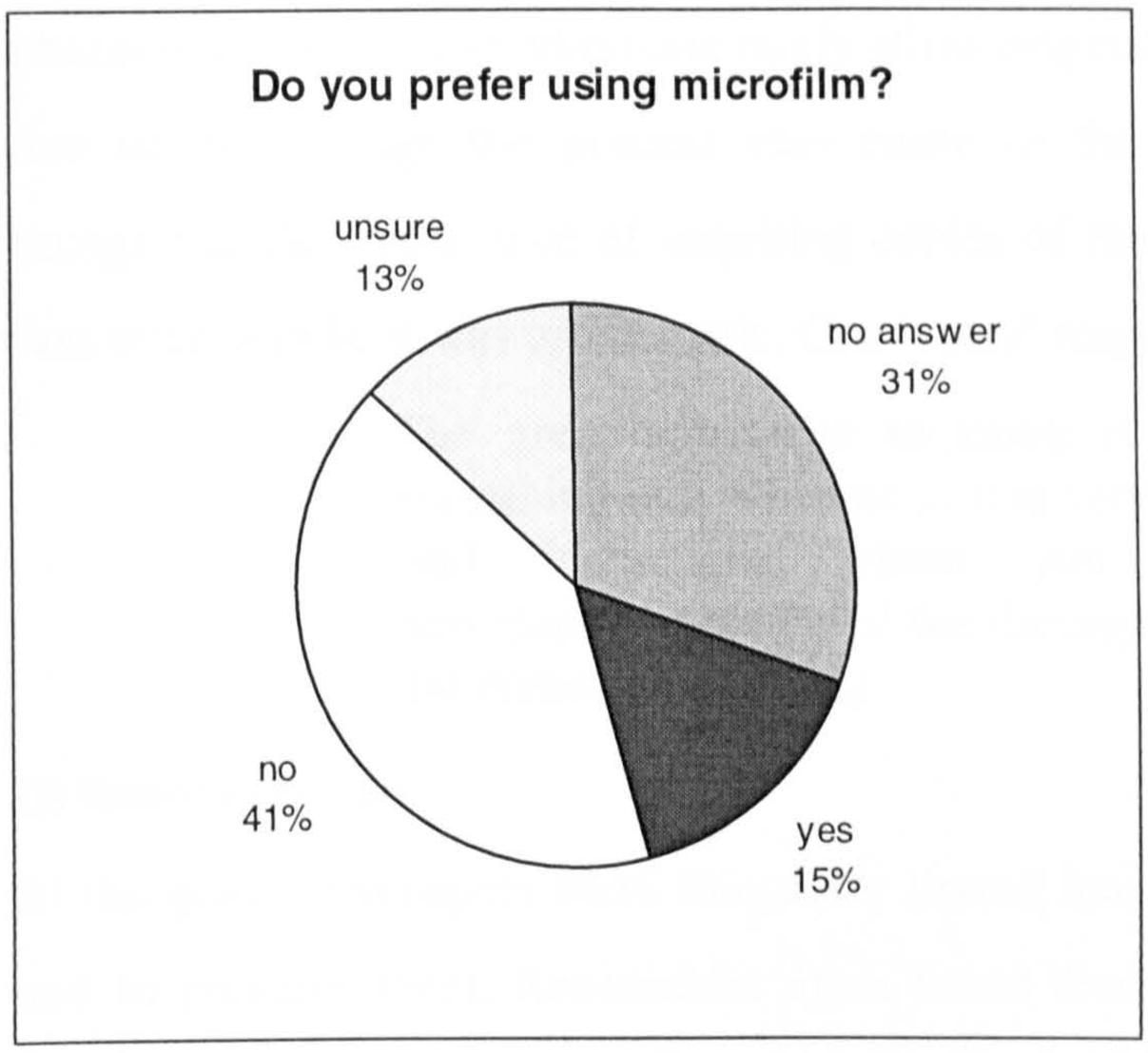
[14] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 10 (b)

Figure 15: Preference for microfilm by questionnaire respondents



Respondents were asked to explain their specified preference, and the results were categorised into positive and negative comments, for the responses were more varied than those from the question on hardcopy. At this point a small number of respondents stated that they had no preference for format. Several historians also commented that they were not given the option of using hardcopy, and were obliged to use microfilm.

5.4.6 The advantages of microfilm

Despite an overall preference for hardcopy, many individuals identified advantages of using microfilmed newspapers. The questionnaire responses suggested that copies could be made from microfilm more easily than from hardcopy, that microfilm was easier to use and less bulky than hardcopy and that microfilm avoided damage to the hardcopy. The interviews highlighted these three issues and examined each in greater detail. Several other advantages were also discussed including the zoom facility offered by many microfilm readers and the possibility of purchasing runs of newspaper on film for private use.

(i) Easier to make copies

There was considerable discussion in the interviews about the importance of being able to make copies of newspaper material. Photocopying is often the most straightforward method, and this process is far easier when titles are held on microfilm. Many libraries and newspaper collections have microfilm reader-printers, which are often available for

use by the public. Where these are not available, it is usually possible to order photocopies. However, librarians rarely allow original newspapers to be photocopied, due to the damage the process may cause to the source. Historians of all types recognised the importance of acquiring copies of newspaper material, and where this was not possible, it was problematic. One typical respondent said of microfilm:

> The great advantage to using it is you can print something out, whereas ... it is very rare that you will find institutions where you can photocopy newspapers, because of the damage to them, which is understandable. (LL2)

(ii) Easier to handle

In the past, newspapers were frequently bound into volumes to make storage easier and to preserve them. Researchers often found these volumes unwieldy, in particular some of the large nineteenth century broadsheet newspapers. Microfilm was often easier to handle. Some local and family historians who did not use newspapers extensively, found this to be a problem. The weight of the volumes caused difficulties for individuals who were not physically strong, and respondents who were shorter in stature found that they had to stand up to use bound volumes. One family historian commented 'the very bulk of these volumes of newspapers is sometimes a bit much for some people.' (FF3)

(iii) Quick to use

Some historians felt that access time was reduced when using microfilmed newspapers rather than hardcopy. However, many added the proviso that the film and the reader had to be in good condition. If this was the case, the reels could be scrolled through rapidly and the researcher was less prone to being distracted by irrelevant material. Often historians who made this point were searching for quite specific types of information. For example, one historian tracing the history of an agricultural show, had the date of the show and knew to turn to a particular point on the microfilm for each year. Therefore searching was quick and easy. Electronic microfilm readers were also mentioned as making research easier and the accessibility of microfilms at some libraries facilitated their use:

> In Newport library the microfilm reels are all in filing cabinets which are accessible to the general public, you don't have to fill in a form, you can just take

> them. They are arranged in a cabinet. So, obviously, if you are looking for a series of references scattered over a number of years, it is much easier to work with microfilm than it would to get all those papers out. (AS8)

However, when a more general theme was being traced across a period, and scanning techniques were required, microfilms were more time consuming.

(iv) Preservation advantages

Almost all researchers were concerned about damage to original newspapers in collections and accepted the wisdom of using microfilm for preservation purposes. This is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.5. Although damage is unintentional, everyday use of fragile sources is problematic. Ultimately, most historians were concerned that the information in newspapers should be preserved, and several mentioned having used damaged or fragile originals. Many individuals had resigned themselves to having to use microfilm and although they used it somewhat reluctantly, they were aware of the benefits:

> I know all the reasons for microfilm and I support them. We can't let people use ... hardcopy, all the time. Because of the wear and tear and I know for instance when I used to use hardcopy of the *Western Mail* some issues are in a very bad state [with] torn pages. (AS6)

Family and local historians were equally aware of the preservation advantages associated with microfilm, particularly because of the fragility of older papers:

> Given the choice ... I would always prefer to use hardcopy, but I do accept that for many types of reasons it is not always sensible or practical, particularly with the earlier newspapers, they get so ... fragile, that it really is essential for everyday researchers. (FL4)

(v) Magnification possible

Microfilm had an additional advantage in that often the reader had a zoom facility that magnified the text. Nineteenth century newspapers frequently contained large amounts of small print, to minimise their size and reduce costs. Where these newspapers were used, the ability to magnify the size of the text was advantageous:

> The broadsheet crammed in so much information, obviously I know paper was expensive and they therefore got as small a type as possible to get it onto two sheets if they could or three sheets, and in that case definitely the film is better, if you can magnify it. (FL5)

(vi) Copies available to purchase

It is often possible for libraries or individuals to purchase copies of a microfilmed newspaper, therefore research can be undertaken at a more convenient location. This advantage was mentioned by one academic historian. It is rare for a set of original newspapers to be available for purchase, although they can occasionally be bought at auction or from specialist bookshops. Consequently, the possibility of purchasing collections on film was important:

> You can buy collections for particular places, which is what we have done here in the university library, buying full runs of some of the Welsh language newspapers. So once they are filmed there is a chance of having copies. (AS8)

5.4.7 The problems of microfilm

The survey highlighted a large number of problems associated with microfilm and many researchers were outspoken in their complaints. These included the fact that microfilm is tiring to use, straining the eyes, back, neck etc.; difficulties associated with reading microfilm, exacerbated by poor quality film and problems using scanning techniques to search microfilm. Another important problem was caused by the microfilm readers often being in a poor state of repair and general mechanical difficulties with the equipment. The majority of historians who participated in the interviews also did not like using microfilmed newspapers. The responses suggested that the greatest difficulties were associated with the condition of either the film or the microfilm reader. These issues are all discussed in greater detail below.

(i) Poor condition of microfilm reader

In many libraries microfilm readers were found to be badly maintained, old and unsuitable for newspapers. At some institutions, particularly the BLNL and the NLW, large screened machines designed specifically for using newspapers were available. These were highly preferable, as they often enabled the researcher to see the entire

page of the paper. The importance of format was seen, when one local historian was asked to specify anything that would make research with newspapers easier:

> ... some better readers, that is the other thing, better quality microfilm readers, Colindale has got some where you can see the whole of the page. I used them at Winchester but everywhere else has these silly little ones. (FL1)

Microfilm readers were often not disliked *per se*, however, frequently poor maintenance and the inappropriate size made them frustrating to use. Modern electronic readers can automatically scroll to specific points on the film, and these made the process easier, although they were unavailable at most local collections. There were often problems with old readers having damaged screens, which made reading material difficult:

> Some microfilm readers are very old, they are marked, they are dirty, it is bad enough looking at eighteenth century text as it is, without bits and pieces on the screens as well! (AP6)

The focus was also often problematic with older machines, making them a strain on the eyes and many researchers clearly thought this was a problem of poor maintenance:

> They haven't been maintained or serviced as well as they should have been. It is difficult to read some of them and with glasses it is even worse, because you have to get the focus so you can read it and if it is at the edge of the film, you sometimes can't see. (FL5)

(ii) Poor condition of microfilm

Rolled microfilm is almost always used for preserving newspapers and was in general regarded as an imperfect medium by historians. Several researchers mentioned a preference for microfiche, which they found easier to handle. This led them to question the wisdom of using rolled film:

> I find that fiche are a lot easier to use than rolled film, turning through rolled film is a bit of a bind ... I find that on the census work I can usually ... find the name in thirty seconds, it is that quick. (FF3)

Furthermore, the film itself was sometimes in poor condition, which hampered the work of the historian and could make it difficult to read. In the past microfilming standards were less rigorous, and many libraries have collections of lower quality

material. Since the development of a British Standard for microfilming of newspapers[15] and the guidelines published by the NEWSPLAN project,[16] filming should now be to a high standard. However, frequent handling damages microfilms and many respondents encountered old, low quality or damaged microfilm that made research more difficult:

> Some microfilms have not been photographed particularly well, and for whatever reason the material is perhaps scratched and it can be very difficult to read. (AS8)

Several historians mentioned using negative microfilm, where the image is white on black. This type of film was found to be particularly difficult to read. Additionally, some microfilm has been used heavily, and in the same way as the original, was subject to wear and tear and was in need of replacing. One academic historian stated:

> One talks about the wear and tear of hardcopy, but microfilm suffers enormous wear and tear, whenever I use microfilm they are scored with parallel lines. There is dust and dirt and you can see hairs flicking around. (AS6)

(iii) Tiring

Microfilm was often an exhausting format to use, exacerbated by the poor condition of readers and films. However, even when both the machine and film were in perfect condition, the process was concluded to be more tiring than reading the original newspaper. Sore eyes, necks and backs caused by using microfilm were common complaints mentioned during the interviews:

> It is always much harder reading anything on microfilm than having the actual document in front of you, because you are sitting there ... and your neck is strained ... and it is quite hot in the library and the film is hot and the machine is hot (LL3)

Historians found they could work for less time with a microfilm, than they could with the hardcopy, because of the tiring nature of the format. Several felt that they had been unable to work through long runs of newspapers when they were presented with

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[15] British Standards Institution, *Specification for 35mm microcopying of newspapers for archival purposes,* (London : B.S.I, 1980) (BS5847. 1980) (ISO 4087-1979)
[16] Jennifer Macdougall, *NEWSPLAN: guidelines for the microfilming of newspapers,* (London: British Library, 1994)

microfilm. Therefore, in this way the format of the newspaper affected the research they undertook:

> I probably wouldn't have bothered to go through the whole fifty years of the newspapers if I had had to look at it on microfilm. I really think I would feel it would be too difficult to have sat down, because I was literally at the library from when they opened to when they shut for a long period of time going through the newspapers and I don't think I could have faced spending that amount of time, it would have been so hard on the eyes. (AS3)

Several older historians suggested that their age made microfilm more tiring to use, as one said:

> I am just old fashioned I think, as my wife will tell you I am hopeless with all machinery, I can't even get that video to work properly! *(AP2)*

However, the subjects interviewed included a wide age range and the younger researchers seemed to dislike microfilm equally. A variety of problems are associated with using microfilmed newspapers. Some of the difficulties may be overcome if care is taken to ensure films and readers are high quality, however, this section concluded that as research format, microfilm often did not meet the needs of historians.

5.4.8 The use of digital newspapers

Since the late 1980s, newspapers have been available on CD-ROM and since the mid-1990s the number of newspapers available on the World Wide Web has increased dramatically.[17] Electronic newspapers are usually current or recent editions and most offer valuable searching facilities to researchers. The survey examined whether individuals had used newspapers on CD-ROM or the Internet to assess their familiarity with electronic sources and their opinion of the format.[18] These sources are currently of marginal use in historical research because retrospective collections are not available, therefore the number of users was not expected to be high. Furthermore, while such sources are often widely available in academic institutions, those historians

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[17] This is discussed in detail in Chapter One, Section 1.3.1 (iv). For a recent overview of regional newspapers available see Kara Neilson and Peter Willett 'United Kingdom regional newspapers on the World Wide Web' *Aslib Proceedings.* Vol. 51, no. 3 (March 1999) 78-90.
[18] See Appendix 3. Final version of questionnaire. Question 4 (a) and (b)

working independently have more limited resources. They often rely upon services provided by public libraries or their own resources. However, with an increasing number of households connecting to the Internet and the Government's pledge in 1997 to connect all public libraries to the Internet, the use of electronic newspapers will undoubtedly increase. Thus, the findings provided evidence of the current experiences of this group and the likely success of future innovations in this field.

Figure 16: The use of newspapers on CD-ROM

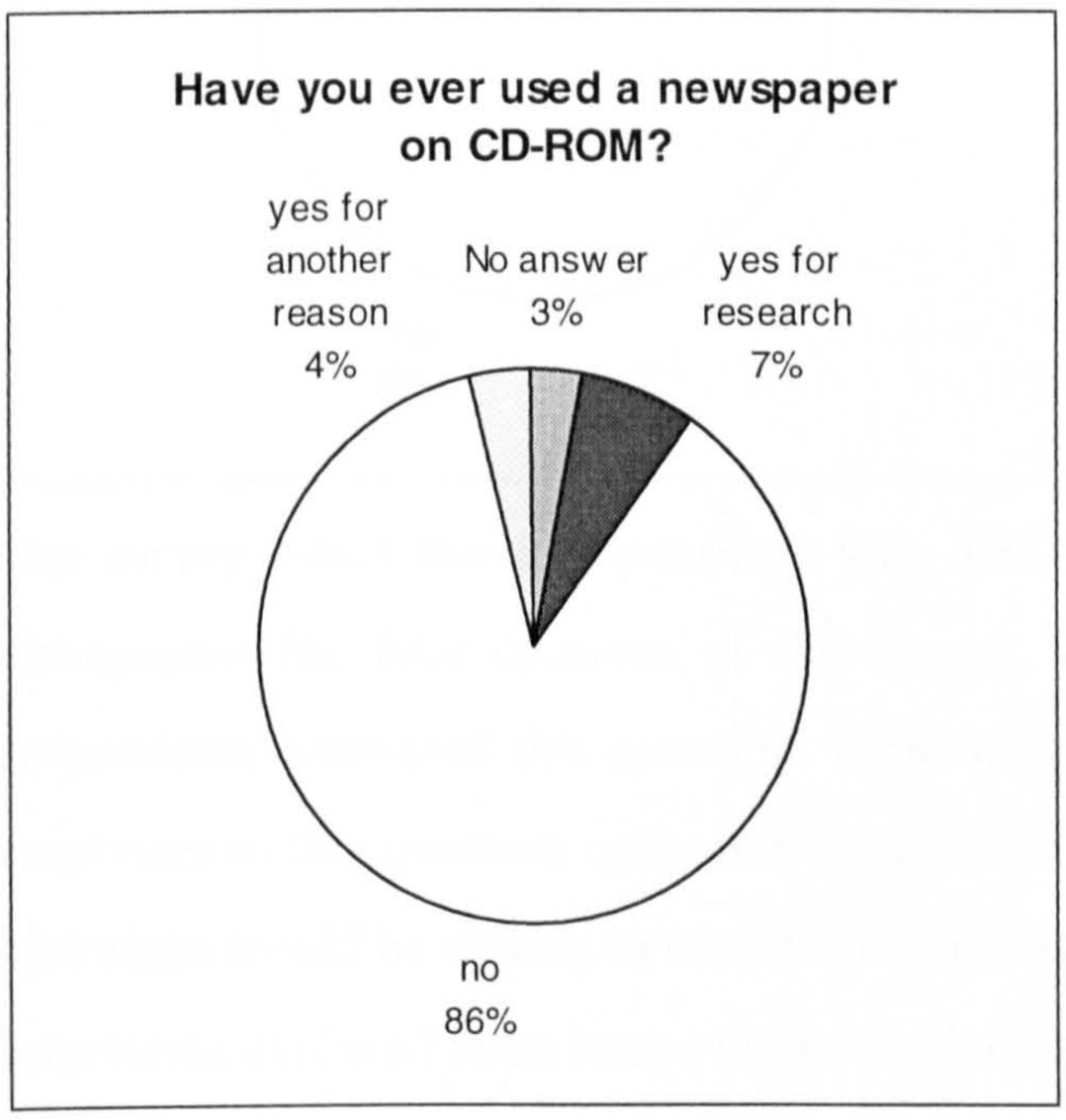
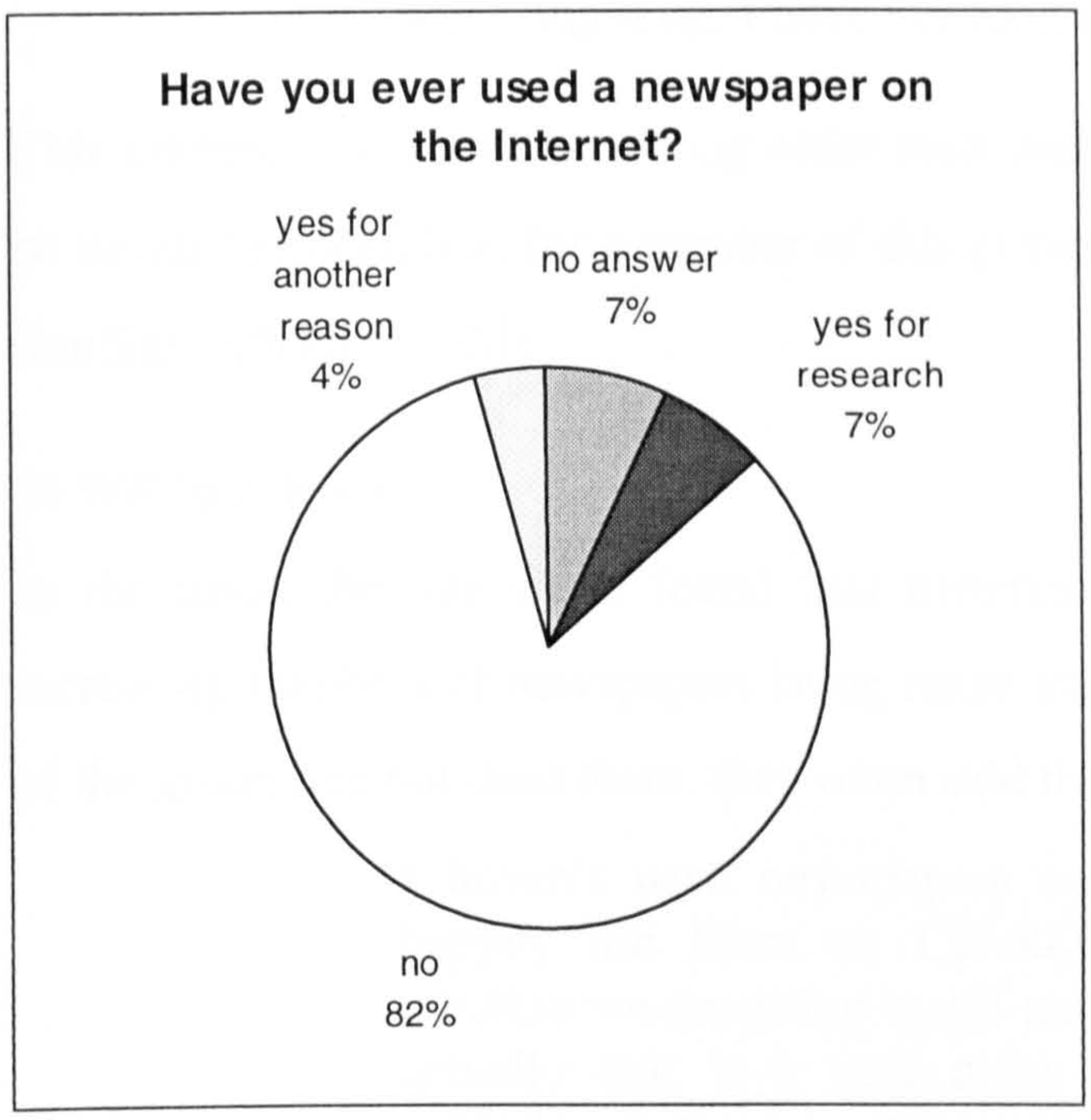


Figure 16 demonstrates that 86 percent of survey respondents had not used newspapers on CD-ROM and Figure 17 shows the percentage is very similar for the use of Internet based newspapers. Equal numbers of respondents, just 11%, were found to use newspapers on the Internet and CD-ROM. This indicated that at the time of the study electronic newspapers were making a limited impact on the work of historians.

Figure 17: The use of newspapers on the Internet



The survey asked those respondents who had used one or more forms of electronic newspapers for their opinions of this format. Although only a small percentage of respondents answered this question, there were found to be twice as many positive responses to this question compared to negative answers. These results suggested that historians would be willing to use such sources if they were more widely available. The interviews explored these issues in greater detail.[19]

(i) Limited knowledge

The results demonstrated that many individuals had only a limited understanding of this format and consequently had made very little use of it. Nevertheless, given the lack of historical material available in this format, this finding is unsurprising. Several historians commented that they had not investigated the availability of electronic newspapers because they believed they would not be useful. However, some admitted they had a very basic understanding of computers, and did not know how electronic newspapers were constructed or operated, as this local historian said:

> I hadn't really thought about that source really. I don't think there will be very much but I suppose I ought to have a go at that. I don't know whether they are indexed or whether they are just newspapers or whether they are actually indexed or not, or whether

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[19] See Appendix 5. Interview Guide. Section 6. Questions 3, 4 and 5.

> they will recall, if you type in a subject whether they will bring it up. I have not used them *(FL1)*

This attitude was common among older local and family historians, although it would be unfair to generalise, for a number of this group were connected to the Internet and familiar with CD-ROMs.

(ii) Willing to learn

In the main, the interviews found that historians were receptive to the idea of an increasing numbers of newspapers being made available electronically. Although many of the group had not used them, they often said they would be happy to try them:

> I haven't used newspapers on CD-ROM. I would happily use them on CD-ROM. Goodness knows whether we are going to get much on CD-ROM. Well actually that is a very open question in terms of publishing. But in some on-line form or some electronic form. *(AP4)*

The advantages of using electronic newspapers are considered later, however often respondents with little experience of using them, were aware they could be valuable, providing facilities such as key word searching:

> The types of papers I am looking at these days, I'm not sure if they'd be available on CD-ROM and really it's just a question of priorities and I haven't got round to doing it, but it is something I'd be very interested to play around with, newspapers stored on CD-ROM and see the possibilities. *(AP1)*

Many also believed the transfer of newspapers from microfilm or hardcopy to a digital format was inevitable, given the current media focus on such developments as the 'digital library'. This was generally regarded as a positive step and one which would help their research.

(iii) Electronic newspaper users

Of the group who had used newspapers in electronic format, these could be categorised into those who had made limited use and those who had used them regularly. The majority of electronic newspaper users were based within academia, which in part reflects the wide availability of ICTs in higher education. University staff were one of the first groups to have access to the Internet, with the establishment of

the Joint Academic NETwork (JANET) in 1984. Academic libraries have higher levels of funding than public libraries and consequently have been able to invest in new technology. Many family and local historians have not had the same opportunities to use electronic newspapers and computer technology in general. Nevertheless, less experienced electronic newspaper users had usually examined *The Times* or *Guardian* on CD-ROM, as these are increasingly available in public libraries. Several researchers had used the CD-ROM out of curiosity, while others had specific queries they wanted to investigate.

The number of regular users of electronic newspapers was low, therefore it is difficult to make generalisations. The limited coverage dates of these publications at present make it difficult to use them in historical research. Undoubtedly as the number of titles increases and the body of material is extended with the passage of time, the responses of future historians may be quite different. However, currently *The Times* and *Guardian* were the most widely used CD-ROMs, often used for more contemporary research that historians occasionally undertake. Several researchers had also read daily newspapers on the World Wide Web:

> I have used *The Times* on CD-ROM but I have not needed to come across anything else in that way. I mean in my work as a musician, I have used CD-ROMs for some music journals for example, when they are available, but no, only *The Times* and even then I have known where I want to go to get the information. So I have done that in the local library, many, many times. *(AS4)*

5.4.9 The advantages of the digital formats

The questionnaire identified several advantages with electronic newspapers. These can be summarised as them being: easy and quick to use and search using key words; convenient to use, for example, several respondents regularly used U.S. newspapers from their desktop, via the Internet and easy to obtain printed copies. The advantages of electronic newspapers over both hardcopy and microfilm, were also discussed in the interviews. These included the facility to undertake key-word searching, availability from the desktop and the storage advantages they provide to libraries.

(i) Key-word searching

Perhaps one of the greatest benefits provided by digital newspapers is the ability to search the text for key-words. This advantage was recognised in the literature, (see Section 1.5.2 (i)). It was cited by a large number of historians, several of whom had little personal experience of using this format, but were aware of this feature. One of the greatest problems associated with using newspapers for any kind of research, is the time taken to search for relevant material. Newspaper indexes provide alternative access points, but their availability and value is limited. However, several researchers believed that once it were possible to search the full text of a newspaper using computer technology, a variety of different types of research could be undertaken. An academic historian used biographical research as an example:

> If you had the *Western Mail* for 1890 and you just type in [a] name and perhaps you get 60 references, so it is going to take you a while to look through them all, but you don't have to read the rest of the paper, that would really speed up things enormously. *(AS8)*

Family historians also find searching for specific names difficult and recognised that if the newspaper was digitised, this type of information would be easier to find. Again some historians saw this development as inevitable. Nevertheless, a number were more realistic and appreciated that financial constraints may mean this development may take some time, and the type of material being digitised may be quite selective.

(ii) More accessible

Historians recognised the benefits of being able to undertake research from their desktop using either a CD-ROM or the Internet. Research could then be carried out at either the office or home. This would avoid the need to travel to libraries and work there, which has been seen to cause many problems. This historian who worked part-time spoke of the advantages of:

> ... immediate access, ... for instance archival stuff for newspapers. Originals on the Internet would be brilliant because I could flick through that really, as and when. Rather than going to somewhere, like ... the library and having to wait. *(AP5)*

(iii) Storage advantages

CD-ROM was seen to provide many advantages in a library situation, or when available over a network. The storage advantages electronic formats offer libraries and archives are immense. Accommodating a collection that grows so rapidly is problematic. During the late 1990s the BLNL has found it necessary to make decisions over issues such as whether to retain hardcopies of filmed titles because of limited space. The storage advantages of the digital format were recognised by historians:

> You can [only] store so much information can't you? ... You've got all those cupboards all over the place and you just haven't got the space. I don't know how they manage at Aberystwyth where they get all the daily newspapers ... and I don't know how long they are going to keep them for. There must come a time when they are going to start throwing them out. *(FF2)*

5.4.10 The problems of digital formats

The survey identified a number of problems with electronic newspapers. These included: the abridged nature of electronic newspapers; the loss of the layout of the newspaper; the low number of titles available in this form; visual problems of reading a screen and a feeling that the source was not so 'real' as the printed hardcopy. However, in general, few historians who had used electronic newspapers disliked the format, although a greater number of potential and actual problems were discussed in the interviews. Several historians believed that the cost of CD-ROMs was prohibitive and that the Internet offered a more viable distribution medium in the future. Both users and potential users discussed a number of concerns, but the development of electronic newspapers was often regarded as an inevitable and positive move.

(i) Cost and access

The cost of digitising large numbers of newspaper runs would be enormous. Experiments at the British Library in 1995 found the required scanning and OCR techniques prohibitively expensive, although research is on-going.[20] Several historians recognised the expense involved in digitisation and felt that access would inevitably necessitate a charge if the service became available. One academic historian felt that

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[20] See Chapter One, Section 1.5.2.

more widely used national newspapers may be digitised in the near future, but that it was unlikely that the runs of local and specialist publications would receive the same treatment:

> Do I think it is going to happen? Well I suspect it is not in a very extensive way, just because of the cost of doing that. So I think my guess is ... we will carry on much as we have been with some additions in electronic format. *(AP3)*

Another academic believed that within universities there were higher levels of funding for and better access to ICTs. Consequently, if electronic publications became available, academic historians would benefit, while others may be left behind:

> In academia we are very fortunate to have all this on tap, but does that affect local historians or even academic historians who are not attached to universities? ... I think the question of accessibility is a key one. I wouldn't want to see anything that was restricting accessibility. *(AS7)*

(ii) Technophobia

A number of researchers displayed an instinctive dislike of ICTs and claimed they would not feel comfortable using this format under any circumstances. This was the opinion of a minority of respondents, although it was not confined to one type of historian. The individuals tended to be more mature members of the group. However, it would be unfair to say older historians disliked computers, as many were fully computer literate. Chapter One demonstrated that historians were often traditional in their use of sources, thus this finding is unsurprising.[21] One historian was categorical in his/her dislike of technology:

> I can't do anything like that, I don't know what that means. I don't honestly. I hate technical things ... young people, obviously that would be perfectly normal and natural for them, but it is not my thing at all. No. I can't be bothered with it. *(LL3)*

(iii) Abridged nature

More experienced users of electronic newspapers were concerned by the abridged nature of many of these sources. CD-ROM and World Wide Web versions of many

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[21] See Chapter One, Section 1.2.1 (ii)

newspapers are rarely identical to the print version. They may not contain information such as adverts, photographs or material which the newspaper does not hold the copyright. This missing information may be crucial to the work of the historian. For this reason, currently the digital format can not be used as replacement for the hardcopy. CD-ROM newspapers are more established as research tools and often detail the components of the paper they include. However, historians commented that with some World Wide Web publications, it could be difficult to establish how the content differs from the print version. Increasingly Internet versions of newspapers are beginning to operate almost like a 24 hour news service and having quite different content to the printed version. These problems were recognised.

(iv) Layout unclear

The page layout of newspapers can be highly relevant to the work of some historians, and where this is not apparent, problems can occur. Many electronic newspapers do not recreate the page layout. Some Internet versions of newspapers are moving away from the traditional newspaper appearance, with 'pages,' headlines and pictures, and their layout is often quite different to print-based media. This researcher had used Internet versions of newspapers frequently and although he was happy with the format he pointed out that:

> It is obviously not as easy as just opening up a paper and scanning it because you're really focused in on a couple of columns really. There is not an index or two columns to browse. There are other problems like if you jump to another page it has got to download another page. *(FF6)*

CD-ROMs are increasingly beginning to recreate the page layout using high resolution graphics files, and they provide details about the location of an article in the newspaper. However, as the above respondent pointed out, using them is not as straightforward as viewing the hardcopy. A number of newspaper CD-ROMs are largely text-based databases and attracted similar complaints to microfilm. Context and the placing of an article on a page is often important to historical researchers. Therefore any format that obscures this, presents a problem:

> If one is trying to assess the importance of a piece of writing in the newspaper, it is very important to know where it appears and which page it appears on. I

> know that when you get something off the CD-ROM it usually tells you which page of *The Times* or the *Guardian* it was on, but again it would be nice to know how it appeared in the paper. *(AS8)*

(v) Lack of titles

The interviews found one of the greatest problems with electronic newspapers was the lack of titles available in this format. Although the number of CD-ROM newspapers has grown dramatically since the late 1980s and new titles appear on the Internet almost weekly, they are still a comparatively new medium and numbers are limited. More importantly, for the historian, the source is also not retrospective, therefore its value to this group of users will be limited, at least for the next few decades. Many historians made the point that electronic newspapers were too modern for their research needs and consequently they had not explored the possibilities they offered. A number also felt that the titles they used would be unlikely to ever become available in this format, because of the low number of users they attracted and the expense of converting them. It may never be cost-effective for some types of historical material to be digitised:

> To be honest I can't see the sort of things that I would be looking at to be on the Net for a very long time ... Sometimes you go and look at something, an American newspaper, or Australian newspaper, dailies and that is fine, you can see why they would be on the Net. *(AS7)*

(vi) Durability

Several historians were concerned about the durability of electronic formats. There has been speculation about the longevity of CD-ROM and earlier versions were known to suffer from 'ROM-rot' which caused material to deteriorate. Microfilm remains the preservation standard, and there are no current plans to use digital formats for preservation. Historians echoed the concerns expressed by preservation experts concerning the use of digitisation in the place of microfilm:

> At one time they said CD-ROMs were only going to have a life of ten years so I really not sure [whether] it is a good medium to store it on. *(FF6)*

(vii) Removes serendipity

A small number of historians felt that it would not be desirable or advantageous to digitise newspapers. A lot of research using newspapers relies of the serendipity factor and chance findings of relevant material. Therefore, the potential of missing relevant material was sometimes felt to be greater than the advantages electronic newspapers could bring:

> There is nothing like going to the National Library and looking at the original, because it's easier; then as you go through the newspaper you know you are going in there and you might glance and see something else, about the same thing. It is really hard to explain but as I said ... there might be some further information. *(FF1)*

(viii) Other problems

Another potential problem associated with electronic newspapers relates to the way in which historians use newspapers. Chapter Four suggested that the methods employed by some historians, to evaluate newspaper information, were not always rigorous. However, currently the difficulties associated with accessing the information in newspapers may mean that less committed historians are reluctant to use them. Once newspapers are available in electronic formats, it will be increasingly easy to access the information. It seems likely that research relying upon newspapers will become increasingly common. Without adequate guidance, less experienced historians in particular, may undertake research using newspapers that is less than rigorous.

5.5 Newspaper preservation and historical research

Often it is perceived that conflict exists between librarians and historians surrounding the issue of access and preservation of fragile sources. Preserving sources might be assumed to be of importance to all historical researchers, for without them, their work would be severely impaired. However, the literature review in this study suggested that preservation techniques, in particular the use of microfilm causes difficulties to researchers. Therefore, their attitudes towards preservation were investigated. The importance of preserving both the format and the information in the newspaper was studied, as were specific problems caused by preservation techniques. This part of the

research was examined during the interviews, as it was felt this issue was complex and required discussion.

5.5.1 Importance of preservation

The interviews first examined the importance that individuals attributed to preservation.[22] Almost all respondents recognised its value, for without the intervention of preservation techniques, many newspapers would not have survived. Newsprint is particularly fragile and prone to deterioration and many historians were aware of the need to treat newspapers carefully. Often this involves microfilming the original and only allowing the film copy to be consulted, although policies at libraries vary. Section 5.4 found that most researchers accepted that they often had to use microfilm, despite disliking it. When the original was fragile or old or rare, most historians felt this policy was valid:

> Preservation is essential, you wouldn't expect to handle a medieval manuscript ... so, yes, I think the handling of newspapers is very important, but not the be all and end all. (AS4)

Many claimed to be satisfied with this situation and felt it was their duty to ensure further damage was not caused to the source. Speaking of early newspapers, where there may be only one surviving copy, one family historian said:

> Because they are so ephemeral it is ... important that they are preserved. Because there might be two or three copies in the world if you are lucky, there might only be one, in which case preservation is absolutely vital. (FF5)

Concern for source material was anticipated, however sometimes it was suspected that this response was not always entirely genuine. The researcher probed further to discover whether the behaviour of researchers corresponded to the concern which they articulated. The comments of one academic historian were enlightening, when he initially explained how he was concerned about preservation, yet went on to describe using a source and causing further damage to it. This researcher had been amongst the group who preferred to use newspapers in hardcopy. He said:

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[22] See Appendix 5. Interview Guide. Section 6: Preservation Issues.

> Certain days in Colindale I found newspapers ... covered in little scraps of paper, that would just come off as I was turning the pages, no matter how careful you were. [I was] very aware of the issue of newspaper preservation ... I suppose newspapers are particularly fragile compared to a lot of sources, they were made out of cheap paper I suppose, and it falls apart fairly easily. (AP1)

Some historians mentioned using damaged material and having it literally falling apart in their hands:

> Many times I have looked at hardcopy newspapers which seem to be in a state of considerable disrepair ... and at the end of the day you have got a pile of dust and bits of paper, all over you and all over the desk. (AS8)

Damage is caused to newspaper collections through constant use. The age and quality of the paper of some publications makes them prone to fragility. Despite the dreadful condition of some titles, one interview respondent had used such newspapers. Although he recognised the importance of putting them on microfilm, however he still undertook research using the originals:

> Many of the newspapers that I began doing my research on from the period 1914, are in appalling condition. It is only because the section of Colindale which houses them was bombed, so they would often arrive on the desk and you'd open them up and pieces of shrapnel would fall out, or pieces of stone [and] masonry would fall out. And they won't be around much longer and there is a need to put them on microfilm. (AP1)

The use of damaged newspapers was almost exclusively mentioned by academic historians, several of whom managed to gain access to original newspapers because of their status. One comment suggested that perhaps certain types of research justified damage to a source, whereas other research may not:

> I have looked at some newspapers there which are in a pretty awful state. They have been good enough to let me look at them because they realise I am a serious historical researcher, whereas perhaps other people who go in and look up the racing results wouldn't be allowed to see them. They would have to look at the microfilm. *(AS8)*

Clearly it could be problematic to suggest that one type of research was more valid than another and ideally library policies should not vary according to the professional status of a historian. The findings suggest more formal and transparent policies concerning public access to original newspapers may be required.

The interviews also considered whether historians were equally concerned about preserving the information and the format of the newspaper. Unquestionably the information in the newspaper is crucial to the historian's research. However, because of the importance of layout, context, and the aesthetic factors associated with the use of the original, most historians felt it was necessary to preserve the source in its entirety:

> I think without the originals (I mean you can microfilm copies if necessary for people to look through, but without the originals,) ... they are the history if you like ... copies are useful for reference from, but the original thing is the original thing, you can't replace that. (FF4)

This argument is pertinent to those libraries considering destroying hardcopy newspapers and retaining the microfilm copies. The suggestion of photocopying onto acid-free paper to preserve the original, but avoid the need for microfilm, was also mentioned. Nevertheless, respondents conceded that it was the information that was of primary importance and if it was unavoidable, the format could be sacrificed.

5.5.2 Problems of preservation techniques

The problems experienced by historians associated with preservation techniques were explored in the interviews. There was a general feeling amongst this group that the techniques employed by the library affected the methods by which they undertook research and could limit access to the material. Sometimes copies were unavailable for consultation due to work being carried out by a conservator, or because they were being microfilmed. Furthermore, certain copies were permanently unavailable for public access, due to their fragility, rarity or age. The policy of many libraries that prevents original newspapers being photocopied, also restricted access to the information.

(i) Preservation verses access

One of the greatest problem experienced by historians was the use of microfilm as an alternative to hardcopy. The problems of microfilm have been discussed at some length in Section 5.4.6. Whilst the majority of historians sympathised with the preservation issues behind its use and recognised its value in this context, they found it imperfect for research purposes. This issue is an area where the different needs and attitudes of librarians and historians became apparent. Preservation was regarded as important by the vast majority of historians. However, most respondents felt that it was important to use original newspapers and they were resentful when emphasis on preserving a source meant limiting access to it. This situation is clearly not ideal and a compromise and understanding between these two groups needs to be reached. One historian felt electronic newspapers were the key to solving this problem:

> CD-ROM is the future, so there is need to find a new way of providing the information not using these [microfilm] machines. There is a definite need for a new way of providing the information. I don't think that hardcopy is the answer if it is the only copy available. It is important that they are kept in the library. (AS5)

Digitisation is currently not viable as a preservation standard, although in the future the situation might alter. By working together, librarians and historians need to reach a solution that is satisfactory to both their needs. Furthermore, the findings from this study were encouraging, and suggest a compromise may be possible, for they revealed that often historians appreciated the librarian's viewpoint, as one said:

> I can see it from the perspective of an archivist and a conservator and obviously these things have to be preserved because otherwise they are not going to be there for people to use in future. But certainly it is very very difficult to actually do the type of research that I was doing quickly unless you can see the whole page, the layout of the whole page at once. (AS3)

5.6 Summary

Historians are the heaviest users of newspaper collections and for this reason, well qualified to assess the nature of current provision of such services. This chapter provided an examination of historians' use of newspapers in the library situation. Questionnaire and interview responses provided complementary information to that

outlined in Chapter Three. The findings suggest that when newspaper collections are established or policies devised, user needs are often not considered in great detail. From the tools available to locate titles, through to facilities for copying newspaper material, the library is not able to adequately meet the needs of historians for various reasons. Furthermore, it is clear that the library can affect the way historians use newspapers and the success or otherwise of their enquiries and work.

Understanding is the key to solving many of the problems outlined in this chapter. Chapters One and Four demonstrated that historians have particular information needs and seeking behaviour and that they employ specific techniques for using newspapers. Librarians and policy making bodies dealing with newspapers would benefit from a greater understanding of this behaviour and these needs. This chapter identified three key areas where newspaper collections could be improved, namely bibliographic control, the provision of local and national collections and the format and preservation techniques used. Through collaboration with historians in drawing up policies and practices, newspaper collections could serve the needs of their users more effectively and be more widely recognised as an important source of information.

Currently it is difficult to identify both the range of titles in existence at a given time and the location of these titles in either local or national collections. Often the newspaper collection is not adequately catalogued and when cataloguing is undertaken the information often is not widely available. The NEWSPLAN project can provide assistance in this area, however currently it is not doing this to a significant degree. Consequently, historians often become dependent upon staff at institutions to guide them in this area. More experienced newspaper users can also provide valuable assistance when locating source material. However, for younger, less experienced or isolated researchers the task can still be difficult. Problems are more acute when using local collections. The fact that a title is held in the BLNL is of little value to a family historian based in West Wales. Through increased publicity for the work of NEWSPLAN and a greater emphasis on the need for adequate bibliographic control locally, these difficulties could be overcome.

Local collections, in public libraries particularly, are the most heavily used location for consulting newspaper sources. However, there is little standardisation in approach between different libraries, and the policies and structures can vary enormously. National collections are valuable as they achieve near comprehensiveness, however the majority of researchers do not visit these locations. The time and expense of reaching collections such as the NLW and the BLNL deters many users. However, local collections are often a poor substitute with titles, page and editions frequently missing. Some research can therefore not be undertaken without a visit to a national collection. Funding for local collections is limited, therefore solving this problem is not straightforward. However, the success of NEWSPLAN demonstrated that greater co-operation between local and national collections is important. Schemes such as inter-library loans of microfilms and co-operative microfilming programmes need further investigation and new policies need to be consider patterns of use.

Format affects the work of the historian and clearly it is preferable to use original newspapers, where possible. Microfilm is highly valuable as a preservation format, but its advantages to the newspaper user are few. Yet, increasingly many newspaper users will have to deal with this format. Digitisation appears to offer some solutions to the difficulties of searching newspapers, however its value for preservation purposes is currently limited. Developments in this area are anticipated to be slow. Thus, it appears that format will continue to present the historian with a range of difficulties. Chapter Six suggests ways libraries can ameliorate the difficulties caused by newspaper format. It also offers techniques to help the newspaper user.

This study sought to foster a greater level of understanding between historians and newspaper librarians in order to cope with the range of problems presented by newspaper collections. In many ways an issue such as format demonstrates that there are no simple solutions and highlights the need for increased communication between these two groups in order to seek them. Future developments concerning newspapers in libraries must be undertaken only after consultation with users and custodians. Newspapers already cause many problems for both groups, many of which have not

been examined before. Thus, it is important that coherent strategies, based upon the needs of both groups, are developed before seeking digital solutions.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter draws together the respective conclusions from Chapters Three, Four and Five and offers overall conclusions for the research. Furthermore, these findings are also translated into recommendations for the main audience of this thesis: historians, librarians who manage newspaper collections, and national bodies involved in research and development of collections. For the purposes of providing structure to the thesis the problems were divided into issues relating directly to the newspaper and issues associated with the library situation. In many ways this division is artificial, as the problems are closely related. Therefore, this chapter attempts to bridge this conceptual divide and provide conclusions of relevance to both the users and custodians of newspapers.

6.1 Conclusions

All types of media are becoming increasingly important sources for historical research. Consequently, it is important to understand the specific challenges that they present to the historian. Unlike previous research, this study has sought to develop an understanding of the newspaper's developing role in historical research and has focused on problems associated with using and collecting newspapers. In part, these difficulties are historiographical in nature, stemming from using a form of communication as a historical document. However this study also recognises that the organisation and storage of newspapers in libraries affects the ways in which they are used.

A range of historians, including academic, family and local researchers in Wales were examined, in order to identify and understand different patterns of information use that are relevant to all historians. This study confirmed the value and increasingly important role of newspapers as documents, providing historians with a valuable, yet complex source. It found that historians often regarded the press as problematic and that they were in need of clearer guidance when using and interpreting it. Additionally, the study examined the influence of policies relating to newspaper collection and organisation, on users. The research concluded that the way in which newspapers are used in historical research is often shaped by the library or organisation who hold them. Thus,

by studying the subject from perspectives of both the user and librarian, a greater understanding of the issues has been achieved.

Newspapers provide a commentary of events as they occur. Their accumulation provides a highly valuable, accessible historical document, often more detailed than other sources. Increasing numbers of historians use newspapers and they are one of the most important sources for the modern period. Local newspapers are often of greater value than national newspapers, providing considerable information about local events as they occurred, perceptions at the time and local views on national and international issues. Almost every section of the newspaper provides valuable information, and the press is of particular value for social and cultural history. Comparisons between different types of academic and non-academic historians reveal that the nature of historical enquiry, rather than historian type, has a greater impact on the methods that are used. Moreover, an understanding of the value and limitations of the newspaper does not appear to be related to the professional status of the historian. These findings contribute towards understanding the information needs of newspaper users. They also highlight an area where further research is necessary.

The nature of newspapers causes historians a variety of problems. The types of information that newspapers contain, their design and construction and their primary role as a contemporary information source, affect their value. By studying more experienced newspaper users, a greater appreciation of these problems could be achieved. Moreover, techniques could be highlighted to overcome or minimise any difficulties. The study concluded that newspapers are unlike other historical sources. Specific methods are required to search, evaluate and use them, and many historians require guidance in this area. Chapter Four discussed the types of enquiries most suitable for newspaper research and suggested strategies for finding and using the information they contain, are offered. These strategies has been developed further in this chapter to form a more comprehensive set of models for conducting newspaper research. These should be of value to all types of historians, and will contribute towards understanding the information needs of this group.

The case studies examined a variety of newspaper collections in Wales to investigate the policies and strategies that they adopt, and to assess the current level of provision. A study of the experiences and opinions of historians complemented this information. By examining these findings together, from both the librarian's and the user's perspective, it is possible to gain a more complete understanding of the issues. Perhaps one of the most significant finding was revealed from the language used in newspaper collection management. Terms such as 'repository' and 'custodian' imply a collection being established for the purposes of preservation. This study concluded that preservation techniques are important, for they ensure the survival of an otherwise fragile source. However, the balance between access and preservation needs to be appropriate. Currently this balance is weighted towards viewing the newspapers as collections in need of preservation, without equal emphasis being placed upon providing suitable access.

Newspapers are known to be a problematic library resource. However, few previous studies have examined the issues in detail. This is, in part, a reflection of the limited thought given to their management and exploitation in the library. This study found that policies relating to newspaper collections were often informal and that newspapers were not fully integrated into the library collection. While this research provides a contribution towards understanding these issues, clearly more work is required. This study opened up a dialogue between an important group of newspaper users and the librarians who manage such collections. Few opportunities for communication between these two groups appeared to exist, prior to this study. While there are no simple solutions to many of the difficulties associated with newspaper collection and management, a greater awareness of each other's perspective will help both librarians and historians develop mutually beneficial strategies, for dealing with the difficulties they experience.

In March 1999 the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded five million pounds to the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel, in recognition of the importance of preserving newspaper

collections.[1] Following this announcement, it became increasingly important to seek a greater understanding of the problems that newspapers present both users and librarians. While the bulk of this money is to be spent on preservation microfilming, the British Library recognises that digitisation is the ultimate solution to many of the access problems associated with newspapers. Some money will be available for further experiments in this area, but for both practical and financial reasons there are no immediate plans for large scale digitisation. When digitisation does take place it is likely that collections will be scanned from the microfilm, experiments have shown this is feasible, being more practical and cheaper.[2] Furthermore, pioneering work has been undertaken outside the UK, such as the Nordic project on digitisation of historical newspapers.[3] With these developments on the horizon in the UK, the findings from this study would appear to be particularly timely. By highlighting problems that newspapers currently cause both users and librarians, future information systems can be designed more appropriately. The development of digital collections is still at an early stage, and therefore it is suggested that the recommendations from this study should be more widely distributed to interested parties.

6.2 Recommendations

Three types of recommendations are provided in this section. Firstly, a detailed framework and guidelines for utilising newspapers is presented, which should be of value to historians. While some of the suggestions many be familiar to the experienced academic historian, it is hoped that less experienced professional or non-professional researchers will find the results of value. More experienced historians may also find that these recommendations can contribute towards using newspapers more effectively. The techniques address problems caused by both the nature of newspapers and current practices in repositories of various kinds.

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[1] NEWSPLAN. *Heritage Lottery Fund Award of £5 million.* Hp. 25th Mar 1999 [last update]. Online. British Library. Available: http://portico.bl.uk/collections/newspaper /nplanhlf.html. June 1999.
[2] Hartmut Weber and Marianne Dorr; translated by Andrew Medlicott. *Digitisation as a Method of Preservation?: final report of a working group of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Association) (Amsterdam: European Commission on Preservation and Access, 1997)
[3] For more details on this and other digitisation projects see Chapter 1, Section 1.5.2 (ii)

However, this thesis also recognised the fundamental way in which libraries and other archives shape the historian's use of all manner of sources. Thus, a set of guidelines for the management and exploitation of newspaper collections is provided. This has been developed partly from considering the needs of historians, but also by looking at current good practice in both local and national collections. These guidelines could be developed into standards of good practice, accredited by a body such as the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel.

Thirdly, recommendations are presented which are of relevance to policy makers at a national level concerned with the storage of newspapers, for example the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel and the BLNL. Change at a local level requires co-ordination, and improving access to newspaper collections both nationally and locally requires some overarching structure. At the time of writing this thesis, the current Government clearly considered newspapers to be an important part of our national heritage, as demonstrated by the Heritage Lottery Fund award. This funding is also a tribute to the success of the NEWSPLAN project. In such a context, the findings of this study are pertinent, reflecting the need for communication between users and custodians. Preservation work is admirable in itself, however without an equal concern for access initiatives, newspaper collection will continue to be problematic and under-exploited.

6.2.1 Recommendations for the historian

Newspapers are a highly valuable source for historical research. The value of the press as a source was discussed in detail in Chapter Four. It emerged that many historians required further guidance concerning various aspects of using newspapers. This guidance concerned both the practicalities of working in a library or archive and advice to assist them in searching and evaluating newspapers. Therefore, this section offers recommendations as a series of models, to assist the newspaper user through all stages of the research process. The guidelines are offered tentatively, recognising that further work in this area is required. Work has not been undertaken to test and evaluate these models. However, they begin to address the problems associated with newspaper use, by offering some guidance to the historian.

The guidelines are presented as a six stage model. Before providing some search strategies for the historian, it is important to recognise that newspapers are a valuable, but highly fragile source. Consequently the user has responsibilities to avoid causing further damage when using them. Achieving a satisfactory balance between preserving sources and allowing access to them is not easy. However, this issue should not become a point of conflict between the user and custodian. Librarians should understand the information requirements of historians and assist them in satisfying those needs. Conversely historians must have realistic expectations over access to newspaper collections. A responsible approach to using newspapers on the part of the historian should minimise conflict with librarians while both groups seek a more satisfactory solution. The guidelines also provide information about preparing for newspaper research, and ways of conducting background studies of particular titles. Search strategies and an evaluation model are also provided.

(i) Responsibilities of the newspaper user

a) Establish the policies relating to access before visiting a newspaper collection. Do not assume you will be able to use the original newspaper; it is becoming increasingly common for users to be supplied with microfilms for preservation reasons. While this is not always a pleasant medium to use, there are often good reasons why the original is not available.

b) Share experiences about newspaper use and valuable collections with other historians. If possible talk to a colleague who has previously used a collection to identify any particular problems that may exist.

c) Where access to original newspapers is allowed, remember they are highly fragile, valuable sources, and should be treated accordingly. Turn the pages carefully and do not handle them excessively.

d) Equal care should be taken when handling microfilmed newspapers - particularly when loading them onto and off the microfilm reader. If a user is unsure of how to operate the machinery properly, consult a member of staff at the collection.

e) If access to a particular source is restricted, do not embarrass staff at the collection by asking to use it - policies are often in place for a reason. If it is essential to

consult the original it would be better to contact a senior librarian or archivist in advance to discuss your particular requirements.

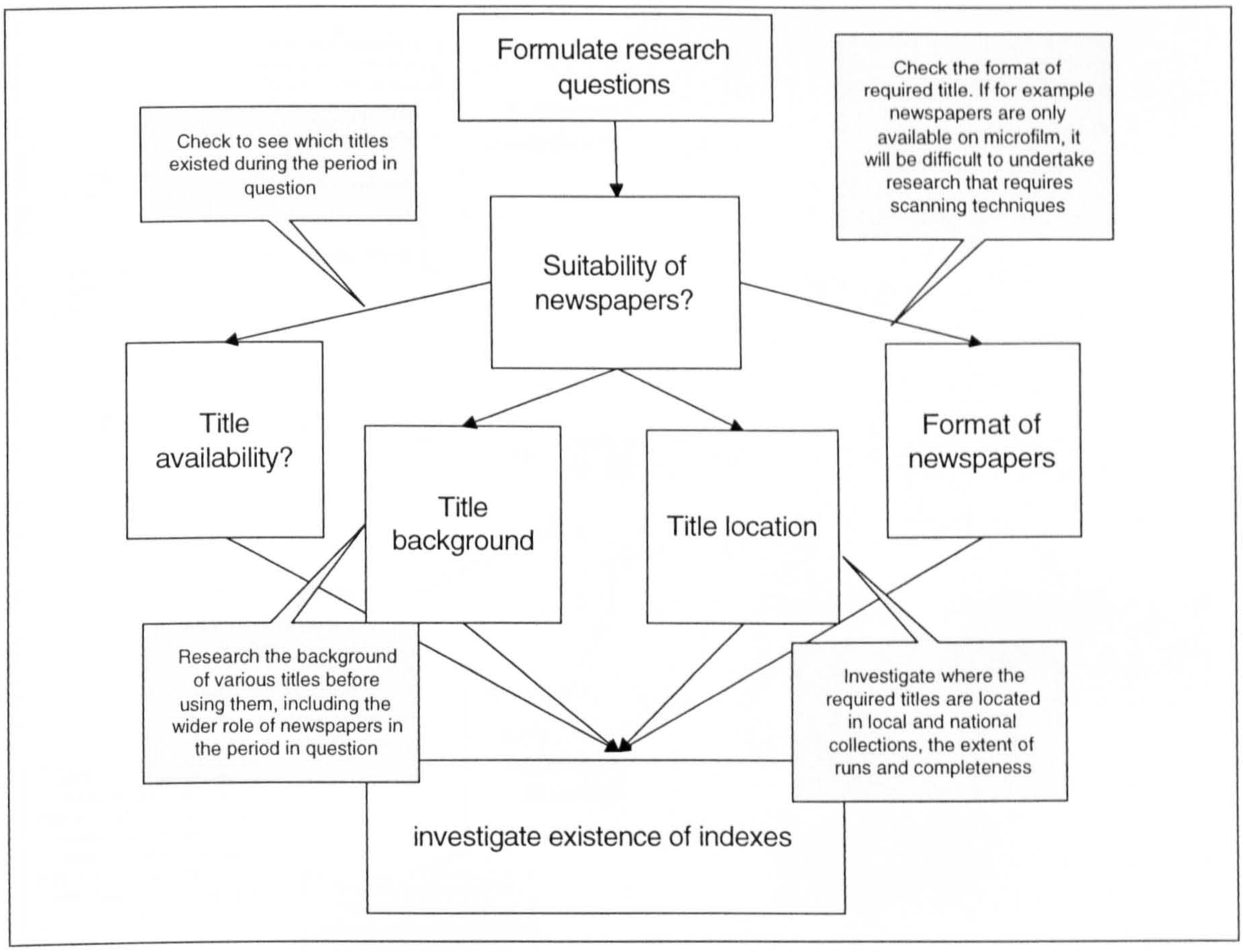
f) If you have particular problems at a newspaper collection, inform the staff of your difficulties. It may be possible to find a compromise or solution through discussion.

g) Participate in debate over digital collections. Historians should take an interest in the future plans of newspaper collections relating to access and any developments in ICTs. They should ensure libraries are aware of their needs and the problems they currently experience, so that appropriate solutions can be sought.

(ii) Preparations for newspaper research

Preparation for historical enquiries using newspapers should be thorough. Projects should have clearly formulated research questions, to establish the type of information that is required from newspapers. Preparations should then include a variety of background research activities to decide upon the suitability and importance newspapers will have. Figure 18 provides a model for this activity:

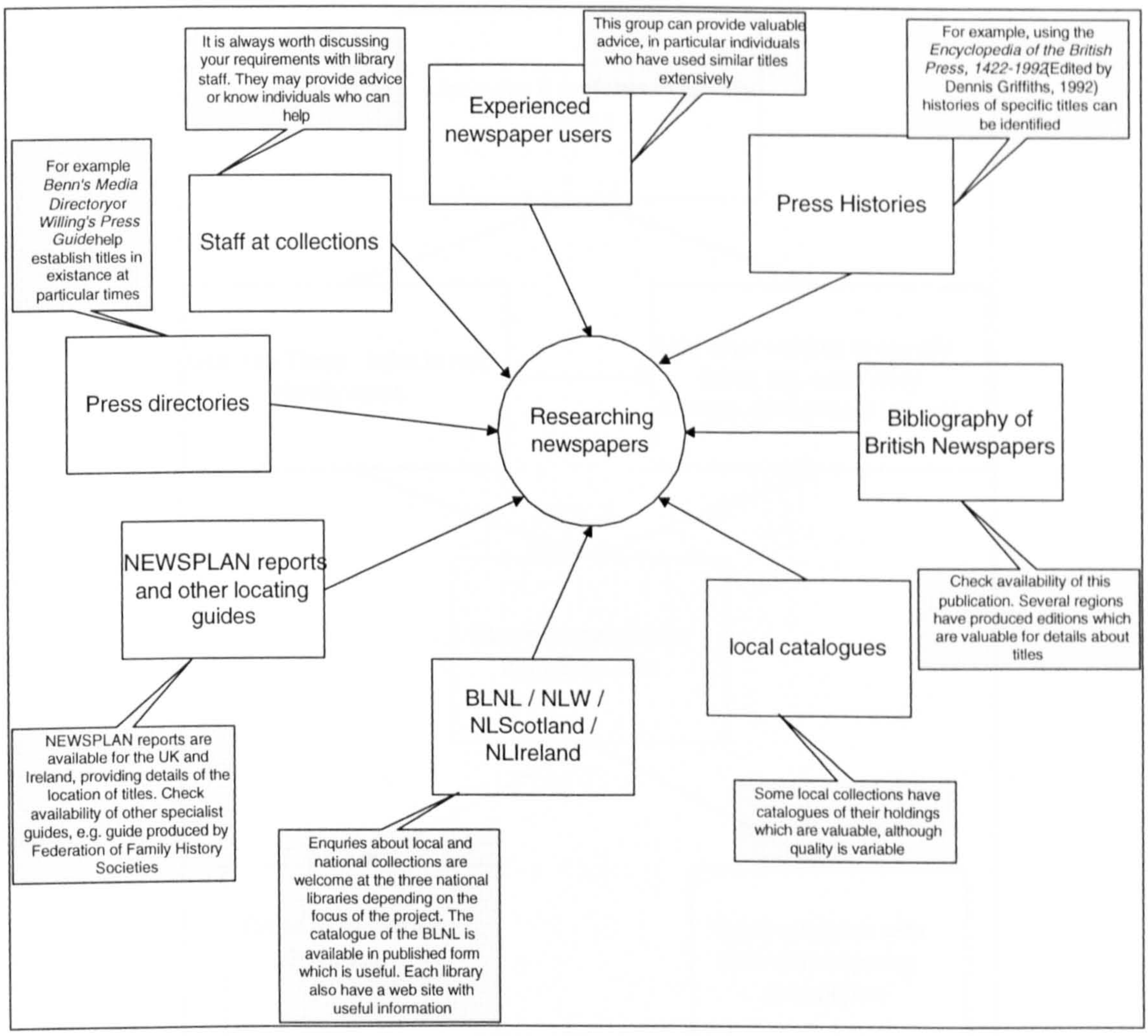
Figure 18: Model showing stages undertaken before beginning newspaper research



(iii) Background research on newspapers

There are many points to consider before using the newspaper as a source. Establishing what titles are available, where these are held and the format in which they exist, is important. It is also necessary to also have an understanding of newspapers for the period in question. However, the level of detail required in background research will vary according to the importance of newspapers in the study. For example, when newspapers are the main historical document used for a piece of research, it will be more important to conduct extensive background research than when they form one of several sources. This study inferred that historians were often unaware of the sources available to assist them in their use of newspapers. Consequently, Figure 19 was devised, demonstrating techniques for researching newspapers.

Figure 19: Model showing techniques for researching newspapers



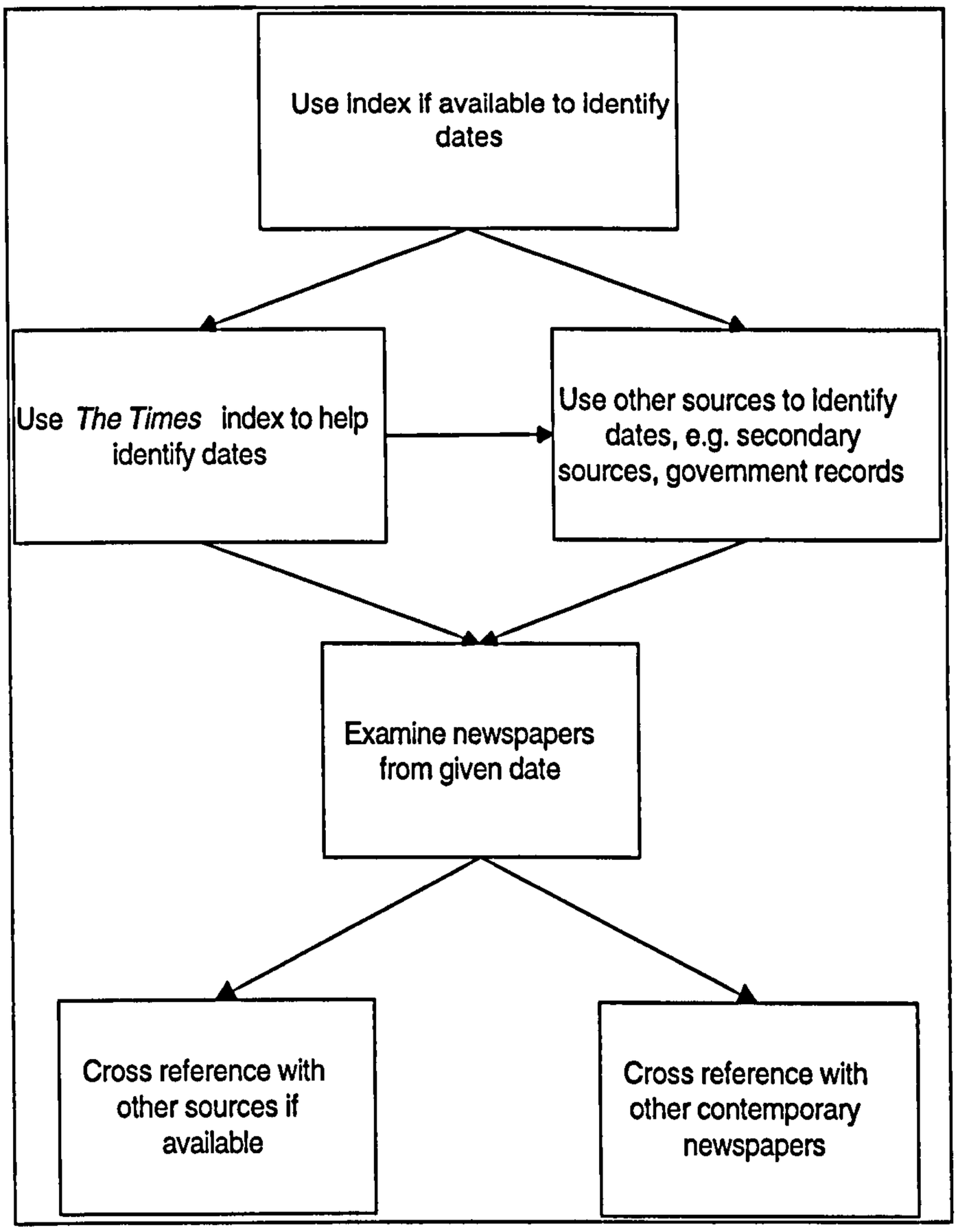
(iv) Search strategies for newspaper research

Newspapers can be used in a variety of ways for historical research. Two examples of search strategies are provided for less experienced users. These techniques are based upon the information seeking behaviour of historians. Both the models presented assume that the historians would previously have followed the guidance provided in Figures 18 and 19.

(a) Searching using date references

Date references provide a readily available access point to the newspaper. When the dates of events or incidents are known research using newspapers can be relatively straightforward. A simple model for conducting newspaper research, when known dates of events are being searched for, is presented in Figure 20:

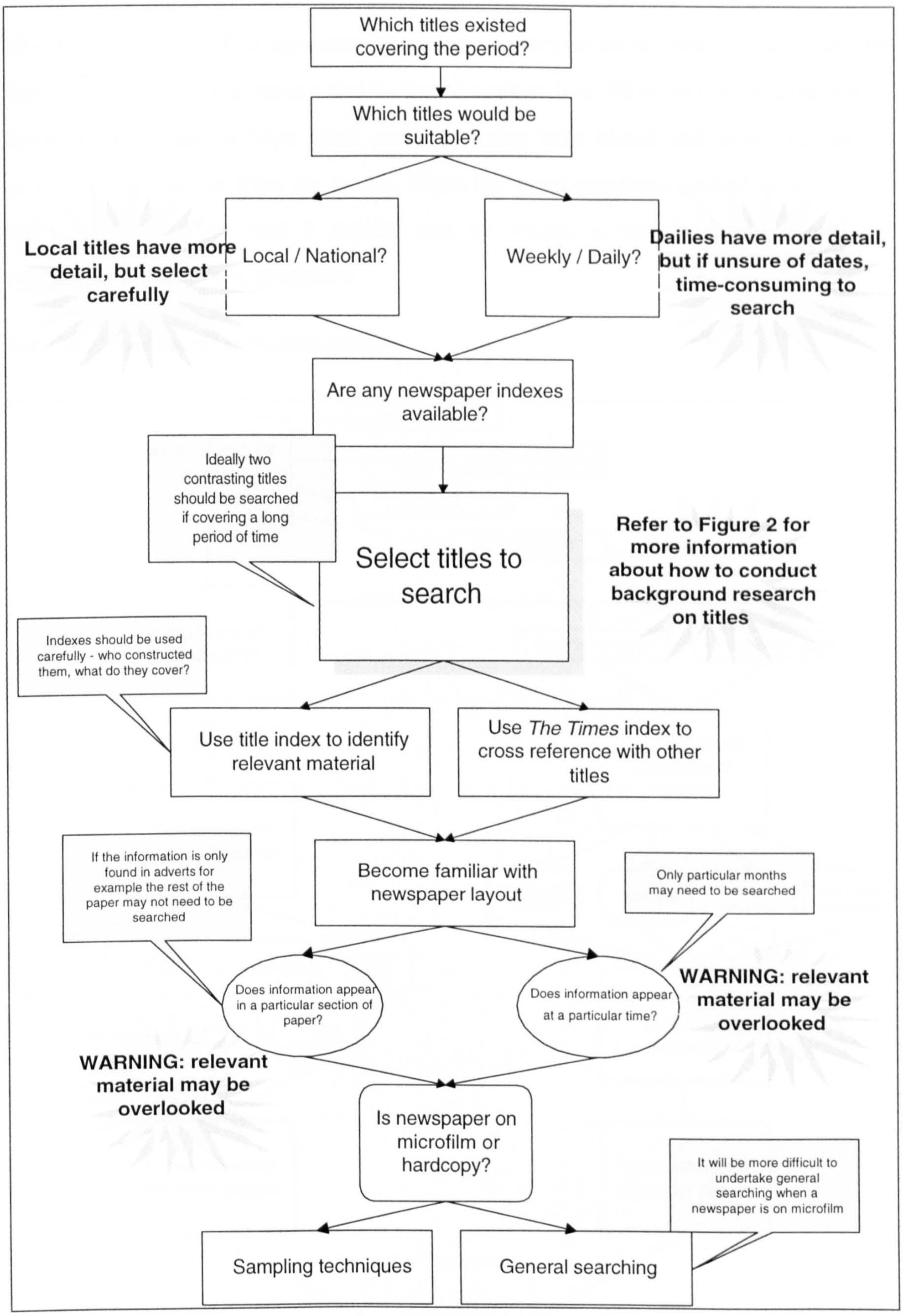
Figure 20: Model showing method of searching newspapers for dates



(b) Searching without date references

Research is often undertaken that does not involve specific date references, particularly when the historian is tracing a theme across a period, for example, a subject such as emigration to America from Wales in the nineteenth century. Although there were particular periods when greater numbers of people left Wales, this subject is not primarily associated with specific dates. This type of enquiry can be more problematic, for it requires more general searching of the newspaper across a wider period. The following model was developed and is suggested as guidance:

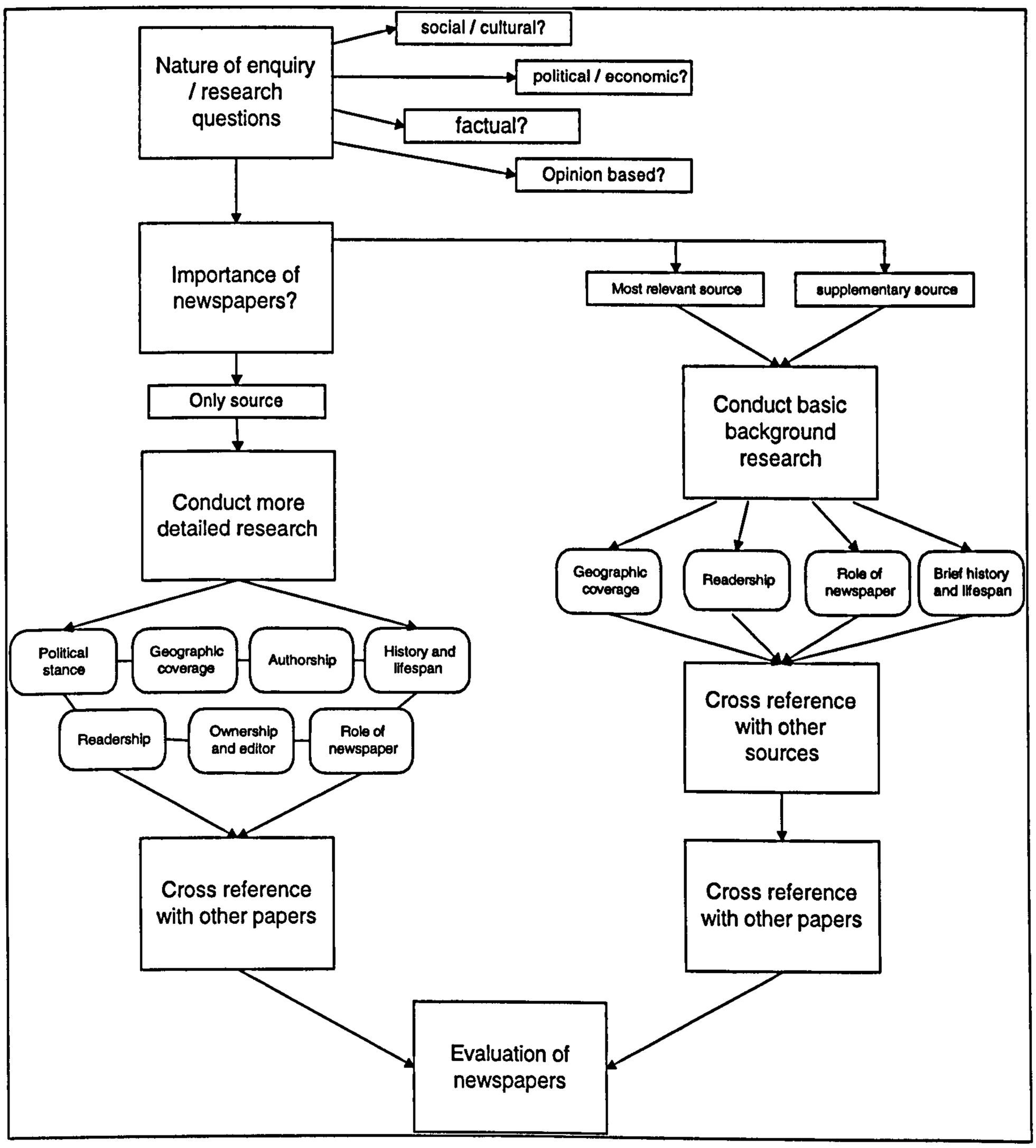
Figure 21: Model showing method of searching without date references



(v) Evaluating newspaper sources

Historians are trained to scrutinise all historical documents in order to contextualise them, to assess their accuracy and to guard against bias. However, newspapers as a form of media, are perhaps more prone to being both biased and selective, and to conceal these features from the reader. While the usual questions applied to all sources apply, such as when was it written and by whom, a more rigorous model for newspaper evaluation is proposed.

Figure 22: Newspaper evaluation model



(vi) Other considerations for the historian

Other more general considerations for the historian using newspapers include the time consuming and tiring nature of this type of research. This can be exacerbated by the use of microfilm, particularly where the readers or the film is poorly maintained. It is also highly advisable to make notes of relevant material as it is discovered, as newspaper research often relies upon serendipity. It is also essential to record the location of any relevant material, including volume, edition, page and column number, to ensure it can be located again if necessary.

6.2.2 Recommendations for newspaper collections

Recommendations for the newspaper librarian are problematic, because limited financial resources may only be available, and also because of the variety of different types of organisation that collect newspapers. This study found that in Wales there was a lack of common practice and standards among local collections, with varying policies and procedures. It recognised that guidance for the storage, management and exploitation of newspaper collections would be valuable to all public institutions, both in Wales and more generally in the UK. This guidance could lead to the development of quality standards or 'good practice' for newspaper collections, recognised and commended by a body such as the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel and/or the BLNL. The following guidelines are therefore tentative. However, they could be used as the basis for established standards in the field.

The guidelines appear below:

(i)Guidelines for newspaper collections

1 Collection policy and management

1.1 Collection policies need to be formalised with a written statement of the titles currently collected and held, providing a rationale.

1.2 Collection should reflect the titles available in the locality.

1.3 Collection policies should complement the titles collected at other local collections.

1.4 As resources allow, collections having missing numbers or volumes should be augmented with microfilmed titles.

1.5 The entire newspaper collection should be managed as a single entity, including the current titles, CD-ROMs and retrospective collection.

1.6 Electronic newspapers require a collection policy.

2 Bibliographic control

2.1 Ideally libraries should maintain an OPAC that contains information about the newspaper holdings.

2.2 Catalogues should be mounted on the Internet and linked via a UK gateway to achieve bibliographic control.

2.3 Where an OPAC is not available, a printed catalogue should be made available at the collection with detailed listings of the extent of newspaper runs (noting any gaps), indicating the condition of material and any special notes about the newspapers.

2.4 The appropriate NEWSPLAN region should maintain up to date records on any changes to local collection and alert national libraries to these changes.

3 Storage and management

3.1 Archival standards should be maintained for storing both hardcopy and microfilm newspapers, (refer to BS 1153; 1992 Recommendations for processing and storage of silver-gelatin type microfilm).

3.2 As resources allow, large screen, modern microfilm readers designed for consulting newspapers, should be purchased.

3.3 Microfilm readers should be properly maintained.

4 Preservation

4.1 The importance of participation and co-operation with the NEWSPLAN project should be recognised.

4.2 Extra care should be taken with those titles identified as priorities for microfilming by NEWSPLAN.

4.3 Microfilming of all titles should be undertaken as resources allow.

5 Access

5.1 Access policies need to be formalised and documented, ideally preventing access to hardcopy titles except under carefully controlled conditions.

5.2 Where a collection holds unique material it is essential that copies are made available to the national collection.

5.3 Copying facilities need to be available for users, such as microfilm-reader printers or an ordering service offering prompt delivery.

5.4 Publicity material for the newspaper collection should be available to increase awareness of its content and value.

5.5 Information about newspaper indexes should be made available

5.6 User surveys of the newspaper collection should be undertaken periodically, in order to ensure user needs are being met and to foster understanding.

5.7 Important policy changes should only be undertaken after consultation with the users of the newspaper collection.

5.8 Although ICTs have currently had a limited impact upon the newspaper collection, they have the potential to improve access. Any new developments should consider the needs of users.

6 Staff development

6.1 The library should encourage and support staff training in newspaper librarianship, including handling of newspapers.

6.2 Staff should have a knowledge of the holdings of their collection and the availability of other local titles in both local and national collections.

6.3 A member of staff should take responsibility for the newspaper collection.

6.2.3 Additional recommendations for policy makers at a national level

The guidelines provided in Section 6.2.2 require collaboration with national and local bodies concerned with newspaper collection, to transform them into quality standards or guidelines for 'good practice'. However, even with a set of standards at a local level, only a limited amount of progress can be made, given the limited resources and political influence. Newspaper collection requires overall co-ordination at a UK level so that the national libraries and the regional library systems can work together. Increasing the status of newspaper collections, raising awareness generally about their value to different types of users clearly cannot be done by individual libraries working in isolation. The NEWSPLAN project has provided an overarching structure with the BLNL and the Regional Library Systems working together on the LINC NEWSPLAN Panel. Therefore, the following additional recommendations are primarily directed at this group.

Following the successful Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) application in 1999, resulting in £5 million further funding for the NEWSPLAN project, these recommendations could be particularly timely and relevant. NEWSPLAN highlighted the importance of newspaper preservation and the HLF award is to be used mainly for preservation purposes. However, this study found that without complementary research to provide improvements in access, the objectives of preservation alone in the long term are limited. The relationship between the issues of preservation and access are complex. Allowing unrestricted access to material will undoubtedly hamper preservation efforts. However, there is little purpose in preserving material that cannot be accessed. Therefore, many of the following recommendations seek to achieve a more appropriate balance between these two issues.

- **Understanding user needs**

Improving access cannot be achieved without first understanding the needs of users. This study went some way to highlighting the information needs of historians and their patterns of use. However, there is clearly a need for further work in this area to examine all users of the newspaper collections and understand their needs. A pilot

user survey of the newspaper collection has been undertaken in the LASER region. The LINC NEWSPLAN Panel should consider further work in this area.

- **Collaboration with users over digital sources**

Before policy decisions regarding digitisation are finalised, further studies examining the needs of historians and others are necessary. The History Data Service at the University of Essex has conducted research into this area and collaboration with this group would be valuable before attempting such work.

- **Improving access through NEWSPLAN information**

Access to newspapers requires information about their location. This is currently available in the NEWSPLAN reports, two of which are now available electronically via the Internet. Work associated with the HLF grant may make all the reports available in this form. This study found that finding information about holdings, particularly at local collections was problematic yet crucial to success, therefore this development will be welcome.

- **Improving access through Inter-Library Loan**

Access is currently a problem when titles are only held at one location such as the BLNL. Therefore, a study into the feasibility of Inter-Library Loan system for microfilmed newspapers is advocated. This system would probably require the production of a extra copy of microfilmed titles which could then be loaned to both record offices and libraries. Funding the service could be problematic and it might only be feasible if users were required to pay for loans. However, the research suggested that most researchers would not object to such charges being raised if it reduced the need to travel to other collections.

- **Co-ordinating collection at local levels**

A review of newspaper collection activity and practice in different regions is advocated, possibly co-ordinated by the NEWSPLAN regions. Ideally an overall co-ordinated and co-operative plan for local collections is required, rather than the haphazard collection that occurs at the moment. For example, county libraries could be

given responsibility for titles that circulate more widely within a county, while smaller libraries could collect more local titles. County Record Offices could also provide a complementary newspaper collection. In Wales this is particularly important to ensure the NLW and the BLNL co-operate more effectively. The effects of local government re-organisation and the creation of unitary authorities also need to be examined. This is particularly relevant in Wales where re-organisation in 1995 had a marked effect on library provision. Policies for the collection of electronic newspapers also need to be formalised. Adopting a co-ordinated strategy will ensure resources are used more efficiently and that local collection is more appropriate to the needs of users.

- **Educating newspaper librarians**

Education and training is required for staff dealing with newspaper collections. The LINC NEWSPLAN Panel should consider that trained staff will complement the work of the project and the panel should consider becoming involved. Training could take several forms including one day special courses for current library staff, possibly offered through the Library Association. Newspaper librarianship could also be incorporated in the education programmes of librarians at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Parallels can be drawn with the development of distance learning modules in Music Librarianship and Rare Book Librarianship, offered by the University of Wales, Aberystwyth, which have been supported by various interested groups.

6.3 Summary

The problems associated with newspaper collections and their users are varied and complex. However, little previous research has been undertaken in this field. This study sought to understand the particular difficulties that newspapers present to both users and custodians. It concluded that a reciprocal understanding between these groups would help to develop solutions, but that, at present, communication channels between them were limited. Historians can adopt various measures to make newspaper research less problematic and yield more useful results, such as developing specific search and evaluation techniques. Similarly, by changing the policies and procedures within organisations holding collections of newspapers, access to the source could also be improved. However, in order fully to address the difficulties that users

experience, custodians should seek a better understanding of historians' needs and behaviour. Historians will also be able to use newspapers more effectively if they develop an appreciation of the way in which librarians maintain newspaper collections. Achieving solutions will not be straightforward. Nevertheless, co-operation and communication are the keys to developing more appropriate policies and procedures which address the needs of both groups.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Content analysis coding frame and sample results

1 (a) Coding Frame

A	National News
B	International News
C	Local News
D	Features
E	Other Editorial
F	Advertisements

National News (A)
This section included all news items originating from outside the circulation area of the newspaper. Many were news from London although reports were taken from Scottish newspapers and local newspapers in other areas.

International News (B)
This section included all news stories concerning countries outside England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

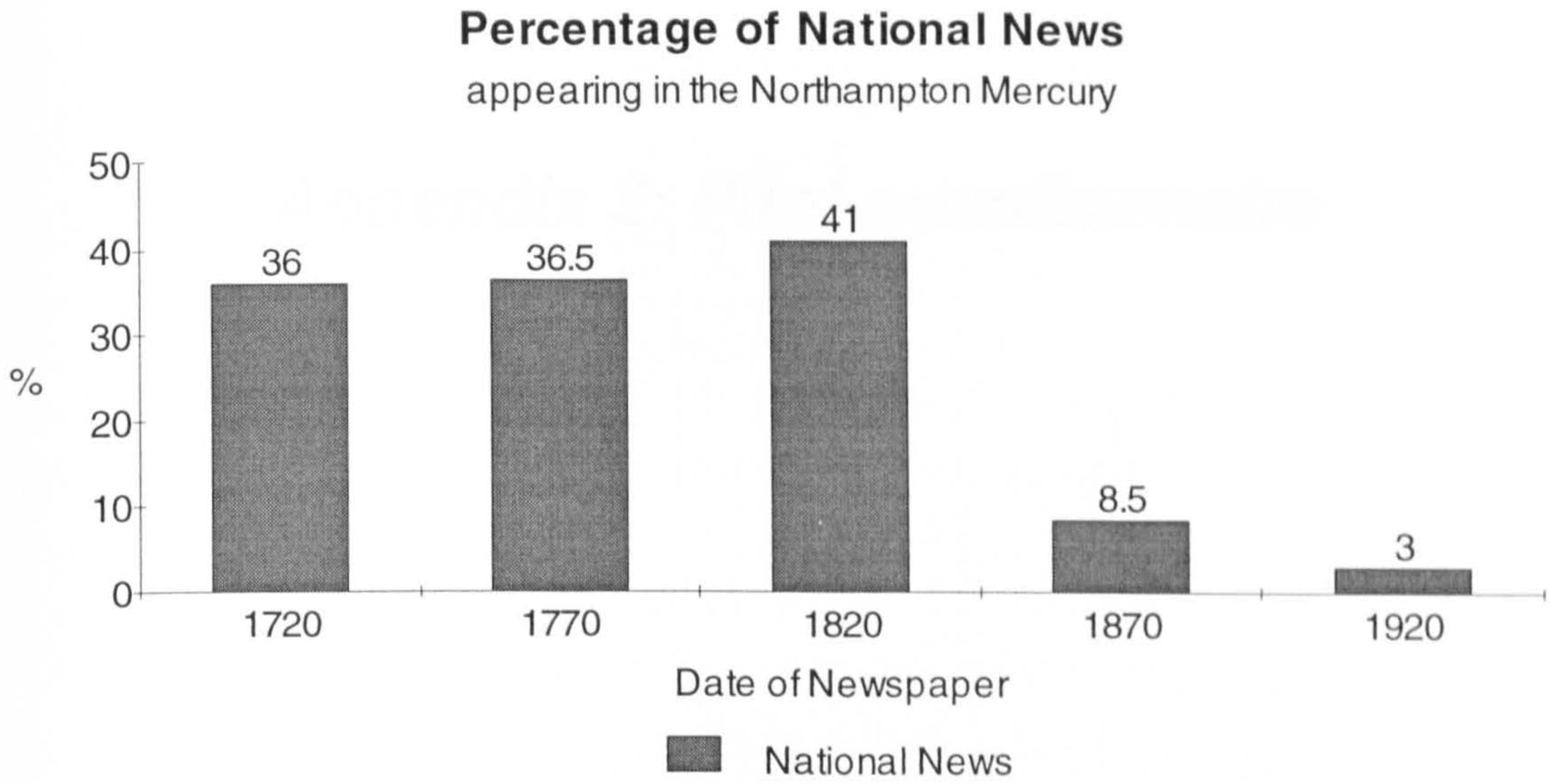
Local News (C)
This section included news items pertaining to the region in which the local newspaper was circulated.

Features (D)
This section includes features on specific topics that are not advertisements and not news but designed to provide entertainment to the reader.

Other Editorial (E)
This section includes letters, stories, poems and other material.

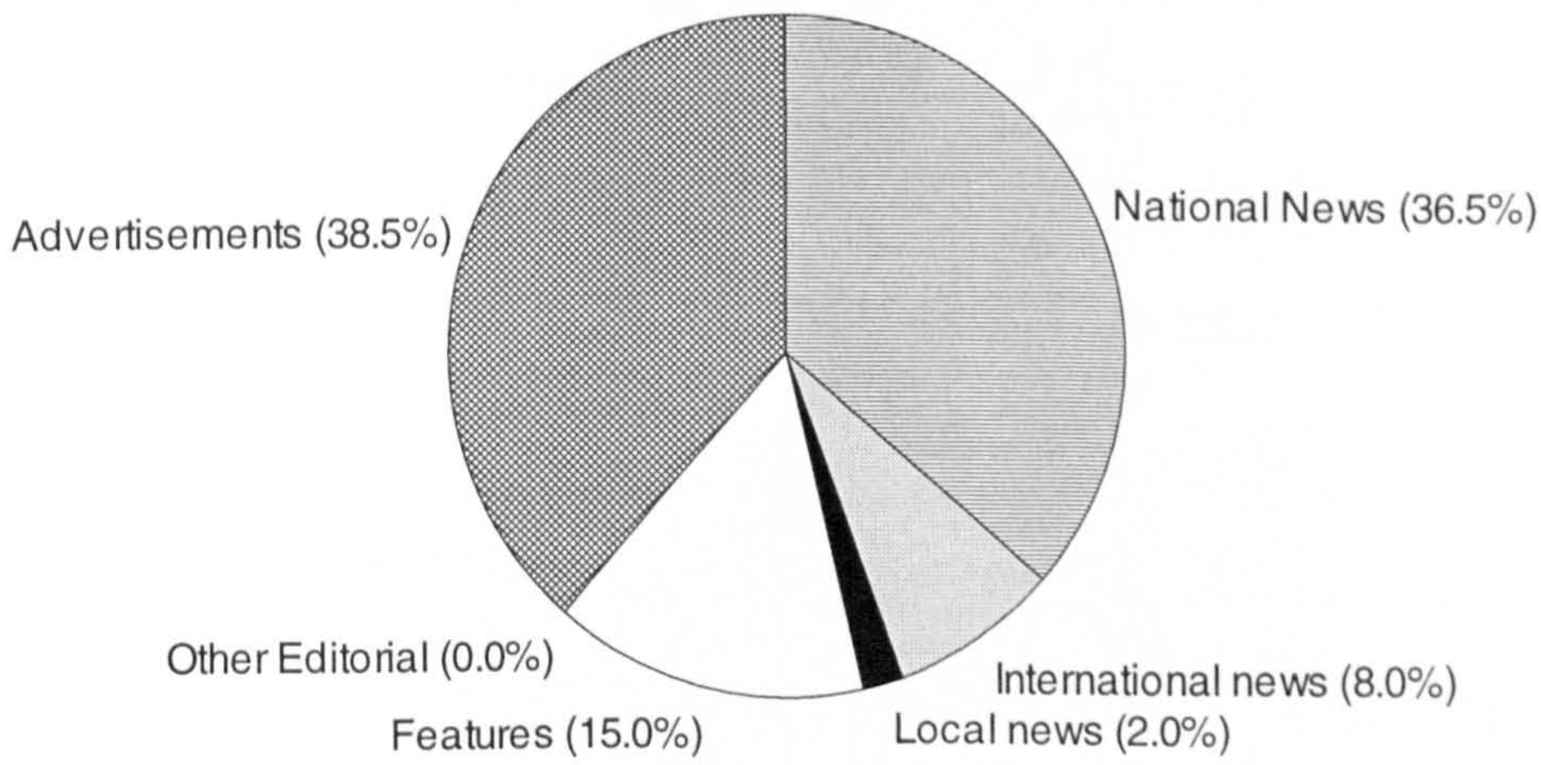
Advertisements (F)
All advertising material including that which is concealed as news or a feature.

1 (b) Sample results from content analysis



General Observations from the 1770 edition of the *Northampton Mercury*

- There is little evidence of local news in this edition, however the national news is from all round the country and does just not concentrate on London. The local content is reflected in the advertisements which are numerous and often difficult to distinguish from the news stories.
- The newspaper is again reliant on the postal service, which is quite apparent from its layout under two posts. Tuesday and Wednesday's post are printed on page 2 and Thursday and Friday's post are printed on page 3.
- The type face is very small and difficult to read although fractionally larger type, italics and capitals are used to distinguish between different items in the newspaper.



Appendix 2: Pilot questionnaire

Questionnaire for historians - use of newspapers as a primary source

1. Please specify the type of historian you define yourself as *(tick as appropriate)*

Professional historian working in higher education ☐
Research student in higher education ☐
Local historian ☐
Family historian/ Genealogist ☐
Other *(please specify)* ☐

_____

2. Please briefly describe the period and aspect of history your research / subject specialism concentrates on. _____

_____

_____

3. Do you regularly (at least once a week) read any of the following categories of British newspapers?

	Yes	No
National daily newspapers eg. The Times	☐	☐
Local / regional daily newspapers eg The Western Mail	☐	☐
Local weekly newspapers eg The Cambrian News ☐	☐	

4.a) Have you ever used any newspapers on CD-ROM or the Internet for any purpose? *(tick where used)*

	CD-ROM	INTERNET
Yes for research	☐	☐
Yes for recreation	☐	☐
No, never	☐	☐
Yes for another reason *(please explain below)*	☐	☐

_____

_____

b) If you have used a newspaper on CD-ROM or the Internet, please explain why you liked/disliked them?

_____

_____

_____

5. Please specify any primary source/s that is/are important in your research? e.g. government records, private correspondence.

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. a) Have you ever used any newspapers in your research? Yes ☐ No ☐

If you have not used ANY newspapers in your research, please go to question 12

b) How important are newspapers as primary sources for your research?

Very important ☐ Important ☐ Fairly unimportant ☐ Unimportant ☐

7. Which of the following categories of British newspapers do you use in your research, and how important is each category for your research?

	tick if used	V.important	Important	Fairly unimp	Unimportant
National daily newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local/regional daily newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local weekly newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Free local Newspapers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. If you primarily use newspapers from outside Britain, please state the country from which they orginate.

_____

9. In what format do you prefer to receive newspapers for your research? *(tick one)*

Hardcopy - bound volume	☐	Microfilm	☐
Hardcopy - loose	☐	CD-ROM	☐

10.a) Do you like using newspapers in hardcopy for your research? Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐
(Please explain your preference below)

b) Do you like using newspapers on microfilm for your research? Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐
(Please explain your preference below)

c) Do you like using newspapers on CD-ROM for your research? Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐
(Please explain your preference below)

11. Please indicate the locations you have visited to use newspaper collections for your research and the frequency you visit them in a year.

	3+ visits	2-3 visits	1 visit	Not used
British Library Newspaper Library	☐	☐	☐	☐
National Library of Wales	☐	☐	☐	☐
County Record Office	☐	☐	☐	☐
Public Library	☐	☐	☐	☐
Newspaper Office library	☐	☐	☐	☐
Private collection	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other (*please specify*)_____	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. *EITHER* **a) Please describe briefly any problems you may have encountered when using British local newspapers for historical research.**
OR **b) If you have not used British local newspapers for your research briefly explain why this is.**

13. Please indicate your age range *(tick as appropriate)*

21-30	☐	51-60	☐
31-40	☐	61-70	☐
41-50	☐	70+	☐

14. Finally, would you be prepared to be interviewed regarding your views on the use of British local newspapers in historical research. The interview would take approximately 1 hour of your time?

Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure, require more information ☐

Thank you very much for your help

Please provide contact details below if you are willing to be interviewed or require more information.

Name_____
Address_____
_____
_____
Telephone Number_____
E-mail

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE BY XX/X/97

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Appendix 3: Final version of questionnaire

Questionnaire for historians - use of newspapers as a primary source

Section A: Introductory details

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Telephone Number.....

E-mail.....

Age range (*please tick*) 18-30❍ 31-40❍ 41-50❍ 51-60❍ 61-70❍ 70+❍

1. Please specify the type of historian you describe yourself as (*tick as appropriate*)

Professional historian in higher education	❐	Family historian / Genealogist	❐
Research student in higher education	❐	Other (*please specify*)	❐
Local historian	❐	.....	

2. Please briefly describe the period & aspect of history your research/subject specialism concentrates on

.....

.....

.....

3. Do you regularly (at least once a week) read any of the following categories of British newspapers?

	Yes	No
National daily newspapers eg. The Times	❐	❐
Local / regional daily newspapers eg The Western Mail	❐	❐
Local weekly newspapers eg The Cambrian News	❐	❐

4. a) Have you ever used any newspapers on CD-ROM or the Internet for any purpose?

	NO	YES for research	YES for another reason
CD-ROM	❐	❐	❐
Internet	❐	❐	❐

b) If you have used a newspaper on CD-ROM or the Internet, please explain why you liked/disliked this format.

.....

.....

Section B: The Use of Newspapers for Your Research

5. Please specify any primary sources that are important in your research? e.g. government records, private correspondence.

.....

.....

.....

.....

6. a) Have you ever used any newspapers in your research?

Yes ❐ *(If YES go to question 8)*

No ❐ *(If NO go to question 7)*

7. Finally briefly explain why you have not used any newspapers in your research.

.....

.....

.....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE, PLEASE RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED. CONTACT DETAILS AVAILABLE OVERLEAF.

8. Please specify how important the following categories of newspapers are for your research in comparison to other primary sources you use.

	Most used	Important	Fairly imp.	Fairly unimp	Not used
UK National daily newspapers	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
UK Local/regional daily newspapers	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
UK Local weekly newspapers	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
UK Free local Newspapers	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
Newspapers from outside the UK	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐

Holiadur i haneswyr - defnyddio papurau newydd fel ffynhonnell sylfaenol

Adran A: Manylion Cychwynol

Enw.....

Cyfeiriad.....

.....

Rhif Ffôn.....

E-bost.....

Oedran (*ticiwch os gwelwch yn dda)* 18-30❍ 31-40❍ 41-50❍ 51-60❍ 61-70❍ 70+❍

1. Fel pa fath o hanesydd y byddech yn disgrifio eich hunan? *(ticiwch fel y bo'n briodol)*

Hanesydd proffesiynol mewn addysg uwch ❐
Myfyriwr ymchwil mewn addysg uwch ❐
Hanesydd Lleol ❐
Hanesydd Teuluol / Achydd ❐
Arall *(manylwch os gwelwch yn dda)* ❐
.....

2. Os gwelwch yn dda, disgrifiwch yn fyr y cyfnod o hanes a'r agwedd arno yr ydych yn ymchwilio iddo/arbenigo ynddo.....

.....

.....

3. A fyddwch yn darllen yn rheolaidd (o leiaf unwaith yr wythnos) unrhyw rai o'r mathau canlynol o bapurau newydd prydeinig?

	Byddaf	Na Fyddaf
Papur dyddiol cenedlaethol e.e The Times	❐	❐
Papur dyddiol rhanbarthol / lleol e.e The Western Mail	❐	❐
Papur wythnosol lleol e.e The Cambrian News	❐	❐

4. a) A ydych erioed wedi defnyddio papurau newydd ar CD-ROM neu'r rhyngrwyd at unrhyw bwrpas?

	Nac Ydwyf	Ydwyf- ar gyfer ymchwil	Ydwyf - am reswm arall
CD-ROM	❐	❐	❐
Rhyngrwyd	❐	❐	❐

b) Os ydych wedi defnyddio papur newydd ar CD-ROM neu'r Rhyngrwyd, a allwch esbonio pam yr oeddech / nad oeddech yn hoffi'r fformat hwn?.....

.....

Adran B:Defnyddio papurau newydd ar gyfer eich ymchwil

5. Os gwelwch yn dda, disgrifiwch unrhyw ffynonellau sylfaenol sy'n bwysig yn eich ymchwile.e. cofnodion y llywodraeth, gohebiaeth breifat.....

.....

.....

.....

6. a) A ydych erioed wedi defnyddio unrhyw bapurau newydd yn eich ymchwil Ydwyf ❐ *(Os 'ydwyf' ewch at gwestiwn 8)*
Nac Ydwyf ❐ *(Os 'nac Ydwyf' ewch at gwestiwn 7)*

7. Yn olaf, a allwch esbonio'n fyr pam nad ydych wedi defnyddio papurau newydd yn eich ymchwil?

.....

.....

.....

DIOLCH AM EICH CYMORTH. OS GWELWCH YN DDA, DYCHWELWCH YR HOLIADUR YN YR AMLEN A DDARPARWYD. MANYLION CYSWLLT DROSODD.

8. Dwedwch os gwelwch yn dda pa mor bwysig yw'r mathau canlynol o bapurau newydd yn eich ymchwil o'u cymharu â ffynonellau sylfaenol eraill y byddwch yn eu defnyddio.

	Defnyddir fwyaf	Pwysig	Gweddol bwysig	Gweddol ddibwys	Ni ddefnyddir
Papurau dyddiol cenedlaethol y D.U.	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
Papurau dyddiol lleol / rhanbarthol y D.U.	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
Papurau wythnosol lleol y D.U.	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
Papurau lleol am ddim y D.U.	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐
Papurau o'r tu allan i'r D.U.	❐	❐	❐	❐	❐

Questionnaire for historians - use of newspapers as a primary source

9. Please specify the parts of the newspaper you have used for your research. eg. advertisements, news stories, correspondence

.....

.....

.....

Section C: Access and the Newspaper

10. a) Do you prefer using newspapers in hardcopy for your research? Yes ❐ No ❐ Unsure ❐

(Please explain your preference below)

.....

.....

.....

b) Do you prefer using newspapers on microfilm for your research? Yes ❐ No ❐ Unsure ❐

(Please explain your preference below)

.....

.....

.....

11. Please indicate the locations you have visited to use newspaper collections for your research and the frequency you visited them in the last year.

	Not used	1 visit	2-3 visits	3+ visits
British Library Newspaper Library (Colindale)	❐	❐	❐	❐
National Library of Wales	❐	❐	❐	❐
County Record Office	❐	❐	❐	❐
Public Library	❐	❐	❐	❐
Newspaper Office library	❐	❐	❐	❐
Private collection	❐	❐	❐	❐
Other (*please specify*).....	❐	❐	❐	❐

12. a) Have you heard of the British Library NEWSPLAN project? Yes ❐ No ❐ Unsure ❐

(If Yes or Unsure, got to question 12b. If No, go to question 13)

b) Have you used any NEWSPLAN reports to assist your research? Yes ❐ No ❐ Unsure ❐

(If Yes or Unsure, got to question 12c. If No, go to question 13)

c) Please briefly explain the purpose for which you used the NEWSPLAN report.

.....

.....

13. a) Please state any problems you have encountered gaining physical access to newspaper collections. eg unsuitable location

.....

.....

.....

b) Please identify any problems you have encountered gaining access to information within newspapers. eg lack of index

.....

.....

.....

14. Finally, would you be prepared to be interviewed regarding the use of British local newspapers for your research? The interview would take approximately 1 hour of your time at a location convenient to you. Unfortunately interviews will only be in English.

Yes ❐ No ❐ Unsure, require more information ❐

Thank you very much for your help

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED BY 7/4/97

Jane Secker *Tel: 01970 623111 x4515*
Department of Information and Library Studies,
University of Wales Aberystwyth, Llanbadarn Fawr,
Aberystwyth, SY23 3AS email: jns95@aber.ac.uk

Holiadur i haneswyr - defnyddio papurau newydd fel ffynhonnell sylfaenol

9. Dwedwch os gwelwch yn dda pa rannau o bapurau newydd yr ydych wedi eu defnyddi o yn eich ymchwil. e.e hysbysebion, straeon newyddion, llythyrau.....

.....

.....

Adran C: Mynediad i bapurau newydd

10. a) A yw'n well gennych ddefnyddio copïau gwreiddiol o bapurau newydd yn eich ymchwil?
(A allwch esbonio eich ateb?) Ydyw❐ Nac ydyw ❐ Ddim yn siwr❐

.....

.....

.....

b) A yw'n well gennych ddefnyddio copïau meicroffilm o bapurau newydd yn eich ymchwil?
(A allwch esbonio eich ateb?) Ydyw❐ Nac ydyw ❐ Ddim yn siwr❐

.....

.....

.....

11. Os gwelwch yn dda, nodwch y llefydd yr ydych wedi ymweld â hwy i ddefnyddio casgliadau o bapurau newydd ar gyfer eich ymchwil, a pha mor aml y buoch yn ymweld â hwy yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf.

	Ni ddefnyddiwyd	Unwaith	Dwy neu dair gwaith	Mwy na thair gwaith
Llyfrgell Bapurau Newydd y Llyfrgell Brydeinig (Colindale)	❐	❐	❐	❐
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru	❐	❐	❐	❐
Swyddfa Gofnodion Sirol	❐	❐	❐	❐
Llyfrgell Gyhoeddus	❐	❐	❐	❐
Llyfrgell Swyddfa Papur Newydd	❐	❐	❐	❐
Casgliad Preifat	❐	❐	❐	❐
Arall *(manylwch os gwelwch yn dda)*.....	❐	❐	❐	❐

12. a) A ydych wedi clywed am gynllun NEWSPLAN y Llyfrgell Brydeinig? Ydwyf ❐ Nac Ydwyf ❐ Ddim yn siwr ❐
(Os 'Ydwyf' neu 'Ddim yn siwr' ewch at gwestiwn 12b. Os 'Nac Ydwyf' ewch at gwestiwn 13)

b) A ydych wedi defnyddio unrhyw adroddiadau NEWSPLAN i gynorthwyo eich ymchwil? Ydwyf ❐ Nac Ydwyf ❐
(Os 'Ydwyf' neu 'Ddim yn siwr' ewch at gwestiwn 12c. Os 'Nac Ydwyf' ewch at gwestiwn 13) Ddim yn siwr ❐

c) Dwedwch yn fyr os gwelwch yn dda at ba bwrpas y ddefnyddioch adroddiad NEWSPLAN.

.....

.....

13. a) Os gwelwch yn dda, nodwch unrhyw broblemau a gawsoch wrth geisio mynediad i gasgliadau o bapurau newydd. e.e lleoliad anaddas.....

.....

.....

b) Os gwelwch yn dda, nodwch unrhyw broblemau a gawsoch wrth geisio mynediad i wybodaeth mewn papurau newydd. e.e diffyg mynegai.....

.....

.....

14. Yn olaf, a fyddech yn barod i gael eich cyfweld ynglyn â'r defnydd o bapurau newydd Prydeinig yn eich ymchwil. Byddai'r cyfweliad yn cymryd tuag 1 awr o'ch amser mewn man a fyddai'n gyfleus i chwi. Yn anffodus, cynhelir cyfweliadau mewn Saesneg yn unig.

Byddwyn ❐ Na Fyddwn ❐ Ddim yn siwr, hoffwn fwy o wybodaeth ❐

Diolch yn fawr iawn i chwi am eich help

OS GWELWCH YN DDA, DYCHWELWCH YR HOLIADUR YN YR AMLEN A DDARPARWYD ERBYN 7/4/97

Jane Secker *Ffon: 01970 623111 x4515*
Adran Astudiaethau Gwybodaeth a Llyfrgellyddiaeth,
Prifysgol Cymru Aberystwyth, Llanbadarn Fawr,
Aberystwyth, SY23 3AS *e-bost: jns95@aber.ac.uk*

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Appendix 4: Questionnaire coding frame

Language
e=English
w=Welsh

Age 0=no answer
1=18-30
2=31-40
3=41-50
4=51-60
5=61-70
6=71+

Q1 0=no answer
1=professional historian
2=research student
3=Local historian
4=Family historian/genealogist
5=Other
6=Family historian and local historian

Q2 A coding frame was not devised for this question as the results were so varied and it was not felt to have any value.

Q3 National Newspapers
0=no answer
1=yes
2=no

Local/regional daily newspapers
0=no answer
1=yes
2=no

Local weekly
0=no answer
1=yes
2=no

Q4a) CD-ROM
0=no answer
1=yes for research
2=no
3=yes for another reason

Internet
0=no answer
1=yes for research
2=no
3=yes for another reason

Q4b) Like
1= easy and quick to use
2= search using key words
3=desktop access
4=easy to obtain printed copies

Dislike
1= the abridged nature
2= the loss of the layout
3= low number of titles available
4= visual problems
5=not so 'real'

Q5 Primary Sources

1=Central government records - census, parliamentary proceedings, Royal Commissions etc.
2=Newspapers
3=Private papers - diaries, correspondence etc.
4=Church records
5=Estate and family records
6=Other printed material including novels, directories, memoirs
7=Local government records
8=Records of associations e.g. political parties, guilds
9=Journals
10=Printed ephemera
11=Maps
12=Oral history
13=Archaeology
14=Art including photos
15=Manuscripts
16=Business records

Q6a) 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no

Q7 1=time consuming
2=no need to use them
3=too difficult to use
4=not authoritative

Q8 UK National dailies
0=no answer
1=not used
2=fairly unimportant
3=fairly important
4=important
5=most used

UK Local/regional dailies
0=no answer
1=not used
2=fairly unimportant
3=fairly important
4=important
5=most used

UK weekly papers
0=no answer
1=not used
2=fairly unimportant
3=fairly important
4=important
5=most used

UK free local papers
0=no answer
1=not used
2=fairly unimportant
3=fairly important
4=important
5=most used

Newspapers from outside UK
0=no answer
1=not used
2=fairly unimportant
3=fairly important
4=important
5=most used

Q9 1=General News
2=Advertisements
3=Correspondence
4=Obituaries
5=Notices
6=Editorials
7=Legal Reports
8=Features
9=Political Reports
10=Reports of Meetings
11=Reviews
12=Illustrations
13=Literature
14=Church Material
15=Shipping Notices

Q10a) 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no
3=unsure

Prefer hardcopy
1=Easier to scan/locate
2=Less tiring on eyes, back etc.
3=Text easier to read
4=Feel more 'real'
5=Easier to make notes

Q10b) 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no
3=unsure

Dislike microfilm
1=tiring to use
2=difficulties reading
3=problems scanning
4= microfilm readers in a poor state of repair

Q11 BLNL (Colindale)	National Library of Wales	County Record Office
0=no answer	0=no answer	0=no answer
1=not used	1=not used	1=not used
2=1 visit	2=1 visit	2=1 visit
3=2-3 visits	3=2-3 visits	3=2-3 visits
4=3+ visits	4=3+ visits	4=3+ visits

Public Library
0=no answer
1=not used
2=1 visit
3=2-3 visits
4=3+ visits

Newspaper Office Library
0=no answer
1=not used
2=1 visit
3=2-3 visits
4=3+ visits

Private Collection
0=no answer
1=not used
2=1 visit
3=2-3 visits
4=3+ visits

Other
0=no answer
1=not used
2=1 visit
3=2-3 visits
4=3+ visits

Q12a) 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no
3=unsure

Q12b) 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no
3=unsure

Q12c) This question was not categorised as the response rate was too low

Q13a) 0=No problems
1=Travel problems / distance to collection
2=Incomplete collection / missing pages
3=Problems using / booking microfilm readers
4=Lack of time / Inappropriate opening hours
5=Problems locating collections

Q13b) 0=No problems
1=Lack of Index
2=Time consuming / too much information
3=Index inadequate / wrong
4=Print not clear
5=Poor condition of paper
6=Issues not standardised
7=Problems making copies

Q14 0=no answer
1=yes
2=no
3=unsure, require further information

Appendix 5: Interview Guide

Section 1:Introduction and welcome

Hello. Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview and for completing my questionnaire. I'll start by telling you a little bit about my research.

- PhD student at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth.
- Research examines the use of newspapers as a source for historical research.
- Studying historians in Wales including:academic
  family
  local
  some others
- Examining their attitudes, behaviour and needs.
- Also studying the newspaper in the library
- Hope to make recommendations of value to both the users of newspapers and the custodians of newspapers.
- I will be tape recording the interview for later analysis, however all information will be strictly confidential and you name will not appear in my research or any subsequent publications resulted from my work.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Section 2: General attitudes towards newspapers

1) Can you start by telling me a little bit more about your research and the way in which newspapers have contributed?
2) Do you enjoy using newspapers as a source?
   Do you find them easy / convenient to use?
   What particularly do you like?
   What particular difficulties do you have?
   What do you dislike?
3) How important are they as a source, particularly in comparison to other sources you might use for your research such as private papers, government records?
   How often do you use them?
4) What about the importance of different types of newspapers?
   National, daily local, local weekly etc.

Section 3: Using the newspaper collection: locating the collection

I now would like to focus more specifically on how you used newspapers in your research and in particular any problems you had locating newspapers for your research. If it makes it easier I would like you to focus on a specific occasion when you used newspapers to answer the next few questions.

1) What led you originally to start using newspapers / why did you decide to use newspapers, for your research?

2) Where did you go to use the newspaper collection / which newspaper locations did you visit?
3) How did you know that the particular newspapers you required were there?
   Have you heard of NEWSPLAN?
   Did you use a catalogue,
   Did you know it was there already, was it luck?
4) Did you specifically visit this site to use a newspaper collection?
   Did you have to travel a long distance?
   Was this a problem?
5) Do you find it easier to use newspapers in one central location, or would you prefer to have localised collections? For example would it be better for you to have all Welsh local newspapers in one place or spread about the country?
6) Did you have any problems locating the newspaper collection when you got to the site? E.g. couldn't find it, certain dates were missing, system difficult to use??

Section 4: Finding the information in the newspaper

I'd now like to talk about how, once you had located the newspapers you required, you extracted the information from within them. Again I would like you to focus on a particular occasion that you used newspapers and in particular to identify any problems you might have had.

1) Were you looking for some specific information within the newspaper, or was your search more general on the subject?
2) Did you have a strategy for searching the newspaper for the information that you required?
3) IF NO. Did you have to trawl through the entire paper?
4) Did you use an index at any time to help your search?
5) a) IF YES. Was it useful?
   What type of index was it?
   What access points did it have - was it subject indexed?
   Did this cause any problems and what were they?
   b) If NO, do you think an index would have been useful?
   How would the index be arranged? By subject?
6) Did you use cross referencing between different newspapers at any time?
7) Were there any other problems accessing the information in the newspaper, such as it being difficult to read ?

Section 5: Using the Information in the newspaper

Can we focus on the actual information in the newspaper, including how you used it, why you used it and for what purpose. From now on you can talk more generally about your use of newspapers rather than focusing on the specific occasion.

1) I see that you have used (adverts, news, correspondence), for your research can you tell me how important the various parts of the newspaper are as a source?
   Do they provide valuable information?
2) Could you give me examples of how you have used (adverts, news, correspondence) for your research.
   Did you use the information in any publications?

Did it provide crucial information for your research?

3) Have newspapers provided unique information for your research?

Reliability and the Newspaper

4) Do you think the newspaper is a less or more reliable as a source of information than other sources you might have used? Why is this?
5) Are there any parts of the newspaper you would consider to be less reliable as a source of information than others? E.g. Would you rely on the information in (adverts) more than you would (news)? Why?
6) Would you try to find other evidence to verify / support the information in the newspaper? or would you rely solely on the newspaper?
7) Have you ever found discrepancies between accounts of the same event in different newspapers?
8) Would you find out background details about the newspaper before you used it as a source?
9) What sort of details would be important to know? E.g. ownership, political slant etc.

Section 6: Format of the newspaper

If we could talk a little about the format that you have used newspapers in,

1) I see that you state you prefer using (microfilm, hardcopy), could you explain a little more about why this is.
2) Would you ever find (microfilm, hardcopy) useful or is it always less preferable?
3) You said that you (had, had not) used newspapers on CD-ROM or the Internet ever, could you explain why this is?
4) Would you generally say that you like using computer technology?
5) Would the format put you off using electronic newspapers?

Preservation Issues

1) Is newspaper preservation an issue that has affected you in any way?
2) Have you ever been unable to use a newspaper fear of damage to the source? If so what did you do?
3) Have you had to use microfilm in the place of hardcopy to prevent damage to the original?

Finally

1) Is there anything relating to newspapers that you would like to see that would have made your research easier?

E.g. Improved access to particular newspaper titles, an index to the newspaper.

Appendix 6: Case study protocol

The nature of the newspaper collection

The content of the collection

Which newspapers do they have?

Which dates are available?

Are they aware of gaps in the runs?

The history of the collection

When was the collection started?

Where did the material come from originally?

Who is responsible the newspaper collection?

Are there staff with a specific responsibility for the collection?

Collection Policy

What is the library's current collection policy with regard to newspapers?

Which newspapers do they now collect?

What about free newspapers?

Is there an accession policy document?

How are the newspapers acquired - Are arrangements made with newspaper publishers?

Format of the collection

In what format is the collection? - microfilm, hardcopy?

Are there any other problems experienced by either staff or users relating to the collection policy or format of the collection?

Storage, preservation & conservation of the collection

Storage of the collection

Where is the collection stored?

How is it stored?

Are the volumes bound or preserved loose, if hardcopy?

Preservation and conservation

Did the library provide information for the NEWSPLAN report?

Is there a conservation policy in the library?

Is microfilming carried out to preserve the collection?

If so who undertakes the filming?

Is the collection damaged or suffering from deterioration?

What is done to minimise further damage to the collection?

Are there any other problems experienced by either staff or users relating to the storage and preservation of the collection?

The bibliographical control of the collection

How is cataloguing of the newspaper collection done?

Is there a catalogue of the newspaper collection?

Who has access to the catalogue?

Is information about newspaper holdings published elsewhere

Public access to the newspaper collection

General access issues

Access to the collection - is there a published policy regarding public access?
Do any storage policies affect access?
Do any preservation policies affect access?
What is the policy on copying newspapers in the collection?
Is there an access policy with regard to different formats?

Users of the collection

Who uses the collection?
For what purposes?
Do you record any statistics on the usage of the collection?
Is the volume of use increasing or decreasing

Improving access to the collection

How valuable is the catalogue for accessing the collection?
Is the collection publicised in any way? (Brochures, talks, other publicity)
Are there any indexes available to improve access to the information in the collection?
Who is responsible for compiling an index

Are there any other problems experienced by either staff or users relating to access to the collection?

Information Technology and the newspaper collection

Current IT policy

Has Information Technology been utilised for any aspect of the management or exploitation of the newspaper collection?
Does your library provide access to newspapers on CD-ROM or via online services or the Internet?
Is there an on-line catalogue of the newspaper collection?

Future plans for IT

Are there any future plans to utilise Information Technology in the newspaper collection?
Do you envisage storing newspapers in a digital format
Are there any other problems experienced by either staff or users relating to the use of Information Technology with respect to the collection?

Finally is there anything else you can tell me about the newspaper collection that may be of value to this study?

Appendix 7: Meeting with the Newspaper Librarian, John Byford, British Library Newspaper Library, 4th December 1998.

Before we start.....

- Recommendations are only preliminary at this stage - interested in your opinion of their feasibility and practicality and how they fit in with the work of the BLNL.
- Different sets of recommendations are to be presented for three groups: Strategic and national organisations, local collections, and the users.
- Seek to create a greater understanding between newspaper users and custodians
- I also have a number of specific questions at the end which you may be able to help me with

Introduction to the research

Title: Newspapers and historical research: a study of users and custodians in Wales

The research investigated two main areas:

- the historiographic problem of the newspaper as a source - (problems independent of the library)
- the problems associated with the newspaper in the library

Methodology:

- Literature review undertaken to identify previous research in field - recognised importance of BLNL.
- A study of the history of newspaper collection including its development in England and Wales was also undertaken.
- Questionnaires and interviews with all types of historians (academic, family, local etc.) in Wales were undertaken to collect data on their attitudes, behaviour and the problems they experience.
- Case studies were undertaken to gather information on newspaper collections in Wales. The National Library of Wales, two public libraries, a Record Office and a newspaper office library were studied.

Information needs and seeking behaviour of historians

- Historians' information needs - primary and secondary source sources from a variety of perspectives and in various formats.
- Becoming familiar with a source and undertaking research the construction of it is important.
- Often need to consult original newspaper as the layout and context of articles in the newspaper can be very important
- Information Seeking behaviour varies with type of research.
- Usually highly intensive methods e.g. scanning techniques, concentrated searching, and sampling techniques although date references are also important.
- Newspaper indexes are used where available.

Importance of newspapers to historians

The research found that newspapers are one of the most important sources used by historians.

- Local Newspapers could often be very important, although national and overseas titles were used
- *The Times* is often the most used national title - mainly because of its availability, longevity and indexing service
- Various parts of the newspaper were valuable for different types of research
- Newspapers often provided information that was unavailable elsewhere
- They were very important for opinion-based material
- They provided a large amount of information useful for social and cultural history
- The newspaper is one of the most difficult sources for historians to use
- Some problems are caused by the nature of the format
- Other problems are caused or exacerbated by the arrangement, storage and preservation techniques employed by the library.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Three main audiences for the recommendations - should improve communication between newspaper users and custodians and allow the source to be better exploited.

1) Historians - guidelines for using newspapers - techniques, responsibilities, problems of using them
2) Newspaper collections - recommendations to allow collection to be better exploited and serve the needs of their users more effectively.
3) National organisations - BLNL, NEWSPLAN panel, representatives of newspaper industry

Use of Newspaper collections

From the research the following conclusions were drawn:

- Public libraries and record offices were the most important locations for consulting newspaper collections
- Collections held locally are often incomplete requiring visits to more than one location
- Although the value of the BLNL was recognised it was used rarely because of problems travelling from Wales
- The location of a title can be a deciding factor about whether research is, and the manner in which it is undertaken.
- Policies vary enormously between institutions and at many local collections policies regarding acquisition, collection management and preservation were not formal documents

Provisional Recommendations for Newspaper Collections

These recommendations are provisional at this stage. There is an awareness of the issues of resources, as public library funding is severely limited and newspaper collections, although important are clearly not the highest priority. Therefore the

following recommendations are subject to review following a consideration of their practical worth:

- **The production of a set of guidelines (toolkit) for local collections,** based on the policies at the BLNL, to give libraries guidance in the area of newspaper collection, acquisition, storage, access, bibliographic control and publicity - this would ensure that in the future newspaper collections are comprehensive and accessible. This could be co-ordinated by the BLNL and/or NEWSPLAN panel.
- **Complete collections should be available both locally AND nationally to give users greater choice.** Material only available at one collection should be microfilmed and made available elsewhere.
- **As an alternative Colindale could develop an Inter-Library Loan system of microfilms.** This would require the production of a copy for loan purposes.
- **The review of Copyright Libraries (Smethurst 1997), should consider the needs of those users in more remote locations, so that their work will not become problematic.** Some titles are currently collected by various libraries and clearly this is a duplication of effort but making newspapers available at various locations is important.

Catalogues and locating newspapers

The following conclusions were drawn in this part of the research:

- The BLNL and NLW are viewed as a 'last resort' by many researchers and it is important to establish what is available locally.
- Locating titles was one of the greatest problems historians encounter - there is a lack of adequate cataloguing at local levels and few reference works in this area
- Staff and other researchers are often the most useful source of information for locating titles
- NEWSPLAN has made a limited impact on the work of the historian, although the few researchers who were aware of it had found it to be valuable
- It is vital that researchers are aware of the range of sources available in both national and local collections

Recommendations for catalogues and locating newspapers

- **The work of NEWSPLAN could be used to produce a comprehensive guide to newspaper collections in the UK.** Although the information is available, it is not well publicised or accessible.
- **This information could be made available electronically either CD-ROM or the Internet.** Two of the NEWSPLAN regions have produced on-line catalogues to the newspapers in their region.
- **Research into the feasibility of creating a 'clump' union catalogue could be undertaken.** The NEWSPLAN regions would need use Z39.50 compliant databases.
- **Local collections need to ensure their catalogues (if only available in printed form) are accessible and up to date.** The guidelines mentioned in the previous section would offer advice about this.

Format and Preservation

- Historians clearly prefer using hardcopy and find microfilm difficult to use
- Hardcopy sources are sometimes essential for the work of the historian
- Microfilm was often provided for preservation reasons, which historians understood
- Digital newspaper had as yet had a limited impact on the work of historians
- Many advantages to digital newspapers were recognised from the perceptive of the user and custodian
- Some disadvantages were also put forward

Recommendations concerning format and preservation

- **A viable alternative to microfilm needs to be investigated** - This requires funding possibly from the British Library.
- **Given the resource implications of developing as alternative, where microfilm is used, the film and readers should be maintained to a high standard.**
- **Microfilm readers should be large screen, modern design and suitable for newspaper reading.**

Other Recommendations

- **Further experiments into digitisation must take in account the needs, behaviour and opinions of the users.**
- **Guidelines for historians will be produced from the research.** These will include points about what users should expect from libraries and what their responsibilities are as they can be using fragile material.
- **There is a need to increase the status of newspaper collections and newspaper librarianship.** For example training and education could be offered by library schools and the BLNL for students and practitioners: a distance learning course in newspaper librarianship could be established and newspaper collections needs to be marketed more effectively.

Questions

1) What do you see your role and the role of the BLNL with regard to newspaper collection in the UK?

   Do you think Colindale should take a more pro-active approach regarding the development of local collections?

2) What changes do you foresee in the next few years and what are the key issues for the library?

3) History of the newspaper collection at Colindale:

   How much do you know about the history of the collection at Colindale?

   Do you know when did the Stamp Office started collecting newspapers?

   Collection was more formalised in the 1860s, was this purely for legal reasons?

4)NEWSPLAN

   Are you a member of the NEWSPLAN panel?

   Are there any plans to extend the project further?

   Do you think the project has been successful?

5)The future of the collections

   Will digitisation become an alternative to microfilm?

What about policies such as the retention of only microfilm copies for certain titles? Might this be extended to reduce the number of hardcopy titles collected?

6) Users of the collections

Are user surveys undertaken?

What do they do with the information from reader surveys?

Are the types of users visiting the collection changing in any way?

Is there any communication with other newspaper collections about this information?

In what ways do you think the collection at Colindale could be promoted more effectively?

8) Do you know any details about the proposed museum of the British press?

How might the library be involved in it?

Appendix 8 : Example of an Interview transcript

R= Researcher
H= Historian

Interview 16: Academic political historian, University of Wales, Swansea, 28/8/97

R: If we start, do you think that you could just tell me a little bit about your research and the way that newspapers have contributed?

H: OK. There are various areas of my research which don't involve newspapers, so shall I just talk about the ones that do?

R: Well you can talk about all of it, I want to see newspapers in their context.

H: OK, OK. Well I suppose my research is in three areas really. I am interested in the history of the state, the history of public policy and I'm interested in intellectual history or the history of political thought. In the last area, of course, newspapers don't impinge on my work at all. However I have written quite a lot on the development of the state in the 18th and 19th century. I've written on central and local government. I have written on policy making, particularly social policy. I'm also now doing a book on Peel and I have published various articles. So I have looked both at the local press and the national press. The doctoral thesis I wrote some years ago had at its core a local study which was of Oxfordshire so the Oxfordshire press is the local press that I know well and as far as the national papers are concerned it is basically the sorts of things you would expect of a historian of my period, things like the Times, the Chronicle. So I think I as far as the work on the local press is concerned I did that reasonably systematically. I looked at every year where there was a general election, because I was quite interested in electoral politics, I have published on electoral policies as well. And then I took years where there were key policy debates so as far as the Oxfordshire press is concerned I looked at about 25 years quite carefully of the selected years. As far as my use of the national press is concerned it has never been particularly systematic. I have used it around particular incidents, issues, events.

R: Would you say you enjoy using newspapers as a source?

H: Erm. Well I don't dislike it. Er. I mean they, it depends what you want from them. They were a very useful way of building up some sort of sense of the political and public culture of a county community and I think when you are unused to 18th and 19th century newspapers also seeing how they work is also quite interesting. Relatively little work has been done on the provincial press, there is some now done in fact I examined a rather good PhD thesis a woman you should certainly talk to if you haven't got her down already, Hannah Barker, she is at Keele, but she wrote a PhD, well it is an Oxford DPhil on the provincial press in the late 18th century, so she knows those sources better than anyone I think. She is not just a newspaper historian she would certainly be worth talking to. But if you look at, when you come to late 18th century newspapers looking at the way they gather information how stories, narratives come together, where they have local correspondents, how their correspondence columns work is another thing, how they incorporate editorial matter. They are all very

interesting questions as to the workings of the press. And you can gain quite a lot from looking at advertisements as well. Quite a lot of advertisements are placed not by people who wish to make sales but by people who wish to convey information. So in that sense getting a feel for how press culture worked is fun, I think the flip side to that is when you go to newspapers wanting something it can often be, if it something specific it can often be quite time consuming. Particularly if they are not indexed.

R: How important would you say then the newspaper has been in your research, compared to other sources you have used?

H: I am quite sceptical about people who become heavily reliant on the press. In fact I just suggested that a major journal reject an article on the political culture in a county because its principal source was the press. It seems much too narrow a base. So I think for most of the sorts of research that I do, material from the press has to be contextualised with other sorts of material. Having made that qualification if you are interested in electoral history, if you are interested in county politics then the local press remains a crucial source, to say you can discover things through the local press that you can't get from anywhere else. And more generally if you are interested in public opinion, and I think that one way or another and a lot of historians in the 19th century are interested in public opinion at least for the culture, then the cultural press is an essential source for that. But I think constructing things into a very straightforward typology would be difficult.

R: If we talk a bit about actually using the newspaper collection and what originally led you to use the newspaper as a source?

H: Erm, I am not quite sure I understand the question.

R: Why did you decide to go to newspapers particularly, were you using all the sources from that period or was there a reason why you thought you would use the newspaper?

H: I think when I was doing the principal archive work you begin by looking at a whole range of sources to see what can yield what and I was finding particularly the local press was yielding all sorts of notions, ideas, contextaulising that as I said I could get from anywhere else. So in that sense, I certainly decided I was getting fair return from work on newspapers and had I not felt I was getting that sort of return then I'd have put them aside. But no I think any historian who is working in all sorts of areas of late 18th century history will end up in newspapers, at one time or another, just because they are such a dense and rich source.

R: Where abouts did you actually go to use the newspaper collections?

H: Most of the work I have done with newspapers has been done at the Bodleian library at Oxford, because I was Oxford based for many years.

R: And how did you know that the particular newspapers you wanted were there, was it just from going there, did you use a catalogue?

H: Yes I have. In answer to the second question, yes I have. Principally I knew what the Bodlean's holdings were from their own catalogues, from their own checklists, so that was the way I discovered what was there.

R: If you were based in Oxford, I suppose it was quite convenient to go to the library?

H: Yes, yes

R: And were there any other problems when you got there, did you find any material was missing or?

H: Very little actually. I think that is all I have to say.

R: If we can talk about the actual information in the newspaper, were you looking for quite specific information in the newspaper or were you more going through reading the newspapers on a systematic basis?

H: It is more the latter. As I say now with for example the work with Peel it is much more, it is a much more closely targeted kind of research, but that is partly that I don't have the time that I did when I was a graduate student. But the time I did the bulk of the work on newspapers, it was much more trying to build up a, this sort of general picture of how the political community worked in the county. So that meant I would read most of it, I mean I even read in the provincial press the sections reporting national and international news just to see what was permeating through and how quickly it was permeating through. When I did that work I didn't know a great deal about which newspapers were circulating in particular areas and that is actually where Hannah Barker's work is very important in showing the sales of regions of particular newspapers and had I had that to hand I probably would have read slightly different.

R: Would you say you developed a strategy for using the newspaper or was it just going through?

H: Well clearly if you are reading a particular publication at least until its proprietor changes you know roughly how it is laid out and what you are likely to find where. So of a four page newspaper it tended to be the central pages I would read but then I there is a wonderful thesis on Oxfordshire agricultural mechanisation which has just been written from the machinery adverts in local newspapers. So I was aware at what could be done with another kind of newspaper. I did look from time to time through advertisements to see what was being sold and what ways it was being marketed but generally speaking I was interested much more in the information that newspapers gathered and were publishing.

R: You said something about newspaper indexes, so have you used ever used one?

H: I have used the Times index, and I have used the index..... Jackson's Oxford Journal, which is the major Oxford newspaper is indexed for certain years. It's basically a twenty year index although only ten years of it is any good. But again it depends what sort of strategy you are using but if there is an index I will use it.

R: Did you find this particular index useful?

H: Not especially but then of course with Jackson's I always as I said, reading the newspaper quite generally so I guess ..It was useful for sampling for deciding which years I might sample outside election years and the years either side of an election. But I think it is probably that sort of marginal use.

R: What about the Times index, have you found that useful?

H: That is more useful. Because I am going to the Times for reporting of or commenting on national events and so on. Yes is quite useful.

R: Did you do any cross referencing between the different newspapers? Did you maybe go to one newspaper and then look at other to see he different opinion.

H: Err Yes. Though I wouldn't necessarily do it in that particular way. That is to say I would be sampling particular years so you begin to place newspaper reporting comment alongside. It is a bit more difficult if you are dealing with essentially a weekly press rather than a daily press because where a weekly press, obviously certain crucial things will be reported in the weekly, irrespective of the publication dates, quite often in the provincial press, as you probably know, it was working on the basis of the publication date so that people would take more than one newspaper but part of the marketing strategy would be that they would report on different things and that is why people would buy different newspapers. So the congruence of comment is less than you might expect.

R: You have sort of said that you use all the different parts of the newspaper, you have used the news, adverts, correspondence as well. Would you say that one of these was more important or are they all different?

H: Yes, no I wouldn't. They are useful for different purposes.

R: Could you give examples of things you might find useful in the different parts?

H: Yes, adverts, as I said a moment ago, adverts are quite useful for seeing, for getting some sort of take on the local market, or indeed the national market, but more so with local newspapers. Its interesting too to see how they the market might respond to certain sorts of local circumstances. For example when you move into the run up to a local election you find advertisements for election handbooks, so local booksellers are trying to cash in on a particular market which is eveversent. But advertisements are the most, because I think it is quite difficult to use them systematically unless you are going to go for the kind of treatment John Walton did in the thesis I was talking about a moment ago, unless you do that, all you can get out of adverts is a list. Correspondence is generally very revealing but you don't know who wrote it. And quite a lot of correspondence is actually editorialising under a different guise. Occasionally you can decode it because often a series of letters to newspapers appear in pamphlet form as well and sometimes in the pamphlet form they are actually published under the authors name or there has been some sort of authorial contribution of the pamphlet. But, so correspondence columns work rather differently from

correspondence columns in modern newspapers but nevertheless I think that the idea that there is a correspondence in newspapers is an important one, that there is something a platform for airing opinion for debate from. Though generally speaking though of course newspapers have a fairly strong political stance and the debate remains within the stance of the newspaper.

R: If we can talk a bit more about that sort of thing, do you find out background details about the newspaper such as the political stance of the newspaper, before you use it?

H: You can't always do that. With national newspapers that is fairly well known anyway, with the provincial press if they run for any length of time, it already, it is fairly well known anyway. Once you look at one or two you can discover what they are. The ones that are much more difficult to find the political stance are newspaper whose life is very short, because you may only have three or four numbers. And of course they all advertise themselves in this period as being independent. This concept is one which is used in part to flatter the reader, you know the reader is independent so in a short lived newspaper you might not just have enough text very closely to identify its political disposition. But anything that is around for more than a few months its stance its pretty well known and by the second quarter of the nineteenth century the majority of newspaper almost proclaimed their political identity much more loudly.

R: Would you find out anything else such as details about the editor?

H: Ermm.. I don't go out of my way to do that. In the main I was using newspaper where these sort of details were fairly well known. I knew from secondary sources. Actually though with 18th century newspapers often you don't know who the editor is. You now who the proprietor is and the proprietor may edit or may not so it is not always possible in the provincial press to know who is editing a particular title.

R: What do you think of the value, the reliability of the information in newspapers?

H: Erm, well that's terribly varied really. Even within a newspaper because very often as you know there are no bi-lines and stories are clearly amalgams of what ..a combination of information drawn from various reporters and various sources, so within a particular story, though much of what it says is reliable, then one particular area may be much less reliable. You may or may not have some control over that, when examining it, the nature of reports something like the Swing Riots, in 1830, there are other sources, there is other sources available so you do have some sort of check. Again if you are looking at something like a report of court case, sometimes you will have other early transcripts or whatever other reporting sometimes you won't.
R: Is that quite common, to only have the newspaper?

H: Yes it is.

R: And what would you do in those cases?

H: What do you mean what would I do?

R: Well how would you judge?

H: Well I don't, I think two things as a matter of fact I think it is easy to make too much of reliability. What we are talking about is we are talking about the reporting of events. And all reporting is partial so just as the foreign secretary is writing a confidential memo on negotiations at Vienna in 1814 there is no reason to assume that that is any more a reliable source than the newspaper reporting elections in what ever it might be. All sources are selective. Even what is going on at an election meeting. You can infer where the silence are and you can infer quite a lot what those silence might mean, so I think you, as with any other source you get a feel for your source, you get a feel for what it can yield and what it can't yield. So I mean, that's...those are particular comments on provincial weekly press. It is a bit different with the national daily press because obviously then you are getting reporting that you can put back to back by the 19th century. But then by the mid 19th century, if you are talking the late 19th century, you are talking of reporting of parliament, a lot of that reporting is verbatim or very extensive and it can be interesting to see well who's speech is that printed verbatim or in a very full form and that may well reflect the political stance of the newspaper. But nevertheless the accuracy of what is being reported is .....

R: Can we talk about format, you said on your questionnaire that you would prefer to use newspapers in hardcopy?

H: Yes

R: Could you tell me a bit more about why this is?

H: I think it is partly the general response you get from any historian talking about any source that having whatever source it is in front of you and being able to inspect it in its totality, is preferable although we all recognise the wear that sources are fragile, whether it be letters or newspapers and that may not always be possible. It is very difficult to reproduce in easily readable form many newspapers so then you get the microfilms. I just find it quite difficult to work, to reconstruct from the microfilm what the page might look like, looking at the page and where information is being placed, or where comment is being placed within the totality of the publication. The automicrology of the newspaper is important and if you can't se that or if you can't see that easily then you are missing something. So the, in research terms the point that lies behind that is you are not just going to a newspaper for information. You are going to a newspaper for information, feelings, comment, which is presented and contextualised in a very particular way.

R: So obviously you do use microfilm, if you have to, but you would prefer the original?

H: Yes, yes yes.

R: You also said you have used newspapers on CD-ROM. Can you tell me a bit more about what you thought of the format.

H: I haven't use newspapers on CD-ROM. I said I would happily use them on CD-ROM. Goodness knows whether we are going to get much on CD-ROM. Well actually that is a very open question in terms of publishing. But in some online form or some electronic form. I think some of my reactions to microfilming disappear because of course you could have on screen the reproduction of a newspaper as a whole. So that point I made about layout I think disappear. If they are actually presented in electronic form but I think then you could home in on particular items of importance, adverts of whatever it might be. You also have the great advantage of it being in electronic form that you can search it and you are not hamstrung by what the compiler of an index might think is significant. You can interrogate the newspaper by key words or phrases. So that would be enormously advantageous. But whether we will get it is a very different question.

R: So you would say that the format would not put you off using a newspaper on CD-ROM?

H: Yes, absolutely and

R: Would you still prefer the hardcopy then??

H: Well I think, that is a good question. I think as far as my own research is concerned, if I could get it online then I would prefer it online. As far as my graduate students are concerned I would tell them that they should spend some time with originals before they do that but then that is just as important with using any kind of source, whatever it might be, that looking at it, feeling it, seeing it, turning it over that's actually quite important, that everything with the source is quite important but once you have got that they it's not a problem. It's about creating that experience imaginatively and extracting the text in a way from it.

R: You said something about damage being done to the newspaper, is it important to you to preserve the newspapers?

H: Yes, I mean obviously newspapers are a, are different as a source from for example letters or other manuscript sources, because manuscripts only exist in one form and newspapers exist in many collections. So I don't have a particular strong view, it is not my field of responsibility to decided how many bound copies of the Times there ought to be. And clearly the world of scholarship doesn't, isn't crippled by the potential disappearance of one bound run of the Times. Although in thinking in terms of source management it is sensible where there are alternative strategies for consulting them the source, to seek to preserve that source. The other thing that is peculiar to newspapers, which is why it is quite useful to have them in front of you is it is medium that often requires you to scan it, scanning across the page or so. Where you are reading a newspaper in anything other than the original quickly scanning the newspaper is not impossible but it is often much more difficult. It can slow you down.

R: My final question, is is there anything you can think of that relates to newspapers that if it was available would make your research much easier, you talked about newspapers online, or CD-ROM, would it be that? Or would it be having indexes?

H: I think the, for reasons I was sort of hinting at a moment ago, I think the period of indexing is probably coming to an end, because of the availability of other forms of access. And an index is a sort of pre-electronic form and an index, the utility of all indexes is constrained by who is doing it and what questions they thing are salient. So In terms of revolutionising the use of newspapers having a lot online would be great now. Do I think it is going to happen, well I suspect it is not in a very extensive way, just because of the cost of doing that. So I think my guess is, this is your research, my guess is we will carry on much as we have been with some additions in electronic format. I think the other problem for lots of researchers is the problem of access and an electronic medium solves that problem of access. But then if you are looking at a lot of newspaper it seems to me that the use that is made of them wouldn't justify the investment of resources in making them available electronically and it wouldn't really justify the investment of time in producing an index although, somebody may want to do that from their own enthusiasm. So I suspect what we will end up with is better access to a limited number of newspapers. I mean that's the, in making that comment, for many historians although you wouldn't call these newspapers, the periodical press is also very important. And what I think one may find is that, partly because English Lit use these things as well, that some of the periodicals are treated electronically. And newspapers won't be. If that was the outcome that wouldn't surprise me.

Appendix 9 : Open Coding

1 General Attitudes towards newspapers

Enjoy newspapers

- Aesthetic factor
- Interest factor
- High yield
- Ease / convenience
- High quality

General problems using newspapers

- High volume of information
  - Time consuming
  - Tiring
- Inaccurate
- Biased
- Not indexed
- Get side tracked
- Less 'academically sound'

2 Importance of newspapers

Compared to other sources

- Varies with research
- Important for opinions
- Important for social history
- Consulted after other sources
- Can be only source
- 'Flesh on the bones'

Importance of different types of newspaper

Local Newspapers - daily and weekly

- Often very important
- Provide detailed information
- Useful for family information
- Useful for local information
- Often searched systematically

National Newspapers

- Less important than local
- Provide opinion
- Importance of the Times - indexed

Overseas newspapers

- Least used
- Valuable for certain research

3 Using the Collections: locations

Motives for using newspapers

- Tradition
- Perceived as valuable
- Suggestion of another researcher
- Unclear motives

Locations used

- British library Newspaper Library

- National Library of Wales
- Record Offices
- Local libraries
- Newspaper office libraries
- Other

Methods for locating
- Library catalogues
- NEWSPLAN
- Other listings of newspapers
- Staff at libraries
- Other researchers

Problems locating newspapers
- Inaccurate listing information
- Insufficient listing information
- Missing titles
- Travel problems

4 Finding information in the newspaper

Types of information searching for
- Specific
- General
- Both

Strategies for searching
- Sampling
- Date reference
- Familiarise and skim
- General scanning
- Cross referencing

Indexes

Value
- Alternative access point
- Facilitates Subject searches
- Facilitates Name searches

Problems
- Lack of
- Construction method

Problems finding information
- Time consuming to search
- Reading problems
- Format

5 Using the Information

Parts of the paper used
- News
- Editorials
- Advertisements
- Announcements
- Features
- Correspondence

Value of the information

- News
- Editorials
- Advertisements
- Announcements
- Features
- Correspondence

Types of information important for
- Opinion
- Factual information

Subject of information
- political history
- social and cultural history
- biography and family history
- economic and trade history
- press history

The Quantity of the Information
- Unique
- Provide detail
- Verifies other sources

Quality of the information
- Bias / opinion
- Accuracy
- Decreased quality

Research on actual newspaper

Not undertaken
- Too difficult
- Not relevant

Undertaken
- Political stance
- Ownership
- Geographic coverage
- Life span
- Other

6 Format of Newspaper

Hardcopy

Like
- Aesthetic factor
- Text clearer
- Scanning easier
- Layout / context visible
- Less tiring

Dislike
- Size of volumes
- Easily damaged
- Dirty
- Copying difficult

Microfilm

Like
- Easy to get copies
- Easy to handle
- Quick to use

Dislike
- Poor condition - reader
- Poor condition - film
- Scanning difficult
- Layout not visible
- Tiring
- Dislike technology

Relevance of format
- Relevant - prevents work
- Relevant - annoying
- Not relevant

Digital newspapers
- Knowledge of digital newspapers
- Use of digital newspapers
- The future of digital newspapers
- Advantages of digital newspapers
    - Key-word searching
    - Access from desktop

Disadvantages
    - dislike of IT
    - dislike of screen
    - not complete
    - layout unclear

Preservation of newspapers

Importance
- Preserve information
- Preserve format

Problems
- Affects access
- Microfilm poor alternative

Appendix 10: Axial Coding

1 General Attitudes towards newspapers

1.1 Enjoy / like using newspapers
- Interesting
- Useful

1.2 Dislike using newspapers
- Quantity of information
    - Time consuming
    - Tiring
    - Difficult to read
    - Not indexed
    - Get sidetracked
- Quality of information
    - Less 'academically sound'
    - Biased / selective
- Problems of format
    - tiring / time consuming / difficult to read

2 Importance of newspapers

2.1 Compared to other sources
- only source for info
- best source
- used with other sources
- used after other sources

2.2 Varies with research

2.3 Provide detail "flesh on bones"
- Important for opinions
- Important for social history

2.4 Valuable for students

2.5 Importance of different types of newspaper
- Local newspapers important
    - Local most important
    - Local provide detail
- Regional newspapers important
- National newspapers important
    - Local copied from nationals
    - Times most important
- Overseas newspapers important

3 Using the Collections: locations

3.1 Motives for using newspapers
- Only source
- Tradition
- Perceived as valuable
- Suggestion of another researcher
- Unclear motives

3.2 Locations used
- British library Newspaper Library
    - used

        - not used
- National Library of Wales
- Record Offices
- Local libraries
- Newspaper office libraries
- Other

3.3 Methods for locating
- Library catalogues
- NEWSPLAN report
- Listings of newspapers
- Staff at libraries
- Other researchers
- No method

3.4 Problems locating newspapers
- Inaccurate information
- Insufficient information
- Missing titles / pages
- Travel problems
- Other problems
- Solutions to problems
    - importance of local collections
    - loan of films

4 Searching the newspaper

4.1 No Strategy
- scanning
- serendipidi

4.2 Strategies
- Selective searching
- Specific date
- Searching between dates
- Sampling
- Familiarise and skim

4.3 Other methods
- Cross referencing
- Developing a guide
- Cuttings files

4.4 Indexes

Value
- Valuable - no reason stated
- Alternative access point
- Facilitates Subject searches
- Facilitates Name searches

Problems
- Scanning more useful
- Lack of
- Construction method

4.5 Problems finding information
- Lack of time / Time consuming
- Volume of information

- Unsure of title

4.6 Problems extracting information
- Reading problems / Format
- Copy problems

5 Using the Newspaper and its information

5.1 Important parts of the paper
- All parts important
- News stories
- Correspondence
- Editorials
- Advertisements
- Announcements
- Features
- Other parts

5.2 Types of information important for
- Opinion
- Factual information

5.3 Subject of information
- political history
- social and cultural history
- biography and family history
- economic and trade history

5.4 The Nature of the Information
- Unique information
- Most detailed information
- Supplementary information

5.5 Quality of the information
- Accurate information

  Problems
  - Inaccurate information
  - Biased / selective information
  - Inconsistant information
  - Accuracy difficult to judge
  - Decreasing quality
  - Other problems

  Solutions
  - Must cross check
  - Accuracy / bias irrelevent
  - All sources flawed

5.6 Research on actual newspaper

Reasons for not being undertaken
- Too difficult / not available
- Not relevant
- Knowledge already adequate
- unclear reasons

Type of Research Undertaken
- Political stance
- Ownership

- Authorship / Editorship
- Geographic coverage
- Life span
- Readership
- News production methods

6 Format of Newspaper

6.1 Hardcopy

Prefer

- Just prefer
- Aesthetic factor
- Text clearer
- Scanning possible
- Layout / context visible
- (Less Tiring)

Dislike

- (Size of volumes)
- (Copying difficult)
- (Easily Damaged)
- Dirty

6.2 Microfilm

Prefer

- Easier to copy
- Easier to handle physically
- Quick to use
- Preservation
- Magnify
- Can buy

Dislike

- Poor condition - reader
- Poor condition - film
- Tiring
- Dislike technology
- (Scanning difficult)
- (layout not visible)

6.3 Format not relevant

6.4 Use of Digital newspapers

- Limited knowledge / not used
- Happy to try / use
- Limited use
- Used often

6.5 Advantages of digital newspapers

- Key-word searching
- Access from desktop
- storage advantages
- other

6.5 Problems of digital newspapers

- cost / access
- dislike of IT
- abridged
- layout unclear

- unavailable
- removes serendipidi
- durability

6.6 Preservation of newspapers

- Important
    - Preserves information
    - Preserve format

Problems

- Affects access
- Microfilm poor alternative

Appendix 11: Coding of Historians

Historians by Category

Very broad categories were devised to distinguish between the types of individuals who particpated in the interviews. By coding each individual it became possible to refer to them in the results chapters without explaining the type of historian that they were. Initially it was decided to separate the academic and non-academic particpants. These were then further categorised to identify broadly the type of research they undertook. The categories included:

- Academic political historians (AP)
- Academic social historians (AS)
- Non-academic family historians (FF)
- Non-academic family and local historians (FL)
- Non-academic local historians (LL)
- Other historians (OO)

Academic political historians (AP)

This category included all interview particpants based in higher education (either lecturers, researchers or research students). Their main area of study had to be political history although this included local, national and international contexts. Six individuals were assigned to this category.

Academic social historians (AS)

This category was perhaps one of the broadest and included all interview particpants based in higher education whose main area of study was either social, economic or cultural history. The broad nature of the definition may account for the highest number of individuals, (eight) being assigned to this category.

Non-academic family historians (FF)

This group included all historians researching purely family history. The research often involved one's own family, however professional geneaologists were included in this definition. There were six individuals in this category.

Non-academic family and local history (FL)

A number of historians were researching both family and local history and this category was devised for this group. Six individuals fell into this category.

Non-academic local history (LL)

Three historians were defined as simply local historians. They were not attached to an institute of higher education and did not undertake family history research.

Other historians (OO1)

Only one historian was categorised as 'other'. The category was intended to include researchers not based in higher education and not undertaking research that could be categorised as family or local history. The individual in question worked in the heritage industry.

Each individual was assigned to a category and they were numbered sequentially. The numbering had no more significance than to distinguish between the different interviewees. The chart below shows information about each of the interview participants. They are not referred to by name in the body of the thesis however, as confidentiality was assured throughout the interview process.

Interview No.	*Research details*	*Historian type*	*Code*
1	The Labour movement in Britain 1880s-1914	Academic, social	AS1
2	Maritime history - shipwrecks off Wales	Other, heritage	OO1
3	Various aspect of local history in Surrey	Local and family historian,	FL1
4	Local and family history	Family and local	FL2
5	History of mass media in Britain	Academic, social, cultural	AS2
6	19th popular culture and protest in Cardiganshire	Research student social	AS3
7	17th - 19th trade history in Wrexham	Family and local	LL1
8	Lead mining history of NE Wales	Local	LL2
9	1900-39 Labour and Liberal political history	Academic political	AP1
10	19th century Welsh cultural and music history	Academic, cultural	AS4
11	History of my family as far as possible	Family	FF1
12	19th century Carmarthenshire	Local	LL3
13	History of my family	Family	FF2
14	Local and family history around Carmarthen	Family and local	FL3
15	20th century international political history esp. Far East	Academic political	AP2
16	18th and 19th century British social, political & intellectual history	Academic political	AP3
17	European history 1500-1800 esp. Anglo-Dutch relations	Academic political	AP4
18	British political history 1919-40	Academic political	AP5
19	Welsh attitudes towards the American Civil War 1861-65	Academic social and cultural	AS5

20	Personal Family history	Family	FF3
21	Clockmaking in Glamorgan 18th-19th Century. Family history	Family and local	FL4
22	Personal family history	Family	FF4
23	Personal family history 16th-20th century	Family	FF5
24	Personal family history and local history	Family and local	FL5
25	20th century Anglo-Welsh literature	Academic cultural	AS6
26	Family and local history	Family and local	FL6
27	Family and local history	Family	FF6
28	19th and 20th Welsh social history and immigration	Academic social	AS7
29	South Wales industry 18th-20th century	Academic social	AS8
30	Political relations - Britain and Ireland in late 18th century	Academic political	AP6

Appendix 12: Comparison of newspaper holdings at Carmarthen and Cardiff public libraries

Carmarthen Library

Microfilm:
Carmarthen Journal 1810- present day
The Welshman 1832-1945
The Times 1843
The Cambrian 1804-1812
The Celtic News 1923-1927 continued as *The Cymric Times* 1927-1936
Carmarthen Times 1962-1989 continued as *Carmarthen Citizen* 1989- 1997 continued as *Carmarthen Herald* 1997 - present day
Amman Valley Chronicle 1913-1960 continued as *South Wales Guardian* 1960 - present day
The Times 1981-1993

CD-ROM:
The Times 1990 - present day
Western Mail 1995 - present day

Current newspaper s:
Cambrian News
Carmarthen Journal
Llanelli Star
South Wales Guardian
Tivyside Advertiser
Western Telegraph
South Wales Evening Post
Western Mail
Wales on Sunday
Daily Telegraph
The Times
The Independent
The Guardian
Financial Times
The Observer

Cardiff library

Holdings in the Local Studies Collection

Microfilm
Western Mail 1873-1905, 1911-1937, 1948-present day
South Wales Echo 1887 - present day
Barry and Cadoxton Journal 1888-1891
Barry Herald 1896-1962
Barry Times 1962-1964
South Wales Daily News 1887-1919
South Wales Star 1891-1894
Tarian Y Gweithiwr / Y Darian 1875-1934
Barry and District News
Penarth Times

Where possible the library also collect all local free newspapers.

Holdings in the Information department

CD-ROM
Independent
Western Mail
Financial Times
The Times

Microfilm
The Times 1785-present day
The Times Education Supplement 1910-present day
The Times Literary Supplement 1902-present day
The Sunday Times 1977-present day

Newspapers in Leisure Library

All UK National daily newspapers except the *Star*.
The European
Western Telegraph
Carmarthen Journal
Merthyr Express
Barry and District News
Daily Post
The Cambrian News
Brecon and Radnor Express
Swansea Evening Post
Irish Times
Belfast Newsletter
Le Monde
A German, Italian and Spanish daily newspaper
Ethnic papers from Asia, Arab, Japan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, India

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