

Evaluation of Newspaper Reading Habits of Youths in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This article examines newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study aims at ascertaining the newspapers that youths in Anambra State read most, the frequency of their readership of newspapers, the type of stories they mostly read and the ways through which they obtain the newspapers they read. The study uses quantitative research technique. It adopts a sample size of 300 youths, purposively drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi. The survey is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media. The paper employs the simple percentage method and frequency tables as analytical tools. Findings of the study show that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot and that *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Complete Sports* and *The Vanguard* are the newspapers they mostly read. Findings also reveal that sports, political and economic news are the major stories the youths read and that they obtain the newspapers they read mainly by going to newspaper stands (to read without paying) browsing newspapers with their cell phones, borrowing from friends and neighbours and by visiting the public library. The paper concludes that most youths in Anambra State do not buy newspapers they read and recommends massive empowerment of youths by the government through provision of employment and other poverty alleviation strategies to enable them buy newspapers.

Key words: Newspaper, Reading, Habits, Evaluation, Youths, Anambra State

1. Introduction and Justification for the Study

Newspapers are known for the provision of up-to-date information on local, state, national and international events. Newspapers often contain current and interesting information meant for the reading pleasure of the vast majority of readers of all ages and walks of life. As an important print medium of mass communication, newspapers provide the most current analysis, debate and criticism of socio-political, economic, health and a host of other issues as information, education and entertainment to the readers. The newspaper is, no doubt, one of the most widely-read periodicals available and accessible to all on daily basis in print and electronic versions.

As a mass medium, newspapers are useful for education, information, recreation, relaxation and entertainment. This explains why Ola and Ojo (2007) opine that newspapers are important because they carry current information and they keep the readers informed of events and happenings within and outside their immediate environments. Okunna (1999) reinforces this position by asserting that the newspaper is important in that it serves as a carrier of current information or news.

The newspaper is important to everybody, particularly students and youths who are considered as the most active information-seeking group in any population for the obvious reasons of academic and other pursuits. The permanency attributed to print media, including newspaper has made information recall possible, and recall capability frees content from becoming transient and ephemeral (Ezeh, Chukwuma and Enwereuzo, 2015), since audience of the media like youths remembers them and use them for academic and other purposes. Indeed, youths are supposed to be the most active users of newspapers as they constitute most important information seekers in the society. On the contrary, evidence from a large body of empirical literature seems to suggest that newspaper reading among youths is declining. Dominick (2002, p. 14) notes that newspaper readership has been declining over the last couple of years. Udie (2002, p. 100) also reports that the frequency of newspaper readership among Nigerian students is less than 50%. Biagi (2003, p. 83) states that since the 1970s, the overall number of newspapers has declined due to non-readership. Business Essay (2009, p. 2) has equally reported downward trend, in the past few decades, in newspaper readership in countries of the world including Europe and America.

The validity or otherwise of the position of these studies will be investigated by the current study using newspaper readers in Anambra State as the case study. Additionally, this study will examine the newspaper reading habits of readers - the newspapers they read, how often they read, the type of stories they read, the affordability of newspapers among the youths, and the ways through which youths obtain newspapers they read.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following objectives

- i. To ascertain the newspapers that youths in Anambra State mostly read.
- ii. To determine how regular they read the newspapers
- iii. To find out the type of stories they mostly read
- iv. To ascertain the affordability of newspapers among youths in Anambra State
- v. To determine the ways through which they obtain the newspapers they read.

1.3. Research Questions

Pursuant to the study's objectives, the following questions are posed for investigation.

- i. What are the newspapers that youths in Anambra State mostly read?
- ii. How regular do they read the newspapers?
- iii. What type of stories do they mostly read?
- iv. Do youths in Anambra State afford the price of newspapers?
- v. What are the ways through which they obtain the newspapers they read?

2 Theoretical Underpinning

Lewis (1958), cited in Amodu (2012, p. 52), opines that "good theories enable researchers to put facts in perspectives and to hypothesise what will happen, even before they happen". Folarin (2005), cited in Amodu (2012, p. 52), notes that "theories help researchers to manage realities". Thus, theories are significant in research exercises as they lend themselves to various texts and analysis such that the phenomenon central to the study is explained, clarified and even predicted as the case may be (Edegoh, Asemah and Okpanachi, 2013; Edegoh, Asemah and Nwammuo, 2013). This study is anchored on the Uses and Gratification theory of the mass media.

Propounded in 1974 by Elihu Katz, Jay Blumler and Michael Gurevitch (Anaeto, Onabajo and Osifeso, 2008), the Uses and Gratification theory falls within the media effects tradition and its bottom line is that the media do not do things to people; rather people do things with the media. The theory explains "how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs" (Burgeon, Hunsaker and Dawson, 1994, cited in Udende and Azeez, 2010, p. 34). The theory holds that "people influence the effects that mass media have on them" (Anaeto et al, 2008 cited in Edegoh Asemah and Nwammuo, 2013, p. 22). The assumption of the theory is that people are not just passive receivers of media messages; rather they actively influence the message effects. Media audience selectively choose, attend to, perceive and retain media offerings on the basis of their needs, beliefs, etc., thus, "there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users" Anaeto et al, 2008, p.71).

The Uses and Gratification theory is relevant to the study at hand in that both share a common ideology and opinion on uses of media offerings, particularly by youths.

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Newspaper and its Usefulness in Society

Newspapers are defined as "written publication containing news, information and advertisements usually printed on low-cost paper called newsprint" (Akobundu, 2009, p.1). It is a printed Publication issued at regular, close intervals, especially daily or weekly, consisting of folded unstapled sheets and often containing current news, comment, feature articles, advertising and correspondence. Sandman et al, cited in Okunna (1999) defines a newspaper as an unbound, printed publication, issued at regular intervals, which presents information in words often supplemented with pictures.

Newspapers whether special-interest or general interest provide important and useful/news information to readers. Ronan (2005, p. 14) captures the whole essence of newspaper when he asserts that "in every language, the newspaper is irreplaceable primary source for historians of every discipline". Reinforcing this notion, Nwabueze, Okonkwo and Nweke (2012, p. 227) maintain that "Newspapers provide excellent memories of a country's historical events, and landmarks". They are regular up-to-date sources of information available to students, scholars, administrators, the barely literate and so on, who demand for newspapers through self-acquisition, exchange and borrowing from friends, relatives, and libraries (Onwubiko, 2005). Nakinganda (2007, p. 14) avers that "newspapers are sources of textual evidence useful to students, researchers, journalists,

administrators, lawyers, politicians and the larger society". They are carriers of current information (Okunna, 1999) and the oldest and traditionally the most important sources of current information that contain far more news than are available on television or elsewhere (Sandman et al, cited in Okunna, 1999). Newspapers stimulate, motivate, inspire, interpret, build, preserve, excite, satisfy and sometimes disappoint. They archive yesterday, chronicle today and periscope the possibility of a brighter tomorrow (Hynds, 1972). Newspapers are, therefore, vital sources of information on which mankind depend for useful daily information on all news fronts.

2.2 Review of Empirical Studies

Many researchers have undertaken to study newspaper readership among different audiences and in several societies. The works of some of these scholars are reviewed hereunder. Nwabueze et al (2012) conducted a study titled "An Analysis of Radio Newspaper Headlines Review: Influence on Readership pattern" which aimed at determining whether newspaper headlines review on radio influences respondents' exposure to newspapers, and whether there is a significant relationship between newspaper headlines review on radio and readership pattern. The scholars adopted quantitative research method and utilised multi-choice, close-ended questionnaire to collect data on 399 respondents.

Findings revealed that 73.6% of the respondents both agreed and strongly agreed that newspaper headlines review on radio can stimulate readership of newspaper; that newspaper review on radio influence buying decisions of respondents (49.1%); and that newspaper headline review on radio influences respondents' readership of newspaper (76.2%). The study concluded that newspaper headlines review on radio has positive influence on readership pattern as it influences people to buy and read newspapers.

Simmons 1967 study reported in Linton and Reinhard (2005), cited in Nwabueze et al (2012, p. 229) reported that newspaper readership in the United States since 1967 among different age categories has continued to decline. The study found that readership of newspaper among people of 18-24 years in 1967 was 71%, but dropped to 42% in 1999. Similarly the newspaper readership among people within 25-34 years age bracket dropped from 73% in 1967 to 44% in 1999. Simmons study in Linton and Reinhard (2005) cited in Nwabueze et al (2012) therefore, established declining newspaper readership among people of different age brackets in the United States of America.

Another study that we consider very important in this work is the Latin American Kids study (1998, p. 9) on newspaper readership among Latin American Kids. The study reported that only 20.8% of Latin American Kids between the age brackets 7-11 years read a week day newspaper and 18.1% read a Sunday newspaper.

From the foregoing, there is strong research-based evidence of declining newspaper readership among people of different ages. There is also enough empirical data showing that youths do not read newspapers. However, at present newspapers are available in both hard copy and electronic form and are accessible through the Internet using all kinds of devices which are at the disposal of youths, particularly students. All these innovations are meant to improve readership of newspapers and attract young readers.

3 Methodology

Research methodology refers to the way in which a researcher retrieves data from the selected sampling frame, methods for collecting data, instruments to be used and how the data is scrutinised and presented (Matseketsa and Mapolisa, 2013). It refers to the framework for extracting meaning from the data collected (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). The research method adopted for this study was the survey.

Survey is the most appropriate method of gathering and measuring data relating to demographics, attitude, opinion and perception (Asemah, Gujbawu, Ekharefo and Okpanachi, 2012, p. 109). The sample size of the study was 300 respondents purposively drawn from Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi (all in Anambra State). The choice of 300 respondents as the sample size was informed by Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 101), citing Comrey and Lee's (1992) view that "one guideline recommended for multivariate studies is as follows: 50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good; and 1000 = excellent". Similarly, Nwana (1981), cited in Okoro (2001, p. 69) writes that "if the population is a few hundreds, a 40% or more sample will do; if many hundreds, a 20% sample will do; if a few thousands, a 10% sample will do; and if several thousands, a 5% or less will do".

The study utilised multi-choice, close-ended questionnaire with a few open -ended items as data gathering instrument. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section A consisted of 6 items carefully designed to obtain data on respondents' demographics while section B comprised 15 items designed to generate data to answer the research questions. Analysis of data obtained was done using simple percentage method and frequency tables.

4 Results

Table 1: Return Rate of the Questionnaire

Item	Frequency	Percentage
Returned and found usable	294	98
Not usable	Nil	0
Not returned	6	2
Total	300	100

Table one shows that the return rate was 98% (n = 294) while the mortality rate was 2% (n = 6). The return rate is higher than the mortality rate. The mortality rate of 2% does not affect the study because it is insignificant compared with the return rate of 98%. Thus, the copies were considered adequate to represent the population. The presentation and analysis of data obtained from the questionnaire was based on the two hundred and ninety-four (294) copies that were returned and found usable.

Table 2: Respondents' Demographic Characteristics

Response/Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	150	51
Female	144	49
Total	294	100
Age		
18-25 years	61	21
26-35 years	147	50
36 years and above	86	29
Total	294	100
Marital status		
Married	94	32
Single	200	68
Total	294	100
Occupation		
Students	147	50
Civil Servants	37	13
Traders	42	14
Unemployed	59	20
Others	9	3
Total	294	100

Academic attainment		
Primary education	27	9
Secondary education	90	31
Tertiary education	147	50
Post degree education	30	10
Total	294	100
Place of residence		
Awka	118	40
Onitsha	110	37
Nnewi	66	23
Total	294	100

Table two contains data on demographic characteristics of the respondents. As shown in the table, 51% of the respondents (n = 150) were male and 49% (n = 144) were female. On the age distribution of the respondents, 21% (n =61) were aged 18-25 years, 50% (n = 147) were within the age bracket "26-35 years" while the age range "36 years and above" had 29% (n = 86).

The marital status of the respondents reveals that 68% (n = 200) were single while 32% (n = 94) were married. Occupational distribution of the respondents shows that 50% (n = 147) were students, 13% (n = 37) were civil servants while "traders" accounted for 14% (n = 42). The unemployed category accounted for 20% (n = 59%). and "others" category (such as artisans, apprentices and the self-employed) accounted for 3% (n = 9).

Academic attainment of the respondents shows that majority of them had tertiary education (50%, n = 147); those who had secondary education were 31% (n = 90); post degree education category had 10% (n = 30) while those who had only primary education training were 9% (n = 27). Distribution of respondents according to their place of residence yielded 40% (n = 118) for Awka, 37% (n = 110) for Onitsha while Nnewi had 33% (n = 66). The disparity in sample size allocation to the cities was to take care of their newspaper readership strength.

Research Question One

What are the newspapers that youths in Anambra State mostly read?

Table 3: Profile of newspapers read by youths in Anambra State

Place of residence	<i>The Sun</i> %	<i>The Guardian</i> %	<i>Complete Sports</i> %	<i>The Vanguard</i> %	<i>The Punch</i> %	Others %	Total %
Awka	58 (20)	26 (9)	9 (3)	12 (4)	6 (2)	6 (2)	118 40
Onitsha	47 (16)	24 (8)	15 (5)	12 (4)	3 (1)	9 (3)	110 37
Nnewi	37 (13)	9 (3)	9 (3)	6 (2)	3 (1)	3 (1)	66 23
Total	142 (49)	59 (20)	33 (11)	30 (10)	12 (4)	18 (6)	294 100

Data in table three were designed to establish the newspaper readership profile of youths in Anambra State. The figures show that 49% (n = 142) read *The Sun* newspaper, 20% (n = 59) read *the Guardian*, 11% (n = 33) patronised the *Complete Sports* while 10% (n = 30) read *The Vanguard* newspaper. Twelve respondents (4%) read *The Punch* newspaper and 18 respondents (6%) read other newspapers such as *The Nation*, *Daily Independent*, *Champion* and *Tribune* newspapers.

The data equally shows that out of the 49% respondents who read *The Sun* newspaper, 20% reside in Awka, 16% in Onitsha and 13% in Nnewi; Out of the 20% that read *The Guardian*, 9%, 8% and 3% of them

reside in Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi respectively; and out of the 11% that read *Complete Sports* newspaper (3% each) reside in Awka and Nnewi while 5% live in Onitsha.

Similarly, out of the 30 respondents who read *The Vanguard* newspaper, Awka and Onitsha got 12 each while Nnewi got 6; the 12 respondents who read *The Punch* newspaper, 6 were from Awka while Onitsha and Nnewi got 3 each. Data show that readership of other newspapers in the study area obtained 6, 9 and 3 respondents for Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi respectively.

The import of data on research question one is that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot.

Research Question Two

How regular do they read the newspapers?

Table 4: Respondents' Response on How Regular They Read Newspapers

Place of residence	Responses					
	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Awka	118	40%	Nil	0	118	40
Onitsha	110	37	Nil	0	110	37
Nnewi	66	23	Nil	0	66	23
Total	294	100	Nil	0	294	100

Table four contains data designed to ascertain whether the youths in Anambra State read newspapers regularly. As could be gleaned from the table all the respondents (294 or 100%) answered in the affirmative meaning that they read newspapers regularly. As shown in the table below, the reading profile of the respondents show that 157 of them (54%) read newspapers daily, 81 (27%) read newspapers 2-5 times per week, 55 (18%) read newspapers weekly and 3 (1%) consulted newspapers on monthly basis.

Table 5: Newspaper reading profile of respondents

Place of residence	Profile							
	Daily	2-5 times/week	Weekly	Monthly	Total			
	%	%	%	%	%			
Awka	59 (20)	30 (10)	28 (9)	3 (1)	118	40		
Onitsha	58 (20)	31 (10)	21 (7)	Nil (0)	110	37		
Nnewi	40 (14)	20 (7)	6 (2)	Nil (0)	66	23		
Total	157 (54)	81 (27)	55 (18)	3 (1)	294	100		

The implication of data on research question two is that 99% of the youths sampled read newspapers regularly; (54% read newspapers daily, 27% read papers 2-5 times per week while 18% read newspapers weekly). Only 1% (n = 3) read newspapers monthly.

Research Question three

What type of stories do they mostly read?

Profile of stories read by respondents

Place of residence	Sports	Politics	Economic	International	Crime	Religious	Others	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Awka	54 (18)	18 (6)	24 (8)	9 (3)	5 (1.7)	6 (2)	2 (0.7)	118 40
Onitsha	52 (18)	21 (7)	23 (8)	6 (2)	2 (0.7)	5 (1.7)	1 (0.3)	110 37
Nnewi	30 (10.2)	14 (5)	12 (4)	3 (1)	2 (0.7)	Nil (0)	5 (1.7)	66 23
Total	136 (46)	53 (18)	59 (20)	18 (6)	9 (3)	11 (4)	8 (3)	294 100

Table six present data obtained to determine the type of stories that respondents read most. As shown in the table, 46% (n = 136) read sports stories, 18% (n = 53) read stories on politics, 20% (n = 59) read economic news while 6% (n = 18) read stories on the international scene. Other type of stories which the respondents consume include crime (3%, n = 9), religion (4%, n = 11), and others such as health news (3%, n = 8).

A clear look at table six shows that the major news stories which respondents read are sports, economic and political news, in that order. Eighteen percent of respondents who reside in Awka and Onitsha respectively consume sports news while 10% of those residing in Nnewi read sports news. For news on the economy, Awka and Onitsha got 8% respondents each while Nnewi got 4%. Those who read stories on politics were 6%, 7% and 5% for Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi respectively.

Data on research question three bears testimony to the fact that the stories youths in Anambra State read most are those on sports, politics and the economy.

Research Question Four

Do youths in Anambra State afford the price of newspapers?

Table 7: Affordability of price of newspapers by respondents

Place of residence	Affordability					
	Yes	%	No	%	Total	%
Awka	14	(5)	104	(35)	118	(40)
Onitsha	21	(7)	89	(30)	110	(37)
Nnewi	11	(4)	55	(19)	66	(23)
Total	46	(16)	248	(84)	294	(100)

Data contained in table seven were obtained to establish the affordability of the price of newspapers by respondents. Evidence from the table shows that those who answered "No", that they could not afford the price of newspapers were 35% (n = 104), 30% (n = 89) and 19% (n = 55) for Awka, Onitsha and Nnewi residing respondents respectively. Thus, a total of 248, representing 84% of the sample, could not afford to buy newspapers. However, 46 respondents, representing 16%, said "Yes", meaning that they could afford to buy newspapers.

The implication of data on research question four is that majority of the respondents do not buy newspapers as they could not afford to do so.

Research Question Five

What are the ways through which they obtain the newspapers they read?

Table 8: Ways through which the respondents obtain newspapers

Place of residence	Reading newspaper stand	Internet/ use of cell phone/ handset	Browsing	Library	Buying	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Awka	29 (10)	41 (14)	14 (5)	20 (7)	14 (5)	118 40
Onitsha	30 (10)	38 (13)	14 (5)	7 (2)	21 (7)	110 37
Nnewi	25 (9)	16 (5)	11 (3)	3 (1)	11 (4)	66 23
Total	84 (29)	95 (32)	39 (13)	30 (10)	46 (16)	294 100

Table eight contains data obtained to determine the ways through which respondents obtain the newspapers they read. Data show that 84 respondents (29%) read papers at the newspaper stands as free readers, 95 (32%) read daily newspapers through the internet or cell phone/handset and 39 (13%) borrowed newspapers they read from friends and neighbours, 30 respondents (10%) read papers at the libraries while 46 respondents (16%) bought the papers they read.

The import of data presented on research question five is that very few youths in Anambra State buy newspapers they read.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study are as interesting as they are revealing. First and foremost, the researchers found that youths in Anambra State read newspapers a lot and that newspapers they read include *The Sun*, *The Guardian*, *Complete Sports*, and *the Vanguard* newspapers (in the main) as well as *The Punch* newspaper.

This finding differs from the outcome of Simmons 1967 study, cited in Linton and Reinhardt (2005), quoted by Nwabueze et al (2012, p. 224) which showed that readership of newspapers among different age categories in the United States of America had been declining since 1967. Specifically, he found that age brackets 18-24 and 25-34 recorded 71% and 73% newspaper readership rates (respectively) in 1967 whereas the two age categories recorded a drop in newspaper readership in 1999 to the tune of 42% and 44% respectively. However, the sharp difference in the findings of the two studies lies in the approach adopted by both studies. Whereas the current study's definition of newspaper readership includes readers of newspaper hard copy and online versions, Simmons 1967 study seemed to have examined newspaper hard copy readers.

On how regular the youths in Anambra State read newspapers, it was found that majority of youths read newspapers on regular bases with 54%, 27% and 18% of respondents reading newspapers daily, 2-5 times a week and weekly respectively. This outcome strongly opposes the claim by McDougall and Chartrey (2008, p.10), that "young generation, the future adult market and readers dedicate only a little time to newspaper".

Findings of the study reveal that stories that youths mostly read in newspapers were those on sports, politics and the economy (to a large extent) and stories on the international scene, crime, religion and health (to a low extent). This finding is in line with the central tenets of the Uses and Gratification theory which this study has reviewed. The major argument of the theory is that people utilise mass media contents to gratify their needs. This finding is in tandem with the submission of Anaeto et al (2008, p.71) that "there are as many reasons for using the media as there are media users".

On the affordability of newspapers among youths in Anambra State, it was found that an overwhelming majority of youths do not afford the cover price of newspapers in Nigeria. Majority of youths do not buy newspapers as they cannot afford the money to do so. This situation may not be unconnected with the high rate of poverty and unemployment prevailing in Nigeria at the moment. However, this findings sheds light on the submission of Beek and Sobal, cited in Ezeokoli (2002, p. 23) that "newspaper readership is not the same as newspaper subscription". This means that a lot of people may be newspaper readers but only a few may be subscribing for newspapers.

Finally, findings of the study show that the ways through which youths in Anambra State obtain newspapers they read were through the internet and/or cell phone/handset, reading at newspaper stands (without payment), borrowing papers from friends, relatives and neighbours (that is, reading papers bought by others) and reading at the libraries. Only 16% of the sample investigated could afford to buy newspapers for themselves.

This finding reinforces Onwubiko's (2005, p. 21) assertion that "students, scholars, administrators, the barely literate and so on, demand for newspapers through self-acquisition, exchange and borrowing from friends, relatives and from libraries". In line with this position, Nwabueze et al (2012, p. 224) writes: "Despite the fact that newspapers are chroniclers of historical and newsworthy events, hence are good sources of research materials and information, people do not buy or read newspapers and those who care to read, borrow from elites or belong to the "Free Readers Association".

This situation is not a healthy development for newspaper establishment in Nigeria because as Nwabueze et al (2012, p.230 put it "...that readers borrow newspapers from friends and neighbours will impact negatively on newspaper circulation and when circulation becomes too low, the survival of the newspaper is at risk".

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

The article examined newspaper reading habits of youths in Anambra State. The rationale behind the study were to establish how regular the youths read newspapers, the type of stories they read often and the ways through which they obtain the papers they read. Three hundred youths were surveyed in the three main urban cities in Anambra State. Findings of the study reveals that youths in Anambra State read newspapers often, that stories which interest them most were those on sports, politics and the economy and that the youths do not buy newspapers because they could not afford the cover price of most newspapers in the land. The inevitable conclusion, therefore, is that Anambra youths read newspaper often and do so through their cell phone/handset or the internet, reading at the newsstands (as free readers), borrowing from friends, relatives and neighbours who

bought daily newspapers and by utilising libraries; because they cannot afford to buy papers at their current cover prices.

Based on the conclusion, the researchers made the following recommendations:

- i. Government should address the rising rate of unemployment and poverty in the land with a view to curtailing its effect on the reading culture of our youths.
- ii. Government should provide employment to unemployed youths to enable them possess the financial base to buy newspapers for themselves.
- iii. Provision of daily newspapers in the public and other libraries to enable willing youths and other readers gain access to current newspapers rather than reading previous days' papers as is often the case with most libraries in the state at the moment.

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