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## One-Page Almanacs - Nigeria's Latest Source of Information

Nothing could be a better pointer to the value of information to Nigerians than the popularity of one-page almanacs all over the country. One-page almanacs are the simplest form of almanacs in existence. They appear in a diversity of forms and serve a variety of purposes. Though not comparable to the World Almanac, the **Information Please Almanac**, or the **Nigeria Yearbook** in terms of format and content, they fulfil similar functions as information providers. One-page almanacs may have originated as far back as the time printing was introduced in Nigeria but from observation, the earliest published one-page almanacs probably appeared in the early 1930s. The present contents of these almanacs point to a probable evolution from one-page calendars with little or no accompanying information to the present pictorial outlook.

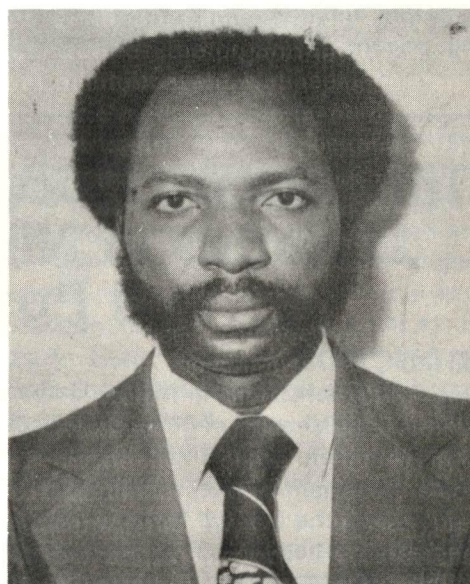
### Description

The almanacs are usually rectangular ranging in size from 40 cm x 50 cm to 60 cm x 90 cm. They are often printed on paper of varying quality. Bank, bond and art paper appear to be used more commonly. The lower edge of each almanac is slipped into a horse-shoe shaped metal strip. The upper edge has a hook attached to a similar metal end.

### Frequency

One-page almanacs are published annually. The following year's almanac is usually available for sale

by



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as early as October of the preceeding year. Production, distribution and sales continue up to the end of March, and sometimes all the year round.

### Publishers

By far the largest publishers of one-page almanacs are religious, professional, cultural and ethnic

associations. It forms a regular activity of these organisations and is often cited as one of the achievements of union executives. Federal, State and Local governments and their agencies take part in this annual publishing venture. It is the responsibility of their information departments and the products are usually distributed free of charge. A few trade publishers gamble each year with various designs of almanacs depicting events of the past year in selected activities of interest to the public like soccer, politics, religion and culture.

## **Contents**

The objectives of the publishers determine the contents of each almanac. The most conspicuous feature, however, consist of personal and group photographs or photographs of events or items of special significance to the publishers and potential buyers. The second major content is the year's calendar. Alongside this calendar is a schedule of the market days of the publisher's ethnic group or ethnic group of the potential area of distribution or potential customer's locality. In order to widen their market, commercial almanac publishers do not include ethnic market schedules. The year's schedule of public holidays and moon phases are important pieces of information carried on these almanacs. Chronological summaries of events such as soccer championships and beauty contests and chieftaincy information are regular features of most one-page almanacs.

## **Uses**

The uses of one-page almanacs vary from person to person and from community to community. Primarily, Nigerians use almanacs to look up information. In planning private or public social gatherings, one-

page almanacs constitute a handy source of information for determining suitable or convenient dates that would not conflict with local traditions, festivals and market days. The almanacs are also acquired for their aesthetic value. This is manifested in the tenacity with which almanac owners hold on to outdated issues. The production of one-page almanacs has flourished in Nigeria partly as a result of its income generating capacity. Several million copies are sold during the December-January peak sales period and this generates fund for hundreds of associations, clubs, unions, societies and small printers.

## **Problems**

Most publishers of one-page almanacs keep a strict eye on costs and consequently aesthetics is sacrificed. The almanacs are often simplistic and monotonous in design and the information they seek to project is not clearly distinguishable. Besides, some of the information is incomplete. Names of markets, the wares for which they have become prominent and directives for locating them could be included so as to make the information on market days a little more useful.

## **Action**

Although Federal and State legal deposit laws require publishers to deposit copies with designated libraries, they have not been complying. Even when they do, it is unlikely that publishers of one-page almanacs would deposit copies. The university of Ife Library Ile-Ife, is building up a collection of posters. There is no doubt that a collection of one-page almanacs would provide a mine of information and this is an area that public libraries in Nigeria could consider doing some work on.

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