

Reading Habits among Library and Information Science Students of Annamalai University: A Survey

S. Thanuskodi

*Library & Information Science Wing, Directorate of Distance Education, Annamalai
University, Annamalai Nagar 608 002, Tamil Nadu, India
E-mail: thanuskodi_s@yahoo.com*

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ABSTRACT A modern saying says "Today's Readers are tomorrow's Leader". One should read books and other materials to acquire knowledge. Unless one reads and get in touch with the mass media, it is difficult to know what is going around us. Not only that, a student has to read books, other than his text books, so that the area of thinking and acting will become broader. 'Reading to learn' is an essential tool for life-long learning. Promoting a reading culture among students is therefore one of the key tasks in the curriculum reform with the aim to strengthen students' learning capabilities. Reading can definitely be taken as the first button in the garment education. It is not the sole object of school, but it is almost impossible to think of education without thinking about what happens and what is implied when a human being tries to get meaning out of the written or printed symbols. The results of the study indicated that majority of the LIS students (79.53 %) are interested in reading LIS course material frequently. The result show that the students overall responded that work most often interfered with their reading and studying.

INTRODUCTION

In 'reading habit', we get two words 'reading' and 'habit'. Reading is an action of a person who reads and habit is a product of this action or learning. Like all other habits, the habit or reading in an individual develops during the course of time. Smith and Robinson defined reading as "an active attempt on the part of reader to understand a writer's message". Devarajan defines reading as an "art of interpreting printed and written words". Nowadays, a common allegation is raised that the reading habit is decreasing. It is true that if we go to the reading room of a library, we find most of the seats are dusty. It is really a matter of concern. So, I made a plan to study the reading habit of the library and information science students. The purpose of this study is to survey the reading habits of the library and information science students.

Reading is a precise process. It involves exact, detailed, sequential perception and identification of letters, words, spelling patterns and large language units. More simply stated, reading is a psycholinguistic guessing game. It involves an interaction between thoughts and language. Efficient reading does not result from precise perception and identification of all elements, but from skill in selecting the fewest, most productive cues necessary to produce guesses which are right the first time. The ability to anticipate

that which has not been seen, of course, is vital in reading, just as the ability to anticipate. What has not yet been heard is vital in listening. Today, the reading has social, academic, economical and survival significance, because democracy of a country can survive when people at large have reading competence. Reading is always a means to an end and not an end in itself. Further, reading is the process of using over 'eyes', our 'mind', to understand the literal as well as the hidden meaning of what the writer was attempting to convey. Therefore, reading gives both power, and pleasure with understanding, by reading the material as a unified whole, by which one can expand the frontiers of knowledge and scholarship.

Benefits of Reading

The impact of reading in people's lives is extraordinarily widespread. A reader can learn new skills, can be introduced to new facts, he can become more knowledgeable about the whole world and he can be stimulated to both thought and emotion. Reading has the unique power of transforming readers. It is sometimes said, "We are what we read". Abraham Lincoln said, "The things I want to know are in books. My friend is the man who will get a book to read". Francis Bacon therefore, rightly said, "Reading makes a full man".

Reading is the art of interpreting printed and written words. It is a basic tool of education. According to William S. Grey, reading influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the attitudes, moral beliefs, judgments and action of readers. The reading habit is one of the powerful and lasting influences in the promotion of one's personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one's living; and thereby prepares him for an effective civilizing force tending to unite social groups through the dissemination of common experiences. Considering the social, cultural and educational goals of reading, it is felt that it is worthwhile to know the reading habits of students' community. There are only a few numbers of attempts in the field of reading interest of secondary school children. Moreover, sufficient study of the reading interest, especially of adolescent group in Indian setting is lacking.

Literature Review

This paper presents a selective review of studies conducted in India and abroad, including Anderson (2007), Shahriza (2007), Train (2007), Boström and Lassen (2006), Corradini (2006), Dent (2006), Celep and Cetin (2005), Brier and Lebbin (2004), but this type of research is unusual, since it studies the reading habits of the senior secondary students. Schools curriculum incorporates an expressive and exploratory from interactive education system, so that they develop an inquisitive mind and discover the power of self-determination and discipline to grow up into successful professionals and good human beings.

Professors make assumptions about students' reading habits before coming to decisions about their reading requirements for a particular course or topic. These assumptions relate to the speed and efficacy of reading together with the recognition and appreciation of the significance of materials to be read. College students are expected to be efficient and proficient readers. Many college courses require students to read 100-150 pages of material per week. When this is multiplied by 4 or 5 courses per semester, it equates to 400 or more pages per week. Time management is crucial to keeping up on reading assignments. Students must have good organization

skills for college. If they are disorganized, they will quickly find themselves falling behind in assignments, due dates and reading (Glencoe 2004).

Reading is essential to academic success and to intellectual growth. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) surveyed 17,000 individuals and discovered that in 1982, 57 percent of adult Americans read literature and in 2004 the figure had fallen to 46.7 percent. The rate of decline for the youngest adults, those aged 18 to 24, was 55 percent greater than that of the total adult population. The NEA study did not include non-fiction or college student reading, however, it is believed that decline of reading threatens not only America's arts heritage but its economic position in the world as well. Reading requires sustained focused attention, working with the powers of memory and imagination. Economic success depends on innovation and creativity which comes from reading. Television, video games, and even the internet are more passive than reading. Reading forces the reader to think; watching allows escape. College students nowadays do not have the traditional sense of the role that reading plays in the development of one's life (NEA 2004).

Objectives of the Study

This paper reports the results of a survey of Library and Information Science students addressing this question. The objectives were to determine:

- To know the frequency of reading LIS materials
- To know the frequency of reading for pleasure
- To know whether the students spend time on various activities
- To know the activities interfere most with reading and studying

METHODOLOGY

The Library and Information Science students in the Directorate of Distance Education, Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu were surveyed in the academic year 2009-2010. The LIS Wing has an enrollment of around 3000 students in three courses including Master of Library and Information Science, Bachelor of Library and Information Science and Certificate of Library

and Information Science. A sample of 342 of the students participated in this research. 186 students were female and 156 were male students. In this study, 60 were under 20 years of age, 85 were 21-25 years of age, and 197 were over 25 years of age. All courses offered during the academic year 2009-2010 were listed and from this list a random selection was made. The selection included MLIS, BLIS and CLIS courses. A questionnaire was developed for this study. Completion of the questionnaire required about ten minutes and questionnaires were given to all the participants during a class period. They were briefly informed about the research project and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. The surveys were given out and collected back at the beginning or end to the class hour. A total of 342 questionnaires were completed by library and information science students. The data were summarized and percentages were calculated.

RESULTS

Data in Table 1 shows that Library and Information Science course material were read more often than other LIS material. Course material was read frequently by 79.53 percent of the students and sometimes by an additional 14.33 percent. The percentage of students reading LIS material rarely was 6.4 percent. Reading LIS related material on the internet was second in frequency with 18.12 percent reading on the internet frequently and 36.85 percent reading rarely. Over 46.19 percent of the students never read LIS journals. However, some students rarely read various types of LIS materials 31.58 percent rarely read a LIS journals, 39.19 percent rarely read LIS news letters and 49.13 percent rarely read LIS magazines. One third of the respondents 30.12 percent sometimes read LIS related materials on the internet and 29.82 percent rarely read LIS news letters. Around one- fourth of the respondents 26.90 percent never read LIS news letters, 21.05 percent never read LIS magazines and 14.91 percent never read LIS related materials on the internet.

Data in Table 2 shows that for recreational reading, 54.39 percent read newspapers frequently followed by 38.59 percent sometimes read newspapers, 47.96 percent read fiction frequently, 31.58 percent read magazines frequently and both 27.48 percent read internet publica-

Table 1: Frequency of reading LIS materials

Variables	Fre- quently	Some- times	Rarely	Never
LIS course material	272 (79.53)	49 (14.33)	21 (6.14)	-
LIS journals	32 (9.36)	44 (12.87)	108 (31.58)	158 (46.19)
LIS news letters	14 (4.09)	102 (29.82)	134 (39.19)	92 (26.90)
LIS magazines	40 (11.69)	62 (18.13)	168 (49.13)	72 (21.05)
LIS related on internet	62 (18.12)	103 (30.12)	126 (36.85)	51 (14.91)

tions and religious publications frequently. The percentage of students reading religious publications sometimes was 32.17 percent, 30.40 percent sometimes read both fiction and poetry, 28.08 percent sometimes read magazines. Around one- third of the students read rarely novels, comic books, magazines and internet publications, religious publications. In fact, 26.32 percent never read non-fiction, 22.23 percent never read internet publications, 21.05 percent never read comic books and poetry, 17.54 percent never read novels.

Table 2: Frequency of reading for pleasure

Variables	Fre- quently	Some- times	Rarely	Never
Newspapers	186 (54.39)	132 (38.59)	20 (5.85)	4 (1.17)
Magazines	108 (31.58)	96 (28.08)	100 (29.23)	38 (11.11)
Comic books	84 (24.56)	76 (22.22)	110 (32.17)	72 (21.05)
Poetry	68 (19.88)	104 (30.40)	98 (28.66)	72 (21.05)
Internet publications	94 (27.48)	68 (19.89)	104 (30.40)	76 (22.23)
Novels	58 (16.96)	82 (23.98)	142 (41.52)	60 (17.54)
Non-fiction	72 (21.05)	80 (23.39)	100 (29.24)	90 (26.32)
Religious publications	94 (27.48)	110 (32.17)	98 (28.66)	40 (11.69)
Fiction	164 (47.96)	104 (30.40)	54 (15.79)	20 (5.85)

Table 3 shows when students were asked how many hours per week that they spend on various activities, the data show that students spend more time, that is, 11 to 15 hours (77.48 %) reading books followed by 51.46 percent watching home movies and 29.83 percent surf the internet. Majority of the students, 57.31 percent watched television around 5 to 10 hours per week followed

by recorded music 53.81 percent, 36.84 percent played video games, 29.82 percent watched home movies and 24.56 percent read books. A total of 76.90 percent spend very less time for listening to radio followed by talk on phone, 71.92 percent. Around half of the students spent very less time for reading books and instead of play video games.

Table 3: Weekly hours students spend on various activities

Variables	Less than 5 hours	5 to 10 hours	11 to 15 hours
Talk on phone	246(71.92)	64(18.72)	32 (9.36)
Watch TV	58(16.95)	196(57.31)	88(25.74)
Listen to radio	263(76.90)	49(14.33)	30 (8.77)
Play video games	142(41.53)	126(36.84)	74(21.63)
Watch home movies	64(18.72)	102(29.82)	176(51.46)
Read	164(47.96)	84(24.56)	94(27.48)
Listen to recorded music	58(16.95)	184(53.81)	100(29.24)
Surf the internet	162(47.36)	78(22.81)	102(29.83)

From the Table 4, When activities that interfere with reading and study are considered, 49.12 percent of the students indicated frequently interfered by work followed by club/ organizations 28.65 percent, 24.56 percent frequently interfered by sports and 14.03 percent frequently interfered by child care. 49.13 percent of the students recorded that child care sometimes interfered followed by 41.52 percent sometimes interfered by personal relationships and 29.83 percent sometimes interfered by clubs/organizations. Around one- third of the students recorded rarely interfered by sports and club/organizations. Less than 20 percent of the students recorded never interfered by work, sports, clubs and organizations.

Table 4: Activities that interfere with reading and studying

Variables	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Work	168 (49.12)	86 (25.14)	70 (20.47)	18 (5.27)
Sports	84 (24.56)	78 (22.81)	112 (32.74)	68 (19.89)
Clubs/Organizations	98 (28.65)	102 (29.83)	102 (29.83)	40 (11.69)
Personal relationships	68 (19.88)	142 (41.52)	34 (9.94)	98 (28.66)
Child care	48 (14.03)	168 (49.13)	26 (7.60)	100 (29.24)

DISCUSSION

Majority of the LIS students (79.53 %) are interested in reading LIS course material frequently (Table 1). Over 46.19 percent of the students never read LIS journals (Table 1). The findings from the study conducted by Brier and Lebbin (2004), but this type of research is unusual, since it studies the reading habits of the senior secondary students. Schools curriculum incorporates an expressive and exploratory from interactive education system, so that they develop an inquisitive mind and discover the power of self-determination and discipline to grow up into successful professionals and good human beings. One third of the respondents 30.12 percent sometimes read LIS related materials on the internet and 29.82 percent rarely read LIS news letters (Table 1). For pleasure 54.39 % percent of the students read newspapers frequently (Table 2). NEA(2004), Study shows that college students nowadays do not have the traditional sense of the role that reading plays in the development of one's life. Around one- third of the students were read rarely on novels, comic books, magazines and internet publications, religious publications (Table 2). LIS students spend more time for (77.48 %) reading books (Table 3). Around 20 percent of the LIS students never read nonfiction, internet publications, comic books, poetry and novels (Table 3). The students overall responded that work most often interfered with their reading and studying (Table 4). Glencoe (2004), in his study found that time management is crucial to keeping up on reading assignments. Students must have good organization skills for college. If they are disorganized, they will quickly find themselves falling behind in assignments, due dates and reading.

CONCLUSION

It is encouraging to know that the student community awakened to read which will raise good citizens for the country. The role of Librarian in college is really challenging. If the students in college start reading at a young age, it will create an impact in every area of their life. The above findings of this study lead us to conclude that LIS students need to improve their reading habits. It will be beneficial to have a record of their reading habits in order to make predictions about their academic success in the study. For effective promotion of reading habits,

skills and culture, reading must be made pleasurable and voluntary. All shades of opinion must be catered for be well considered. It is such a demonstration of democratic sensitivity that can turn even a reluctant reader to a lover of books. In a library there should be adequate reading area and related facilities to accelerate reading habits. There are still barriers in creating a reading environment that will inculcate good reading habits in LIS students. The library is still the best place for quiet study.

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