HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ READING HABITS – A USER STUDY OF THE STUDY L’ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE, PUDUCHERRY, INDIA

R. JAYAKUMAR
Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore – 641 046, Tamilnadu, India

Dr. N. TAMILSELVAN
Chief Librarian, RVS College of Engineering and Technology, Coimbatore – 641 402

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to identify high school students’ reading and library use behaviour. This user study was conducted with 100 ninth and tenth graders of The Study L’école Internationale, Puducherry, India. It revealed that 88% students liked reading books but only 59 had the habit of borrowing the school library books. 45% of them preferred to buy their own books to read. Only a limited 29 accessed the subject references available in the library collection while others preferred reading literature for leisure. 84 out of 100 expressed satisfaction in being able to locate their desired genre of books from the library.

Key words: high school students, library collection, library use, reading habits of students, school library, user study.


1. INTRODUCTION

The advance of internet and technology has created a lot of changes in reading habits. With every type of information available on the electronic format, the usage of printed materials is in a threat. The present generation children are seen owning smart phones and using it for various purposes. But have they already replaced the printed books
and are the children depending on electronic media for everything from a young age itself? This study was an attempt to learn about the preferences of the reading materials and their interest in libraries, reading and usage of traditional materials.

It is usually the high school where the children develop different interests as they are in their adolescence. A user study of a school library was done using the high school ninth and tenth graders to identify their varying interests in reading.

1.1. THE STUDY L’ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE, PUDUCHERRY, INDIA

The Study L’école Internationale is a Central Board Secondary Education school in the Union Territory of Puducherry, HO, India. The school has two functional libraries for the primary and the secondary school respectively. The library has a vast collection of approx. 15,506 books in which English Literature amount to approx. 6,816 books and the other reference books are approx. 8,690 books. Every student from the first grader to the tenth grader has a compulsory library period once in a week where they have to visit the library and read books. Apart from that, the students from the sixth graders are allowed to borrow books to read at home. Reference books are not made available for borrowing and have to be accessed within the library. Only literature can be borrowed, with only one book at a time and for a maximum of 10 days loan period after which the student has to renew the book to continue reading. The students are allowed anytime in the library except during other class hours, and they can take books even on a daily basis. The collection include various genre of novels right from classics to contemporaries, many poetry collections, references on all type of subjects, general reference books, fact-books, dictionaries, world books and encyclopedias, biographies, health, sports, art, etc., different language books in Tamil and Hindi, around 15 different magazines and 10 different newspapers in both English in Tamil.

2. RESEARCH AIM AND METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to identify the present generation high school students’ interests in reading books. A sample of 100 students comprising of 75 tenth graders and 25 ninth graders were selected for the study. A questionnaire containing queries about the students’ reading habits, preferences of books, frequency of reading, preferred medium of reading, their opinion about the library’s collection etc. was prepared and distributed among them in person. The collected data was analysed in detail and the findings are presented below.

3. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Out of the 100 students who were studied, a majority of them were found to have reading habits. A total of 88 students liked reading books while a meager 12 students did not find reading to be interesting. Figure 3 shows the percentage.
The students projected different time frame for reading books. The frequency varied greatly among each of them. Of all the 100, a negligible number of 5 had the habit of reading books every day. A majority of 32 students read one or two books per month and almost a similar number of 29 students read a few books per year. 19 students read a book or two per week, while a surprising amount of 15 rarely touched books or never read any. The comparison is shown in figure 3.1.

Almost all students with reading interest access the school library. The proportion is given in the figure 3.2, revealing that 86 students access the library while 14 don’t access it.
The frequency of library visit by the students was in the extremes. A majority of 79 students accessed the library only during the library period which is once a week, and only 1 student was a daily visitor to the library while the remaining 20 students visited the library more than once a week. The comparison is given in the figure 3.3.

Though most of the students had reading habits only 59% of them borrowed books from the library for reading while the remaining 41% didn’t borrow from the library. This is shown in the figure 3.4.
The borrowing frequency of the students can somewhat be compared with their interest, reading speed and involvement. Maximum of 45 students borrowed books rarely and 24 students never borrowed books. While 18 students borrowed books once in a month, 11 of them borrowed weekly, just 2 borrowed in alternate days and none of them were daily borrowers. This detail is given in the figure 3.5.

Although most students use the library only 29 of them refer to subject books while the remaining 71 read only for leisure. See figure 3.6.
As shown in the figure 3.7, a sparse 18% of students had the habit of visiting public libraries while the remaining 82% visited only the school library.

Most of the students’ reading preferences was to buy their own books to read and a very few preferred to read online. 45% of the students buy their own books, followed by 25% of the students borrowing from libraries and 17% borrowing from friends. Very limited students resorted to electronic means of reading with a mere 9% reading downloaded e-books using e-readers, tablets and mobile phones and a 4% of them read online. This is shown in figure 3.8.
Through this study it was found that a larger group of students preferred to read adventure and mystery novels while a very scanty number of students preferred romance, fan-fiction and classic, and the other genre of books had an average liking. Figure 3.9 shows that 54% of students liked adventure and mystery novels, followed by 27% of them with like for comics. 25% of students liked comedy, 24% liked horror and science-fiction, 23% liked crime, 20% liked drams, 17% liked mythical fiction, 13% liked historical fiction, non-human or paranormal fiction and moral stories, 10% liked fairytale, 9% liked short stories and medical fiction, 7% liked non-fiction, 6% liked classic, 5% romance and fan-fiction and 3% liked other genre of books like biography, sports and fantasy.
Most of the students affirmed that they were able to locate their preferred genre of books in the library. A dominant 84% of the students could find their favourite genre of books while the remaining 16% felt that their preference of books was not available in the library’s collection. This is shown in figure 3.10.

```
3.10 Availability of preferred genre in the library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Available</th>
<th>Not available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Finally on testing the students’ satisfaction level in the library collection, it was found that 40 students out of the 100 were fully satisfied and there was not even a single student who expressed complete dissatisfaction. However, 35 of them were not completely satisfied though they liked the collection. 16 students felt that the library needs to improve its collection and 9 of them expressed neutral opinion. This comparison can be seen as mentioned in figure 3.11.

```
3.11 Satisfaction level of students in library's collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fully satisfied</th>
<th>Somewhat satisfied</th>
<th>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
<th>Fully dissatisfied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

The students, who expressed dissatisfaction to an extent, felt that there need to be more literature in the library’s collection compared to the other subject references. They felt that a variety of genre must be made available in the library with an increased number of books in each so that they can read more of their preferred type of books.
5.1 SUMMARY
The study inferred many details about the library usage of the present generation high school students. From the sample of 100 students studied, it was found that a majority of students liked reading books and accessed the library, with 88% and 86% respectively. However, 76% of them used the services of the library only during the library period. Only 56 students had the habit of reading more than a book per month while others read books less frequently. An average proportion of 59 students borrow books from the school library out of which a majority 45 of them borrow books rarely. However, 45% of the students preferred to buy their own books to read and only 25% of them preferred to rely on borrowing library books. A sparring 18 students alone have visited public libraries. While querying about the students’ reading preferences and their opinion on the collection of the library, a huge 71% of them did not like to use the library for subject references and only preferred light reading for entertainment purposes. The favourite genre of 54% of the students was adventure and mystery novels. 84 students expressed satisfaction in being able to identify their preferred books in the library and 60 of them felt that the library needed improvement in terms of its collection.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS
The study revealed that the children are yet to convert fully to technology savvy and still rely on traditional printed materials. Their interest in reading is at a healthy level when comparing to the leisure time they get after their busy study schedule. However they need to learn to utilize library materials for reference purposes also apart from resorting just to textbooks. This will be helpful for them in future when they have to compulsorily rely on library and external reference materials for their academics. As The Study library keeps updating its collection twice a year, by adding approximately 500 books per year, the students are almost satisfied with its collection.

REFERENCES


