

Reading Habits and Library Use among Students of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the reading habits and library use patterns of students in the department of Information Resources Management, Babcock University, Nigeria. The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population was made up of 210 students in the 2nd and 3rd year of study. Sampling was enumerative. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage counts. Findings indicate that majority of the respondents spend more than an hour reading every day. The purpose of reading was found to be mainly for entertainment. Respondents were also found to read mostly newspapers and other general interest magazine. In the area of library use, majority of the respondents browse the shelves in search of reading materials; consult library staff and make use of online databases. The least used library resource was found to be e books. Despite using most library resources, respondents affirmed that visit to the library was not a popular activity. Based on the findings, the study concludes that students of IRM engage in reading activates both for entertainment and education purposes although most reading activities took place outside the university library. Considering the role of the respondents as future information professionals the study recommends that students make regular use of the university library in order to acquire valuable practical experience. It was also recommended that students explore the use of e books especially through the internet as this would afford them the opportunity of reading books which may not be available in the university bookstore or library.

Keywords: Information literacy, Information Resources Management, Library use, Reading culture, Reading habits.

Introduction

Reading is an activity engaged in by most people through out their life time. According to Moyle (1969), reading is the thoughts of a writer communicated to others through written or printed words. It is an interactive activity (Suleiman and Crossman, 1980) as the reader not only gets to share the thought of the author but is also able to interpret the words of the author. Reading is most often associated with literacy as educated persons are expected to have the ability to read and write to a competent level. It is therefore not surprising, that reading is an important topic for undergraduates.

In recent times, however, the reading habits of young people have become the concern of educators, researchers and policy makers (Kaur & Thivagarajah, 1999). The National Endowment for the Arts (2004) reported that reading in America is becoming less common. Studies in Malaysia also reported that Malaysian students read very little (Kaur & Thivagarajah, 1999). In Nigeria, Ifedili (2009) came to a grime conclusion that there is a high decline rate in the reading culture. The current state of reading could be associated with Gallagher's (2003) assertion, that students being human seek pleasure or value. As such students may decide to engage in non-reading activities if they do not derive pleasure from reading or even see the value of reading.

The concept of reading is of particular interest to libraries by virtue of the fact that libraries are major providers of information materials especially within the university environment. While the school educates students through the help of teachers, the library offers information materials to aid classroom teaching. Erinle (1997) as cited by Busayo (2011), therefore, concludes that the library works in line with the parent institution to achieve a common goal. Unfortunately, Osinulu (1998); Olofinsawe & Ajayi (2008); report low usage of university libraries in Nigeria despite its' role in enabling the development of full potentials through the use of library resources and services.

According to Babcock Undergraduate Bulletin (2009-2011), part of the objectives for training students in the department of Information Resources Management (IRM) is to produce graduates who possess knowledge of selection, organization and use of recorded knowledge in all kinds of information environment such as libraries,

archives and museums. Graduates of IRM are, therefore, expected to be lovers of books, in terms of selection and organisation. As future information providers, it is also a major responsibility for them to ensure the use of information materials through the provision of programmes and services that encourage reading. Bearing in mind the implication of their training on information literacy and use of information centres, it is, therefore, not out of place to investigate their reading habits and library use patterns.

Statement of the problem

Reading is a strategic activity meant to improve the knowledge of students not only in academic matters but in other areas of life. Literature, however, reveals that there may be a decline in positive reading habits thereby contributing to low use of libraries. It is in the light of this that the present study investigates reading habits and library use among students of Information Resources Management, Babcock University.

Research objectives

The general objective of this study is to investigate the reading habits and library use patterns of Information Resources Management students at Babcock University. The specific objectives are to:

- ascertain the reading habits of students of IRM;
- identify the library use pattern of students of IRM;

Literature review

The primary purpose of university libraries is to support teaching, learning, and research in ways consistent with, and supportive of, the institution's mission and goals (Oyewusi & Oyeboade, 2009). Libraries, therefore, make effort to acquire information materials in a variety of formats which they make available to their community of users. Daniel (2004) as cited by Busayo (2011) observes that an educational institution without a library is like a motor car without an engine and a body without a soul. Rajendran & Rathinasabapathy (2005) as cited in Tella, Owolabi & Attama (2009) argue that the value of academic libraries reside in the guidance they provide as well as the technical infrastructure they develop and maintain. Libraries, therefore not only ensure the provision of reading materials but also ensures its' use through appropriate guidance to users. It is in line with this that Alegbeleye (2008) sums up that the library is the best learning resource centre for effective reading.

Reading according to Fatimayin & Lawal (2010), connotes the ability to read well not only English language and literature texts, but also newspapers, magazines, journals, periodicals, and engaging in both recreational and academic reading. Collins & Cheek (1999) describe reading as a process that requires the use of complex thought processes to interpret printed symbols as meaningful units and comprehend them as a thought unit in order to understand a printed message. Smith (1971) grouped reading into three categories: developmental reading, functional and recreational reading. While developmental reading focuses attention on improving the ability to read, functional reading is directed towards information, as a means of reading to learn. Recreational reading on the other hand, implies reading for entertainment. Okebukola (2004) affirms that, through reading, humans have the tools to transmit knowledge to each succeeding generation; it allows one to listen to the wisdom and people of the ages. In accordance, Nnadozie & Egwin (2008) note that reading is an important method of acquiring information, knowledge, experience and learning.

Alawiye, Owolabi & Olagesin (2012) maintain that the ability to read is the heart of self education and lifelong learning. In agreement, Adigun and Oyelude (2003) posit that skill in reading will not only assist students in organizing their thought and jotting down important facts while reading, but also equip them to comprehend entire texts. Illustrating why people read, Oke (1996) as cited by Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun & Ogundipe (2011) points out that people read for self-improvement; pleasure and relaxation, and a feeling of pride and prestige.

Ifedili (2009) examined the reading culture among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The major findings affirmed that there was a high decline rate in the reading culture among the students in the tertiary institution; 60% of students read prescribed textbooks only during examination period; browsing and watching television have taken most of students' time for reading and very few students (21%) buy novels to read for knowledge and pleasure. In a study by Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi & Lean (2011) 66% of the respondents claim that they read in order to pass exams; 40% claim to read because they think they should, additional 40% read because they are interested in a topic or subject, while only 10% read because they think reading is fun.

Qun & Onwuegbuzie (1997) in a study of library use affirmed that obtaining a book or article is the most important reason for using the library, followed by studying for a test, using the online facilities, and reading a textbook. Tella, Owolabi, & Attama (2009), in a similar study found out that the most common use of the library by students is for reading, followed by using the library for borrowing books, making photocopies and searching the library catalogue. Oluwadare (2006) while examining the accessibility and use of the Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria Library resources by the part-time students of the institution found out that over half of the respondents surveyed (52.6%) use the library whenever they want to read. This was, however, in contrast with the finding of Ifedili (2009) were almost half of those surveyed (49%) claim that the library was substandard and so was not always used.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population was made up of 210 students of I.R.M at Babcock University, registered for compulsory courses in the 2nd and 3rd year of study. Cataloguing and Classification which is a compulsory course at the 2nd year with a class size of 130 was used to represent 2nd year students, while Indexing and Abstracting, a compulsory course at the 3rd year with 80 students was used for representing students in the 3rd year of study. The choice of restricting the study to 2nd and 3rd year students was based on the fact that final year students were busy with their final year projects which often entailed travelling out of school for data collection, while 1st year students were considered new to the university environment. Sampling was enumerative as all members of the target population were given the opportunity of participating in the study. A questionnaire titled “reading habits and library use questionnaire (RHLUQ)” was used for data collection. Reading habits was measured using: frequency of reading, purpose of reading, reading preference and reading environment while library use was measured by frequency of use of library resources/services. Data collected was analysed using frequency and percentage counts.

Presentation of findings

Out of 210 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 184 were successfully retrieved. This represents a response rate of 87.6%.

Table 1: Demographic information

	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	88	47.8
Female	96	52.2
Total	184	100
Level of study		
300level	72	39.1
200level	112	60.9
Total	184	100

Table 1 reveals that 88(47.8%) of the respondents were male while 96(52.2%) were female. The presence of more female respondents is an indication that there are more females than males in the department. Majority of the respondents were also found to be in their second year of study.

Table 2: Reading habits

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1 I spend less than an hour reading every day	32(17.45)	48(26.1%)	88(47.8%)	16(8.7%)
2 I read on weekly basis	32(17.4%)	104(56.5%)	32(17.4%)	16(8.7%)
3 I read only as the need arises	32(17.4%)	40(21.7%)	96(52.2%)	16(8.7%)
4 I read mostly print textbooks in my field of study	24(13.1)	104(56.5%)	56(30.4%)	-
5 I am more interested in reading my class notes	8(4.3%)	72(39.1%)	104(56.5%)	-
6 I find time to read newspapers and other general interest magazines	56(30.4%)	80(43.5%)	48(26.1%)	-
7 I am interested in reading materials that are technology related	40(21.7%)	64(34.8%)	80(43.5%)	-
8 I read mostly library and information science literature	8(4.3%)	80(43.5%)	88(47.8%)	8(4.3%)
9 I find time to read for entertainment	32(17.4%)	120(65.2%)	32(17.4%)	-
10 I read to keep up with current affairs	8(4.3%)	72(39.1%)	104(56.5%)	-
11 I read mostly for class assignments	16(8.7%)	72(39.1%)	72(39.1%)	24(13%)
12 I read to research specific topics of interest	48(26.1%)	56(30.4%)	64(34.8%)	16(8.7%)
13 I prefer reading electronic materials to print materials	32(17.4%)	48(26.1%)	80(43.5%)	24(13%)
14 The library is my favourite reading place	16(8.7%)	40(21.7%)	64(34.8%)	64(34.8%)

Findings from Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents spend more than an hour reading every day as affirmed by level of disagreement 104 (56.6%) to the statement “I spend less than an hour reading every day” which is an indication that majority of the respondents actually spend more than an hour reading everyday. When asked of their reading habit on weekly basis, the responses were equally more on the positive side with 136 (73.9%) affirming that they read on weekly basis.

The purpose of reading was found to be mainly for entertainment as affirmed by 152 (82.6%) respondents who were of the opinion that they find time to read for entertainment and for researching specific topics of interest 104 (56.5%) of the respondents. Although some of the respondents read mostly for class assignments only 88 (47.8%) positively identified with the statement “I read mostly for class assignments. A little above average 80 (43.4%) also read to keep up with current affairs”.

Respondents were also found to read mostly newspapers and other general interest magazines as affirmed by 136 (73.9%) respondents, followed by materials that are technology related 104 (56.5%). A little below average affirmed that they read mostly library and information science literature. Majority of the respondents 128 (69.6%) also affirmed that they read mostly print textbooks in their field of study. Even when put differently, 104 (56.5%) respondents still disagreed that they prefer reading electronic materials to print materials. On the environment of study, 128 (69.6%) respondents disagreed that they library is their favourite reading place.

Table 3; Library use

Statement	SA	A	D	SD
1 I make use of the library catalogue when searching for reading materials	48(26.1%)	56(30.4%)	64(34.8%)	16(8.7%)
2 I consult the projects/dissertations deposited in the library	-	104(56.5%)	64(34.8%)	16(8.7%)
3 I make frequent use of online databases in the library	32(17.4%)	96(52.2%)	40(21.7%)	16(8.7%)
4 When I go to the library, I read mainly my lecture notes	24(13%)	56(30.4%)	80(43.5%)	24(13%)
5 I go to the library to read newspapers	16(8.7%)	64(34.8%)	80(43.5%)	24(13%)
6 I consult the materials in the reference section of the library	16(8.7%)	88(47.8%)	64(34.8%)	16(8.7%)
7 I read e books in the library	16(8.7%)	56(30.4%)	88(47.8%)	24(13%)
8 I make use of library’s photocopier to make copies of reading materials	16(8.7%)	96(52.2%)	64(34.8%)	8(4.3%)
9 I consult the library staff while searching for materials	64(34.8%)	64(34.8%)	40(21.7%)	16(8.7%)
10 I browse through the shelves in search of reading materials	64(34.8%)	88(47.8%)	16(8.7%)	16(8.7%)
11 I borrow books in the reserved section of the library	48(26.1%)	56(30.4%)	56(30.4%)	24(13%)
12 I go to the library to socialize with my friends	24(13%)	56(30.4%)	64(34.8%)	40(21.7%)
13 I make use of electronic resources in the library	16(8.7%)	96(52.2%)	48(26.1%)	24(13%)
14 I visit the library on daily basis	24(13%)	48(26.1%)	72(39.1%)	40(21.7%)

Table 3 reveals respondents use of the university library. Majority of the respondents 152 (82.6%) browse the shelves in search for reading materials; 128 (69.6%) respondents consult library staff while searching for materials; 128 (69.6%) make use of online databases in the library while 112 (60.9%) make use of the library’s photocopier. The least used library service/resource was found to be e books with only 72 (39.1%) respondents using it. Despite using most library resources respondents affirmed that visit to the library on daily basis was not a popular activity as only 72 (39.1%) were found to do so.

Discussion of findings

There is a clear indication that respondents spend time reading whether on daily or weekly basis. This is, however, in contrast to previous studies by Kaur & Thivagarajah (1999) and Ifedili (2009) whose studies came to the conclusion that students read very little. This contradiction may be related to the fact that students must pass examination to move from one level of the educational ladder to another and so must make out time to read. The fact that this study looked at just one department in the university system unlike the previous studies which looked at students in general may also account for difference in findings.

Although respondents in this study read for research and class assignment, a higher majority of the respondents affirmed reading for entertainment. The finding in this case is in agreement with Oke (1996) in Aina et al (2011) who asserts that people read for self-improvement, pleasure and relaxation, and a feeling of pride and prestige. It is, however, in contrast with the findings of Abidin; Pour-Mohammadi & Lean (2011) whose study revealed that students read mostly to pass examination. Considering the assertion of Gallagher (2003) that students being human seek pleasure or value, it is not out of place to assume that the respondents in this study seek pleasure and therefore read mostly for entertainment. This of course, could have negative implications for studies if it is not managed properly.

Notwithstanding the fact that the respondents belong to the department of Information Resources Management, they were however found to read more technologically related materials than library and information science literature. This is not surprising considering the multidisciplinary nature of the course. Respondents were also found to have a preference for print textbooks over electronic materials. This may not be unrelated to the fact that print textbooks can easily be purchased personally by the respondents or gotten from the university library. Although majority of the respondents do make time to read, an overwhelming majority 128 (69.6%) did indicate that the library is not their favourite reading place which is in agreement with the finding of Osinulu (1998); Olofinsawe & Ajayi (2008); Ifedili (2009), whose studies revealed that the library was not always used.

Although majority of the respondents did affirm that the library is not their favourite place for reading, the study did establish that students do use the library for other purposes. Most of the study respondents do browse the shelves in search of reading materials; consult library staff; make use of online databases and the library's photocopier. The least used library service/resource was found to be e books with only 72 (39.1%) respondents using it. The findings are in partial agreement to the findings of Tella, Owolabi & Attama (2009) whose study found out that the most common use of the library by students is for reading, followed by using the library for borrowing books, making photocopies and searching the library catalogue

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the findings, the study concludes that students of IRM engage in reading activities both for entertainment and education although most reading activities are done outside the confines of the university library. As future information professionals who will one day be responsible for managing libraries within and outside Nigeria, the study makes the following recommendations:

- 1 Students of IRM should make more regular use of the university library as this will expose them to library operations thereby providing them with practical experiences.
- 2 It will also be beneficial for the students to explore the use of e books especially through the internet as this will afford them the opportunity of reading books which may not be available in the university bookstore or library.
- 3 Considering that the library is used mostly used when searching for reading materials, libraries should also endeavour to provide current reading materials in order to keep attracting students to the library.

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