

## Promoting Reading Habits and The Role of Library

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***Abstract** - Promotion of a reading habits aims to publicize among users of the library. It is an activity that is meant to popularize reading and make it a lifelong hobby. The main objective of promoting a reading culture is to make reading a habit that is appreciated and loved by the users. It is therefore important to create awareness on the importance of reading for leisure and not necessarily to pass exams and to develop reading as a habit. This paper defines the concept of reading culture and analysis the efforts that are being undertaken to promote and need to develop the reading habit in users. The study further examines various factors of poor reading culture and important roles libraries can play towards improving and promoting reading culture among users. This study will assist in considering different essential factors needed for improving and promoting effective reading culture in present and future time.*

**Keywords:** Reading habits, User Studies, Reading, Library Users

### INTRODUCTION

Reading is a lifelong process which never ends. People read various kind of literature whether it is available in print or electronic format every day for their own purposes and gain information and knowledge to solve day to day problems and achieving the tasks as without reading it is not possible to seek any information and knowledge. The best stage of start reading is childhood and from home as well school. Kachalal also stated that the development of a reading culture should start in early childhood and be nurtured up to adulthood and through this process, it can build a literate nation that can transform itself into an informed and knowledgeable society which plays a significant role in society. Therefore, parents and school should motivate their children enough and provide good environment of reading culture so that from the childhood, children attract, motivate and foster to read for their pleasure and benefits. On the other hand, any kind of libraries whether it is school libraries, public library, academic library or special library play very important role towards reading in society by providing different unique reading environment with different kind of literature, able to fulfill the information needs, attract the users, motivate the users to read and promote reading culture as well. Similarly, libraries are assisting in also providing right information to the right users, right format at the right time. However, libraries become main source which accelerate reading culture among the users.

Reading is something many, who are literate, take for granted. But if one thinks about it and tries to define it, one may have difficulty verbalizing his/her thoughts. Sybil (1984:9) defines reading as a process of communication through which most formal learning takes place. It involves understanding written language and respond to the author's message. Therefore, this means that when one is reading one has to be thinking, predicting, questioning, evaluating and defining and redefining. Manzo et al (200:25) defines reading simply as unlocking and

constructing literal interpretive and applied meanings from coded message. It is the act of simultaneously reading the lines reading between the lines, and reading beyond the lines. The first part of the definition: 'reading the Lines' refers to the act of decoding the words in order to construct the author's basic message. The next part 'reading between the lines' refers to the act of making inferences and understanding the authors implied message and finally 'reading beyond the lines' involves the judging of the significance of the authors message and applying it to other areas of background and knowledge. Reading can be defined as the process of looking at and comprehending the meaning of written and printed words by the visual representation of symbols. It involves recognition and sometimes verbalization of symbols, which represent sounds in human speech. According to Dorothy 2 reading is a total integrative process that starts with the reader and includes the following domains: the affective, the perceptual, and the cognitive.

**The affective domain:** includes our feelings and emotions. For instance, if we have adverse feelings about certain things, these feelings will probably influence how we interpret what we read. Our feelings can also influence what we decide to read.

**Perception:** can be defined as giving meaning to sensations or the ability to organize stimuli on a field. How we organize stimuli depends largely on our background of experiences and on our sensory receptors. In the act of reading, visual perception is the most important factor. Eye movements influence what the reader perceives.

**Cognitive domain:** involves thinking, and skills of comprehension. Persons who have difficulty in thinking for instance would obviously have difficulty in reading. Readers who have faulty perceptions will also have faulty concepts. Culture can be defined as an integrated system of learned behavior patterns which are characteristic of the members of a society and which are not a result of biological inheritance.

Reading culture means that reading is basic part of culture and habit which has to share and value greatly in society in which value denotes that reading is a essential for getting information as per need in everyday life. This requires the ability to recognize access, evaluate and utilize information in the available literature or information materials. The ability to read and write alone cannot lead to a reading culture. Reading must play a significant role in a person's day-to-day life and become a habit in order to constitute a reading culture. In the context, reading culture refers to a way of life characterized by the habit of reading intensively and extensively.

## **BACKGROUND**

Promoting a reading culture has long been a major theme of various countries in the world yet despite the all these efforts one common threat emerges: no country is satisfied with the number of active readers among its population. It is felt in most countries that the methods and teaching used to boost reading must be tried again and again in order to bring people and books together in a lasting fruitful relationship. Eisemon (1997) argues that if reading is left to continue unabated, the number of illiterates would tend to increase in future. Makenzi (2004:2) observes that illiteracy, the converse of literacy is difficult to measure and although statistics on the world's illiterate populations are relatively easy to obtain, little is known about the millions of literate adults who rarely pick up a book or open a magazine or about school children for whom reading has come to mean textbooks and little else. The causes of this phenomenon are still difficult to determine because there are many kinds of reading.

Besides, reading habits vary considerably according to age group, educational level and socio-cultural background

## IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING A READING CULTURE

In the entire world have been very particular on the development of a reading culture among their citizens. UNESCO manifesto of 1994 states that constructive participation and the development of democracy depend on satisfactory education as well as on free and unlimited access to knowledge, thought, culture and information. The efforts of developing a reading culture cannot be ignored. Makenzi (2004) describes reading as an instrument for acquiring lifelong learning and reading skills. On the other hand, Wawire (2010) argues that's reading is important because it is central to development. It is essential to full participation in modern society. It adds quality to life and provides access to culture and cultural heritage. Reading is important because it empowers and emancipates citizens. It brings people together. Reading is essential because books are the key to the world: both the real world and the fantasy world. Therefore, it should be encouraged in the society. Research has shown that those who read for examinations lapse into illiteracy in the end. Rosenberg (2000) adds that without the opportunity to read widely, what is taught in the classroom is not reinforced and the quality and performance of the benefit of education are endangered. Without wide reading, pupils/students cannot develop skills of locating, selecting, organizing, manipulating, analyzing, evaluating and processing information.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have been conducted on reading habits and reading culture in different countries **Goulding** discussed the reading promotion schemes in UK public libraries have been recently introduced and include initiatives by partner organizations. For getting successful in this direction, librarians need to understand why people read fiction, the needs that it fulfils and the role it plays in people's lives. UK public libraries are also pro-actively addressing the needs to non-readers, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods, with support for the development of adult basic skills and the introduction of the concept of community librarianship. **Lijuan** presented the popularization activities of reading in Hong Kong and Macao. Further, the researchers make recommendations for improving reading activities and promotion on the basis of experiences and advantage of public libraries. **Mc Swain** in Salisbury Library Services in South Australia over four years developed an extensive programme that aiming to encourage all age groups in the community to read on seven components in which some of these components rely on building relationships. **Palmer** provides several strategies for promoting reading to males and boys. Smith and **Young** pointed out the ways through which academic librarians can encourage reading among users including displays, instruction, programming, connecting with other libraries, expanding ideas of genre, and developing readers' advisory skills. Trott and **Elliott** identified and highlighted different barriers to such efforts: budget constraints, staff issues, and low priority for promoting reading in academic libraries setting. **Doiron** through his study stressed on motivation of reading habits by using information books in literacy programme. **Bello** study emphasized on promotion of reading culture and readership of Nigerians country users. **Fabunmi** and **Olayinka** conducted a survey of secondary schools students for identifying causes for poor reading culture and suggest measures for improving reading culture among students.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study comprises following objectives:

- To define the concept of reading culture
- To investigate causes behind the poor reading and necessity to improve them.
- To suggest important roles libraries can play in order to improving and promoting reading culture in society.

## **FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR POOR READING CULTURE**

1. Poverty
2. Commercialization of Education
3. Lack of Govt. Policies (Absconding role of state towards Higher Education)
4. Corruption
5. Noise culture
6. Malpractices attached to earn “quick money”/ wealth
7. Lack of reading language
8. Administration’s poor attitude towards libraries

## **ROLE OF LIBRARIES IN PROMOTING READING CULTURE**

Libraries can play an imperative role in following ways for promoting reading cultural among readers:

### **Providing platforms to access resources**

As a library has collection of variety of resources such as books, journals, thesis, newspapers, magazines, CD(s), DVD(s) etc. in which some resources are in available in print form and some are available in electronic form. Beside this, a library may comprise resources like journals, magazines, thesis etc. which can be available in both formats print as well as electronic format. Therefore, this is a unique feature of libraries where all resources whether they are in print or electronic are ready available to read in a roof to the users and for their own purposes. When users read these resources to fulfill their information needs then automatic may tell other users about resources available in the library. As such, through providing this platform, a library helps in attracting users to use variety of resources as per users choice and can be promoted reading culture.

### **Atmosphere matters lot**

Atmosphere is a vital feature that affects everyone in order to develop any thing. Hence, it is prime duty of library staff members to make silent and reading atmosphere within the library as good and supportive reading atmosphere may easy inspire users for reading as in a library, items like collection of reading materials, library furniture staff, users and so on are the symbols of reading and help in creating positive atmosphere for reading through which users affect a lot and promote them self to be a part of this reading atmosphere. On the other hand, parents of students should engage in reading activities so that parents also read the books and make reading atmosphere for their children even in the home.

### **Access to right information and services**

A library is used different mechanisms to arrange and manage its huge collection of resources and for improving working efficiency which includes classification and cataloguing of reading materials, automation, using cutting edge technologies and so on therefore significant role of library staff members is required to provide access to the variety of resources by displaying these resources and services in proper manner and ease of use so that readers may not be frustrated in finding reading materials and they only concentrate on their reading and seeking desired information.

### **Reward for best reader**

Library must have provision for awarding best reader of the library in particular time frame by keeping track of his information demands, reading time; reading materials used etc. and arranging reading based competitions among users. Through, this practice library can encourage readers to read more as per their need for participating in reading based activities and getting best reader award as well as able to create reading culture.

### **Interaction with users**

Interaction with users is another important point to discuss reading developing a reading culture. By making an interaction with each other, one can share and discuss their personal and professional ideas and information. This practice creates a platform to express user's views and promote reading culture.

### **Creating effective strategy**

For making reading culture in the libraries, it very essential to make effective strategies as proper strategy is key to success towards achieving the goals. In this exercise, library mission and vision should include so that with developing reading culture among readers, a library will able to achieve its goals as well.

### **Encourage users to read widely and deeply**

Many times library users, students don't read beyond their favourite genre or author deeply and not able to get wider knowledge. Therefore, it is very necessary to encourage users to read outside of their preferred genres wide variety of genres and text types in order to build a wide vocabulary and depth background knowledge.

### **Encourage users to read and write through social media**

Users should encourage enough for expressing their comments while users read any book or any reading material. On the one hand, social media is extensively used for information communication by any type of reading community. Therefore, for commenting purpose, a blog may be a proper medium through which a user and blogger can get reflections easily about their works. On the other hands, RSS (Rich Site Summary) feeds play an vital role to keep users up-to-date in their interested fields for which users must subscribed particular RSS feeds. After subscribing RSS feeds, a user can fetch update information and read new updates when new information added on library website. However library website should has provision of RSS feed so that users can keep abreast with latest happening in their interested

fields by reading updates. In such ways, libraries can help in developing reading culture by using social networking web tools.

### **Provision of library hours in curriculums**

For creating reading culture, it is very necessary to have provision for separate library hours in the different disciplines course curriculums so as to provide separate time for readers to come in the library and reading materials as per their interest in. On the other hand, it is moral duty of library staff to arrange reading materials in effective ways which self attracting the users to read these reading materials. Beside this, library staff should help the users in finding and providing exact reading materials as per user's demanded formats without wasting time.

### **Creation of reading groups**

For developing an effective reading culture in society through library, different reading groups should be created which may be library users or outside users and provide various platforms to discuss experiences gained by each category of users may be shared and discussed at a platform on regular basis with no hesitation.

### **Use library collection**

Library should display their reading materials collection such as book collection, audio visual collection, e-resources etc. on the specific occasion or celebrating day to get extra attention towards library collection available on specific topics and field.

### **Making effective campaign, publicity and marketing**

None reading material use effectively unless proper propaganda in terms of marketing, publicity, advocacy, advertisement etc. should make for them, therefore, it is very needful to mention that proper marketing must be done in order to reach the information in terms of services and reading materials available in the library to the end targeted users. For making marketing of library services and products, well written, target oriented, having objectivities, vision, logo of the library and so on must be prepared and distributed via different traditional and use modern channels such as through websites, social media, print media, personal contacts etc. and make ensure to reach up to targeted audience as well.

### **Organizing workshops**

Libraries may organize workshops time to time that directly focusing on developing reading habits and providing possible innovation ways to motivate users towards reading more in order to gain dept knowledge in interested subjects. Libraries should engage the parents in such workshops so that parents also can tell the advantages of workshops and motivate their children towards reading culture. These types of workshops are also provided platforms to discuss, interact and provide for problems faced by the users.

### **Read what Students are Reading**

Creating a culture of reading, it is necessary for library staff to read material as per taste of students need. For librarians, it's important to help students find books that get their attention towards interested reading materials available in the libraries. For this, one of the best ways



to keep current knowledge of library's reading materials so that librarians may be able to connect right users with right reading material.

### **Mobile libraries**

For promoting reading culture outside the library, library should arrange mobile library services with proper propaganda and variety of reading materials with effective library rules & policy as per types of users which encourage users to read the library's reading materials. Beside this, small reading based competition and awards may also be arranged while providing mobile services to the users.

### **Create and keep record of every user**

For attracting users towards library reading materials, libraries should keep records of individual user which may include his/ her education background, personal feeling and behaviors, reading taste, interest in type for reading format, mission and goal and so on, so that without wasting time of the users library should be able to serve appropriate reading material to individual users as per his/ her taste and be able to satisfy his/ her information needs. This practice definitely develops the reading culture through the library.

### **Virtual author visits**

Author visits can generate a lot of interest in books and reading, but unless only local authors come to the libraries, such visits may not fit a library's budget. But it is far less expensive to bring an author in virtually by using web tools such as Skype, Google Hangouts or other video conferencing programmes.

### **Use of web and self assessment tools**

By using tablets, smart phones and other devices by making sure your e-book collection, digital magazines, and other digital resources are easy to find and use. Students are showing a growing preference for reading in digital formats. Even if a library does not have the budget for commercial e-materials. Therefore, libraries can provide links to repositories of open source e-books like Project Gutenberg and ICDL for reading e-books. Further, users may also keep track on their usages of reading amount and levels by using self assessment reading tools such as MyOnReader, Accelerated Reader etc.

### **Provision adequate funds**

Adequate funds should be provided to libraries in order to develop collection reading materials on a user centric basis, modernized library with many ways including technology, e-library, internet access, digital information system, automation and library corners so that libraries can attract users all the ways for promoting reading habits of the users.

### **Reconstruction of services**

Timely reconstruction of services are an important part of any library services. Libraries should ensure and reconstruct their services in an effective manner which includes opening hours; working hours; borrowing system; Access system; extension of attractive services, etc.

## **Reading for pleasure**

The habit of reading for pleasure and information is one of the most valuable markers for future success in life. The habit of exploring libraries, books, and reading is the cornerstone of many life rewards, even if, users leave library. The habit of reading for pleasure is also helpful in building knowledge in diverse fields and resolving the problems in many ways.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study expressed different issues towards promoting reading culture among users and found that there is urgent need to develop reading culture in the society in order to continue the reading habits and make the society well literate in every area of subjects and use reading for everyday life. This study further suggested that different roles of libraries such as changing the services, products and atmosphere as per current demand of readers especially for schools, parents, libraries and making effective education policy should develop for reading culture in society. These practices are not only helpful in promoting reading habits but also able to satisfy complex information needs of the users and meet their information expectations as well.

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