Prior experiences of the new entrants in using the school library: with special reference to Management students, University of Peradeniya

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Abstract

The objectives of the study was to examine the previous library experiences and sources of information used by the new entrants to the Faculty of Management in order to assess whether they have adequate experience in using the school library. The results indicated that all the respondents have been asked by their teachers to read materials other than notes given in the class room. More than 85% confirmed that they used the school library when they were studying for GCE/AL examination and 61% of them visited the school library daily, few days a week or once a week. With regard to library usage, 85% of respondents borrowed books followed by 56% who used the school library as a study place and 44% used the library catalogue. It is remarkable that 98% of students felt that they needed to read books other than the notes given by the teachers. Respondents who used different sources of information other than the school library were asked to mention from where they got them. Of the respondents, 73% purchased from bookshops and borrowed from friends or relatives and 81% of them mentioned that the tuition class provided needed materials as handouts. Results further revealed that the majority (54.3%) did not have access to social media but half of them had email accounts and more than 58% was willing to communicate with the library digitally. The results of this study can be used when planning library instructional programs for the undergraduates.

Keywords: University New Entrants, School Library Use, User Assessment, Information Sources

1.0 Introduction

New entrants to a university have varied levels of library skills. Some of them have experiences on library use and some of them may not have. There is a common belief among the university community that the new entrants are familiar with the libraries and have skills on library use and therefore do not need special training in how to use the university library. But no study has been carried out to prove this belief statistically in Sri Lanka.

It is important to familiar with library skills when students enter university as it is required for successful academic work in the university. What are the resources and library services mostly used by students? If the students did not use school libraries, how were their information needs fulfilled? What are the sources of information used by the students to acquire required information? Are the students comfortable with accessing email and social media? Are they willing to communicate with the library digitally? Without knowing answers to these questions, librarians will not serve the undergraduates' information needs in the university effectively.

Therefore to investigate whether the new entrants to the university have adequate experience in using a school library and to find out the sources of information they used to acquire knowledge, a survey was conducted in the Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya in 2015. Conducting this type of survey is helpful for the university librarians to identify the level of library use of new entrants. The results of the survey would be useful for the librarians when planning library instructional programs for the new entrants.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study as follows;
- To study the prior experiences of using the school library;
- To inquire into the sources of information they used, other than the school library;
- To investigate their access to e-mail and social media; and
- To assess the willingness to communicate with the library digitally.

3.0 Review of Related Literature

Literature search has revealed that most of the research has focused on university library usage of new entrants and it lacked on studies on previous library usage or use of resources of the new entrants to the University. Schein and others (2012) conducted a study with high school students and first year college freshmen and they found that both categories of students could not distinguish between a journal and a book when given a citation, identify keywords in a thesis, or distinguish between a popular magazine and scholarly journal. Alades and others (2014) conducted a study on library use characteristics of undergraduates

in Nigeria University of Science and Technology. One of the objectives of this study was to find out the relationship between the school library use and university library use of undergraduates and they concluded that the experience of school library use and library instruction programs positively influence the university library use of the undergraduates.

In the Sri Lankan context, few studies on the use of library and information sources by new entrants to the university are reported. Mashroofa (2012) conducted a study for new entrants at three universities (Jaffna, Eastern and South Eastern) to examine their characteristics and information seeking behavior and their needs and wants towards the university library and she recommended that the information literacy programs should be offered as a course module. Kumara (2014) conducted a study to investigate the level of using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) by new entrants to the University of Moratuwa. The results revealed that there was a trend towards a higher ICT usage of university freshmen as digital natives. The results of the study would be useful for assessing the level of IT skills of undergraduates which enable to design effective user education programs for them.

3.0 Methodology and Procedure for Data Collection

The study population was all the students (n=149) who entered to the Faculty of Management, University of Peradeniya in the year 2015. A questionnaire was the main research instrument used for the study and it was distributed to all the new entrants to the Faculty of Management at the point of registration in the library. A two page structured questionnaire was distributed among students and it inquired about their biographic data, whether they used the school library in their GCE/AL class or not, how often and for what purposes they used the library, the reasons for not using the library (if they did not use), and the other sources of information they used to find information for their studies. The study also inquired their use of e-mail and social media and whether they would like to communicate with the library digitally. The data were analysed using SPSS software package version 16.0.

4.0 Data analysis and Findings

Total population entered the Faculty of Management (N=149) were surveyed and 127 responded by making 85.2% response rate. Of them 52% were female while 48% were male.

All the respondents mentioned that they have been asked by their teachers to read materials related the subjects taught by them in addition to the notes given in the classroom and 85.8% of them confirmed that they used the school library when they were studying for GCE/AL exam as the responses to the questions asked.

4.1 Library visits

As the frequency of library visits is an important indicator to measure the library use, the respondents were asked to mark the frequency of their library visits.

Table-1: Library visits

Frequency	Number	Percentage
Daily	02	1.5
Few days a week	23	18.2
Once a week	52	40.9
Once in two weeks	23	18.2
Once a month	06	4.7
Other	21	16.5
Total	**127**	**100**

The findings revealed that 1.5% of students visited the school library daily while 18.2% visited few days a week and 40.9% of students visited once a week which is a good sign of their library use. Of the respondents 18.2% visited once in two weeks and 4.7% visited once a month to the school library.

4.2 Use of library facilitates

The respondents were asked to mention the library facilities and services they had used in their school library and the Figure 1 presents the results obtained. As shown in the figure 1, 108 (85%) students borrowed books while 71(56%) students used the school library as a study place. With regard to the library catalogues, 63(50%) students mentioned that they had the catalogues and 56 (44%) of them used it to find books in the library. Only 37 (29 %) students have used magazines while 90 (71%) students have not used magazines. Of the respondents 65% have mentioned that they did not have computers in the library and 83% of them said that they did not use computers in the library.
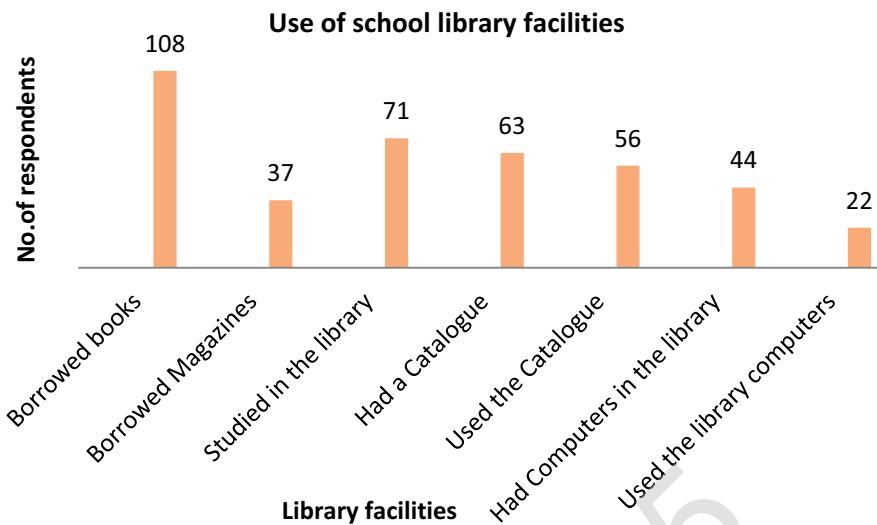
Figure- 1: Use of school library facilities

4.3 Sources of information use

Students were asked whether they felt that they needed to read books other than the notes given by the teachers in the school and it is remarkable that 98% of students felt that they needed to. Respondents who mentioned that they used information sources other than the school library to obtain study related information were asked from where they got them.

Table-2: Sources of information used

No.	Sources	Frequency	Percentage
1	Tuition class provided all needed materials	103	81.0
2	Borrowed from my friends/relatives	93	73.2
3	Purchased from bookshops	93	73.2
4	Asked from knowledgeable people	72	55.0
5	Used public library	39	30.7
6	Used online materials	48	37.8
7	Used Wikipedia	16	12.6
8	Used some other library	07	5.5

As revealed in the Table 2, 81 % of respondents mentioned that the tuition class provided needed materials as handouts. Of the respondents, 73.2% mentioned that they purchased relevant information materials from bookshops and borrowed from friends or relatives. Results further revealed that 55% respondents asked knowledgeable people whenever they needed some

information related to their studies. Of the respondents, 37.8% used online materials while 30.7% used the public library in their home town and 12.6% used Wikipedia to obtain study related information.

4.4 Use of social media

In today's world, since social media is used as popular information source, new entrants were asked to indicate their access to email and social media and further asked to mark their willingness to communicate with the library digitally.

According to the table-3, of the respondents, 50.1% confirmed that they had e-mail accounts followed by 45.7% who had face book accounts while 6.87% had Skype accounts and 7.9% had twitter accounts. The significant finding is 58.3% of respondents like to communicate with library through any of these accounts. The results further revealed that 45.76% of respondents confirmed that they have smart phones and 59.8% of them confirmed that they would like to receive messages from the library through their mobile phones.

Table-3: Use of social media

No.	Method of communication	Number	Percentage
1	Have an e-mail account	64	50.1
2	Have Face book account	58	45.7
3	Have a Skype account	34	26.8
4	Have a Twitter account	10	7.9
5	Like to communicate with library through above accounts	74	58.3
6	Have smart phones	58	45.7
7	Like to receive messages from library to the mobile phone	76	59.8

5. Conclusions

The results confirmed that the majority of the respondents have some sort of experience with the school library. However, many do not have experience in using computers in the library or used magazines. More than 80% of the respondents depended on handouts given by the tuition class as source of information while majority of them purchased required materials from bookshops and borrowed from friends or relatives instead of going to the school library. Majority (54.3%) did not have access to social media but half of them had email accounts and more than 58.3% was willing to communicate with the library digitally. However, it should be assumed that the rest of the 41.7% were not willing to communicate with the library digitally, as they did not have any experience in using social media and they may not have known how they could be used to communicate with the library.

The results of this study can be used when planning library training programs for the new entrants and more attention should be paid to the use of library catalogues, especially the OPAC and other computer based library services and use of journals with more practical and hands on sessions. Librarians should think about the future communication with the students digitally as they are more comfortable with using ICT technology as media of communication.

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