A STUDY OF LIBRARY USAGE PATTERNS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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Abstract
The library plays a pivotal role in educational institutions by providing information resources that support research, education and extension activities. However a major cause of concern for colleges is the underutilization of the services provided. Colleges spend a substantial part of their budget in purchasing books and periodicals but students do not spend much time reading them. A number of differences exist between students from different disciplines in usage patterns of libraries. This study examines the differences between students pursuing different undergraduate programs in a college in Mumbai. Results indicate that differences exist between students from different programs. However there are also similarities especially with reference to the demand for more computer facilities. Results are discussed and recommendations to increase usage are made.

INTRODUCTION
Academic libraries have been described as the "heart" of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to conduct their research and advance their knowledge. In the education system, an academic library is the centre of academic life. (Gunasekara, 2010).Library plays a pivotal role in educational institutions by providing information resources that support research, education and extension activities. According to Nwosu (2000), information is acquired, processed, and disseminated through the university library, "a place, where books and users interact together for the transmission of civilization and cultivation of human beings" and "the most important resource in the tracking down of the general goals and objectives of the institution of higher learning". The major purpose of the library is to provide information. Apart from resources in print modern libraries also provide online databases. A library may be well stocked but that does not mean it is well utilized .Library utilization is influenced by a number of factors ranging from personal preferences to convenience of timings and general environment of the library. So for any institution it is important to understand how resources are being used, the changing needs of users, and their levels of satisfaction.

There has been a lot of interest in the impact of differences between disciplines on library usage. It is recognized that patterns of usage differ among different groups of library patrons. Information behaviours are very different in different disciplines (Covi, 1999; Whitmire, 2002). Studies have used surveys, both purpose-built (Chrzastowski & Joseph, 2006;) and re-analysis of pre-existing responses (Whitmire, 2002), case studies (Meyer et al., 2011; Bulger et al., 2011), or a combination of the two (Maughan, 1999) to try to understand disciplinary differences. Studies have also looked at different groups of library users: undergraduates (Wells, 1996; Bridges, 2008; Cox & Jantti, 2012), postgraduates (Chrzastowski & Joseph, 2006), and researchers at all stages of their careers (Meyer et al., 2011; Bulger et al., 2011; Tenopir & Volentine, 2012).

A library committed to provide excellent resources and services has to develop an on-going dialog with its users. Student needs are changing so academic libraries have to improve the quality of their services to remain relevant in a dynamic competitive environment .For this purpose it is necessary to evaluate the library service from point of view of the students One approach to understand student needs is to conduct surveys which collect information on usage patterns ,preferences and satisfaction. According to Cullen (2001) such surveys not only help to acquire detailed information about user's opinion of the service but also help to clarify the librarians' concept of the services as well as their assumptions about the user needs. Further such surveys also help to highlight problems and get suggestions on possible solutions. Knowledge of the information needs and information seeking behavior of users is vital for developing library collections, upgrading facilities and improving services to effectively meet the information needs of users. (Tahir, 2008).

This paper presents the results of a library usage survey conducted in a college library in Mumbai.

METHOD
 Hypotheses
   The main hypotheses of this study were
   1. Purpose and frequency of visit would vary across the different programs
   2. Opinions about various aspects of the library would vary across the different programs
   3. Overall level of satisfaction with the library would vary across the different programs

Sample
The subjects in this study were 80 students (20 per program) in the final year of graduation pursuing Bachelor's degrees in Commerce, management studies, accounting and finance and information technology from a college in Mumbai. Only subjects in their final year were taken because they would have had sufficient time to experience various aspects of the library services over a three year period. The age range of the participants was 20 years to 23 years.

Tools and Procedure
The study used a library usage questionnaire prepared by the researcher based on a review of previous research. The questionnaire had items covering
    1. Purpose of visit and frequency of visit for each purpose.
    2. Time spent per visit
    3. Overall frequency of visits
    4. Opinions about various aspects of the library.
    5. Overall level of satisfaction with the library.

The researcher met the subjects during class hours and explained the purpose of the study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed and clear instructions were given. The subjects then answered the question with the researcher clarifying meanings of terms as and when required. On an average the administration took 15-20 minutes. A short de- briefing session was conducted after each administration.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Total and mean score was calculated per program for each of the purposes of visiting the library. (Table 1.1) Results indicated marginal differences between students pursuing different programs. Students pursuing Bachelors in Information Technology were most likely to visit the library to borrow /renew /return books, complete class notes, to read reference books and study for examinations. Students pursuing Bachelors in Commerce (Accountancy and Finance) were most likely to visit the library to borrow /renew /return newspapers/magazines. Students pursuing Bachelors in Management Studies were most likely to visit the library to search for materials for assignments/projects, to read newspapers/magazines and meet friends. Across the different programs students primarily used the library to study for examinations. Highest frequency of use irrespective of purpose was among the students pursuing the Bachelors in Information Technology program.

Table1.1.Program wise mean scores for purpose and frequency of library

Purpose of visit.	Frequency of visit per purpose				
	B.COM	B.M.S	B.Com (A&F)	BSc.(I. T)	Overall Mean
To borrow books/renew /return books	2.9	2.65	2.75	**3.7**	3
To borrow /renew /return newspapers/magazines	2.3	2.2	**2.45**	2.1	2.262
To complete class notes or to copy notes	2.7	2.25	2.45	**2.8**	2.55
To study for the examination	3.4	3.2	3.1	**3.5**	**3.3**
To search for materials for assignments/ projects	2.6	**3.05**	2.6	2.65	2.72
To read reference books	1.9	2.55	2.3	**2.6**	2.337
To read newspapers/magazines	2.7	**3.4**	3.05	3.15	3.075
To use internet/e-mail	**2.4**	2.2	2.3	2.1	2.25
To meet friends	1.75	**2.2**	1.7	1.7	1.837
Overall Mean	2.51	2.63	2.52	**2.7**	2.59

Results indicated a below average use of the library across the different purposes and programs. This is not a healthy sign for any educational institution. It means that students are not using the library to the fullest and the institution should take special efforts to popularize and encourage library use across all faculties. These findings are further supported by the findings with reference to time spent and frequency of visit over a year.(Tables 1.2 &1.3).Results indicate that out of a sample of 80 students surveyed more than fifty percent (43 students) spent less than an hour in the library and only 7 students visited the library on a daily basis.

Table1.2.Program wise results of time spent in the library

Time spent	Number of students				
	B.COM	B.M.S	B.Com (A&F)	BSc.(I.T)	Total
Less than 1 hour	09	12	11	11	43
1 to 2 hours	10	03	08	09	30
2 to 4 hours	01	03	01	Nil	05`
More than 4hours	Nil	02	Nil	Nil	02

Table1.3.Program wise results of frequency of visits to the library

Frequency of visits	Number of students				
	B.COM	B.M.S	B.Com (A&F)	BSc.(I.T)	Total
Daily	Nil	01	04	02	07
2-3 times a week	10	05	06	08	29
Once a week	02	03	02	08	15`
2-3 times a month	05	05	03	01	14
Once a month	02	Nil	05	Nil	07
Once in two months	Nil	03	Nil	Nil	03
Once in six months	Nil	03	Nil	Nil	03
Once a year	01	Nil	Nil	01	02
Never visit	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table1.4. Opinions of students of Bachelor of Commerce Program

Opinion about different aspects of the library	Number of students				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
The library provides a good collection of text books.	Nil	Nil	02	08	**10**
The library provides a good collection of reference books.	Nil	Nil	05	10	05
The library provides a good collection of newspapers and magazines.	Nil	Nil	Nil	11	09
The library provides good internet facilities.	Nil	02	04	07	07
The library has sufficient number of computers for use by students.	**03**	**02**	**08**	01	06
The library is has good lighting.	Nil	01	Nil	12	07
The library is well ventilated.	Nil	Nil	Nil	14	06
The seating arrangements in the library are comfortable.	Nil	02	Nil	07	**11**
The library staff is polite.	Nil	01	03	07	09
The library staff is well-informed and helps us to search for information.	Nil	02	05	06	07
The library timings are convenient.	01	01	02	08	08

The opinions of students of the different programs about various aspects of the library were also studied. Opinions of students of the Bachelor of Commerce Program (Table 1.4.) indicated that these students were most satisfied with the seating arrangements and the textbooks available in the library. They were on an average quite satisfied with almost all the aspects with most of the students agreeing with the statements. The only area where they indicated some dissatisfaction was with the computer facilities provided in the library. This is not altogether unexpected because today students rely heavily on computers and online resources and the student strength of this program is also higher than the other programs so it is likely that they may need more computer facilities in the library .This is an area where there is scope for improvement.

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Table1.5. Opinions of students of Bachelor of Management Studies Program

Opinion about different aspects of the library	B.M.S Number of students				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
The library provides a good collection of text books.	02	03	05	10	Nil
The library provides a good collection of reference books.	02	03	08	07	Nil
The library provides a good collection of newspapers and magazines.	01	02	01	12	04
The library provides good internet facilities.	03	04	04	07	02
The library has sufficient number of computers for use by students.	**06**	05	02	06	01
The library is has good lighting.	Nil	01	01	**13**	**05**
The library is well ventilated.	Nil	02	Nil	**14**	**04**
The seating arrangements in the library are comfortable.	Nil	06	03	08	03
The library staff is polite.	01	03	Nil	15	01
The library staff is well-informed and helps us to search for information.	01	03	06	07	03
The library timings are convenient.	02	03	02	07	06

Opinions of students of the Bachelor of Management Studies Program (Table 1.5.) indicated that these students were most satisfied with the lighting and ventilation arrangements followed by the collection of newspapers and magazines available in the library. However these students were less satisfied than the commerce students. These students too were dissatisfied with the computer facilities provided. As discussed previously this is not altogether unexpected.

Table1.6.Opinions of students of Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance)Program

Opinion about different aspects of the library	Number of students				
	Strongly Disagree	**Disagree**	**Undecided**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
The library provides a good collection of text books.	02	**08**	02	07	01
The library provides a good collection of reference books.	02	01	04	**11**	**02**
The library provides a good collection of newspapers and magazines.	Nil	Nil	Nil	**12**	**08**
The library provides good internet facilities.	02	03	04	10	01
The library has sufficient number of computers for use by students.	**03**	**07**	03	05	02
The library is has good lighting.	Nil	Nil	01	12	07
The library is well ventilated.	Nil	03	Nil	07	10
The seating arrangements in the library are comfortable.	Nil	02	Nil	09	10
The library staff is polite.	02	03	01	07	07
The library staff is well-informed and helps us to search for information.	**05**	**06**	Nil	07	02
The library timings are convenient.	06	03	Nil	07	04

Opinions of students of the Bachelor of Commerce (Accounting and Finance) Program (Table 1.6.) were also almost along the same lines as the opinions of the students of Management Studies .These students were also satisfied with the seating arrangements. These students indicated high level of satisfaction with the magazines newspapers provided as well as the reference books available in the library. They were however dissatisfied with the availability of textbooks in the library. They

also seem to have negative opinions about the library staff. These students too were dissatisfied with the computer facilities provided.

Table1.7.Opinions of students of Bachelor of Science (Information Technology) Program

Opinion about different aspects of the library	Number of students				
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
The library provides a good collection of text books.	Nil	**09**	**08**	03	Nil
The library provides a good collection of reference books.	01	Nil	04	**15**	Nil
The library provides a good collection of newspapers and magazines.	Nil	01	02	**13**	04
The library provides good internet facilities.	Nil	02	06	**12**	Nil
The library has sufficient number of computers for use by students.	**04**	**08**	05	03	01
The library is has good lighting.	Nil	02	01	**11**	06
The library is well ventilated.	02	01	04	**09**	04
The seating arrangements in the library are comfortable.	02	02	03	**10**	03
The library staff is polite.	03	05	04	08	Nil
The library staff is well-informed and helps us to search for information.	04	06	04	04	02
The library timings are convenient.	01	13	03	02	01

Opinions of students of the Bachelor of Science (Information Technology) Program (Table 1.7.) were slightly different from those of earlier groups. These students indicated high level of satisfaction with the magazines newspapers provided as well as the reference books available in the library. Of course they too were happy with the lighting, ventilation and seating arrangements provided. However they also felt that the computer facilities provided were inadequate. They were however dissatisfied with the availability of textbooks in the library. They also seem to have negative opinions about the library staff. The questionnaire also measured the overall level of satisfaction with the library services.(Table 1.8).Results indicated that overall(60 out of a sample of 80) the students sampled in this study were satisfied while a few(04 out of a sample of 80) were also extremely satisfied with the library with the services though there are some who appear to be dissatisfied(12 out of a sample of 80) and extremely dissatisfied(04 out of a sample of 80).

Table1.8.Program wise results of overall satisfaction with the library

Overall opinion	Number of students				
	B.COM	B.M.S	B.Com (A&F)	BSc.(I.T)	Total
Extremely satisfied	03	Nil	01	Nil	04
Satisfied	**16**	**13**	**13**	**18**	**60**
Unsatisfied	01	06	04	01	12
Extremely Unsatisfied	Nil	01	02	01	04

Besides the closed ended questions the questionnaire also asked an open ended question about students' suggestions for improvement. This question was included to get an opinion from the students about the type of changes they wanted in the library. Here again the demand for more computers was reiterated. The library had a system of segregated seating for boys and girls in the reading room section which was also opposed. There was a demand to integrate the seating on the grounds that students would like to work together on class assignments. Another demand put forth was a change rather an extension in the library timing. This demand must be because the lectures in most courses commence at around 7 am but the library only opens at 9.This means that if the students are free on any day due to the absence of a faculty member they are not able to utilize their time effectively. This is a change which must be considered.

CONCLUSIONS
The study provided valuable inputs for the college library. The high level of importance given to provision for computers, are indicative of the fact that, the younger generation considers computers essential to modern education. They are not inclined to pour through pages of printed material rather they want to have the convenience of on line search. This means that if the

college truly wants to upgrade their facilities and services they need to upgrade the computer facilities provided. The results are an eye opener because though the college may be spending large sums of money on buying books that is not the demand of the students. In fact the college could even consider providing a separate section in the library exclusively for use of computer facilities. The study however has the primary limitations of the small size of the sample and the use of only self-report questionnaire to collect data.

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