

# READING HABITS AMONG THE USERS OF BANTWAL PUBLIC LIBRARY

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**Abstract** *This paper investigates the reading habits, purposes and preferences of the users visiting the Public library at Bantwal. The paper therefore, intends to examine key aspects of reading habits in the jurisdiction of Bantwal area. The study uses questionnaire method of data collection as well as typical interview with the librarian. The study found that the readership in Bantwal is quite positive. The public libraries are largely utilized with most of the users being students followed by workers with different vocations. It was discovered that the major documents used in the libraries are the newspapers and magazines. In essence public libraries are the people's university and therefore should be used by all. The study identified several obstacles, which hinders the reading. The noted obstacles were mostly lack of time outdated collections, poor quality of information services, and lack of adequate library space. The study provides some constructive recommendations to overcome these identified barriers. The suggestions include fine tuning of library service provisions, changing of library timings, improvement of the library collection among others.*

**Keyword:** Reading Habit, Public Libraries, User Behavior, Bantwal Branch Library

## INTRODUCTION

India can be called as a reading nation though the 2010 National Youth Readership Survey found that it was not enough. As per the survey 74 percent of the youth in India were literate, only around 25 percent could be claimed as regular readers. For creating a literate society in this world, cultivating reading habits at an early age is the most important and essential aspect. In order to encourage reading, more access is to be created for printed sources and inculcate the reading habit. It helps in shaping the personality of an individual and also to develop the proper thinking methods and creating new ideas. With the advancement in technology, people could not show much interest in reading the books, magazines and journals etc. Before the advent of the TV, both the young and the old found enough time to read. Reading can not only help people in their education but stimulates their imagination and expands the horizons. "Reading makes an informed citizen fit for democracy. Effective reading is pre-requisite for full participation in modern society" is a view of a The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) body. Conversely any government runs on the printed words. A nation who reads is the nation who leads is an old saying. Reading has education, a social and cerebral aspect.

## PUBLIC LIBRARY

In India, majority of the population lives in rural areas. The rural population has very limited access to the information

source. In a country like India where all cannot afford to receive the benefit of formal education and therefore a local library is a social nerve centre of the society. The traditional concept of public library has undergone tremendous changes and it aims at making books and journals accessible to all. In India as in other countries, the present and future generation is at risk of jumping directly from an oral to a digital culture, skipping the writing and reading process. The library has to encourage the reading culture among the students as well as the public by making information available in all formats. Library has to procure the non-print materials also in addition to print materials and create an awareness of the use of these materials along with the infrastructural improvement of these. The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 1994 elaborates the significance of public libraries as "the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups" (Ngurtinkhuma, 2007).

In India, Karnataka is the third state to have enacted the Public Libraries Act in 1965. The objective of the Act is as follows --, 'An Act to provide for the establishment and maintenance of Public Libraries and the organization of a comprehensive rural and urban library service in the State of Karnataka (Mysore)'. Public libraries are considered as an essential part of the society and it plays a very significant role in generating new ideas, using leisure time creatively and in preserving the national heritage. It also helps in the social, cultural and educational development of the community. The

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Act facilitates establishment and maintenance of libraries in rural areas. Another important fact is that, the act also provides provision for collection of library cess through property tax. While the literacy programme is influencing the reading habit of the community, it has necessitated going in for establishment of public libraries across the state including the rural area (Department of Public libraries, Report, 2006).

At present Karnataka State is having a State Central library, 30 District Central libraries, 26 City Central libraries, and 490 Branch libraries. Also 5766 Gram panchayat libraries and 14

mobile libraries are functioning in the state. The present study is an attempt to find out the attitudes of the users towards reading habits and purpose of the visiting of libraries at the Bantwal branch public library in Dakshina Kannada district. Bantwal taluk was the largest taluk, prior to 1852 in the entire of Canara Province. It had 411 villages with a total population of more than 1, 69,000. According to 2001 census of India, the population of Bantwal was 36,829. The literacy rate of Bantwal was 74% which was higher than the national literacy rate (59.5%). The district has 3 tiers of public libraries in hierarchy as shown in the following figure 1.

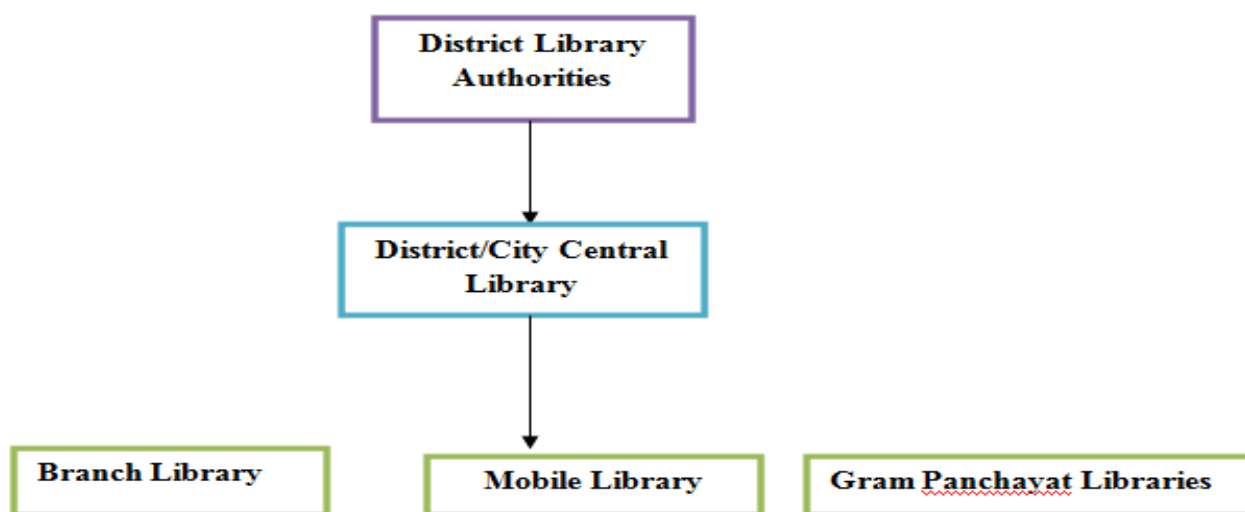


Figure 1. Organogram of Dakshina Kannada district Public Library

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Education plays a significant role in the development of the mankind. In the process of learning reading is an important activity. Reading is both physical and mental process. Reading and writing ability is an important aspect which helps the people in the development of their personalities and mental capabilities. It is an important aspect for unhindered intellectual growth of a person. Reading plays a crucial role in developing an individual's language proficiency. Reading is a passion of the greatest personalities and helps in passing on the knowledge through generations. Reading habits are also vital part of lifelong learning concept. Man needs updating of their knowledge when there is a rapid and constant technological changes taking place at an unprecedented rate.

Adaptation to these changes can be possible only through continuous reading, training and sufficient library resources and facilities to support these information needs. Public libraries help people in the enrichment and development of the communities. To encourage and promote the reading habit among the public necessary measures are taken. In the views of Parvathamma and Reddy (2009) public libraries provide varieties of services to different categories of users equally among all class of people irrespective of caste, creed, community, and social status. Public libraries serve the local communities, meeting their needs and thus contributing in the creation of a well informed and democratic society. The libraries, organizations, the government at various levels, parents, and teachers have their role to play and together they have to contribute in developing a high reading culture

among the people. In this context the study provides an insight into the reading habits, purposes and preferences of the users visiting the Public library at Bantwal.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study keeps the following key objectives in its ambit of discussion:

- To ascertain the users' basic purpose of visiting public libraries.
- To identify the reasons for those who are not going to the library.
- To find out which group of people frequently visit the library.
- To identify their language of preference for reading.
- To find out the types of activities they engage themselves during their leisure time.
- To find out the time spent by the people for reading.
- To know the impact of reading on the people.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies have been carried out regarding the reading habits of the public in various countries. The present study reviews similar kind of literature relating to the assessment of reading and information gathering habits of the users of similar sort public libraries all across the world. The role played by public libraries in developing the reading habits of the people as also been given due importance.

Kaushik & Kanchi (2007) investigate the reading habits of rural undergraduate students and the results indicate respondents read newspaper and general magazines. The study found that most of the female under-graduates have been found reading Novels/Stories books, while male under-graduates are interested in reading religious and competitive books. And also most of the female undergraduate students read books at home unlike the male under-graduate students. The librarians have to make efforts for Internet browsing facility at the library since the use of INTERNET by rural under-graduate students is very low. Sudha & Harinarayan (2008) in their study examined the role of

the library in promoting reading habits of professional and non professional students. The study investigated as to how much the students are dependent on the libraries, resources read by them, and other factors that motivate them in developing their reading habits. It was found that non-professional students are making use of the library more than the professional students. Pors (2006) in his article entitled 'The public library and student's information'. This study opines the uses of public libraries among the students for the purpose of study and public library as a substitute for an academic library. This study also finds out which section of the students depends heavily upon the services of the public libraries for the study purposes. Sohail & Alvi (2011) in their study collected data from 56 users of the Delhi Public library. The study investigated their attitudes towards reading habits and reason for visiting the library. The study also found that the purpose of reading, language preference, assistance by the library staff in the use of resources and services is necessary to help users meet their information requirements. Finds that people are not able to visit the library regularly due to lack of time and magazines and newspapers are the most read by them.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted using a descriptive survey research method. The study was conducted on a sample of 55 users in Bantwal Public Library. The respondents included were primarily high school students, college students, working class, house wives and senior citizens. Sixty questionnaires were distributed among the respondents, out of which the investigator could collect a total of 55 completely filled in questionnaires constituting a response rate of 91.6%. The data thus collected were tabulated, analysed and subsequently interpreted using simple percentage.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The respondents were classified into five groups as 5 (9%) high school students, 18 (32%) college students, 18 (32%) from employees, 6 (11%) house wives and 8 (14%) retired people) and out of the 56 respondents, 42 (75%) were male and 13 (23.2%) were female.

**Table 1. Frequency of Visit to the Library**

Respondents	Everyday	Weekly Once	Occasionally	Rarely
High school students	-	3(60%)	2 (40%)	-
Employee	-	14 (77.8%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)
College Students	10 (55.5%)	6 (33.4%)	2 (11.1%)	-
House Wives	-	4 (66.6%)	2 (33.4%)	-
Retired persons	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	-	-

Table 1. reveals that majority of the retired persons (75%) and college students (55.5%) visit public libraries everyday where as majority of the high school students, 3 (60%) visit the library once in a week. Concurrently, the great majority of (77.8%) of the employees pay visit to libraries once in a week.

In case of house wives the visit to public library is found minimum as no one has reported to have visited the library every day.

Therefore, it is inferred that aged persons visit public libraries more frequently in comparison to other categories of users.

In all fairness, it is deduced that the frequency of visit to public libraries across categories of users is not quite encouraging except retired persons.

**Table 2. Reasons for Not Visiting the Library Regularly**

Respondents	Distance	Shortage of Time	Unavailability of Material	Poor Services of the Library	Any other Reasons
High School students	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	-	-	-
Employees		18 (100%)	-	-	-
College Students	8 (44.5%)	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)		2 (11.1%)
House Wives	4 (66.6%)	2 (33.4%)	-	-	-
Retired persons	2 (25%)	-	2 (25%)	4 (50%)	-

Table 2 clearly indicates that majority of high school students (60%) do not visit public library daily due to longer distance. All the respondents, belonging to the working class (18 respondents; 100%), reported that paucity of time as the cause of their irregular visit to the library. In the similar vein,

44.5% of the college students reported distance as the barrier of visiting library though a few respondents opined paucity of time and unavailability of material are the reasons that dissuade their regular visit to library. Similarly, majority of house wives expressed reluctance to visit library owing to distance.

**Table 3. Use of Non-print Materials**

Respondents Group	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
High School Students	-	-	5(100%)	-	-
Employees	6 (33.3%)	-	6 (33.3%)	4 (22.2%)	2 (11.2%)
College Students	-	2 (11.1%)	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.2%)	8 (44.5%)
House Wives	-	2 (33.4%)	-	4 (66.6%)	-
Retired persons	-	-	2 (25%)	2 (25%)	4 (50%)

Table 3 shows that cent per cent of the high school students use non-print materials in the library sometimes. More than one third of the employees always use the non-print materials in the library. At the same time, identical number of views from this category of respondents goes in favor of

using it sometimes. However, a few use it rarely. Only two respondents (11.2%) do not use it. In the similar vein, college students offer a mixed opinion in regard to the frequency of use of non-print materials in the library. As expected, the opinions of house wives and retired persons are also divided.

**Table 4. Library Staff Assistance**

Respondents	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
High School Students	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	-	-
Employees	6 (33.4%)	2 (11.1%)	8 (44.4%)	2 (11.1%)
College Students	4 (22.2%)	4 (22.3%)	10 (55.5%)	-
House Wives	-	2(33.4%)	2(33.4%)	2(33.3%)
Retired persons	-	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	-

Table 4 reveals that great majority of the high school students often get assistance from the library staff as they are relatively new to the systems and services of the library. Among the working class/employees, the level of assistance required is found less as evident from table 4. Similarly,

college student take little assistance from library staff. However, house wives seek assistance often (33.4%) of sometimes (33.4%). Interestingly, the views of aged persons are divided in between often (50%), and sometimes (50%).

**Table 5. Collection of the Library**

Respondents	Very Good	Good	Average	Poor
High School Students	-	3 (60%)	2 (40%)	-
Employees	4 (22.3%)	10 (55.5%)	4 (22.2%)	-
College Students	-	8 (44.5%)	10 (55.5%)	-
House Wives	-	4 (66.6%)	2 (33.4%)	-
Retired persons	-	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	-

It is understood from Table 5 that majority of the high school students opine that the library collection is good, but the remaining portion of the respondents opine it as average. Similarly, majority of employees (10 respondents; 55.5%) opine that the collection is good. Concurrently, majority

of house wives (4 respondents; 66%) view the collection good. The views of retired persons vary from good (50%) to average (50%). Interestingly, majority of college students finds the collection average. On the whole, the collection may be regarded as satisfactory though it is not up to the mark.

**Table 6. Respondents' Purpose of Reading**

Respondents	Getting Information	For Entertainment	Education	Acquiring Insight
High School Students	2 (40%)	-	3 (60%)	-
Employees	6 (33.4%)	2 (11.1%)	8 (44.4%)	2 (11.1%)
College Students	12 (66.6%)	2 (11.2%)	4 (22.2%)	-
House Wives	2 (33.4%)	-	-	4 (66.6%)
Retired persons	4 (50%)	4 (50%)	-	-

Table 6 shows that majority (3 respondents; 60%) of the high school students read for education and the rest read for the purpose of getting information. Majority of employees (8 respondents; 44.4%) read for education, followed by for getting information (6 respondents; 33.4%). At the same

time, reading for entertainment, and reading for acquiring insight is found less among employees. Majority of college students usually prefer libraries for getting information. Among the retired people 4 (50%) read to remain informed and another 4 (50%) read to entertain themselves.

**Table 7. Library Resources Preferred**

Respondents	Fiction	Non-Fiction	Magazines	Newspapers	Religious Books
High School Students	2 (40%)	-	3 (60%)	-	-
Employees	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)	6 (33.4%)	8 (44.4%)	-
College Students	2 (11.2%)	-	12 (66.6%)	2 (11.1%)	2 (11.1%)
House Wives	2 (33.3%)	2 (33.3%)	-	-	2 (33.3%)
Retired persons	-	2 (25%)	-	2 (25%)	4 (50%)

Table 7 shows that most of the high school students (3 respondents; 60%) prefer to read magazines, preference to read newspapers among employees (8 respondents; 44.4%) is found more, while majority of college students read

magazines (12 respondents; 66.6%). However, the views of the house wives are equally divided. Not surprisingly, half of the retired persons prefer to read religious books as expected from their old age emotional and philosophical requirements.

**Table 8. Respondents' Preferred Language**

Respondents	English	Kannada	Konkani	Hindi
High School Students	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	-	-
Employees	14 (77.7%)	4 (22.3%)	-	-
College Students	14 (77.7%)	4 (22.3%)	-	-
House Wives	2 (33.4%)	4 (66.6%)	-	-
Retired persons	2 (25%)	6 (75%)	-	-

It is understood from Table 8 that English is the most preferred language by high school students and college students. However, House wives and retired persons prefer

their mother tongue over English language. None of the respondents mentioned any other language. Thus the analysis is that the respondents prefer only the English and Kannada language.

**Table 9. Interest in Reading**

Respondents	Most Interested	Interested	Occasionally Interested	Little Interested
High School Students	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	-	-
Employees	4 (22.3%)	14 (77.7%)	-	-
College Students	6 (33.4%)	12 (66.6%)	-	-
House Wives		5 (100%)	-	-
Retired persons	6 (75%)	2 (25%)	-	-

Table 9 clearly shows that of majority of the high school students are interested to read books (3 respondents; 60%). Similarly, interest shown by the working class is quite

encouraging. Cent per cent of the housewives are most interested in reading books. Hence, it is inferred that majority of respondents across categories agree that they love to read.

**Table 10. Reading Habit**

Respondents	Everyday	Always	Occasionally	Rarely
High School Students	2 (40%)	3 (60%)	-	-
Employees	14 (77.7%)	4 (22.3%)	-	-
College Students	12 (66.6%)	2 (11.1%)	4 (33.3%)	-
House Wives	4 (66.6%)	-	2 (33.4%)	-
Retired persons	6 (75%)	-	2 (25%)	-

Table 10 clearly shows that 2 (40%) of the high school students read every day and 3 (60%) among them read always. 14 (77.7%) of the working class read every day and 4 (22.3%) read always. Among the college students 12 (66.6%) read every day, 2 (11.1%) read always and 4 (33.3%) read occasionally. 4 (66.6%) of the housewives read every day and 2 (33.4%) read occasionally. 6 (75%) of the retired people read every day and 2 (25%) read occasionally.

## FINDINGS

The findings of the study are as follows.

- A number of people visit the public library despite their busy schedules at least once in a week;
- Respondents find the collection of the Bantwal Public Library as fairly good which also comprises books in regional languages;
- The respondents are not able to visit the regularly due to shortage of time;
- Majority of the people visiting the library go there in order to gain knowledge, acquire information and entertain themselves.
- Magazines and Newspapers are the most read materials by the respondents.

- Mostly the respondents prefer to read in English and Kannada;
- Staff of the Bantwal Public Library efficiently assists the readers;
- The reading attitude of the readers of the Bantwal Public Library is positive;
- They enjoy reading and spend at least 2-4 hours in reading.

## SUGGESTIONS

The library administrators, policy makers and library professionals must find all the ways and means to improve the collection of the public libraries and the traditional cataloguing should first get replaced with Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

The staff of Bantwal Public Library should be properly trained so that they can understand the needs of the users easily and accurately. They should possess skills accordingly to the changes in the demands of the users and their reading attitude.

The library has to procure the non-print materials also in addition to the print materials and create an awareness of the use of these materials along with the required infrastructure.

Public library must pay attention to the needs of the high school students. They should be made aware of the benefits of the library.

## CONCLUSION

The study investigated the reading habits of the users of the Bantwal Public Library, Dakshina Kannada. Public libraries

are considered as the local gateway of knowledge and have a prominent role to play in developing the reading habits of the public. The library professionals also have an important role to play; they should be in the forefront supporting new and innovative techniques and help in the promotion of the reading habit. Access to information is important to individual all round development. The gap between knowledge and ignorance is reduced by information and hence information is utmost necessary in the development of the society. For acquiring information, reading is one of the major avenues. Reading helps in improving vocabulary, word power and language skills.

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