FORGOTTEN BOOKS
(Edge of Digital Resources over Print Materials: Information Overpowers Knowledge)

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ABSTRACT
This exploratory study describes the extent of the use of printed material/books or digitally available information by the students of higher education for their understanding and application of knowledge or information in academic and social purposes in Pakistani context. The study was conducted on two hundred male and female students, after second semester of their degree programme, of higher education through a questionnaire, based on likert scale, followed by an informal interview over the period of one year and the quantitative data have been analyzed qualitatively to put forward findings reflected as percentage indication. The results show majority of subjects, especially male, are comfortable while using Internet instead of reading printed materials/books for their academic and social needs. The subjects accept the importance of books as treasure of knowledge but argue that relevant information required for academic or social purposes is digitally available on Internet without spending much time on reading printed materials because visiting libraries is a time consuming task. The study concludes with the remarks that in present era Internet is providing all opportunities to seek information to overpower knowledge through books, which is a source of understanding rather than knowing, and is supporting present generation to forget printed materials/books just at the cost of pain the knowledge seekers have to bear in the form of visiting libraries which is time consuming but may be harmful for third world’s new generation. Hence, the study suggests that information, though silver, is overpowering knowledge which is gold especially for the third world nations such as Pakistan.

Keywords: Books/printed materials, digital information, knowledge, higher education, developing world

INTRODUCTION
Reading enlightens the mind, makes the intellect sharper and makes an individual travel far without motion (Braunger & Lewis, 2006). On the other hand it is very common for stakeholders in the education sector to make derogatory comments about the way students apply themselves to modern Information and Communication Technologies, especially the Internet. The Internet is now a means by which the digital divide between the developed and developing countries is gradually closing up (Onovughe, 2012).

Pakistan, being a developing country, is enjoying Internet facility and users, especially adults, are growing day by day. Chatting was the first blessing of Internet but with the passage of time it has almost provided a substitute for many facilities such as academic and socially required knowledge as well as information, etc. It may have given some sort of comfort to University graduates but it has taken from them habit of reading books. As (Kumar, Singh & Siddiqui, 2011) say that in the past, undergraduates rely heavily on print materials such as newspaper for information because they help to create and improve reading habits,
knowledge, and awareness. They can be part of good study habits for students in any area of specialization.

Keeping in view this important fact the study has been designed to find out what are the ways the University graduates follow to seek knowledge in the present information technology age.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The major objective of the study is to find out that to what extent the University going students prefer books/printed material to digitally available information through Internet required both in their academic and social life so that appropriate recommendations may be furthered in the light of the findings of the study in either way.

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

The study is a survey/exploratory research and aims to find out the status of printed material/books as means of knowledge or Internet facility for University graduates in their academic and social life. The study further aims at tapping the possible reasons of preferring books to digitally available information or vice versa so that it may determine which is a favourite mode of seeking knowledge or information for University graduates and why. The study also attempts to dig out the answer of the following question:

- Do the University graduates after second semester of their degree program, female and male, prefer reading printed materials/books to Internet/digital information to seek knowledge required in their academic and social life/purpose?

**DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE**

The quantitative cum qualitative study is survey based research conducted on two hundred male and female University graduates over a period of one year through a questionnaire followed by an informal interview to know their responses regarding their habits of reading printed materials/books and Internet usage to seek knowledge required for their academic and social life. A likert scale based questionnaire was administered on the subjects followed by an informal interview related to the questions items reflected in the questionnaire. The data were qualitatively discussed for drawing conclusion along with the reflection of percentage of the subjects’ responses and in the light of the conclusion implications have been furthered.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Reading has been the passion of the greatest personalities of all times. Humans have been reading since ages and thus words of knowledge have been passed on through generations. The reading habit influences in the promotion of one’s personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one’s living; and thereby prepares a person for an effective participation in the social, religious, cultural and political life. Reading fires the imagination of the person. It adds new sight to eyes and new wisdom to mind. Reading loads the mind with new software (Satija, 2002). Oke (1996) gives reasons why people read thus:

a. Reading is a tool of self-improvement leading to do-it-yourself techniques, acquisition, equipping oneself with skills for better job.

b. Reading for pleasure and relaxation.
c. Reading is status symbols - this involves the prestige and value society places on reading rather than nothing.

He further affirms that a conscious effort should be made by all stakeholders in the educational system to promote reading habit.

(Hassan, et al., 2012) reading habits, for the purpose of this survey, are defined as how often, how much, and what students read. For the past few decades, many researchers have devoted efforts to examining learners’ reading habits (e.g. Allen, 1986; Anderson, Higgins, & Wurster, 1985; Cheng, Shen, Chou, & Hung, 1997; Dimitrijevic, & Gunton, 1975; Gallik, 1999; Hashway, Duke, & Farmer, 1993; Lamme, 1976).

Smith & Robinson (1980) define reading as “an active attempt on the part of reader to understand a writer’s message”. And according to Toit (2001) “Reading is as a process of thinking, recalling and relating concepts under the functioning of written words.” Devarajan (1989) defined reading as the art of interpreting printed and written words. Irvin (1998) describes the reading process as “The interaction of what is in the head with what is on the page within a particular context that causes students to comprehend what they read”.

The (Li-Bi Shen, 2006) invention of computer in 1950s, the advance of computer technology in 1970s, and the prevalence of personal computer in 1980s and 1990s seem to lead to the revolution of people’s literacy world in the 21st century. People nowadays tend to rely more on computer-based resources (such as writing emails, sending free e-cards, watching online video, reading online news, transmitting instant messages and photos by Yahoo or MSN messengers, exchanging information in online chat room or discussion area) than paper based resources (such as writing letters, sending cards and postcards, reading newspapers, magazines, novels, and sending pictures by snail mails).

As (Leu, 2000, p.1) pinpointed, “Literacy is rapidly and continuously changing as new technologies for information and communication repeatedly appear and new environments for exploring these technologies are continuously crafted by users.” Does computer technology affect college students’ reading habits? Lyons (1999) claimed that the computer revolution is unlikely to significantly affect reading habits in the perspective of history and current literacy trends. However, other researcher believed that computers and the Internet are changing the way people read (Lamb, 2005).

Additionally, “this new media and online literacy belong to and affect people of all ages” (Hagwood, 2003, p.387). Caverly and Peterson (2002, p.291) also indicated that, Today, computer technology is integrated into almost every aspect of learning in higher education: “textbooks arrive with CD-ROMs; homework is delivered and graded on the World Wide Web (WWW); and assignments are designed to be completed collaboratively through electronic mail”.

In fact, “the Internet becomes an important part of college students’ lives, not only for their studies and daily routines, but as a tool for getting to know other people and the rest of the world” (Chou & Hsiao, 2000, p.66). It is generally believed that third world countries, which had had Internet facilities in the recent times, are under the influence of such rapid use of Internet so far as students are concerned. For instance, Bobda (2011) while investigating the reading habits of some postgraduate high school student-teachers in Yaounde stated that the lack of reading in Africa and specifically in Cameroun is a phenomenon often decried in popular opinion.
Arua (2011) investigated the influence of teachers on students’ leisure reading habits with a view to finding solution to the contentious view that Botswana do not have a reading culture. In Nigeria, Ibode & Isiugo-Abanihe (2011) in their study on redressing poor reading culture among youths in Nigeria laments the phenomenon of poor reading culture, especially among youths in Nigeria.

The direct link between ICT use and students’ study habit and academic performance has been the focus of extensive literature during the last two decades. Some of them help students with their learning by improving the communication between them and the instructors (Valasidou & Bousiou, 2005).

Leuven et al. (2004) stated that there is no evidence for a relationship between increased educational use of ICT and students’ performance. In fact, they find a consistently negative and marginally significant relationship between ICT use and some student achievement measures. In support to these, some students may use ICT to increase their leisure time and have less time to study. Online gaming and increased communication channels do not necessarily mean increased achievement.

Karim and Hassan (2006) noted the exponential growth in digital information, which changes the way students perceive study and reading and in how printed materials are used to facilitate study. And on the other hand a survey carried out by Book Aid International (2003) in Sonaike (2004) found out that children in developed countries read for relaxation, while a majority of children in developing countries read for examinations.

(Ofodu, 2012) says that Cull (2011) opined that while the Internet is a text–saturated world, reading online screens tends to be significantly different from reading printed text. In his study, he reviewed literature from a variety of disciplines on the technological, social, behavioural, and neuro– scientific impacts that the Internet is having on the practice of reading. A particular focus was given to the reading behaviour of emerging university students, especially within Canada and the United States.

A brief overview was provided of the recent transformation of academic libraries into providers of online digital text in addition to printed books and other materials. On the other hand, it seems it has had some negative effects on their reading habits. Instead of people reading books, they now listen to people talk on You Tube, Face book, etc. So, they do not feel the need to read any longer.

But reading (Holden, 2004) is an important gateway to personal development, and to social, economic and civic life. It allows us to learn “about other people, about history and social studies, the langue arts, science, mathematics, and the other content subjects that must be mastered in school” (Lyon, 1997). As noted by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003), “people cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read. Reading is a prerequisite for almost all cultural and social activities”. The section may be concluded with: According to the International Reading Association (Moore et al., 1999, p. 3):

“Adolescents entering the adult world in the 21st century will read and write more than at any other time in human history. They will need advanced levels of literacy to perform their jobs, run their households, act as citizens, and conduct their personal lives. They will need literacy to cope with the flood of information they will find everywhere they turn. They will need literacy to feed their imaginations so they can create the world of the future. In a complex and sometimes even dangerous world, their ability to read can be crucial”.

"Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities   Vol. 3(4)  November  2014"

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ISSN: 2186-8492, ISSN: 2186-8484 Print www.ajssh.leena-luna.co.jp
**FINDINGS**

**Female Respondents**

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<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>To Some Extent</th>
<th>To Great Extent</th>
<th>Not at All</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>How important are printed materials/books for a University graduate?</td>
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<td>27.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
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<td>Are the printed materials/books a big source to seek knowledge?</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Do you go to library for reading printed materials/books?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Do you go to library for the issuance of printed materials/books?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>27.5</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Do you read at least one book fortnight other than course book?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How often do you use Internet for knowledge?</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Do you think Internet fulfills your academic and social needs regarding knowledge and information?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.5</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Do you prefer Internet to printed materials/book reading for academic and social purposes?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Do you think Internet is a must for University graduates than printed materials/books to achieve academic targets?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.5</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Do you think University graduates have little time to visit library or readings?</td>
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<td>17.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Do you think Internet only provides information instead of knowledge?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Do you recommend Internet usage to seek knowledge and information?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do you read relevant part of a printed materials/book or Internet source required for your academic or social purpose?</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>62.5</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
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### Male Respondents

#### Percentage Indication

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<tr>
<th>Sr. No</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>To Some Extent</th>
<th>To Great Extent</th>
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<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Do you go to library for reading printed materials/books?</td>
<td>17.5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>47.5</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Do you go to library for the issuance of printed materials/books?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you read at least one book fortnight other than course book?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>66.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>How often do you use Internet for knowledge?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>64.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Do you think Internet fulfills your academic and social needs regarding knowledge and information?</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do you prefer Internet to printed materials/book reading for academic and social purposes?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Do you think Internet is a must for University graduates than printed materials/books to achieve academic targets?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Do you think University graduates have little time to visit library or readings?</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>77.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Do you think Internet only provides information instead of knowledge?</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Do you recommend Internet usage to seek knowledge and information?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Do you read relevant part of a printed materials/book or Internet source required for your academic or social purpose?</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>72.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS/DISCUSSION

The study intends to find out the responses of University graduates regarding the use of library for reading printed materials/books as well as the use of Internet and in the light of the results of the study it has been noted that a majority of subjects have Internet access and there is a tendency of over use of Internet than printed materials/book reading among the University going graduates receiving higher education especially the students enrolled in social sciences disciplines. Though pure science graduates do read printed materials/books but they also prefer to concentrate on the required material available in the books, necessary
for some particular topics and use Internet for certain academic and social purposes. It is also important to mention that almost all the subjects are very well aware of the fact that book/printed material reading provides knowledge and enables them to have in depth knowledge but are more prone to Internet use which, they feel, is an instant way to overcome information and knowledge pertaining needs promptly despite the fact they are allowing Internet to overpower knowledge at the same time.

It has also been found during the informal interview that the subjects, at heart, do not seem to be recommending Internet as a source of seeking knowledge but are using it for almost all academic and social needs which generate a sense of queerness for the researcher to actually know the exigency of Internet usage for academic purpose. The subjects know that over use of Internet does not provide them knowledge in a true sense of the word but are of the opinion that in semester system there is less time available to them to visit institution or public libraries for reading books. They say at their concerned institution semester based academic mode does not have much time to sit in the library as a regular visitor and they prefer to get the copies of the relevant material that suits their academic need. Similarly, public library visit is time consuming task and different social compulsions do not allow them to sit in the libraries to till late for book reading which ultimately harms actual thirst for knowledge and consequently they are to rely on Internet which is a service provider in the present educational scenario.

The findings also make us understand that presently available search engines have the capacity to satisfy students’ academic needs but at the same time it kills two birds with one stone as Internet has opened new horizons for youth to have instant connection with anyone in the world through Facebook, messenger services, Skype, etc. The worrying aspect, as the results reflect, is that the subjects while using Internet for academic requirement appear to be more concerned with the relevant part of the information linked with their academic concern which is, in fact, making the presents new generation information thirsty rather than knowledge seekers. It may be applicable to the University graduates of the advanced countries but it is highly significant to remember that the advanced nations have made socio-technological progress because of reading books/printed materials after having found them a big source of knowledge and hence, the youth of third world nations, such as Pakistan, cannot afford to set aside printed materials/books which are the secret of progress and guarantee technological progress.

It is important to mention that there is tendency of using books/printed materials for academic purposes among the female subjects but they also seem to use books/printed materials by focusing the relevant portions required for academic purposes but at the same time there appears a marginal difference of opinion between male and female respondents so far as books/printed materials’ reading as a consistent habit is concerned.

**CONCLUSION**

In the light of the results the study concludes that the knowledge seekers, students of higher education, are comfortable while using Internet instead of books/printed materials by considering it time consuming, hard and uneasy source to gain knowledge which is, as the subjects opine, quite easily available on Internet digitally. This generates an alarming notion that under developed countries such as ours may face intellectual impotency if Internet usage, as a source of knowledge, is consistently prolonged by the new generation especially those who are engaged in higher studies. It has been also been noticed during the informal interviews that a majority respondents were studying under semester system which may not
provide chance to students read in detail as they are engaged in studies on daily basis and jump to another semester after sixteen to eighteen weeks leaving a lot to be desired so far as knowledge is concerned. Hence, they primarily focus themselves on the required information required for academic purposes and let books as forgotten ones.

**IMPLICATIONS**

1. Internet, undoubtedly, is the biggest invention of the present era but the importance of books/printed materials can never be denied because book reading, as Francis Bacon says, makes a ready man and the new generation of the third world countries like ours needs to be ready men and women so that they may be engaged in receiving education in such a way to compete the members of global village. Hence, it is imperative that institutions of higher education should take appropriate steps so that students of higher education must focus on printed materials/books’ reading instead of relying only on digital assistance. In other words there seems to be need of revisiting semester system of education so that University graduates may be given such a system that may quench their thirst for knowledge.

2. There must be some concrete efforts by all the concerned with education to promote books’ reading at Colleges and Universities to enable students involved in book reading as it has been found that students do read books but only the specific parts in the light of academic requirement.

3. There must strict attitude of University teachers to discourage Internet based written assignments to encourage creativity.

4. Self-generated essay competitions should be the hallmark of all Universities in Pakistan in which students of all disciplines be engaged.

5. Though odd, but tutorials should be encouraged at University level to promote discussions so that graduates may focus on knowledge sharing which primarily is the outcome of book reading.

**REFERENCES**


