

# Reading Habits of Research Scholars in ICT Environment with Special Reference to Universities of Bihar: A Survey

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## Abstract

*Reading is a fundamental activity for research scholars, as it underpins their engagement with the existing body of knowledge in their respective fields. Reading habits are influenced by various factors and offer a wide range of benefits. However, challenges exist in today's digital age. Promoting reading habits requires collaborative efforts and tailored strategies. By understanding the influences, benefits, and challenges associated with reading habits, educators, policymakers, and individuals can work together to foster a lifelong love for reading and promote literacy in society. Research scholars read extensively across a wide range of sources, including journal articles, conference proceedings, books, reports, and pre-prints. They develop the ability to quickly skim and identify the most relevant and impactful materials within the vast amount of information available. Recent development in information and communication technology especially the internet has brought out significant change in the reading habits of reader in accordance with the way which generate storage repackage and make use of information. The purpose of the study was to focus on reading habits of research scholars in digital/internet environment. Reading habits among research scholars, who are actively engaged in academic pursuits, can vary based on individual preferences, research areas, and the demands of their specific disciplines. A survey of 75 research scholars of the five Universities of Bihar was done to find reading habits, impact of ICT on reading, average time spent on reading, types of reading materials preferred, etc.*

**Keywords:** Reading habits, Research scholars, Library users, ICT, Digital resources, Online resources.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading habit may be defined as the 'settled tendency or practice' to 'reproduce written and printed words mentally or vocally' or otherwise interpret, or convert written, printed or digital words or other symbols into intended words or meaning. Reading is the art of interpreting published and written works [1]. It's an introductory tool for education.

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Received Date: May 06, 2024

Accepted Date: August 31, 2024

Published Date: August 31, 2024

**Citation:** Amit Kishore, Kaushal Kishor Chaudhary, Amita Singh. Reading Habits of Research Scholars in ICT Environment with Special Reference to Universities of Bihar: A Survey. Journal of Advancements in Library Sciences. 2024; 11(2): 12–18p.

Research scholars read extensively across a wide range of sources, including journal articles, conference proceedings, books, reports, and pre-prints. They develop the ability to quickly skim and identify the most relevant and impactful materials within the vast amount of information available. Focused reading involves in-depth analysis of key publications, carefully extracting insights, methodologies, and findings that are directly relevant to their research. Research scholars cultivate a critical mindset when engaging with scholarly literature, evaluating the credibility of sources, the soundness of the research methods, and the validity of the conclusions. They are selective in

their reading, prioritizing high-quality, peer-reviewed publications and maintaining a skeptical stance towards questionable or biased sources. This critical approach helps research scholars form well-informed opinions and avoid relying on flawed or biased information. Research scholars understand the importance of situating their work within the broader academic context and literature [2]. They actively seek out and read materials from related disciplines, exploring different theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and empirical findings that can inform or enrich their own research. Research scholars recognize the ever-evolving nature of knowledge and the importance of staying up-to-date with the latest developments in their field. They allocate dedicated time for regular literature reviews, actively seeking out new publications, attending conferences, and engaging with research communities.

Reading habits unlike any other habits are rather difficult to study. In order to know about the development and rate of reading habits among the present generation of readers, we have to know more about 'reading habits' and changing reading habits. Reading and learning are the two sides of the same knowledge acquiring coin. Both these activities have to perform by any human being simultaneously. We may learn certain things without reading and then in order to develop our knowledge on that area, we read first and then only we learn that area much more in detail and for that we need further readings.

How can we define reading as such? Reading cannot be simple phenomena, but comprise countless different form. Reading could be defined as the act of deciphering a piece of writing. We know that knowledge as well as power both are gained by reading. Reading makes us more alive. A book is undoubtedly a good tool, if it is sincerely read by a doctor, a manager, a teacher, a businessman, a physician, an engineer or by men of any other callings. It is aptly has been said that 'some books are to be swallowed, some are to be tested and some others to be chewed and digested'. Reading process required practices, development and refinement regularly.

The internet is offering an environment for the reading of various kind of literature in the digital format. Now we are living in the midst blooming digital revolution age. People are thronging towards the internet and digital library for finding desired information. For finding any information now-a-days people are approaching the digital material or internet immediately rather than printed reading materials.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Maharsi, Ista and Ghali, Muhammad Izam and Maulani, Salma (2019) [3] studied on high school students and found that 68% students read novel, short stories, humor, poems, and plays. As many as 27% of the students opt for reading anime, 20% read online e-books. Shanmugam, Thanuskodi (2017) [4] studied reading habits among Library and Information Science Students of Annamalai University and found that majority of LIS students (79.53%) are interested in reading LIS course material, over 46.19 percent of students never read LIS journals. One third of the respondents 30.12 percent sometimes read LIS related materials on the internet and 29.82 percent rarely read LIS newsletters. For pleasure 54.39% percent of the students read newspapers frequently. LIS students spend more time for (77.48%) reading books. Around 20% of the LIS students never read fiction, internet publications, comic books, poetry and novels. The students overall responded that work most often interfered with their reading and studying.

According to Yacoob, Ujang & Endung (2016) [5], reading has at all times and in all ages been a great source of knowledge. The ability to read receptively and responsively is highly valued, and considered paramount for social and economic advancement. In today's world with so much to know and learn, and also the need for conscious effort to conquer the divisive forces, people, most especially students need to read more. Reading is a cornerstone for success, not just in schools, but also throughout life. A good reading habit is necessary for healthy intellectual growth and plays a very vital role in enabling a person to achieve practical efficiency. The rise of digital technologies has had a significant impact on reading habits. Studies have found that while digital reading is becoming more common, particularly for shorter texts and news articles, print books remain the preferred format for longer-form

reading (Merga & Moon, 2016; Taipale, 2014) [6, 7]. According to Umeh, (2015) [8], a reading nation is a moving nation and a country whose citizens hardly reads stands at the edge of precipice awaiting a colossal loss. In Nigeria, the habit of reading is speedily approaching a freezing point, and in attempt to highlight the decline in reading culture, the “bring back the book” campaign was launched. This campaign was launched to reawaken Nigerians on the importance of reading and to promote effective reading habits among the general populace of Nigeria.

### **READING HABITS OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS**

The reading habits of research scholars play a crucial role in their academic and intellectual development. Research scholars are engaged in extensive reading as they explore and contribute to their respective fields of study. Some key characteristics of reading habits are:

- *Wide-ranging and in-depth reading:* Research scholars often engage in extensive reading across a variety of sources, including academic journals, books, conference papers, and reports. They delve into a wide range of topics to gather relevant information, understand existing research, and identify research gaps.
- *Strategic reading:* Research scholars adopt a strategic approach to reading. They develop the ability to skim and scan texts efficiently to quickly identify key ideas, arguments, and methodologies. They also engage in in-depth reading when they find materials that are directly relevant to their research projects.
- *Critical reading and evaluation:* Readers critically evaluate the quality and reliability of the sources they read. They assess the reliability of the authors, scrutinize the methodology and data presented, and evaluate the significance and relevance of the research findings. This critical reading helps them build a solid foundation for their own research and avoid basing their work on flawed or biased studies.
- *Annotated note-taking:* Research scholars often take detailed notes while reading to capture important concepts, arguments, and references. They annotate texts, highlight key points, and record their own thoughts and reflections. These notes serve as valuable references and aids when they write literature reviews, develop research proposals, and cite relevant sources in their own work.
- *Continuous learning and staying updated:* Research scholars are committed to staying updated with the latest developments in their fields. They regularly follow academic journals, attend conferences, and engage in discussions with peers and mentors. They also explore interdisciplinary literature to gain a broader perspective and incorporate diverse insights into their research.
- *Time management and prioritization:* Given the vast amount of literature available, research scholars must effectively manage their reading time and prioritize their reading materials. They identify the most relevant and influential works in their field and allocate time accordingly. They also make use of bibliographic management software to organize and keep track of their reading materials.
- *Collaboration and discussion:* Research scholars actively engage in discussions, both online and offline, with colleagues, mentors, and experts in their field. They participate in journal clubs, research seminars, and conferences, where they share and exchange ideas, discuss research findings, and seek feedback. Collaborative reading and discussion help them broaden their perspectives and refine their research questions and methodologies.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To identify information need and reading habits of the users;
- To find out the amount of time spent in reading and acquiring information;
- To find out the reason of reading books;
- To find out the form and types of reading material they are interested;
- To find out the impact of internet on their reading habits;

- To explore the currency and use of internet by the research scholars;
- To investigate the types of literature being read by research scholars; and
- To explore the tools used to find information on the internet.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to know the reading habits of the research scholars of Universities of Bihar, survey method has been followed. A questionnaire was designed keeping in view the objectives of the study for collection of data. The questionnaire was distributed randomly to 75 research scholars of the five Universities of Bihar (Patna University, Patna; Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga; BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, T. M. Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur and Magadh University, Bodh Gaya). Out of which, only 57 questionnaires were received by the respondents.

## DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

There are a total of 18 government universities in Bihar, out of which 11 are general universities, as well as a technical university, an agricultural university, a veterinary university, a law university, an Arabic and Persian university, a Sanskrit university and a distance education university. Out of 11 general universities, 3 universities have been established in the year 2018 [9]. A survey of 75 research scholars of the five Universities of Bihar was done to find out reading habits, impact of internet on reading, average time spent on reading, types of reading materials preferred, etc. The questionnaire was distributed randomly to 75 research scholars of the five Universities of Bihar (Patna University, Patna; Lalit Narayan Mithila University, Darbhanga; BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur, T. M. Bhagalpur University, Bhagalpur and Magadh University, Bodh Gaya). Out of those 57 questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 76 percent.

It has been found in Table 1, out that even today research scholars/students prefer to study printed (Documentary) materials as compared to digital materials. Although research scholars of science faculty use digital materials more than research scholars of other faculty.

**Table 1.** Amount of time spent on Printed Vs. Digital/Internet Materials.

Amount of time spent by the Research Scholars of :	Printed (Documentary)	Digital	Internet Use
Social Science	3-4 hours	1-2 hours	1-2 hours
Science	2-4 hours	2-3 hours	1-2 hours
Humanities	4-5 hours	1-2 hours	1-2 hours
Others	4-5 hours	1-2 hours	1-2 hours

It has been found in Table 2, out that 42.10% research scholars use internet 2-5 hours in a week, 28.07 research scholars use internet 6-15 hours in a week, 22.80 research scholars use internet more than 15 hours in a week and 7.01 research scholars use internet less than 2 hours in a week.

**Table 2.** Use of Internet for Research Purpose

Frequency	No. of Research Scholar	Percent
2-5 hours in a week	24	42.10
6-15 hours in a week	16	28.07
More than 15 hours	13	22.80
Less than 2 hours	4	7.01

Table 3 indicates that while ranking the use of internet resources used by the research scholars in general, e-journals come to the top rank with 61.40% while e-thesis/dissertation occupy second position with 54.38% and e-books occupy third position with 42.10%. The use of government Publications are 10.52% only and, that of standards/patents and technical reports is less than 10%.

**Table 3.** Use of Digital/Internet resources.

Types	No. of Research Scholar	Percent
E-Books	24	42.10
E-Journals	35	61.40
Govt. Publications	06	10.52
Standards and Patents	04	7.01
Technical Reports	05	8.77
E-Thesis/Dissertation	31	54.38

It is clear from Table 4 that most of the people consider the use of digital material as important for saving time (74%), while in terms of ease of use, the documentary source is considered useful (77%). There is almost equal trust in both from the point of view of updated information and reliability. Readers consider digital content to be less expensive (70%) but satisfaction levels are almost the same.

The digital divide is generally defined as the gap between people who are able and those who are unable to use ICT technology. Technology is important for reading/learning and research. It is clear from Table 4 that most of the scholars (63%) feel unable to access the correct information due to the problem of digital divide.

**Table 4.** Benefits/defects of Internet/Digital material over Conventional document.

	Internet/Digital material	Conventional document	Both
Time saving	74%	26%	--
Easy to use	18%	77%	5%
More Informative	51%	39%	10%
Current and updated Information	45%	43%	12%
Less Expensive	70%	29%	1%
Reliability	40%	45%	15%
Satisfaction Level	43%	47%	10%
Digital Divide	63%	--	--

It is clear from Table 5 that dependency on digital sources has increased (74%), though some 88% believed that the importance of documentary sources is still intact. 99% believed that the documentary and digital sources both are important for research purpose.

**Table 5.** Influence of Internet on Reading Habits.

Types	Yes	No
Dependency on digital materials has increased	74%	26%
Importance of documentary material has decreased	11%	88%
Both are important sources	99%	1%

The Table 6 shows that around 9% of the research scholar visit the library daily, 58% once in a week, around 22% twice in a week and 11% visit occasionally. The quantum of the research scholar who visit the library once or twice in a week is high. The analysis expressed that many of the research scholars are regular user of the library.

**Table 6.** Frequency of visit to the Library.

Almost Daily	9%
Once in a week	58%
Twice in a week	22%
Occasionally	11%

Table 7 states that 55% of research scholar read for 1-5 hrs in a week, around 17.5% for 5-10 hours, 20% for 10-15 hours and around 7.5% read more than 15 hours in a week. This figure highlights how much time is devoted by the research scholar in library.

**Table 7.** Time spent in Library in a week

1-5 hours	55%
5-10 hours	17.5%
10-15 hours	20%
More than 15 hours	7.5%

This Table 8 explained that 43% of research scholars prefer the documentary sources while using library, 33% textbook, around 24% thesis and dissertation, only 5% online searching and around 28% prefer journal, newspaper and magazine. The purpose of the table is to know the opinion of the most preferred reading source, it was found out that conventional sources highly appreciated by research scholars.

**Table 8.** Use of Different types of Reading materials.

Books	33%
Thesis and Dissertation	24%
Journal, Magazine, Newspaper etc.	28%
Online/Digital Sources	5%

## FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The major findings of the study are as follows:

- The use of digital source of information by research scholars is increasing rapidly.
- Research scholars have more belief on conventional (printed) sources like books, journal, and newspaper than any other digital source. The user thinks that print sources are more authentic than digital sources.
- Research Scholars use digital sources to search any information because these are time saving in searching information and having updated information.
- Research Scholars like to read conventional (printed) sources than digital sources because they are familiar with the printed documents.
- The use of digital/e-resources used by the research scholars in-general, e-journals comes on the top rank while e-books occupies second position and e-thesis or dissertation occupies third position.
- Research scholars prefer the documentary sources while using library. The purpose of the study is to know the opinion of most preferred reading source; it was found out that conventional sources was highly appreciated by research scholars.
- It is also evident that the proper use of digital and e-sources need some prior knowledge and training for using them.

The following suggestions for the libraries to acquire the better collection and user services in digital environment:

- The library should acquire books and newspapers mostly in printed form, because users prefer to read conventional document while using library.
- The library should develop electronic/digital resource collection of the library and the multimedia resource should be collected by library.
- The libraries should have a separate e-library section with internet facility for the users.
- The libraries should list out the important link of different information sources and it should be there with each of the computer in the e-library section.

- The library staff and users should have adequate capacity to handle digital resources, and the internet and its related services.
- The library should join the consortia, online database, OPAC etc. for the online journals and thesis/dissertation.
- The user education program is must for success in creating reading habit in digital environment.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) on the reading habits of research scholars is significant and far-reaching. ICT has revolutionized the way research scholars access and engage with scholarly literature. Digital repositories, online databases, and open-access journals have dramatically expanded the breadth and depth of information available to researchers [10]. The prevalence of electronic devices, such as e-readers, tablets, and laptops, has led to a growing preference for digital reading among research scholars. This shift has altered their reading patterns, allowing for more efficient information retrieval, annotation, and sharing. The integration of ICT tools, such as reference management software, online annotation tools, and collaborative platforms, has enhanced the efficiency and productivity of research scholars in their reading and literature review processes. While ICT has facilitated access to information, it has also introduced new challenges, such as increased multitasking and potential distractions, which can impact the depth and focus of reading. Research scholars have had to adapt their reading habits and strategies to navigate the digital landscape effectively.

In conclusion, the impact of ICT on the reading habits of research scholars has been profound, revolutionizing the way they access, engage with, and leverage scholarly information. While presenting both opportunities and challenges, this technological transformation has ultimately enhanced the research process, enabling scholars to stay informed, collaborate more effectively, and drive the advancement of knowledge in their respective fields.

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