

# Revisiting the reading Culture and information dissemination: Conceptualisation of “a reading nation is an informed nation”

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**Abstract**— *Getting information and inform others is amongst the human needs in the world they live. For information to be successfully and conveniently disseminated, informant needs be well informed from a well-known source mainly a written document they have read. In this study, the researchers assessed the trends of reading culture and its impact on information dissemination with specific reference to Kigali public Library located in Kigali City, in Rwanda. As today the world is moving faster with a lot of progresses and technological innovations in different areas, it is worth laying strategies to cope with a bad culture of not reading which may result in relying on non- founded information or being under informed totally. The study is a descriptive survey involving quantitative and qualitative methods. A daily record - document analysis, questionnaire and observation were used as research instruments. The study was conducted within the paradigm that successful information dissemination depends largely on how well informants have consulted sources about what they want to tell their audience. Results revealed that libraries are major repositories of knowledge and integral part of societal needs which make not only local people but also others in many parts of the globe to be informed. Researchers recommended that the habit of reading should begin at an early stage and be imbibed throughout one's lifetime.*

**Keywords**— *Reading culture, information, informed nation, public library.*

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Preliterate societies, African in particular, could communicate mouth to mouth unlike the current world where the pen is mightier than the word. In Rwandan context, many people still rely on oral communication while this century is predominantly geared by writings. Actually, this influence dated long before whereby communication used to be done from ear to mouth without any written source (Ruterana 2012:14). Traditional practices were learned by the young generation who observed closely what their elders were doing and saying. Today, quality information dissemination depends largely on how well people are interested in reading in a given place at a particular time. Information takes a lead in public places where people benefit a lot, if well informed, and face losses if not well informed about what they want to do, about what goes around them. Information is relevant among people who live

together or having something in common. True information benefits society while false information distorts them. In other words, getting informed and inform others makes people stay connected and go with time in the world they live. Cited in Owusu- Acheaw & Larson (2014), Dadzie asserts that human personal growth and development goes with knowing the world and having the ability to understand the content of a document and make use of the knowledge is what can enable people get well informed and inform those with whom they live. While Oke (1996) contends that people read for self-improvement, pleasure and relaxation, for a feeling of pride and prestige, Owusu- Acheaw & Larson (2014) opine that people read for different reasons and purposes including pleasure, leisure, relaxation, information and knowledge. By reading books, newspapers and other magazines, people can know about the world and its environment. In the same light, Palani (2012) is of the view

that nowadays reading habit has lost its importance as both the young and old are glued to the television and other ICT gadgets. In this vein, lack of reading culture among people of a given place bears serious consequences including the negative impact on the information dissemination.

According to Ramatou et al (2015), reading is an indispensable tool and bedrock of education due to information acquisition. The same authors contend that reading is the foundation upon which other academic skills are built. Inherently, the leading saying about reading goes that “*A reading nation is an informed nation*”, meaning that reading holds a pivotal role in human society not only at local level but also in distant places. As such, Public Library, as a local centre for information, makes all kinds of information readily available to its users who aim to communicate among them, transform their life and educate themselves for different purposes. Be that as it may, in the current African communities reading culture dwindled drastically while public libraries were established to create peaceful, democratic and equal societies as well.

#### **statement of the problem**

The twenty-first century is predominantly characterized by much reliance on writing in contrast with the former time whereby communication used to be done from ear to mouth without any written source. While the situation should have improved, many people in Rwanda are not very much interested in spending time on a book in a library. Despite that there are many reasons why people read, research has revealed that their reading habit among different people in recent times is still low, especially in developing countries including Rwanda, where many people are not interested in reading due to a number of reasons. With the advancement of technology that brought internet, reading from physical library has been considered as a loss of time and demotivating. Instead of spending time on a book in a library, people are interacting on internet or WhatsApp while others are watching television. Elsewhere, while the city should be considered as a place that counts a number of good readers due to a high literacy rate there, it is not always the case. For example, in Kigali Public Library, the culture of reading has dwindled and people are distracted with the advents of these ICTs gadgets. As a library officer, one of the researchers visited Kigali Public Library and interacted with librarians there. They revealed that reading trends are at a low level in contrast with the belief that the public libraries create peaceful, democratic and equal societies. All these foregoing reasons triggered the researchers to investigate the reading

culture among the citizens and the impact that such situation can have on information dissemination. Taken together, an idea to conduct this study sprang on the one hand from the above background. Similar to that situation is that when the second researcher interacted with a young boy selling newspapers at Nyabugogo main bus park. When the researcher asked him about his business, the young boy revealed that the business dwindled drastically due to people's little interest in reading. The two situations led the researchers to pose a number of questions about people's rampant culture of not reading. It is against this background that the researchers wanted to assess the trends of reading in one urban public library and investigate into its impact on information dissemination bearing in mind the saying that “*A reading nation is an informed one*”.

#### **Aims of the Study**

It is often time said that “*If you don't read, you don't know*” particularly in this century where written communication outweighs the mouth to mouth communication just as the common French saying goes that “*Les paroles s'envolent mais les écrits restent*” (Written information cannot be lost unlike oral that is easy to forget). In that regard, this study hinged on the following objectives: (1) To assess trends of reading culture in public libraries with specific reference to Kigali Public Library; (2) To explore the relationship between reading and information dissemination; (3) To identify factors militating against reading among Rwandese people and suggest measures to grapple with this issue in urban areas in particular. From the above objectives stems an assumption that successful dissemination of true and reliable information depends largely on how well the informant is well equipped with knowledge of what he/she is telling others because they have reliable written sources of that information.

#### **Scope of the study**

This study consists of surveying reading trends and the impact of reading culture on information dissemination. The study involves public library in Kigali City; that is Kigali public Library. All aspects did not have room in this single study. Rather, the focus was put on reading since library is greatly concerned with it. The study was conducted from June 2015 to November 2016 and was basically framed on Freire's theory of Library as information centre for people not only to teach themselves but also to disseminate knowledge to others with whom they live.

#### **Theoretical Consideration**

This study was framed on Freire's critical theory of libraries as transformative agents for community empowerment through communication. According to Freire's theory, libraries in the modern era have been tasked with discovery and consultation and dissemination of knowledge that is fixed, authoritative, discipline bound, and constructed for individual access. These institutions have thus identified themselves as separate from the mundane world standing for purer, more elevated values and acted as universal archives for transmitting information based on higher values and objectified knowledge (Wisner 2000; Bruce and Kapitzke 2006; Bruce 2008 cited in Buchmana et al.(2010). Today, however, librarians have moved into the public view, although in many cases, they still wait for information seekers to come to them. At the same time, contemporary theorists of library and information sciences have been increasingly recognizing the importance of making libraries relevant to local communities. Thus, in this study the researchers built on the ground that libraries are sites and depositories of information; relevant tools to local communities in that they enable people not only to learn better on their own but also to teach one another, thus to create an inclusive community.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literatures in relation with reading defined the process of getting ideas from print or written materials as a way of acquiring knowledge. According to Oyeyemi (2005), reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds. As depositories of these materials, libraries strive to collect and make accessible relevant and appropriate materials for literacy development (Cheung and Waldeck, 2016). The role of library, public library in particular, is closely associated with social and economic development. Public libraries can develop social and educational initiatives that aim to improve the state of well-being of people and reduce the social exclusion (Alvim & Calixto (2016). Elsewhere, Gill (2001) is of the view that public library plays the utmost social role as a communal meeting place, as a place of informal contact between community members, which may be a positive social experience. They add that public library is an engine of social development and a positive agent in the change of the community bringing social benefits. Libraries serve as important cultural institutions in providing a physical learning space for all ages for developing and sustaining literacy skills (Howard, 2013). They can be in form of standalone buildings, set up within

schools, located in community centers or provide their services with mobile libraries. Although there are factors which inhibit the culture of reading including a narrow perception of reading by education system in Africa (Ruterana, 2012) and many others, libraries provide their users a welcoming literate environment with a collection of diverse literacy materials which can stimulate individual or group learning (Cheung and Waldeck, 2016). Taken all in all, library as depository of information plays a vital role in the human society because the latter will become backward if they don't know what is going around them. Hence, a statement that "a reading nation is an informed nation", make researchers in information and library science to posit that reading is important in human social life.

### Reasons for reading

The great awareness of why reading is important is that it does not only contribute to an individual's well-being, self-development and progress but also the whole nation and the world (Affidah et al, 2013). People read for a variety of reasons each according to his/her interest. According to Fabunmi & Folorunso (2010) people read to acquire knowledge about something they want to know. As for Oyeyemi (2005) reading is a means of tapping knowledge from superior minds. He believes that people read to get knowledge. Elsewhere, people read for enjoyment. Through reading exercise, we are able to learn about how society has evolved and about the societal norms during each of the different periods all throughout history. This can even help us to understand references made in more modern societies because authors often make old religious texts or historical moments. Through reading we are able to continuously uncover new information about history. It is easy to see how all academic fields have roots in reading. Information became easier to pass down from generation to generation once we began to write it down. Eventually everything was written down, from things like home remedies and cures for illness, or how to build shelter to traditions and religious practices. Readers are able to improve on ideas, further knowledge and academic fields such as the medical field or trades could be started. In the academic world, reading holds an important place as it is associated with language and it is really a social discipline. The pride in reading is that it empowers one to use language with ease. Reading broadens one's reasoning, perspectives and outlooks towards life and society. Any literate society should be characterized by adherence to the culture of reading. Fabunmi and Folorunso (2010) posit that reading is essential to literacy and it is an

emancipatory tool that liberates one from ignorance, disease and poverty as well as providing one with the liberty for all round development. Libraries strive to collect and make accessible relevant and appropriate materials for literacy development (Cheung and Waldeck, 2016). Reading in that sense cannot be dissociated with knowledge. This skill has become more necessary now than before because, in order to live well and succeed in our modern and complex world, which has become a reading world, one requires effective reading skills (Fabunmi and Foloruns, 2010). In a word, reading is vital for human community to live going with time, knowing the the world around them.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The researchers used descriptive survey design with quantitative and qualitative approach. The study is quantitative in that it expresses the results in terms of quantity where the results are presented in term of frequency and percentages; and qualitative in that the researchers commented qualitatively on the results revealed by the numerical data. The target population of this study was readers from different places of the country and even beyond, who usually visit Kigali public Library for reading. The study employed a simple random sampling method to select the respondents. Information was extracted by honest and personal interaction between the researchers and respondents. More importantly, the documents where readers are recorded were selected objectively for analysis basing on the research objective to assess the reading trends. Questionnaire, observation and document analysis were used as research tools. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. The first section consisted of reading frequency and

reasons for reading. Section two was about what motivate readers while section three was about impact of reading on information dissemination. Section four dealt with strategies to enhance the culture of reading. Data were also collected on the number of books and materials checked out and used in the library emphasis falling on the interest of each of the categories of readers. Simply put, the questionnaire was distributed among readers and librarians. A total of 384 copies of questionnaire were distributed among respondents that were selected randomly following Morgan and Krejcie’s (1970) for sample size determination. The data collected was analyzed by means of tables, frequency count and percentage tables. Besides, document analysis was also used as a tool in this study. The document analysed contained the daily record in Kigali Public Library. Analysis took into consideration the types of readers, age, and sex during the period between June 2015 and July 2016.

### IV. PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

In line with the methodology of library research, a variety of methods were used to gather information and interpret them. The descriptive survey design was used for this study Figures and tables were used to present the results of findings. Data collected were analyzed using frequency and percentage counts. The analysis of data involved both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis.

#### *Information gathered through observation*

The following table shows the records the researchers got when they visited purposefully Kigali Public Library in hopes of knowing and having firsthand information reading in that library.

*Table1: The number of readers per day*

Dates	Category of readers	Number of readers	Percentage
October13th, 2016	Adults	296	78.3 %
	Teen kids	82	21.7 %
	Total	378	100%
October 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2016	Adults	348	80.2%
	Teen kids	86	19.8%
	Total	434	100%

As indicated in the above table, one of the researchers visited the library two times. For the first time, it was, 13 October

2016. He sat in the library and recorded intentionally the number of readers per day. The records showed that reading

rate is low as they recorded only 236 readers for the whole morning. In the afternoon, the number decreased slightly as there were 142 readers which made a total of 378 readers a day. Among them, 296 (78.3 %) readers were adults while 82 readers (21.7 %) were teen kids.

For the second time, it was Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The situation improved a bit and the records went up to 434 readers in total. Among them, 348 readers (80.2 %) were adults and teen kids were 86 equivalents to 19.8% which is not enough in consideration with the mission of the public library located in the capital of a country. From the situation above, the researchers concluded that during working hours people do not visit the public library. They related the situation with the bad culture of not reading among people young and children. The idea is that youth and ten kids should be encouraged to read so as to cope with the culture of not reading among the future people where information has great power.

*Information gathered through questionnaire*

Besides observation, the researchers used questionnaire to collect data. Questionnaire was administered to readers and librarians, emphasis being the reading trends, reasons for reading, materials to read, factors that motivate readers and impact of reading on information dissemination. Questions about strategies to motivate and improve reading among people were reserved to librarians. It is important to put it clear that the questionnaire comprised of both closed and open ended questions.

**Characteristics of Respondents**

*Table 2: Table showing the characteristics of respondents*

Categories	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Young	Male	88	22.9%
	Female	93	24.2%
	Total	181	47.1%
Adults	Male	106	27.6 %
	Female	97	25.3%
	Total	203	52.9%
TOTAL	Female and male	384	100

	male		
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From the above table, it is obvious that the adult read more than youth do. Of the total number of 384 respondents, 203 (52.9%) are adults of which 106 (27.6%) are male while 97 (25.3%) are female. As for youth, they totalize 181(47.1%) among which 88 (22.9%) are male and 93(24.2) are female.

**Types of Respondents**

*Table 3: Table showing the readers from the city and from other places*

Categories	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Citizens(From Kigali city)	Male	108	28.2%
	Female	116	30.2%
	Total	224	58.4
Others(From outside Kigali City)	Male	91	23.7%
	Female	69	17.9%
	Total	160	41.6%
Total	Female and male	384	100%

The above table reveals that of the total respondents, 108 (28.2%) are male citizens while 116 (30.2%) are female from the city area. Thus, the table indicates that among the respondents, citizens were 224 equivalents to 58.4% of the total number of respondents. As for other readers from different places, they totalize 159 (41.6%) of which 91 (23.7%) are male while 69 (17.9%) are female. Thus, a big number of readers who visit Kigali Public Library come from the city the reason being they are nearer that Library. The implication is that there should be other libraries at countywide to help the Kigali public Library offer the service and provide the material for reading.

**Frequency of Reading**

The frequency of reading was revealed by the statistics provided by the management of Kigali Public Library. They involve the records on library use from July 2015 to July 2016 as the table below put it clearly.

*Table 4: Table illustrating the reading frequency at Kigali Public Library between June 2015 and July 2016*

Period	Circulation	Visitors
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		Adults &Teens	Kids	Total
<b>July 2015</b>	568	9,872	1,795	11, 667
<b>August 2015</b>	462	10,125	1,836	11, 961
<b>September 2015</b>	390	11,078	2,960	14, 038
<b>October 2015</b>	448	12,185	2,640	14, 825
<b>November 2015</b>	678	11,428	2,463	13, 891
<b>December 2015</b>	701	7,083	1,379	8, 462
<b>January 2016</b>	551	7,337	1,154	8, 491
<b>February 2016</b>	413	5,073	968	6, 041
<b>March 2016</b>	341	6,840	1,310	8, 150
<b>April 2016</b>	430	7,803	968	8, 771
<b>May 2016</b>	250	5,443	1310	6, 753
<b>June 2016</b>	547	6,416	1,180	7, 596
<b>July 2016</b>	785	4,910	1,142	6, 052
<b>Total</b>	6, 564	105,593	21, 105	126, 680
<b>Average</b>			1623	9,746

The above table is concerned with the reading situation within the period of one year, that is, from July 2015 to July 2016. As shown in the table, majority of readers are adults and teens while kids are few. This means that Kigali Public Library provides services for a big number of aged people. Of course, the fact that the number of kids is still low means that the culture of not reading starts at the early age and stagnates. Following closely, the table indicates that for each month the number of readers lies at 9,746. It is also worth noting that during 2016 the number of readers dwindled drastically particularly in February where the number of readers is very low in comparison with other months.

#### Reading Materials

Under this section, information gathered revealed that the most consulted rubrics are those related to science and technology and Social sciences. The table below provides the details as regard the rubric which is mostly read or visited in Kigali Public Library.

Table 6: Table showing reading materials

Types of materials	Gender of readers	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Science and Technology</b>	Male	108	28.1%
	Female	86	22.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>50.5%</b>
<b>Social Sciences</b>	Male	68	17.8 %
	Female	54	14%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>31.8%</b>
<b>Others</b>	Male	44	11.5%
	Female	24	6.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>17.7%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Female and male</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the information in the above tells, the most frequently read books are those related with science and technology at the level of 50.5%. It is also important to mention that male among the readers interested in that rubric majority are male (28.1%) while 24.4% are female. The implication is that those females are still having a little interest in Science and

technology. Regarding the rubric of Social Sciences, the table shows that of the total 384 respondents, 122 of them (31.8%) are interested among which 68 (17.8%) are male while 54 (14%) are female. It is obvious that readers at Kigali Public Library do not like so Social sciences as Science and technology materials. For the other remaining materials including Languages and Literature, sports, music and the like, the results reveal that of the 384 respondents, 68 (17.7%) of which 44 (11.5%) are male while 24(6.2%) are female.

Taken all in all, readers are much more interested in science and technology and on may relate this situation to the country’s policy of promoting the science and technology as the engine of development. This is of course in line with the vision 2020 pillars whereby technology holds a very important room for the country to boost its economy. As people understand what technology is and the role it may play for them to go with time, there is likelihood to contend that it is the core reason for the rubric to be more consulted than others.

**Factors that motivate citizens to read**

Among the factors that motivate people to read, internet connection, working hours, customer care and sitting comfort.

Table 7: Table illustrating what motivates people to read

Factors	Gender of readers	Frequency	Percentage
Internet connectivity	Male	120	31.3%
	Female	88	22.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>54.2%</b>
Library working hours	Male	78	20.3 %
	Female	66	17.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>37.5%</b>
others	Male	14	3.6%
	Female	18	4.7%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>8.3%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>

As the above table reveals, majority of people, that is 208(54.2%) are motivated to read by the internet connectivity in Kigali Public Library. This is obvious in the

sense the internet provides readers with all about what is happening in all domains. Another factor is related with library working hours which is supported by 114 respondents (37.5%). It is important to point out that at Kigali public Library; they normally open on Monday to Saturday. The working hours are from Monday to Friday are from 8 a.m to 8 p.m.; and on Saturdays, they close at 5 p.m. Actually, these working hours are well enough for readers to achieve their goals. For other factors that motivate readers at Kigali Public library, research, leisure and entertainment were supported by 32 respondents (8.3%).

**Impact of reading on information dissemination**

Reading is a key language skill, apart from speaking, writing and listening, that cannot be underestimated. It is therefore a skill that needs to be fully developed and nurtured alongside speaking and writing. Unlike speaking, the uniqueness of reading lies in the power of words as symbols of ideas (Kang’a Mbayi & Gichuru, 2016). Along with this idea, reading impact enormously information dissemination in one way or another. When asked about how reading affects their behaviors as regard information dissemination, readers at Kigali public Library confirmed that when one has read about a situation, be it about economy, politics, education , science and technology, what they have ready impacts positively the world around them in terms of information dissemination.

**Strategies for improving reading culture among Rwandan people**

Both readers and workers at Kigali Public Library believe that reading can be fostered by coping with conditions such as book shortage - books in Kinyarwanda specifically, access to international Library and e- journals, increase the number of libraries countrywide and sensitization as well as shown in the table below.

Table 8: Table indicating strategies for improving reading culture among Rwandans

Strategies	frequency	percentage

<b>Increase the libraries countrywide</b>	135	35.2%
<b>Sensitization</b>	114	29.6%
<b>Increase the books written in Kinyarwanda</b>	89	23.2%
<b>Access to E- Journals</b>	22	5.7%
<b>Competitions on reading</b>	14	3.7%
<b>Undecided</b>	10	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	384	100%

As shown in the above table, majority of respondents 135(35.2%) believe that the most important strategy to foster reading among Rwandans is that libraries should be increased countrywide; 114 respondents (29.6%) say that sensitization is the best strategy to foster reading culture among people of Rwanda. As for 89(23.2%), Kinyarwanda books must be put on the public library shell to foster reading culture. Access to E- journals was supported by 22(5.7%) respondents while 14(3.7 %) suggest that competitions can foster reading culture. The 10 respondents (2.6%) were undecided. Suffice it here to say that reading culture can be fostered by considering a number of factors as discussed above. It is worthwhile mentioning that the leading strategy among those suggested is to increase the number of libraries. The remaining question is still to know whether the existence of many libraries will motivate readers and as such increase the number of readers.

## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study revisited the reading and information dissemination with particular interest in Kigali public Library in 2016. The study was led by an assumption that dissemination of information depends largely on how well the informant is well equipped with knowledge of what he/she is telling others because they have consulted reliable written sources. The literatures which geared the study posit that public libraries are the bedrock or depositories of knowledge for national development and, being an integral part of society needs, libraries are of necessity in educational purposes. Reading is still a big issue among people, youth in particular. Most of readers visit library for reasons such as

research and are likely interested in information related to their goals. Thus, the culture of reading from the library is still not developed among Rwandese due to a number of factors including but not limited to people’s narrow perception of reading besides the advancement of technology whereby social media have attracted people than libraries. Following the results interpretation, it was suggested that the culture of reading be promoted for the public library to serve the purpose it was set for. The habit of reading should begin at an early stage and should be imbibed throughout one's lifetime particularly because “The library becomes increasingly a gold mine for information seekers in all areas”. Libraries should be equipped with enough material-books specifically- written in Kinyarwanda to attract native speakers who may not be familiar with foreign languages. Kinyarwanda books especially should be put on the library-Public Library in particular, to encourage readers and attract them to know about their respective culture and the culture of others. The material about the native culture should be priority to enhance it through reading. Sensitizing people on the culture of reading should be a duty of readers, librarians and the local governance in a bid to fight together the culture of not reading. There should be competitions as regard reading as one of the strategies to foster reading among people. Both public and private media should be a channel through which people can know the relevance of reading. Notwithstanding the results in this study, research on Library and information science should be more encouraged to help the policy makers and planners for effective planning in the domain of Library. As workers in Higher Education sector, the researchers suggested that research be conducted on how students’ reading impacts their performance.

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