

# Reading as a Need of Today's Students and the Ways of Meeting it

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*Reading is an education that doesn't end the day we leave school or university, it is leisure, it is a refuge, and it is access to information.*

*Neil Gaiman*

## Abstract

This article analyzes psychological, pedagogical, and literary aspects of reading needs development. A survey was conducted to identify the ways, means, conditions, goals, and content of reading as a need of today's students. The survey was aimed to find out what ways of obtaining information the students prefer: with the help of gadgets or printed editions, the students' reading rituals, reading habits (skimming, fractal reading), reading preferences (classical, academic, periodical literature), to determine the main motives that make them read. Special attention was paid to participation in reading clubs, marathons, forums, and visiting libraries.

The results of the study showed that students prefer to read paper books, although all use gadgets to find, read and process information; reading as a form of leisure is relevant to most of the surveyed students, it prevails over video games / watching videos, almost all have certain reading rituals; most students do not have such reading habits as fractal reading, skimming, notes, etc. This all shows the necessity for further popularization of reading, visiting libraries as the center of culture, development of positive reading habits and techniques, and involving students participate in reading clubs, forums, and meetings.

**Keywords:** reading, reader, reading culture, information culture, reading needs, reading rituals, reading habits

## 1. Introduction

For most of human history, books have been the main source of information about the world - historical, spiritual, cultural, and natural science. Today the situation is completely different: literature is no longer the main channel of information and, in order to get answers to the questions relevant to us, it is enough to make a few clicks in the browser search engine. As we know, information has a price, and the right information is priceless. People are willing to pay for access to information that can give them a competitive advantage, help them make better decisions, or provide insight into the workings of the world around them. Throughout history, we have lived in times of information scarcity, and in recent years the situation has changed dramatically - we are experiencing an information glut (N. Gaiman, 2014). Eric Schmidt (the CEO of Google from 2001 to 2011), claims that since 2003, every two days humanity has created as much information as it has produced since the beginning of civilization. This is something like five exabytes of information per day, so it is important to be able to find the right and interesting information in a huge stream (M. Simmons, 2017). The main task is to master the reading techniques that help become familiar with the content of a book or a website faster and draw out important and insignificant information. Under the influence of society not only do ways and means of obtaining information change, but also preferences, goals of reading, conditions of formation and the manifestation of the need to read.

Considering the phenomenon of reading needs, scholars take into account the artistic horizon of readers, the nature of demand for books and the degree of its satisfaction depending on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, education level, profession, place of residence, etc., as well as changes in the conditions of social life (P. Biryukov, S. Borodin, R. Kontsevich, V. Polonsky and others). Nevertheless, the scholars note the relevance of in-depth pedagogical and psychological research to analyze the reading needs of the individual

(N. Dobrynina, T. Van Dyck, M. Kufaev, V. Talov, Sarah P. McGeown, Lynne G. Duncan, N. Davidovitch, Y. Yossel-Eisenbach, etc.). T. Van Dyck states that readers are more inclined to choose literary works that are close to their own worldview position (T. Van Dyck, 2008). Conducting research that examines the characteristics of reading needs (N. Dobrynina, M. Kufaev, R. Saip, N. Davidovitch, R. Yavich, E. Druckman), the scholars trace the links between reading habits, rituals, means and purpose of reading, reading culture (N. Davidovitch, Y. Yossel-Eisenbach, 2018). Another research direction in psychology and library science focuses on the areas of motivation and needs (P. Biryukov, V. Borodina, V. Talov, E. Chekryzhova), which is the basis for various typologies of readers' development (V. Borodina, S. Smirnova, V. Talov). Among the main motives for reading there are cognitive, emotional, moral, prestigious, aesthetic and entertainment.

## 2. Purpose of the Study

To analyze the ways, means, conditions and content of reading as a need of modern students.

## 3. Research Objectives

1. To analyze psychological and pedagogical sources on the reading needs formation.
2. To reveal the basic concepts of the study: "reading", "reading culture", "information culture", "reading needs", and "reading rituals".
3. To conduct a survey in order to identify the students' reading needs and the ways to meet them, to find out what ways of obtaining information the students prefer: with the help of gadgets or printed editions, the students' reading rituals, reading habits (skimming, fractal reading), reading preferences (classical, academic, periodical literature), to determine the main motives that make them read.
4. To analyze the obtained data and determine the directions for further research.

Reading is a type of communicative and cognitive activity (spiritual communication and mutual influence of people), aimed at the satisfaction of various needs (spiritual, professional, aesthetic, etc.) by means of printed information, one of the most important means of forming public consciousness and worldview of people, developing their high political and moral convictions; part of the universal culture (V. Polonsky, 2004, p. 199). In this regard, we are talking about the notion "reading culture" - knowledge, abilities, and skills that help the reader to navigate the book products and develop the ability to perceive read information, as well as to choose the topic of reading, to use the bibliographic system, to understand the structure of a book, apply appropriate ways of work with the text (vary the speed of reading, use techniques to consolidate the material read, create optimal conditions for mental work), etc. (I. Schuler, 2011). Close in meaning, but not adequate to the term "reading culture" is the concept of "information culture". At the present stage of social development, it is reasonable to apply both terms, because information culture in many respects substitutes the concept of reading culture.

The need for reading is one of the most important components of reading culture, it is manifested in the motivational component, activity, behaviour of the reader, and reading activity, which is concretized by the following concepts: 1) time devoted to reading; 2) reading structure; 3) peculiarities of access to literature; 4) conditions and ways of reading (V. Talov, 1993).

But in any case, it should be taken into account that mastering information when working with its various sources cannot be reduced directly to reading. Reading should be considered a creative activity, covering the whole process of information communication ("author - book - reader").

P. Biryukov in his research on students' reading (P. Biryukov, 1999) assumes that a reader is a key pillar of the conceptual framework of the sociology of reading. A reader can be defined as a person who reads various types of printed and electronic information products with different intensities, under different conditions and with different types of perception (passive or active reading). The researchers N. Dobrynina and S. Smirnova believe that it is inappropriate to include only people who read books into the category of readers, because the informational significance of the material published on the Internet and periodicals can be no lower than in books. In addition, many people read only special literature, so reading books alone cannot yet be a criterion for reading. The authors mentioned above rightly believe that it is not worthwhile to reduce the concept of "reader" to the concept of "fiction reader" (N. Dobrynina, S. Smirnova, 1997).

Among the great variety of student-readers, P. Biryukov singles out an active reader, who has several characteristics. First of all, the concept of "time devoted to reading" is one of the most reliable indicators of reading activity. Empirically this concept is specified in two categories: a) duration of reading and b) its regularity. Reading time was examined by asking about the amount (in minutes) of reading on the eve of the survey: "How much time did you

manage to spend on reading yesterday?" and "How much time per day do you spend on preparing home assignments?" Reading regularity was measured indirectly by comparing responses to both questions. This indicator also includes the proportion of responses that did not need any preparation for classes.

The conditions (or circumstances) of reading are largely determined by the type of reading (M. Kufaev, 2004). Educational reading has its own specificity. This category is defined by such concepts as the place of reading, the reading environment, and the existence of accompanying reading activities. These parameters have a strong influence, creating the right mood and shaping the goals that the reader sets himself, as they can both promote and hinder their implementation. Therefore, reading conditions mostly determine the way one reads.

The reading conditions specific to a definite reader strongly influence the opportunities to improve reading skills, moving from passive to active reading (R. Sipe, 2014). However, in addition to reading conditions, focusing on reading is also important, and this depends on the target orientations of the reading activity. Reading skills are determined by the speed and quality of mastering the material, the ability not only to perceive the text, but also to reproduce what is read from memory. Reading skills are very important in learning, they are formed through intensive work with the text, in which the reader strives not only to review the text once, but also - if necessary - to return to what has already been read (iteration method). The development of reading skills is facilitated by making a meaningful plan of the text and outlining it.

The situation "why to read" is determined by the specific life circumstances of the individual; these circumstances form a set of alternatives. It is based on the individual and social needs of the individual or the group of the individuals (N. Davidovitch, Y. Yossel-Eisenbach, 2018). The motivational structure of an individual determines its dispositional structure, motives are fixed in dispositions (attitudes) and, finally, form the value orientations of the individual. Therefore, reading motives are the basis for the formation of reading goals (N. Davidovitch, R. Yavich, E. Druckman, 2016).

The individual's answer to the question "what to read?" is determined by their reading attitudes. The latter determine the purpose of reading and, ultimately, the entire structure of reading. The purpose of reading is determined by the desired result. Let us distinguish the following main purposes of reading: 1) obtaining information necessary for the reader to solve the problems of making money; 2) obtaining information for learning within the social institution of education; 3) self-improvement and self-learning; 4) relaxation, rest, entertainment. Certainly, in a particular reading situation these purposes rarely exist in a "pure form", they are, as a rule, intertwined. Thus, even in purely educational reading, there is often a component of self-development. Therefore, the goals of reading, its types cannot fully coincide with the classification of its goals (the desired result).

All of the above brings us to the generalization of the concept of "reading need". As it is known, the need is the initial form of activity, the driving force of human development, organizing and directing behavior and cognitive processes (V. Polonsky, 2004, p. 106). Human needs are not innate; they are formed when a person comes across with the social reality, in the process of the individual's development on the basis of innate prerequisites (Pedagogy, 2005, pp. 454-455).

The need to read belongs to the group of spiritual needs, it is a kind of information need. Informational needs may have different content: cognitive, educational, professional, recreational, etc. In contrast to the motives that determine the desire to read, the reading need is characterized by an awareness of the pragmatic purpose of reading.

Reading needs' development occurs through changes in the subject of reading, its circle, satisfying certain needs of the reader (V. Borodina, S. Borodin, 2005).

#### **4. Methodology and Results**

Beginning the study of ways, means, conditions, goals and content of reading as a need of modern students, we conducted a survey in which 147 students from 17 to 26 years old from different universities in Ukraine, technical and humanities faculties participated. Respondents in the sample are evenly represented by all criteria, including age, social status and gender.

We studied the ways and means used for reading, irrespective of target (reading educational books and fiction, i.e., reading for learning and reading for entertainment and leisure). Our task was to find out the most convenient way and means for students to read in order to get information: educational materials on the computer screen, educational materials in printed form, any literature on the screen of a laptop, tablet, smartphone, paper books. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Ways and means of reading in order to get information

Answer options	Ways and means of reading					
	I usually read study materials on a computer screen	I usually read study materials in printed form	I prefer to read on a laptop screen	I prefer to read on a tablet screen	I prefer to read on my smartphone screen	I prefer to read paper books
To a very little or no extent	65 (44%)	40 (27%)	41 (28%)	32 (22%)	36 (24%)	12 (8%)
To little extent	35 (24%)	38 (26%)	34 (23%)	38 (26%)	38 (26%)	26 (18%)
To some extent	25 (17%)	34 (23%)	28 (19%)	34 (23%)	28 (19%)	24 (16%)
To a large extent	20 (14%)	21 (14%)	28 (19%)	25 (17%)	25 (17%)	40 (27%)
To a very large extent	2 (1%)	14 (10%)	16 (11%)	18 (12%)	20 (14%)	45 (31%)

According to the data presented in the table it is clear that the main part of survey population prefers to read paper books, (indicators: to a large extent 27% and to a very large extent 31% of students, to some extent 16%, to little extent 18% and to a very little or no extent 8%). Respondents identified the personal computer as the least popular reading medium (to a very little or no extent 44%, to little extent 24%, to some extent 17%, to a large extent 14%, and to a very large extent 1%). In accordance with these figures, printed material is read by 27% of respondents to a very little or no extent, 26% to little extent, 23% to some extent, 14% to a large extent, and 10% to a very large extent. Reading from laptop, tablet, and phone screens are evenly represented: to a very little or no extent 28%, 22%, and 24%, to little extent 23%, 26%, 26%, to some extent 19%, 23%, 19%, to a large extent 19%, 17%, 17%, to a very large extent 11%, 12%, 14%. It is clear that students, despite the abundance and variety of gadgets, do not see much difference when reading from the screen, but prefer reading from the paper sheet (print books and material printed from websites).

The next step was to find out students' reading preferences. To do this we asked students what kind of literature they read: classic books or periodicals, referring to the so-called "tabloid press". The results of the survey are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The students' reading preferences

Answer options	The students' reading preferences	
	Classical literature	Periodicals
To a very little or no extent	8 (5%)	103 (70%)
To little extent	21 (14%)	28 (19%)
To some extent	44 (30%)	10 (7%)
To a large extent	52 (36%)	4 (3%)
To a very large extent	22 (15%)	2 (1%)

The majority of respondents prefer to read classical literature: to a very large extent 15%, to a large extent 36%, to some extent 30%, only 14% of students chose the category to little extent and 5% - to a very little or no extent. Periodicals are popular with only 4% of respondents (categories: to a very large extent 1% and to a large extent 3%) and 7% to some extent. The vast majority chose the answer to little extent 19% and to a very little or no extent 70%. This indicates that today's students, despite the accessibility and aggressiveness of the "tabloid press," choose classic literary works.

Students were also asked what kind of literature they mostly read: academic/professional or fiction, 100 students (68%) mostly read academic and professional literature and only 47 people (38%) preferred fiction. From this we can conclude that the main motivation for reading is the desire for self-education and learning.

The following questions characterize the need to read, i.e., frequency, place, reason, condition, and form of presentation (print or audiobook). We asked students the following questions: What is more preferable for you: reading or watching TV/computer games (reading as a form of leisure time)? How many books do you read per

month? How did the lockdown affect the number of books you read? Do you listen to audiobooks? What are your reasons for reading? Where do you read?

Answers to the question "What is more preferable for you: reading or watching TV/computer games (reading as a form of leisure time)?" are shown in Figure 1.

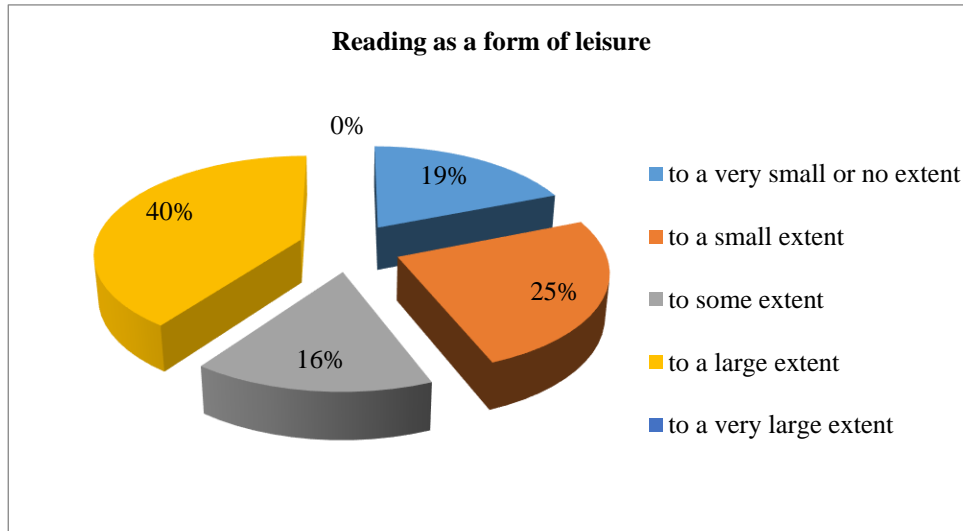


Figure 1. What is more preferable for you: reading or watching TV/computer games (reading as a form of leisure time)?

The answers received were distributed as follows: to a very small or no extent 19% of the respondents (28 students), to a small extent 25% (37 people), to some extent 16% (23 students), and to a large extent 40% (59 respondents). No one chose the answer "to a very large extent". The above data indicates that the majority of students 56% (answers "to a large extent" and "to some extent") choose reading as a form of recreation.

Responses to the questions: "How many books do you read per month?" and "How did the lockdown affect the number of books you read?" are shown in Figures 2 and 3.

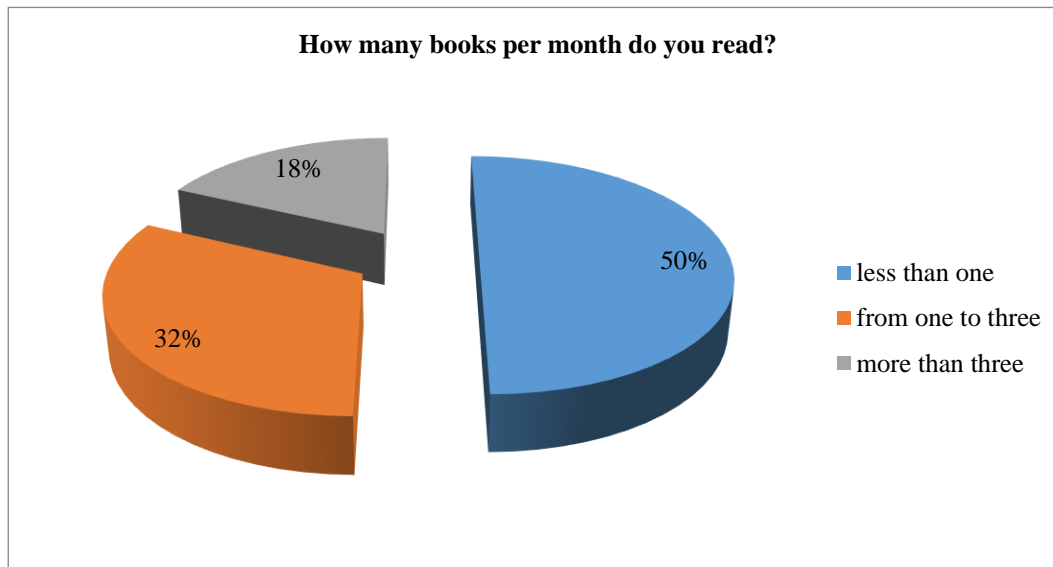


Figure 2. Number of books read per month (without taking into account academic and professional literature)

Answering the question "How many books do you read a month?" (excluding educational and professional literature) - 50% of the respondents (74 people) chose the answer "I read less than one book a month." "from one to three" - 46 (32%), more than three books 27 (18) respondents. Analyzing other studies on this topic, we note that this figure is

slightly higher than the European average (for example, in France the average is 1 book in six months, in the UK - 1 book in 8-10 months) (Sarah P. McGeown, G. Duncan Lynne, M. Griffiths Yvonne, 2014), (M. Simmons, 2017).

Responses to the question, "Did you read more books because of quarantine (COVID-19) and self-isolation in the past two years?" were distributed as follows: yes, 85 (58%) and no, 62 (42%). These data are confirmed by earlier research (A. Stepanov, 2022).

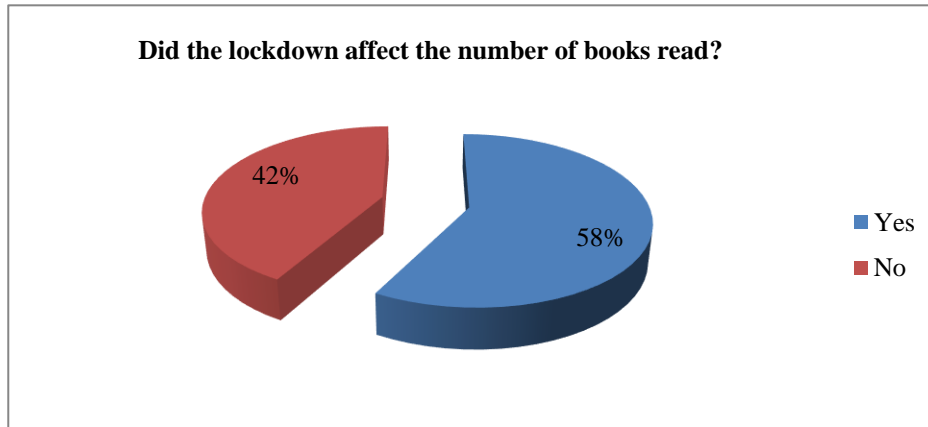


Figure 3. Effect of the lockdown on the number of books read

The next question was "Do you listen to audiobooks?" (Figure 4).

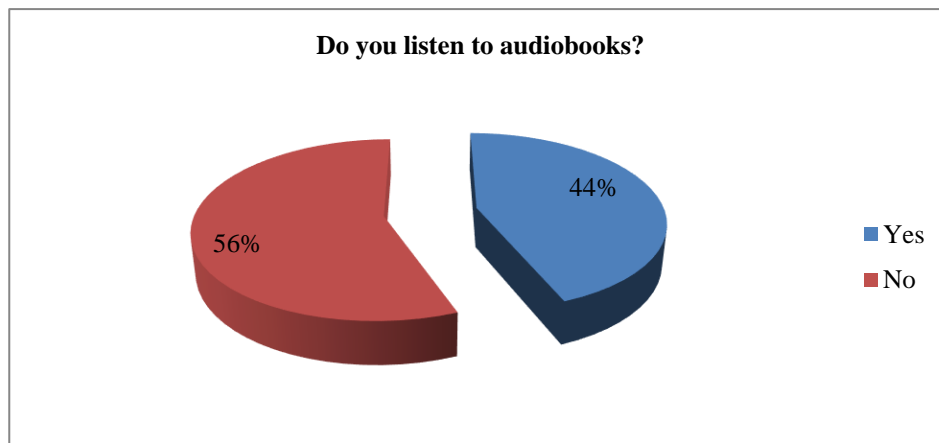


Figure 4. Listening to audiobooks

As shown in the chart, 65 students (44%) listen to audiobooks and 82 (56%) do not, preferring to read print editions. Which indirectly confirms the data presented in Table 1.

Statistical data about the reasons for reading are presented in Figure 5.

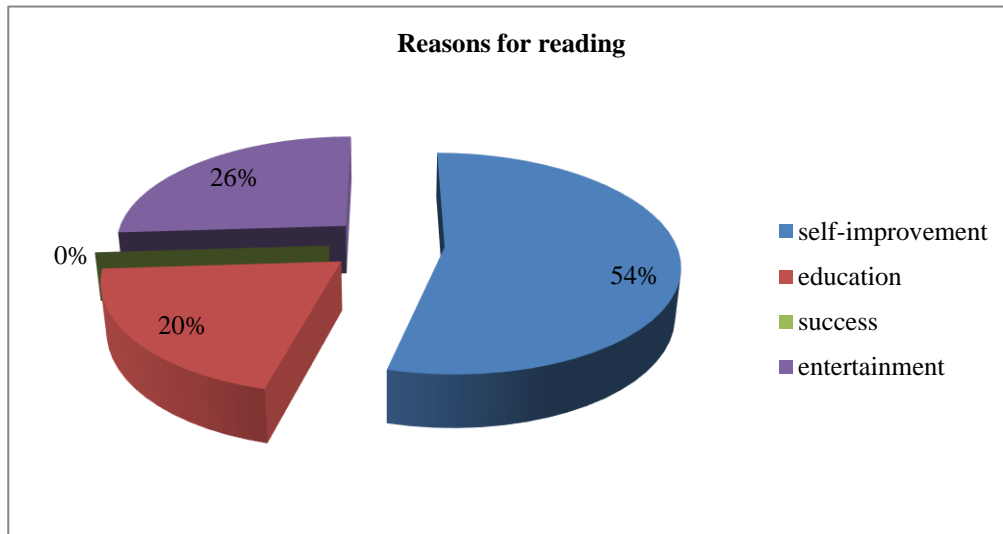


Figure 5. Reasons for reading

The majority of students - 79 people (54%) named self-improvement as the main reason for reading, 30 students (20%) named education, and 38 people (26%) named entertainment. No one chose the suggested option "success."

Data from the last question in this series, about the place of reading, are shown in Figure 6.

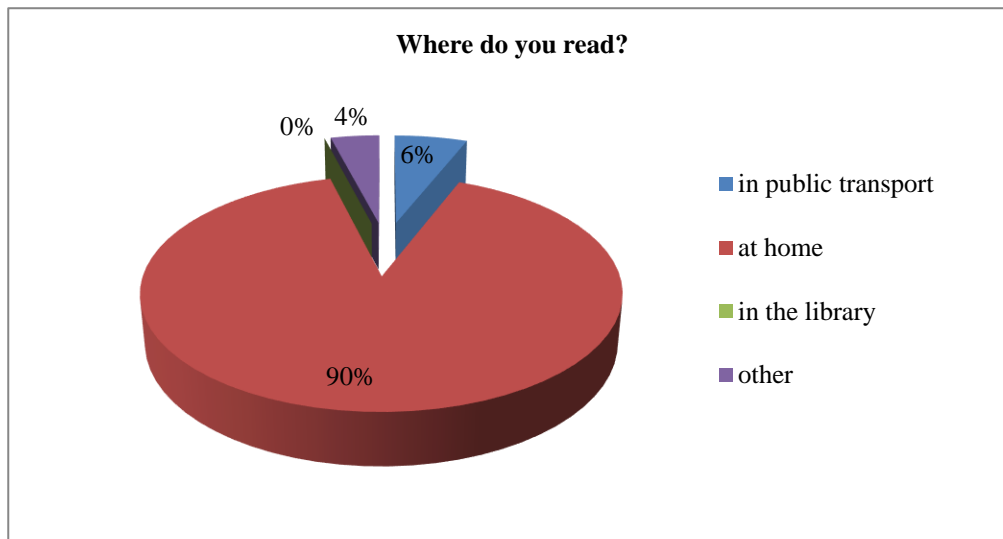


Figure 6. Place for reading

To the question "Where do you read?" we got the following answers: in public transport 8 people (6%), at home - 134 respondents (90%), other (in the park, at work) - 5 students (4%). It is interesting that no one indicated the library as a traditional place to read. In this regard, we asked an additional question: "How often do you visit libraries?" 35 people (24%) do it once a year, 70 people (47%) once in half a year, 32 (22%) once in 1-5 months, 10 students (7%) do not visit libraries. In our opinion, this is a very low percentage of library attendance for university students. Students explain this by the fact that most of the necessary literature can be found on the Internet.

In the survey we found out whether the students have special reading rituals, what kind of reading rituals they have. The answers were not formalized and respondents named one or more rituals. Most often, students cited conditions for reading as a ritual: silence, comfort, tranquility, a lyrical atmosphere such as lit candles, soft music, favorite drinks (tea, coffee, cocoa). Such answers made up about 70%. There were also answers characterizing reading technique: reading to the page that ends on 0 or 5 or to the end of a chapter, making bookmarks, taking notes, and writing out quotes (about 60% of responses). Several respondents focused on the emotional, internal aspect of reading: visualizing characters and events, fantasizing and sketching on the theme of the story (about 20% of

respondents). Analysis of the responses showed that most students focused on the external attributes and conditions accompanying the reading process.

The next stage of our study was to find out students' reading habits (fractal reading, skimming, notes, etc.). The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Reading habits

Answers options	Reading habits			
	When you are half way through a boring book, do you stop?	Do you practice skimming?	Do you practice fractal reading?	Do you write down key thoughts and ideas from books?
Yes	107 (73%)	69 (47%)	67 (46%)	55 (37%)
No	40 (27%)	78 (53%)	80 (54%)	92 (63%)

As we can see, 73% of the respondents (107 people) stop reading an uninteresting book. This can be called a positive reading habit (R. Sipe, 2014), because a person does not waste precious time processing unnecessary and uninteresting information. 27% (40 students) finish an uninteresting book to the end. Skimming (reading rapidly in order to get a general overview of the material; reading to find specific information in the text; searching for keywords) (E. Chekryzhova, 2021) is only practiced by 47% (69 respondents). Fractal reading (fractal is a figure, each fragment of which is similar to another and the figure itself as a whole; fractal reading - the study of all information related to the book, its metadata: abstracts, the interviews with the author about the book, first and last chapters of the printed work; it is possible only with the help of information and communication technologies and gives a general idea about the content of the book (M. Simmons, 2017) practiced 46% (67 students). The next question was, "Do you write down key thoughts and ideas from books?" Thirty-seven percent (55 students) responded "yes". The results of the survey indicate that, unfortunately, most students have not developed positive reading habits that would allow them to get the most out of reading in a short amount of time. This may be due to a lack of information about reading techniques (fractal, skimming) and students use them on an intuitive level or not at all.

According to the answers received earlier, we can conclude that in order to develop the students' reading skills it is necessary to involve them in book clubs, marathons, forums, so at the end of the study we asked a series of questions about activities to promote reading. The results are presented in Table 4.

Unfortunately, only 5% of the respondents (7 people) participated in book marathons. 65% of respondents (95 people) were aware of the existence of a book club in their city, but only 13 people (9%) were at the meeting. Similar situation with book forums: 51 people (35%) know about them, but only 6 people (4%) participate. The vast majority of respondents answered all questions negatively. It shows the necessity for getting the students involved in books communities.

Table 4. Popularization of reading

Answers	Questions				
	Have you participated in book marathons?	Is there a book club in your city?	Have you ever been to a book club meeting?	Do you know any book forums?	Do you participate in book forums?
Yes	7 (5%)	95 (65%)	13 (9%)	51 (35%)	6 (4%)
No	140 (95%)	52 (35%)	134 (91%)	96 (65%)	141 (96%)

## 5. Conclusions and Discussion

After conducting a study of the ways, means, conditions, goals and content of reading as a need of modern students, we carried out a survey, according to which we came to the following conclusions:

1. Students prefer to read printed paper books, although everyone uses gadgets to find, read and process information, also students are more willing to read printed educational materials rather than from the screen.

Reading paper books has been a long-standing tradition and an integral part of Ukrainian culture. For many Ukrainians, the tactile and sensory experience of reading a paper book, with its unique smell, feel, and weight, is irreplaceable and essential to the reading experience. The physical books themselves have become cherished cultural artifacts, often passed down through generations and symbolizing the continuity of Ukrainian culture. many



Ukrainians continue to value and prioritize paper books as an important aspect of their cultural heritage. For some, reading a paper book is a form of escapism and a way to disconnect from the digital world. Others view paper books as a way to connect with the past and preserve the traditions of Ukrainian literature.

2. Reading as a form of leisure is relevant to most students surveyed, it prevails over video games/viewing videos, almost everyone has certain reading rituals and habits.

It can be due to the affordability of such leisure activity. books can be purchased at a relatively low cost. This may make it an accessible form of leisure for Ukrainian students who may not have a lot of disposable income. Ukraine has a well-developed publishing industry, and books are widely available in bookstores and online. This makes it easy for Ukrainians to access a wide range of books and to find something that they are interested in reading. Also, the reading rituals are an important part of the reading culture: choosing a comfortable reading spot, creating a special atmosphere (candles, favourite drinks), using bookmarks.

3. Unfortunately, students mostly do not possess positive reading habits (fractal reading, skimming, taking notes, etc.).

There could be several reasons for that:

(1) Lack of awareness: Many students may not be aware of these reading strategies or how to use them effectively. These strategies may not be taught in schools or universities, or students may not have been exposed to them in their previous educational experiences.

(2) Lack of time: Students may have busy schedules and may feel that they don't have enough time to implement these reading strategies. Fractal reading and taking notes, for example, can be time-consuming, and students may not feel that they have the luxury of spending a lot of time on their reading.

(3) Learning style differences: Different students have different learning styles, and not all reading strategies may work equally well for all students. Some students may find that they learn best through active engagement with the text, while others may prefer a more passive approach.

4. Students' reading preferences, mostly focused on classic and academic literature, the main motivation for reading is the desire for self-improvement and learning.

These motivational reasons are explained by the students' need for intellectual stimulation: reading is a mentally stimulating activity that challenges and expands knowledge and understanding of the world. For many readers, the desire to learn and grow intellectually is a key motivator for reading. Reading can also help develop new skills, broaden our perspectives, and deepen our understanding of ourselves and others. Reading can be a valuable tool for professional development, as it can help us to stay informed about current trends and developments in our field, and to gain new insights and perspectives that can enhance our work.

5. Students very rarely visit libraries and do not use them as a place to read, preferring to read at home and find academic information online.

(1) In today's digital age, many students have access to a wealth of online resources and digital libraries. They may feel that they can find what they need online, and may not see the value in visiting a physical library.

(2) Some students may not be aware of the resources and services that libraries offer, or may not know how to effectively use a library. This may lead them to overlook libraries as a valuable resource for their academic and personal pursuits.

(3) Limited library budgets: Some libraries in Ukraine have limited budgets for resources and services, which can impact the quality and availability of materials. This makes libraries less attractive to students who are looking for up-to-date and comprehensive resources.

6. The vast majority of students do not participate in book clubs, marathons, forums, explaining it by the lack of information about events and communities, lack of time to participate. Also, there can be financial constraints: these activities may require a financial investment, such as purchasing books for a book club or paying a registration fee for a marathon.

Summarizing the study, we can say that popularization of reading is of vital importance for the intellectual, cultural, and emotional development of individuals and societies. It can be achieved by turning libraries into the centers of culture: libraries can offer a range of cultural programs and events, such as author talks, book clubs, art exhibits, and film screenings; provide access to technology and resources that support cultural engagement, such as online

databases, e-books, and streaming services; create a welcoming and inclusive environment that encourages students to visit and engage with cultural programming;

(1) positive reading habits (fractal reading, skimming, taking notes, etc.) development as they are important for effective learning, time management, critical thinking, professional success, and personal growth. These skills are essential for success in many areas of life, and individuals who invest in developing these skills are likely to reap significant benefits;

(2) involving students to participate in reading clubs, forums, meetings as it is an effective way to promote a love of reading, encourage critical thinking, build social skills, increase motivation, and foster a sense of community. These activities can be a valuable addition to any classroom, and can help students develop important skills and habits that will serve them well in their academic and personal lives.

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