Technologies and Shrinking Footfalls in Libraries

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We often come across a common grievance that majority of students and researchers of present generation are not academic minded; if the attendance in libraries is regarded as an indicator of readership, then there is no denying that they read less in comparison to their counterparts just a few days ago. The issue is quite debatable and the most befitting of the replies is if this is a fact then how they are clearing various exams? As we see in practice, the reading aids have undergone changes. The pens and notebooks are gradually being replaced by pen drives and laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc. Even the photocopiers are being rarely used. The modern cell phones with high quality camera are adequate enough to get very clear images of the pertinent pages from books and journals. Never-the-less, such images are often sent to multiple 'friends' with a few clicks of the button within seconds. It has become a trend for a group of ten students working on a specific project simultaneously visits five Libraries in a city visit with two individuals in a group. They often interacts among them through 'whatsapps' so that they can avoid duplication of material collections from different libraries. As they have 'done' with their material collection activities for a day, they leisurely distribute their collected materials among themselves. Thus, making full use of both of their shared labour and advanced technologies, the 'new-gen' readers can get along easily with their requisite study materials and at the same time making library usage statistics miserably low! As I know a couple of their teachers some of whom often enquire about their students' proposed visits to the libraries usually get disheartened because of the lack of seriousness and dedications among their students while in practice, the students have done their jobs neatly and well in time. We, the Library professionals are often subjected to questions from authority about less workload and presumably due to bad library housekeeping activities which refrains the users from using the libraries which, in turn, increases the probability of staff cuts in library sections while the reality is better and more computer friendly library housekeeping processes are the prime reasons for such low rates of foot fall. The WebOPACs in libraries enable the users to ensure availability of the requisite books from remote locations. The Barcode enabled call numbers of books makes finding the books easier. The wi-fi enabled library environment helps whatsapps operations free. The pen drives connected to devices like laptops or tablets can easily record quite clear images of pages captured through higher mega-pixel charged cell phones and neatly assemble them sequentially in files which can be easily attached to e-mails and transmitted to multiple users within seconds. Thus, we see that while technologies help library housekeeping and maneuver service potentiality to higher degrees, it reduces the footfall to a considerable extent.