

DOG-EARING OF LIBRARY INFORMATION RESOURCES BY USERS: ITS' EFFECTS AND WAY FORWARD.

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Abstract

The study examined dog-earing of books amongst library users at the Laz Otti library, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was employed on library users across all levels and disciplines within three weeks of using the library. Purposive sampling technique was employed. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire administered, only 331 (82.8%) copies were found usable for the study. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings showed that dog-earing is prevalent on paper-based library materials. From the findings, library users dog-ear book pages to note areas where they stopped reading as well as highlight important aspects of the book. It was noted that library users had a negative attitude towards dog-earing as a positive attitude indicates a favourable disposition toward the practice. It was found that bookmarking is a safer way to engage in active reading as dog-earing reduces the lifespan of books as well as causes early deterioration.

Keywords: Dog-earing, Bookmark, Library Users, Book, Information resources, Library materials, Clientele

Introduction

Academic libraries have a sizable collection of paper copies of materials. Documents, manuscripts, drawings, prints, posters, and maps are examples of paper-based materials. One of the more efficient, affordable, and simple preservation techniques is to handle collection items with care (Amankwah, Bilson & Atisoe, 2022). Olajide (2013) asserts that poor handling of paper-based book materials by users can cause deterioration. Mishandling includes marking up books, dog-earing the edges, pulling out pages, and other behaviors. The ethics of careful

handling, which are essential for extending the life of paper materials, have been followed by many academic libraries in order to preserve their collections (Ugwuanyi, 2004).

The lifespan of paper-based library collections and the extension of the life of library collections have both been argued to depend on the careful management of paper-based library resources by library staff and patrons by way of preservation (Tondo, Jembe & Yankyar (2022). Simply put, careful handling refers to managing library items properly to prevent the excessive physical stress and strains imposed on them by negligence. Some of the stressors include utilizing books as note holders, inserting pens or pencils, opening books with filthy or wet hands, dog-earing pages for quick location, and using clips to keep pages together, to name a few. The Merriam Webster dictionary defines 'dogear' as the folded down corner of a page in a book. The name emanates from the fact that the ears of many breeds of domestic dog flap over like the page of a book when it is folded. Dog-earing is an easy and quick way to indicate a specific page one is reading, hence, readers are inclined to use it readily. It is a popular practice that is probably a result of ignorance of the resultant damage a dog-eared book may suffer. The practice of dog-earing books can lead to deterioration of books because a dog-eared book has a high chance of breaking at the point the book is folded in, making the book to loss its value. Attitude towards dog-earing vary; while some people believe the practice damages a book, others believe it is a useful and convenient way to mark where you are in a book.

Promotion of reading culture and embracing of library friendliness among users are core assignments that spur librarians to greater service. All forms of information materials especially books are treasures that should be carefully handled by both library staff and clientele to ensure longevity. Information resources as domiciled in libraries must be jealously guarded and made readily available to users. A librarian's job schedule in all ramifications therefore involves every attempt made to gain access into the library's assets. However, any sort of molestation of library materials by users like dog-earing is not acceptable. Observation has shown that library resources, most times are subjected to rough handling that adversely affect them. The aim of this study, therefore, is to unravel the reasons why library clientele dog-ear materials, and to proffer solution(s) to the malpractice.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study is to evaluate the effects of dog-earing of library information resources/library materials by library users.

The study will specifically

1. Identify the reasons for dog-earing library materials (book) among users
2. Ascertain the attitude of library users towards the practice of dog-earing library materials.
3. Determine the prevalence of the practice of dog-earing library materials among library users.
4. Ascertain the effects of dog-earing on library materials.
5. Ascertain the efforts put in place by libraries to prevent dog-earing of books

Research Questions

The following questions were answered in the study:

1. What are the reasons for dog-earing books among library users?
2. What is the attitude of library users towards the practice of dog-earing books?
3. What is the prevalence of the practice of dog-earing books among library users?
4. What are the effects of dog-earing on library materials?
5. What efforts do libraries make to prevent dog-earing?

Literature Review

The vandalism of books can take many different forms, such as dog-earing a book to use as a bookmark or using papers, leaves, or flowers as bookmarks. It can also take the form of underlining words, writing comments, notes, and witty remarks on books, opening books the wrong way and pressing them, which tears the backs of the books and causes unsewing and displacement. Dog-earing is folding the corner of a page(s) in a book (Landsberg, 2021). The practice of dog-earing differs from person to person. While some regard it as a handy technique to indicate where one is in a book, others believe it does harm to the book. Dog-earing is a common and easy way for readers to indicate where they left off in a book. The practice of dog-earing is disliked by certain ardent readers and book enthusiasts who see it as causing harm to the book. It is often forbidden by libraries, where patrons are urged to utilize non-intrusive methods in marking where they left off in a book.

Reporting on the preservation of printed music, Gertz & Blaine (1994) discovered that musicians frequently mark pages with a dog-ear to make speedy page turns during rehearsals. Similar to this, Issac Newton is renowned for his distinctive habit of underlining key passages in texts by doodling, dog-earing, or indenting a page corner (Blair, 2004). The practice leaves more to be desired as poor handling and mistreatment of books by dog-earing over time makes the book to break at the point of the dog-ear. Subsequently, the page(s) so dog-eared are ruined, therefore causing the book to lose value.

To stop this abusive treatment of books, Saska (2016) suggests using sticky notes or bookmarks, a note card, or anything else that would keep one's place in the book without permanently tarnishing it. Also, he underlined how crucial this is, particularly while reading a book from the library. It is impolite to dog-ear the pages of library books because many others have access to them. In the same vein, Davidescu (2010) posits that books should be treated with care because they are tools, especially if they are borrowed. Since loaned books belong to everyone, it will amount to impropriety to break the paper with a dog ear, because that page is ruined forever, and the integrity of the fibers may never be restored. Fallon (2015) advises readers to stop dog-earing books and destroying their spines, but instead should treat them like they (the readers) would like to be treated. In this way, books do not become misaligned with the edges or wrinkled and bent by users' overzealous dog-earing and spine-breaking behaviour. Fallon (2015) comes to the conclusion that treating books as though they have feelings and acting accordingly will be advantageous in extending their lifespan.

Dog-earring books can occur for a variety of reasons, it is typical for dog-earring to occur ‘when nothing else was at hand to mark our place’, Hanick (2022). Not having a bookmark is one of the simplest reasons a reader may turn to dog-earring as a quick and practical technique to indicate their place if they do not have a bookmark (Landsberg, 2021). This means that when engaging a book and one comes across a particularly intriguing piece and wish to swiftly go back to it later, some readers may impulsively dog-ear pages. This can be done on the spur of the moment without giving the book's long-term effects any thought. Some people develop the habit of dog-earring pages. Dog-earring pages is a behavior that some people get into overtime (Jeffries, 2022). It could be a steadfast personal choice made even where bookmarks are available. Ignorance of the harm done to dog-eared books is another reason why some users dog-ear books. Some readers are unaware that dog-earring can harm a book over time. They might not realize how important it is to preserve a book's physical integrity.

The attitude towards dog-earring books may be favourable or otherwise. There are stigmas associated with folding or dog-earring the edges of book pages. Conversely, some claim that altering books, including dog-earring, is an important component of engaging with books and a demonstration of reading actively (Evans, 2018). LeMaster (2018) also believes that engaging on a visceral level increases one's appreciation for the book. According to this school of thought, dog-earring indicates use rather than abuse. According to Wright (2015), dog-earring is a practical method for quickly finding where you left off when reading. Bridle (2010) agrees that dog-earring is a good approach to highlight intriguing passages in books. LeMaster (2018) asserts that the act of dog-earring a book is a sign of active reading and expresses a person's enjoyment for it.

Historically, it was typical to forbid turning pages over in books. Cherniack (1994) makes reference to Chao Meng-fu Wffi's (1254–1322) work on traditional book-culture, which highlighted prohibited book abuses like bending, dog-earring leaves, and putting objects inside books, as well as transgressions like sucking saliva onto a fingertip to turn pages and using a book as a pillow. Additional causes of book damage include readers handling books without clean hands and page-dog-earring. To prevent this latter temptation and to serve as a visual reminder of library regulations, book marks are inserted into each book given (Katz, 2013). Daiwie (2007) referred to the forbidden behaviors with respect to a book as enumerated by Chen Jiru (1558-1639), to include bending and holding a book like a scroll, dog-earring leaves, sticking pins into books, tearing at the leaf, and turning pages with saliva on the fingers. The question is, are book marks the solution to the damages that are seen as a result of dog-earring of books?

Although dog-earring is a simple and quick way to mark a specific page, serving as a makeshift bookmark, dog-earring can cause deterioration to the page, which may eventually weaken the paper that is folded and cause it to tear, thereby reducing the integrity of the book. Dog-earring can provide a worn and tattered appearance to books, which may turn off those who value books' aesthetic worth. Dog-earring is often frowned upon and seen as disrespectful to the books by libraries. For the benefit of all users, libraries work hard to preserve the condition of their holdings, and they therefore frown on dog-earring. Libraries encourage bookmarking, and could provide bookmark, a piece of paper, or even a sticky note as substitutes for users that need to

mark their spot in a library book. Applying these techniques maintain the users' position in the book without endangering the book.

Bookmarking enables the reader to add items to the books that will help him or her focus on particular places or pages of the book for simple access. This practice has been observed to make reading more interesting. Library users do not have to memorize numerous page numbers that they intend to get back to because the books have been marked with objects. A post by Mouse Mouse (2015) offers a variety of bookmarking advice that users may find useful. Among them are trading cards, paint chips, rejected photographs, old concert (and others) tickets, sticky notes, a jar of bookmarks, glass bead bookmarks, film bookmark, complex color coding, plant tags, luggage tags, collage bookmarks, stuffed bookmarks, and old essay clippings, etc.

Many have argued that bookmarking is a safer way of locating pages of books than dog-earing, as bookmarks can easily be removed from the books after reading unlike dog-earing books which will ultimately damage the leaf forever. On the other hand, some also argue that dog-earing of books makes them find it very easy to locate where they left off in the books they are reading. Having ex-rayed book marking as serving similar purpose with dog-earing, one may wonder what the experience of online library users will be. This brings us to want to juxtapose physical book marking with online bookmark.

Several libraries conserve their paper-based materials by following the principles of proper handling in order to prolong the longevity of their books. Nearly all of the literature on library preservation has addressed the need to handle library resources with care. Alam & Sharma (2023) opines that poor usage and handling, poor storage conditions, and the high acid content of the majority of generated paper are reasons for the quick deterioration of paper products. Therefore, library users should avoid bringing drinks and food inside the library due to handling requirements. Other measures include avoiding page folding (also known as "dog-earing"), refraining from licking fingers before opening books, avoiding direct heat, and reading with unwashed hands, among others.

Careful handling which connotes respect for the materials increases their life span. In reference to preventing the dog-earing of books borrowed from the school library, the Hoover High School Library in San Diego, California, offers vibrant book markings created by the school's printing students to deter people from dog-earing books they have taken from the library. Each student naturally takes a bookmark as soon as he checks out a book because there is a plentiful supply of them on the desk. This mechanism has practically eliminated the practice of dog-earing books borrowed from the school library (Maccurdy, 1951).

Also, educating readers about the harm they create by doodling books while reading is another strategy to prevent readers from doing so. The practice of dog-earing corners of books keeps the books in a deteriorating condition. Therefore, it behooves librarians to teach users the ethics of book maintenance. In the same vein, according to LYRASIS Preservation Services (2010), patrons who fold the corners of books rather than utilizing book markers are among those who pose a hazard to book collections. Since such expertise does not come naturally, library employees and users should be trained on how to manage library materials properly.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The study adopted purposive sampling technique in the choice of population. The population was made up of library users in Babcock University Library, in Ogun State, Nigeria only which included students, faculty, staff and community. For the reason that it was impossible to determine an exact population size, the researcher distributed 400 copies of questionnaire to library users within a period of three weeks, out of which a total number of 331 (82.8%) copies were adequately filled. The self-structured questionnaire was employed in this study because of its dependability in data collection. More so, the questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test and was found to be adequate (Cronbach's Alpha .814) for the study. The library used for the pretest was Tai-Solarin University Library. Data was analyzed using the Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The results were presented in frequency counts and percentages, mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Information

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Faculties	Education & Humanities	29	8.7
	Management Sciences	25	7.5
	SAT	19	5.7
	Computer Sciences	38	11.2
	Basic Medical Sciences	12	3.6
	Public & Allied Health	19	5.7
	Social Sciences	34	10.2
	Law & Security Services	78	23.6
	Medical Sciences	40	12.1
	Nursing Sciences	12	3.6
	Staff & Faculty	23	6.9
	No Response	2	0.6
Type of User	Faculty	10	3.0
	Staff	20	6.0
	Student	300	90.6
	Community	1	.3
Gender	Male	89	26.9
	Female	241	72.8
	No response	1	0.3

How often do you use the library?	Daily	63	19.0
	Weekly	111	33.5
	Monthly	20	6.0
	Sometimes	113	34.1
	Rarely	23	6.9
	No response	1	0.3
For what purpose do you use the library	Academic	315	95.2
	Fun & Enjoyment	4	1.2
	As a meeting point	4	1.2
	Others	6	1.8
	No response	2	0.6

Source: Field work 2022

As seen on Table 1, 300 (90.6%) of the participants of the study were students, 20 (6%) were Staff, and 10 (3%) were Faculty members. There were 89 (26.9%) males and 241 (72.8%) females that participated in the study, their faculties were also indicated. On frequency of use, 111 (33.5%) of the respondents use the library weekly, and 113(34.1%) indicated that they use the library sometimes. And on purpose of use, 315 (95.2%) of the respondents indicated that they use the library for academic work.

Question one: What are the reasons for dog-earing books among library users?

Table 2: Reasons for Dog-earing Books

Reasons for Dog-earing	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
I dog-ear books to easily locate where I stopped reading	95(28.7)	116(35)	45(13.6)	75(22.7)	2.70	1.114
Dog-earing is for highlighting areas of interest in a book	63(19)	127(38.4)	77(23.3)	64(19.3)	2.57	1.008
Dog-earing is an essential part of active reading	48(14.5)	97(29.3)	105(31.7)	81(24.5)	2.34	1.003
Dog-earing a book is a way of showing that the book has been thoroughly enjoyed by me	28(8.5)	62(18.7)	125(37.8)	116(35)	2.01	.937

Source: Field work, 2022

The result in Table 2 reveals the reasons for dog-earing books. The respondents indicated that they dog-ear books to easily locate where they stopped reading (mean=2.70), and that it is a practice for highlighting areas of interest in a book (mean=2.57). These statements agree with that of Wright (2015) who sees dog-earing as a convenient way for easily locating the spot left-off when reading as well as that of Bridle (2010) who believes that dog-earing is a way to note

something interesting in a book. The respondents also disagreed that dog-earing is an essential part of active reading (mean=2.34), though some authors have argued that dog-earing is an essential part of active reading and active engagement with the books. (Evans, 2018), argued that dog-earing a book is a way of showing that the book has been thoroughly enjoyed by the reader (mean=2.01). This is also in agreement with the view of LeMaster (2018) who stated that dog-earing reveals one's appreciation for the book because it is a mark of active reading.

Question two: What is the attitude of library users towards the practice of dog-earing books?

Table 3: Attitude towards Dog-earing

Attitudes towards Dog-earing	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Books are tools, and should be treated properly	209(63.1)	110(33.2)	8(2.4)	4(1.2)	3.58	.604
It is safer to use bookmarks or sticky notes than dog-ear books	204(61.6)	101(30.5)	21(6.3)	5(1.5)	3.52	.684
Not dog-earing books can increase the life-span of books	145(43.8)	130(39.3)	39(11.8)	17(5.1)	3.22	.846
Dog-earing can cause deterioration in books	138(41.7)	137(41.4)	43(13)	13(3.9)	3.21	.814
Dog-earing is one of the many ways in mishandling books	117(35.3)	141(42.6)	65(19.6)	8(2.4)	3.11	.798
It is a good practice to treat books like you would like to be treated	109(32.9)	157(47.4)	53(16)	12(3.6)	3.10	.792
It is improper to dog-ear a book	115(34.7)	115(34.7)	84(25.4)	17(5.1)	2.99	.899
It is a good practice to assume that books have feelings, and to treat them as such	82(24.8)	165(49.8)	61(18.4)	23(6.9)	2.92	.840
Dog-earing books show disrespect for books	77(23.3)	105(31.7)	107(32.3)	42(12.7)	2.66	.973
Dog-earing is a sign of use rather than misuse	35(10.6)	137(41.4)	115(34.7)	44(13.3)	2.49	.854
It is right to dog-ear books	27(8.2)	88(26.6)	129(39)	87(26.3)	2.17	.911

Source: Field work, 2022

Respondents view on the attitudes of library users towards the practice of dog-earing books is presented on Table 3. The result shows that the respondents agreed that books are tools, and

should be treated properly (mean=3.58), and that it is safer to use bookmarks or sticky notes than dog-ear books (mean=3.52). This agrees with the position of Davidescu (2010), that books are tools, and should be treated properly, especially borrowed books. A negative attitude is also seen as the respondents agreed that not dog-earing books can increase the life-span of books (mean=3.22) as dog-earing can cause deterioration in books (mean=3.21). In the same vein, the respondents agreed that dog-earing is one of the many ways in mishandling books (mean=3.11), and that it is a good practice to treat books like you would like to be treated (mean=3.10), as it is improper to dog-ear a book (mean=2.99). These findings correlate with Fallon (2015) who admonishes that readers should quit the practice of dog-earing books and breaking their spines but treat them like they (the readers) would like to be treated and also assume that the books have feelings and treat them in a manner that would suggest that. It can therefore be inferred that library users have a negative attitude towards dog-earing as a positive attitude indicates a favourable disposition toward the practice.

Question three: What is the prevalence of the practice of dog-earing books among library users?

Table 4: Prevalence of Dog-earing

Prevalence of Dog-earing	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Dog-ears are common among paper covers than on hard covers	78(23.6)	158(47.7)	80(24.2)	15(4.5)	2.90	.807
Dog-earing of books is a popular practice among book lovers	74(22.4)	156(47.1)	83(25.1)	18(5.4)	2.86	.822
I dog-ear pages only in books that belong to me	101(30.5)	117(35.3)	61(18.4)	52(15.7)	2.81	1.041
I dog-ear books to show that I have actively engaged the book	45(13.6)	89(26.9)	136(41.1)	61(18.4)	2.36	.934
I have noticed that many library books are dog-eared	21(6.3)	91(27.5)	177(53.5)	42(12.7)	2.27	.763
I dog-ear pages in books irrespective of ownership	16(4.8)	36(10.9)	135(40.8)	144(43.5)	1.77	.829

Source: Field work, 2022

As seen on Table 4, one prevailing practice in dog-earing books is that of paper cover as the respondents agreed that dog-ears are common among paper covers than on hard covers (mean=2.90), and that it is a popular practice among book lovers (mean=2.86). As indicated,

dog-earing occurs mostly in pages of personal books of the respondents (mean=2.81). Irrespective of ownership or prevailing practice of dog-earing, LYRASIS Preservation Services (2010) emphasized that threats to book collections are initiated by certain use and handling practices which include patrons folding corners of books and magazines instead of using book markers. The respondents also agreed that dog-earing book pages does not indicate that one has actively engaged a book (mean=2.36), and that not many library books are dog-eared (mean=2.27). Finally, the respondents disagreed on dog-earing pages of books irrespective of ownership (mean=1.77). All of these forbidden behaviours as reported by Daiwie (2007) include bending and folding a book like a scroll, dog-earing leaves, inserting pins into books, clawing at the leaf, and dribbling saliva on the fingertip to turn pages.

Question four: What are the effects of dog-earing on library material (books)?

Table 5: Effects of Dog-earing

Effects of Dog-earing	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Dog-earing of books shows lack of respect for information/library materials	180(54.4)	130(39.3)	19(5.7)	2(0.6)	3.47	.634
Dog-eared books get worn out quicker	139(42)	144(43.5)	40(12.1)	8(2.4)	3.25	.759
Dog-eared books have a high chance of breaking at the point the book is folded in	120(36.3)	166(50.2)	39(11.8)	6(1.8)	3.21	.715
Dog-earing makes books lose their value	95(28.7)	114(34.4)	107(32.3)	15(4.5)	2.87	.882

Source: Field work, 2022

Presented on Table 5 are respondents' views on the effects of dog-earing books. The respondents agreed that Dog-earing of books shows lack of respect for information/library materials (mean=3.47), and that dog-eared books get worn out quickly (mean=3.25), therefore they have a high chance of breaking at the point the book is folded in (mean=3.21). The respondents also added that dog-earing makes books lose their value (mean=2.87). These assertions are in line with Amankwah, Bilson & Atisoe (2022) who posit that one of the more efficient, affordable, and simple preservation techniques is to handle information materials with care. Proper handling implies respect for the printed materials and increases their life span. When books are mishandled, they will not be properly aligned with the pages, and they will be creased and bent due to dog-earing and spine breaking by users; Fallon (2015) therefore admonishes that readers should quit the practice of dog-earing books and spine breaking them, that way, books remain

properly aligned with the edges, not creased and bent due to overly enthusiastic spine-breaking and dog-earing by users.

Question five: What efforts do libraries make to prevent dog-earing?

Table 6: Prevention of Dog-earing

Prevention of Dog-earing	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)	Mean	SD
Proper handling of books is taught by my library	91(27.5)	155(46.8)	61(18.4)	24(7.3)	2.95	.865
The library teaches users the ethics of book maintenance	83(25.1)	158(47.7)	76(23)	14(4.2)	2.94	.805
The library educates readers about the damage of dog-earing books while reading	58(17.5)	135(40.8)	103(31.1)	35(10.6)	2.65	.889
The library provides bookmarks to discourage dog-earing	39(11.8)	100(30.2)	135(40.8)	57(17.2)	2.37	.902

Source: Field work, 2022

As reported on Table 6, the respondents agreed that proper handling of books is taught by the library (mean=2.95) in order to prevent dog-earing of books, and that the library teaches users the ethics of book maintenance (mean=2.94), as well as educate readers about the damage of dog-earing books while reading in order to prevent dog-earing of books. These statements corroborate that of Ugwuanyi (2004) who stated that ethics of careful handling, which are essential for extending the life of paper materials, have been followed by many academic libraries in order to preserve their collections. However, majority of the respondents indicated that the library does not provide bookmarks to discourage dog-earing of books (mean=2.37), although many authors have argued that bookmarking is a safer way of locating pages of books than dog-earing as bookmarks can easily be removed from the books after reading unlike dog-eared books that will damage the leaves forever.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has established that users dog-ear book pages to note areas where they stopped reading as well as highlight important/interesting aspects of the book. It can be inferred that library users have a negative attitude towards dog-earing as a positive attitude indicates a favourable disposition towards the practice. It was also established that dog-earing is prevalent on soft paper-based books covers than the hard. Users indicated they do not support dog-earing books irrespective of ownership of the book. Based on the findings of the study, the paper recommends:

- (1) bookmarking as a safer way to engage in active reading as dog-earing reduces the lifespan of books as well as causes early deterioration. This level of damage impacts on the quality of library books in the long run and consequently affects information service delivery.
- (2) that both library staff and users should be trained and retrained on proper handling of books to forestall damage. This training can be at the point of employment of the library staff and during orientation of new students.
- (3) as has been found out in the study that dog-earing of soft covers is prevalent, the study recommends that more of hard paper covers of information materials should be printed rather than the soft.
- (4) library staff should regularly go round to remind users of the library the need to avoid dog-earing books while they are in the library.

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