1.1: INTRODUCTION

Reading gives a unifying and civilizing force tending to unite social groups through the dissemination of common experience. This would develop the reading and learning habits of the students and increase their imagination thinking and knowledge. Reading also provides a source of pleasure. Unless reading develops as an automatic activity, outside and unrelated to the classroom, it can make little contribution to the intellectual growth of the person and hence to his/her overall personality. How to promote reading as a habit, what factors are involved in the process, who should stimulate reading interest among students are the issues of concern. In this regard the role of writers, parents, teachers, librarians have greater importance, particularly in the education field. A habit started from the tender age usually lasts for ever. Habit of visiting library from the early age and more so as a student become a part and parcel of life at later age. The reading culture from the beginning can make anyone to be more inquisitive about the things and happenings in and around of the human life.

The companionship of books permits individuals to form an interest in reading and furthers their intellectual and emotional development. No habit acquired during education is likely to be of more lasting benefit than the habit of reading and the ability to use books for enjoyment and information.

According to Soni, “resolve to edge in a little reading everyday, if it is but a single sentence. If you gain fifteen minutes a day, it will make itself felt at the end of the year. A great work is not only to read, but settles in our hearts and mind. Hence the joy of reading is inseparable from the joy of communication” (Sharma, 1989).
Demidov states that “Reading activity shapes the abstracting power of the left hemisphere of the brain and besides develops the words relating to specific the word relating to specific images. The last process is totally absent when viewing pictures on the television screen. As a result the reader develops more intellectual personality than the one who lives at the mercy of the visual perceptions without taking the trouble of couching them in words that is at the level of abstraction” (Ramaiah, 1994).

Very often, in practicing reading leads to effective reading. Reading skills vary from person to person and the type of books a person is reading and as well the kind and level of one wants to assimilate. Reading could be improved through faster reading, skimming and scanning. Skimming results in pre-selected sections of the text to gain a general overview. Scanning helps in finding the specific piece of information. Faster reading could be adopted while reading the novels or literature pertaining to entertainment aspects.

The reliance of man upon exchange of thoughts and ideas through the medium of printed lines is vast. Reading enters into nearly every phase of life and its contribution is incomparable. It is a pathway of learning, an instrumental way to an end. Primarily we learn to read, but later it helps in learning. Reading is important for the leisure time of life, no less than for the toil of life. It has a major contribution in personal and professional development and helps to make life richer and more meaningful. It is a form of experience which helps in enhancing our intellectual caliber and helps in personality development.

Rather, study habits are learning tendencies that enable students to work privately. Azikiwe (1998) describes study habit as "the adopted way and manner a student plans his private readings, after classroom learning so as to attain mastery of
the subject". According to her, "good study habits are good asset to learners because they (habits) assist students to attain mastery in areas of specialization and consequent excellent performance, while the opposite constitute constraints to learning and achievement leading to failure". These study habits may influence the library habits of the students in their use of various resources in the library for academic achievement. Olaojo and Akewukere (2004) in their study on study habits of postgraduates in University of Ibadan reported that library habits such as mode of reading ability to locate needed materials in the library affected their learning outcomes.

1.2: DISTANCE EDUCATION AND LEARNING

Distance learning is often described as the formalized learning received while the student is on a location outside the university campus. Both the teacher and student are expected to have minimal physical contact, but much reliance on electronic communication and independent studying. Distance learning as defined by Oladeji (2000) is an ‘educational programme designed for those who could not, may be for family, financial or some other reasons, attend existing educational institutions to acquire learning without necessarily becoming regular students of such institutions’.

He stressed that distance education is considered as a branch of adult education where the clientele may comprise of those who have no exposure of any kind to formal education, or those who dropped out of the formal school system and those who wish to supplement their formal education. Distance learning usually refers to open learning applied to situations in which there is a geographical expiration between the learner and the leaning institution. The focus is on the needs of the individual students and is more learner-centered. The learner chooses the place of study, time and pace of learning. Distance learning is particularly beneficial to the students as they could learn
from their chosen location which could be thousand miles away. Distance learning has become more popular in recent times because it is cost saving for universities to reduce the number of residential and full-time students. However, distance learning normally should demand much use of library resources, audio-visual media and information and communication technology. These are essential for communicating with a large group of people especially in distance locations. They also make for interactive sessions with groups and individual students. On the other hand, the learners also need to read all kinds of texts and information materials when they are not in school. This is to prepare them for the course content and examinations. Thus, the students need to use libraries and information centers for reading and for information search.

Distance learners have characteristics which Akintayo and Bunza (2000) listed as adults with professional responsibilities (jobs), social responsibilities (families), study part time, limited formal education or are a long time away from formal education, highly and intrinsically motivated and who are interested in practical results for career, occupation or life style. Sacchanand (2002) reported that distance students' characteristics are different from students in traditional universities. Their characteristics were listed as: adult learners, mature, employed, have family responsibilities, higher motivation and are willing to take responsibility for their own education. Others include: clear cut goals, self-directed, study on independent basis, learn in a variety of ways, take control over their learning and often experience a feeling of isolation and remoteness from other students.
The library is the nerve centre of any educational institution as it promotes the acquisition of reading, inquiry and independent thinking through the provision of resources to support teaching and learning activities (Mabawonku, 2004). It normally houses information materials in various formats such as electronic information sources like CD-ROM, the internet, etc. Library services are essential support services to distance education students. Most researchers in distance learning are in agreement that library support is a key element (Caspers, Fritts and Gover 2001). Distance learners' expectations of library services as revealed in the literature, demonstrate a great need (Niemi, Ehrhard and Neeley 1998). The library needs of distant learners are not unique; they have the same library and information needs as on campus students (Dugan 1997; Rodrigues 1996), but Rowland and Rubbert (2001) in their study on information needs of distant learners reported that the university libraries did not cater for the specific needs of these students. Apart from the manner in which they are accessed, requested and delivered, the same resources are required, the same questions are asked, and the same quality of service is expected (Rodrigues 1996); and they expect the same level of library service as that provided to their peers on campus (Riggs, 1997).

Distance learners access library and educational resources and services in various ways (Sacchanand, 2002). Access can be direct e.g. face to face, or mediated by printed material, e.g. manuals, brochure, or mediated by technology, using a variety of media such as telephone, radio, the Internet etc. Successful direct access is characterized by flexibility, reliability, availability, user-friendly, portability, efficiency and service ability (Sacchanand, 2002). Kavulya (2004) in his study of distance education in four universities in Kenya opined that some of the students have
little or no exposure to library use and this affects their access to library resources. Effective and appropriate services to distance learning communities may differ from, but must be equivalent to those services offered on a traditional campus (ACRL 1998).

1.3. NEED AND PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Unlike formal education, distance education attracts students from different age groups with varied level of background and experience. There are students registered for distance education courses who are employed in different sectors, some are engaged in social service; some are officers and politicians; some are housewives and unemployed. Thus, the student community in distance education institution forms heterogeneous group. Their status are different, the level of knowledge and experience is different, their approach to reading is relatively different.

As one could see from the literature review no specific in-depth study has been carried about the reading habits of students falling under the umbrella of distance education.

Precisely, Karnataka State Open University (KSOU) established in 1996 has more than 2 lakhs students studying graduate, postgraduate, diploma and certificate courses in different disciplines. These students are scattered throughout the country. The concentration of students’ strength in Karnataka is more. Most of these students visit to main campus placed at Manasagangothri, Mysore for a short period for their contact classes. For many, contact classes are provided at different centers. Thus they hardly have any chance to visit main campus. However, KSOU library is supposed to provide information to all students who have registered, irrespective of the location.
they have come from. To make sure access to each individual student, the library has to have information resources of different variety through different forms such as print as well as electronic media and this is information should be ensured to be accessible on line and as well as offline. It is under these circumstances that the need to study the reading habits of students of distance education is felt.

1.4: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The title of research study is conceived under the title “Reading Habits among Students of Distance Education: A Case study of KSOU.”

The problems are mainly to discover the pattern of reading habits of students pursuing their higher education through distance mode. It is to understand the background of students, their level of education, their approach towards reading and the kind of reading materials they normally in need. It also discovers the relationship between the educational level and the status of the students and their approach to reading. Further the study intends to know their expectations from the KSOU library to facilitate their study and promote their reading habit.

1.5: DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.5.1: Reading

The oxford dictionary defines Reading as a “way of interpreting something”. According to Dhupkar (1994), “reading is the act of interpreting printed and written words; it is a basic tool of education and one of the important skills in day today life”. We live in the world of print and electronic media of communication. Reading helps
in acquiring newer ideas, in providing the needed information, seek support for our ideas and also help in adding to personal pleasure and broaden our mental horizon. Reading reflects the society’s lifestyle, the ideals, beliefs, curiosities and seeking soul of the people. Reading culture leads us to a revolt of revolution which springs from a sensitivity to surroundings, resulting in transformation with reference to ideals, progress and civilization apprehended by imagination and sensibility nurtured by the best of books enshrined in the greatest literature.

1.5.2. Reading Habits

The meaning of the term ‘habit’ as found in dictionaries is disposition or tendency to practice something regularly, constantly shown to act in a certain way, acquired by frequent repetition of act.

Broadly, reading habits cover broadly individual’s style of regularizing study behavior and sensitization to curricular and extracurricular books, interest in newspapers, and magazines on the one hand and such personal habits like reading aloud or silently in group or seclusion etc.

Reading instructs, entertains and transports (stimulates) and further going to stay with us. Reading scores over viewing because it is personal, intimate and certainly more stimulating.

Based on Gray and Roger’s thought on reading, the concepts of reading and reading habits reveal that reading is an intellectual activity which contributes intensely in the development of balanced personality in solving personal problems and also in attaining mental maturity and evolving an independence of thoughts. Reading deals with man’s inner life, his soul, and become man’s teacher in his quest
for inner understanding and silence. In other words, cultivating reading habits transforms the individual from passive learning to intensive learning.

### 1.5.3. Distance Education

Distance education or distance learning, is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom.

Honeyman and Miller (1993) describe distance education as “a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both”.

### 1.6. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study purpose/reasons for pursuing the present course and sources of inspiration among distance learning students.
2. To identify reading habits of students of distance education of Karnataka State Open University (KSOU).
3. To study frequency of visiting and purpose of using KSOU library by distance education learners.
4. To understand the role of libraries in promoting reading habits among different learners.
5. To study the kind of books they read, their language preference, contents and role of media of distance learning students.
6. To study the problems and reasons encountered in reading and reasons there on.
7. To study promotion of reading habits among distance education learners.

8. To find out the influence of age groups, gender and occupational status of students on reading habits and related issues.

9. To suggest for improvement of KSOU library resources services to fulfill reading habits of KSOU students.

1.7. HYPOTHESES

Following hypotheses have been formulated for the present study.

H1: Distance education learners differ in their reading habits

H2: Distance education learners differ in their purposes of visiting KSOU library and frequency of use.

H3: Guiding distance education learners to information resources and services are the primary role of the libraries along with providing them reading materials.

H4: More distance education learners visit KSOU library to use the text books/reference books than that of journals and other research resources.

H5: Large number of distance education learners prefers to study in regional languages rather than to study in English language

H6: More distance education learners tend to use only printed books and SIM materials of KSOU than using e-resources

H7: Higher the age, lesser the dependence on use of library resources and services among distance education learners

H8: Female distance education learners use large variety of resources than their male counterparts.
1.8: SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

1. The study has focused its attention on reading habits of KSOU students who are pursuing their studies for graduate and post graduate degree courses.
2. The study is limited to KSOU students only. It does not cover students of any other distance education universities or open universities.
3. The study does not include students, teachers and scholars of formal universities.

1.9: CHAPTERIZATION

Chapter I introduce with the topic of research and establish the need and importance of the study. It states the research problem, objectives and hypotheses of the study, scope and limitations of the study; it also gives brief summary of chapters of the thesis.

Chapter II discusses a brief review of literature. It covers various issues relating to reading habits and promotion of reading.

Chapter III gives an overview of KSOU and presents a brief profile of the Karnataka State Open University Library. The profile provides vision and mission, brief history, facilities, services, budgetary details etc. of KSOU library.

Chapter IV describes the methodology adopted for the present study. It deals with the methods, procedure of administering the tools and tests to study the research problem. Further it presents the selection of the sample. Tools for the purpose of investigation, the questionnaires employed procedure, pilot study, main study, period of data collection etc.
Chapter V presents the primary data collected from the KSOU students. This chapter deals with the general reading habits of KSOU students and it presents analysis and interpretation of data in the light of the objectives formulated for the study. Necessary figures, tables and graphs are incorporated in presenting the data.

Chapter VI is the concluding chapter. It includes summary of findings of the study along with the verification of the hypotheses. It gives certain constructive suggestion for providing better facilities and services by the KSOU library to its students, as well as improving reading habits. Suggestions for further research have been offered.

Bibliographical references and appendix are appended at the end.