

Educational Use of Mobile Technologies Amongst Library & Information Science (LIS) Students – a Comparative Study Between the University of Hong Kong and the University of Tsukuba

by

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New developments in mobile technologies have demonstrated that they pose great potentials for educational use. Indeed, mobile technologies are becoming increasingly prominent in university students' lives. For such reasons, many universities are also attempting to use such technologies for teaching and learning purposes.

The major and unique benefits for using mobile technologies for teaching and learning could be summarized as follows:

1. Mobile technologies allow students to learn at “anywhere and at anytime”, without any constraints imposed by the physical classroom or library — thus providing students with highly individualized and personalized educational experiences.
2. Facilitate students to take part in a wide range of virtual and yet interactive learning opportunities, and thereby encouraging students to develop the social and collaborative skills that are necessary for success in the 21st century.

3. Mobile technologies are also a great challenge for libraries, as they provide libraries with various opportunities to extend their collections and services by enabling access to their end-users in their most convenient way, regardless of formats and types of device, physical location and time.
4. Mobile devices are relatively inexpensive and small, and can be carried literally at anywhere and at any time.

The potentials and social impacts of such mobile technologies for educational purposes simply cannot be ignored. Meanwhile, there have been debates regarding to what extent, and the actual percentage of students who are using such mobile devices for study and learning purposes.

The aim of this research study is to investigate the different types of mobile devices owned and used by the library and information science (LIS) students at 2 different universities in Asia, namely the University of Hong Kong and the University of Tsukuba.

Research Questions

Research questions set out for this study are as follows:

RQ1. Do LIS students use smartphone applications (apps) and/or other mobile devices for communications in their research and learning activities?

RQ2. Do LIS students use smartphone applications (apps) and/or other mobile devices for finding academic or other research information for study and learning purposes?

RQ3. What other purposes LIS students use smartphone applications (apps) and/or other mobile devices for education and library related activities?

RQ4. For education and library related activities, what types of apps do they normally use, and what are their associated usage frequencies and patterns, as compared with their general use of smartphones and/or mobile devices?

RQ5. For education and library related activities, what types of apps do they use most frequently; and in what contexts and for what purposes do they use such devices?

RQ6. How do LIS students perceive potentials for libraries regarding mobile technologies and what contents and functionalities students want to be offered via a mobile library or via a physical library's website?

RQ7. What are the differences in the answers to the RQ1-6 between students at the University of Hong Kong and at the University of Tsukuba?

Research Methodologies

Both undergraduate and graduate LIS students from the University of Hong Kong and the University of Tsukuba will be invited to take part in this study.

A Facebook page entitled LISexchange will be created. This Facebook will serve as a virtual discussion forum - for engaging the students of these 2 universities to take part in discussions regarding their use of mobile technologies for learning and study purposes over a period of several months, i.e., including their habits and frequencies for using the mobile devices for accessing research information provided by their affiliated university libraries.

Students' online discussions from these 2 universities will be compiled, and compared against each other.

Significance of Study

1. Limited research has been found in the area of mobile-device usage focusing on LIS students.
2. Research results would facilitate educators and administrators to better understand the mobile language and other associated mobile-technology usage patterns

amongst the students, which is unique and necessary for the reform of LIS education.

3. Result would also enable educators and librarians to develop more effective interventions for mobile learning – and thereby improving LIS education in future.
4. Enable educators and librarians to seek better support from the university administration for the educational use of mobile technologies.