Effects of Online Audio-Book Resources on Library Usage and Reading Preferences and Practices of Young Learners in an Elementary School Library Setting in Hong Kong

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Meeting:	**94. Literacy and Reading and Information Literacy**

Abstract

The purpose of this research study is to measure and assess the potentials and effects of online audio-book resources in fostering young children's motivation to read. The research study involved 2 groups of 5th- and 6th-grade elementary-school students in Hong Kong – measuring their reading motivation, and learning from an online audio-book resource, Naxos Spoken Word Library (NSWL) in the context of a school-library setting in Hong Kong. A total number of 292 participants (students from 2 different international elementary schools (Bradbury and Kingston International Elementary School) in Hong Kong were invited to take part in this study. Students' library usage, reading habits, and their attitudes and ratings on the chosen audio-book resource were recorded, measured and evaluated through the use of a set of self-completed questionnaires. The data sources included questionnaire surveys on students, and interviews with classroom teachers, school-library staff, and parents, etc.

The duration of this research study was 5 months, whilst data collection was conducted between October 2006 and March 2007. The major findings were that out of all 260 respondents, 52% indicated they had used NSWL. Amongst these 136 NSWL users: 33.3% said "Yes", they did enjoy using NSWL; 37.2% said they "Sometimes" enjoyed it; while only 29.5% said they did not enjoy using this online audio resource as they thought its contents not interesting. The chosen online audio resource seemed to have very little influence in enhancing the students' reading motivation in general. In fact, the school librarians witnessed a decrease (10.4 percentage points) in the number of students who visited the school library on a daily basis, and a small decline in the number of students using the school library for "fun". In other words, the availability of audio-books is not necessarily a motivator to read, or to read more amongst the student population under study. Other data collected from the questionnaires also indicated girls were more likely than boys to regularly and voluntarily visit and borrow books from the school library, to use the school library for fun, to enjoy reading poetry, and to use NSWL. In order to appeal to a wider audience and enhance motivation to read, the content of audio-books will need to be expanded to include more genres and more diverse content.

I.   INTRODUCTION

1.1.   Aims of Research

Recently, many educational researches have suggested that online audio-book resources are one of the growth areas that could be important in drawing new young patrons to the public and school libraries. In some cases those students who listened to an audio-book by an author whom they might not otherwise read, or concerning a subject about which their interest is slight, may also become interested in this author or subject, and make good use of the other printed resources as well (Anderson-Inman, 1997 ; Barron, 2001 ; Beers, 1998). With this study, I hoped to find out more information about the elementary students' use of the online audio-book resources, and its relations to their own school library.

1.2.   Research Questions and Purpose of Study

This research study was designed to examine the effectiveness of the chosen online audio-book resource in 2 school libraries in Hong Kong in engaging young learners in more frequent reading practices. The questions directing this research study include:

- *What was the nature and direction of changes in the number of students who would use the school library for pleasure-based reading or other literacy-related activities?*

- *Were there any changes in the amount of voluntary reading students undertook after being exposed to this chosen online audio resource 5 months later?*

- *What were students' views of online audio-books and on their evolving sense of reading?*

- *Where they any gendered differences in reading practices and reading attitudes in association with the online audio-book resource?*

II.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY & INSTRUMENTATION

2.1.   Study Population

The 2 international elementary schools selected for this research project were Bradbury and Kingston Elementary School, and are both located in Hong Kong (SAR)[1], China. Key details of the schools and their libraries are shown in (Table 2.1).

(Table 2.1) **Profiles of Schools Selected**								
Schools	**School Types**	**MOI**	**Total # of Students**	**Tuition Fees / month**	**Total #of 5th- & 6th- Grade Students**	**Size of Library Collection**	**# of Items / Students in Library**	**Hard-Copy Audio-books in Library?**
Bradbury School	Intel. school *(mixed)*	English	720	**HKD$5,000** *(USD $641)*	**240 (approx.)**	15,000 items	20.8	YES
Kingston School	Intel. school *(mixed)*	English	197	**HKD$9,000** *(US$1,154)*	**70 (approx.)**	8,429 items[2]	53.7	YES

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[1] **SAR** – Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

2.2. Characteristics of Study Population

This study focused especially on students from 11 to 12 years old (5th- and 6th-grade students), who are already fluent in English. The reason for choosing this specific age group was because they can often read adult-level magazines and newspapers. Furthermore, they are expected to be accustomed to using computers, in addition to the ability to fill out simple questionnaires by themselves, under the proper supervision and guidance.

2.3. Research Instruments

I worked closely with the 2 school librarians for several months to develop the following research instruments:

(a) *Self-Completed questionnaires for students* - the Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire for students consisted of mostly check-boxes, and were administered at 2 different times.[3] The pre-test and post-test data collected enabled me and the school librarians to compare students' transformed reading practices and library usage after being exposed to this online learning resource for a period of 5 months. (see Appendix 1.)

(b) *Naxos Spoken Word Library (NSWL) online database* - NSWL audio-books encompass subjects such as music appreciation/education, biographies, religion, sports, great epics and tales, history, etc. For NSWL's basic facts and content highlights, please refer to table below (Table 2.2).

(Table 2.2) NSWL - Basic Facts & Content Highlights[4] - *(as of September 2006)*	
Collection size:	Over 340 titles ; Over 1,000 hours of spoken word.
No. of authors, playwrights &poets represented:	Over 100
Numbers of new releases:	Approx. 30 new titles added automatically annually.
Natures of literature featured:	Many classical novels, plays and poetry, from medieval times to 20th century ; many unabridged titles, from Shakespeare to James Joyce, etc.
Range of literature included :	Adventure books ; biographies ; fables ; fairy tales ; folk tales ; historical fictions ; legends ; limericks ; mysteries ; myths ; novels ; nursery rhymes ; plays ; science fictions.
Content highlights of Children's & Junior Classic Fictions:	*Andresen – Fairy Tales ; One Thousand and One Nights ; Ballet Stories ; Peter Pan ; Secret Garden ; Robin Hood*

(c) *NSWL Monthly Usage Report* - electronic monthly usage report generated directly from the NSWL software, featuring mainly statistical data describing the overall monthly usage activities amongst the Bradbury and Kingston students for quantitative comparison, e.g., different login times, dates, usage frequencies, various audio-book titles being listened to by the students each month (see Tables 4.1 & 4.2).

2.4. Total Number of Completed Questionnaires Collected

The Pre- and Post-Questionnaires were filled out by the students during their library lesson, under the direct supervision of the 2 school librarians. The total number of eligible students to attend the library lessons was **310**. The total number of completed Pre-Questionnaire collected was **292**; and the total number of Post-Questionnaire collected was **260**. The total number of completed Post-Questionnaire collected was

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lower **-** this was mainly due to the small number of absentees in March 2007 (see Tables 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5).

(Table 2.3) Student Respondents & Number of Questionnaires Collected				
Schools	Pre-Questionnaire[5]		Post-Questionnaire[6]	
	%	Total # collected	%	Total # collected
Bradbury	77.1	**225**	83	216
Kingston	22.9	**67**	17	44
Total	100.0	292	100	**260**
(Table 2.4) Student Respondents & Gender Distribution				
Gender	Pre-Questionnaire		Post-Questionnaire	
	%	Total # collected	%	Total # collected
Girl	44.9	131	45.4	118
Boy	**55.1**	**161**	**54.6**	**142**
Total *(Boys + Girls)*	100.0	**292**	100.0	**260**
(Table 2.5) Radio between Boy & Girl Respondents				
Pre-Questionnaire	1 (girl) : 1.2 (boys)			
Post-Questionnaire	1(girl) : 1.2 (boys)			

III.   DATA ANALYSIS - PART A
OVERALL CHANGES IN LIBRARY USAGE AMONGST STUDENTS

3.1.   Overall Changes in Library Usage: Student Questionnaire Survey Results
5 months later, the questionnaire results indicated that the frequency of students using the school library daily had in fact decreased. Interviews with the school librarians revealed that the small increase in the number of students using the library weekly was thought to be caused mainly by the weekly scheduled library-skill lessons, which were made part of the regular school curricula, and mandatory for all 5th- and 6th- grade students to attend, and did not necessarily mean that the students were taking the initiative to use the school library for 'pleasure' weekly. For the same reason, the school library staff witnessed a major decline in the number of students using the library daily; and the number of students who claimed to have "Never" visited the school library had in fact dropped to zero (see Table 3.1).

(Table 3.1) (A) General Information			
	How often do you visit school library?	**Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)**	**Post-Questionnaire (n=260)**
		%	%
2.	Daily	**19.0**	8.6
	Weekly	67.1	**69.8**
	Monthly	4.2	**7.5**
	Once/term	0.7	**3.9**
	Annually	0.3	**0.4**
	Never	0.7	0.0
	Cannot remember	8.0	**9.8**

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[5] Administered and collected in October 2006.
[6] Administered and collected in March 2007.

School library as a place for 'work' versus 'fun' - Questionnaire item 13, ***Do you use the library for fun?*** was designed to enquire whether students would use the school library for informal purposes. The Post-Questionnaire survey results indicated that the percentage of students who used the library for "Fun" had decreased by 2.3 percentage points.[7] Interviews with the school librarians revealed that these small statistical changes might be related to the fact that an increasing amount of additional learning and extra-curricular activities were being organized at both school libraries, compared to 5 months ago. All these could have caused a decrease of free time and a disinclination amongst the students to use the school library for 'pleasure reading' or other 'fun' use. It was therefore concluded that NSWL failed to motivate more students to use the library more often for 'fun' or 'pleasure' reading.[8]

Changes in frequencies amongst students borrowing books in spare time - The questionnaire survey results indicated that there was a decrease in the number of students checking books out from the school library to read daily, and also a decrease in the number of students taking books out weekly (see Table 3.2).[9]

(Table 3.2) (B) Reading Habits/Practices			
	How often do you borrow books from school library to read in your spare time at home?	Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)	Post-Questionnaire (n=260)
		%	%
6.	Daily	**21.5**	10.9
	Weekly	**60.2**	**56.8**
	Monthly	7.7	**11.3**
	Once/term	0.7	**2.7**
	Annually	**0.4**	0.0
	Never	0.7	**3.5**
	Cannot remember	8.8	**14.8**

Bradbury Librarian: *"At Bradbury I should certainly hope that students are visiting the library at least once per week as every class has a scheduled weekly visit!* (After examining the results collected from the Pre-Questionnaire)*, it is pleasing to note that at least a small amount of students are reporting that they are taking books home to read, as by 5th-grade, they are no longer required to by their class teachers. However, it is also very sad to see that such statistics could not sustain as indicated on the Post-Questionnaire results."* **Kingston Librarian:** *"At Kingston, it is a compulsory that they need to take out books from the school library at least once a week. Only small amount of students would prefer not to take out books for a week or 2 because they don't have time to read, **too many other activities**, too many books to read at home or can't find what they want to read."*

Changes in students' ratings on overall school-library environment - The number of students who found the school library "a quiet place where I can concentrate and do

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[7] (50.9% pre-NSW and 48.6% post-NSWL)

[8] The results reflected that some students had ceased to view the school library as a place for leisure activities. Instead, they began to see the school library as another 'classroom' for supporting their curriculum needs and formal learning.

[9] Again, NSWL did not seem to play a major role in motivating more students to take new or additional initiatives to borrow books out from the school library to read more frequently. Interviews with the school librarians regarding their students' book-borrowing rates revealed that a majority of students have other formal commitments imposed by the curricula, leading to a decrease in the number of students taking books out for voluntary reading after school.

my work" had increased. Originally, 57.4% of students described the school library to be "a place where I can relax and read", however, 5 months later, only 49.6% of students said so. Additionally, the number of students who described the library as "noisy and frantic" had also decreased (see Table 3.3).[10]

(Table 3.3) (C) Library and Services Available			
	Do you use library to study/do your homework/coursework in?	**Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)**	**Post-Questionnaire (n=260)**
		%	%
8.	Always	2.5	**2.7**
	Most of the time	**15.4**	7.4
	Sometimes	**40.0**	34.8
	Not very often	28.1	**38.3**
	Never	14.0	**16.8**
	How would you describe the library?	**Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)**	**Post-Questionnaire (n=260)**
		%	%
9.	Very important for helping me with my school work	**14.3**	13.6
	A quiet place where I can concentrate and do my work	24.8	**31.9**
	A place where I can relax and read	57.4	**49.6**
	Noisy and frantic	**2.3**	1.7
	A place I want to get out of as soon as possible	1.2	**3.2**

Changes in library-information skills & relations to library-lesson curricula - The student questionnaire results indicated that the explicit and systemic teaching of library skills was the key mechanism for developing competence amongst students. Post-Questionnaire results, (5 months later) indicated an obvious growth in the number of students taking the initiatives to use OPAC to find books in the school library (see Table 3.4). In addition, there were also a larger number of students claiming to be able to use OPAC without help. For example, there was a 22.3 percentage-point increase in number of students claiming being able to use OPAC "Always" without help; 1 percentage-point increase in number of respondents saying "Most of the time" (see Table 3.4).

(Table 3.4) (D) Curriculum and Library			
	Do you use library computer (OPAC) catalogue to find books in library?	**Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)**	**Post-Questionnaire (n=260)**
		%	%
15.	Always	7.0	**10.8**
	Most of the time	**25.6**	22.8
	Sometimes	**29.3**	**32.0**
	Not very often	**24.2**	20.8
	Never	**13.9**	13.5

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[10] Such findings followed the same patterns which supported the notion that the school library was being seen as a place for 'work' instead of 'fun', suggesting that the school library is synonymous with thinking about school work.

(Table 3.4) – Continues			
16.	**Do you use library computer catalogue (OPAC) without help?**	**Pre-Questionnaire (n=292)**	**Post-Questionnaire (n=260)**
		%	%
	Always	18.4	**40.7**
	Most of the time	20.2	**21.2**
	Sometimes	**37.5**	15.7
	Not very often	**13.2**	8.9
	Never	10.7	**13.6**

Interviews with the school librarians revealed that such information-seeking skills are strongly emphasized at both schools. According to the school librarians' explanations: *"Instruction in library and information skills (such as using the OPAC [11]) is a valuable and essential part of the school's educational programmes even at elementary-school level. Essential library and information skills encompass more than just locating a book and access to information sources. The whole idea of a library lesson is to ensure that students are effective users of ideas and information, as today, students need to learn what to do with information and what to do with it, and not just how to find it."* These findings suggest that the library-skill lessons contributed to the students' development of independence and ease of information seeking. The above results endorsed that the library-skill lessons indeed helped acquire the skills to use the OPAC.[12]

Gendered comparison on overall school-library usage & reading practices - This section sets out to explore whether there were distinctive gendered differences in reading practices and preferences amongst the students. The following findings (Tables 3.5 to 3.8) were remarkably consistent with the results of the earlier (quantitative) research by Barrs (1993) and Millard (1997). More girls would visit the school library on a daily basis voluntarily; more girls used the school library for 'fun' (see Table 3.6); and more girls took books out of the school library to read voluntarily[13] (see Table 3.7). Results also indicated that a higher number of girls preferred reading fiction, while boys preferred non-fiction. Furthermore, the findings also suggested that more girls enjoyed reading poetry (see Table 3.8).

(Table 3.5)						
How often do you visit school library?	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	**Total (% points)**	
	Boys (n=161)	**Boys (n=142)**	**Girls (n=131)**	**Girls (n=118)**	**Boys (A+B/2)**	**Girls (D+E/2)**
	A	**B**	**D**	**E**	**G**	**H**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Daily	10.7	3.6	29.2	14.7	7.2	**22**
Weekly	**74.8**	71.2	57.7	**68.1**	**73**	63
Monthly	7.5	**7.9**	0.8	**6.9**	**7.7**	3.9
Once/term	1.3	**5.0**	0.0	**2.6**	**3.2**	1.3
Annually	0.0	**0.7**	0.0	0.0	**0.4**	0.0
Never	0.6	0.0	**0.8**	0.0	0.3	0.4
Cannot remember	5.0	**11.5**	**11.5**	7.8	8.3	**9.8**

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[11] OPAC – **O**nline **P**ublic **A**ccess **C**atalogue or library computer catalogue.

[12] Interviews with the librarians also revealed that in terms of locating information and reading materials, the students commonly identified the school library as their source of information and the use of the computer catalogue as the primary source. The library skills were introduced and practiced in the previous semester, which led to a form of independence amongst students. In other words, the majority of the students in this study showed signs of understanding how to go about finding resources.

[13] On both a daily and a weekly basis.

(Table 3.6)					
Do you user library for fun?	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	**Total (% points)**	
	Boys (n=161)	**Boys (n=142)**	**Girls (n=131)**	**Girls (n=118)**	**Boys (A+B/2)**	**Girls (D+E/2)**
	A	**B**	**D**	**E**	**G**	**H**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	**50.3**	46.0	51.5	**51.9**	48.2	**51.7**
No	49.7	**54.0**	**48.5**	48.1	**51.9**	48.3

(Table 3.7)					
How often do you borrow books from school library to read in spare time at home?	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	**Total (% points)**	
	Boys (n=161)	**Boys (n=142)**	**Girls (n=131)**	**Girls (n=118)**	**Boys (A+B/2)**	**Girls (D+E/2)**
	A	**B**	**D**	**E**	**G**	**H**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Daily	**22.9**	8.5	**19.7**	13.9	15.7	**16.8**
Weekly	**57.3**	55.6	**63.8**	58.3	56.5	**61.1**
Monthly	10.8	**12.7**	3.9	**9.6**	**11.8**	6.8
Once/term	0.0	**3.5**	1.6	**1.7**	**1.8**	1.7
Annually	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Never	1.3	**4.2**	0.0	**2.6**	**2.7**	1.3
Cannot remember	7.0	**15.5**	11.0	**13.9**	11.3	**12.5**

(Table 3.8)					
What kind of books do you enjoy reading at home?	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	Pre-Questionnaire	Post-Questionnaire	**Total (% points)**	
	Boys (n=161)	**Boys (n=142)**	**Girls (n=131)**	**Girls (n=118)**	**Boys (A+B/2)**	**Girls (D+E/2)**
	A	**B**	**D**	**E**	**G**	**H**
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fiction	51.6	**54.2**	53.5	**54.8**	52.9	**54.2**
Non-Fiction	**45.8**	40.5	**43.0**	36.7	**43.0**	40.0
Poetry	2.6	**5.3**	3.5	**8.6**	4.0	**6.1**

IV.   DATA ANALYSIS – PART B
NSWL - ANALYSIS OF USAGE RESULTS & USER EXPERIENCES

4.1.   NSWL's Usage Frequencies & Patterns

This Section sets out to report NSWL's actual usage and user behaviours amongst the same group of students. It should be noted that the NSWL software is unable to generate data that enabled me to determine whether individual login sessions belonged to the same or different users. However, NSWL's usage statistics clearly indicated that there was a group of students using NSWL for regular 'pleasure' reading after school. Based on the monthly usage statistics generated from the NSWL software, a majority of the streaming activities occurred after school, and the average duration of each streaming session was **45** minutes.

Analysis of usage results from NSWL Software - The statistics generated directly from the NSWL software provide a comprehensive view of NSWL's streaming activities at the 2 school sites during the research period[14] (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2).

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[14] **Research Period -** from October 2006 to April 2007.

NSWL's usage frequencies indicated that most of the streaming activities occurred at students' homes after school[15], rather than at the school library. The statistics also indicated that a high percentage of the streaming activities actually occurred on weekends, as well as on public and school holidays.[16] In other words, the results conveyed the notion that a group of students from both schools had taken the initiative to use NSWL for 'pleasure' after school, even without direct supervision from both school librarians and teachers.[17] For Bradbury School, during the research period, the average of the total audio-clips streamed was **289** clips per month. Out of these 289 clips, 57.8% occurred after 3:00 P.M. (that is, after all lessons ended). It should also be highlighted that out of these 289 clips streamed, 33.2% occurred on weekends, or school and public holidays (see Table 4.1), while for Kingston School, from December 2006 [18] to April 2007, the overall average of the total audio-clips streamed[19] was 183 clips per month (see Table 4.2). Out of these 183 clips streamed, 60.7% occurred after school, and 25.7% occurred on weekends, or school and other public holidays.

(Table 4.1) Bradbury School – NSWL Monthly Usage (Number of Potential Users – **240** approx[20].)						
	A	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
	# audio-clips streamed:	Total logins:	Ave. login time / session:	# audio-clips streamed after 3:00 P.M.	# audio-clips streamed on weekends, public/school holidays	# audio-book streamed:
2006						
Oct.	21[21]	7 hr. 34 min.	23 min.	N.A.	0	11
Nov.	154[22]	30 hr. 54 min.	35 min.	29	13	54
Dec.	**486**	**42 hr. 35 min.**	44 min.	**377**	242	15
2007						
Jan.	299	24 hr. 6 min.	42 min.	215	11	28
Feb.	247	48 hr. 58 min.	45 min.	157	112	20
Mar.	391	47 hr. 40 min.	37 min.	194	125	**48**
Apr.	159	20 hr. 8 min.	40 min.	27	70	22
Overall Ave.[23]	**289**	**35 hr. 7. min.**	**41 min.**	**167**	**96**	**31**
Overall % of clips streamed after 3:00 P.M.	• **57.8%** *(out of 289 clips)*					
Overall % of clips streamed on holidays	• **33.2%** *(out of 289 clips streamed)*					

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[15] At both Bradbury and Kingston International School, all lessons finish at 3:00 P.M.

[16] School and public holidays included Christmas, New Year and Chinese New Year, etc

[17] In order to measure 'true' motivation for voluntary reading, the teachers and the school librarians deliberately avoided making the use of NSWL as part of school assignments during the research period.

[18] NSWL was launched at Kingston School 1 month later than Bradbury School.

[19] Excluding both February and March 2007, as the NSWL service was interrupted by Kingston Library's network malfunction.

[20] **Number of Potential Users** - at Bradbury, all 1st- to 4th-grade students also knew about NSWL, and were free to use it. But based on Bradbury Librarian's knowledge, the vast majority of NSWL users were 5th- and 6th-grade students (approximately 240 students), as promotional efforts were aimed mainly at 5th- and 6th-grade students only.

[21] **Trial Use for Teachers** - October 2006 – NSWL trial use period for teachers and the school librarian only.

[22] **Launching Date** - NSWL was launched to the students at Bradbury in November 2006.

[23] NOT including the trial use period.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
(Table 4.2) Kingston School – NSWL Monthly Usage (# Potential Users – **70** approx.[24])						
	# audio-clips streamed:	Total logins:	Ave. login time / session:	# audio-clips streamed after 3:00 P.M.	# audio-clips streamed on weekends, public/school holidays	# audio-books streamed:
2006						
Oct.	**1**	**3 min.**	**3 min.**	**0**	**1**	**1**
Nov.	**0**[25]	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Dec.	**431**[26]	**67 hr. 7 min.**	**47 min.**	**240**	**113**	**51**
2007						
Jan.	**58**	**26 hr. 5 min.**	**41 min.**	**43**	**18**	**10**
Feb.[27]	**21**	**3 hr. 40 min.**	**28 min.**	**21**	**5**	**4**
Mar.	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Apr.	**60**	**18 hr. 9 min.**	**57 min.**	**51**	**11**	**11**
Overall Ave.[28]	**183**	**37 hr.**	**48 min.**	**111**	**47**	**24**
Overall % of clips streamed after 3:00 P.M.	• **60.7%** *(out of 183 clips)*					
Overall % of clips streamed on holidays	• **25.7%** *(out of 183 clips)*					

4.2. NSWL's Content Coverage & Relevance of Classics to Children

There were other important issues arising from this study is the relationship between the reading-ability level and the appropriateness of the literature inside NSWL. For example, many of the NSWL titles were too advanced for elementary-level students. A large portion of the literature inside NSWL was out-of-copyright classics, lacking pictures, and containing too many "hard" or "unfamiliar" words. Out of all **429** titles of audio-books from NSWL[29], only about **120** of them were listed under the children-literature categories (see Table 4.3). In other words, only **28%** of the entire NSWL collection catered especially for the elementary-school level.

(Table 4.3) NSWL's Content Statistics (Sept. 2006)	
Categories of NSWL Literature	**No. of Titles**
• Total number of NSWL titles:	***429***
• *Children's Classics*:	15
• *Junior Classic Fiction*:	44
• *Junior History*:	7
• *Junior Non-Fiction*:	8
• *Music Education*:	46
• **Titles suitable for 5th-/6th-grade students:**	***120***
• Remaining titles under the following sections[30]:	309

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[24] **Number of Potential Users** - at Kingston, all 1st- to 4th-grade students also knew about NSWL, and were free to use it. But based on Bradbury Librarian's knowledge, the vast majority of NSWL users were 5th- and 6th-grade students (approximately 70 students), as promotional efforts were aimed at mainly 5th-grade and 6th-grade students.

[25] **Trial Use for Teachers** - October and November 2006 – NSWL trial use period for teachers and the school librarian only.

[26] **Launching Date** - NSWL was launched to the students at Kingston in December 2006, which is 1 month later the Bradbury, due to maternity leave taken by the Kingston Librarian from October to November 2006.

[27] **Reason for Low Usage Statistics:** Kingston's usage statistics in February 2007 were disregarded and not included in the comparison. As Kingston School's system broke down for over 2 weeks, students could not access NSWL via the school library or from home.

[28] NOT including trial use period.

[29] As of September 2006,

[30] Remaining session belong to the following categories: *Classic Fiction*, *Great Epics and Tales*, *Arts*, *Biographies*, *History*, *Literature*, *Music Biographies*, *Philosophy*, *Religion*, *Sports*, *Shakespeare*, *Poetry*, *Anthologies*, etc

Students may become more interested in reading when they are able to see the connections between books and their own lives (Au, 2000). Thus, children may subscribe to the view that reading classics is more of a 'duty' than a 'pleasure' (James, 1993). According to Meek (1991), it should be noted that the nature of our society is likely to have an effect on the character and definition of the classics. It should also be remembered that classics play different roles in different cultures, and the changing demography of children is making us realize that *"our multicultural society must find itself reflected in books for children"*. Such a reflection would be difficult to detect in texts written by "dead, white, European males" but might be present in modern classics (Maynard, 1999). Maynard, McKnight and Keady also pointed out that even if we accept the view that the classics have literary value or significance within our society, this does not necessarily mean that children themselves will automatically find them interesting (Maynard, 1999, pp. 189). Liz Waterland discusses the school of thought that claims that *classics*, such as A.A. Milne's *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) have no relevance for *"'today's' children, that his books are middle-class and sweet, that they are full of inaccessible language and morality and have no place in a modern city child's experience"* (Maynard, 1999, pp. 189). Furthermore, the lack of knowledge of the classics might be caused by the traditional image of such works - that they are rather long and difficult to read - so that children are discouraged from reading them. Additionally, the image of classics as long and complex is not likely to appeal to children who are accustomed to media other than print, such as television, cinema, video and computer games, as everyday tools (Maynard, 1999, pp. 189).

4.3. NSWL Usage and Ratings: Analysis of Results from Post-Questionnaire

The overall results from the Post-Questionnaire, Section E were that out of all **260** respondents, **136** of them indicated they had used NSWL; 43% users preferred using NSWL at home; and a majority of users had positive user experiences. For example, results indicated that a majority of users (37.2% said "Sometimes"; 33.3% said "Yes") 'enjoyed' using NSWL, and a majority of users thought NSWL's background music and sound effects had helped them understand the text. 37% of users said NSWL was "easy and interesting" to use. Finally, given NSWL's versatility and its convenient online format, over half of the respondents (50.8%) preferred stories to be told by a live person than NSWL, due to various social and sentimental reasons. A small number of users also indicated that NSWL was "boring". I now share details of the student Post-Questionnaire survey results.

NSWL overall user population - For this study, it was important to understand the overall user population. The results indicated that out of all **260** Post-Questionnaire respondents, **136** (52%) of them said they had used NSWL.

(Table 4.4) 17. Do you use NSWL in school library? (n=136)	
▪ Sometimes	44 users
▪ Yes	17 users
▪ Total	61 school users

(Table 4.5) 18. Do you use NSWL at Home? (n=136)	
▪ Sometimes	49 users
▪ Yes	26 users

▪ Total	75 home users

Amongst these **136** NSWL users, **61**[31] of them were school-library users, as opposed to **75**[32] home users[33] (see Tables 4.4 and 4.5). The results in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 indicated that a high percentage of the streaming activities occurred in the evening after both schools were closed. Such evidence further supported the notion that NSWL has the advantage over paper-books is that it offers users instant and convenient access to reading materials, even allowing the same title to be shared by different users at different locations concurrently.

Location of accessing NSWL: home versus school library - Post-Questionnaire item 28, ***Do you prefer to listen to NSWL at school or at home?*** (see Table 4.6) sought to find out whether NSWL had the potential to promote more voluntary reading at home, especially when the library staff were witnessing a decline in the number of students borrowing books from the library for 'pleasure reading', for the reason that an increasing number of students saw the library as a place for 'work' instead of 'fun'.

(Table 4.6) 28. Do you prefer to listen to NSWL at the school library or at home? (n=136)	
	%
• School library	34.5
• **Home**	**43.4**
• Both places	22.1
• Total	100.0

Librarians and teachers frequently expect independent reading to occur at home (Walmsley, 1991), and increasing students' access to books can significantly influence students' reading motivation (Anderson, 1984). The results indicated that a majority of students preferred using NSWL at home; while only 22% said at both places (see Table 4.6). As mentioned in Section III, the notion that the school library is seen as a place for formal learning, rather than personal pursuits, was likely to be caused by the increasing amount formal instructions imposed by the curricula. This might be the core reason that a majority of users preferred using NSWL at home instead.

Self-selection versus selections from adults - The results indicated most of the students preferred to choose their own books from NSWL, as opposed to 17.7% said "No" (see Table 4.8). Only 3.8% of users indicated that they preferred parents and teachers to choose books for them from NSWL (see Table 4.7). Such findings further supported the notion that for students to become independent and engaged readers who choose to read, then they need to read self-selected books (Fielding, 1994), and choice increases the students' interest in books and motivates them to read (McCarthy, 1999 ; Tunnell, 1989 ; Worthy, 1999 ; Worthy, 2002). Self-selection included selection of topics that match students' reading interests.

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[31] A total number of 61 student respondents who said they would used NSWL, 44 NSWL users said "**Sometimes**" used NSWL at School Library; while remaining 17 of them said '**Yes**" to using NSWL at school.

[32] A total number of 75 student respondents who said they would used NSWL, 49 NSWL users said "**Sometimes**" used NSWL at home; while remaining 26 of them said '**Yes**' to using it at home.

[33] In other words, out of all **136** NSWL users, *45% were school-library users; remaining 55% were home users*.

(Table 4.7) 24. Do you rely on your parents or teachers to choose what books to listen to from NSWL? (n=136)	
	%
▪ **No**	**64.6**
▪ Sometimes	31.5
▪ Yes	3.8
▪ Total	100
(Table 4.8) 25. Do you prefer to choose your own books from NSWL? (n=136)	
	%
▪ No	17.7
▪ Sometimes	16.9
▪ **Yes**	**65.4**
▪ Total	100

Live storytelling - The results indicated that the majority of NSWL users did not have a parent read to them. However, by 5th- and 6th-grade, most students have already outgrown the idea of having parents read to them for either learning or parent-child relationship reasons. Despite of that, the school librarians were still pleased to learn that a small number of parents still took the efforts to read to their children at home. According to the school librarians, given NSWL is conveniently available 24 hours per day, such online resources could be used creatively by both teachers and parents to complement or substitute storytelling by adults.

(Table 4.9) 29. Do your parents still read books to you at home? (n=136)	
	%
• **No**	**63.3**
• Sometimes	27.5
• Yes	9.2
• Total	100.0

Average number of audio-books read - Although the figures did not take account of the length of time listened to each NSWL title, the school librarians were pleased to learn that NSWL was attractive enough to 'lure' many users to repeat their listening experience. The finding that 8.3% of users had listened to more than 10 titles exceeded the librarians' initial expectations (see Table 4.10).

(Table 4.10) 31. Total # of NSWL titles listened within last 30 Days (n=136)	
# of titles	%
• **1-3**	**72.2%**
• 4-6	13.9%
• 7-10	5.6%
• > 10	8.3%
• Total	100.0%

Students' experiences with NSWL - Post-Questionnaire item 19-A, ***Do you enjoy listening to NSWL in your free time?*** and item 20, ***Do you think NSWL is easy to use?*** (see Tables 4.11 and 4.12) sought to measure students' attitudes towards using

NSWL, with the aim to determine whether students had an 'enjoyable' user experience. The results were that out of all 136 NSWL users, only 33.3% said "Yes", they did 'enjoy' using NSWL, while 37.2% said "Sometimes" enjoyed using it. On the other hand, 29.5% said "No" (see Table 4.11). Meanwhile, 37.2% said they found NSWL, "Easy and interesting"; 17.8% said it was "Easy but boring"; while only 0.8% of users said it was "Too difficult" (see Table 4.12).

(Table 4.11) 19 - Part A. Do you enjoy listening to NSWL in your free time? (n=136)	
	%
• No	29.5
• **Sometimes**	**37.2**
• Yes	33.3
• Total	100.0
(Table 4.12) 20. Do you think NSWL is easy to use? *(NSWL User-Friendliness)* (n=136)	
	%
• About the right level	25.6
• Don't know	18.6
• **Easy and interesting**	**37.2**
• Easy but boring	17.8
• Too difficult	0.8
• Total	100.0

Reasons students 'enjoyed' using NSWL - Post-Questionnaire 19-B sought to ask respondents to explain whether or not they 'enjoyed' using NSWL. 31 respondents gave positive feedbacks about their user experiences. According to some of the comments recorded on the Post-Questionnaire, students 'enjoyed' using NSWL because: *"Sometimes I can learn more words." ; "It reads for you and sometimes when you don't know the words they read it for you." ; "You can listen and read at the same time."* Or *"I don't have to buy the book."* Students' comments revealed that using NSWL helped support their vocabulary development and enhanced acquisition of the English language. Such evidence was echoed by Samuels, who suggested that talking-books provide unique opportunities to develop comprehension and fluency that are similar to those benefits reported for repeated readings of traditional text (Samuels, 1997). Students' feedback further supported teachers' comments regarding NSWL's capability in providing model reading, and its potential to actively engage the reader in the text so that reading is stimulated (Byrom, 1998). Furthermore, students' comment "because I don't have to buy the book" supported the notion that NSWL has the potential to improve opportunity and access to reading materials that is also a factor central to students' reading motivation (Anderson 1984 ; Gambrell, 1996 ; Palmer, 1994).

Relevance of classics to children & their experiences of classics - Meanwhile, Post-Questionnaire item 19-B recorded comments from another 35 students regarding their not-so-positive user experiences. Some said they would not use NSWL because they were too "busy". Based on the comments from all 35 respondents, 10 of them said "it was boring". According to the school librarians, many NSWL titles were simply too advanced for the elementary-level students. In addition, there is a great lack of contemporary materials. As mentioned earlier, only 28% of the entire NSWL

collection catered especially for the elementary-school level (see Table 4.3). [34] Further analysis of NSWL's content coverage enabled me to realize that integrating the use of NSWL into the library curricula did not only mean introducing a new format of reading materials to the students, but also included exposing these young students to a new set of European or Anglo-American cultural norms, values, meanings, and symbols upon which a majority of the NSWL literature is based. Inside the audio-book stories from NSWL, the ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests, and agree or disagree with someone in the European societies, as well as the varying behaviours and intonation patterns that are only appropriate in one's own speech community, contrast with the students' own Hong Kong experience. All of these new phenomena could be conceived very differently in the context of these young learners' own existing and limited cultural experience. Students will become more interested in reading when they are able to see the connections between books and their own lives (Au, 2000). As pointed out previously, even if we accept the view that the classics have high literary values or significance within society, this does not necessarily mean that children themselves will automatically find them interesting (Maynard, 1999, pp. 189). Thus, children might view reading classics as more of a 'duty' than a 'pleasure'.

NSWL versus paper-books - The results were that 35.9% users said "Yes" to NSWL being "Interesting and easy to follow"; 47.9% said "Sometimes"; while only the remaining 16.2% said NSWL was "NOT interesting and NOT easy to follow". In other words, the evidence confirmed that NSWL was more interesting and easier to follow compared to traditional paper-books for a majority of users (see Table 4.13).

(Table 4.13) 22 – Part A. Do you find text under NSWL more interesting and easier to follow than other printed books? (n=136)	
	%
• No, NSWL is NOT interesting & NOT easy to follow	16.2
• **Sometimes**	**47.9**
• Yes, it is interesting & easy to follow	35.9
• Total	100.0

Reasons why students preferred one over the other - While item 22-A, asked students to compare NSWL with paper-books, item 22-B set out to find out why users preferred one over the other (see Tables 4.14 and 4.15). 20 users indicated that they preferred and 'enjoyed' using NSWL, but their reasons for this 'enjoyment' varied widely from student to student. Although students' explanations did not always promote literacy activities that supporting reading, several students' comments revealed that they liked using NSWL because "you don't need to read it", "it is fun to use" or "it is fun to read to yourself as if somebody reading to you". Out of these 20 keen NSWL users, 11 of them felt that using NSWL supported acquiring English, and reduced many difficulties and pressure associated with reading, e.g., "it helps you

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[34] Interviews with the librarians revealed that even many of those classed as "children's classics" were really meant for teenagers rather than primary-aged children. Many of the audio-book titles, including style, vocabulary and structure are not related to the readers' age and level of experience and the stories of such literary classics literature often convey genteel and noble values that do not apply to modern society. For example, over the last century, concepts such as morality, virtue, service, honour and duty have fallen out of favour, while really substantial alternatives are often wanting. As a result, it may be difficult for the children to make connections between their current interests and the story, as the students could not relate themselves to the story which happened in times and places that they cannot experience. For examples, one of the teaching staff at Kingston School indicated on the questionnaire: *"Some of my students who have tried to use NSWL told me that they don't like it because it is boring and they can't find the topics that they really interested in. Many of the audio-books are either too advanced or too old."*

with the words you don't know how to pronounce" or "because when I hear someone reading, it is quite easy to follow" (see Table 4.14).[35]

(Table 4.14) 22 – Part B. reasons why students like and dislike NSWL	
Reasons why NSWL better than paper-books	
• **When I hear someone reading, it is quite easy to follow ; You are listening to it at the same time ; You don't need to read it ; It reads the words to you ; Helps you with words you don't know how to pronounce ; Sometimes the online text tells what to do so it's easier.**	**11**[36]
• It is fun to read to yourself as if somebody reading to you.	3
• Others	6
• **Total**	**20**

The results indicated that not all of the students preferred using NSWL. 20 users contrasted NSWL to reading a paper-book, and expressed a preference for the latter. Several respondents described their NSWL-user experiences to be "boring", "not convenient", "reading too fast", to simply "don't like it" (see Table 4.15). Some felt that not being able to control the reading speed was a problem, e.g., "because I can read faster than they speak" or "because sometimes they read too fast". Others found reading on a computer screen was uncomfortable.

(Table 4.15) Reasons why students think paper-books better than NSWL (NSWL Disadvantages)	
• **It is a bit /so / sometimes boring ; Not fun / not interesting ; Nothing is special about it.**	**8**
• It's hard and easy.	1
• Not (very) convenient.	2
• Poor quality.	1
• I can't use it at home because I have a Mac without WMP.	1
• I don't even like to reading the NSWL.	1
• My eyes focus on the words and skip ahead sometimes ; I read faster than they speak ; Sometimes they read too fast.	3
• The font is not too small so I don't have to squint my eyes ; Online text is too bright to read ; If I read too much on the computer I get headaches.	3
• **Total**	**20**

NSWL's background music & sound effects - Post-Questionnaire item 26, ***Do background music and sound effects in NSWL help you better understand and enjoy the stories or poems?*** (Table 4.16) sought to verify whether these added features (background music and sound effects) had the ability to help them better understand and 'enjoy' the texts being read. According to Kozloff, audio-books offer 'dramatized' productions specifically replicate radio aesthetics. Similar to radio drama, audio-books provide examples of aural dramatizations, of the use of sound effects, multiple performers and music, e.g., horses galloping, and dramatic musical scoring (Kozloff, 1995). The results were satisfying as a majority of respondents said that NSWL's background music and sound effects had "Sometimes" helped them under the text (see Table 4.16). In other words, the results indicated that NSWL's added features could actually help illustrate a storyline, as well as contribute to varying mood settings, thereby making it a 'whole' and yet 'enjoyable' reading experience.

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[35] Reading while listening to audio-books allowed students to use both modalities of reading and listening to support their development of word knowledge. It also allowed students to hear the correct pronunciation of words and supported their acquisition of the English language (O'DAY, 2002).

[36] Total number of student respondents making the statement.

(Table 4.16) 26. Do background music and sound effects in NSWL help you better understand & enjoy the stories or poems? (n=136)	
	%
• No	23.4
• **Sometimes**	**50.0**
• Yes	26.6
• Total	100

NSWL versus storytelling by live person - Post-Questionnaire item 30-Part A, ***Do you preferred stories be told by a live person than NSWL?*** (see Table 4.17) sought to ask the students to compare their experiences as a reader, aiming to determine whether they preferred one over the other. NSWL titles are read by professional actors, but students still preferred stories be told by a live person (see Table 4.17).

(Table 4.17) 30 – Part A. Live person versus NSWL – Do you preferred stories be told by a live person than NSWL? (n=136)	
	%
• No	25.0
• Sometimes	24.2
• **Yes**	**50.8**
• Total	100.0

According to the students' explanations (see Table 4.18), 9 users preferred stories be told by a live person because they felt that a live storyteller can give more "expressions", and make the story more "exciting" and more "fun".

(Table 4.18) 30 – Part B. Reasons why students preferred stories be told by live person than NSWL? • 38 respondents provided reasons why they preferred to stories told by a liver person, and they are as follows	
• **I will have more imagination ; More interesting / exciting / fun ; Better quality ; Makes me feel excited when a live person tells the story ; I will understand more.**	**9**
• You feel more social ; You can ask questions ; They tell you what the words means ; It makes it real life if a live person reads to me ; I don't want to really stare at the computer, I normally prefer someone reading to me ; You can tell them to repeat a sentence without dragging the arrow back.	8
• More interesting, can see facial expressions ; A live person has (more) expressions / more feelings than NSWL ; NSWL has not much expression ; I like listening to new stories than an old story.	7
• It's better and clearer ; Easier to understand ; Voice is different sometimes you understand better.	5
• Others	9

8 users expressed that they preferred live stories because they would "feel more social" and "[have the opportunity] to ask questions", as well as having the storyteller "telling you what the words mean". 7 other respondents indicated that listening to a story told by a live person enabled them to both see and feel more "expressions".[37] Interviews with the school librarians had led to the conclusion that children at this age would still associate storytelling with their own experiences, such as bonding between

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[37] Initially, the school librarians and I anticipated that the majority of students would prefer NSWL because it was assumed that professional actors would be more skillful in engaging the students: they are professionally trained with the skills to deliver a variety of presentation modes, e.g., better or more proficient in the use of inflection, tone, voice variations, or even dialects for different characters for his or her interpretations, as well as more effective pacing, pauses, and even silence engage of students' senses. In addition, NSWL offered other added features, e.g., the background music and sound effects. Students' responses did not explain why live-person stories could be of better quality, and had more expressions than the ones read by professional actors under NSWL.

parent and child; socializing with the peers and other comparable experiences provided by a live professional storytellers or adult, etc.

Gendered Comparison: Analysis of Results from Post-Questionnaire Survey - Not surprisingly, the results from the Post-Questionnaire survey indicated that out of all 136 NSWL users, 66 (48.5%) were boys and 70 (51.5%) users were girls (see Table 4.19). In other words, the girl-user population was slightly (3%) higher than boys.

(Table 4.19) NSWL Users - Gender Distributions *Total NSWL users: 136 (boys + girls)*		
1. Do you listen to NSWL in school library?	**Post-Questionnaire**	
	Boys %	**Girls %**
Yes	32.1	24.2
Sometimes	67.9	75.8
2. Do you listen to NSWL at home?	**Post-Questionnaire**	
	Boys %	**Girls %**
Yes	34.2	35.1
Sometimes	65.8	64.9
Total # of boy users	28 + 38 = **66 boys**	
Total # of girl users		33 + 37 = **70 girls**
Ratio (Boys vs. Girls)	48.5	**51.5**

Popular NSWL titles & relations to gendered preferences - Information on students' reading interests could be used for targeting towards students' personal interests that could motivate them to keep reading. Post-Questionnaire item 33, ***Which is your favourite audio-book inside NSWL?*** (Table 4.20) sought to identify the most popular NSWL audio-book titles, as well as to identify the gendered differences when students choosing their NSWL titles. A total 23 titles were chosen as their favourite NSWL titles by 68 students. As shown in Table 4.20, the figures indicated the variety of reading tastes and patterns amongst the NSWL users.[38] It was noticeable that not only reading tastes were eclectic, but boys and girls of the same age were reading books with very marked differences in the level of sophistication (in terms of language, plot and subject matter, etc.) (Table 4.20). Considering a large proportion of the NSWL titles are out-of-copy-right classical fictions, often requiring a higher level of reading proficiency on the part of the reader. Many fictional works, despite of their lack of overt informational content, may indeed require a higher level of verbal ability from the reader than does the straightforward presentation of facts typical of juvenile non-fiction (Childress, 1985, pp. 72). For this reason, girls as a group found it easier to adapt NSWL to their regular reading diet, which eventually led to a slightly higher NSWL usage amongst girls. While, 10 students[39] said "it was boring". In addition, many of these classic titles contain too many unfamiliar words, comprehension of text (and with it enjoyment) inevitably suffers, and true reading

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[38] Such findings would come as no surprise to the school librarians and classroom teachers. According to the school librarians, more boys chose comedy, and other non-fiction books, or sports. On the contrary, romance, ballet stories, fairy tales, and other stories about family and human relationships with female protagonists were chosen by girls only. On the other hand, adventure, detective and crime stories were more evenly selected. All these verified the notion that boys chose certain books that featured men or boys as the main character, and refused to cross the gendered boundaries.

[39] Out of these 10 students, 8 of them were boys, while 2 were girls.

does not take place. In addition, some of the original texts contain passages that are specifically intended for adults, such as political references, and sometimes words are used that are either obscure, outdated or difficult to read. For examples, one of the teaching staff indicated that: *"Some of my students who have tried to use NSWL told me that they don't like it because it is boring and they can't find the topics that they really interested in."*

(Table 4.20) 33. Which is your favourite audio-book inside NSWL?			
Favourite NSWL audio-book titles chosen by students	**Boys**[40]	**Girls**[41]	**Total**
1,000 Years of Laughter	2	1	3
Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There	0	2	2
Ballet Stories	0	2	2
Dog and the shadow	2	1	3
The Emperor's New Clothes	1	1	2
Great Explorers	1	1	2
Heidi	0	2	2
History of World Cup	2	0	2
Jason and Argonauts	2	1	3
Little Women	0	4	4
The Little Red Riding Hood	0	2	2
Martin Luther King	1	0	1
Peter and the Wolf	2	2	4
Peter Pan	2	2	4
Romeo and Juliet	0	1	1
The Secret Garden[42]	*6*	*6*	*12*
Sherlock Holmes	2	2	4
Sleeping Beauty	0	3	3
The Swan Lake	0	4	4
Thumbelina and Other Fairy Tales	0	3	3
Wind in the Willows	1	2	3
TOTAL:	**25**	**43**	**68**

[40] **Boys' votes:** NSWL titles voted by total number of boys.

[41] **Girls' votes:** NSWL titles voted by total number of girls.

[42] ***The Secret Garden*** was found to be equally popular amongst both boys and girls. Its popularity revealed that the story is very moving and the themes are very mature. Another reason behind its popularity amongst both sexes is that the two main characters are a young girl and a young boy. It could be that the plot involving the sickly young boy slowly gaining strength is attractive to boy, despite the book as a whole appearing more of a 'girl story'. According to the Naxos representative and the school librarians, *"the relationship between the main characters is the central element of the novel. **The Secret Garden** is one of the few children's books that is about changing yourself, rather than being guided by adults. Mary Lennox is transported from India at the death of her parents to Yorkshire and the home of an emotionally-remote uncle. Left to her own devices, she has to create her own world, thus validating children's own desires for exploration and discovery. The path to her future, however, lies not in the musty past that lies in India nor in her uncle's unhappiness, but in the discovery of nature through Dickon, the exact opposite to her highly-trained Victorian upper-class mentality. Through Dickon she meets the local plants and animals and then uses them to cure her cousin Colin, who is sickly and lives in the past when his mother was alive and his father not so removed. By the end of the book, Mary is a real person, rather than just an ugly child shunted to the side and lied to. Colin achieves his father's dream of health and the secret garden of the title is brought forward to its full potential (like the children). In many ways, it's a classic Victorian tale - but in so many other ways, it is a unique story - although the reader is first presented with the ugly child Mary, the reader soon adopts her as his/her heroine because she's not beaten down by circumstances but uses her own power to create a new future. In the other books by Burnett, such as Sarah Crew (also known as The Little Princess), the adults are much more vindictive and nasty - Sarah escapes her servant-like situation, but she escapes into her idyllic past, when her father comes home from the wars. For Mary, the past is a dead place and the adults, by and large, leave her alone."*

V. OVERALL RESEARCH FINDINGS & ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall student questionnaire findings and analysis of the school library interviews provided multi-dimensional perspectives of the overall changes found in the nature and usage of the school library. The use of NSWL as a complementary reading programme was not found to be associated with any significant difference in the students' reading motivation during the course of this study. The evidence, in fact, suggested that the amount of voluntary reading carried out by students had actually decreased, although this was believed to be attributable to other formal commitments imposed upon the students by the curricula which meant they had less time and felt disinclined to engage in more 'pleasurable' reading pursuits. Because of the changes in the school-library climate, students began to see the school library as supporting their formal information and curricular needs, rather than supporting their leisure activities or personal pursuits. It might be that independent reading was a casualty of the gradually intensified schooling. Unfortunately, improved library skills did not guarantee an enhancement of reading motivation amongst the students. In other words, library skills and reading motivation did not necessarily go hand-in-hand, even though these skills are a prerequisite for effective retrieval of desired reading materials in the library. Results revealed that NSWL could reduce the burden of reading by helping students decode the text, as well as enabling students to make meaning effectively through the interaction of different communicative modes. As a result, NSWL's added features could be particularly effective for enhancing the motivation of reluctant readers, as its added features enable the audio readers to be actively engaged in constructing schema from the story so that they have a better chance of reading for meaning (Anderson, 1977 ; Ausubel, 1967). Reading while listening draws on the benefits of using both modalities to enhance text comprehension (Stanovich, 1986). Additionally, reading while listening to audio-books provides opportunities for students to read independently with minimal teacher supervision, and the benefits of reading independently are well documented in the research literature (Allington, 2001 ; Anderson, 1984 ; Taylor, 1990). Using NSWL might lead to positive feelings might directly influence students' reading development, and findings from this study suggested that a majority of students found reading while listening to NSWL 'enjoyable'[43], which could in turn increase their motivation to read.

Several factors were identified for NSWL's failure in motivating more students to read. Firstly, there was a great lack of contemporary literature appropriate to students' age, reading abilities and cultural interests. Secondly, comments from both students and teachers indicated that a typical class was mixed sex and had a wide range of reading interests, levels and abilities. One of the immediate difficulties was that there was a great lack of children's literature with contemporary themes inside NSWL that would enable 'real-world interactions' for the students – 'real-world interactions' that these young readers could refer to, based on their own personal experiences, or sensory as learners. The importance of book choice was pointed out by other experts who suggested that providing students with different choices appropriate to the reading interests and abilities contributes greatly to students' interest in books and motivates them to read (McCarthy, 1999 ; Ruiz, 2002 ; Tunnell, 1989). Although NSWL failed to motivate more students to read voluntarily, a small

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[43] Audio-books also allow students to hear the correct pronunciation of words and thereby support their acquisition of the English language.

group of students indicated that they "enjoyed" using NSWL, as evidenced by the survey results. This enjoyment was also demonstrated by the after-school logon statistics, as well as the regular streaming sessions that occurred on weekends and holidays. Findings from this study also indicated that there were distinctive gendered differences in reading practices amongst the student population. Boys and girls of the same age were reading books with marked differences in terms of level of sophistication, language, plot and subject matter, etc. Evidence suggested that girls read comparatively more poetry, and more fiction. A large proportion of the literature available inside NSWL is out-of-copy-right classical fiction, with storylines that appeal more to girls (e.g., family and human relationships with female protagonists rather than more masculine adventure stories) and often requiring a higher level of reading proficiency on the part of the reader. For this reason, girls as a group found it easier to adapt NSWL to their regular reading diet, which eventually led to a slightly higher NSWL usage amongst girls.

VI.   IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

6.1.   Implications of the Research Findings

This research has identified a series of different and yet closely related factors that could affect a given student's motivation to read. These factors need to be considered when implementing library programmes involving the use of online audio-books for the students in the future. These factors were: library environment, parental guidance, and interactions between choice, gendered differences and access, as well as the relationship between the level of reading materials and children's reading abilities and interests. All these factors are central to whether or not students choose to read voluntarily both at school and at home. The findings of this study have highlighted the importance of providing a wide range of books with varying levels and differing genres in promoting interest and motivation in reading. When students engage in recreational reading, they need to select books that span the developmental levels. Choice increases students' interest in books and motivates them to read (McCarthy, 1999 ; Tunnell, 1989 ; Worthy, 1999 ; Worthy, 2002), and increasing students' access to books and promoting interest in books can significantly influence students' motivation to read (Anderson, 1984 ; Gambrell, 1996 ; Palmer, 1994 ; NAEP, 2000, pp. 98). Another immediate reason for the decrease in the number of voluntary readers was the intensive schooling and changes in the learning environment. These factors suggested that to enhance students' motivation to read, it is important to create an environment that is conducive to learning and appropriate to the maturity and interests of students by making the library a 'fun' and 'existing' place to learn and to read. The findings also highlighted that online audio-books were not designed to, and could never replace the traditional paper-books or live stories at least in the near future. Nevertheless, audio-books could, if developed and implemented properly, serve as a valuable, convenient supplement to enhance reading skills and experience to a certain level. Reading is a complex and multi-faceted process. In order to get them motivated or excited about reading, it needs an approach that integrates many elements. Unfortunately, there is no single 'magical' formula or tool for motivating students to read.[44] Balajthy also echoed that computer-based resources for teacher

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[44] **According to the 2 school librarians' final comments regarding students' experiences with NSWL:** *"Our overall experience with the NSWL has been a positive one. I have seen students engage with it successfully, and my opinion is that it can make a valuable contribution to their learning. The current generation of students, having grown up immersed in technology,*

reading do not provide a 'magical motivational cure' (Balajthy, 1989). Whether they could serve as an effective literacy tool for connecting the students to books depends entirely on how teachers and librarians incorporate them into their regular teaching or how they are promoted amongst the students. Interviews with the school librarians also revealed that both native and ESL[45] students could use them in learning the new language by imitating correct pronunciation, intonation, and inflection. My findings and those of other researchers suggested that audio reading could, if the content and sensitivity to different learning styles was finessed, be used as a flexible scaffolding tool which can be adjusted to the students' needs, stretching their skills to a point within their grasp, with the aim of bridging independent silent reading (Byrom, 1998). The message is that increasing long-term reading motivation and engagement does not result from a 'quick fix'. Reading motivation that is strong enough to last across weeks, months, and years is not made in a day (Guthrie, 2001). The results might allow students and parents to go beyond the technological hardware and realize that these online audio resources are at least as educational and enjoyable as some of the users reported in this study.

6.2.   Final Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has not found substantial and convincing found evidence indicating that the use of the chosen online resource (NSWL) could enhance students' motivation to read. However, at least in its current form, NSWL has the potential to be a low-cost enhancement for children's reading experience, as well as to serve as a convenient and automated substitute for adults reading aloud. Although NSWL might well provide a variety of critical technological advantages over paper-books, the overall findings indicated that there was little change in children's overall reading practices during the course of this study. Indeed the evidence suggested that the amount of voluntary reading carried out by students had actually decreased. Evidence produced in this research suggests that students' motivation to read depends on a variety of factors. Thus, online audio-books should not be expected to function as an immediate 'cure' for reluctant readers. They are also not designed to replace the traditional paper-books or live stories in the near future. Additionally, there is no single 'magical' formula or tool for motivating students to read. The value and effectiveness as an educational tool also depends on the reading-ability level and the appropriateness of the literature inside the resource, as well as how such online resources are used to support their teaching and learning. As a result, effective promotion of the reading resource is equally vital if the potential benefits of such resource are to be realized. Most importantly, NSWL itself also needs to be better developed in order to overcome many of the limitations this study has identified.

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have no problem accessing digital content online. The NSWL's ease of use, its accessibility at both school and at home, and the range of its content make it a worthwhile resource for a school library to hold. The audio presentation of classic literature introduces students to material they would otherwise have not been exposed to. On the other hand, it should also be recognized that the NSWL is plainly not geared towards the primary-school level. There is a lot of content that is too difficult for primary students to engage with. However, during the course of the study, I discovered that to exploit the full potential of the NSWL it is necessary to go beyond mere provision. This type of online resource is relatively new in school settings. Effective promotion of the resource is vital if the potential benefits of the resource are to be realized. At the primary-school level, there is often so much to handle day to day, often by only one person, that such attempts to introduce new and unfamiliar resources can fall by the wayside. I feel that this sometimes happened in our experience of using NSWL. One particular problem was that NSWL was regarded as a peripheral resource – more benefits would likely have been derived if there had been more opportunities for NSWL to have been made the focus of a topic or study. Better collaboration between teaching and library staff is needed."

[45] **ESL** - English as second language.

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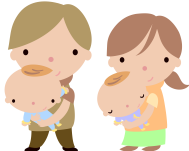
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Student Pre/Post-Questionnaire
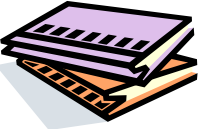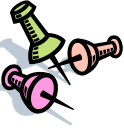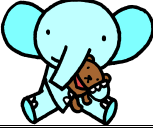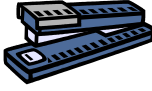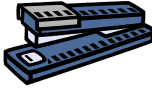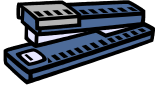
(A) General Information:	
1. **Gender**	• **Girl / Female** ☐ • **Boy / Male** ☐
2. **How often do you visit the school library?**	• **Every day** ☐ ☐ • **Every week** ☐☐ • **Every month** ☐☐ • **Once a term** ☐ ☐ • **Once a year** ☐ ☐ • **Never** ☐ ☐ • **Cannot remember** ☐
3. **Do you use the library for fun?**	• **Yes** ☐ ☐ • **No** ☐ ☐
4. **What do you usually do if you are having trouble finding a book or information?**	• **Ask the librarian** ☐ • **Browse the shelves until I find something useful** ☐ ☐ • **Check the library catalogue/computer** ☐ ☐ • **Give up** ☐ ☐
5. **Where do you get most of the books you read?**	• **School library** ☐ ☐ • **Public Library** ☐ ☐ • **Parents bought them for me** ☐ ☐ • **I buy them** ☐ ☐ • **I choose them with my parents** ☐
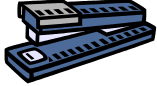
(B) Reading Habits:	
6. **How often do you borrow books from the school library to read in your spare time / at home?**	• **Every day** ☐ ☐ • **Every week** ☐☐ • **Every month** ☐ ☐ • **Once a term** ☐ ☐ • **Once a year** ☐ ☐ • **Never** ☐ ☐ **Cannot remember** ☐
7. **What type of books do you enjoy reading in your spare time?**	**Fiction :** ☐ • **Non-fiction** ☐ • **Poetry** ☐ • **All** ☐ •

Fiction:	Non-Fiction:
● Horror ☐ ● Thrillers ☐ ● Detective ☐ ● Adventures / fantasy ☐ ● Romance ☐ ● Science-fiction ☐ ● Classics ☐ ● Family / friendships ☐ ● Others:_____ _____ _____	▪ Animals ☐☐ ▪ Art ☐ ☐ ▪ General science ☐ ▪ Geography ☐ ☐ ▪ Food ☐ ☐ ▪ History ☐ ☐

(C) The Library and Services Available:	
8. Do you use the library to study / do your homework / coursework in?	▪ Always ☐ ☐ ▪ Most of the time ☐ ☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐ ☐ ▪ Not very often ☐ ☐ ▪ Never ☐ ☐
9. How would you describe the library?	▪ Very important for helping me with my school work ☐☐ ▪ A place I want to get out of as soon as possible ☐ ☐ ▪ A quiet place where I can concentrate and do my work ☐ ▪ A place where I can relax and read ☐ ☐ ▪ Noisy and frantic ☐☐
10-A. Do you enjoy library skills/literacy classes?	▪ Yes, we have regular lessons ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Only if you ask the librarian ☐☐ ▪ Only when you start school ☐☐ ▪ I don't know ☐☐
10- B. Are the library staff helpful to you?	▪ Yes ☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ It is OK ☐☐
11. What type of help do you usually need from the library staff?	▪ Finding things ☐☐ ▪ Using the library catalogue ☐☐ ▪ Using the computers ☐☐ ▪ Using the online audio-books ☐☐ ▪ Using CD-ROMs ☐☐ ▪ Help with projects ☐ ▪ Others: _____ _____ _____ _____

(D) Curriculum and The Library:	
12. Do teachers ask you to use the library to help you complete homework / coursework?	▪ Always ☐☐ ▪ Most of the time ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐ ▪ Not very often ☐☐ ▪ Never ☐☐
13. Can you find useful information to help you with school work?	▪ Always ☐ ▪ Most of the time ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐ ▪ Not very often ☐☐

	▪ Never ☐
14. Is the information that you find in the library generally:	▪ **Too easy?** ☐ ▪ **Too difficult?** ☐☐ ▪ **About the right level?** ☐☐ ▪ **Mixture** ☐☐
15. Do you use the library computer catalogue to find books in the library?	▪ **Always** ☐☐ ▪ **Most of the time** ☐☐ ▪ **Sometimes** ☐☐ ▪ **Not very often** ☐☐ ▪ **Never** ☐☐
16. Do you use the library computer catalogue without help?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐ ▪ Don't know ☐☐
(E) Online Audio-Books (Naxos Spoken Word Library):	
17. Do you use the online audio-books on the _Naxos Spoken Word Library_ in the Library?	▪ **Yes** ☐☐ ▪ **No** ☐☐ ▪ **Sometimes** ☐☐
18. Do you use the _Naxos Spoken Word Library_ at home?	▪ **Yes** ☐ ▪ **No** ☐☐ ▪ **Sometimes** ☐☐
19. Do you enjoy listening to the _Naxos Spoken Word Library_ in your Free-Time?	▪ **Yes** ☐☐ ▪ **No** ☐☐ ▪ **Sometimes** ☐☐ ▪ **WHY?:** _____ _____ _____
20. Do you think the _Naxos Spoken Word Library_ is easy to use?	▪ **Easy and interesting** ☐☐ ▪ **Easy but boring** ☐☐ ▪ **About the right level** ☐ ▪ **Don't know** ☐☐
21. When you have found a book in the _Naxos Spoken Word Library_, what do you do?	▪ **Read and listen to the whole audio-book** ☐☐ ▪ **Read and listen to the whole book, but par-by-part over a few sessions** ☐☐ ▪ **Read and listen to the whole book and make notes** ☐☐

		▪ Read and listen to the title only and print it out ☐☐ ▪ Others: _____
22.	Do you find the texts on the *Naxos Spoken Word Library* more interesting and easier to follow than other printed-books?	▪ Yes, it is interesting and easy to follow ☐ ▪ No, it is NOT interested and NOT easy to follow ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐ ▪ Please state reasons, why? _____
23.	In the Library, is there always a free computer when you want to use *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ Always ☐☐ ▪ Most of the time ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐ ▪ Not very often ☐ ▪ Never ☐☐
24.	Do you rely on your parents or teachers to choose what books to listen to from the *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐
25.	Do you prefer to choose your own books to listen to from the *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐
26.	Do the background music and sound effects in *Naxos Spoken Word Library* match the moods of the stories and poems, and do they help you better understand and enjoy the stories or poems?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐
27.	When listening to *Naxos Spoken Word Library*, do you use the Dictionaries Online to look up words that you do not understand?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐
28.	Do you prefer to listen to the *Naxos Spoken Word Library* at the School Library OR at Home?	▪ Prefer at School Library ☐☐ ▪ Prefer at Home ☐☐ ▪ At both places ☐☐
29.	Do your parents still read paper-books to you at home?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐☐
30.	Do you prefer listening to a story told by a live person than listening to the *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ Yes ☐☐ ▪ No ☐ ☐ ▪ Sometimes ☐ ☐ ▪ Why?_____ _____ _____ _____
31.	In the last 30 days, how many audio-books from the *Naxos Spoken Word*	▪ 1 – 3 ☐ ☐ ▪ 4 – 6 ☐☐

Library have you listened to?	▪ 7 – 10 ☐☐ ▪ More than 10 ☐ ☐
32. How long have you been using the *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ About 5 months ☐ ☐ ▪ About 3 months ☐ ☐ ▪ About 1 month ☐ ☐ ▪ About 2 weeks ☐ ☐ ▪ About 1 week ☐ ☐ ▪ Just a few days ☐ ☐
33. Which is your favourite audio-book insider *Naxos Spoken Word Library*?	▪ Please give title of your favourite audio-book: ▪ Audio-book title: _____ _____