

A Comparative Study of use of the Library and the Internet as Sources of Information:Indian Perspective

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Abstract

This study was conducted to compare Internet use and library use among graduate students. It was based on the assumption that graduate students use the Internet more than the library. Literature on library and the Internet were reviewed. The researcher adopted convenient sampling technique to select the sample for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires. Collected data was statistically analyzed and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Findings of the study indicated students do not bypass the library in satisfying their information need. They use both the library and the Internet, although Internet usage was more than the library, hence the Internet was the most preferred source of information. It was recommended that the library should be upgraded to meet recent advancement in research.

Keywords: Electronic media, Internet,India, publications, university libraries, Academic staff.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Information is a vital and an indispensable component of any academic environment. It makes for effectiveness in any academic system. Both faculty and students need to use information daily in their various academic endeavors. For decades, faculty and students have actively used the library and its resources as their main information source. Alemna, (2000) states that for centuries libraries have served as repositories of information and knowledge that have provided the vital underpinnings for socio-economic, political and cultural development in any civilization. Their relationship with cultural progress has been so interdependent that it is needless to argue whether man's

cultural advancement merely produces libraries as by product. According to Robinson (2006) simplistically, libraries and archives came into being to provide a central location for hard-to-find, scarce, expensive or unique material. Scarcity of information is the basis for the modern library. In countries where information continues to be scarce, a library's role is still unambiguous. In some countries where access to information is now akin to access to electricity or water, the reason to have freestanding storehouses of a subset of all information is harder to articulate. Libraries in such countries can provide access to more information than any user could want or need. Rangathan's rule "for every reader, his or her book," might be now redefined as "for every reader, huge amounts of free-floating content, anywhere, anytime. We now live in the information age where access to many Internet resources is just a few clicks away. The Internet is a technology, which has gained more popularity in many countries across the world and India , is no exception. The Internet as a medium of communication and source of information has enabled students, researchers, business information seekers and information professionals to access information to enhance their work and communicate effectively. Robinson (2006) states that in 2004, seventy million American adults logged onto the Internet in a typical day. Over 95 percent of U.S. public libraries provided Internet access. Students, many faculty, and laypeople turn to online information sources before print or the library. As a result, library use, especially for walk-in reference questions and preparation for school and college reports has declined.

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The internet boom in India has become one of the major contributors to the economic growth of the country. The use of internet has increased more than 11 times in the last seven years. This rise has led to the growth of cybercafes and internet parlors throughout India with easy accessibility and cost effective services helped by the enhanced speed of the internet. The number of internet users since the year 2000 has increased by a staggering 69 times in the metropolitan areas and 33 times in the semi-urban towns. The internet boom in India is still on the rise at present, and as per the trends it should continue on its path of glory until things might change (Business mapsofindia.com, 2008). With the rapid development in the IT sector, almost all of the

libraries in engineering, management or medical institutions are using electronic information sources as well as the internet to provide better services to their users. Indeed, it has been pointed out that electronic information sources and more particularly internet resources have become an increasingly substantial component of academic library collections over the last decade (Blecic et al., 2007). Mary Case(2004) has reported that “between 1994/1995 and 2001/2002, expenditures on electronic resources for the typical university research library have grown almost 400 per cent to almost \$1.4M, while the overall library materials expenditures have grown only 61 per cent. Electronic journals account for the greatest proportion of the electronic expenditures claiming 92 per cent of these dollars in 2001/2002.

Given the high stakes, it is vital for libraries to have meaningful measurements of the use of electronic as well as internet resources to inform prudent expenditure of limited collections budgets. Moreover electronic publishing has been revolutionizing the format of the recorded knowledge and electronic information services are attracting readers' attention in today's networked environment. E-journals and e-databases bring new challenges before the library and information professionals to give full text access to scholarly publications both in print and electronic version to its end users. Further subscribing to printed journals by individual libraries is beyond human comprehension. Ever-increasing prices of journals accompanied with the shrinking budget of libraries, manes that management/parent bodies are forced to resort to the best alternatives like consortia. But the question is how much are our academics benefiting from it? Are all of them aware of it? If so what is the extent of use? These are some of the questions that come to our mind. Hence there is a need to know, through a systematic opinion survey, what is the extent of influence the electronic information source has, on the user community in the engineering, medical and management colleges. The present study is envisaged with this backdrop in mind and thus the study made an attempt to understand how users utilize the electronic information sources and internet in the college environment.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The study seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To determine the factors that encourage or discourage the students from using libraries.
2. To investigate the frequency and purpose of Internet use.
3. To find out the extent to which the Internet helps graduate students in their academic work.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study brought to bear the services found in the library and the services available on the Internet. It is hoped that results of the study will help to improve service delivery to graduate students in India . In addition, the study adds to existing literature on students' information behavior patterns and information needs. This study is based in the broader field of information behavior. More specifically in the context of information seeking behavior as defined by Willson (2000) as “ the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web)”. The study therefore focuses on how students interact with both manual and computer based systems. It also investigated which system they prefer using and the motivation to select one system to the other. 2.2 The library and library use Reding (2005) indicates that from a social, cultural and economic point of view libraries play a fundamental role in our society. They are the collectors and stewards of our heritage; they are organizers of the knowledge in the books they collect – adding value by cataloguing, classifying and describing them; and, as public institutions, they assure equality of access for all citizens. They take the knowledge of the past and present, and lay it down for the future. Adele and Milheim (1995), argue that “Libraries are not simply storehouses of books but provide proactive services to their users both from within the library's stock and from a wide range

of external sources.” Some of the services according to them are enquiry services, bibliographic assistance, library instruction, interlibrary loans, photocopying, and computer facilities.

1.4 CONCLUSION

Information seeking is widely used in information sciences to encompass the entire process from recognizing the need for information to finding and using it. It focuses on interaction between the information seeker and information resources. There is a need to organize user-workshops in educating and training regarding the various information sources available that includes primary, secondary and tertiary information sources both print and e-format. Using new technological devices merely for copy-pasting information is simply not enough. Instead, a new pedagogical culture, which is supported by technology, has to be carefully designed and put to use for developing students’ information skills. In addition, it is important that new pedagogical models, which emphasize higher order information seeking activities, do not become an unmanageable additional cognitive load. The library plays a significant role in promoting the better use of information sources and services, but at the same time, the teacher plays an important role in coordinating and graduate students learning activities towards a comprehensive inquiry process. But the starting point for effective information seeking with technological support is thus embedded in a sound theoretical understanding of the information seeking process, as it is intertwined with meaningful pedagogical practice.

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