

Use of Digital Resources by Faculty and Research Scholars of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli

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ABSTRACT

Sources of information available via the Internet are increasing exponentially, leading to steady increase in the use of Internet for education and research. Since past few years, free online information sources like e-journals, e-books, e-databases have increased considerably. Earlier, information and knowledge were passed by word of mouth or through manuscripts, and communication was a slow process. Today, it is passed from one individual to an infinite number of other users through a number of media and formats which makes rapid and widespread dissemination of information possible. This paper discusses utilisation of digital resources by faculty and research scholars of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. Results show that 67.14 per cent of the faculty is familiar with the use of digital resources, and majority of these members are using digital resources for research purpose. Study also reveals that majority of the faculty members are learning the required skills for the usage of digital resources through self-study.

Keywords: Digital resources, Internet, e-mail, search engines, CD-ROM, faculties

1. INTRODUCTION

The major developments taking place in library and information centres today are the widespread availability and use of various kinds of electronic learning resources. Electronic learning materials have increasingly become the focus of research and development of any institution in the recent years. The commonly available electronic resources namely CD-ROMS, OPACs, web databases, Internet, and other networked information sources are competing with, and in some instances replacing the print-based information sources, which have been in place for centuries as the primary medium for storage and communication of recorded information¹.

The term 'e-library' refers to information accessed through electronic sources like Internet. Unlike traditional libraries, e-libraries are not limited by location or time. Libraries have changed with the emergence and application of information technology (IT). Libraries have assumed the role of educators—teaching users to find, evaluate and use information both in the library and over electronic networks. As the use of e-library continues to soar, users are expected to develop information literacy

skills. These skills, as Julien² observes, will enable users to make efficient and effective use of information sources. The main purpose of the present study is to investigate the users searching behaviour for retrieval of information on the Web². The study also aims to know the use of CD-ROM, online databases, online journals, Internet, e-mail and search engines, and also methods of learning digital resources by faculty members.

2. ABOUT MANONMANIAM SUNDARANAR UNIVERSITY

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University was established in 1990, as per the Act 31 of 1990 by the Government of Tamil Nadu, as a teaching-cum-affiliating University. The University has been named after the Tamil poet/literate. Prof. P. Sundaram Pillai (1855-1897) was the renowned writer of late 19th century and author of famous verse drama Manonmaniam. The University caters to the needs of three southern districts of Tamil Nadu viz. Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Kanyakumari. Dr M. Karunanidhi, the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, on 7th September 1990, formally inaugurated the University. Manonmaniam Sundaranar University is the youngest of all Universities in India and is recognised by the

University Grants Commission (UGC). The University is located in a campus of 550 acres at Abishekapatti (on Tirunelveli-Tenkasi Road) at a distance of 8 kilometres from Tirunelveli. There are 21 departments in the University besides the Directorate of Distance and Continuing Education and Community College Directorate.

One of the important wings of the University is the community college. The Community College Directorate offers one-year Diploma Courses. It also offers many Diploma and Certificate Courses through Extension Learning Programme. About 8000 students are studying in the various University Departments and the 80 affiliated colleges including 2 constituent colleges. MSU is one of the pioneer institutions that offers choice-based credit system (CBCS). The courses and research programmes offered by the University have been carefully chosen after considering the contemporary times and needs of the region. The University Departments offer MPhil and PhD Programmes (full time and part time) in addition to regular PG Programmes. The University offers good library service, through the University Library. The Sports Department, National Service Scheme and Youth Welfare Department provide opportunities for students interested in development programmes. The University has a Women's hostel, which can accommodate 96 students at present.

3. OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this study was to explore the use and awareness of the digital resources by faculty members and research scholars of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. The main objectives were:

- ✘ To assess the amount of knowledge and frequency in the use of the different types of digital resources made by the faculty members and research scholars.
- ✘ To find out the purposes for using digital resources.
- ✘ To discover problems faced by the faculties and research scholars while accessing the digital resources.
- ✘ To know the adequacy of information in digital resources.
- ✘ Investigate whether the digital resources can replace the print resources.
- ✘ To suggest suitable suggestions to improve the digital resources and services for the benefit of users.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study is based on the user capability of the faculty members and research scholars of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. The scope of the study is limited to the use of digital resources and to fulfill the teaching and research purpose of the faculties. It covers the availability of digital resources and services in Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ajuwon³ studied physicians' use of Internet for health information for patient care at the University College Hospital (UCH) Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings revealed that 98 per cent of the respondents used Internet. A majority (76 per cent) accessed Internet from cyber cafes. Ninety per cent reported that they obtained information for patient care from the Internet. Of the 90 per cent, 76.2 per cent searched a database.

Asemi⁴ did a case study of Medical Sciences University of Isfahan, Iran. The results of the study showed that all the respondents used Internet frequently because all faculties had an Internet connection. It was revealed that the researchers of the university were getting quality health information and patient care through Internet. Fifty-five per cent of respondents searched Internet for scientific health information because the university library provided access to databases and online journals to both students and staff.

Barker⁵ discussed the growing importance of electronic publishing in a case study, involving, Intranet/Internet and CD-ROM, to illustrate the influence that online books and other forms of electronic document might have on conventional publishing process.

Chestnutt and Reynolds⁶ conducted a study of 457 dentists in Wales to identify how patient information on Internet has influenced the delivery of oral care and how the practitioners were using Internet. Thirty-nine per cent of respondents agreed that information gained from Internet had led to patients demanding inappropriate care.

Hanrong Wang⁷, *et al.* analysed the impact of Internet and stated network technology academic libraries in China and found great development and innovation and the latest development of reference services in academic libraries in mainland China by reviewing these services.

Bonita⁸ explained the contrasts between traditional problems of document access and delivery with the

advances being made by University Microfilms International (UMI). The new UMI information delivery system integrates CD-ROM technology, digital image technology, retrieval software, and computer hardware. Abstract and index citations were linked with full-text page images which are immediately available for viewing or printing.

Lohar and Roopashree⁹ analysed data to cover the use of electronic resources, how the electronic resources improved the academic career of the faculty, and the problems faced while using the electronic resources. They conclude that the main intention of the use of electronic resources was the academic interest of the users.

Natarjan¹⁰ described electronic resources, electronic journals and the role of academic library, and comparison and usage of electronics and print journals. He also discussed use of electronic journals by undergraduates and graduates in an academic environment, behaviour of people towards e-journals, and the future of the print media.

Steffy and Meyer¹¹ reported the results of a survey of CD-ROM use at the Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Tennessee. CD-ROM users were analysed by status (graduate, undergraduate, faculty, staff and other). Relative use of 20 CD-ROM products was studied by patron status. Data was presented for users ratings of: ease of use, satisfaction with numbers of citations retrieved, and value of citations retrieved. User's suggestions to improve the products, the time spent searching products, and the time patrons spent conducting their searches were reported. Patrons who used CD-ROM liked these enough to recommend these to their friends.

Tenopir¹² conducted a survey of university libraries in the USA in 1994 to discover the impact of Internet connections on reference services. Among the issues highlighted by the survey were: Traffic congestion, in that there were insufficient workstations for users, users using the Internet for inappropriate purposes, and users viewing pornography on the Internet.

6. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a questionnaire method. The study comprised faculty members and research scholars of the various departments of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. Altogether there were around 200 faculty members and research scholars in various departments. Out of this, a sample of 150 faculty members and research scholars were taken at random as they study unit. The investigator visited all the departments of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University and personally handed over the questionnaire to 150

faculty members and research scholars. The completed questionnaires were personally collected after one week. About 140 filled questionnaires were returned; out of which, ten questionnaires were rejected from the ultimate sample as they were not properly filled. The analysis of the data obtained through the questionnaires provided an in-depth interpretation for fulfilling the objectives.

7. ANALYSIS

7.1 Distribution of Faculty and Research Scholars by Age

The distribution of faculty members and research scholars according to their age is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age

Age	No. of respondents	Percentage
<30	48	34.28
31-40	41	29.28
41-50	33	23.57
>50	18	12.85
Total	140	100

It is clear from Table 1 that in case of faculty and research scholars 34.28 per cent of respondents belonged to <30 age group, 29.28 per cent of respondents belonged to 31-40 age group, 23.57 per cent of respondents belonged to 41-50, and 12.85 per cent of respondents belonged >50 age group.

7.2 Faculty and Research Scholars' Familiarity with Digital Resources

The distribution of faculty members and research scholars according to their familiarity to use digital resources is shown in Table 2. It is evident that 67.14 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars were familiar with digital resources, while 32.86 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars replied in the negative.

Table 2. Familiarity with digital resources

Use	No. of respondents	Percentage
Familiar	94	67.14
Not familiar	46	32.86
Total	140	100

7.3 Frequency of Using the Digital Library

The distribution of faculty members and research scholars according to the frequency of using the digital library is shown in Table 3. It is evident that 32.14 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars were

Table 3. Frequency of using the digital library

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentage
Daily	25	17.86
Thrice in a week	45	32.14
Once in a week	38	27.14
Once in a month	18	12.86
Rarely	14	10.0
Total	140	100

using the digital library thrice in a week, 27.14 per cent once in a week, 17.86 per cent daily, 12.86 per cent once in a month, and the remaining 10 per cent were rarely using the digital library.

7.4 Methods of Learning Digital Resources

The distribution of use of digital resources by faculty members and research scholars is shown in Table 4. It is evident that 65.71 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars learned the necessary skills to use digital resources through self-study/instruction, 56.42 per cent learned from colleagues/friends, 45.71 per cent from guidance from the library staff, 34.28 per cent by training offered by the university, and 30.71 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars learned to use digital resources from guidance from the computer staff.

Table 4. Methods of learning use of digital resources

Methods	Responses	Percentage
Self-study/instruction	92	65.71
From colleagues/friends	79	56.42
Guidance from the library staff	64	45.71
Guidance from the computer staff	43	30.71
Training offered by the University	48	34.28

Note: Questions were multiple choice.

7.5 Purpose of Using Digital Resources

Purpose of using digital resources by faculty members and research scholars is shown in Table 5. It is evident from Table 5 that 64.28 per cent of the faculty

Table 5. Purpose of using digital resources

Purpose	Responses	Percentage
For teaching	65	46.42
For research	90	64.28
For publishing articles / books	79	56.42
For keeping up-to-date in your subject area	64	45.71
For getting relevant information in the area of specialisation	48	34.28
For getting current information	46	32.85

Note: Questions were multiple choice.

members and research scholars indicated that the digital resources were used for research purpose, 56.42 per cent for publishing articles/books, 46.42 per cent for teaching purpose, 45.71 per cent for keeping up-to-date in subject area, 34.28 per cent for getting relevant information in the area of specialisation, and 32.85 per cent of the faculties and research scholars were using digital resources for getting current information.

7.6 Locations of Accessing of Electronic Resources

Table 6 highlights the location from where the electronic resources were mostly accessed by the faculty members and research scholars. A majority of the respondents 49.28 per cent accessed the electronic resources from the university, while 33.58 per cent accessed these from home. Another 17.14 per cent used Internet café for accessing the electronic resources.

Table 6. Place of accessing of electronic resources

Variables	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Home	47	33.58
University	69	49.28
Internet café	24	17.14
Total	140	100

7.7 Adequacy of Information in Digital Resources

The distribution of faculty members and research scholars indicating the adequacy of information in digital resources is shown in Table 7. It is evident that 55.71 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars indicated that the information available in the digital resources was always adequate and 44.29 per cent indicated the information available in the digital resources was some time adequate.

Table 7. Adequacy of information in digital resources

Opinion	No. of respondents	Percentage
Always	78	55.71
Some time	62	44.29
Total	140	100

7.8 Problems Faced while Using Digital Resources

The distribution of faculty members and research scholars indicating problems faced while using digital resources is shown in Table 8.

Majority, 66.42 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars stated that 'it takes to long view/

Table 8. Problems faced while using digital resources

Problems	Responses	Percentage
Slow access speed	88	62.85
Difficulty in finding relevant information	62	44.28
It takes too long to view/download pages	93	66.42
Too much information retrieved	47	33.57
Difficulty in using digital resources due to lack of IT knowledge	65	46.42
Limited access to computers	38	27.14

Note: Questions were multiple choice.

download pages', 62.85 per cent 'slow access speed', 46.42 per cent 'difficulty in using digital resources due to lack of IT knowledge', 44.28 per cent 'difficulty in finding relevant information', and 27.14 per cent 'limited access to computer' as the main problem to use digital resources.

7.9 Digital Resources versus Printed Resources

A majority of the faculty members and research scholars 66.42 per cent, felt that the digital resources cannot replace the printed resources. Only 33.58 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars felt that the digital resources can replace the printed resources (Table 9).

Table 9. Digital resources versus printed resources

Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	47	33.58
No	93	66.42
Total	140	100

8. FINDINGS

The following observations were made:

- ✘ Most of the faculty members and research scholars (67.14 per cent) were familiar with the use of digital resources.
- ✘ About 32.14 per cent of the faculty members and research scholars were availing the digital library thrice in a week.
- ✘ Most of the faculty members and research scholars 24.36 per cent, 21.33 per cent, 19.39 per cent, 15.62 per cent, 14.58 per cent and 13.32 per cent respectively were using search engines, e-mail, Internet, online journals, CD-ROM, and online databases 'daily'.

- ✘ Majority of the faculty members and research scholars (64.28 per cent) were using digital resources for research purpose.
- ✘ Majority of the faculty members and research scholars (65.71 per cent) were learned the required skills for the usage of digital resources through 'self-study'.
- ✘ Majority of the faculty members and research scholars (55.71 per cent) felt that the information available in the digital resources is always 'adequate'.
- ✘ A large majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the digital resources can never replace the printed resources.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve the use of digital resources among the users.

- ✘ Awareness should be generated about the online journals to obtain current information.
- ✘ The University administration should create programmes and infrastructures to train its staff on ICT with particular reference to the use of digital resource facilities.
- ✘ There is a need to develop knowledge about use of digital resources.
- ✘ More computer terminals should be installed in the library for easy access to faculty, research scholars, and students.
- ✘ Efforts should be made to increase the speed of the Internet access.

10. CONCLUSION

The fast growth of ICT and particularly the Internet has changed the traditional methods of research, storage, retrieval and communication of scholarly information. Now-a-days digital resources has emerged as the most powerful medium for storage and retrieval of information. In the electronic environment, libraries need to recognise that they are not the only one in distributing knowledge.

The 24 hour online bookshops can provide reference services as well as information to the global information users. This study concludes that library and information science professionals should be well aware of the digital

resources available in the concerned field of study and evaluate these before subscribing these for their library users.

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