

# Use of Library Portal by Engineering and Technology Students of Aligarh Muslim University: A Survey

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to find out the level of awareness and use of library portals by the students of Engineering and Technology of Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire distributed to the undergraduate and postgraduate students of Engineering and Technology at AMU. The survey found that the majority of the students use library portals but not regularly. The study also found that the reasons for not using the library portal were lack of awareness, training and guidance, and the lack of contents on the library portal. The majority of the respondents gave average value to their library with regard to portal provision of course material and useful links. A majority of the respondents also expressed that they needed instructions and help for the effective utilisation of resources on the library portal.

**Keywords:** Portals, user studies, engineering and technology library, library portal, Aligarh Muslim University

## 1. INTRODUCTION

A portal is a location on the world wide web (WWW) usually containing a collection of hyperlinked documents and files. A library portal has a unique uniform resource locator (URL), which normally, but not necessarily, points to the entry page or home page for the library site. Academic libraries cater the need of information of their users. In the last decade library websites have become the first point of contact. It has become increasingly important for libraries to evaluate the usage of portal to verify that the information being provided to their users is pertinent, clearly presented, and internally consistent. It is important to see that the resources and services provided by library Portal are well utilised by the academic communities. This study was done to determine the usage of the library portal by the students has a great significance of engineering and technology at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and the library to improve the contents available on its portals.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Augustine and Greene<sup>1</sup> studied the way users searched information. Astroff<sup>2</sup> home page design of library portal of more than 100 colleges have common

patterns indicating genre development; a number of university home pages with no direct links to the library webpages disrupted user expectation.

A study conducted by Breckbill and Baldwin<sup>3</sup> revealed that some academic libraries displayed a main library webpage as the default home page of their websites. Booth<sup>4</sup> in his study aimed at the practical issues involved in providing a website that meets the needs of diverse users. Comeaux<sup>5</sup> indicated that despite an increase in accessibility, only 50 to 60 per cent of the websites were free of Bobby-detectable errors. This is the only study that provides trend information about the accessibility of a broader set of library and library school websites. Usability of the academic library portal was assessed by Elaine and Louise<sup>6</sup>.

The purpose of their study was to access usability of an academic library website and to understand how faculty and students complete typical task using library portal. The authors found that library websites failed to take into account how people approach the information problem. Li<sup>7</sup> examined the geographic distribution of users and usage patterns of the library Web page, the peak usage times, and the computer environment which included type of Web browsers, operating systems, screen resolutions,

and screen colours, etc. In addition, the study also compared usage statistics gathered before and after the library's Web page promotion activities, to measure the effectiveness of these business management and library marketing efforts.

Peters<sup>8</sup> highlighted the practical aspects of usage statistics. Efforts to standardise the gathering and interpretation of e-resource usage statistics in the USA show promise for accelerating the adoption and diffusion of reliable, meaningful usage information. The article found, with some speculation, the overall value and long-term potential for e-resource usage statistics. Pearson, Green and Pearson<sup>9</sup> investigated the relative importance of five key criteria for assessing Web usability.

These criteria are navigation, download speed, personalisation, ease of use, and accessibility. This study utilised a scenario-based, multi-criterion decision-making approach. The research indicated that, as expected, ease of use was the criteria that the respondents considered most important in assessing Web usability. The findings from this study have practical implications for website designers and the results indicated that less effort/resources should be devoted to personalisation and customisation, and more in making sure that websites are easy.

Shemberg<sup>10</sup> found that it is often difficult to locate the library portal from the university name. Information that is essential on every library website includes postal address with zip codes and Web master e-mail contact when this information is not readily available. It was found that academic library sites were often difficult to navigate. Tranis and Elaina<sup>11</sup> examined how students use electronic research libraries. Major finding of this study showed that design features website can drastically affect the success of the students doing research.

Xue<sup>12</sup> attempted to evaluate a government publications library website by studying its usage statistics. It examined organisation, including access, search ability, and structure, of electronic government information in subject directory format. This study revealed that a subject directory website is an important tool for distributing electronic government information, but it requires continuous development. The usage statistics are useful in monitoring search engine ranking, improving display, structure, and search ability.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following major objectives.

- ✂ To find out the level of awareness and use of library portal by the students

- ✂ To find out the type of information sources and services used by the students through library portal
- ✂ To know the purpose and frequency of use of library portal
- ✂ To ascertain users' opinion regarding usefulness and adequacy of contents/resources on library portal
- ✂ To know the barriers faced by the students in using library portal.

### 4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The study is intended to give an overview of the use of library websites by the students of engineering and technology, AMU at their own institution's library portal or other institution's library portals. The study has certain limitations, users and non users of library websites; the geographical area restricted to Zakir Husain College of Engineering and Technology, A.M.U, Aligarh, and the responses from Postgraduate (PG) and undergraduate (UG) students of academic year 2009-2010.

### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The data related to the study was collected using a structured questionnaire. The gap was filled up by the researchers through informal interview with the respondents and observation in the library.

### 6. SIZE AND SAMPLE OF THE POPULATION

Ninety questionnaires were personally distributed among the randomly selected UG and PG students of the faculty of engineering and technology at the university campus. A total of 53 filled in questionnaire were received, out of which, only 50 questionnaires were taken for the study, 3 questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete responses. The overall response rate was 55.55 per cent.

### 7. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected through questionnaire, observations and informal interviews was thoroughly organised and tabulated using simple statistical methods, tables and percentage. The table and graphs were generated using MS-Excel-2007. The findings of the study are presented below:

#### 7.1 Distribution of the Respondents

In the overall respondents, 34 (68 per cent) were UG and 16 (32 per cent) were PG students (Figure 1).

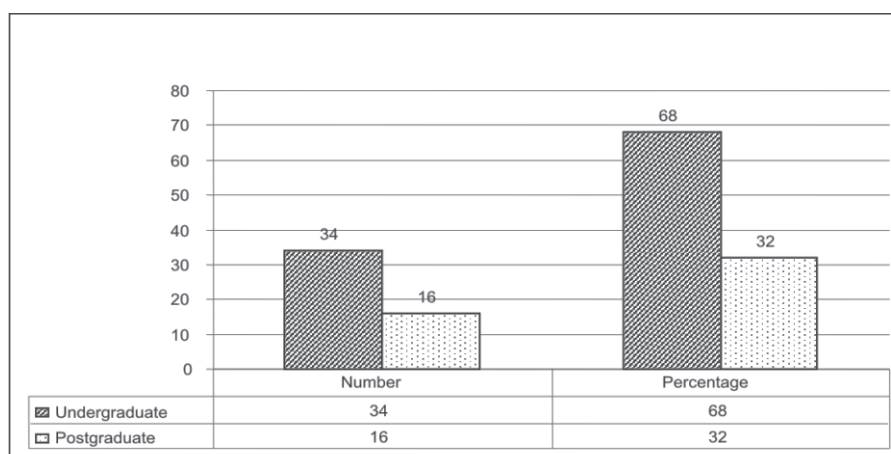


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents.

## 7.2 Awareness of the Library Portal

Figure 2 shows that a high percentage of UG, i.e., 61.76 per cent as well as PG students, i.e., 68.75 per cent were aware about Maulana Azad library portal. Only a few percentage of the respondents were not aware about the library portal.

## 7.3 Use of Library Portal

It is evident from the Table 1 that 61.76 per cent UG and 68.75 per cent PG students used their own institution's library portal.

## 7.4 Use of Other Institutions' Library Portals

Table 2 indicates that 94.11 per cent UG students and 93.75 per cent PG students used other institutions library portal. The investigators found that besides using Maulana Azad library portal, students used other institutions' library portal as well.

Table 1. Use of Maulana Azad library portal

Respondents	Yes	No
UG (n=34)	21	13
PG (n=16)	11	5

Table 2. Use of other institutions' library portals

Respondents	Yes	No
UG (n=34)	32	2
P.G. (n=16)	15	1

## 7.5 Frequency of Use of Library Portal

Respondents were asked to indicate frequency of their use of library portal. The frequency of UG students varied regarding the use of library portal. Table 3 shows that 29.42 per cent UG students used two to three times in a week followed by 20.59 per cent everyday and 20.59 per cent only a few times throughout the year. As far as PG students are concerned, 31.25 per cent used it two to

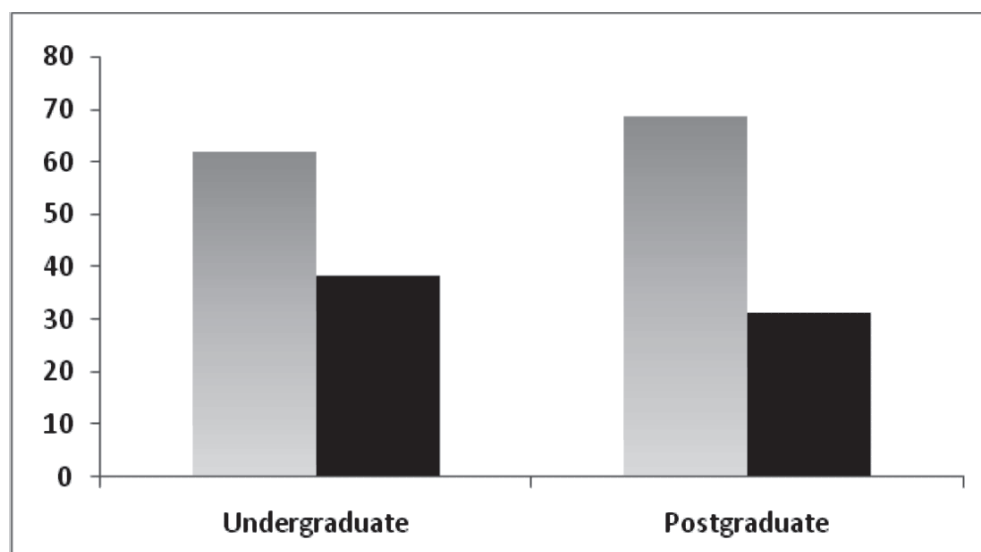


Figure 2. Awareness of library portal.

**Table 3. Frequency of use of Maulana Azad Library Portal**

Frequency	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
Everyday	7	2
Once a week	5	2
2-3 times in a week	10	5
At every 2 weeks	5	3
Only a few times through out the year	7	4

three times in a week and 25 per cent students used it only a few times throughout the year. The study found that only a few UG as well as PG students used library portal daily.

### 7.6 Frequency of Use of Other Institutions' Library Portal

The respondents were asked how often they make use of other institutions' library portals. Table 4 indicates that 32.36 UG students used other institutions' library portal sometimes and rarely, while as 17.65 per cent used very often, and only 11.76 per cent often used these portals. It was found that only 25 per cent PG students used other institutions' library portals very often also 37.50 per cent and 31.25 per cent who rarely used other institutions' library portals.

**Table 4. Frequency of use of other Institutions' library portal**

Frequency	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
Very often	6	4 (25%)
Often	4	1
Sometimes	11	6
Rarely	11	5
Never	2	--

### 7.7 Use of Information Sources and Services Provided through Maulana Azad Library Portal

Table 5 shows the frequency of use of Maulana Azad library portal by the students. It was observed that UG students very often made use of web OPAC 35.29 per cent, 58.82 per cent of E-Journals, 58.82 per cent of Encyclopedia and useful links 35.29 per cent, and 41.17 per cent of UG students used curriculum resource and encyclopedias occasionally. Also, 58.82 per cent of UG students expressed that they never used electronic books. Table 5 also shows that the average number of UG students used most of the services occasionally followed by rarely. On the other hand PG students very often used electronic journals (81.25 per cent), useful links (62.50 per cent), electronic directory (43.75 per cent) and electronic books (43.75 per cent) followed by web OPAC (37.5 per cent). The PG students rarely made use of the curriculum resource (68.75 per cent), other digital

collections (81.25 per cent), ask a librarian (81.25 per cent) and electronic books (50 per cent). The study reveals that majority of the UG and PG students 'occasionally' used the resources and services provided through Maulana Azad library portal. The investigators felt that the UG as well as PG students may not be aware about the different types of resources and services provided on the portal and also the material may not be useful to them or the provision of information is not adequate on library portal. It is also felt by the investigators that the UG students need training and assistance to enhance the use of the library Portal.

### 7.8 Mode of Access to Library Portals

Table 6 shows that majority of the UG students i.e. 29.41 per cent followed a link to the library portal from another page on the Web and searched it by name through a search engine, and 14.71 per cent bookmarked it on their Web browsers as a favorite site. Only 14.71 per cent used their personal home pages to link the site directly. The PG students (18.75 per cent) on the other hand searched for it by name through a Web search engine. The same percentage of PG students used their personal home page, which linked the site directly. A high percentage (37.5 per cent) of PG students indicated that they follow a link to the site from another page on the Web.

### 7.9 Relevancy of Resources Available on Library Portal

Table 7 shows that 38.23 per cent of UG and 31.25 per cent of PG students strongly agreed with the resources available on the library portal whereas 20.58 per cent UG and 25 per cent PG agreed with the relevancy of resources available. Further, 11.76 per cent UG and 12.5 per cent PG students disagreed regarding the relevancy of resources available on the library portal.

### 7.10 Value of Library Portal

Table 8 depicts that while 17.64 per cent of UG students give it a very high and high value majority of UG students (38.23 per cent) gave it an average value to library portal, and other data follows. Where as on the other hand 18.75 per cent PG students gave it a very high and high value. Majority of the PG students (31.25 per cent) gave it an average value.

### 7.11 Need for Training and Guidance

It is discernible from the Table 9 that 44.11 per cent of UG and 37.5 per cent of PG students strongly agreed with the opinion that the training and guidance can improve the efficiency of use of library portal. While 24 per cent UG and 18.75 per cent of PG students agreed

Table 5. Use of information sources and services provided through Maulana Azad Library portal

Questionnaire Item	U.G. (N=34)					P.G. (n=16)				
	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never	Very Often	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Browse online catalogue (OPAC)	12	6	6	8	2	6	3	3	3	1
Ask a librarian	6	8	6	3	11			3	13	
E-books	12		2		20	7	1		8	
E-Journals	20	3	7	4	6	13	4	5	5	2
Online Databases	6	28								
Encyclopedia	20		14			12		4		
Electronic Directory	2	2	8	20	2	7	1	8		
Curriculum Resource	12		14	8				5	11	
Other digital collection	2	12	11	2	7			3	13	
Useful links	12	7		7	8	10		6		

(Percentage within parentheses) Note: Very often =5, Often=4, Occasionally=3, Rarely=2, Never=1

Table 6. Mode of access to library portals

Modes	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
My personal home pages links directly to site	5	3
I follow a link to the site from another page on the Web	10	6
It is bookmarked on my Web browser as a favorite site	5	2
I search for it by name through a Web search engine	10	3
I type in URL to go directly to the site	4	2

Table 7. Relevancy of resources available on library portal

Opinion	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
Strongly agree	13	5
Agree	7	4
Neutral	10	2
Disagree	4	2
Strongly disagree	--	--

Table 8. Value of library Portal

Opinion	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
Very high	6	3
High	6	3
Average	13	5
Low	6	4
Very low	3	1

Table 9. Need for training and guidance

Opinion	UG (n=34)	PG (n=16)
Strongly agree	15	6
Agree	8	3
Neutral	6	4
Disagree	5	3
Strongly disagree	--	1

with the need of instruction, only a few disagreed with this opinion.

## 7.12 Overall Satisfaction with Library Portal

To know the overall satisfaction regarding the quality, contents and arrangement of links of the Maulana Azad library portal, students were asked the questions like image quality, layout, arrangement of hyperlinks and ease of use, etc. Table 10 shows that 64.70 per cent of UG students were highly satisfied with ease of use of library portal followed by arrangement of hyperlinks, Web OPAC, and access to full contents.

A high percentage of the UG respondents were moderately satisfied with the image quality, layout, arrangement of hyperlinks, online catalogue (OPAC), ease of use, access to back issues, and access to full content etc. On the other hand it was found that a very less percentage of respondents were dissatisfied and highly dissatisfied.

The Table also indicates that only 56.25 per cent PG students were highly satisfied with the ease of use of library portal followed by arrangement of hyperlinks and Web OPAC. Where as a high percentage (81.25 per cent) of PG students were satisfied with access to full content of resources followed by arrangement of hyperlinks (56.25 per cent), ease of use (20.58 per cent), OPAC (25 per cent) and image quality (18.75 per cent) majority were neutral the questions regarding the image quality, layout, arrangement of hyperlinks and ease of use, and access to back issues. A few percentage of respondents were dissatisfied with image quality (25 per cent), and access to back issues of journals (31.56 per cent). Very few PG students were highly dissatisfied with access to back issues of journals and layout of the portal.



Table 10. Overall satisfaction for library portal

Questionnaire	UG (n=34)					PG (n=16)				
	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dis-satisfied	Highly dis-satisfied	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dis-satisfied	Highly Dissatisfied
Image quality	-	6	20	8	-	-	3	9	4	-
Layout	-		28	3	3			13	2	1
Arrangement of Hyperlinks	7	22	5	-	-	3	9	4	-	-
Online catalogue (OPAC)	7	10	17	-	-	2	4	10	-	-
Ease of use	22	7	5	-	-	9	5	2	-	-
Access to back issues	-	-	22	8	4	-	-	9	5	2
Site map			26	4	4	-	-	13	2	1
Access to full content	3	28	3	-	-	2	13	1	-	-

## 9. CONCLUSION

Library portal has become one of the most commonly used media for effective and efficient delivery of information as it not only offers information about policies, staff, opening hours, library members and services available in the library, but also conveniently deliver electronic resources such as electronic books, electronic journals, online databases, online dictionary, encyclopedia, bibliography, electronic directory, biography directly to the users on their computer screens. The study found that majority of the students use library portals but not on a regular basis. A high percentage of users used their own library portal followed by other institutions library portal as well. The investigators found that the reason for not using the library portal was lack of awareness and lack of training and guidance. Therefore, it is the need of hour that more and more information literacy programmes should be conducted by the libraries to enable the effective use of library portal. However, this study mainly focuses on the the undergraduate and postgraduate students the similar studies on faculty members and research scholars at various departments of the university, and a comparative study may also be conducted between other central universities.

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