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Online Information Seeking Behaviour of Scholars of University Libraries in South Tamil Nadu: A Study

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***Abstract* – Information is considered as a useful commodity for routine life. For anything and everything information is required. Libraries serve as center for providing right information to the right people at all times information seeking is the process of searching for the information from the information resources. It is concerned with the integrated utilization of the three basic sources i.e. People, Information and System. A sample of 592 respondents have been selected on the basis of stratified random sampling method from a population of 2368 users of library, a structured, close-ended questionnaire consisting of 40 questions was used for collection of primary data. The information collected was analyzed using different conventional tools like tables, figures, averages, percentages and chi-square tests were also used. Primary data were entered in SPSS and analyzed. The analysis has been made fewer than four sections. The study discusses the general features of respondents, explains the availability and accessibility of online information by respondents, discusses the utilization of online information, nature of extracting and storing of information and the perception of the respondents regarding existing online information.**

Keywords: **Websites, E-mail, Internet, Information Technology, Strategies**

I. Introduction

Written communications such as memos, newsletters, brochures, leaflets manuals, reports, monographs, text books and reference, books are paper bound. But now all these are online. Everything has gone electronic way; hence, to keep pace with the revolutionary changes, we should also go online and learn E-mail. E-mail and websites are transmitted through internet which connects computers internationally.

Information is considered as a useful commodity for routine life. For anything and everything information is required. This information is available in various sources like libraries, libraries serve as center for providing right information to the right people at all times. The new information technology has enabled the library and information centers to change their mode of service from Traditional to electronic services. Accordingly this information seeking behaviour of the scholars has also changed.

II. Review of Related Literature

Review of Past studies on the study provides a solid background for the development of the present study; hence a few past studies have been reviewed here.

Bidgut and Bajpai conducted a study about the impact and use of electronic resources by faculty members in VBS Puruanenal University Library. The studied revealed that all faculty members are familiar about e-resources and usage of internet. The main purpose of the use of e-resources of a large number of faculty members is publication and research. Most of the faculty members are facing the problem of slow access speed at the time of accessing e-resources. Majority of the faculty members access e-journals, e-books, e-data bases and all of them access internet.

M.Gunasekaran, R.Balasubramani and S.Sivaraj in their article usage of electronic journals through consortia by the students and members of faculty of Bannari Amman Institute of Technology, Tamil Nadu, found that among nine departments in Bannari Amman Institute of Technology, computer science and engineering users use the electronic journals (17%) rather than information technology (16%), computer applications (15%), electrical and electronics engineering (12%), electronics and communication engineering (10%), Mechanical engineering (9%), biotechnology (8%), Civil engineering (7%) and textile engineering (6%).

E.Kanniyappan, K.Nithyanandan and P.Ravichandran, carried out a study on the use and impact of e-resources in an academic and research environment and found that the entire respondents used computers, online service (100%), regarding the electronic information service, 53.47% of the staff(60.67%) members are fully satisfied with E-mail and Internet (56.67%), OAP system (58%) and on-line journals (56.67%). Further the research found that on-line electronic journals (48.66%) university library site (40%) and research project sites (38.67%) are very useful. The result was that majority of the respondents (52.66%) used the E-journals than the printed journal and 32% of the respondents used both E-journals and printed journal equally.

J.K. Latha and M.Nagarajan conducted a survey on users and their usability assessment of information communication technology and e-resources in special libraries in Tamil Nadu. The study showed that the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and e-resources is very common among the scientists and research scholars are dependent on ICT and e-resources to get the desired information.

S. Parameshwar and D.B.Patil conducted a survey on use of electronic resources university libraries of Karnataka, Gulbarka University was taken for case study. In this study 73.27% of respondents search for information by e-journal, 9.79% of the respondents do not know how to use the UGC-INOFNET consortium and 37.95% of respondents know the UGC-INFONET consortium by library staff members. In this study 62.05% of the respondents revealed that bibliographical database is essential. In this study 59.19% respondent needed training or orientation programme on how to search for information under UGC-INFONET.

K.Praveena, S.Kavitha and M.Nagarajan conducted a study on usage of e-resources among the members of faculty of Arts and Science at Annamalai Unviersity and found that the members of faculty who belong to science used e-resources to get current information in their respective subjects, while arts faculty members used the e-resources for preparing class notes. Both the faculty members of arts and science preferred PDF format for downloading articles. About 8% of members of the arts faculty use e-resource once in a month. Lecturers used e-resources for preparing class notes while professors and readers used them for assisting research and project work. They found that lecturers preferred internet café for accessing e-resources while professors and readers preferred department and university library as a preferred pace for accessing e-resources.

III. Objectives of The Study

A perusal of the past studies and the outcomes of the studies formed the basis for the following objectives for the study.

1. To study the demographic characteristics of scholars of universities.
2. To evaluate the factors determining the accessibility of online information by scholars in universities.
3. To study the availability, accessibility and utilization of online information by scholars of the universities.
4. To study the attitude and behaviour of the respondents regarding the online information seeking.
5. To study the perception about the online information by scholars of the universities with reference to comparison of conventional documents and internet level of satisfaction on using university internet services.

IV. Scope of The Study

The title of the research is "A study of online information seeking behaviour of scholars of university libraries in South Tamil Nadu". For the collection of the required information, faculty members, research scholars and post graduate students of the universities in south India are taken into consideration. There are three Arts and Science universities in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. They are Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, Alagappa University, Karaikudi and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. This study is related mainly to the available online information centers such as university central library, library at various departments, offices and students centers on campus.

V. Sampling Technique

In South Tamil Nadu, there are about three universities with 2368 users including faculty members, research scholars and post graduate students. Out of 2368 users, 592 respondents (25% of the total respondents) were randomly selected by adopting proportionate random sampling method. The sample size has been detailed in the following table.

Table I Distribution of Sample Size

Population	Total No. of Respondents	Sample Size	Total No. of Samples
Faculty Members	400	25%	100
Research Scholars	748	25%	187
Post Graduate Students	1220	25%	305
Total	2368	25%	592

Source: Primary data

A. Sources of Data

The required information has been collected both from primary and secondary sources. First hand information has been collected from the selected sample respondents. In addition informal talk with knowledge persons and interview technique with librarians and library staff formed primary source of information. The records of the libraries and library entry registers formed the secondary source of information.

B. Tools Used for Collection of Data

The required data has been collected both from primary and secondary sources by using a structured, close-ended questionnaire consisting of 40 questions. In addition informal talk with knowledgeable persons and interview technique was also followed for the collection of primary data.

C. Tools Used for Analysis

The information collected was analyzed using different conventional statistical tools like averages, percentages, tables, figures and chi-square tests were also used, primary data were entered in SPSS version 16.0 and analyzed. Necessary tables are generated using the package and analyzed by using appropriate statistical tools to bring out interpretation. To test the hypothesis the following chi-square formula was used.

$$\chi^2 = \Sigma\left\{\frac{(O-E)^2}{E}\right\}$$

VI. Analysis and Interpretation

The analysis is based on the data collected through questionnaire from scholars of the selected South Tamil Nadu Universities. Analysis and interpretations are made by applying appropriate statistical tools. The study discusses the general features of respondents, the availability and accessibility of on line information by respondents, utilization of online information, nature of extracting and storing information and the perception of the respondents regarding existing online information.

Out of the total 592 respondents, about 359 were males and 233 were females. The respondents have been distributed age-wise.

Table II Age-Wise Distribution

S.No.	Age Group	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	20-25	285	48.14
2	26-30	175	29.56
3	31-35	63	10.64
4	36-40	39	6.59
5	41 and above	30	5.07
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data

Table II shows that the majority of the respondents (48.14%) belong to the age group of 20-25, only 30 respondents 5.07% are in the age group of above 41 and above, it is inferred that majority of the respondents are from the age group of 20-25.

Table III shows that 255 respondents (43.07%) belong to urban area followed by 249 respondents (42.06%) who belong to rural areas about 88 respondents (14.86%) only belong to the sub-urban areas. So it is inferred that the majority of the library users are urban people.

Table III Sector-Wise Distribution of Respondents

S.No.	Sector	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Urban	255	43.07
2	Sub-Urban	88	14.86
3	Rural	249	42.06
	Total	592	100.00

Source: Computed from primary data.

In order to examine the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the sector-wise distribution and sex, chi-square(χ^2) test has been applied. The result of chi-square test presented below

Table III A Chi-Square Test Between The Sector-Wise Distribution and Sex

Computed chi-square value	Degrees of Freedom	Critical value at 5% level	Inference
1.424	1	3.84	Not-Significant / Accepted null hypothesis

Source: Computed Data.

The calculated value of χ^2 is 1.424 which is less than the table value (3.84), therefore the hypothesis is accepted. χ^2 is not-significant. Thus we conclude that there is no relationship between sector-wise distribution and sex and the sector (i.e. Rural, Urban) and Gender (i.e. Male, Female) are independent.

The following table shows the preference among the respondents to use or not to us internet.

Table IV Preference To Use Internet

S. No.	Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Yes	592	100
2	No	-	-
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table IV shows the use of internet among the respondents. It is evident that all the 592 respondents (100%) use the internet services of the selected universities.

Table V Location of Access of Internet Within The University Campus

S. No.	Location	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	University Central Library	278	46.96
2	Office /Department	165	27.87
3	Students amenities centre on campus	52	8.78
4	Other places	15	2.53
5	University central Library and office/Department	82	13.85
	Total	592	100

Source: Calculated from Primary data

Table V explains the accessing of internet within the university campus. Among the 592 scholars, 278 respondents (49.96%) access the internet from the university central library. Above 165 respondents (27.87%) access the internet from their office/departments, 52 respondents (8.78%) access the internet from students amenities centre on campus. 82 respondents (13.85%) access the internet from both university central library and office/departments. Only 15 respondents (2.53%) access to internet through other places.

The details of the different methods of learning internet skills have been displayed in Table VI.

Table VI Methods of Learning Internet Skill

S.No.	Methods	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Guidance from friends	273	46.11
2	Trial and error method	202	34.12
3	Formal training	60	10.14
4	By attending courses	47	7.94
5	Others	10	1.69
	Total	592	100

Source: Calculated from Primary data

Table VI shows the methods of learning internet skill. The analysis showed that 273 respondents (46.11%) learned internet browsing from their friends. About 202 respondents (34.12%) learned internet through trial and error method. 60 respondents (10.14%) learned from formal training. 47 respondents (7.94%) learn from attending courses. Besides all the methods cited above, there are some other methods also (1.69%). Therefore, at first most of the respondents learned internet skill guided by friends and then them learned internet skill through trial and error method.

Table VII Frequency of Using Internet

S.No.	Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Every day	228	38.51
2	Two to three times a day	208	35.14
3	Once in a week	84	14.19
4	Two to three times a month	20	03.38
5	Once in a month	21	3.55
6	Occasionally	31	5.24
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table VII describes that 228 respondents (38.51%) use the internet every day. This is followed by 208 respondents (35.14%) who use the internet two to three times a day whereas 84 respondents (14.19%) use the internet once in a week. About 20 respondents (3.38%) use the internet once in a month. About 31 respondents (5.24%) use the internet occasionally. Hence, it is inferred that around two fifth of the respondents use the internet frequently.

The Table VIII explains the purpose of using internet, use of browsing, search engine, storing devices, use of e-mail provider, frequency of checking e-mail and problems faced while using internet.

Table VIII Purpose of Using Internet

S.No.	Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentages
1	Ongoing Research work	146	24.66
2	Subject Specific Information	190	32.09
3	Employment Information	41	6.93
4	Preparation of Teaching/Lecture Notes	16	2.70
5	Writing & Research paper for publications	23	3.89
6	Entertainment information	5	0.84
7	E-mail	85	14.36
8	For career development	15	2.53
9	E-Journals	61	10.30
10	Others	10	1.69
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table VIII shows that 146 respondents (24.66%) use the internet for their ongoing research work. This is followed by 190 respondents (32.09%) who are using internet for getting information about their subjects. 41 respondents (6.93%) use the internet for collection information regarding employment opportunities; 23 respondents (3.89%) use the internet for writing research papers for publications. 85 respondents (14.36%) use the internet for sending and receiving e-mails. Only about 15 respondents (2.53%) use the internet for career development. Hence, it is inferred that about one third of the respondents are use the internet for getting specific information with regard to their subjects.

Table IX Name of The Browsers to The use ff Internet

S.No.	Browser	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Internet Explorer	292	49.32
2	OPERA	25	4.22
3	Google Chrome	82	13.85
4	Mozilla Firefox	175	29.56
7	Google chrome and Mozilla Firefox	18	3.04
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

It is observed from table IX that about 292 respondents (49.32%) use internet explorer for accessing information from internet. 25 respondents (4.22%) use opera browser, 175 respondents (29.56%) use Mozilla Firefox browser. Hence, majority of the respondents use Internet Explorer Browser for accessing information from internet.

Table X exhibit the various ways of access to get the required information from the internet. Among the 592 respondents, 160(27.03%) directly enter the websites whereas 343 respondent (57.94%) use search engine. About 35 respondents (5.91%) use subscription data bases. 20 respondents (3.38%) enter web addresses directly and use search engines. It is inferred that more than 50% of the respondents use search engines for browsing the required information from the internet.

Table X Ways of Access to Internet

S.No.	Option	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	From the Web address directly	160	27.03
2	Use Search Engines	343	57.94
3	Use subscribed data bases	35	5.91
4	Through Web Portal	24	4.05
5	From the web address directly and use search engines	20	3.38
6	Any other	10	1.69
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table XI Sources to find out New WWW Pages

S.No.	Sources of WWW	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Books	91	15.37
2	Friends	76	12.84
3	Follow Hyperlinks from other WebPages	86	14.53
4	Internet search Engines	185	31.25
5	Internet directories	60	10.14
6	Use net news groups	10	1.69
7	Magazines/News Papers	39	6.59
8	Television Advertisements	30	5.06
9	Other Sources	15	2.53
	Total	592	100

Source: Computed from primary data.

Table XI shows that 91 respondents (15.37%) find out the new web pages through books. About 76 respondents (12.84%) find out the new web address from their friends. 86 respondents (14.53%) find out follow hyper links from other web pages. About 185 respondents (31.25%) find out from internet search engines, whereas 60 respondents (10.14%) find out from internet directories. Ten respondents (1.69%) find out from use net news groups whereas 39 respondents (6.59%) find out from magazines, newspapers. It is inferred that the majority of the respondents find out the new web pages through internet search engines.

Vii. Conclusion

In the era of technological advancements in all fields in the world information technology plays an important role in the development of education. With the emergence of information technology the concept of information providing centers such as libraries, internet centers and computer centers has been transformed a lot in it's functioning. The vital aim of the information providing institutions in extending online services is to provide public access to the internet fulfill is missions to preserve and promote universal access to a broad range of human knowledge, experience, information and ideas to support the academic and research endeavor thus internet connects electronically to ideas global village under one umbrella. The more the utilization of online information services the more will be the development of Indian economy.

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