

PERCEPTION AND USAGE OF E-JOURNALS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

*P. Dhanasekaran
V. Chandrakumar*

E-Journals occupy a prominent place in academic and research environment. The new technologies have enhanced access to and usage of e-journals. The study has adopted simple random sampling with sample replacement method to collect information from the students/ researcher at University of Madras. The study found that majority of the users prefer e-journals rather than conventional type of printed journals. Further, the users prefer internet search engines such as Google, Yahoo and MSN as their initial search engine point for accessing e-journals. UGC-INFONET web portal is also used by majority of the users.

Keywords: E-Journals; UGC-INFONET; Search Engines; Usage of E-Journals.

INTRODUCTION

Majority of the libraries nowadays are ICT enabled and are equipped with wifi facility to enhance access to information resources. In the modern period, readers are continuously using ICT gadgets to access information instantly wherever they are. Nowadays readers are seeking more information as the world becomes more competitive. In the academic field, journals occupy a crucial role in the development and dissemination of knowledge. Before the invention of ICTs, paper based printed journals were available at the libraries and the academicians were using them. But, in recent days, electronic journals replace printed version and the readers could access them at any point of time at any place. The growing popularity of e-resources leads to changes in the structure of traditional libraries from print documents to e-resources. This has led libraries to relook into their collection development and functioning. Application of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in libraries offers enough opportunities for building e-resources and disseminate them in the manner which suits the needs of academics. In order to examine the usage of e-journals to enhance their usage, the attitudes of the users are to be assessed. So, in this dynamic environment, it is necessary to know the students/ researchers perception of importance of e-journals.

LITERATURE SEARCH

A plethora of studies have been made in the field of e-journals usage pattern among students/research scholars undertaken by the different authors. Some important studies made are reviewed here. Amritpal Kaur [1] and M. Ansari [2] revealed that electronic resources are the best means of getting current and up-to-date information.

E-journals have been a vital part of information for research work. The study found that all respondents informed that e-resources can be a good

P. Dhanasekaran
Department of Library
and Information Science,
University of Madras,
Chennai – 600005 INDIA
dhanagcl@gmail.com

V. Chandrakumar
Department of Library
and Information Science,
University of Madras,
Chennai- 600005 INDIA
vcakilan@gmail.com

substitute for conventional resources if the access speed is fast.

Masoom Raza and Ashok Kumar Upadhyay (2006) [3] have also revealed that the most common problem faced by the respondents is that there is a difficulty in accessing full text and many of the respondents are not satisfied with the available Internet facilities. Some problems like lack of training and slow downloading have been found and the researchers felt the difference about the need for print journals as well as electronic journals.

Herman (2001) [4] points out that the integration of electronic media into academic work is progressively harnessing the new technologies to scholarly information gathering endeavors and characterizes the information activity of University faculty in an increasingly electronic environment.

Similarly, a study carried out by study Research support Library group (2002) [5] indicates that the migration of information from paper to electronic media promises to change the whole nature of resources. Within the changing information environment, university libraries need to understand readers' information seeking behaviour and service demands more keenly than before. In the research environment, most researchers use digital finding aids to locate both digital and print-based resources. Print finding aids are used by very few researchers and these are mainly in the arts and humanities. As users of digital information, researchers place a very high value on electronic journals, but much lower value on other kinds of digital resources.

Woo (2005) [6] observed that while respondents prefer to use journals online compared to print journals, they prefer print books than e-books. Houghton, Steele and Henty (2004) [7] also opine that electronic publication alternative were supporting, not replacing, print.

The literature confirms that the information seeker should have at least basic knowledge of ICT tools to make use of the e-resources effectively. A common problem identified by majority of the researchers with regard to e-journals is that the readers/respondents are not able to access full

information due to some restriction. Further, a significant percentage of the respondents opined that they are not able to download the full text in PDF format.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the users' perception of e-journals. To understand the importance of e-journals, its productivity is to be measured. To this, students/researchers belonging to the University of Madras have been considered for the study and their opinions regarding the usage of e-journals have been collected and measured through Likert scaling method.

METHODOLOGY

The researcher has used structured interview schedule for empirical survey. The study is empirical in nature as it involves both primary and secondary datasets. Simple random sampling with sample replacement method is adopted to collect the primary data. The population size of the present study is 1442 respondents who are students/researchers belong to 4 campuses (Viz., Chepauk, Marina, Guindy and Taramani) of the University of Madras.

Likert scaling method is adopted to examine the relative importance of the variables. The scale starts from zero to four; the lower value indicates least importance / no importance and high value shows strong opinion of the respondents.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This section deals with results of data analysis which have been presented in tabular form. It is found from the study that 52.9 percent of the respondents are female and 47.1 percent are male.

Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution

S. No.	Description	Frequency	Percent
1	Male	679	47.1
2	Female	763	52.9
Total		1442	100.0

Out of the 1442 respondents, 861 respondents were (59.71%) Post-Graduate students

and 581 (40.29%) were research scholars. Out of the 861 respondents, 27.2 percent were male respondents and 62.8 percent were female respondents. Among the total research scholars surveyed for the study, 19.9 percent were male and the remaining are female. The survey result shows that majority of the respondents are female whose participation in higher learning is increasing in recent years.

Awareness of ICT Tools

ICT tools facilitate students and research scholars to find out a variety of services. The study has attempted to find out the level of awareness of ICT tools used by students and research scholars.

Table 2: Awareness of ICT Tools

S. No.	Description	Low	Medium	High
1.	Basic knowledge of Computer	596 (41.3%)	633 (43.9%)	213 (14.8%)
2.	Internet	569 (39.5%)	417 (28.9%)	456 (31.6%)
3.	Chat	549 (38.1%)	755 (52.4%)	138 (9.6%)
4.	E-mail	550 (38.1%)	419 (29.1%)	473 (32.8%)

It is found from the survey that majority of the students and research scholars were familiar with E-mail operations, Internet and had Basic computer knowledge. It is observed from the study that 32.8% of the students and research scholars have much familiarity with E-mail operations. 31.6% and 14.8% have moderate level knowledge in Internet and Basic computer operations respectively. Further, the table discloses the fact that 52.4% of the students and research scholars were experts in Chat, followed by basic operation of computer (43.9%), Email (29.1%), and Internet (28.9%).

In order to ascertain the level of awareness of ICT tools, the study used Likert scale based questions. It is ascertained that both male and female respondents were familiar with e-mail operation and have moderate level awareness of Internet, Basic computer knowledge and Chatting. Though everyone knows that e-journals can be accessed

through Internet, majority of the users do not know how to link to the website and access the same. The users have been confronting many problems in accessing and making use of e-journals. In this context, the respondents were asked to opine whether they know the web places where the e-journals can be accessed and the detail regarding the same is furnished in table 3.

Table 3: Place of Accessing E-Journals

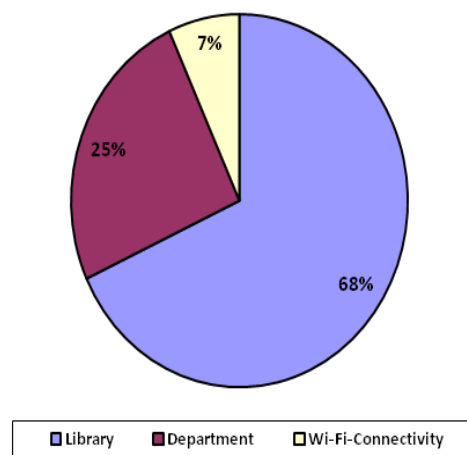


Figure.1: Place of accessing e-journals

It is found in the study that majority of the students and research scholars prefer to access e-journals in the Library followed by Department, and via Wi-Fi-Connection. It is indicated in the table that 80.1% of the students and research scholars prefer to access e-journals in Library, and is followed by Department (29.4%), and Wi-Fi-Connectivity (8%). Accessing e-journals through Wi-Fi-Connectivity is least preferred among the students and research scholars.

Majority of the male students and research scholars have given high priority to Central Library for accessing e-journals. It is found that 80.3% of female students and research scholars preferred to access e-journals in Library than the male students and research scholars (79.8%). It is observed that 30 %of the male students and research scholars have highly preferred access to e-journals from Department than male students and male research scholars (28.8%). It is seen that Wi-Fi-Connectivity is least preferred place as reported by male and female students and research scholars. The standard deviation is very less it ranges from 0.26 to 0.43.

Frequency of E-Journal Usage

E-journal is an important part of scholarly communication. It is found from the study that majority of the students and research scholars said that they use e-journals regularly.

Table 4: Frequency of accessing E-Journals

S. No.	Description	Responses
1.	Daily	1106 (76.7%)
2.	Rarely	866 (60.1%)
3.	Monthly	530 (36.8%)
4.	Weekly	904 (62.7%)
5	Never	861 (59.7%)

Source: Sample Survey.

Note: Numbers in parenthesis denotes percentage.

The results in the table reveal that majority of the students/ research scholars were using/ accessing e-journals regularly. Further, it is found from the study that 76.7% of male respondents and 76.8% of female respondents have informed that they access or use e-journals regularly. It is also to be noted from the study that around 61% of the female respondents and 63.9% of male respondents have recorded that they use/access e-journals rarely i.e. weekly once. A very few margin of the respondents have informed that they use/ access e-journals monthly. Age-wise cross clarification reveals that respondents belonging to the age group of below 25 years were using e-journal portals regularly.

Preferred Method of Accessing Journals

Now days, majority of the libraries are equipped with computers. It facilitates access to e-journals and also able to retrieve information. But, it cannot be presumed that all readers or users of the libraries will be computer savvy. Such readers will continue to depend on printed materials. Based on, that the study examined the readers' preferred format. The results of the same are shown in table 5.

Table 5: Preferred method of Accessing Journals

S. No.	Description	N
1	Printed Materials	1136
2	Online Materials	1101

Source: Sample Survey.

It is found from the table that about 78.8% of the respondents reported that they use online journals (e-journals) for their academic purpose and 76.4% of the respondents reported that they are using printed journals. It is to be noted from the findings that though the ICTs dominate in the academic field, a significant proportion of the readers still follow conventional method of reading or reference.

Reasons to Prefer Online Methods

Table 6: Reasons to Prefer Online Methods

S. No.	Description	N
1	Free to me	1188 (82.4%)
2	They eliminate photocopying	1086 (75.3%)
3	Physical convenience	929 (64.4%)

The respondents were asked to mention the reasons for preferring online method of accessing e-journals. The reasons are furnished in table. It is found from the table that majority of the respondents have informed that it is free to access (82.4%); photocopying of the text is restricted (75.3%).

Search Starting Points

Generally, all the online users start their searching through Google web platform only. In this context, the study intends to examine the search point used by the students/ researcher scholars. The response regarding the same is displayed in the table.

Table 7: Search Starting Points

S. No.	Description	SD	DA	UD	A	SA	WAS	Rank
1	UGC-INFONET	81 (5.6%)	295 (20.5%)	214 (14.8%)	244 (16.9%)	608 (42.2%)	3.70	2
2	Search Engines	81 (5.6%)	55 (3.8%)	218 (15.1%)	899 (62.3%)	189 (13.1%)	3.74	1
3	Journal Websites	162 (11.2%)	298 (20.7%)	163 (11.3%)	271 (18.8%)	548 (38%)	3.52	3
4	Online citation Index	81 (5.6%)	354 (24.5%)	164 (11.4%)	600 (41.6%)	243 (16.9%)	3.40	4
5	Open Access Journals Domain	274 (19%)	245 (17%)	217 (15%)	190 (13.2%)	516 (35.8%)	3.30	5

(SD=Strongly Disagree; DA=Disagree; UD=Undecided; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree)

Source: Computed

It is identified in the study that there are five tools that are used by the respondents. These include UGC-INFONET, Search Engines, Journal Websites, Online Citation Index and Open access journals domain. It is found in the study that 1088 respondents have strongly agreed that their search point will always be search engines such as Google, yahoo, MSN, etc., Next, search point is UGC-INFONET report by 852 respondents and online citation index is the starting point for 843 respondents. About 50% of the respondent search e-journals through open access journals Domain.

Weighted Average Score method is adopted to compute the average response score for the reader's opinion on the questions. WAS method applies to measure the relative importance of search engine points. The WAS value is obtained by applying the formula

$$WAS = 1/N \sum_{i=1}^n X_i$$

X_i is the response variate ranging from 1 to 5, as the low value signifies least preference and a high value is high preference. Table 7 shows the

WAS, which reveals that majority of the respondents prefer search engines (Google, MSN, etc.,) their initial search point. The next priority has been given to UGC-INFONET and is followed by journal website.

CONCLUSION

University libraries play an important role in promoting research and development in the country. The electronic resources are directly impacting the nature and quality of research across the globe. The technological developments are also influencing readers' information seeking behaviour and tools and techniques of information searching. Though, readers' preferences are leaning towards using e-resources, they are constrained by the limited availability of the same. It is the responsibility of the university libraries to provide information to the researchers. They need to maintain information resources both in print and electronic formats. There should be a separate digital section in the library with trained staff to guide the researchers to access electronic resources. The libraries should venture to provide remote and web-based access to the e-

resources available with them and links to other important resources available globally in order to satisfy the research needs. The scope of the electronic collection in UGC- INFONET consortium has to be improved; particularly in humanities and social science disciplines. Further the university libraries need to organize effective training and information literacy programmes at regular intervals on how to access and use the electronic information resources and services. The regular introspection on the availability of library facilities and services through feedback from the research community is also essential to identify their changing needs.

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