
Awareness and Use of Electronic Resources by the Research Scholars of Alagappa University

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Abstract

Electronic resources are playing a significant role in meeting the information needs of the academic and research community for several reasons, including their availability anytime, anywhere, without physical or geographical barriers. Most academic libraries spend a sizable portion of their budgets on procuring electronic resources, and these resources and services need to be utilised effectively. Effective utilisation of the resources alone will compensate for the cost of subscribing to them. In this connection, the authors have undertaken this study among the research scholars of Alagappa University and the major findings of the study reveals that the department and library were the major places for accessing the resources and friends, seminars/conferences/ workshops, user awareness programme, search engines, computer professionals and librarians were the major sources through which they were aware of the resources.

Keywords

Electronic Resources; Awareness; Electronic Information Services; Information Use; Information Access

Electronic access

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1. Introduction

The library is the heart of an educational institution, providing a range of resources and services to the academic and research community. Recent developments in technologies have changed the functioning of the libraries and librarians across the globe as the information in the library are procured, analysed, processed, stored and disseminated by overcoming the conventional barriers such as time and space (Rekha & Sanjeeva, 2023). At present, most of the resources are available in electronic form and electronic resources are part and parcel of the library collection due to various reasons such as 24 *7 access without any physical or geographical barriers (Waray & Deshpande, 2024). The changes in information scenario offers wide range of choices for managing the information sources (Sahu & Tiwari, 2021) and there are many ways through which they can access the resources and services from their desktop through remote access for their information needs (Vijayalakshmi, Swaroop Rani and Ally Sornam, 2017).

Remote access to library electronic resources and services is considered a major boon for users, providing them with the option to access any kind of information. As the information growth is alarming due to worldwide publishing trend by organisations, institutions and publishing companies in various electronic formats, it is being considered as an indispensable source for academic and research work in any field (Singh & Meena Singh, 2021). The Internet, as one of the powerful means of communication, dissemination, and retrieval of information (Chanda, 2016), has transformed society into an information society and the lifestyles of human beings. Library services in the 21st century are changing rapidly due to rapid developments in electronic publishing, and as a result, libraries are arranging to provide various learning resources in electronic format, changing the way users live and learn (Kenchakkanavar, 2014). Money spends in the form of subscription of e-resources need to be compensated through effective usage of the electronic resources. In this connection, this study has been undertaken.

2. Review of Literature

A review of the literature is important for identifying related studies conducted worldwide. Exploring the literature will help the authors to identify the research gap and provide guidance for conducting the research

smoothly. Some of the study-related reviews were identified and discussed below. Kumar, Singh and Soni (2025) have conducted a study to find out the awareness and use of electronic resources by the research scholars in selected universities of Bihar revealed that high level of awareness and use of e-resources found in e-journals and e-books, but awareness level on online databases, repositories, reference management tools were not up to the expectation level. The study highlighted the need for continued efforts to address the challenges and barriers which hinder better utilisation of the electronic resources. Vaid, Singh and Verma (2024) assessed user perception and satisfaction with remote access to e-resources in Delhi Academic Libraries found that remote access system significantly improved the accessibility and usability of electronic resources, but effectiveness differed from institution to institution. The study concluded that libraries that continue to improve their technical support and infrastructure will be better able to meet user needs.

Waray and Deshpande (2024) conducted a study to find out the use of electronic resources in S.V.K.T College, Nashik, which revealed that both faculty members and students of the surveyed college used IT-based library services and facilities more frequently, and awareness about various sources was higher among the faculty members when compared with students. The study also revealed that both the respondents were satisfied with the library services. The study noted that the library must promote the use of e-resources among students. Rekha and Sanjeeva (2023) have conducted a study to find out the use of e-Resources by the students and research scholars of the National Institute of Technology, Karnataka. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents, 61.11% and 54.16% aware of e-resources through the library website and friends. The study also revealed that an overwhelming majority of the respondents have agreed that electronic resources are better than print resources. The study emphasised speeding up internet access and diversifying the provision of full-text databases and journals. Gupta (2022) has conducted a study to find out awareness and use of electronic resources by the research scholars and faculty members of Dr. C.V. Raman University, Bilaspur and the findings of the study revealed that the electronic theses and dissertations available in the library is adequate and online databases were frequently accessed by the respondents. The finding revealed that the university has inadequate e-resources and recommended to enhance the resource collection.

Patricia and Sibanda (2021) carried out a study to find out users' perception and use of electronic resources in ARRUPPE college library, Zimbabwe, found that students and lecturers were aware of the electronic resources provided by the library, but fluctuation was found with regard to awareness, with some sources being high and low for some. Based on the findings, the study recommended increasing e-books and awareness campaigns through various forms. Sharma (2019) studied access and use of electronic resources by social sciences faculty members and research scholars in Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak found that high majority of the respondents were aware of e-Resources and UGC-Infonet E-Journals Consortium and JSTOR were used by more research scholars. The study suggested providing more computers, printing facilities, increasing the bandwidth and appointing qualified IT experts to solve the problems of the network. The study also recommended organising an orientation and training programme.

Shivaraju and Sivasami (2019) have conducted a study to find out awareness and use of electronic resources by the faculty members and research scholars in Alliance University, Bangalore revealed that majority of the respondents were aware of electronic resources and library and department were the major places preferred by respondents for accessing electronic resources. The study also revealed that the majority were aware of e-resources through professional colleagues. The study suggested that the library encourage users to access e-resources by providing more resources and more initiatives to raise awareness. Bharati (2018) conducted a study to identify the e-Resources searching behaviour of research scholars at Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi, which revealed that most research scholars were familiar with e-resources and used search engines, e-mail, the internet, online journals, CD-ROMs, and online databases daily. The study recommended that the university administration needs to develop knowledge about the use of e-resources and efforts to increase the speed of internet access. Varadaraju (2018) assessed the attitude of Science Faculty Students towards Osmania University Library, revealing that the majority of students had a positive attitude towards the library and that users wanted the library to subscribe to more e-resources. Majority of the users needed periodic training to use the resources effectively. Based on the findings, the study suggested subscribing to a greater number of e-resources and providing the latest information to the users via ICT modes.

3. Objectives of the study

The following are the objectives of the study

1. To identify the source through which the research scholars aware of electronic resources
2. To find out the purpose of using electronic resources
3. To know the opinion of available electronic resources and influencing factors of using the electronic resources
4. To find out the challenges faced by the research scholars while accessing the electronic resources

4. Methodology of the study

The study comes under descriptive in nature. Survey method using questionnaire was used to collect the data from the research scholars of Alagappa University. For the study, the authors have selected full-time research scholars as the part-time research scholars will be meeting their supervisors according to their convenient time and they will be working in some other places. Questionnaires were distributed to research scholars in their departments, and those available at the time of distribution were included in the study. 135 questionnaires were distributed, yielding 125 responses; 5 were discarded due to incomplete responses. Hence, 120 questionnaires were identified as correct and considered for this study. The departments were grouped into three categories, namely arts, social sciences and science. Data on socio-demographic details have been collected from the research scholars, and the results are presented in Table 1.

5. Results and Discussions

Table 1: Socio-demographic information

S.N.	Category		Nos	%
1.	Gender	Male	36	30.00
		Female	84	70.00
2.	Qualification	PG	101	84.17
		M.Phil	19	15.83
3.	Age	Below 25	71	59.17
		26-30	30	25.00
		Above 30	19	15.83
4.	Native Background	Rural	41	34.17
		Urban	54	45.00
		Semi-Urban	25	20.83
5.	Faculty	Arts	29	24.17

6.	Research Experience	Social Sciences	34	28.33
		Science	57	47.50
		1-3 Years	72	60.00
		4-6 years	34	28.33
		Above 6 years	14	11.67

From Table 1, it is found that the majority of the research scholars were female (84, 70.00%) and that the majority possess PG qualifications. Again, those under 25 years old dominated with 71 (59.17%), and those 30 years old or above accounted for 19 (15.83%). For native background, 54 (45.00%) were the highest from urban background and 25 (20.83%) were the least from semi-urban background. Similarly, for faculty-wise distribution, 57 (47.50%) of the highest respondents were from a science background, and 29 (24.17%), which is less than one-fourth, were from an arts background. It is also found that respondents with 1-3 years were the dominant group with 72 (60.00), and those with 6 years or more were the least represented group with 14 (11.67%).

Respondents may approach different places to access the resources. It will reveal where the users are convenient in accessing the resources. Identifying the most convenient place to access will help the authority take an appropriate decision. To determine where research scholars access resources, data were collected from the research scholars, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Place of accessing electronic resources

S.N.	Place	Nos.	%
1.	Department	87	72.50
2.	Computer Centre	41	34.17
3.	Library	62	51.67
4.	Hostel	23	19.17
5.	Internet Centre	32	26.67
6.	Home	44	36.67

Table 2 shows that the majority of the research scholars accessed electronic resources from the department, followed by the second-highest 62 (51.67%) who accessed them from the library. A little more than one-third of the research scholars have accessed electronic resources from home and the computer centre, and the hostel was the least preferred place with 23 (19.17%). Overall, the majority of the research scholars accessed electronic resources from the department and the library. The

sources that are normally used by the research scholars to identify and access were listed in Table 3. Data related to this were collected from the respondents and analysed, with the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Source through which awareness of electronic resources

S.N.	Source	Nos.	%
1.	Friends	76	63.33
2.	Supervisors	46	38.33
3.	Librarians	57	47.50
4.	Computer Professionals	59	49.17
5.	Newspapers/Magazines	49	40.83
6.	Library Website	37	30.83
7.	User Awareness Programme	64	53.33
8.	Search Engines	63	52.50
9.	Trial and Error Method	41	34.17
10.	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	73	60.83

It is identified from the above table that the majority of the research scholars, 76 (63.33%) and 73 (60.83%), have stated that they were aware of electronic resources through friends and seminars/conferences/workshops. Again, it is also found that the majority of the research scholars, i.e. 64 (53.33%) and 63 (52.50%), were aware through sources such as the user awareness programme and search engines. A sizable number of the respondents were also aware of electronic resources through computer professionals, librarians and newspapers/magazines. The library website was the least preferred source by the research scholars. To sum up, the majority of the research scholars used friends, seminars/conferences/workshops, user awareness programmes, and search engines and the least preferred source was the library website. Research scholars may use electronic resources for various reasons. To find out the purpose of using electronic resources, questionnaires were distributed to the surveyed respondents and the collected data were analysed and presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Purpose of using Electronic Resources

S.N.	Purpose	Nos.	%
1.	Literature Search	69	57.50
2.	Writing Research Articles/Projects	91	75.83
3.	Seminars/Conferences/Workshops	63	52.50
4.	Updating Knowledge	68	56.67
5.	Accessing Current Information	76	63.33

6.	Entertainment	39	32.50
7.	To augment research work	45	37.50
8.	Career Development	50	41.67

Among various purposes listed in Table 4, it is found that an overwhelming number of respondents, i.e. more than three-fourths of the respondents, 91 (75.83%), have used electronic resources for writing research articles/projects. Followed by which, the majority of the respondents, i.e. 76 (63.33%), 69 (57.50%), 68 (56.67%) and 63 (52.50%) have used electronic resources for accessing current information, literature search and seminars/conferences/workshops. Career development, to augment research work and entertainment were the least preferred purposes expressed by the respondents. From the overall responses, the majority preferred writing research articles, accessing current information, conducting literature searches, updating knowledge, and participating in seminars/conferences/workshops.

Respondents may face many challenges while accessing the electronic resources. Identifying the challenges faced by the respondents will enable the authorities to address the problems and ensure effective access of the resources. Common problems respondents commonly faced were identified and listed in Table 5. Responses received from the respondents were presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Problems faced while accessing electronic resources

S.N.	Purpose	Nos.	%
1.	Retrieval of irrelevant information	46	38.33
2.	Slow Internet Speed	66	55.00
3.	Server down/systems problem	47	39.17
4.	Lack of IT knowledge	41	34.17
5.	Lack of Information Literacy Skills	36	30.00
6.	Less number of computers	55	45.83
7.	Lack of Library Staff help	46	38.33
8.	Lack of adequate materials	49	40.83
9.	Insufficient time allotment	35	29.17
10.	Lack of authenticity/reliability	51	42.50

Among the listed problems, majority of the research scholars 66 (55.00%) expressed that slow internet speed was the major problem faced by the research scholars. Less number of computers, lack of authenticity/reliability and lack of adequate materials were the major problems faced by more than 40% of the respondents. Finally, Lack of information literacy skills and insufficient time allocation were problems reported by 30% and fewer than 30% of the respondents, respectively. Overall, majority of the respondents faced slow internet speed.

The library's resources should meet the needs of the academic and research community in many ways, such as being adequate, relevant, properly organised, and preserved for future use, and library staff should be in a position to provide the resources required by users. To find out whether the library's electronic resources meet the user needs, the authors have collected the data from the respondents, and the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Opinion on available electronic resources in the library

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
I see the e-resources available in the library are relevant for my academic use	23(19.17)	41 (34.17)	34 (28.33)	15 (12.50)	7 (5.83)
Electronic Information Resources available in the library is properly organised and preserved	10 (8.33)	32 (26.67)	29 (24.17)	22 (18.33)	27 (22.50)
Electronic resources available in our library is adequate	26 (21.67)	43 (35.83)	26 (21.67)	19 (15.83)	6 (5.00)
Electronic resources available in our library is up to data	19 (15.83).	30 (25.00)	38 (31.67).	22 (18.33)	11 (9.67)
Library professionals help in accessing electronic resources are appreciable	20 (16.67)	32 (26.67)	27 (22.50)	27 (22.50)	14 (11.67)
Electronic resources available in the library meet my needs	30 (25.00)	39 (32.50)	27 (22.50)	26 (21.67)	8 (6.67)

From the table 6, it is found that majority of the research scholars 64 (53.33%) have strongly agreed and agreed for the statement “the resources available in the library are relevant for academic use” and 69 (57.50%) each have agreed for the statements “electronic resources available in the library is adequate and meets the needs of the research scholars”. On the other hand, the majority of the research scholars have expressed their opinion from neutral to strongly disagree for the remaining statements, such as “electronic resources available in the library are properly organised, up to date, and library professionals help in accessing the electronic

resources”. Overall, mixed responses were received for the users’ opinion on available electronic resources in the library.

There are some factors that may influence the use of electronic resources. In order to find out what factors influenced access to electronic resources, data have been collected from the research scholars, and the data is presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Factors which influence use of electronic resources

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
Free access to the resources	31(25.83)	34 (28.33)	29 (24.17)	16 (13.33)	10 (8.33)
Accessible of resources at anytime and anywhere	34 (28.33)	38 (31.67)	33 (27.50)	11 (9.17)	4 (3.33)
Easy to get current, relevant, and updated information	21 (17.50)	36 (30.00)	30 (25.00)	24 (20.00)	9 (7.50)
Less expensive when comparing to print and time saving	24 (20.00)	48 (40.00)	23 (19.17)	17 (14.17)	8 (6.67)
Access to variety of information sources and services	28 (23.33)	44 (36.67)	28 (23.33)	15 (12.50)	5 (4.17)

Easy to find and retrieve the required information	21(17.50)	39 (32.50)	30 (25.00)	22 (18.33)	8 (6.67)
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Table 7 shows that the majority of research scholars have a positive opinion regarding the factors that influence the use of electronic resources. For most of the statements such as “free access to the resources, access at any time and from anywhere, less expensive when compared to print sources, access to a variety of resources and services and easy to find and retrieve required information”, the research scholars have strongly agreed. Conversely, the majority have strongly disagreed and disagreed with the statement, i.e. easy to get current, relevant and updated information.

6. Conclusion

The study on awareness and use of electronic resources by the research scholars of Alagappa University, Karaikudi, Tamil Nadu, provides valuable insights about their use pattern. The findings of the study revealed that the majority of the research scholars used the department and library to access electronic resources, and friends, seminars/conferences/workshops, user awareness programmes, search engines, computer professionals, and librarians were the major sources through which they were aware of these resources. The study results also revealed that writing research articles, accessing current information, conducting literature searches, updating knowledge, attending seminars/conferences /workshops, and career development were the primary purposes for using electronic resources. However, the study identified some of the major problems faced by the research scholars such as slow internet speed, a smaller number of computers and lack of authenticity/reliability of the electronic resources. For opinion with regard to available electronic resources, the majority of the research scholars were not happy with up-to-date, organisation and preservation, and library professionals help in accessing the resources and for factors which influence the use of e-resources, their opinion was positive for all the statements except the one i.e. easy to get current, relevant and updated information. Based on the study's findings, the challenges faced by the research scholars need to be addressed to ensure the effective utilisation of resources. Some initiatives need to be implemented to effectively utilise resources, such as enhancing infrastructure facilities and implementing targeted training and awareness programmes at the university to empower access to e-resources among research scholars and enhance overall quality.

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