Connecting Digital Divide among Students through Libraries: Study at Arts and Science Colleges of Madurai and Tirunelveli District

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Abstract

Information explosion happens every day through information communication technology. The difference between having e-skills, particularly those related to internet use, and not having them creates a new kind of information gap, which is generally known as digital divide. Libraries can connect the digital divide by facilitating information communication technology and imparting information literacy skills. Data has been collected at 16 colleges affiliated to the Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli District and Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai District. Information literacy skill level of the students is being analyzed by their information search information, email, Downloading, Social Networking and Youtube. Barriers for not using internet are also calculated. After that, training on information literacy skills has been organized for the students at Sri Sarada College for Women, Tirunelveli alone..The conclusion is imparting information literacy skills among college students along with their regular study is very much important for building lifelong learning skill

Keywords

Digital Divide; Information Literacy Skill; Information Literate

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INTRODUCTION

Information explosion happens every day through information communication technology. Those who get chance to use these technologies, are familiar with these resources and those who do not get chance to use technologies, are not familiar with electronic resources. Libraries need to concentrate on this to facilitate information communication technology and to teach them how to use effectively. Through this, Libraries can build bridge between the digital divide.Libraries can connect the digital divide by facilitating information communication technology and imparting information literacy skills.

DIGITAL DIVIDE

The difference between having e-skills, particularly those related to internet use, and not having them creates a new kind of information gap, which is generally known as digital divide. This paper intends to explore out this gap among the students, to identify the important reason behind this and how the library could be the bridge between these gaps.

INFORMATION LITERACY

The American Library Association's (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, Final Report states, "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information". Information literacy forms the basis for lifelong learning. It is common to all disciplines, to all learning environments, and to all levels of education. It enables learners to master content and extend their investigations, become more self-directed, and assume greater control over their own learning.An information literate individual is able to:

➢ Determine the extent of information needed
➢ Access the needed information effectively and efficiently
➢ Evaluate information and its sources critically
➢ Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
➢ Use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
➢ Understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information, and access and use information ethically and legally.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Jangea, Suresh and Lalitha K Samib (2006) Authors stated that Information literacy encompasses learning to learn and ability to research, evaluation and apply information. Information literacy helps in overcoming the problems of identifying and retrieving right information for the right person at the right time in a right manner. Building an information literate community is a complex process. The purpose of this paper is to briefly examine initiatives by the Government of India in bridging the digital divide. The success story of creating an information literate school community in Kerala has been presented as a model worth replicate.

Aqili, SeyedVahid; Moghaddam, AlirezaIsfandyari (2008), "Bridging the digital divide", The purpose of this paper is to show how the digital divide has become a common metaphor originating from now nearly obsolete phrases such as "information have and have nots" and "information rich and information poor". The article aims to focus on several dimensions of the digital divide that pertain to service as well as the responsibilities of libraries. This article places emphasis on the role of librarians and information professionals in bridging the digital divide by indicating some aspects related to it as evidenced in the literature including its definition, aspects, factors affecting, and internet users. Libraries are treated as one of the major social tools which can solve the information divide rooted in the digital divide and contribute to the realization of democratic society. Rethinking the digital divide, librarians must redesign and redefine their service menu for their customers through thinking functionally. They also need to review the various IT devices and information services available and examine which can be employed to present a more effective library service. In addition, policy-makers should consider the vital role that librarians can play in the realization of knowledge-based society and sustainable development. This paper provides a theoretical basis for librarians to be more active and sedulous and policy-makers to be vigilant and place much value for information sector and its professionals, particularly librarians working in various libraries.
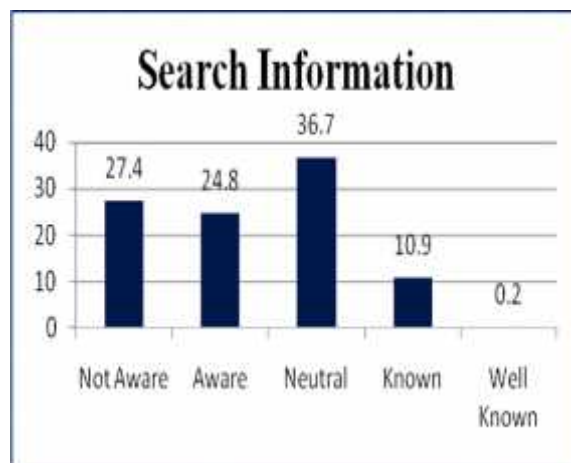
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire method has been used to collect the data to assess information literacy level of the students. Among 600 questionnaires distributed, 540 questionnaires have been collected back. Data has

been collected at 16 colleges affiliated to the ManonmaniamSundaranar University, Tirunelveli District and Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai District. After collecting the data, data have been analyzed with the Descriptive analysis method, Paired Sample T Test using SPSS software. Descriptive analysis method used to find out the information literacy skill level of the students. It is being analyzed by their information search information, email, Downloading, Social Networking and Youtube. Barriers for not using internet are also calculated. After that, training on information literacy skills has been given for the students of Sri Sarada College for Women, Tirunelveli alone. After the training another survey has been taken back. Paired T Test has been used to find out the differences between before training and after training.
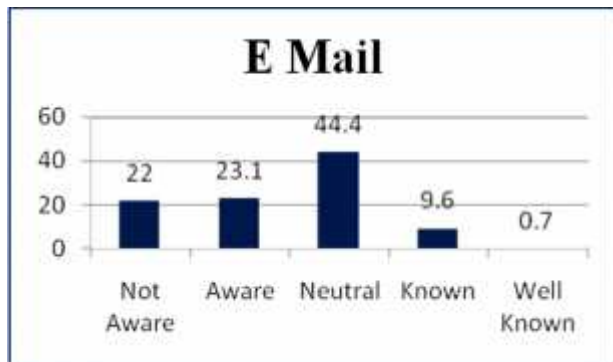
DATA ANALYSIS

Figure Number 1

Search Information:

Search information is the most important benefit of internet. Search and retrieve accurate information is the important skill to become independent effective lifelong learner. The above figure number 1 states that 36.7% and 27.4% of the respondents are being neutral and not aware of how to search information respectively. 24.8% of the respondents stated that they are aware of searching information. 10.9%, 0.2% of the respondents stated that they have known and well known respectively.
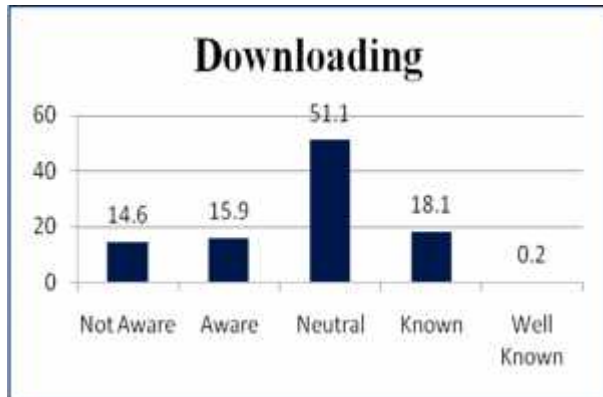
Figure Number 2

E Mail:
This is the important internet tool to communicate with people around the world virtually.The above table number 2 states that 44.4% and 22% of the respondents are being neutral and not aware of email respectively. 23.1% of the respondents stated that they are aware of using email.9.6%, 0.7% of the respondents stated that they have known and well known about email respectively.
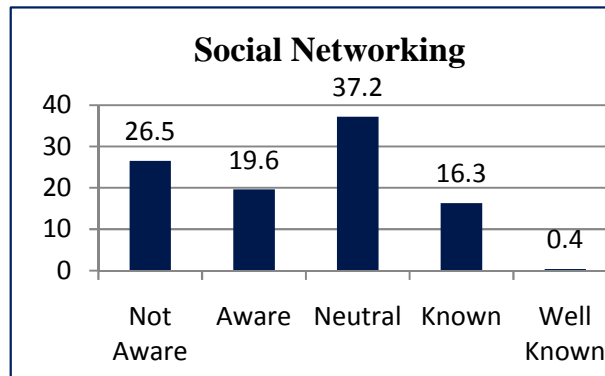
Figure Number 3

Downloading:
This is another internet tool to download documents, audio, video files. The above tablefigure number3 states that 51.1% and 14.6% of the respondents are being neutral and not aware of downloading respectively. 15.9% of the respondents stated that they are aware of downloading. 18.1%, 0.2% of the respondents stated that they have known and well known about downloading respectively.
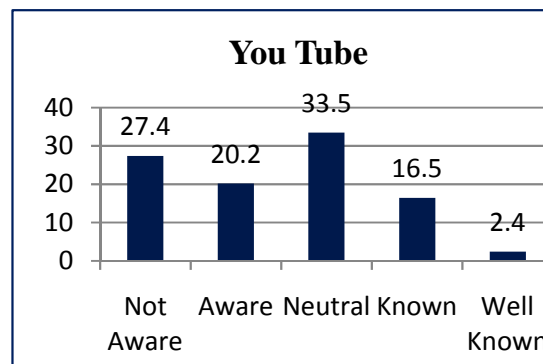
Figure Number 4

Social Networking:
This is another internet tool to connect with people, to find old friends and form a group. The above figure number 4states that 37.2% and 26.5% of the respondents are being neutral and not aware of social networking. 19.6% of the respondents stated that they are aware of social networking. 16.3%, 0.4% of the respondents stated that they have known and well known about social networking respectively.
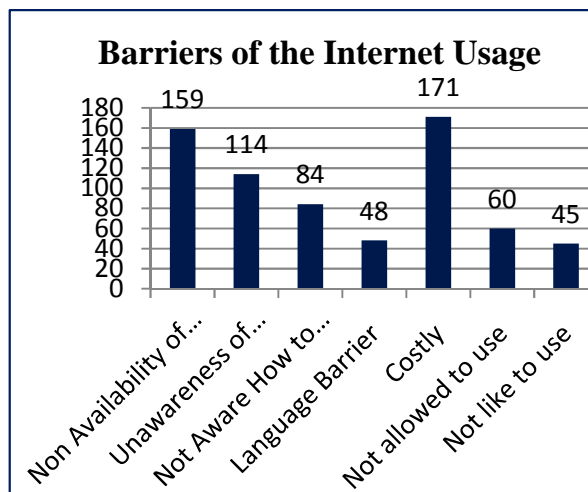
Figure Number 5

You Tube:
This is another internet tool to view and share video files. Through these video lectures and demo people could learn new things. The above figure number5 states that 33.5% and 27.4% of the respondents are being neutral and not aware of photo sharing respectively. 20.2% of the respondents stated that they are aware of photo sharing. 16.5%, 2.4% of the respondents stated that they have known and well known about photo sharing respectively.

Figure Number 6

Barriers of the internet usage:
For this question, respondents could select multiple answers, as they may have so many barriers.It is seen from the above figurenumber6 that 171 of the respondents stated that internet usage is costly to them. 159, 114, 84, 60, 48, 45 of the respondents stated that non availability of the internet, unawareness of usage benefit, not aware of how to use, not allowed to use, language barrier and not to use respectively.

Libraries can help the students to overcome these barriers by facilitating information communication technology and to impart information literacy skills among the students.

Paired Samples T Test

Training on information literacy skills has been given for the 170 hostel students of Sri Sarada College for Women, Tirunelveli. Seminar with internet and power point projector presentation, training for small group of 4/5 students have been organised for 6 months. After the training, the same survey has been taken again.

$H_0 1$:
There is no significant different on information literacy skills before and after the training.

Table Number 1

	Particulars	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Search Information - Search Information	-.903	.942	.071	-1.043	-.763	-12.721	175	.000
Pair 2	E Mail - E Mail	-.840	.911	.069	-.975	-.704	-12.234	175	.000
Pair 3	Downloading - Downloading	-.776	.942	.071	-.916	-.635	-10.919	175	.000
Pair 4	Social Networks - Social Networks	-.859	.990	.075	-1.006	-.712	-11.511	175	.000
Pair 5	You Tube - You Tube	-.903	.954	.072	-1.045	-.761	-12.560	175	.000

$H_1 1$
From the above table number 1, it can be observed that p value is 0.000 for all variables, thus null hypothesis is rejected.
Hence there is significant different before and after the training. Students enthusiastically learnt information literacy skills such as search information, e mail, downloading, social networks, you tube.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion is imparting information literacy skills among college students along with their regular study is very much important for building lifelong learning skill. Being literate is essential to one's career, to self-guided learning, to national development participation, and to Internet usage. Information literacy holds the key to sustainable development. It gives opportunity to know, to learn, to share, to participate and to compete in the global

village. When the chances are given, opportunities can be made through. Enlighten community can make empowered Country.

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