

USE OF E-RESOURCES BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY OF POLYTECHNIC COLLEGE

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Abstract Purpose –

This study aims to focus on the students and faculty of Polytechnic College on the use of electronic resources and attempts to evaluate the level of electronic information services offered by the primary information reserves of the respective Polytechnic Colleges with an opinion pool of sample respondents. Moreover, it intends to elicit the barriers in use of e-information with recommendations for the improvement of services and usage of e-resources. Data was collected by use of questionnaires, document analysis and interview guide. The study found that utilization of e-resources was not only affected by lack of computer skills and information literacy skills but also lack of enough computers and slow internet connectivity. The frequency of use of these resources indicated that a lot need to be done to increase e-resource use

Design/methodology/approach – The paper examines the use of electronic resources by students of Polytechnic College structured questionnaires.

Findings – The study finds that students express keen interest in the use of e-journals, followed by e-books, e-newspapers, e-reports, and e-articles. Least interest is shown towards the use of electronic theses and dissertations. The study reveals that the majority of students are aware of EBSCO, and Emerald Management Xtra. However, the awareness of all other databases is not quite so encouraging. Further, it is revealed that the use of printed materials is slightly more compared to that of e-resources. Use of Web OPAC is also less than expected.

Practical implications – The paper highlights the practicality of the use of electronic resources, compared to print, among the students of Polytechnic college
Originality/value – The paper reveals the degree of use of electronic resources by business students and makes some useful deductions for its subsequent generalization. Keywords Electronic journals, Online databases, Information retrieval, Internet, Business schools, India Paper type Case study

Introduction

The library is seen as a source of training and guidance to a community of learners who are concerned with navigating the complexities of locating and using digital resources and services. Moreover, the move towards a digital environment has resulted in a shift from the systematic one-to-one information flow of the past to a new model in which the users and the providers of information are able to relate in a many-to-many, dynamic relationship (Sharifabadi, 2006). Owing to the technological revolution and advent of modern information and communication technologies (ICT), the students' community no longer relies upon the traditional library services. They are, however, encouraged to trust in electronic resources with a presumption that, the wealth of information available in electronic formats can utterly accomplish their scholastic needs as a better substitute to traditional print services. Moreover, students can have direct access to electronic information with consistency and a guarantee of equity of access. Besides, students can get certain advantages in accessing electronic information like, quick browsing, compound access, retrieval speed, sharing, print . Further, they can take advantage of the multifarious growth of knowledge in different subjects by using electronic media, which is not possible by moving from library to library for physical tracking of these documents. Thus, the major question remains how well the students' community, in particular, is acquainted with the flood of electronic resources available via the channels of online databases, e-journals consortiums, open access free journals, web sites, blogs, wikis, etc. Hence, the present study attempts to evaluate the extent of students' curiosity in the use of e-information for supplementing their scholarly needs with some constructive suggestions for the effective utilization of electronic resources in the respective Polytechnic College

Conceptual framework of e-resources

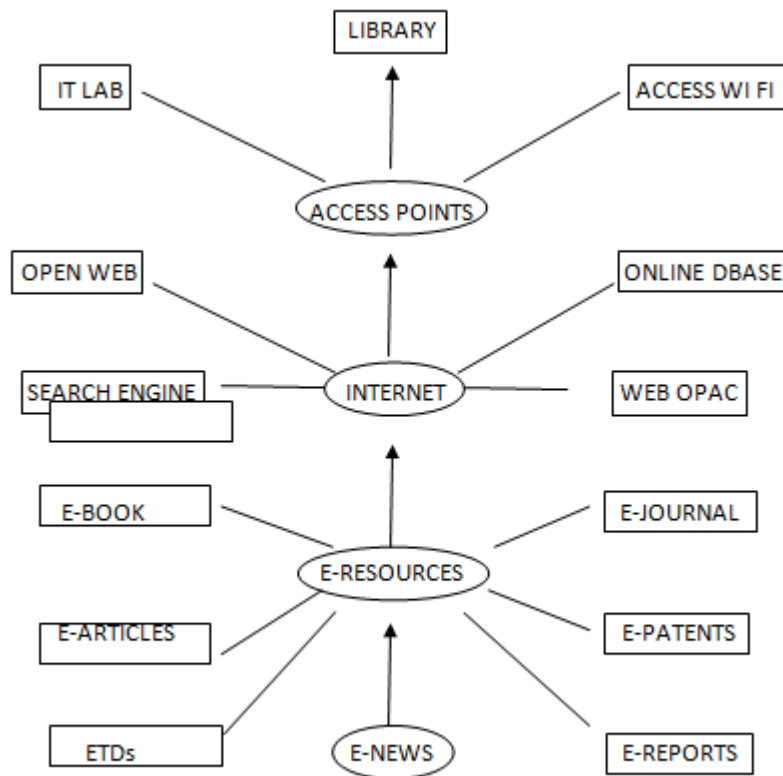
In the words of Saye (2001), "electronic resources are the resources that are generated through some electronic medium and made available to a wide range of viewers both on-site and off-site via some electronic transferring machine or internet." Therefore, electronic resources in its ambit include all kinds of digital collections in the form of e-books, e-articles, e-databases, e-journals, electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs), e-standards and patents, e-

reports, e-news, etc. Moreover, ICT has enabled the transformation of electronic information services in the forms of e-assignments, e-terms papers, e-project reports in many educational institutions and universities all across the world which impels the students’ community to use electronic resources for the betterment of their academic needs. The author conceptualizes the following model that illustrates the transmission of e-resources in academic environment.

Review of literature

Several user studies have been carried out by students, research scholars, and teachers of different institutes, colleges and universities all around the world, focusing on the use of e-resources. In this regard, highlighted that, the great majority of the faculty of Technical Educational Institution (TEI), Thessaloniki, Greece use printed sources more than e-sources, but they also use e-sources quite frequently. Use is mostly of books, web sites and printed journals. The results of this study further indicated that the use of e-sources is higher in the School of Business Administration and Economics among those who hold a PhD degree. “The impact of e-resources at Bournemouth University 2004/2006” observes that the use of and enthusiasm for, electronic resources is widespread amongst students and staff of Bournemouth University (UK). Kanungo (2007) highlighted the purposes and frequency of use of Internet by the social scientists, and their methods of locating, accessing and using information on the Internet at IGNOU. Mahamed (2007) unfolded the popularity of ICT-based resources and services among the special library users of Kerala (India). In another typical study, Weng-Shung (2008) found that the efficiency and capacity of electronic learning could be comprehensively enhanced through the application of self-organizing map/data mining methods. Ani and Ahiauzu (2008) found that there is a high level of developing electronic information resources in Nigerian University libraries through direct subscription for electronic information than conversion of information into electronic form in the library through computerization and

Figure:



FIGURE

digitization. Chu et al. (2008) revealed that the development of a mobile learning environment could employ an instructional electronic library with metadata elicited from domain experts for providing students personalized guidance during the process of their learning. Atakan (2008) in his study on, “An evaluation of the second survey on

electronic databases usage at Ankara University Digital Library” found that the most preferred databases among the faculty members were Web of Science, Science Direct, and EBSCO. For his part, Anderson (2009) highlighted that professional forums provide useful bibliographic information regarding e-resources for faculty and collection officers alike; additionally, they provide a useful starting point for discussions of desired learning outcomes, leading to better support for technology/curricular needs. Swain and Panda (2009) in the process of evaluating librarians opinion found that, availability of some key online databases are exclusively confined to only a selected few Polytechnic College and the internet-based e-resources are being well used compared with CD-ROM databases. Solis and Hampton (2009) in their findings expressed that students and professors appreciate course-specific web pages that provide access to library resources that relate directly to class assignments. However, the results of the present study may add another contribution to the corpus of available literature.

The survey analysis

A study was conducted in late 2007 for evaluating the opinions of librarians of major Technical Education of the state regarding the availability and use of e-resources at their respective Technical Education (Swain and Panda, 2009). Impressed with the study result, a set of questionnaires (available from the author) was structured with a view to testing out the keenness of the students on use of e-resources and accordingly, a predetermined sample of 200 paper-based questionnaires were personally distributed among students of major technical education at their respective Colleges. The majority of respondents handed over the filled in questionnaires to the investigator on completion. However, a few respondents who received the questionnaires and promised to mail back their responses did not respond to the survey. The surveyor visited different Colleges at different times well in accordance with his plan and finally could gather a total of 192 (96 percent) completed questionnaires. Though the surveyor anticipated responses from three different age group categories of students namely 20-30, 30-40, and 40 p , surprisingly, on scrutiny, it was found that no respondents belonged to the over 40 category. Therefore, two age bands (20-30 and 30-40 years) were used for a comparative analysis of age group opinions. The surveyor further classified the responses gender wise for drawing a difference of opinions of male to that of female respondents. The data thus collected were scrutinized, tabulated, and processed by means of the SPSS package for cross tabulation, analysis and subsequent interpretations of results as presented in the following sections.

Interest on use of types of e-resources

Even though there are plenty of e-resources available in different types and forms, the interest of users are often focused on certain specific types of e-resources. The students were asked to state if they take real interest in using all of the seven-key e-resources mentioned in Table I for the fulfillment of their academic needs.

The data reveal that students express keen interest in the use of e-journals (63.5 percent), followed by e-books (65.1 percent), e-newspapers (53.6 percent), e-reports (53.1 percent), and e-articles (46.4 percent). Less interest is shown towards the use of electronic theses and dissertations (32.8 percent). The reason for the low requirement rate for ETDS might be associated with the fact that either ETDS are less relevant to the course curricular needs of the students or their use is exclusively related to project works/assignments.

Ratings:

the availability and accessibility of e-resources Respondents were asked to rate the availability and accessibility of different types of e-resources through a five-point rating scale (unknown, poor, good, very good, Excellent). Lavene’s Test for equality of variances (ANOVA) is used here for testing the variances if they are homogeneous or heterogeneous. Table reflects the frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, F value, t value and p value against the views of each group, under the respective types of e-resources for testing the null hypothesis and interpreting the results.

Table exhibits that the average score from the ratings of e-resources done by students fall into the range “poor” to “good” consistently in all cases. Interestingly, it is found that in the 30-40 age group students have exercised their high rating option ranging from “good” to “very good” against all types of e-resources excepting electronic theses and dissertations. It is presumed that the 31-40 age group students must be having some n-service background with earlier exposure to certain e-library environments. In all fairness, it is deduced that, although students have shown the right interest towards the use of e-resources in Table I, their overall ratings on availability and accessibility of these resources (Table) are not quite encouraging. Therefore, a policy for the procurement of e-books, e-databases, setting up of electronic theses and dissertation projects in respective business schools needs to be developed and expanded. Awareness of management specific online databases The study attempted to evaluate the students’ awareness of various management related online databases. The gathered

opinions relating to such questions are depicted in Table. It is found that majority of students are aware of EBSCO (62.5 percent), followed by Emerald Management Xtra (52.6 percent). However, the awareness of all other online databases is not so encouraging. Indeed, the awareness for no fewer than six of the online databases was less than 40 percent. Thus, it is deduced that core online databases are not available to many remote Polytechnic college of the state or the students of respective less exposure to the domain of online database services. Therefore, it is presumed that e-information literacy of students' community is the most key area that needs to be implemented. Frequency of use of search engines As search engines play crucial role in accessing electronic information on the web, it is quite essential to understand the frequency of use of some popular search engines.

Time spent on use of e-resources

The study intended to know how much time the users spend, an average daily, on accessing electronic resources. The responses to this query are figure. The table shows that nearly half the respondents (46.9 percent) spend about 2-4 hours daily for the use of e-resources. Some 29.2 percent spent 1-2 hours, while 23.9 percent spent more than four hours. Some of the students who spare more than four hours a day on use of e-resources must be some industrious students serious on studies and research. Interestingly, though, it was female students who spend this longer period of time and these differences might well be worth exploring in future.

Frequency of use of Web OPAC

The Web OPAC, in recent times, is considered as a guide to e-information. Thus, students were asked how frequently they use Web OPAC. The views obtained from the respondents are presented in Table VII for analysis. As the table reveals, over half of students (53.1 percent) avail themselves of Web OPAC services occasionally, some 33 percent said they usually used them, while only 14 percent said they never did; and two-thirds of those responding never were older students. Thus, it is deduced that use of Web OPAC by the students' community has not yet been completely explored. It further indicates that either the students' community is not much accustomed to the use of Web OPAC or the construction of institutions' Web OPAC is devoid of added features like indexes to e-articles on different subjects, contents of e-information on CDs, e-books, etc. which need inclusion.

Problems cited by respondents

The respondents were asked to state the problems and constraints encountered by them in accessing electronic resources in their respective Polytechnic Colleges through an open-ended questionnaire. A few points cited by different students reflect the cause of their disinclination to the use of e-resources. In this context, one student reported that e-resources are useful but their availability is restricted by the institution's subscription to a limited few online databases. Another respondent remarked, "It's difficult to access e-resources when the source of their availability is not known" Some other respondent inscribed, "Our library web site is not comprehensive enough to browse e-information" A few more opined that they are still not aware of which e-information sources are relevant to their course curriculum. A few of them reported that they are overloaded with classes; therefore, they hardly find any time to browse e-information. A few other respondents expressed that they do not find much help from library staff in locating e-resources pertaining to their course work.

Recommendations

On the whole, the findings of the survey indicate that the use of e-resources by the students of Polytechnic Colleges needs to be considerably optimized. Therefore, the author, from the collected opinions of the respondents and his own gathered experiences and knowledge, recommends certain cases for the improvement of use of e-resources in the academic spheres of business schools of this part of the world that are expressed as below:

- (1) Librarians of Polytechnic College should develop specific web pages, blogs and wikis accommodating the course oriented topics in conjunction with navigation facilities to all subscribed online databases, e-journals, and open access e-information resources. These course-oriented web pages should be linked to library web sites, which, in turn, can help the students use these resources easily and conveniently.

Table-I

FREQUENCY OF USE			AGE GROUP				GENDER			
			20-30		31-40		MALE		FEMALE	
	NO	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
USUALLY	63	32.8	62	33.3	1	16.7	43	36.2	20	27.4
OCCASIONALLY	102	53.1	101	54.3	1	16.7	51	42.8	44	60.3

NEVER	27	14.1	23	12.4	44	66.6	25	21	9	12.3
TOTAL	192	100	186	100	6	100	119	100	73	100

(2) Library staff should take utmost care to update the library web sites/blogs regularly. The periodic updating of web sites would ensure the provision of most current and up to date e-information.

(3) WAN/LAN and wireless infrastructural facilities across the campus should be upgraded and irregularities in Internet services should be properly taken care of so that students can gain absolute confidence in using Internet and subsequent utilization of e-resources and services.

(4) Each business school library should adopt a wide-ranging acquisition policy for the procurement and subscription renewals of e-journals, online databases, etc. so that adequate availability of qualitative e-resources can be assured to users.

(5) Libraries should take active participation in various e-journal consortiums for maximizing procurement of e-journals at minimal cost on sharing basis by which institutes can afford to balanced e-subscriptions without much financial burden.

Conclusion

The status of use of electronic resources among the students of Polytechnic Colleges, as presumed from the findings of the survey, is still at its infancy. The student community has yet to explore the potential benefits of various forms of e-resources that could suitably help their scholastic needs. Therefore, Library professionals, policy makers and administrators have to take some serious innovative measures to improve the provision of e-services through some dynamic electronic movements in the wake of providing qualitative services towards students’ flourishing exposure to global electronic information. Additionally, Librarians of business schools should volunteer with the idea of implementing extended applications of Library 2.0 enhanced with RSS feeds, wikis, blogs, tagging, ranking etc. to facilitate two way interactions between users and library professionals. Since the academic needs of the students of business schools of the country are common in general, the librarians’ community should address all the assorted facets of Library 2.0 in the professional assembly for its successful implementation and thereby promoting an effective transmission of electronic information sources into the academic spheres of the business schools of the state and country as well. Moreover, digitization is one more issue that could be taken in hand alongside for the evolution of the libraries towards an affable digital environment.

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