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Use of the Internet by Research Scholars and Post-Graduate Students of the Science Faculty of Aligarh Muslim University

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Introduction

The Internet is a "network of networks" that consists of millions of smaller domestic, academic, business, and government networks. Internet is also described as the worldwide publicly accessible network of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet switching using the standard Internet Protocol (IP). Internet is the transport vehicle for the information stored in files or documents on another computer. It carries together various information and services, such as electronic mail, online chat, file transfer, and the interlinked Web pages and other documents of the World Wide Web. The Internet itself does not contain information, it is a slight misstatement to say a "document was found on the Internet." It would be more correct to say it was found through or using the Internet. What it was found in (or on) is one of the computers linked to the Internet.

Every aspect of our day to day life is affected by the Internet. Whether it is shopping, business, banking, communication, paying bills, social gathering, party, learning, education etc. Internet is everywhere, knocking at our door, making our life easier and smooth. Moreover, when it comes to education and research Internet is paving way for a great leap and sure library and information centers has no exception. The Internet made the information on our finger tips. The libraries of the developed world has adopted the Internet facilities to provide the fast and better library services to its patron but this is not the case with many developing nations and third world countries. The libraries of the third world countries still do not have the basic Internet access facilities in many cases because of the poor

funding and budget crisis, while we are talking about web 2.0 in countries like United States, Europe and other developed nations. This paper has also tried to explore broadly the importance of Internet with regard to access of information sources and its utilities for library patrons in academic organizations and institutions.

Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is a residential academic institution located in the city of Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, India. Originally it was Mohammedan Anglo-Oriental College, which was founded by a great Muslim social reformer Sir Syed Ahmed Khan in 1875 and in 1920 it was granted a status of Central University by an Act of Indian Parliament. Modelled on the University of Cambridge, it was among the first institutions of higher learning set up during the British Raj. Aligarh Muslim University offers more than 250 courses in traditional and modern branch of education. The University is open to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or gender. For more information please logon to university website: www.amu.ac.in.

Literature Review

Pangannaya (2000) is an attempt to investigate the use of Internet resources by the academic community of Mysore University, using survey as the research tool. The paper has investigated the faculty wise frequency and length of use of the Internet. Moreover, it describes the emergence of Internet, has revolutionized the academic world.

Darries (2004) discusses issues related to Internet-based reference . An electronic survey was conducted using the web and e-mail to distribute the questionnaire. The target population was the heads of reference services at large libraries and the directors at smaller libraries of the 36 higher education institutions in South Africa. The response rate to the questionnaire was 28 (30.4 %); two returned questionnaires were spoilt. These results showed that all libraries surveyed have Internet access, and all but one provided access to their users. Librarians had access to the Internet for a longer period than their users. User Internet training tended to be on a one-to-one basis at the point-of-use.

Jay and Webber (2005) conducted a research study which investigated the impact of the Internet on reference services in public libraries in England. A questionnaire was administered in 2003 to a sample of the public library authorities in England, investigating the use of the Internet for receiving or answering reference enquiries, the use of electronic reference sources, and the nature of public library web sites. The paper concludes by identifying the need for public library managers to assess the changing role of professionals and Para-professionals in delivering reference services, and to provide appropriate training. It also notes that despite the discussion of real-time reference, asynchronous digital reference is still more common in England.

Objectives and Methodology

- Identify the preferred place for Internet use;
- Discover the purpose of Internet use;
- Understand what Internet-based services are accessed by users;
- Discover the impact of Internet on print information sources;
- Discover the most satisfactory source of information;
- Assess user rating of Internet information sources in their academic activities;
- Examine user dependence on and satisfaction with Internet vis-à-vis print sources for their academic pursuits;
- Learn about the problems faced by users while using Internet sources and services and their possible solutions.

The present study was conducted using a questionnaire-based survey method.

The sample population was research scholars and PG students of the science faculty of Aligarh Muslim University, India. There are around 500 research scholars and PG students in the science faculty in AMU. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, with 95 completed and returned, and 91 found to be usable.

Analysis of Responses

The collected data were analyzed, classified, and tabulated.

Table 1: Place

S. No.	Location	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	Department	51	33.77
2	Library	66	43.70
3	Computer Centre	19	12.58
4	Cyber Café	15	9.93

(Multiple answers were permitted)

Table 1 reveals that 51 (33.77%) users are using the Internet-based information services from the department, while 66 (43.70%) research scholars and PG students browsing the Internet in the library. On the other end 19 (12.58%) users prefer to use access it in the computer centre of AMU and 15 (9.93%) research scholars and PG students using the Internet-based information sources from cyber cafés.

Table 2: Purpose

S. No.	Purpose	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	Research	84	51.21
2	Communication	32	19.51
3	Update yourself	27	16.46
4	Career development	21	12.80
5	Any other purpose	--	--

(Multiple answers were permitted)

According to Table 2, most of the research scholars and PG students of the science faculty use the Internet for their research work. The table clearly shows that 84 (51.21%) users are accessing the Internet sources for their research work, while 32 (19.51%) use it for seeking better career prospects. In addition to that, 27 (16.46%) use the Internet to keep abreast with the latest developments in

their fields and 21 (12.80%) use it for communication.

Table 3--Access tp databases

S. No.	Online Databases	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	J-Gateway	58	44.96
2	Science direct	26	20.15
3	Taylor and Francis	20	15.50
4	Net Library	16	12.40
5	Ingenta	9	6.97
6	OCLC	--	--
7	Emerald Full text	--	--
8	INDEST	--	--

(Multiple answers were permitted)

The research scholars and PG students of the science faculty in AMU have access to the above listed databases.

Table 3 clearly shows that 58 (44.96%) use online journals through J-gateway, while 26 (20.15%) access Science Direct for academic pursuits. The Taylor and Francis database was accessed by only 20 (15.50%) users, while NetLibrary is used by only 16 (12.40%) and Ingenta group of information services accessed by 9 (6.97%) users only. Respondents believe that print information sources have been affected by the use of the Internet, with 52 (57.14%) agreeing on this, while 39 (42.85%) users said that the Internet does not affect the use of print information.

Table 4: Most satisfactory source of information

S. No.	Source gives satisfactory information	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	Internet	70	46.05
2	Journals / Magazine	50	32.89
3	Newspapers	20	13.15
4	Colleague / friends	5	3.28
5	Others	7	4.60

(Multiple answers were permitted)

Table 4 clearly shows that Internet-based information is the most satisfactory one for the research scholars and PG students. Therefore, 70 (46.05%) users opined that the Internet-based information services are the most satisfactory for their academic activities, while 50 (32.89%) chose Journals/Magazines. In the same way 20 (13.15%) users rely on newspapers, while 5 (3.28%) users approach to their friends for information purposes and 7 (4.60%) rely on the other sources of information for quenching their information thirst.

Table 5: User's dependence on Internet vis-à-vis print sources

S. No.	Dependence on Internet	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	26 to 50%	44	48.35
3	50 to 100%	28	30.76
2	1 to 10%	11	12.08
4	11 to 25%	8	8.79

(Multiple answers were not permitted)

Table 5 gives a clear idea about the extent of users' dependence on Internet-based information sources vis-à-vis print sources. The tables clearly shows that 44 (48.35%) users believe that they fulfill 26-50% of their information needs from Internet-based information sources, while 28 respondent (30.76%) use Internet-based information services up to 50-100% for their academic pursuits.

Table 6: User rating of Internet for the academic pursuit

S. No.	Rating	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	Average	47	52.64
2	High	36	39.56
3	Low	6	6.59
4	Very low	2	2.19
5	Not helpful at all	--	--

(Multiple answers were not permitted)

It is evident from table 6 that 47 (52.64%) users have rated the utility of Internet-based information services as average for their academic purposes, while 36 (39.56%) users rated the Internet as high. Moreover, 6 (6.59%) and 2 (2.19%) rated it as low and very low respectively.

Table 7--User's satisfaction with Internet vis-à-vis printed medium

S. No.	User's Satisfaction level	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	High	41	45.05
2	Average	36	39.56
3	Very high	14	15.38
4	Non satisfactory	--	--
5	Low	--	--

(Multiple answers were not permitted)

Table 7 clearly shows the results users' satisfaction level with Internet-based information services. The table shows that 41 (45.05%) users are highly satisfied with the Internet-based information services in comparison to print sources. A total of 36 (39.65%) the Internet as a source of information as average, while 14 (15.38%) users are very highly satisfied with Internet-based information services.

Table 8--Problems with the Internet access in the department/Library

S. No.	Problems in Internet access	No. of response	Percentage (%)
4	Slow Internet speed	72	47.68
3	Lack of enough computer	28	18.54
1	Too many hits	19	12.58
5	Missing link	17	11.25
6	Non-Technical staff	12	7.94
2	Irrelevant information	3	1.98

The major barrier to Internet access is slow speed. 72 (47.68%) users complained about the slow Internet speed, 28 (18.54%) users feel that there are lack of sufficient Internet connected terminals in the department or library, which keeps them from using their time well. Moreover 19 (12.58%) users face the problem of too many hits or information overload, 17 (11.25%) reported the problem of the missing or broken links. In addition to that, 12 (7.94%) users feels that the staff in the computer section of department or library need training and sound technical knowledge. 3 (1.98%) users complained about the irrelevant retrieval or lack of precision while trying to find information on the Internet.

Recommendations

This study suggests solutions to the technical problems of Internet access faced by the research scholars and PG students of science faculty in AMU.

Table 9: Suggestions to improve Internet services

S. No.	Suggestion to improve Internet	No. of response	Percentage (%)
1	High speed Internet	62	37.80
2	Installation of new systems	41	25
3	Increase time period for Internet use	24	14.63
4	Trained technical staff	23	14.02
5	Others	14	8.53

(Multiple answers were permitted)

It is evident from Table 9 that the largest portion of users, 62 (37.80%), see increased Internet speed as the most pressing need, while 41 users (25%) think that number of computer systems equipped with Internet facility should be increased to improve the Internet-based information services. In addition to that, 24 (14.63%) users say that an increase in Internet use hours will boost the use Internet information sources and services, while staff with sound technical knowledge is the choice of 23 (14.02%) users. Only 14, (8.53%) users suggested other.

Conclusion

Most research scholars and PG students have Internet access in their departments. Users from science faculty access the Internet in various locations, mostly in their departments and in the university central library, as well as the university computer centre. Cybercafés are the least preferable location. Most respondents use the Internet for their research workto keep abreast of new developments, for communication, and for career development information. Most use the J-gateway to access online journals either. Moreover, the present study found that print information sources have been affected by the use of Internet-based information services, and the user satisfaction is quite high vis-à-vis print sources. In addition to that, research scholars and PG students find Internet-based information services easy to use. It is clear from the present study that most use the Internet for searching for subject oriented information. A majority of users are satisfied with the accuracy of the Internet-based information sources.

These findings make it clear that the Internet is a good source of information and a good channel for accessing online information sources to research scholars and PG students of the science faculty in Aligarh Muslim University.

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