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Internet Use by Researchers: A Study of Annamalai University, Annamalainagar

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Introduction

There has been a more change in academic libraries because of the revolution in e-resources. The networked information and access to information resources rather than holdings have become the order of the day, all over the world academic libraries besides, individuals subscribe electronic journals to meet their expectation. Academic libraries of all sizes and types are embracing digital collection, although most libraries will continue to offer both print and digital collections for many years to come. New purchases and purchases of journals, magazines, and abstracting and indexing services are heavily weighted towards digital, while digital books (e-books) are only beginning to become a present library collection. Libraries prefer digital resources for many reasons such as digital collection save the space and are relatively easy to maintain.

Growth of Electronic Resources

The most rapidly changing pervasive and publicized aspects of library and information studies are the electronic resources. In a relatively short period of the time, Electronic resource have expanded from a few dozen computerized bibliographies databases to include the over whelming information available on the Internet use of Electronic resource has moved from accessing online databases with a dumb terminal to surfing the world wide web with a high speed multimedia personal computer that has more power than the early main frame computers.

The complexity of electronic resource has grown to comprise of library online catalogue list of CD-Rom, online journals, database, newspapers, reference materials open access journals, e-books, major publishers and online bookshops amounting to the Electronic resource is not easy, or so it appears, at the same time there is a pressing need for guidance in the use of such resources.

Advantage of Electronic Resources

Electronic information resource offers enormous benefits. They provide users faster, more convenient, 24 hours desktop access from home and college campus or library as well as special features such as hypertext link to related information graphics, audio, video and animation. These resources also offer benefits to

libraries. They don't take up valuable space on library shelves; they can't be stolen or destroyed and depending on the licenses agreement, information at the same time.

Disadvantage of Electronic Resources

The college and university libraries face enormous challenges and opportunities. The amount of information that libraries need to acquire continues to increase the resources available are insufficient. The libraries face a number of problems relating to the new media that are yet to be resolved. Subscriptions to material in electronic forms are more expensive than subscription to material in traditional printed form. In some cases, not only an additional monetary payment to acquire both formats, there are considerable additional expenses in providing staff and infrastructure to acquire the paper copy and the electronic version.

ICT Developments at Annamalai University

Annamalai University is a unitary, teaching and residential university. It was founded by the munificence of the farsighted and noble hearted philanthropist and patron of letters the late Hon'ble Dr. Rajah Sir Annamalai Chettiar of Chettinad, Kt, LL.D., D.Litt. He started several colleges and ultimately the University in 1929. Since its inception, it has progressively tried to realize the aims of the noble Founder Pro-Chancellor. After him, his illustrious son Padma Bhushan Dr. Rajah Sir Muthiah Chettiar of Chettinad, was the Pro-Chancellor from 1948 to 1984 and he sedulously nurtured the growth and development of the University. The present Pro-Chancellor Dr.M.A.M. Ramaswamy, a philanthropist and a patron of sports, is the distinguished son of Dr.Rajah Sir Muthiah Chettiar. The University has had the unique good fortune of having a succession of eminent Vice-Chancellors to guide its destinies. During the last eighty years the University has grown rapidly and consolidated its position as a unitary and residential University with Forty nine Departments of Study and over 2,500 members on its teaching staff. Annamalainagar is already a busy and full-fledged University town east of Chidambaram, the abode of Lord Nataraja. The University campus, including the colleges, hostels and playgrounds occupies an area of about thousand acres.

Main Library

The seed of the main library germinated in 1920 with a token deposit of 200 books, when Sri Meenakshi College was founded. Then main was initially housed in the eastern wing of the Administrative building. It moved into its present abode in 1959, opening a new chapter in its history. The building was designed by internationally reputed architects namely Messers. Prynne, Abbot and Davis and the building was named after the former Vice Chancellor of Annamalai University, Dr. C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar, in recognition of his valuable services to the country and to this university. The present building was opened by His Excellency Shri. Bishnuram Medhi, the then Governor of Madras, on 22nd October, 1959. Within a built-in area of about 36,000 Sq.ft. The building is a 'H' shaped structure, with a well controlled entrance lobby, a spacious Central Reading Hall, Reference Hall, Periodicals hall, and Bindery on the Eastern wing and Administrative Sections, closed access stack-rooms, Reprographic Section in the Western wing and open access stack rooms on both the wings.

The Annamalai University Library has the unique privilege of being selected as a full-fledged Depository for the World Bank Publications ever since 1986, and through this offer, our library gets the entire publications of the Bank at free of cost, and it is getting renewed every two years, based on the utility of the collections. The World Bank Cell is kept opened in all working days for reference. The photocopy service available inside the library is useful for the researchers to

get Xerox copy of the collections. The compact discs (CD), contain information collected by the International Bank for reconstruction and development and the index of publications & guide to Information Products, and services of the World Bank are available in discs.

The Library is one of the few University Libraries in the country to have modernized its entire operations. The automation project was started in the year 1995 with special grant of fifty lakhs rupees received from the UGC-INFLIBNET. Through the following facilities, the user community will have unique advantage of availing of the library services round the clock. Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), Internet Service, CD-ROM Service.

Literature Review

Schleyer, Spallek, and Torres-Urguidy (1998) examined a profile of current Internet users in dentistry (that is, professionals who either subscribed to dental discussion lists or who frequented dental websites with high traffic) dentists, assistants, hygienists, dental students, and educators. The study reported that respondents used the Internet for discussing clinical cases, obtaining diagnostic and therapeutic information, buying dental products, communicating with patients, and participating in continuing education. A majority of the respondents (80%) considered the Internet to be a useful or very useful resource in dentistry.

Nicholas, et al. (2003) conducted a study in the UK to examine the use of the web for health information and advice. More than 1,300 people were surveyed. The study showed that 66% of the respondents accessed the Internet from home, 28% from work, and the remainder (6%) used a combination of both work and home.

Maheswarappa and Emmanuel (2003) identified an exploratory study at Gulbarga city, showing a high rate of computer knowledge. Mahajan (2006) conducted a study on internet use by researchers in Punjab University, Chandigarh, which analyzed how the convergence of information and communication technologies, as embodied by the Internet, has transformed the present day society into a knowledge society. Chandran (2000) carry out a study on the use of Internet resources and services in S.V. University, Tirupati, indicating that more than 56 percent of respondents used to the Internet to access information. Kaur (2000) studied Guru Nanak Dev University, and Bavakutty and Salih (1999) conducted a survey at Calicut University, which showed that students, research scholars, and faculty members used the Internet on education and research purpose. Madhusudhan (2007) conducted a survey on Internet use by research scholars at Delhi University, which revealed that most respondents used search engines more than subject gateways or web directories to locate information. Negative attitudes as well as conservatism act as barriers to effective Internet use.

Asemi (2005) did a case study of Medical Sciences University of Isfahan (MUI), Iran. The results of the study showed that all the respondents used the Internet frequently because all faculties had an Internet connection. It was revealed that the researchers of the university were getting quality health information and patient care through the Internet. Fifty-five percent of respondents searched for scientific health information through the Internet because the university library provided access to databases and online journals students and staff.

Ajuwon (2006) conducted a study of the physicians' use of the Internet for health information for patient care at the University College Hospital (UCH) Ibadan, Nigeria. The findings revealed that 98% of the respondents had used the Internet. A majority (76%) accessed the Internet from cyber cafes. Ninety percent reported that they had obtained information from the Internet for patient care; of this number, 76.2% had searched a database.

Chestnutt and Reynolds (2006) conducted a study of 457 dentists in Wales to identify how patient information on the Internet has influenced the delivery of oral

care and the use practitioners make of the Internet. Thirty-nine percent of respondents agreed that information gained from the Internet had led to patients demanding inappropriate care.

Objectives of the Study

The study generally aims to analyze the Internet use by the science and social science research scholars of Annamalai University, Chidambaram. Specific objectives are:

- Investigate how respondents acquired Internet skills.
- Access respondents' experience in the use of Internet.
- Determine the frequency of Internet use.
- Determine the amount of the time spent on the Internet.
- Find out the awareness about electronic resources

Methodology

The aim of the present survey was to study the use of the Internet by the researchers at Annamalai University, Chidambaram in all the three fields of knowledge – Sciences, Social Sciences and humanities, so as to determine its impact on their academic routine. For this purpose, 100 questionnaires were distributed, 50 to researchers in sciences and 50 to researchers in social sciences. This was in proportion to the total number of researchers working in these fields. The results of the survey indicate:

Findings and Recommendations

The Researchers in Sciences are more positive about the use of Internet and its impact on their educational experience. All of them (100%) have a positive attitude toward the Internet and feel comfortable gaining information through it for academic and personal purposes. About 60 % of researchers in social sciences also agree with the importance of Internet's information resources.

Nearly 65 % of the researchers in sciences use the Internet facility provided in their respective departments, where as 35% go to cybercafés to have an access of Internet. 55 % of the researchers who use Internet in social sciences use Internet in their respective departments whereas 45 % of them use cybercafés.

80 % of the Internet use is for academic purposes by the researchers in science, whereas only 45 % in social sciences use it for academic purposes.

Nearly 70 % of researchers in sciences use the Internet for 5-6 hours per seek whereas about 30 % use it for about 10-12 hours per week. In the social sciences, 85 % of the researchers use it for 2-3 hours per week and 15 % for about an hour per week.

About 90 % of the researchers in the sciences have gone online to find information from the e-journals that are available through the university library whereas only 45 % in social sciences are using such a facility.

100 % of researchers in the sciences frequently look for emails whereas 72 % of researchers in the social sciences have email accounts.

Only 30 % of researchers in the sciences subscribe to academically – oriented mailing lists, whereas 13 % of social science researchers are doing so.

Only 35 % of the researchers in the sciences have published their papers in e-journals, where as only 15 % of the researchers in the social sciences have published their papers in e-journals.

Totally 80 % of researchers in the sciences also use the Internet for seeking jobs online, with 35 % in the case of researchers in social sciences.

About 70 % of the researchers in the sciences, 25 % in the social sciences use document delivery services provided by various information / documentation centers.

Most of the researchers in sciences 70 % and social sciences 85 % started using Internet only after joining the university.

Around 95 % of the researchers in sciences who use the Internet agreed that Internet use had a positive impact on their study and research. 47 % of the researchers in social sciences agree with them.

The majority of the researchers in sciences and social sciences who use Internet for acquiring information use search engines such as Yahoo, Google, Infoseek and msn.

Recommendations

- The University administration should as a matter of urgency put create programmes and infrastructures to train its staff on ICT with particular reference to the use of Internet facilities.
- Staff should be encouraged to the Internet facilities on campus, which will justify the large investment
- There is need to develop knowledge about use of electronic theses and dissertations, technical reports, patents, etc., available online.
- Efforts should be made to increase the speed of the Internet access and shorten the time it takes to view and download web pages.
- Information regarding the popular and the latest websites with their addresses should be displayed on the notice board in the computer lab.

Conclusion

The Internet as medium of communication is useful in the higher education. It is important that Annamali University maintain the Virtual Learning Resource Centre with all necessary technology, for the effective use of information in higher education and research. It is evident from the result that Internet in the sciences are making maximum use of Internet facility provided by the university; however, researchers in other fields still rely on bibliographies and printed journals. The academic staff should encourage the use of electronic information sources for study and research. The librarians should provide proper training in the use of online information sources.

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