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sumaira Jabeen Baba

University of Kashmir, India, sumairababa2524@gmail.com

Dr. Shabir Ahmed Ganaie

University of Kashmir, India

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Utilization of Library Website(s) in Higher Educational Institutions

Sumaira Jabeen

Email: sumairababa2524@gmail.com

Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kashmir.

Dr. Shabir Ahmed Ganaie

H.O.D, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kashmir.

Abstract

In present circumstances technology (web technologies) are offering libraries a new world of opportunities to connect patrons with numerous innovative activities to widen their field of ideas. One such activity can be usage of online resources (e.g. library website), which has become an important component in providing and extending library services. But library website(s) need to be user friendly in design, access and use. In this context the present study is focused on usability of library website, associated to a higher educational institution (University of Kashmir). To investigate the usage, frequency, satisfaction among users with regard to their institutional (university of Kashmir) website. By employing questionnaire as a tool to attain feedback from users. Later on, the gathered results were analyzed carefully in order to determine the areas for improvement and to provide valuable information regarding how the users make use of their institutional (library) website(s).

Keywords: *Website, Library, Users, Education, Usage.*

Introduction

Library website has become a significant aspect of the higher educational institutions. It becomes difficult for users to access and retrieve information if the website is not properly designed. Therefore, library website needs to be user friendly in design, access and use. That helps in growing its (website) usability (i.e., the ease at which an average person can use the website to achieve specific goals) which is considered as one of the most important aspects of designing a website (**Cappel & Hung, 2007**). Moreover, academic library websites believed to provide information as well as access to several services (online catalogues, electronic databases, digital collections, different library tutorials of the institution whom they are associated with). Thus, academic library websites act as gateways to information for faculty members, research scholars, students etc. Through which users can ask reference questions online, conduct research in databases, place interlibrary loan requests online, and obtain academic articles electronically (**Cohen & Still, 1999**). But website should be designed in such a manner so that it can appeal as much as users, it must provide easy access to required and

relevant information through its homepage. Library website goals should be, to establish clear site navigation and organization, to enable content management system, to develop a unified institutional visual identity throughout the site, and to utilize user centered categorization (**Turnbow, Kasianovitz, Snyder, Gilbert & Yamamoto, 2005**). In this connection, **Vandecreek (2005)** studied usability analyses of Northern Illinois libraries website. Data was collected using a trilateral approach: usability testing, focus group sessions and survey questionnaire. Findings reveal that the data collected by using above methods was useful for redesigning library website. Furthermore, **Kim (2010)** studied the user perceptions of university library websites, a wide range of users were categorized based on their academic role differences, used for study. Findings reveal that users perceived university library websites somewhat difficult to use. As a result, it was recommended to design user focused library websites that enhance the usability of website (s).

Role of Library Website (s) in Academic Sphere

Advancement in technologies (world wide web) permit users to exploit the potential of various learning and communication tools in more effective manner. Even in recent years, the changed library services provided through the internet and computers brought numerous opportunities (**Liu and Briggs, 2015**). Especially in educational (higher) institutions library website (s) has an important role to play, as it (library website) is a virtual public face, which acts as the path to the collections, services and is used as a window to the World Wide Web (WWW). As a result, more libraries move towards providing services in a web environment, by making electronic information resources more realistic and more attractive that improves access to remote library collections (**Madhusudhan & Nagabhushanam, 2012**). Apart from this, academic library website pages can be classified into: homepage, directional: library hours and policy; reference: collections and resource guides; and combination (**Hightower et. al., 1998**). Infact, a library website (academic or public) facilitates its users to connect with the library 24 hours a day. “Today it is possible for student to conduct research for papers without ever stepping in the academic library. They can ask reference questions virtually; conduct research in databases; and place interlibrary loan requests electronically. All of these functions utilize library websites, requiring those websites to be timely and easy to use” (**Connell, 2008**). Also, these (websites of libraries) provides virtual library guide to the physical facilities including collections, services and infrastructure available in the library. Along with the web-based user education that provides a high degree of interactivity and flexibility to the users. In addition to this, some library web sites have some web forms for suggestions and comments on the library

Services that may be helpful in acquiring some publications, interlibrary loan request form for document delivery, Ask-a-Librarian forms, on line reservation form or user survey form etc. (Bhatnagar, 2005). In order to remain relevant with needs of users (faculty members/ students) believed to more regularly to expand information searches to include the collection of other libraries. Infact, faculty members were found requesting inter library loan through there library website in most of the academic institutions (Dickenson, 2006).

Objectives

1. To analyze the use of library website in university of Kashmir.
2. To reveal factors/ opinions regarding the library website.

Methodology

The scope of present study is confined to three faculties (Faculty of Social Science, School of Applied Sciences & Technology, School of Earth & Environmental Sciences) in university of Kashmir, selecting two departments from each faculty. As a result, six (6) teaching departments in university of Kashmir i.e. History, Media Education Research Centre, Computer science, Electronics & Instrumentation technology, Earth Sciences, Environmental science were chosen by simple random sampling and respondents were selected by systematic sampling i.e. $K = N/n$ where K = sampling interval, N = size of universe and n = sample size. Further to collect response from respondents (faculty members, scholars and students) questionnaire has been employed, which comprises of queries related to the study.

Data Analysis & Interpretation

The collected data is presented and analyzed with the help of eight statistical forms (figures). Among them figure (fig).1 shows that highest 56% of Faculty members have internet experience of 5-10 years, followed by 25% having 3-5 years and 19% with 1-3 years of experience. On the other side highest 50% of Research scholars have internet experience of 3-5 years, followed by 29% having 5-10 years, 13% with 1-3 years and 8% having <1 year of internet experience. Besides this highest 47% of Students have internet experience of <1 year, followed by 26% having 3-5 years, 21% with 1-3 years and 5% having 5-10 years of internet experience. Further overall rating highlights that highest 33% of users have 3-5 years of internet experience followed by 26% having <1 year, while 23% with 5-10 years and lowest 18% having 1-3 years of internet experience.

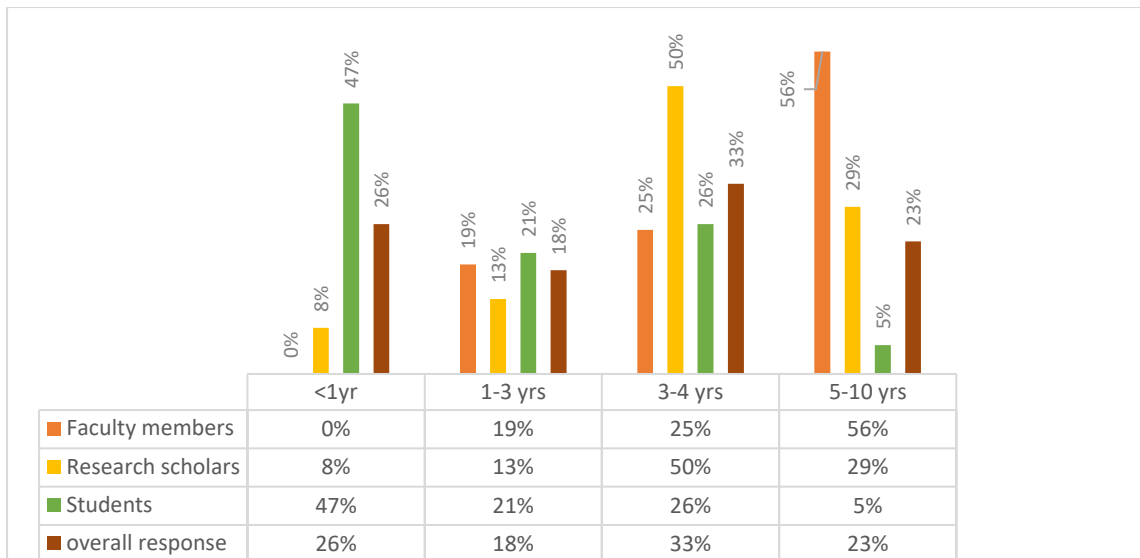


Fig 1: Experience of Respondents with Internet

As evident from fig.2 highest 41% of users use Library website Often, followed by 36% of users who use it Rarely, while 14% use it Daily, and lowest 9% users Never use it. The top contributors to highest 41% are Faculty members contributing 56% followed by Research scholars with 42% and students with 34%. However, students are top contributors of lowest 9% contributing 11% to it.

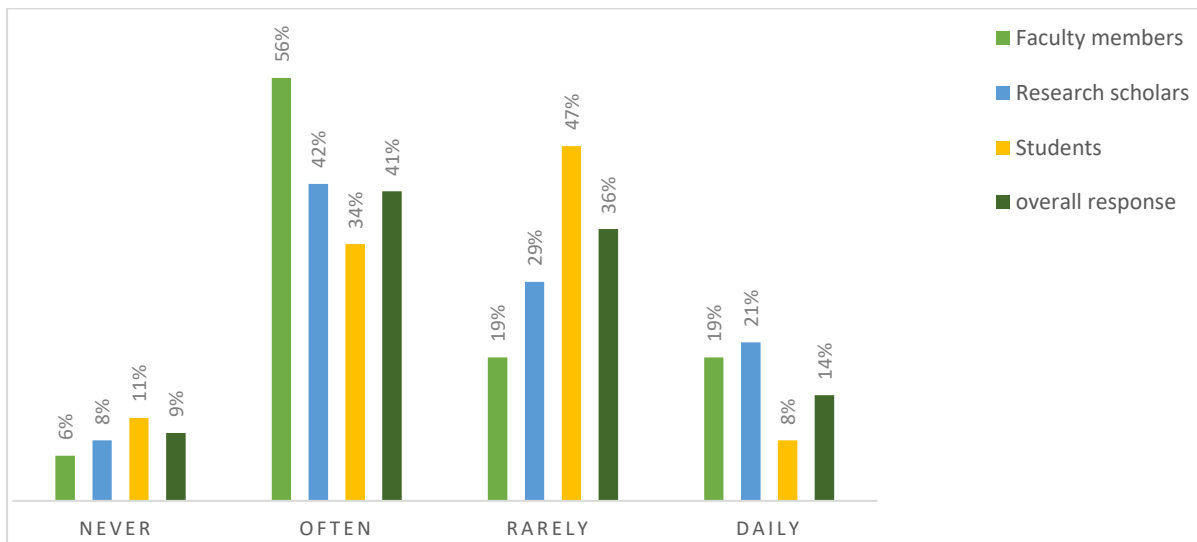


Fig 2: Frequency of Website Usage

As evident from fig 3 highest 45% of users agree with OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) retrieval of information is very much easy and lowest 5% of users strongly agree and 13% disagree with it. Among the respondent's top contributors were Students with 53% agreeing with it and lowest contributor are Research scholars with 29%. However, Faculty members are top contributors of strongly agree with 6%.

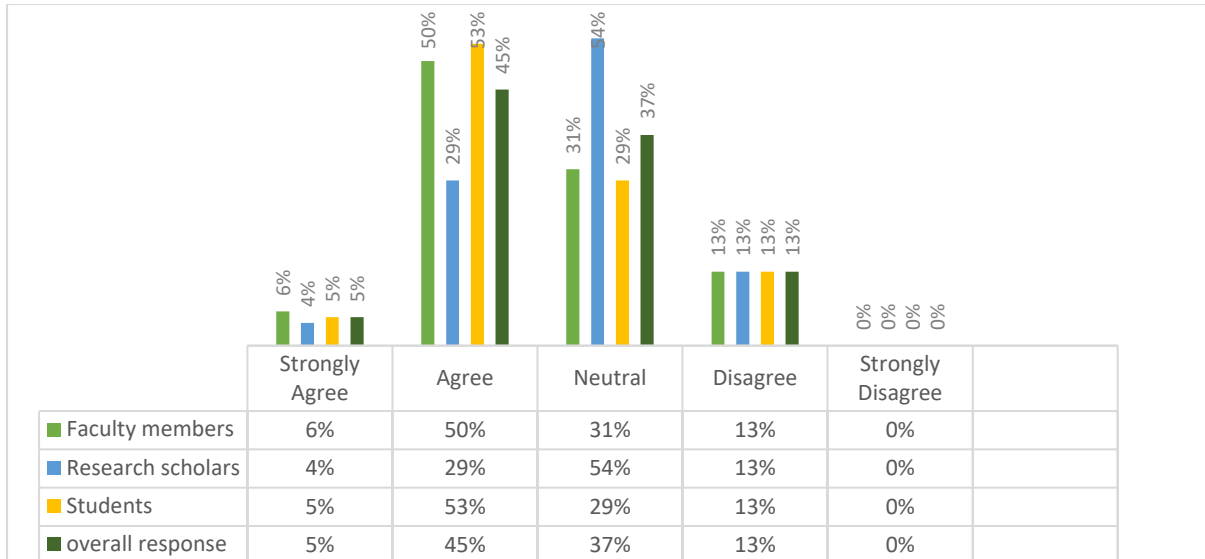


Fig 3: Information Retrieval through OPAC.

Fig 4 depicts highest 47% of users agree that OPAC provides exact location of the documents, while lowest 3% strongly agree. The top contributors to highest 47% are Faculty members with 63% and lowest contributors are Research scholars with 33%. However, Faculty members are top contributors of strongly agree with 6%.

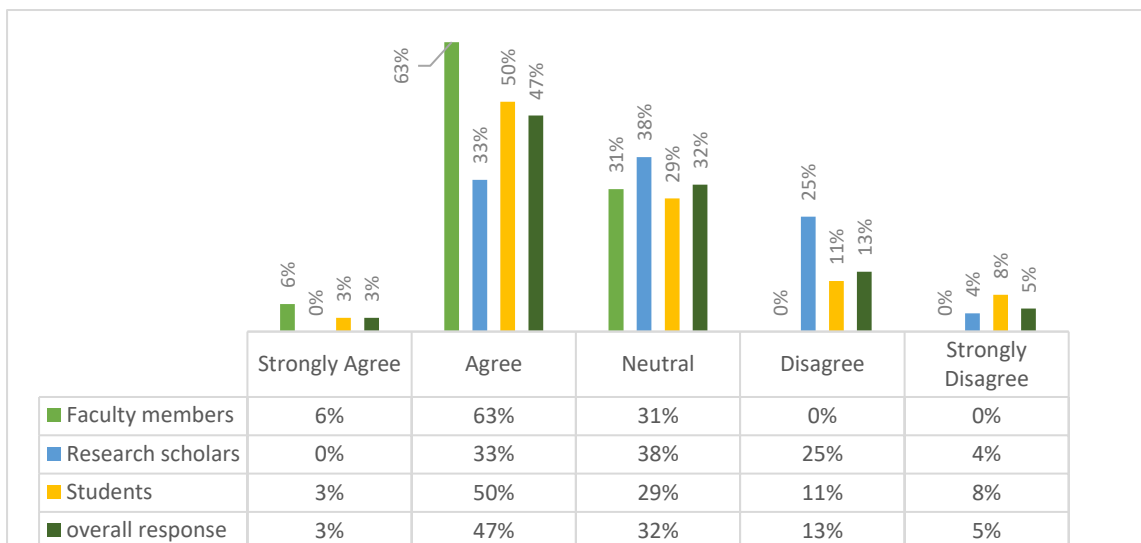


Fig 4: OPAC helps in determining location. of the document(s).

From fig 5 it can be seen highest 37% of users disagree that the library provides training in facilitating the use of Website, 21% strongly disagree with it, while lowest 1% of users strongly agree. The top contributors to highest 37% are Research scholars as well as Faculty members contributing 38% each, and lowest contributors are Students with 37%. However, Students are only contributors of strongly agree.

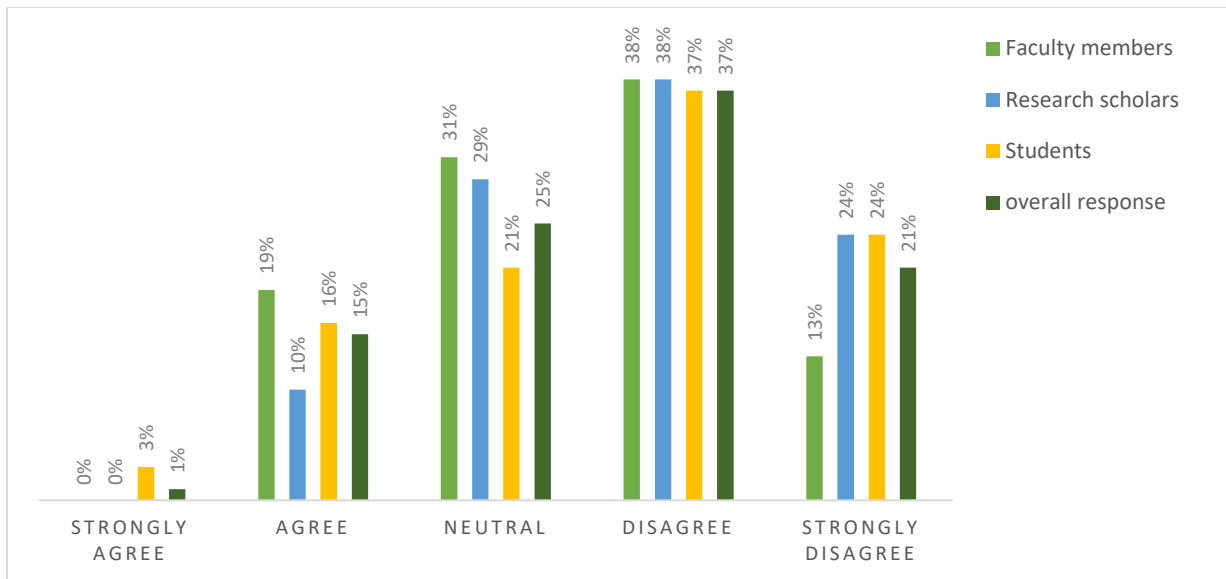


Fig 5: Library provides training in facilitating the use of Website (s).

In Fig 6 Highest 49% of users agree that library should increase the quantity of online (subscription) based resources while as lowest 3% disagree with it. The top contributors to highest 49% are students and faculty members and to lowest 3% are research scholars.

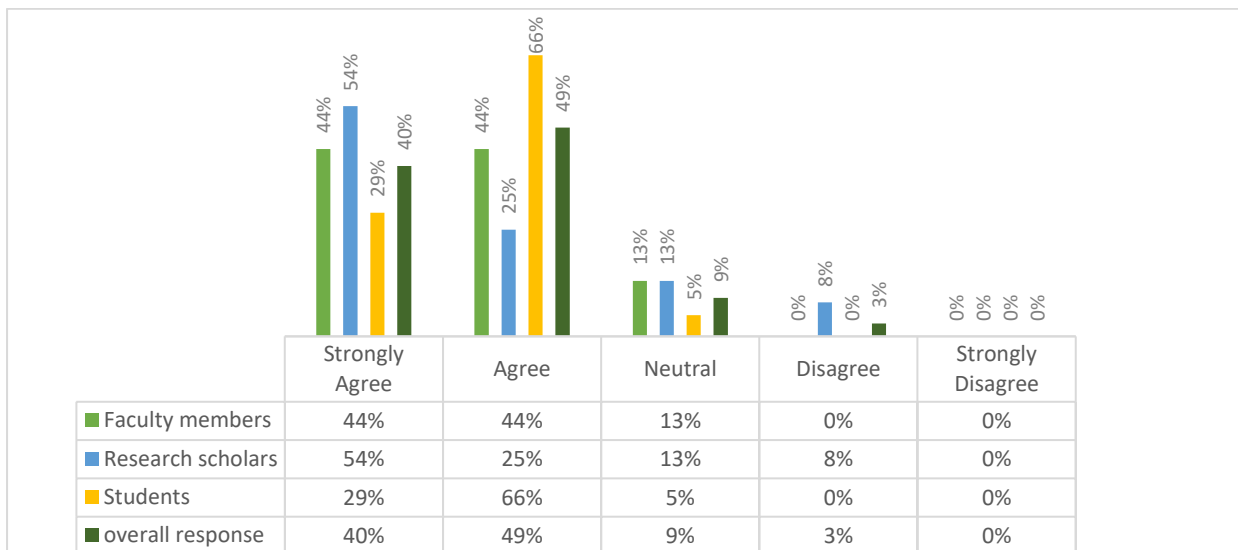


Fig 6: Library should increase the amount of online resources.

As evident from fig 7 highest 48% of users agree with the learnability of the website i.e. they finds things easy to learn from website, while lowest 4% of users strongly disagree with it, and also 17% of users disagree in which the top contribution is of students with 17%. The top contributor to highest 48% is faculty members contributing 55% and lowest contributors are Students with 41%. However, Research scholars are top contributors of strongly disagree with 6%

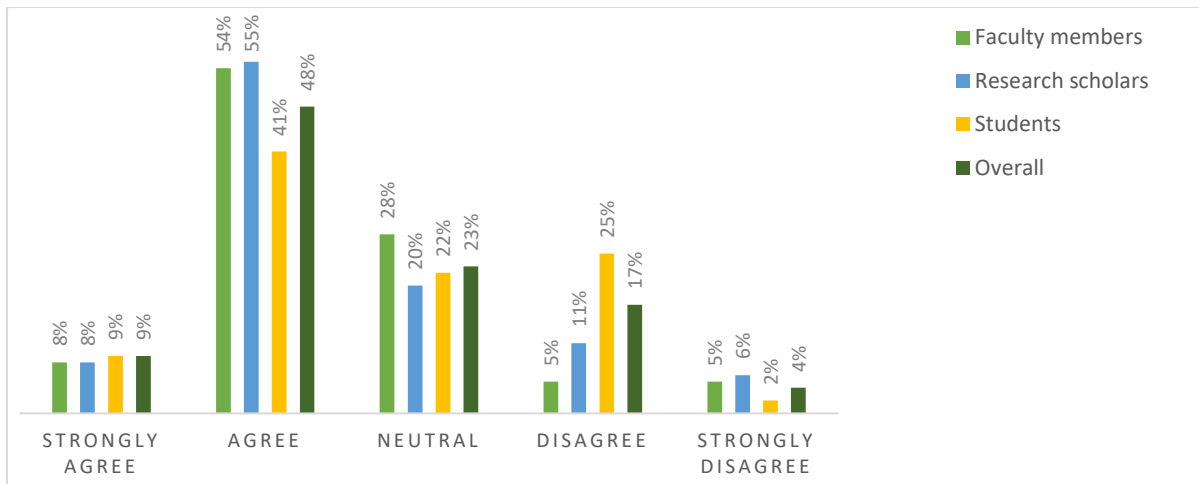


Fig 7: Impact of Learnability on the usage of library Website (s)

The result from the fig 8 reveals that the highest 53% of Faculty members rate Kashmir university library website as Moderate followed by 27% Poor, 13% Good, and 7% Excellent. On the other side Highest 46% of Research scholars rate university (Kashmir) library website as Moderate, followed by 29% Poor, 13% Bad, 8% Good, and 4% Excellent. Also, Highest 46% of Research scholar's rate library website of Kashmir university as Moderate followed by 29% Poor, 13% Bad, 8% Good, and 4% Excellent. Overall rating highlights that highest 48% of user's rate website as Moderate, followed by 30% Poor, 10% Good, 6% Bad and 5% Excellent. As indicated by the data in the table.4 it is revealed that administration and designers need to pay more attention to the website, so that expectations of users are fulfilled.



Fig 8: Overall Rating given to website (s)

Conclusion

The overall results regarding, utilization of website has found to be very useful. As the feedback was gathered from Faculty members, Research scholars and Students provides great insight

into the strengths as well as weaknesses of the website. Which will enable to attain indication about how shortcomings might be improved. Valuable suggestions were given by maximum number of respondents to make website more usable and well designed. Whereas most of users are intone with their needs with the website, but still it is not up to mark; there are various features and changes which need to be incorporated in the website. If we compare our library website with other university libraries websites, we found our website is no were to reach their standard. As revealed from analysis 30% of users rated it (library website) as Poor. While analyzing practice (frequency) of website among users it has been observed 9% never use it and only 14% use it daily. Therefore, more attention need to paid for making information available through website (s) to the library users in an efficient way. So that they (users) make more and more use of their respective institutional website (s). In order to remain updated with computers, placement, examination, seminars and conference details etc. through the library website. As large number of required sources for remaining up-to-date can be provided to the users centrally (at single place). which in turn help to make library use easier for the users. Apart from this information literacy instruction can also be delivered through the library websites.

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