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Exploring users' experiences with digital information services in the Law College libraries affiliated to University of Mumbai, Maharashtra

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Abstract

This research study aims to assess the use of digital information services in Law College libraries affiliated to the University of Mumbai, Mumbai. A total of 358 responses from the users and 34 responses from the librarians of the selected Law Colleges were collected through the questionnaires designed for the research purpose. The study outcomes show that majority of the users use different digital information services in libraries. The study found that, the limited number of subscribed databases cause difficulty in accessing the required resources for the users and the major challenges Librarians face while providing the digital information services are lack of skilled staff, limited resources and inadequate finance. The study recommends conducting training for the staffs to increase their technical expertise and adequate funding to increase the number of electronic resources and promotion of the digital information services.

Keywords: Digital Library, Digital information service, Law College library, University of Mumbai

Introduction

The comprehensive changes in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and its application in libraries have revolutionised the functioning and services of libraries. The continual evolvement of digital technologies and their application in libraries to access, select, manipulate and produce information resources has caused many librarians to rethink on the way forward and beginning to realise the possibilities of digital information services. The libraries with digital collection are designing different services to facilitate the users to access the e-resources. The situation in law libraries is also similar to enormous transformations of the legal information format, search, retrieve and access during the last few years. Law library are categorised as special libraries which cater the information needs of law faculty, law students, researchers, legal practitioners, lawyers and others interested in the subject. Academic law libraries are affiliated to law departments, universities and colleges offering various courses on Law. The main aim of the academic law libraries is to support the academic and research needs of the students, faculty and staff.

Digital Information Services

According to Choughule (2007) "Digital Information Services in the libraries includes all electronic information resources organised for services, as well as

computerized and networked online resources accessed through libraries.” Bhattachary et al. (2002) said that “the meaning of DIS is in the process of evolution as it climbs along the technological ladder”.

In a digital library environment, the users are provided with instant information access supported by specialized staff involved in the selection, organization, preservation and management of the digital information resources. According to American Libraries Associations (2006) "Libraries are important points of access to many digital resources and services, including, but not limited to, computers, the Internet, and digital resources and tools. To provide access to digital resources and services.... libraries must consider intellectual freedom principles and issues of equity to ensure that access to information is enhanced, not restricted, by digital technology." But the large volume of digital information and resources is challenging the libraries in providing the user services as per the need and satisfaction.

The appropriate application of advanced technologies and social software such as IM, blogs, online chat, and Wikis, etc. helps in proper management and utilisation of digital information services and resources. Customisation of the digital information services as per the demands and requirements of individual users is also beneficial to satisfy the individual needs. Tonta (n.d.) observed that through interoperability libraries are integrating the DIS with other online and offline information systems of the institution.

Review of related literature

A number of authors studied the information seeking behaviour, services and user satisfaction of the Law College libraries.

Khan and Bhatti (2012) found that the majority of the law faculty members develop personal libraries for access to required information as they were not satisfied with the provision of services of the libraries in their colleges. The authors suggested the provision of IT-based sources and facilities and better user-oriented services. The study conducted by Ashokbhai Bhatt (2014) revealed that to meet their information needs faculty members of Institute of Law, Nirma University (ILNU) preferred to consult personal collection first and then visit the library. It was found that online databases and electronic journals are preferred by 64.60% over print resources. Khan and Bhatti (2011) found that the lawyers acquire information through purchase/personal collection (mean=3.62). Even though most of the respondents agreed that information seeking and access process had become simple and easy because of use of ICT, however, only 20.37% of the respondents use the internet which may be due to poor information retrieval skills. Thus, the authors suggested the libraries to organise computer literacy training programmes for the lawyers to improve their computer skills. Olorunfemi, Mostert and Ocholla (2012) studied the information-seeking behaviour of undergraduate law students by reviewing the published literature. The analysis revealed that students are not using the library information resources as they were not acquainted with advanced technological equipment and also lack of encouragement to use. Other problems as identified were irregularity in electric supply, shortage of qualified staff, lack of maintenance by working staff, limited access to information resources, obsolete of technology infrastructure, and misperception of the roles and values of law libraries and librarians.

Roopa and Krishnamurthy (2015) presented about the trends in digital library services research and the major developments in digital library and services, and the role of librarian in digital era through review of related literature published from the year 2000 to 2013 available in LISA, LISTA and Google Scholar. Considering the positive attitude of the users, the authors suggested to provide the digital services by the libraries. Thanuskodi and Ravi (2011) studied the usage of different digital library services by the academic community of various departments of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University. The study found that 67.14% were acquainted with the use of digital resources and out of them about 32.14% use the digital library thrice in a week.

The organization of user orientation, training, user studies has received attention in the literature. Hemavathi and Chandrashekara (2018) studied user satisfaction on library resources and services in law college libraries in Mysore in Karnataka. The authors found that 91.25% respondents visited libraries for borrowing and reading books related to their subjects. The authors suggested for user studies and orientations at regular intervals to create awareness about the CAS, reprographic, OPAC and other digital services. Kadli and Hanchinal (2015) found that the students often face the problem of 'Lack of information skills to search' and hence the authors suggested to conduct formal users' training programme, re-evaluate the collection development policy and provide library services as per the demands of the current users. Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-ose (2010) emphasised on legal research as a core course at the undergraduate level law programs and make the law students and practitioners computer literate to encourage them to use the digital library services and legal databases for research. Rao and Rao (2012) found that Indian College Libraries are mostly equipped with the book lending and other traditional services and other services are often not seen. Hence the authors suggested conducting orientation programmes for users and enhance the skills and competencies of the law librarians in the areas related to reference and research services, library management, collection management and organization and classification.

Law (2009) referred to various published reports of different bodies and suggested measures to be adopted to provide different library services. Some of the aspects mentioned by the author include the use of social networking tools, training about information retrieval skills, content aggregation to deal with the information explosion, etc.

Objectives of the study

- To explore the user experiences with digital information services provided by Law College libraries;
- To identify the satisfaction level of the users regarding the services, infrastructure and resources provided by the libraries;
- To investigate how Law College libraries are supporting new web-based forms of collaboration and publication in the digital age; and
- To identify issues and challenges to Law College libraries in providing effective digital information service support.

Methodology

The scope of this study was confined to the University of Mumbai affiliated 49 Colleges offering courses in the Law discipline. The list of the Law Colleges has been collected from the official website of the University of Mumbai (www.mu.ac.in). The research population for the study consists of students of three years LL.B. and five years

LL.B. courses and teaching faculty members in the Law Colleges affiliated to the University of Mumbai. For the purpose of data collection, two questionnaires were designed: the first meant for the users (students and faculties) and second for the librarians. This study is based on 358 valid responses recorded from the students and faculty members and 34 responses received from the librarians. The collected data has been statistically incorporated and imported into Tableau data visualization software.

Analysis

Respondents' demographics

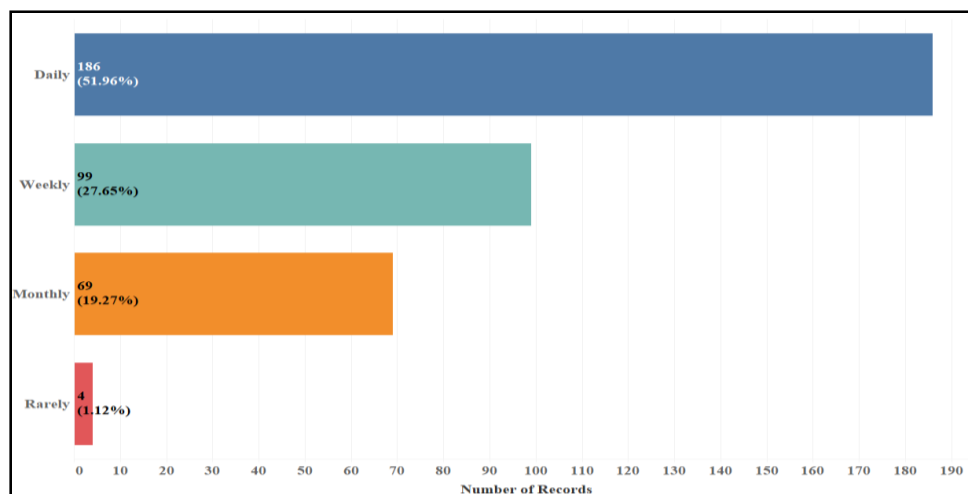
The analysis found that out of the total 358 respondents, 223 (62.29%) were male and 135 (37.71%) were female. The dominant gender among the respondents is male. Out of the total 135 female respondents, 38 (10.61%) were faculty and 97 (27.09%) were students. Further, out of the total 223 male respondents, 30 (8.38%) were faculty and 193 (53.91%) were students. It indicates that the highest responses were received from the students. Further, the analysis revealed that the respondents were scattered over the wide range of age group and the maximum number of respondents were between the ages 24 to 41.

Analysis based on the use of library

Table 1 — Frequency of library visit

Visit Frequency	Frequency	%
Daily	186	51.96
Weekly	99	27.65
Monthly	69	19.27
Rarely	4	1.12
Grand Total	358	100.00

Figure 1 — Frequency of library visit

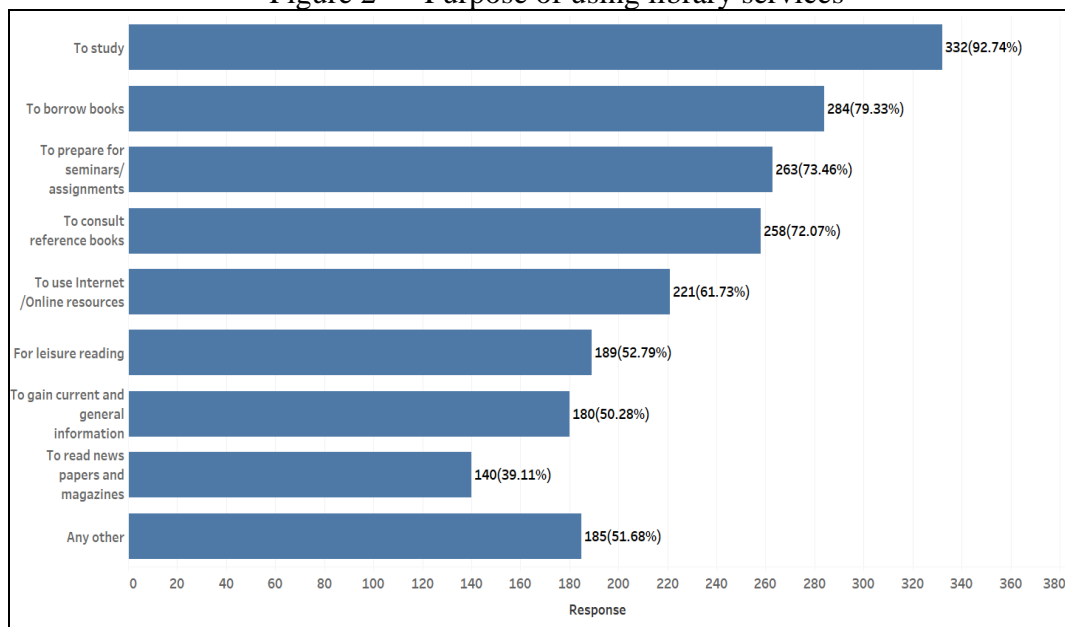


Majority of the users make visit to library on daily basis (Table 1), and only 1.12% claimed that they visits the library rarely.

Of the respondents, 92.74% visited the library to study and 79.33% to borrow books. Further, it was found that 221 (61.73%) of the respondents visits the library to

use the Internet and other online resources available in the library. However, a low percentage of uses reported that they visits the library for leisure reading 52.79%, update knowledge of current affairs 50.28% and to read the newspapers and magazines 39.11%. It indicates that the purposes of the visit to the library are mainly to study and borrow books.

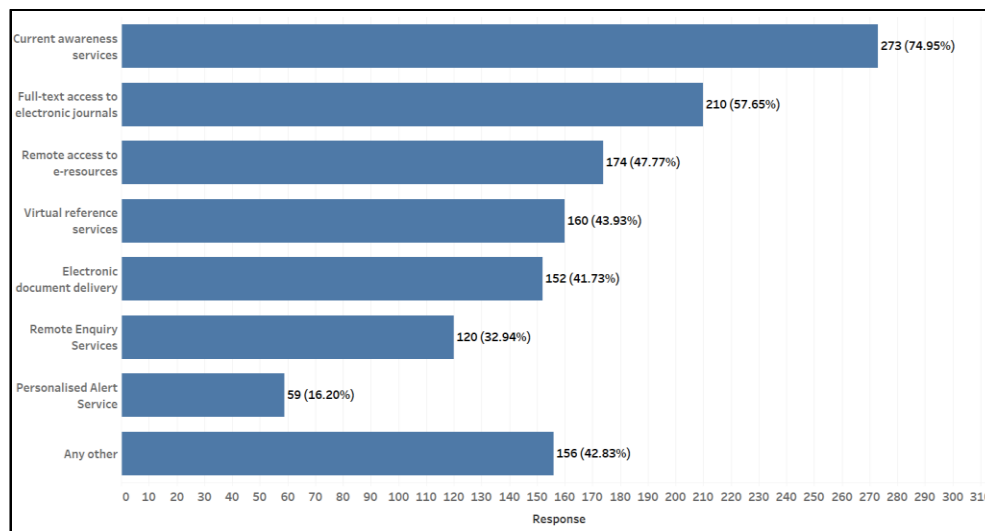
Figure 2 — Purpose of using library services



Availability of different digital information services

Respondents were asked to mention the availability of different digital information services. The DIS available mostly are CAS (74.95%), full-text access to e-journals (57.65%), remote access to e-resources (47.77%), virtual reference services (43.93%) and electronic document delivery (41.73%). The response to remote enquiry services (32.94%) and personalised alert services (16.20%) are significantly low.

Figure 3 — Digital information services available within the library



Rate of using digital information services

The analysis of the data regarding the rate of using digital information services in the library is represented in table 2 followed by figure 4 for the clear vision of the statement.

Table 2 — Rate of Using the Digital Information Services

Library Services	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	Not at all	Total
OPAC	98 27.37%	83 23.18%	56 15.64%	51 14.25%	70 19.55%	358 100.00%
Online Databases	90 25.14%	87 24.30%	130 36.31%	31 8.66%	20 5.59%	358 100.00%
Electronic Journals	86 24.02%	74 20.67%	65 18.16%	82 22.91%	51 14.25%	358 100.00%
CAS	69 19.27%	30 8.38%	153 42.74%	8 2.23%	98 27.37%	358 100.00%
Digital Repositories	86 24.02%	49 13.69%	102 28.49%	31 8.66%	90 25.14%	358 100.00%

Figure 4 — Rate of using digital information services

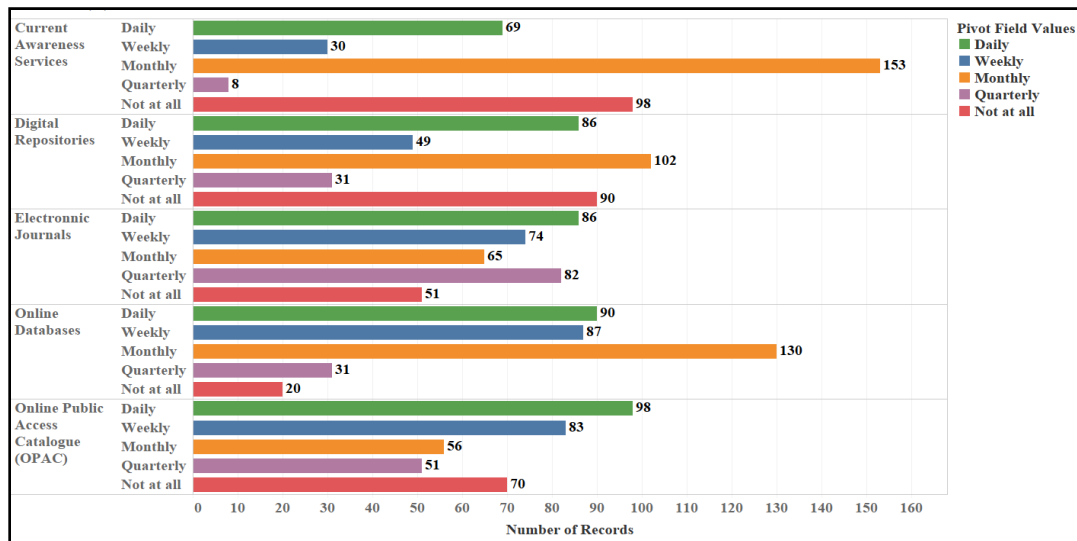
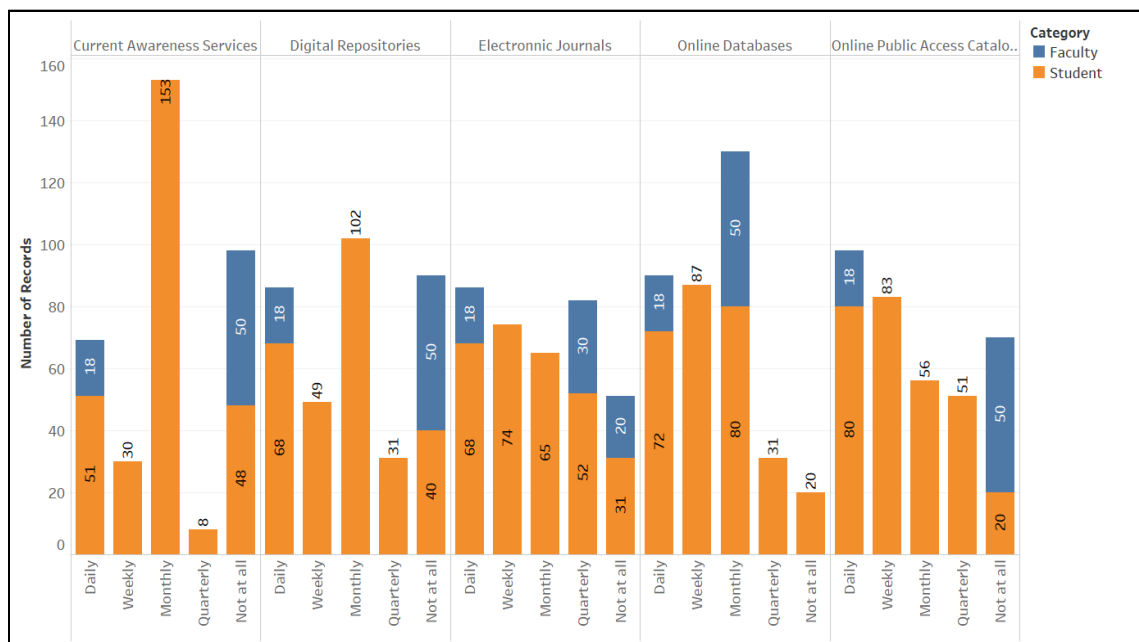


Table 2 illustrates that OPAC is used daily by 27.37% respondents and 25.14% uses online databases daily. Electronic journals services are also used daily by the majority of 24.02% respondents. The majority of 27.37% expressed that they not at all use the current awareness services and 25.14% digital repository services. This implies that majority of the respondents uses the different digital information services provided by the library regularly and OPAC and online databases are popular than other services. 72 students and 18 faculties use online databases and 80 students and 18 faculty members uses OPAC on daily basis.

Figure 5 — Category-wise rate of use of digital library services



Respondents were asked to mention the databases used to obtain the required information. Manupatra (279), AIR Online (160) and Lexis Nexis (154) are most

frequently used. And SCC-Online (138), Westlaw India (127), HeinOnline (98) and Westlaw International (87) are less frequently used. Further analysis shows that most of the respondents who use the legal databases daily were students.

Figure 6— Use of different online legal databases

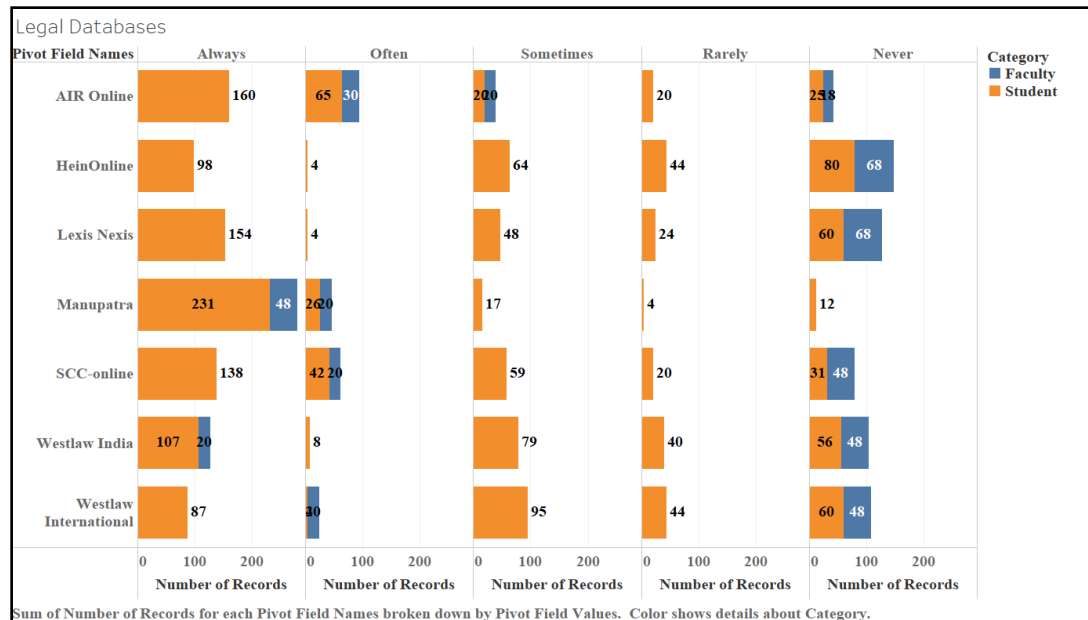
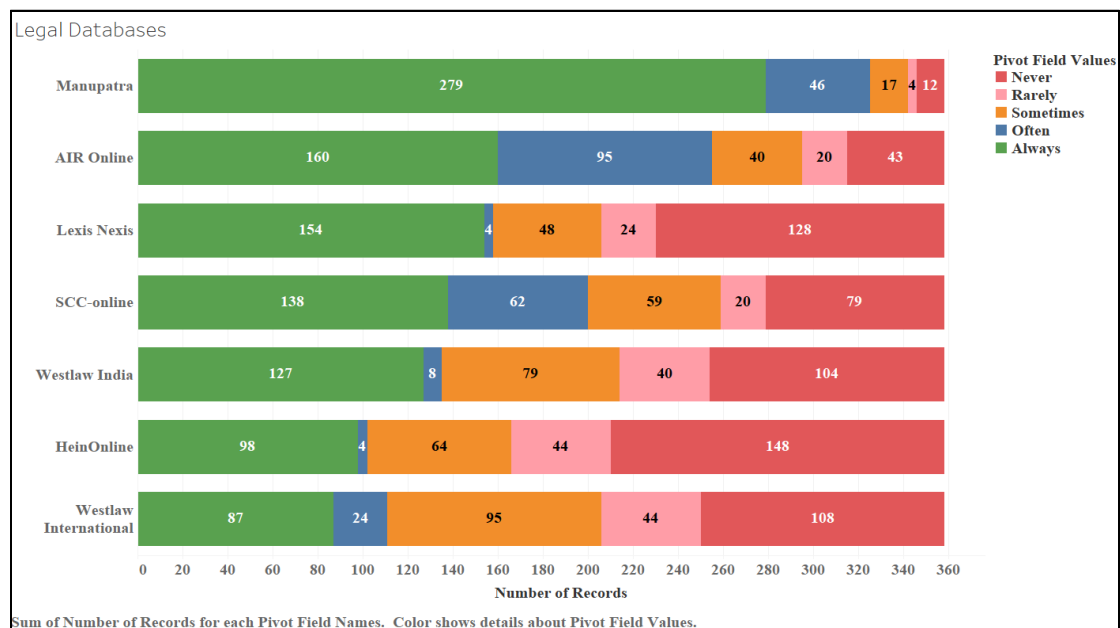


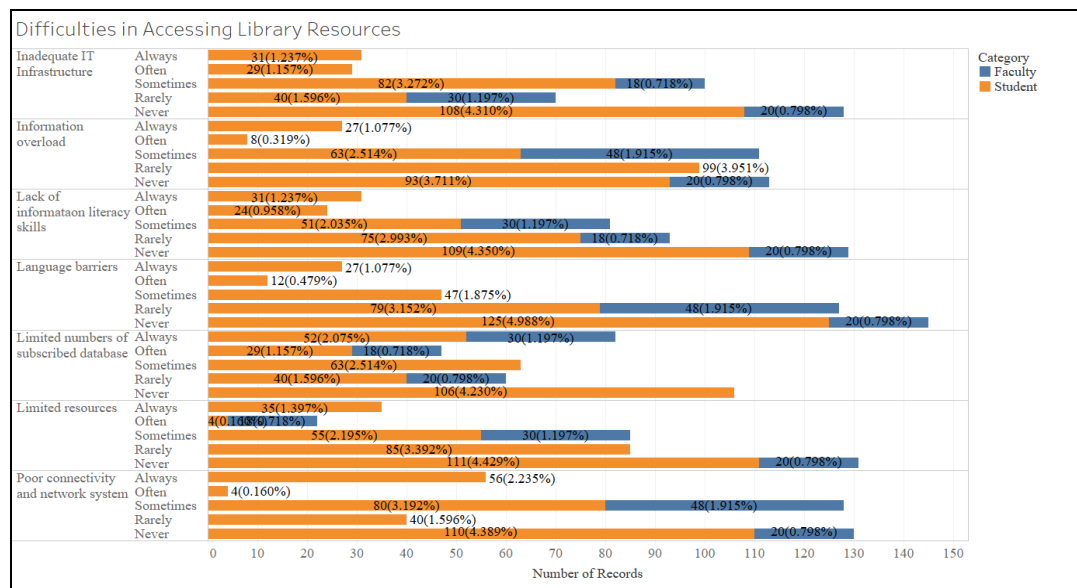
Figure 7— Use of different online legal databases



Difficulties faced in accessing digital library services

Figure 8 depicts the problems faced by the users while accessing the DIS. The respondents were asked to indicate opinions about difficulties faced in accessing digital information services in the library. Whereas, a less percentage of respondents faced difficulties always in using the digital library services offered by the libraries. The difficulty of limited number of subscribed databases was faced always by only 2.07% students and 1.19% faculties. Responses to other difficulties are significantly low among the users.

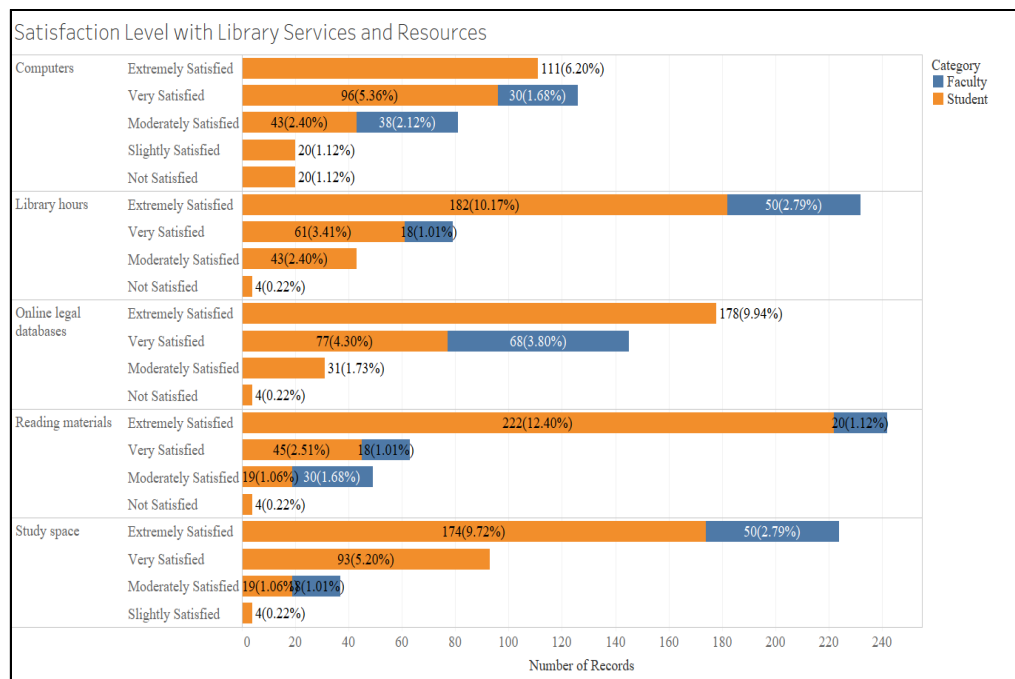
Figure 8 — Difficulty in accessing the digital information services and resources



Satisfaction level in terms of different library services and resources

From the figure 9 it is visible that 12.40% students and 1.12% faculties were extremely satisfied with the reading materials. Further, it is also found that 10.17% of the students and 2.79% of the faculties were extremely satisfied by the library working hours. Thus, it can be concluded that the respondents were satisfied and only a moderate percentage of respondents were slightly satisfied or not satisfied with the services and resources provided to them.

Figure 9 — Rate of satisfaction level with library services and resources

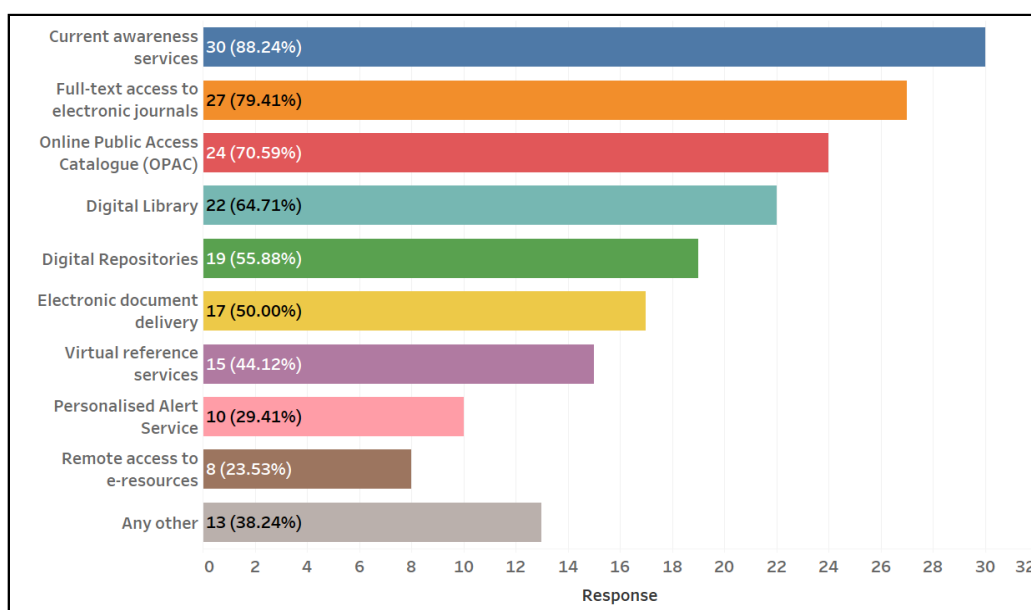


Librarians' opinions towards digital information services

Availability of different digital information services

Among the digital awareness services majority of the libraries have current awareness services 88.24% followed by full-text access to electronic journals 79.41% and OPAC 70.59%. Further, it can be seen that 64.71% colleges have digital libraries. A few libraries provide remote access to e-resources.

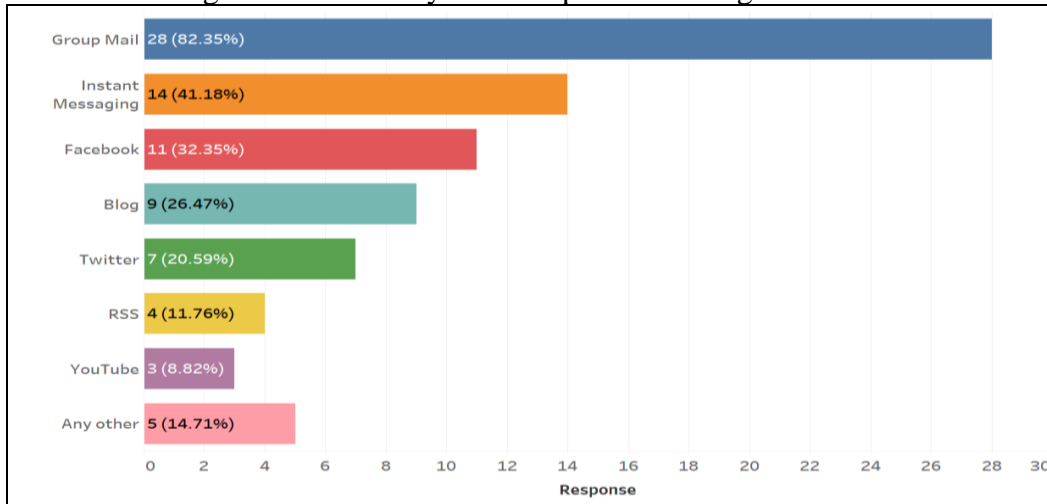
Figure 10 — Analysis based on the availability of digital information services



Library services using web 2.0 tools

Application of various web 2.0 tools is a common feature in libraries. Analysis of the data revealed that 82.35% libraries use Group Mail, 41.18% Instant Messaging and 32.35% Facebook to facilitate its users. However, RSS and YouTube are not commonly used by the libraries for the dissemination of information.

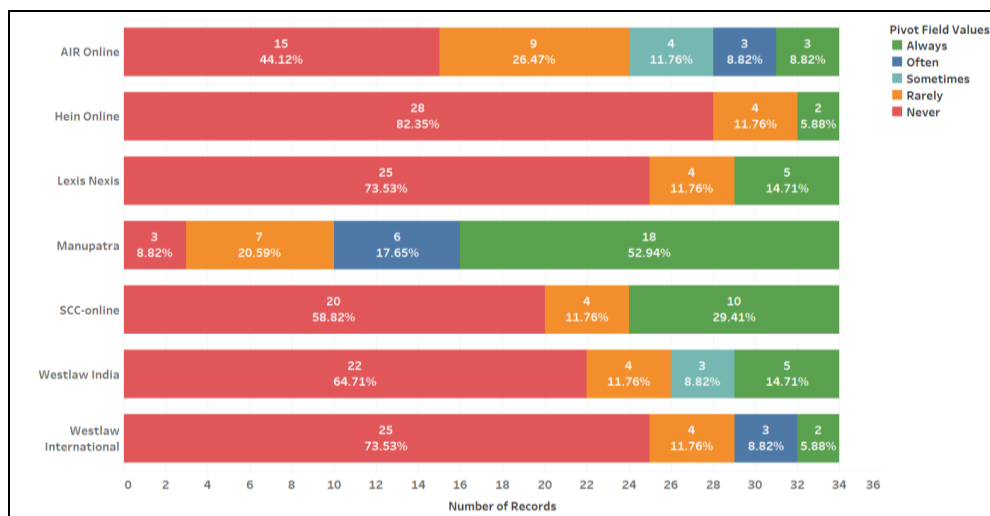
Figure 11 — Library services provided using web 2.0 tools



Frequency of use of online databases

The analysis of the data about the frequency of use of various legal databases as represented in the figure 12 shows that AIR online was never or rarely used by 15 (44.12%) and 9 (26.47%) of the respondents. Further, among the respondents, 28 (82.35%) and 25 (73.53%) had never used the HeinOnline and LexisNexis databases. Further analysis revealed that Manupatra and SCC-Online are used always by 18 (52.94%) and 10 (29.41%) of the respondents. Thus, it can be inferred that Manupatra and SCC-Online are the databases used always by majority of the law college libraries.

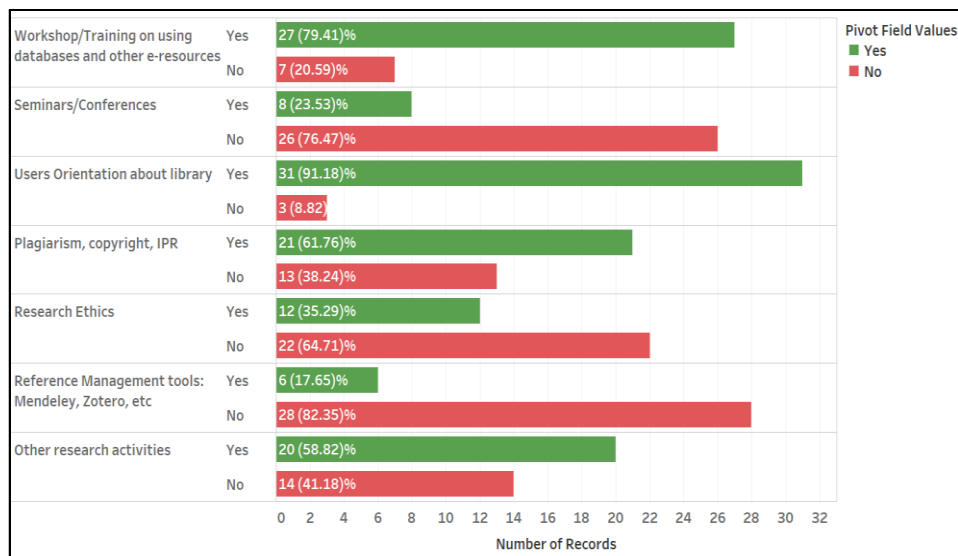
Figure 12 — Frequency of use of online databases



Activities for user awareness in the library

The study also tried to find out the different user awareness activities conducted by the respondents to increase the use of digital information services and the result is highlighted in figure 13 below. The analysis shows that, 79.41% libraries affirmed about organising workshop and training programs on using databases and other e-resources, while 91.18% libraries conduct users' orientation, and 61.76% training on plagiarism and copyright. Further, only 35.29% respondents confirmed that they conduct activities on research ethics and 17.65% on reference management tools like Mendeley, Zotero, etc.

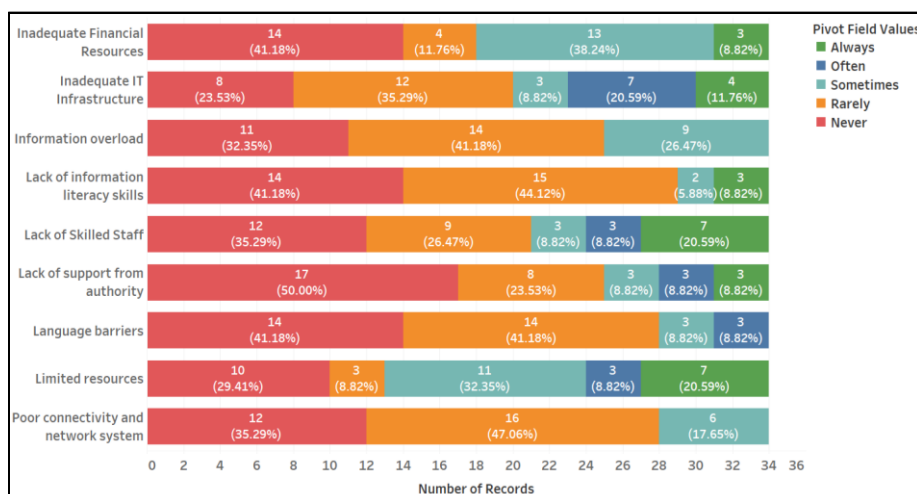
Figure 13 — Analysis based on activities for user awareness in the library



Challenges faced while providing digital information services

The librarians were asked to give opinions on the challenges faced by them while providing digital information services to their users. The summary of the findings is indicated in figure 14. The result indicates that the problem of inadequate financial resources is an issue for 38.24%. Unavailability of skilled staff and limited resources are the major challenges faced always by 20.59% of the libraries. This implies that the major challenges librarians faced while providing digital information services included lack of skilled staff and limited resources.

Figure 14 — Challenges faced while providing digital information services



In summary, in this chapter, the results of the analysis are presented with figures and tables for a clear understanding of the findings. Through the interpretations of the analysis, inferences have been drawn based on the objectives of the study.

Conclusions

The study outcomes show that majority of the respondents uses the different digital information services provided by the library regularly and among them, OPAC and online databases are used on daily basis by 98 (27.37%) and 90 (25.14%) users. The study revealed that, though a less percentage of respondents faced difficulties in using the digital library services always, however, the difficulty with limited number of subscribed databases was faced by the highest percentage of users. The mostly used legal databases are Manupatra, AIR Online and Lexis Nexis and a maximum number of students prefer to use them regularly. The majority of the users are extremely satisfied with the available reading materials, library working hours and study space. Thus, it can be concluded that the students are extremely satisfied and only a moderate percentage of respondents are slightly not satisfied with the services and resources provided to them. The major challenges they faced when providing digital information services included a lack of skilled staff and limited resources. Inadequate financial resources also caused difficulties sometimes. The libraries also conduct different activities related to using databases, e-resources, plagiarism, copyright, research ethics, reference management tools and other topics related to the use of digital library services.

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