

June 2010

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Ansari, Munira Nasreen and Zuberi, Bushra Adeeb, "Use of Electronic Resources among Academics at the University of Karachi" (2010). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 385.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/385>

Use of Electronic Resources among Academics at the University of Karachi

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Introduction

Technology has penetrated all areas of life and the use of information technology (IT) has work procedures and approaches. Libraries use IT for better services and satisfying diverse user needs. Libraries have transformed into digital and virtual libraries where books, journals and magazines have changed into e-books, e-journals, and e-zines. This has increased the global dissemination of information. Electronic resources are easily accessible in the remote areas. Electronic resources solve storage problems and control the flood of information. Print sources are being digitized. There is a great need to study the use of electronic resources and investigate the factors that are a hindrance to their use.

University of Karachi and Electronic Resources

The Dr Mahmud Hussain Library is the central library of the University of Karachi, which serves students, faculty, and researchers. All departments and research institutes have departmental libraries. Dr Mahmud Hussain Library is responsible for acquisition and technical processing of all departmental libraries. The library has access to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) digital library. All necessary facilities and equipment for accessing electronic resources are available through the HEC digital library. The HEC digital library program was introduced in 2004 to provide access to international scholarly literature in electronic form, including high- quality, peer-reviewed journals, article databases, and e-books. Access is provided to public and private universities and non-profit research and development organizations in Pakistan. It provides 24,000 electronic journals and 45,000 electronic books (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, n.d.)

Scope of the study

This study is limited to the Faculty of Arts, University of Karachi. The university has five faculties. The Faculty of Arts is the largest, consisting of twenty departments in the social sciences and humanities.

Objectives

1. To discover available facilities for using electronic resources in the departments being studied
2. To ascertain the abilities of UOK academics to use electronic resources
3. To discover the type of sources which are used most often among UOK academics
4. To explore the purpose for using electronic resources
5. To ascertain the satisfaction level of UOK academics with electronic resources

Literature Review

A large number of research studies have been conducted on the use of electronic resources. Shuling (2007) analyzed the use of electronic resources in Shaanxi University of Science and Technology. The sample consists of 909 respondents of all types of library users. The study found that nearly 80 percent of respondents knew little about electronic resources. Nearly half the respondents use both printed and electronic resources, followed by print periodicals.

Ali (2005) highlights the use of electronic information services (EIS) among the users of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) library in Delhi, India. Data was collected from three hundred IIT library users. Results reveal that 95 percent of users have awareness about EIS provided by the library.

Dadzie (2005) investigated the use of electronic resources by students and faculty of Asheshi University, Ghana, to determine the level of use, the type of information accessed and the effectiveness of the library's communication tools for information research and problems faced in using electronic resources. Results indicate that 85 percent of respondents used the Internet to access information, and that respondents mainly accessed information in the library by browsing the shelves.

Rehman and Ramzy (2004) investigated the awareness and use of electronic information resources among health academics. Results show that libraries are extensively used for research needs, preparation of lectures, and for obtaining current knowledge. Lack of time is the main reason given for not using electronic resources (37 percent). Unfamiliarity with computerized searching comes next (22.6 percent).

Majid and Abazova (1999) explored the use of electronic information sources relevant to computer literacy among academic staff of the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Nearly all respondents considered themselves to have good or very good computer skills.

Electronic resources are widely used in universities. There is a direct relationship between computer literacy and use of electronic resources. Mostly academics are computer literate; however, they need to develop their searching skills.

Methodology

Questionnaire-based survey method was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was developed for data collection. It consists of thirteen questions. The first part of the questionnaire included demographic information. The second part included questions about the availability of electronic resources and the ability to use them, while the third part asked questions about the use of electronic resources. The questions were pre-tested. Follow-up questions were used for clarification and changes were made thereafter. The research setting was offices of the academics in the University of Karachi. Questionnaires were filled in by the researchers and the questions were explained if required.

Sampling

Stratified random sampling was used to select participants. The sampling frame is the list of academics issued by the registrar's office, University of Karachi. Participants were selected randomly from each stratum. The constituted strata are Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, and Lecturers who belong to the various departments of the Faculty of Arts. Total participants were seventy: seventeen professors (24.3 percent), five associate professors (7.1 percent), twenty six assistant professors (37.1 percent) and twenty two lecturers (31.4 percent) out of a total of 179 teachers are

teaching in the Faculty of Arts, of whom 28 are professors, 17 associate professors, 77 assistant professors, and 57 lecturers.

Data Analysis

Available computers in the department

	Frequency	Percent
Office	27	38.6
Departmental computer lab	43	61.4
Total	70	

Table I. Available computers in the department

Participants were asked to indicate the availability of computer in their departments. Table I denotes that 27 (38.6 percent) have computers in their offices, while 43 have computers in their departments.

Available Internet facility

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	65	92.9
No	5	7.1
Total	70	

Table II. Available Internet facility

Table II shows that virtually all have Internet connectivity in their departments through the campus wide area network.

Operate computer independently

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	68	97.1
No	2	2.9
Total	70	

Table III. Operate computer independently

Virtually all can use computers independently.

Knowledge of electronic resources

	Frequency	Percent
A lot	13	18.6
A little	55	78.5
Nothing	2	2.8
Total	70	

Table IV. Knowledge of electronic resources

A large majority (78.5 percent) know little about electronic resources. Training is not provided and they learn mainly by trial and error.

Resources used most often

	Frequency	Percent
Electronic	4	5.7
Printed	30	42.9
Both	36	51.4
Total	70	

Table V. Resources used most often

Both print and electronic resources are popular, followed by printed sources only (42.9 percent). Use of only electronic resources is rare (5.7 percent). Shuling (2007) supports this result.

Purpose of using electronic resources

	Frequency	Percent
Preparation of lectures	38	29.2
Subject knowledge	30	24.8
Research	40	32

Table VI. Purpose of using electronic resources

About one-third of respondents use electronic resources for research. About one-quarter to one-third use it to prepare lectures and gain subject knowledge.

Reasons for not using electronic resources

	Frequency	Percent
Lack of time	10	14.2
Lack of knowledge	30	42.8
Problems with networking	30	42.8
Total	70	

Table VII. Reasons for not using electronic resources

Lack of knowledge and networking problems are the main reasons for not using electronic resources.

Satisfaction with electronic resources

	Frequency	Percent
Satisfied	22	31.4
Not satisfied	2	2.9
Quite satisfied	46	65.7
Total	70	

Table VIII. Satisfaction with electronic resources

More than three-fifths are quite satisfied with electronic resources, and nearly all are quite satisfied or satisfied.

Reliability of electronic and printed sources

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	63	90
No	07	10
Total	70	

Table IX. Reliability of electronic and printed sources

Significant amount of academics i.e. 90 percent believe electronic resources are reliable, however majority of the respondents consider only those electronic resources are reliable which are produced by authentic organization or publisher. According to them everything is not reliable on Internet.

Findings

The study explores the University of Karachi's facilities for using electronic resources. Some departments have fully-equipped computer labs, while some have a few computers. A few departments also provide computers to individual academics in their offices. An Internet connection is available to 92.9 percent of the departments. A majority of the academics have computer skills that facilitate the use of electronic resources, although a majority have little knowledge of electronic resources, which is not a positive aspect of the findings. Most use both electronic and printed resources, or only printed sources. Electronic resources are used for research and for preparation of lectures. Lack of knowledge and lack of facilities are the main reasons for not using electronic resources. Nearly all respondents are satisfied or quite satisfied with available resources.

Conclusion

Electronic resources are the best means of getting current and up-to-date information. Academics use these electronic resources, but due to networking problems and lack of training they are not properly used. While a majority of academics are quite satisfied with electronic resources, they regard them as

less reliable. They consider electronic resources produced by an authentic organization or website to be authentic and reliable. Electronic resources are mostly used for research and lecture preparation.

Recommendations

- Each department should have a well-equipped computer lab or academics should be provided with a computer in their offices.
- Qualified IT experts should be provided to solve the problems of networking and hardware.
- Departmental libraries should provide online journals and electronic resources.
- Training courses should be organized for the awareness and use of electronic resources.
- Dr Mahmud Hussain Library, the central library of the University of Karachi, should subscribe to online journals and provide access to departmental libraries also.
- The library should also purchase offline electronic resources.
- Basic training in hardware and software such as MS Office, Internet searching, and use of electronic resources should be included in the curriculum of each department.

Appendix I: Departments in the Faculty of Arts

- Arabic
- Bengali
- Economics
- Education
- English
- General History
- International Relations
- Islamic History
- Library and Information Science
- Mass Communication
- Persian
- Philosophy
- Political Science
- Psychology
- Sindhi
- Social Work
- Sociology
- Urdu
- Visual Studies

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