

Information technology based services in a university library: A user satisfaction survey

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Indira Gandhi Memorial Library, University of Hyderabad has computerized all its in-house operations and provides information technology based services over the network to the students and faculty. This paper attempts to evaluate the services provided by the library in the IT environment and also finds out the user satisfaction based on a questionnaire survey. Two hundred fifty questionnaires were distributed to students and research scholars in the university out of which 181 responses were received. The data analyzed indicates that students and research scholars are satisfied with the library services.

Introduction

As per the Encyclopedia of Computer Science, "Information Technology is an imprecise term frequently applied to a broad area of activities and technologies associated with the use of computers and communications"¹. According to Mahapatra and Ramesh "Information Technology is the result of the technological convergence of existing single isolated technologies viz., computer technology, communication technology, information processing, publishing technology etc."².

Information technology applications and the techniques are being used by libraries for information processing, storage, communication, dissemination of information, automation, etc. Further, the origin of Internet and the development of World Wide Web revolutionized the information communication³. Recognising the advantages of information technology applications in academic and research activities, governments are encouraging university and college libraries to provide information technology based library services to the user community.

Indira Gandhi Memorial Library (IGM Library), University of Hyderabad

The IGM Library has been providing information technology based library services to the academic community of the University of Hyderabad for a long time. All the library operations are computerized and network based library services are provided to the users. It subscribes to over 18,000 e-Journals. The IGM Library also undertakes computerization activities for other libraries. It is the first library to provide a Post Graduate Diploma in Library Automation and Networking (PGDLAN) course. IGM Library is a governing member of OCLC.

The IT infrastructure of the library includes Sun Enterprise 3500, DEC Alpha server and 60 work stations, Procom CD server, 2S Digibook scanner, flatbed and handheld scanners, printers etc. The library operating system environment has Solaris, UNIX, Linux and Windows NT. The library started all its computer operations in LIBSYS software and recently it switched over to Visionary Technology Library Solutions (VTLS) which facilitates transliteration of languages and digitization.

Table 1 – Student response

S.No.	Subject Group	Research Scholars	Students	Total	Percentages
1.	Sciences	34	27	61	34
2.	Social Sciences	33	26	59	32
3.	Humanities	29	32	61	34
	Total	96	85	181	100

Table 2 – Satisfaction level for physical facilities, hardware and software of the computers (In percentage)

Subject	Spatial arrangement	Availability of computers	Allotted time	Configuration of computers	Software, OPAC	LAN
Sciences	84	81	65	78	71	81
Social Sciences	76	74	71	76	72	77
Humanities	88	100	72	94	81	83

The survey

A survey was conducted among the students and research scholars of the university to study their satisfaction level about the information technology based services in the library. Though several methods like questionnaire, interview, observation, scheduling etc., are available for carrying out the survey, the questionnaire method was used for the present study, since it gives ample time and opportunity to the person to give his opinion.

The library is providing services to the academic community consisting of eight schools of study from the three traditional subject groups, i.e., sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed among the scholars and students of the above three subject groups to elicit satisfaction level on the following:

- a) Physical facilities such as spatial arrangements of the computers, their configuration, allotted time to work, library software, OPAC and LAN.
- b) INTERNET services, search engines and e-mail
- c) Access to e-Journals and CD-ROM databases
- d) Staff competence and overall rating of IT based services of the library

Analysis and findings

Out of the 250 questionnaires circulated, 181 responses (72%) were received. The 181 responses comprised 61 (34%) from sciences, 59 (32%) from social sciences and 61 (34%) from humanities. Subject-wise responses and the percentages are presented in Table 1.

Table 2 shows that eighty four percent of the science students, 76% of the social science students and 88% of the humanities students were satisfied with the physical facilities. Besides this, 81% of science students, 74% of social science students and 100% of humanities students responded that the computers are immediately available for use and the time allotted for them is sufficient. With regard to hardware, software, OPAC and LAN the response of satisfaction ranged between 71% to 94% in all the three groups which indicates that 70% and above students are satisfied with the physical facilities, configuration of computers, software and the campus network.

With reference to Internet and related services, 50% to 61% of respondents use the computers for one hour and the remaining for more than two hours, 87% to 96% use the Internet for academic purpose and 41% to 66% for career opportunities. Regarding web-sites, 77% to 90% of students use the search engine Google and 41% to

Table 3 – Internet and related services (In percentages)

Subject	Time		Purpose		Search engine		E-Mail	
	1-2 hrs	More than 2 hrs	Academic	Career	Google	Yahoo	Academic	Personal
Sciences	61	25	96	51	90	56	65	60
Social Sciences	59	28	87	41	82	41	76	49
Humanities	50	33	94	66	77	66	72	72

66% use Yahoo. Regarding the E-mail, 65% to 72% use it for academic purpose and 49% to 72% use for personal communication (Table 3).

With regard to e-Journals and CD-ROM databases, 77% of science students, 76% of social sciences students and 82% of humanities students are accessing the e-Journals. Sixty per cent to 75% of the students of all the subjects refer CD-ROM databases. Table 4 gives the data on use of e-Journals and CD-ROM database access.

Finally, 84% of the science students, 82% of Social Science students and 94% of humanities students have stated that they are satisfied with the staff performance and rated the library services in the IT environment as outstanding.

Conclusion

From the study, it is evident that the users are largely satisfied with the library services provided by the IGM

Table 4 – Use of e-Journals and databases (In percentages)

Subjects	e-Journals access	CD-ROM databases
Sciences	77	75
Social Sc.	76	66
Humanities	82	60

Library in the IT environment. The study once again reiterates the benefits of IT in libraries to meet the user requirements and have satisfied library clientele.

References

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