

Use of internet by research scholars at Shivaji University, Kolhapur

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Highlights the purpose of use, methods of locating information and search techniques used in retrieving the information by the research scholars of Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Finds that the research scholars use the internet for their research and communication purposes. Concludes that more awareness about internet resources and training in use of the same needs to be provided by library professionals.

Introduction

The role of library has changed drastically and it is continuously changing. With the application of information and communication technologies in libraries, the concept and the role of library and librarian is dramatically changing, especially with the invention of internet. It has successfully entered all the areas of human sphere and to a great extent is directly or indirectly affecting the library and information centres. A wide variety of public domain (free) and commercial information sources are currently available on the internet, with new sources added frequently. Such sources include, bibliographical/ full text databases, table of contents of journals, discussion forums, preprints, technical reports, directories, biographies, teaching and training material, data archives, softwares, library catalogs and so on.

Use of internet by research scholars is an important area of study in today's wired information environment. The internet has become an important component in academic institutions as it plays a pivotal role in meeting information and communication needs of institutions and individuals. "It makes it possible to access a wide range of information, such as journal articles, papers etc., from anywhere in the world. It also enables scholars and academic institutions to disseminate information to a wider audience around the globe through having web sites and a way to search them and organize the output"¹.

Today the internet has become an invaluable tool for teaching, learning, and research"²⁻⁴.

Shivaji University, established in 1962 has a campus-wide computer network of around 250 nodes at its campus at Kolhapur. At present 27 academic departments as well as administrative building are connected. The university library is a member of UGC-INFONET e-journals consortium of INFLIBNET, under which it has access to over 3000 electronic journals and few bibliographic electronic databases⁵.

Objective

The objective of the study is to analyse the use of the internet by the researchers at Shivaji University, Kolhapur in sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Methodology

One hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to sixty researchers in sciences, sixty researchers in social sciences and thirty researchers in humanities. This was in proportion to the total number of researchers working in these fields.

A total of 122 out of 150 respondents returned the questionnaires giving a response rate of 81.33%. Among

Table 1 — Purpose of browsing internet

Sr. no.	Purpose for internet browsing	Sciences	Social Sciences	Humanities	Total No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Communication	54	32	09	95	77.86%
2.	Research purpose	60	19	04	83	68.03%

the respondents 57 (38 %) were from sciences, 46 (30.67%) were from social sciences and 19 (12.66%) were from humanities. The responses received from the 122 research scholars are analyzed using SPSS statistical package.

Data analysis and findings

All the respondents surveyed indicated that internet is very useful in meeting some of their requirements and in undertaking communication with outside world through e-mail. It is observed that out of the total respondents 73 (59.83%) were male and 49 (40.17%) were females. All the respondents were found to have sufficient knowledge of internet.

The study, in respect of frequency of using internet, revealed that, majority of users use internet on daily basis. Ninety seven (79.50%) respondents are the regular users of internet who browse internet at least once in a day. Eighteen (14.75%) make use of internet 2-3 times in a week and 7 (5.75%) respondents make use of internet once in a week.

Purpose of internet browsing

Ali⁶, Adika⁷, Applebee et al⁸ and Mahajan⁹ found that students use internet mainly for communication purposes, that is e-mail as compared to information retrieval. Though this study also found that nearly 78% of the students use it for communication purposes, it is interesting to note from Table 1 that 68.03% of researchers are using it for research purpose too. A marginal number of users, who are using internet only for communication need to be encouraged to make use of internet for research work through orientation programs.

It is interesting to note that the research scholars from science faculty are using internet extensively for communication as well as for undertaking research, followed by social science faculty and to a lesser extent by the research scholars from humanities. The reasons for this could be that may be there is lot of current literature

available for the scientific community on the internet as compared to the social sciences and humanities.

Methods used for locating information

Various tools such as directories, subject gateways and search engines are available for searching information on the internet. The respondents were asked to provide information regarding method used in locating the information on the internet. Respondents were allowed multiple answers and the responses received are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows that majority of the users make use of search engines for locating the desired piece of information rather than using subject directories or subject gateways. One hundred and eighteen (96.72%) respondents used Google for locating information which indicates that it is their favorite search engine for locating information on the internet, followed by Yahoo which was used by 101 (82.78%) respondents, Alta vista by 84 (68.85%), Lycos by 58 (47.54%) , Ask.com by 43 (35.24%), Web crawler by 24 (19.67%) and others by 19 (15.57%) .

Figure 1 also shows that among the users of the various search engines, the researchers in sciences use the search engines to a greater extent compared to the social sciences and humanities. As far as the researchers from social sciences and humanities are concerned, most of the researchers use Google and Yahoo search engines for locating information.

Search techniques

Retrieval of exact information from the internet requires appropriate search strategy. Many times it is found that the users usually get lot of hits and the users waste their time in filtering the information. Shivaji University library provides access to many of the databases and electronic journals to their users under the UGC-INFONET consortia covering the universe of subjects. All these electronic resources provide basic search services, such as search by title, author, keyword, date of publication,

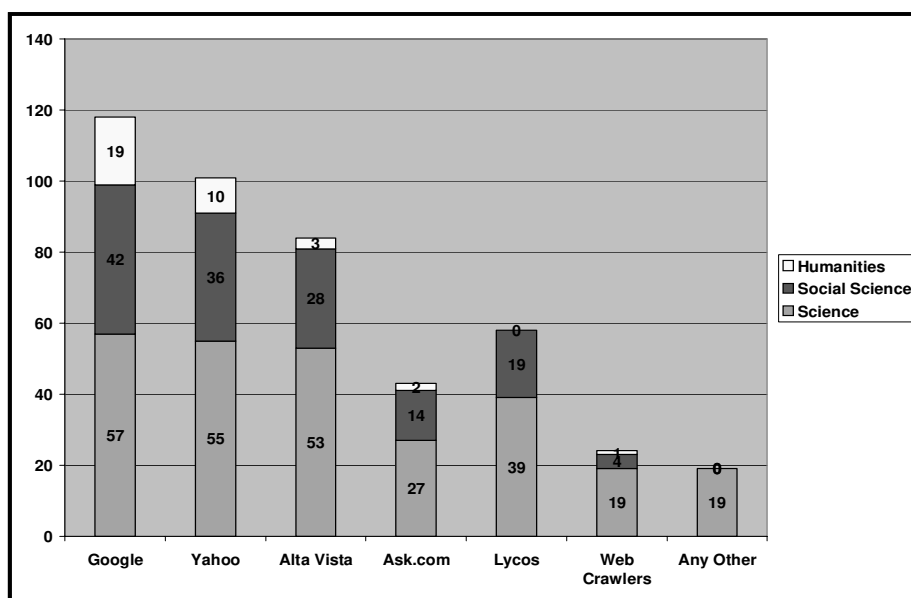


Fig. 1 — Search tools for locating information

etc. The users were provided with multiple choices and were asked to give their search preferences. The responses received are presented in the Table 2.

The study shows that all the respondents make use of keywords to retrieve information, followed by 60 respondents (49.18%) who use authors as the option for search. Search by title is used by 49 (40.16%), date of publication, source, use of Boolean operators and wild card as search techniques are used by some of the researchers, amounting between 30.32% to 1.63%. It has been observed that researchers from the field of science make frequent use of keyword, author, title or the Boolean logic as search techniques where as researchers from social sciences and humanities do not make use of wild card for searching the information.

Problems in using internet

Respondents were asked regarding the problems faced by them while making use of internet and the responses received have been presented in the Table 3.

The responses reveal that 88 (72.13%) users found it very difficult to extract exact information from the retrieved results. This necessitates the university library to undertake orientation programmes on search techniques. Sixty one (50%) users accepted that they lack searching skills and training is necessary. Fifty (40.98%) respondents felt that the internet connection

provided by the university is slow where as 27 (22.13%) users responded that because of the low configuration of computers they could not have proper access to the internet.

Use of internet by the researchers

From the analysis it has been found that internet is being widely used by the researchers of Shivaji University. The researchers in the sciences (up to 90%) are making maximum use of internet facility provided by the university to meet their information requirements. However, majority of researchers in social sciences (64%) and humanities (85%) are still relying on bibliographies and printed journals available in the university library. The reason for this may be due to lack of awareness about the availability of resources on the internet or not having proper ICT infrastructure. The steps to increase usage of internet in these fields need to be undertaken by creating awareness through orientation programmes and by providing suitable infrastructure.

It is interesting to note that most of users from all the disciplines are making use of internet for their communication purposes. Secondly, the orientation programmes conducted by library in recent past has helped in the increase in usage of UGC-INFONET e-journals to 4 times in 2006 (21578 hits) as compared to their usage in 2005 (7734 hits) according to use statistics received from INFLIBNET.

Table 2 — Search techniques used by different user groups

Search techniques used	Science	Social Science	Humanities	Total
Keyword	57	46	19	122
Author	35	17	8	60
Title	27	16	6	49
Source	13	7	0	20
Date of publication	20	14	3	37
Boolean operators	15	13	2	30
Wild Card	2	0	0	2

Table 3 — Problems faced by various group of users while using internet

Problems	Science	Social science	Humanities	Total
Low configuration of computer	19	8	0	27 (22.13%)
Difficulty in finding relevant information	27	44	17	88 (72.13%)
Lack of proper training	12	36	15	61 (50%)
Slow Internet Connection	27	18	5	50 (40.98%)

Conclusion

Although internet is being widely used by the research community of Shivaji University, there is a need to provide training on the use of internet so that the researchers use the appropriate search tools and techniques than just relying on popular search engines and elementary search techniques to obtain information. The university library can play a proactive role by providing the requisite training to the researchers to better equip them with the requisite skill sets for more efficient searching.

Bandwidths should be increased in order to provide faster access that will save much of the users' time and be a source of motivation to use the internet. The very low bandwidth during peak hours sometimes makes it impossible to download files or software. The university library should gear up to provide extensive training program to students from post-graduate level, which will help to a greater extent in building the digital divide of information and build a strong team of researchers.

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