

USE OF INTERNET SERVICES AND RESOURCES IN THE COLLEGE LIBRARIES OF SALEM DISTRICT: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The libraries changed from time to time due to various reasons. Internet has made a greater impact on library and information service by offering new modes for information delivery and a vast variety of information services. In the recent years we are witnessing a sea change in the landscape of library. This study is to understand the pattern of internet usage among the college students in Salem District. Of 27 colleges, only 8 colleges had internet connection in the library for their students. The data analyzed in this study comes from 260 student respondents, who had used internet for the last three months, spread across eight academic libraries which provide internet services to the users. The survey revealed that the majority of the respondents, i.e. 65.4%, access the Internet from Cyber Café. More than 57 % of the respondents use the Internet services mainly for educational purposes. Google and Yahoo search engines are found to be more widely used than other search engines.

KEYWORDS: Internet Services, College Libraries, Salem District.

INTRODUCTION

Use of the Internet is pervasive, evolving rapidly, and indicative of major changes in the fields of research, teaching and learning. "Sources of information and other opportunities available via the Internet are increasing exponentially" (Edwards & Bruce, 2002). This comes with a steady increase in dependency on the Internet for various purposes. Especially in the academic community (i.e. students) there is a growing dependence on the Internet for various educational purposes. The Internet provides vast amounts of information on every field and subject. There are hundreds of millions Web pages, bibliographical databases, and full-text databases available on the Internet Trajkovski (2001) stated that about 5 years ago, only three million people were connected to the Internet in the whole world, but now its number has grown to 300 million. The gap between the rich and the poor countries is now being replaced with the digital divide between those who do and those who do not have that opportunity. The Internet is fast changing the methods for accessing and using information and research activities. There are many surveys on the use of the Internet, and nearly all find that Internet usage is most prevalent amongst younger, more educated people (Haoffman, Thomas, & Ann, 2000). In order to understand the nature of impact of internet among the college students, the current study was undertaken with an

expressive title “Use of Internet Services and Resources in the College Libraries of Salem District”.

CONCEPT OF INTERNET

The internet is a world wide collection of computer networks. It provides access to communication services and information resources to millions of users around the globe. This network of networks, or internet, is a group of two or more networks that are: interconnected, capable of communicating and sharing data with each other, able to act together as a single network. (Leon, Alexis & Leon, Mathews, 1998)

The internet has assumed a role as the latest in a line of mass media, stretching back to books, newspapers, radio and television. Like these mass media, it encompasses aspects of those that come before and adds a unique feature. The internet gives interactivity and is the first mass medium that allows the individual to interact with the mass (John Feather & Paul Sturges,(2003)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kaur (2000) conducted a survey regarding the use of Internet facility at the Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar. The study indicated that 100% of the respondents used the Internet for sending e-mail and 82% for World Wide Web (WWW). 67.5% of the respondents used the Internet for primary information, 38% for secondary and only 15% used it for consulting OPACs. A majority of the respondents, i.e. 75.6%, faced the problem of slow connectivity. The results of the study further showed that more than 80% of the respondents felt that in comparison to traditional documents, the Internet was time saving, easy to use, more informative, more useful and more preferred.

Tadsad P G et al (2003) had conducted another study in 2001 about the use of internet by undergraduate students of PDA College of Engineering, Gulbarga. The study surveys and reports the use of internet by one hundred and ninety three undergraduate students of engineering. The study reveals that the internet use is confined to general or recreational purposes and its potential in supporting curricular requirements has not been realized by the students. The study also shows that only a few students use internet and this needs to be increased. It was found the necessity of internet in the library, as it has become an important source of information, facilitating effective communication and being a major information retrieval tool. The study emphasized the point that awareness to be created among the students for using internet in addition to the library facilities and training to be provided to acquaint students with internet and its resources.

Rajeev Kumar and Amritpal Kaur (2004) had studied the use of internet by teachers and students in Shaheed Bhagat Singh College of Engineering and technology. The major findings of the study are: a majority of the respondents use the internet for educational purpose, a majority of the respondents have more places for accessing the internet were the college and the home, e-mail is the most preferred service, google is the most favorite search engine.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To identify the use of the Internet by students in the degree colleges of Salem District.
- To identify the different purposes that the Internet usage among the students of degree colleges.
- To identify the suggest some measures to improve the use of Internet based services.
- To identify the problems faced by the respondents while using the Internet.
- To identify the satisfaction level with the Internet based services and resources.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Though the institutions considered for the present study fall under the jurisdiction of Periyar University the geographical jurisdiction was limited to only one district, namely Salem. The colleges considered for the study offer general courses like B.A., B.Com., B.B.M., B.Sc. and B.C.A. These colleges are affiliated to the Periyar University. The study considers only those colleges, which have internet facility in the libraries and the respondents were students of those colleges.

This study is to understand the pattern of internet usage among the college students in Salem District. Of 27 colleges, only 8 colleges had internet connection in the library for their students. As the study was intended to cover only the undergraduate students, the faculty members, postgraduate students were excluded from the study.

The study is conducted in an academic library environment consisting of respondents from different disciplines. The results of this study may not lead to generalization across all types of library. The professional colleges were not included in the study. Hence the results may representative all student community.

METHODOLOGY

Stratified random sampling method has been adopted for the present study. The data required for the study has been collected through primary sources. Primary data was collected through two questionnaire supplemented by personal interview, discussions and interaction with the students and librarians. Hence the study considered students who have used internet facility in the selected college libraries for the past three months as target population. As per the information provided by the respondent libraries the total number of students who used the internet was around 1,300. The study considered 20% of the target population as sample size. Thus the sample size for the current study was 260 respondents. We have used the statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Chi-square analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic characteristics include the personal features such as age, gender, marital status, residence and discipline of study. The responses are presented below.

Age: As the study was intended to include only student community of degree colleges the age of the respondents was ranging from 18 to 21.

Gender: The respondent population constituted 59.23 % of female respondents followed by male respondents forming 40.77 % of response. The distribution is shown in Figure 1.

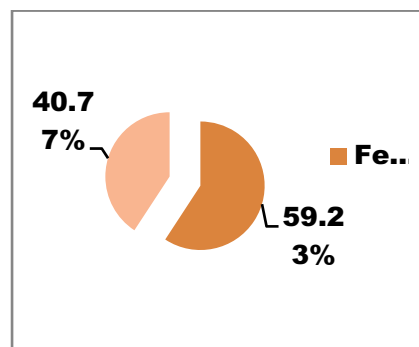


Figure 1. Gender –Wise Distribution of the Respondents

Table 1 Experience of Internet use

Library Visit	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Less than 1 year	28	10	12	50	19.23
1-2 years	30	24	20	74	28.46
Above 2 years	58	30	48	136	52.31

X^2 calculated = 6.46, X^2 Critical = 9.49, Df = 4, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

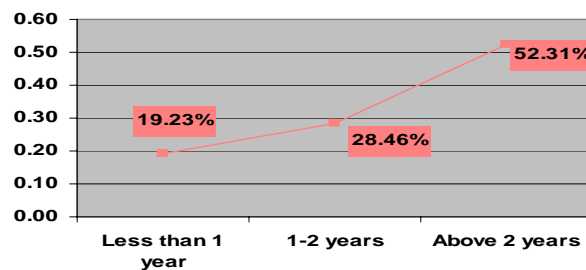


Figure 2. Experience of Internet use

EXPERIENCE OF INTERNET USE

The results in Table 1 show that 52.31 % of the academic community has Above 2 years of Internet experience, followed by 28.46 % with 1–2 years of experience in using the Internet. 19.23 % of the respondents have used the Internet for less than 1 year. The analysis clearly indicates that on an average, the majority of the respondents have more than 2 years of experience in using the Internet.

Table 2 Frequency of Internet use

	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Daily	74	34	52	160	61.54
2-3 times a week	22	16	18	56	21.54
2-3 times a month	14	8	6	28	10.77
Once in a month	6	6	4	16	6.15

X^2 calculated = 4.32, X^2 Critical = 12.6, Df = 6, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

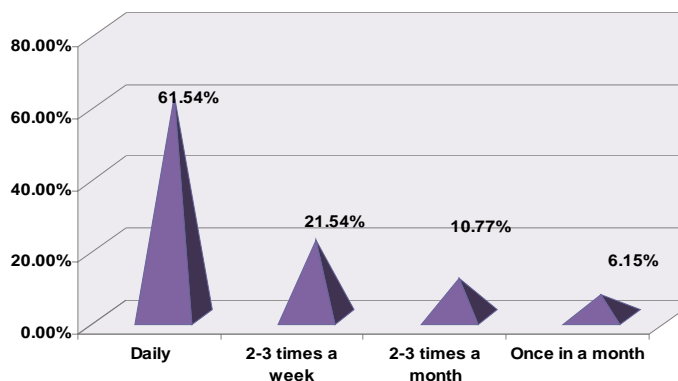


Figure 3. Frequency of Internet use

FREQUENCY OF INTERNET USE

In order to assess the frequency of using Internet services, the respondents were asked to indicate any one out of four categories of time lag. 61.54 % of the respondents used the Internet daily, 21.54 % used it 2–3 times a week and 10.77 % times in a month. Only 6.15 used the Internet once a month (Table 2).

Table 3 - Place of Internet use

	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Cyber Café	72	40	58	170	65.4
Library	30	20	14	64	24.6
Home	14	4	8	26	10.0

X^2 calculated = 5.16, X^2 Critical = 9.49, Df = 4, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

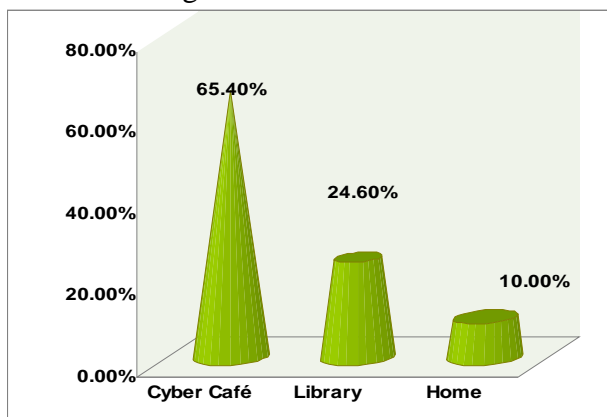


Figure 4. Place of Internet use

PLACE OF INTERNET USE

The majority of the respondents (i.e.65.4%) reported that they accessed the Internet from Cyber Café, while 24.6 % also accessed it from College library. Another 10 % also used other places such as home. It indicates that the majority of the respondents accessed the Internet from their Cyber Café (Table 3).

Table 4 Methods of learning Internet skills.

Methods of Internet Skills	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Trial and Error method	73	30	42	145	55.77
Guidance from friends	26	25	25	76	29.23
Guidance from the library staff	12	5	8	25	9.62
External course	5	4	5	14	5.38

METHODS OF LEARNING INTERNET SKILLS

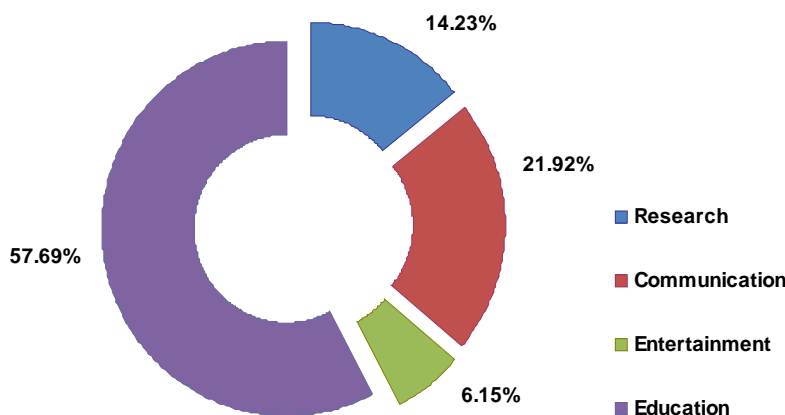
Table 4 shows that the most popular method of acquiring the necessary skills to use the Internet is via trial and error method. More than 55.77 % of the respondents used this method to learn the Internet, followed by guidance from friends with 29.23 % response. 5.38 % of the respondents acquired the skill by external courses and only 9.62 % of the respondents learnt the Internet through Guidance from the library staff.

Table 5 Purpose for Internet use

Purpose of Internet Use	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Research	14	11	12	37	14.23
Communication	23	18	16	57	21.92
Entertainment	5	3	8	16	6.15
Education	74	32	44	150	57.69

X^2 calculated = 6.59, X^2 Critical = 12.6, Df = 6, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

Figure 5. Purpose for Internet use



PURPOSES FOR INTERNET USE

Table 5 exhibits that 57.69% of the respondents used the Internet for educational purposes, 21.92 % for communication purposes 14.23 % for research purposes, while 6.15 % of the respondents admitted that they also used the Internet for entertainment purposes. It indicates that the majority of the respondents mainly used the Internet for educational purposes while the least number of respondents used the Internet for entertainment purposes.

Table 6 Favorite Search Engine

Search Engine	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Googel	58	39	45	142	54.62
Yahoo	31	12	20	63	24.23
Rediff	17	8	10	35	13.46
Others	10	5	5	20	7.69

FAVORITE SEARCH ENGINES

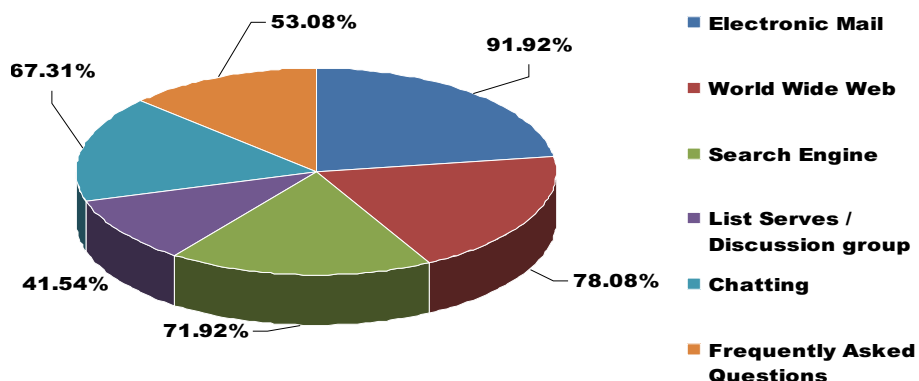
Respondents regarded Internet search engines as the main tool for locating desired information. Data presented in Table 6 reveals that Google was the most preferred search engine with 54.62 % response, followed by Yahoo and Rediff with 24.23 % and 13.46 % response respectively. Other search engines are gaining popularity slowly, but Google and Yahoo currently dominate in providing information on the Internet.

Table 7 Use of Internet services.

Internet Services	Discipline			Total	%
	Science	Arts	Commerce		
Electronic Mail	110	54	75	239	91.92
World Wide Web	95	45	63	203	78.08
Search Engine	90	39	58	187	71.92
List Serves / Discussion group	55	28	25	108	41.54
Chatting	85	35	55	175	67.31
Frequently Asked Questions	75	28	35	138	53.08

X^2 calculated = 6.01, X^2 Critical = 12.6, Df = 10, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

Figure 6. Use of Internet services



USE OF INTERNET SERVICES

It is very clear from table 7 that majority of the respondent's most often used internet services

were e-mail has been chosen as the most popular service with 91.92 % response. Browsing the WWW comes next, with 78.08 % response. Next in order come search engines with 71.92 % response, chatting with 67.31 % response, FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) with 53.08 % response, and list serves/discussion groups with 41.54 % response. It is seen that the use of list serves/discussion groups is very low among the Internet users.

Table 8 Problems encountered while using Internet.

Type of Problem	Science	Arts	Commerce	Total	%
Slow Internet Access Speed	105	40	58	203	78.08
It takes too long to View / Download Web Pages	63	28	35	126	48.46
Difficulty in Finding Relevant Information	87	29	35	151	58.08
Overload of Information on the Internet	95	32	48	175	67.31
Privacy Problem	59	25	32	116	44.62

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED WHILE USING THE INTERNET

The data presented in table 8 shows that mostly the barriers or problems encountered while using the Internet were 78.08 % of the respondents faced the problem of slow Internet access, which takes a lot of their slot time to retrieve the relevant information. 67.31 % of the respondents reported that they faced the problem of overload of information on the Internet. 58.08 % of the respondents found it difficult to get the relevant information from the Internet. 48.46 % of the respondents were of the opinion that it took too long to view web pages/download pages. 44.62 % of the respondents faced problems with privacy on the Internet.

Table 9 Satisfaction with Internet facilities.

	Science	Arts	Commerce	Total	%
Fully	34	22	21	77	29.62
Partially	56	30	48	134	51.54
Least satisfied	18	8	6	32	12.31
No comments	8	4	5	17	6.54

X^2 calculated = 4.93, X^2 Critical = 12.6, Df = 6, Level of significance = 0.05,
 Decision = Accepted, Remark = No Significant.

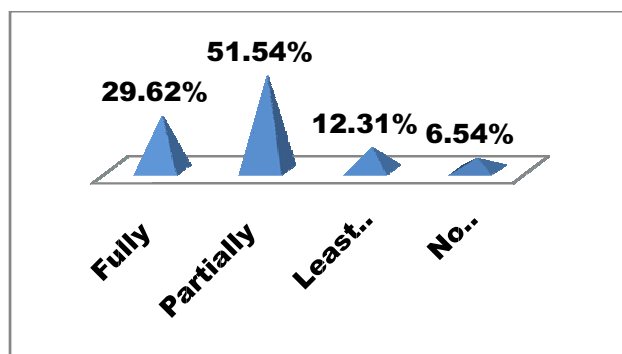


Figure 7. Satisfaction with Internet facilities

SATISFACTION WITH INTERNET FACILITIES

Table 9 shows that only 29.62 % of the respondents felt fully satisfied with the Internet facilities, 51.54 % partially satisfied, and 12.31 % least satisfied and 6.54 % of the respondents did not express any opinion regarding the facilities provided by their respective colleges.

MAJOR FINDINGS

- The analysis clearly indicates that on an average the majority of the respondents had more than 2 years of experience in using the Internet (Table 1).
- More than 60% of the respondents used the Internet services and resources daily (Table 2).
- The majority of the respondents (i.e. 65.4 %) accessed the Internet from Cyber Café (Table 3).
- The majority of the respondents (55.77 %) learned Internet skills by trial and error method. Guidance from colleagues and friends followed with 29.23 % response (Table 4).
- More than 57.69 % of the respondents used the Internet mainly for educational purposes, followed by communication, with 21.92 % response (Table 5).
- Google was the most preferred search engine with 54.62 % response, followed by Yahoo and Rediff with 24.23 % and 13.46 % response, respectively (Table 6).
- Of the Internet services, e-mail was the most popular Internet service with 91.92 % response. Next in priority came the WWW with 78.08 % response (Table 7).
- More than 78.08 % of the respondents faced problems of slow Internet access speed, which used up a lot of their slot time in order to retrieve relevant information (Table 8).
- Only one-third of the respondents felt fully satisfied and 51.54 % partially satisfied with the Internet facilities provided by their respective colleges (Table 9).

SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE INTERNET SERVICES

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forward to improve the use of the Internet among students in the degree colleges of Salem District.

- Allotted time of Internet service should be increased and if possible, the service should be made available round the clock so that users can make maximum use of the Internet facility.

- The librarians can bring to the notice of the students about the popular and latest websites with their address. They can make use of the notice boards in various departments and the library notice boards.
- At regular intervals the colleges should organize orientation, training programs, which will help the users to know how to use the net for their academic purposes.
- Printing facilities should be provided in the libraries. This will surely help the readers to get the required information in hard copies after downloading it from the net.
- The facilities in the libraries where internet is already available will definitely improve in the coming years. By looking at various colleges and their own experience will definitely help them to move forward. We hope that a time will come to say proudly that all the libraries are having internet facility.

CONCLUSION

The Internet provides a wealth of information on any subject field. Students are using the Internet increasingly and it occupies an important place among various information sources. The information on the Internet is not usually available in an organized way and the users are unable to get precise information from the Internet. In order to make the Internet more beneficial, the library staff who have acquired a good deal of efficiency in the collection, organization and retrieval of information should feel duty-bound to see that the users are able to obtain right information at the right time. For this, they should organize and classify the information on a website in such a way that the users are able to easily find the information they need for their studies and research purposes. The supplementation of library services with Internet services will benefit users in getting the right information at the right time.

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