

USAGE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON READING CULTURE: A CASE STUDY OF PUNJAB AGRICULTURAL UNIVERSITY, LUDHIANA

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Abstract

Reading performs an essential role in the academic achievements. Though, the technology has overwhelmed pattern of reading culture. To investigate this change, 114 students from Punjab Agricultural University were surveyed through the questionnaire method. The study found that most of the students were not aware of the online databases. They were using e-journals, e-books and e-theses for their research. But they acknowledged that the electronic sources have improved their skills of searching and they feel more comfortable with the e-form of resources. They are well trained of using the e-resources and the only hindrance in retrieving the information is the less number of computers.

Introduction

Reading is the basic foundation for academic skills of an individual. It helps in the overall development and provides steps to excel in each and every sphere. Even our education system acknowledges the fact that reading is important and it should be given top priority from the initial stages of study. Reading is mostly misunderstood with reading of school textbooks but it is not confined to the reading for educational purposes only

No doubt that reading is a priceless activity but its importance is deteriorating rapidly. One of the most prominent causes for this is the technology boom, owing to which we end up spending most of our time in front of the television or computer screen. Sadly, people nowadays seem to have totally lost interest in this activity. Undoubtedly, modern information technologies (IT) have also revolutionized the library systems and services. The continuing new developments in IT have ushered a new digital era. With this development, libraries are being shifted from traditional to automated and finally to digital environment under which the traditional library systems and services are being

replaced by new technologies. It has a great impact on the reading preferences of the library users.

Statement of the Problem

Due to a shift from print to electronic media, the libraries have shrink to the computers and servers. The digitized information is available through the online databases with free hand searching facilities. A huge amount of information is available through internet. But to cope up with this information explosion, the library staff has to be on their toes. Although, the new generation is techno-savy without trainings but they are unable to differentiate between lots of resources. In the light of the above, it is mandatory to enquire about the reading patters of the students, their awareness about the library resources and preferably the impact of electronic resources on the reading culture.

Available Electronic resources in the University

The PAU library has a huge collection of books and journals in print as well as in online format. The electronic resources available with the library are as follow:

1. E-Books: Approximately 80 e-books are available on various subjects in the PAU Library. The access is available within the campus.
2. E-Journals: The PAU library is subscribing 50 online journals for the students and the access is IP authenticated within the campus.
3. E-Thesis: The library has digitized Ph.D. theses before the year 2000 to facilitate the users in browsing the various theses which are not covered under krishiprabha.
4. CeRA (Consortium for e-resources in Agriculture): It is a database of ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research). ICAR is having network connectivity across institutes and state agricultural universities to make available the selected journals over the network for the use of scientific community.
5. Krishiprabha (now Krishikosh): KrishiPrabha is a full-text electronic database of Indian Agricultural Doctoral Dissertations submitted by research scholars to the 36 State/Deemed Agricultural Universities since 1.1.2000.
6. Business source elite: This resource provides full-text coverage of scholarly business, management and economics journals.
7. Indiastat.com: It provides secondary level socio-economic statistical information about India, its states, regions and sector. It is accessible within the library only.
8. Commodities database: The Commodities database provides real-time spot and futures prices, market intelligence, historical fundamental data and robust forecasts for agricultural crops. This database is ideal for investors, researchers, banking and non-banking financial institutions involved in the commodities markets of India.

Objective of the Study

The study aimed at identifying the followings:

1. To identify various electronic resources used by the students of Punjab Agricultural University (PAU).
2. To find out the level of usage of electronic resources among the students of the University.
3. To assess the impact of electronic resources use on reading culture of the students.
4. To identify the reading pattern of the students of Punjab Agricultural University.
5. To examine the aspects hindering the effective use of electronic resources for improved reading culture.

Literature Review

Adeleke and Emehara reported that less usage of electronic resources is associated with the lack of searching skills by many graduate students. The research revealed that there was a significant relation between the use of electronic resources and information literacy skills.

Bhat and Ganaie conducted a survey at Dr. Y. S. Parmar University of Horticulture and Forestry. The study showed that e-journals and online databases are frequently used by the students. On the other hand, a small percentage of students use e-books and e-theses. The prime tendency was to prefer online mode of resources.

Natarajan et.al conducted a survey of faculty members and Ph.D. scholars at Annamalai University to analyse their awareness of e-resources and their attitude towards it. The study unveiled that the use of e-resources was very low which was because of unawareness and slow internet speed of downloading.

Kaur and Verma organized a survey of undergraduate, postgraduate, research scholar and faculty members at Thapar University, Patiala. The researchers found that the users were well-aware of the electronic resources in the library. It was revealed that there was visible variation of use of e-resources among various types of users.

Flanagin and Metzger, in a study, observed that users' way of accessing the information has been changed. The study revealed that the emergence of Internet has transformed the users' behaviour towards browsing of information to satisfy their information needs.

Methodology

The survey method was used to carry out this research and the target population were M.Sc. and Ph.D. students of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana which totalled 660. A random sampling method was adopted for the research work. A total number of 150 were sampled from the total population. A well structured questionnaire was the instrument used to gather data for the study. A total of 150 questionnaires were

distributed and 114 copies were returned and found valid for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

Findings and Discussion

Findings for this study are presented in tables 1-5

Table 1: Various electronic resources used by students of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana.

	Yes (Percentage)	No (Percentage)
E-Books	97 (85.09%)	17 (14.91%)
E-Journals	96 (84.21%)	18 (15.79%)
E-Thesis	53 (46.49%)	61 (53.51%)
CeRA (Consortium for e-resources in Agriculture)	46 (40.35%)	68 (59.65%)
Krishiprabha	32 (28.07%)	82 (71.93%)
Business source elite	22 (19.3%)	92 (80.7%)
Indiastat.com	38 (33.33%)	76 (66.67%)
Commodities database	26 (22.8%)	88 (77.2%)

From Table 1, it is clear that use of e-books and e-journals is higher side. The students are not using various databases available in the library.

Table 2: Frequency of Utilization of electronic resources among the students of the University

	Often	Rarely	Never	I am not aware of this source
E-Books	69 (60.53%)	32 (28.07%)	11 (9.65%)	02 (1.75%)
E-Journals	59 (51.75%)	34 (29.83%)	20 (17.55%)	01 (0.87%)
E-Thesis	39 (34.22%)	26 (22.8%)	42 (36.86%)	07 (6.14%)
CeRA (Consortium for e-resources in Agriculture)	21 (18.42%)	30 (26.32%)	40 (35.09%)	23 (20.17%)

Krishiprabha	13 (11.4%)	18 (15.79%)	52 (45.62%)	31 (27.19%)
Business source elite	09 (7.89%)	14 (12.28%)	60 (52.64%)	31(27.19%)
Indiastat.com	15 (13.16%)	20 (17.55%)	50 (43.87%)	29 (25.42%)
Commodities database	11 (9.65%)	14 (12.28%)	66 (57.9%)	23 (20.17%)

Table 2 reveals that the e-books are more often used by the students. Most of the library users were not aware of the electronic databases available with the library. 43.87% and 57.9% of the students never accessed the statistical databases i.e. Indiastat.com and Commodities databases respectively.

Table 3: Influence of electronic resources use on the reading habits of the university students

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
1. I like reading electronic resources	38 (33.33%)	60 (52.64%)	04 (3.51%)	06 (5.26%)	06 (5.26%)
2. It has improved my reading interest	38 (33.33%)	50 (43.87%)	06 (5.26%)	14 (12.28%)	06 (5.26%)
3. I am comfortable with electronic resources.	39 (34.22%)	56 (49.12%)	03 (2.63%)	09 (7.89%)	07 (6.14%)
4. It has improved my reading speed.	37 (32.46%)	33 (28.95%)	08 (7.01%)	22 (19.3%)	14 (12.28%)
5. It makes reading more enjoyable.	23 (20.17%)	46 (40.35%)	12 (10.53%)	23 (20.17%)	10 (8.77%)
6. Electronic resources waste my time	0	11 (9.65%)	36 (31.58%)	57 (50%)	10 (8.77%)
7. It has increased my independency and self-learning skills	24 (21.05%)	70 (61.42%)	08 (7.01%)	06 (5.26%)	06 (5.26%)

Table 2 exhibits that approximately 77% of the respondents agreed that electronic resources have improved their reading interest. Further, the data shows that most of the students felt comfortable using the electronic resources and they agreed that it has also improved their reading speed. 81.58% of the respondents disagreed with the statement that e-resources waste their time while 9.65% agreed to this statement. 82.47% students

nodded that e-resources increased their independency of using the library recourses and it improved their self-learning skills.

Table 4: Reading culture of students of the University.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
1. I make use of the library for my research	46 (40.35%)	54 (47.37%)	04 (3.51%)	06 (5.26%)	04 (3.51%)
2. I prefer reading on my laptop/PC /Mobile device rather than reading in the library.	26 (22.8%)	34 (29.83%)	16 (14.04%)	30 (26.32%)	08 (7.01%)
3. I prefer reading the electronic resources rather than the print resources.	10 (8.77%)	32 (28.07%)	20 (17.55%)	44 (38.6%)	08 (7.01%)
4. I use electronic resources only when I have to prepare assignments and I have to prepare for exams	12 (10.53%)	52 (45.62%)	20 (17.54%)	24 (21.05%)	06 (5.26%)

The above table depicts that 87.72% students use the library for academic purpose. Mixed opinions found about the preferences of reading on personal computers rather than reading in the library. 36.84% of the respondents agreed that they prefer to use their personal laptop/PC/Mobile device for reading rather than reading in the library. On the other hand 56.15% disagreed of using their personal gadgets. Only 7.01% respondents were undecided on this aspect. Furthermore, 56.15% agreed that they use e-resources only when they have exams and they had to prepare the class assignments, while 38.59% disagreed on this account and remaining 5.26% were undecided.

Table 5: The problems in the effective use of electronic resources.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided
1. Inadequate facilities (Less No of Computers) in the library for using the electronic resources	24 (21.06%)	46 (40.35%)	04 (3.51%)	34 (29.83%)	06 (5.26%)
2. No training is provided by the library to use the electronic resources	04 (3.51%)	24 (21.06%)	18 (15.79%)	58 (50.87%)	10 (8.77%)

3. I do not possess the adequate technical skills to use the electronic resources	08 (7.01%)	16 (14.04%)	32 (28.07%)	56 (49.12%)	0
4. Inadequate internet facility	10 (8.77%)	22 (19.3%)	18 (15.79%)	64 (56.14%)	0
5. Poor power supply	04 (3.51%)	14 (12.28%)	18 (15.79%)	66 (57.9%)	12 (10.53%)

Table 5 reveals that 61.41% of the students approved that inadequate infrastructure if the major obstacle in the use of electronic resources. The best results found about the library that it provides proper training to the students in using the e-resources. 66.66% of the respondents disagreed on the inadequate training by the library staff. Similarly, two other factors also not considered as the obstacles in the effective use of electronic resources as 71.93% students disagreed to inadequate internet facility and 73.69% students also disagreed to poor power supply.

Discussion of findings

1. The research disclosed that e-books, e-journals, and e-theses are the most commonly used electronic resources among the students. Other online databases are less popular among students.
2. Most of the students are of the opinion that electronic resources have improved their reading habit and they are friendly with the use of e-resources. Its use made them more confident and it drove them to learn the searching skills.
3. The students prefer to use the library resources for their research but they opt to use their own electronic gadgets as they feel that that the library has inadequate facilities in terms of infrastructure.
4. On the other hand most of the students accepted that the library has a satisfactory internet facility.
5. The students accepted that the training to use e-resources is provided by the library staff and they possess adequate skills to retrieve the information from electronic resources.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

1. To improve the academic achievements of the students, they should be made aware of various online databases available in the library and hands on training should be provided for the maximum and effective use of these resources.

2. Teacher-librarian collaboration should be boosted so that all the students may be trained by reaching to them instead of students approaching the library or library staff.
3. The students should be encouraged for general reading in addition to their research and academic purpose.
4. The library should be equipped with more computers with required configurations to fascinate the students towards library.

Conclusion

The findings show that the impact of e-resources is noticeable on the library users in pattern of using and accessing information. It has given a free space to the users to develop lifelong learning skills as well as the independence of using the resources without any hitch. The PAU library is playing a pivotal role in facilitating the students and the teachers in the use of the internet and e-resources. Though the use of online database is not to the expected extent, but the user awareness programmes and library seminars may increase the use of these databases.

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