SELECTION AND ACQUISITION OF E-RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The present study was conducted among the academic librarians under Mumbai University to ascertain the major challenges faced by them while selecting and acquiring e-resources. The survey revealed that the college libraries' e-collection is dominated by e-journals. It is found that the librarians use multiple tools to select the e-resources. Apparently, the selection of e-resources depend upon the recommendations made by faculty and the subject relevance of the e-resources. The study revealed that the librarians use different methods to acquire the e-resources depending upon the types of e-resources. The survey revealed that the college librarians provide in-house training to the library staff to update their skills. They also impart training to the users and use different methods to create awareness among them. Unfortunately the college libraries neither have a license agreement nor a preservation strategy for e-resources.

Keywords: Acquisition of E-resources, Challenges of E-resources Development, E-resource Development in Academic Libraries, Preservation of E-resources, Selection of E-resources

INTRODUCTION

A well established library is essential for any academic institution. The emergence of information and communication technology has repositioned the resources, operations, and services as well as the expectations of users of an academic library. These days the users prefer to browse through the internet for their information needs rather than visiting the library. The academic library cannot compete with the modern information technology in its traditional collection of print material. To attract the students and to provide better services to its users, the academic library should develop electronic resources along with print materials. Though the selection, acquisition, dissemination and preservation of e-resources are similar to that of print materials, they differ in various aspects. Academic librarians face numerous challenges while developing e-resource collection. The objective of this study is to

ascertain the major challenges faced by academic librarians while selecting, acquiring and preserving e-resources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A number of studies have been carried out to find out the usage of e-resources in libraries by different kinds of users. However, only a few researchers have undertaken studies to identify the challenges faced by librarians while developing e-resources.

Flatley, R. K. & Prock, K. (2009), in their research article emphasized the need for a structured selection process with consistent selection criteria for e-resource development in academic libraries. Chen, Xiaotian et. al. (2004) discussed current practices for the cataloguing of e-resources and consortia in academic libraries. Cole, Louise (2005) highlighted the administrative challenges faced by librarian while managing e-resources specially e-journals. He also suggested some excellent practices for the efficient management of e-journals.

According to Vashishth, C.P. (2011), the main problems in building collection in e-environment are quotation system, cost factor, rate of library discount, unorganized book trade and reminder books. He also pointed out that lack of ICT infrastructure, inadequate collection, and lack of mechanism for training library personnel are other major problems being faced by librarians. Iwhiwhu, B.E. and Eyekpegha, E.O. (2009) identify inadequate ICT infrastructures, manpower, fund, inadequate government support and lack of user education as the major challenges facing digital libraries in Nigeria. Singh, T.S. (2012), emphasized the need for digital preservation with its objectives in library environments. He also discussed the benefits of digitization over traditional methods.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research study are as follows:

1. To find out existing criteria for selection of e-resources
2. To identify the limitations of acquisition and cataloguing of e-resources
3. To find out the methods used for training of library staff and users
4. To discover the methods used for user awareness and access to e-resources
5. To identify the strategy used in preservation of e-resources

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The focus of the present study is the challenges faced by academic librarians of undergraduate colleges while selecting, acquiring and preserving e-resources in their libraries. This study is limited to undergraduate colleges under Mumbai University in Mumbai region.

METHODOLOGY AND PLAN OF WORK

For this study 80 undergraduate colleges under Mumbai University was randomly selected. A well structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 80 undergraduate college librarians under Mumbai University. Out of that 68 college librarians fully completed the questionnaire given to them. The data received from the respondents was tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data was collected from the college librarians of undergraduate colleges of Mumbai University, in Mumbai region. 71% of the respondents were female and the remaining 29% were male. The majority of the respondents (53%) belonged to the age group of 31-40 year. 36% of the respondents were between the age group of 41-50. 6% of them were above 50 years of age whereas only 5% of the respondents were of the age group of 30 years.
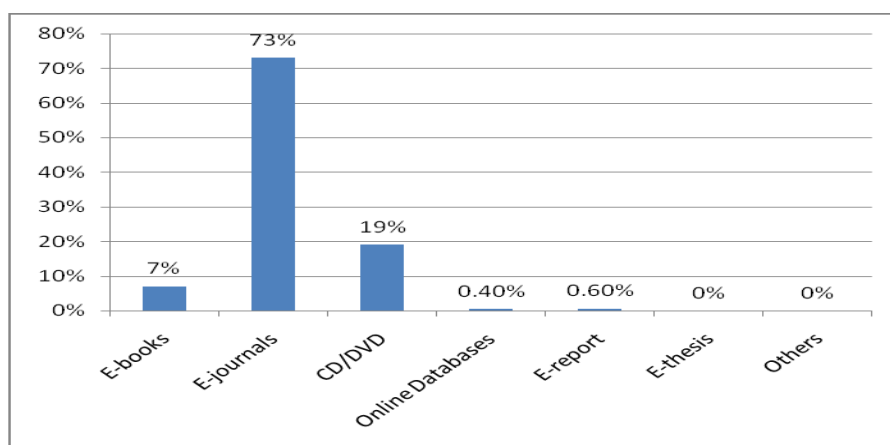
Types of E-resources Available

Chart No. (1): Types of E-resources Available in the Library

The above chart no. (1) illustrates the percentagewise collection of different types of e-resources of the college libraries. The college libraries' e-resources mainly consist of 73% e-journals, 19% CD/DVD and 7% e-books. Few college libraries' e-resource collections also include 0.4% of online databases and 0.6% of e-reports. The survey also found that most of the college libraries (61%) subscribes to NLIST.

The survey revealed that the college libraries' e-collection is dominated by e-journals. Nevertheless, few libraries are developing a collection of e-books and CDs/DVDs. The college libraries are not subscribing to databases except very few libraries. However, most of

the college libraries subscribe to NLIST. NLIST (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content) is a consortia initiative by UGC-INFLIBNET for the universities and colleges in India. More than 6000 e-journals and 97000 e-books can be accessed online. Moreover most of the college libraries can afford it since the subscription rate is quite economical.
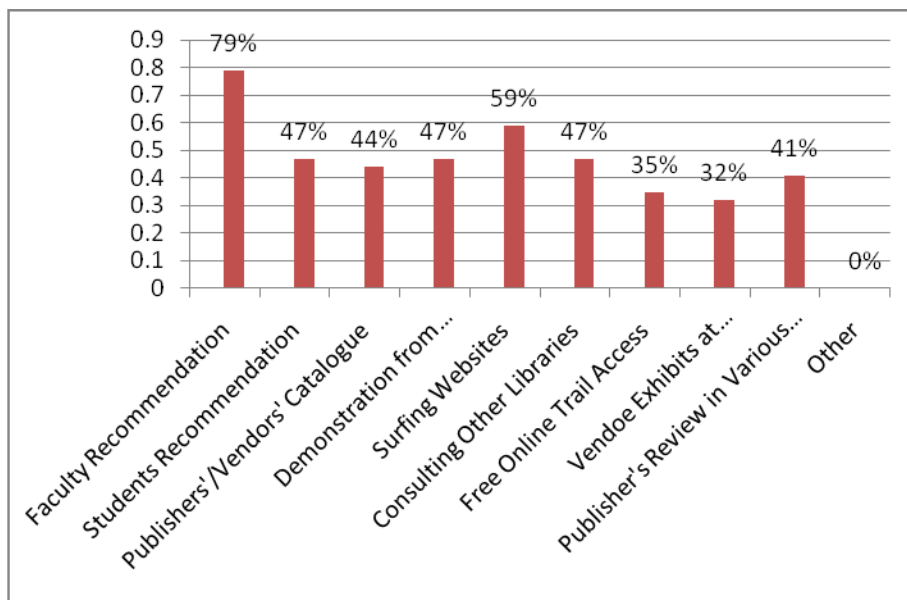
Selection of E-resources

Chart No. (2): Tools Used to Select E-resources

The respondents were asked to select the different tools they used while selecting an e-resource. Various options were given to them. It is found that all the respondents were using multiple tools to select the e-resources. The above chart no. (2) shows their response in percentage. The study revealed that recommendation from the faculty (79%) was the most used selection tool in college libraries. 59% of the college librarians selected e-resources by surfing the website while 44% of them used publishers'/vendor's catalogue . 47% of the college librarians selected e-resources on either student's recommendation or demonstration from the vendors or consulting with other libraries. 41% of the librarians read the published review of the e-resources before selecting while 35% of them did test with the free online access whenever available. 32% of the librarians did visit the vendor exhibit at conference and Seminars before selecting the e-resources.

The tools used to select the e-resources are very important. Since a lot of tools are available, to select the best one is a challenge faced by the librarian. The present study revealed that the college librarians use multiple tools to select e-resources. This facilitates the librarians to select the right e-resources. Apparently, it is observed that the college librarians give more weightage to recommendations made by the faculty while selecting e-resources.

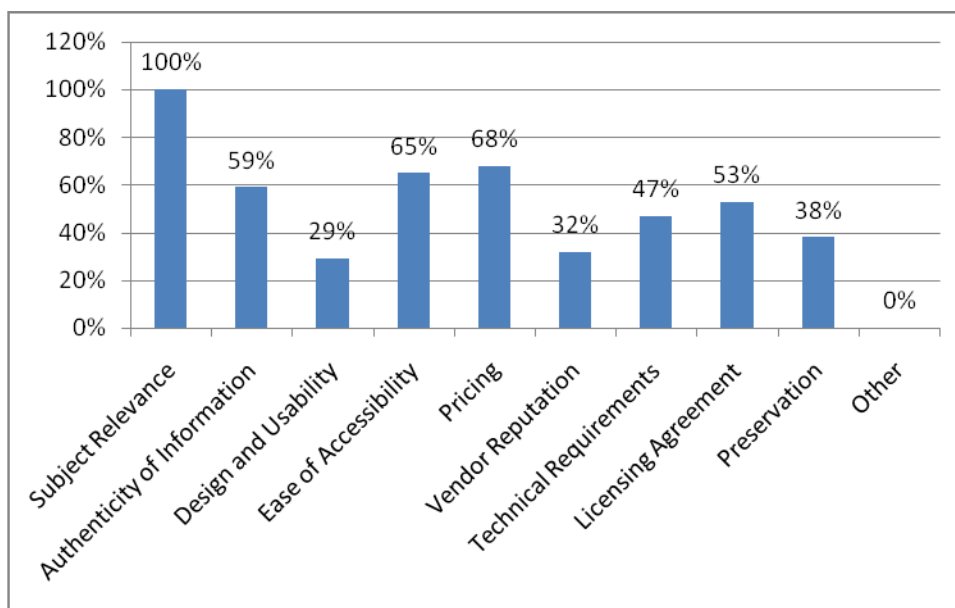**Criteria for Selection of E-resources**

Chart No. (3): Criteria for Selection of E-resources

The respondents were asked to mention different criteria used for selection of e-resources. Various options were given to them. The above chart no. (3) shows the selection criteria followed by the college librarians. It is found that all the respondents were using multiple criteria for selection of e-resources.   From the chart, it is observed that subject relevance of the e-resource (100%) is one of the main criterion for the selection of e-resources. Other frequently used criteria for selection of e-resources were pricing (68%), ease of accessibility (65%), authenticity of information (59%), and licensing agreement (53%) of the e-resource. However, 47% of the librarians verify the technical requirements needed while 38% of them check the preservation methods before selecting e-resources. Again 32% of the librarians ascertain the reputation of the vendor while 29% of them check the design and usability of the e-resource.

Selection criteria for e-resource also pose challenge to the college librarians. In case of print material they have to evaluate the price, contents, layout etc. But in the case of e-resources the librarian has to assess its subject relevance, authenticity of information, its usage and accessibility, pricing, vendor reputation, and many more technical factors. The college librarians are using different criteria for selecting e-resources so that the best one can be selected and procured for their libraries. Nevertheless, all the librarians consider the subject relevance of the e-resource as the main criterion for selection.
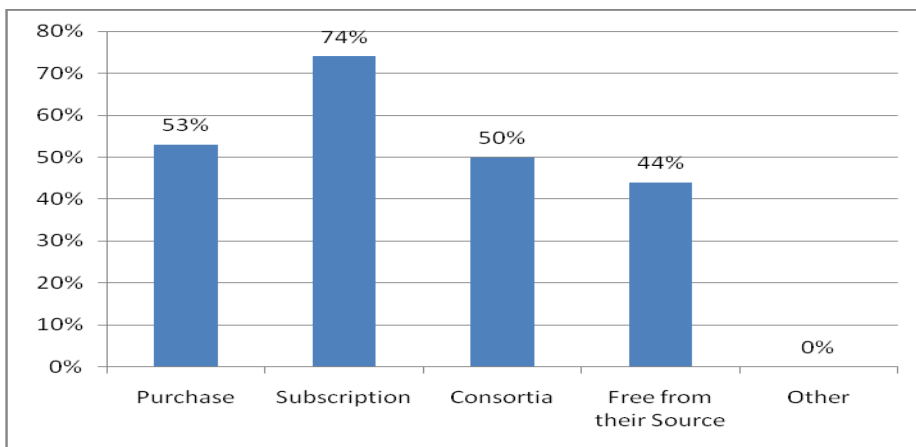
Methods to Acquire E-resources

Chart No. (4): Methods to Acquire E-resources

The respondents were asked to mention the methods they use in acquiring e-resources. Multiple options were given to them. Most of the librarians use multiple modes to acquire the e-resources. The above chart no. (4) shows that the majority of the college librarians (74%) subscribed to e-resources. 53% college librarians purchased the e-resources while 50% of them were using consortia method to acquire e-resources. 44% of the college librarians were using e-resources which were available free from their sources.

Unlike print materials, e-resources can be purchased or subscribed or can be acquired through consortia. The college librarians use different methods depending upon the type of e-resources. However, subscription to e-resource is the commonly used method by a large number of libraries while acquiring e-resources.
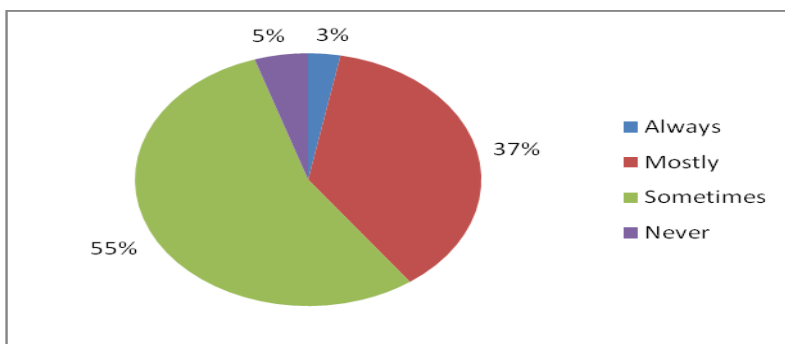

Chart No. (5): Whether Available E-resources Meet the Needs

The respondents were asked to specify whether available e-resources meet their needs. The above pie chart no. (5) shows that while 3% of the respondents felt that available e-resources always met their needs, 5% opinioned their needs were never met. 55% of the respondents

opined that their needs were met sometimes while 37% opined that mostly their needs were met.

The number of e-resources available in the market is enormous. Major issue is whether these e-resources meet the needs of the undergraduate library users. The majority of the librarian felt that the available e-resources may not always meet the needs of their users. The undergraduate students mainly depend upon the text books referred by the university for their information needs. Generally, the undergraduate users search for information beyond their referred textbooks only when they get a project work or assignment.

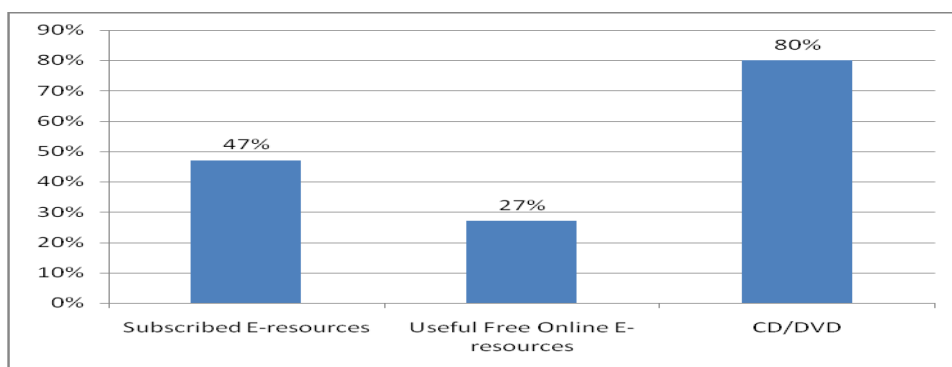**Cataloguing of E-resources**

Chart No. (6): Criteria Used for Cataloguing of E-resources

The respondents were asked to specify whether they catalogue their e-resources or not. The survey result shows that 56% of the college librarians catalog the e-resources while 44% of them do not catalogue their e-resources. The respondents who had catalogued their collections were further asked to mention the criteria used for cataloguing of e-resources. Multiple choices were given to them. It is found that most of the college librarians adopted multiple criteria for cataloguing e-resources. The above chart no. (6) illustrates that 80% of the college librarians catalogue their CD/DVD collection (purchased) while 47% catalogue their subscribed e-resources. Again 27% of the college librarian catalogue useful free online e-resources.

A catalogue indicates the existence of a resource in the library. Therefore e-resource's catalogue is necessary so that the users are aware of their existence in the library. An integrated catalogue for both print and e-resources would be ideal for a college library. The library can not only catalogue their purchased or subscribed e-resources but also catalogue useful free e-resources. The study revealed that majority of the librarians prefer to catalogue the e-resources purchased by them. However, some of them catalogue their subscribed e-resource and a few of them catalogue useful free online e-resources also. Subscribed e-resources mainly consist of e-journals. It is found that most of the college librarians do not catalogue journals, but they only make the list of journals available in the library. The present

researcher found that most of the college librarians have not yet started the practice of cataloguing their e-resource collection that is necessary to draw the attention of the users.
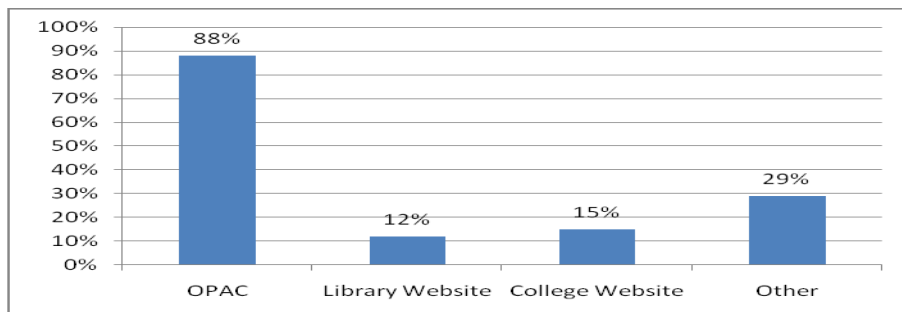
Access to E-resources

Chart No. (7): Method Used to Provide Access to E-resources

The respondents were asked to mention different methods they used to provide e-resource access to their library users. The above chart no. (7) shows that 88% of the respondents were given access to e-resources through their OPAC. 15% of the respondents were given access to e-resources through their college website while 12% of them were providing access through the library website. 29% of the librarians were using other methods to provide e-resource access. They were namely, on demand access, access through ID and password, and separate terminals in the library to access the e-resources.

Majority of the librarians provide access to e-resources through their OPAC. They have an integrated OPAC for print and e-resources. This helps the users to find out all the existing resources on a particular subject at one place irrespective of their format. Few librarians provide e-resource access through their college website and library website. This proves that most of the librarians are trying to reach out the users through various channels.
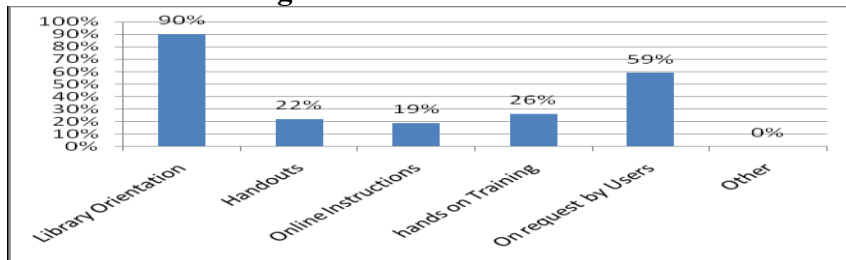
User Education Programme

Chart No (8): Methods Used in User Education Programme

The respondents were asked whether they have a proper user education programme. The analyzed result indicates that 91% of the respondents have a proper user education programme while 9% of them did not have one. The respondents were asked to mention the

different methods used to conduct user education programmes. The above chart no. (8) illustrates the analyzed result. Most of the librarians were using one or more ways to impart user education programme. An overwhelming majority of the college librarians (90%) were using library orientation method. 59% of the librarians conducted user education on demand by the user while 26% of them provided hands on training to the users. 22% of the librarians distributed hand out to the users while 19% of them provided online instructions to the students.

A well planned user education programme is important to achieve the maximum utilization of the library collection regardless of its format. An overwhelming majority of the college libraries have proper user education programmes. The library users should be aware of the existence of e-resources in the library to be able to use it. It is found that the college librarians adopt various methods to create awareness among the users about the availability of e-resources. They conduct library orientation programme, send e-mails and put up notices for the benefit of the users.
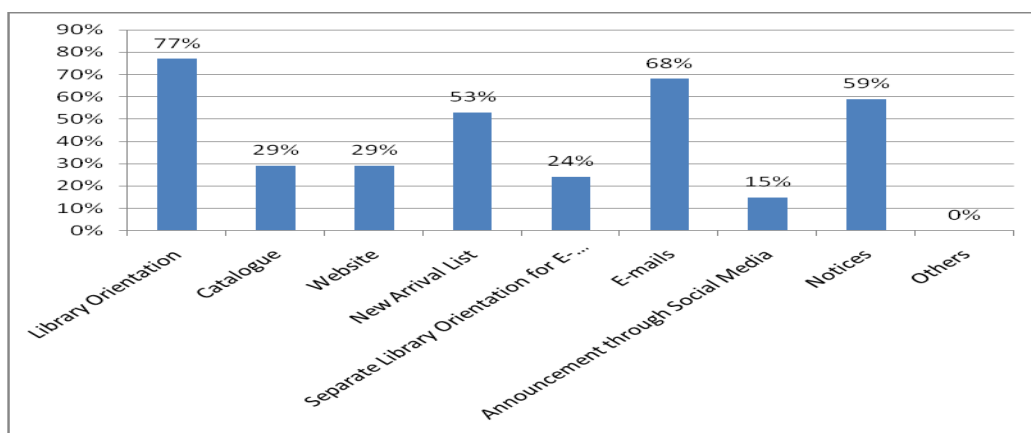

Chart No (9): Methods Used to Create Awareness of E-resource Availability to the Users

The respondents were further asked to mention the methods used to create awareness of e-resource availability to users. Multiple options were given to them. The above chart no. (9) shows that 77% of the respondents were using library orientation to create awareness of e-resource availability among library users followed by 68% of them using E-mails. 59% of the respondents used notices while 53 % of them used new arrival list to create awareness about e-resources. While 29% librarians used catalogue as well as website, 24% of them have separate library orientation for e-resources. 15% of the librarians used social media to create awareness about e-resources.

Another major challenge for the librarian is to create awareness of availability of e-resources to their users. Most of the librarians are using different methods to create awareness among

the library users. Commonly used methods are library orientation, sending e-mails, displaying notices on prominent places and list of new arrivals.

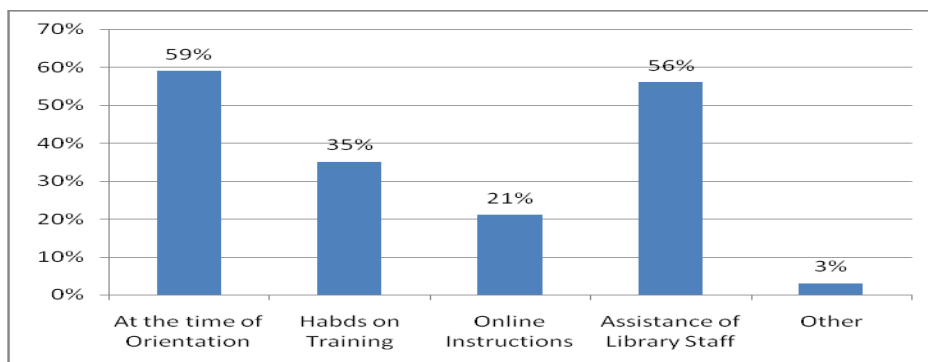**Training to Library Staff and Users to Access E-resources**

Chart No. (10): Methods Used to Give Training to Users to Access E-resources

The respondents were asked whether they impart any training to the library users to access the e-resources. They were given various options. The above chart no. (10) illustrates that 59% of the respondents gave training to the users at the time of orientation. 56% of the respondents said that the library staff gave assistance to the users. 35% of the college librarians gave hands on training to the users while 21% of them provided online instructions. 3% of them used other methods like give training on demand.

There is no need to give training to users when they use print materials. Training is required even though the users are techno savvy since the use of e-resources varies from one to another. Majority of the college librarians provide training to the users by different methods. The training of users is essential for the optimal usage of e-resources. The present researcher found that library orientation method is widely used to train the users by the college librarians and that most of the college librarians provide training to the users on demand. However, hands on training is necessary to learn the usage of e-resources. But the majority of the college librarians do not provide hands on training to their users.

The respondents were asked to mention the number of library staff with basic computer knowledge. The result shows that 65% of the library staffs were computer savvy while 35% were unskilled staff.   The respondents were further asked whether the library staff were given training to manage e-resources. It is found that the majority of the college libraries (71%) imparted training to the staff to update their knowledge while 29% of the libraries did not practice the same. The respondents who gave training to the staff were further requested to specify the nature of training given to the staff. The result shows that in house training was given to the staff by all the respondents. In addition to that, 20% of the respondents said that their staff were given training by outside agencies too.

Adequate qualified staff is an essential requirement for the smooth functioning of any library. Furthermore if the library's collection is incorporated with e-resources, staff with computer knowledge is necessary. Managing the e-resources without adequate skilled manpower is a challenging task for the librarians. It is found that most of the college libraries in Mumbai have more skilled staff compared to unskilled staff.   The accessibility and management of e-resource is different for each type of e-resources. Moreover, the library staff needs different types of training as and when the new e-resources are acquired. Since the kind of e-resources available in the market are different and the technology is changing rapidly, the training of the staff is an ongoing process. If the library staff is not well versed with the available e-resources, they may not be in a position to assist the users in using the e-resources properly. Having a good collection of e-resources without enough skilled staff is wastage of money and space. Therefore the training of the library staff is necessary that cannot be ignored. It is found that the majority of the college libraries are imparting in house training to the staff to enhance their skills in handling technology.

Licensing Agreement

The respondents were asked whether they follow Licensing agreement while acquiring e-resources. The result shows that 68% of the college libraries do not follow licensing agreement while 32% college libraries have licensing agreement while acquiring e-resources.

Unlike print materials, licensing agreement is very important for acquiring e-resources. The license agreement of electronic resources is a complex issue that needs attention. The librarian should be able to identify the issues that need to be addressed while negotiating a contract. A well drafted license agreement is mandatory for the fair use of e-resources. Unfortunately, the present study revealed that the majority of the college libraries do not have a license agreement for e-resources.
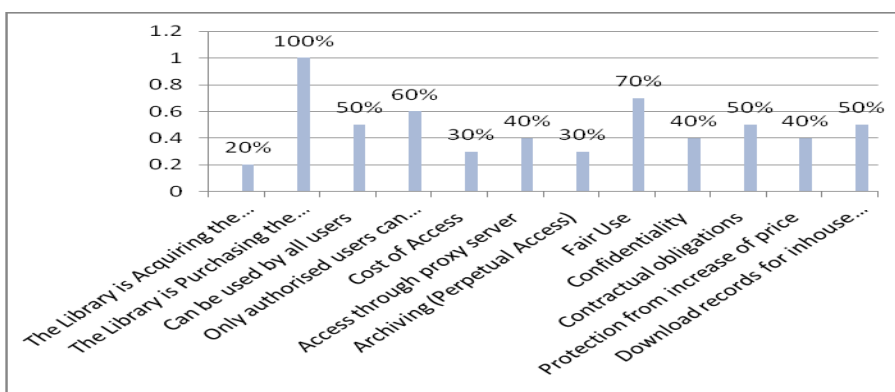

Chart No. (11): Contents of Licensing Agreement

 The respondents who have license agreement were further asked to specify the issues considered while drafting the license agreement. They were given multiple options. The

above chart no. (11) reveals the analyzed results. All the respondents agreed to 'the right to access the content of e-resources' was the main issue they incorporated in the license agreement. 70% of the respondents opined that 'the fair use of e-resources' was incorporated in the licensing agreement while 60% of them incorporated 'only authorised users can access the e-resources'. 50% of the librarians agreed that the licensing agreement included 'the e-resource can be used by all users', 'contractual obligations' and 'permission to download records for inhouse use'. While 40% of the respondents incorporated 'access through proxy server', 'confidentiality of the user' and 'protection from future increase of price' in the licensing agreement. 30% of the librarians opined that 'cost of access' and 'perpectual access' were included in the licensing agreement. Only 20% of the respondents included 'the library is acquiring the content of the e-resources' in the license agreement.

The majority of the librarians consider many issues while negotiating a contract. The substance of the license agreement will vary depending on the types of e-resources. 'Library is purchasing the right to access the e-resource' happened to be the most important issue considered by all the librarians while drafting the license agreement. It is obvious, since the college library's e-collection is more of e-journals.
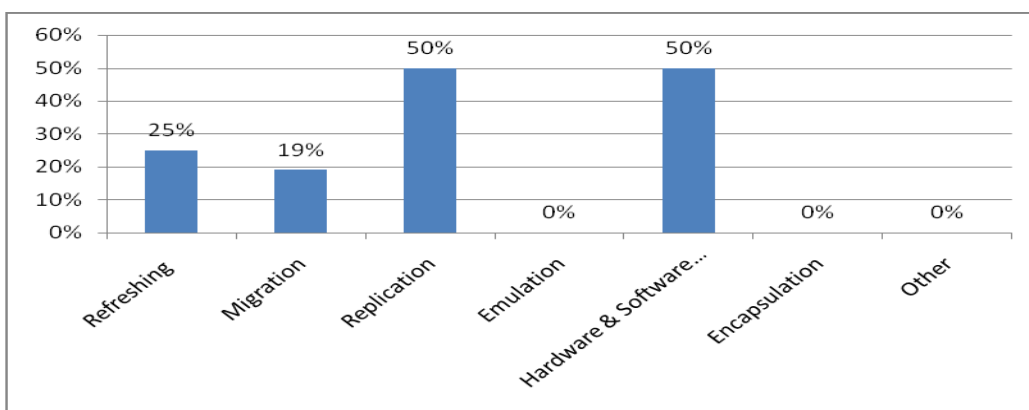
Preservation of E-resources

Chart No. (12): Preservation Strategy Used

The respondents were asked whether they preserve e-resources. The result indicates that 36% of the respondents said they never preserve e-resources while 6% of them said they always do it. 29% of the respondents said they mostly preserve the e-resources and the same number of respondents said they sometimes preserve the e-resources. The respondents were further asked to mention the preservation strategy used in their library, if any. This question was not answered by the respondents who said that they never preserve e-resources. Multiple choices were given to them. The above chart no. (12) indicates that some of the respondents were using more than one strategies. From the chart it is observed that 50% of the respondents were using replication as well as hardware software preservation strategy to preserve e-

resources. 25% of the respondents use refreshing strategy while 19% respondents use migration strategy to preserve e-resources.

Preservation of library materials for the future use is one of the main functions of the library. This rule applies to e-resource too. However, preservation of e-resources is entirely different from print materials. Preservation of electronic information requires more constant and ongoing attention towards efforts, time and money to handle rapid technological advances than preservation of the print documents. Physical deterioration and digital obsolescence are the two main challenges faced by the librarians while preserving digital information. Currently, different preservation strategies are used to preserve digital information. However, there is no effective or cost-effective method available to preserve complex digital sources for a long period of time. Whatever the medium used to preserve e-resources, it is important to ensure their accessibility for the future use. The present study revealed that the majority of the college librarians do not preserve their e-resources. However, replication and hardware & software preservation are the commonly used preservation strategy among the college librarians. Both of these methods are economical compared to other preservation methods.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the present study following recommendations can be made for the smooth development of e-resources in undergraduate college libraries.

- The college library should have a clearly defined set of selection criteria that can help the librarian in the selection process of e-resources.
- The college librarians should choose co-operative acquisition and resource sharing to reduce the cost and thus manage the tight budget.
- The college librarians should take more initiative in participating online consortium for fulfillment of information needs of users and thus develop the e-resource collection of the library. Since every library faces the problem of limited budget, less staff and time with ever changing needs of users, the consortia can assist librarians to provide the required information to the users with minimum expenditure.
- Ongoing Training should be provided to the library staff for effective use of e-resources.
- The college library should have a proper user education programme. The librarian should make sure that the users are aware of the availability of e-resources and also teach them how to use it effectively. As far as possible, the librarian should try to impart hands on training to the users for the optimal use of e-resources.
- The catalogue of e-resources should be available to the users. An integrated catalogue of both print and e-resources will serve the user in a better way.
- The librarian should try to link the e-resource through the OPAC.
- A well drafted license agreement should be made before acquiring e-resources. This will facilitate the fair use of e-resources.

- The college library should try to preserve the e-resources using appropriate methods so that it can be accessible for the future use. A well thought plan to ensure the preservation and accessibility of digital information must be developed and implemented.

CONCLUSION

E-resource development in academic libraries is the need of the hour. It is quite evident from the study that the undergraduate college librarians consider various tools and multiple selection criteria while selecting an e-resource. Apparently, the selection of e-resources is mainly depends upon the recommendations by faculty and the subject relevance of the e-resource. The librarians use different methods to acquire the e-resources depends upon the types of e-resources. However subscription to e-resources is the most common method used to acquire e-resources. The college librarians provide in house training to the library staff to update their skills. The librarians also impart training to the users at the beginning of the academic year and use different methods to create awareness among them. The college libraries neither have a license agreement nor have a preservation strategy for e-resources.

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