Information Seeking Behavior of the E-Consortia Users of University Libraries of Southern Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the information access and retrieval strategies of university library users. The study employed a descriptive survey method, covering 440 respondents from the university libraries of southern Rajasthan. The random sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the sample. A sample size of 440 respondents was used for this purpose. It opted for the use of questionnaires, interviews and observation methods. It emerged that users of e-consortia were utilising sources such as audio-video lectures, e-journals, e-books, and research articles. The study also revealed that university students (UG/PG) are using e-consortia for their academic purpose whereas research scholars and faculty members are navigating e-consortia for research purposes. There is a significant difference between the use of e-consortia by students from professional and non-professional courses. The students from professional courses are using e-consortia excessively rather than those of non-professional courses. The library in charge should promote awareness and train users about e-consortia by organizing workshops for hands-on practice in regular intervals, rather than simply giving an introduction of the e-consortia-specific tools only.

KEYWORDS: Awareness about e-consortia, e-consortia, e-resources, e-journals, university e-libraries, information environment, Searching strategies, universities in south Rajasthan

INTRODUCTION

he information technology, information explosion, information age and information revolution are some of the terms that reflect the importance of information use and its need in day to day life specially for academic community. Information seeking form an important part of academic world in present digital era. The library is a place for information seekers where information is collected, organized and shared with their users. There is an explosion of information and to cope with this explosion libraries are adopting advanced technologies to deliver information to people in a very short time. The development of computers and the internet have changed the functioning of the libraries and making it easier for users to find what they need. The libraries are moving from paper books to electronic resources like e-journals, e-books, online newsletters, electronic reference books and electronic theses and

dissertations. The internet is very important for finding these digital resources in the digital library. Information seeking behavior is defined as "the complex patterns of action and interactions that people engage in when seeking information of whatever purpose".

According to Ellis[1], Information seeking behavior refers to the way people search for and utilize information. He described information seeking behavior as purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. Information Seeking behavior is the micro-level of behavior employed by the researcher in interacting with information systems of all kinds, be it between the seeker and the system, or the pure method of creating and following up on a search.

According to Krikelas[2], Information seeking behavior refers to "any activity of an individual that is undertaken to indentify a massage that satisfies a perceived need."

Mick[3], observed that "information-producing and information-seeking behavior are closely linked and are the reasons why most information systems are not better accepted as they fail to provide linkage between the two activities".

Most libraries have limited budget to spend on e-consortia subscription, as such there is an urgent need to share the resources with other libraries. This library co-operation to share e-books and other e-materials is called e-consortium. A consortium helps to resolve the problems related to broad information, need of different users and shortage of budget.

E-CONSORTIA

E-consortia are groups of libraries and information centers that work together to buy and manage digital resources like e-books, e-journals and databases. These groups started mainly because buying digital resources was becoming too expensive for single libraries. By working together, they can get better deals and more access to resources. (ebooks.inflibnet, 1991)[4]

Libraries in e-consortia share their knowledge and ideas to manage digital resources better. Working together helps them talk to publishers with a stronger voice and choose resources that users actually need. However, there are some problems. Different libraries have different needs, which can make decisions harder. Also, talking with publishers and agreeing on licenses can take a lot of time. Making sure every library can use the shared resources easily can also be difficult.

There are many library consortia are available in India as well as at international level viz. INDEST-AICTE Consortium, CSIR Consortium, UGC INFONET Consortium, ISRO Consortium, FORSA Consortium, IIM Consortium, ICMR Consortium, HELINET Consortium, OCLC Consortium, EIFL Consortium etc. When libraries subscribe to electronic resources together through a consortium then they can access more resources with using fewer budgets. The E-journals give the original and latest information about research and innovation in particular area. Because of this the e-journals are used a lot by the research scholars.

In the future, e-consortia will become even more important as digital access grows. They might also help share open access materials and research data, making them key partners in the world of research and learning. As libraries deal with the challenges of the digital age, working together in e-consortia will help make sure everyone has a fair chance to access information.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

Talawar and Naikar (2024) [5] in this research observed that how important e-consortia resources are for students and teachers in the Social Science department at Karnatak University, Dharwad. These researchers sent questionnaires to 100 people out of which 84 answered. The results of the analysis showed that most people know about different types of electronic resources of e-consortia and use them for their academic purpose. These resources help their studies. Some people have trouble using them, but there are also many benefits. The article suggests that university libraries should help students and teachers learn more about e-consortia resources. They should also organize training programs to teach everyone how to use these resources better. This will make it easier for everyone to find and use helpful information for their research and studies.

Singh & Prasad (2023) [6] highlighted in their study that how teachers and students in the Botany and Zoology Departments at Banaras Hindu University use the e-ShodhSindhu Consortium. The study checks if people know about e-ShodhSindhu, how often they use it, why they use it and what helps or stops them from using it. It also sees how these online resources help with their teaching and research. The study found that about 77% of Botany and 68% of Zoology members know about e-ShodhSindhu. Most teachers use it for teaching, and most students use it for research. The article also gives ideas to help people use e-ShodhSindhu better.

Muthurasu (2020) [7] conducted a survey at Alagappa University Central Library, Karaikudi. The survey wanted to see how people use UGC-Infonet digital library journals. Sixty-five library users were chosen randomly. They answered questions in a form. The results showed that 89% know about the UGC-Infonet journals. About 37% learned about them from the library staff. More than 40% of users look at the journals every day. Around 69% are happy with the journals. Most people are satisfied with the service the library gives for using these journals.

Hanchinal (2019) [8] in their study on Indian colleges are ranked by groups like NAAC and NIRF. To stay highly rated, colleges need to help students learn well and get good skills. Libraries are important in this, especially by giving students digital resources. The article looks at how students in colleges in Mumbai Suburban use the N-LIST e-resource service. Out of 200 students, only half knew and used N-LIST. Most students used it for class notes and homework, but many did not know about it at all. The study shows that more students could benefit if they learned about N-LIST and how to use it. Colleges should do more training and promotion so students can use digital libraries better and improve their studies.

Sinha and Deb (2015) [9] looked at how people use online resources from the INDEST-AICTE Consortium at the NIT Silchar Library. The researchers used a survey with questions based on earlier studies to find out how well students, teachers, and researchers use these e-resources for their learning and research. They gave out 180 questionnaires, and 132 were answered. The study happened between February and June 2013. Results showed that most people know about and use the e-resources, especially e-journals. Many use both printed and online materials, but most prefer online resources. The study also found that users want the library to offer more computers and faster internet to make it easier to use these resources.

Kumar and Narasappa (2015) [10] analyzed in their research article that knowledge is very important for countries. Libraries are changing fast and now focus more on online resources. Two major programs are UGCINFONET and INDEST help to academic libraries for get more digital materials. The internet is making it easier for people to learn and find information. Many library groups share online journals which are now more than other digital resources.

These changes give students and teachers access to quality journals, databases and research papers. Working together, libraries can buy online information at a lower cost. In recent years this group buying of digital materials has become very important. Libraries are becoming more modern and helpful for people who want to learn.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses on university e-libraries of south Rajasthan. It includes 15 university libraries viz. one IIM, one agriculture university, one Vedic university, two medical universities and ten general universities. This research looks at how university library users like faculty members, research scholars and students knew about e-consortia resources of their libraries, how much they used them and retrieved as well. The study does not include non-teaching staff to examine the quality of library services. It also measures user satisfaction with these resources. It also focuses on the awareness and academic quality of the users.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research was planned to achieve the following objectives -

1. Find out information seeking behavior of university library users.
2. Measure the awareness and usage of e-consortia resources among library users.
3. Determine frequency and purposes of users engage with e-consortia resources.
4. Identify which types of e-consortia resources are most preferred by library users.
5. Examine the reasons and challenges that users face while seeking information on e-consortia..
6. Evaluate user satisfaction regarding the availability and coverage of e-consortia resources.
7. Propose recommendations to improve facilities and services related to e-consortia usage.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a survey method to collect the data from the respondents. The questionnaire has been distributed among university students, research scholars and faculty members with request to provide information needed. A total of 520 questionnaires were distributed in which 440 completed questionnaires were received back. After collecting the completed questionnaires used to understand the data and calculate for the interpretation and results.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data collected through questionnaires method are organized and tabulated by using appropriate statistical methods.

Table 1: Distribution of questionnaires to the library users

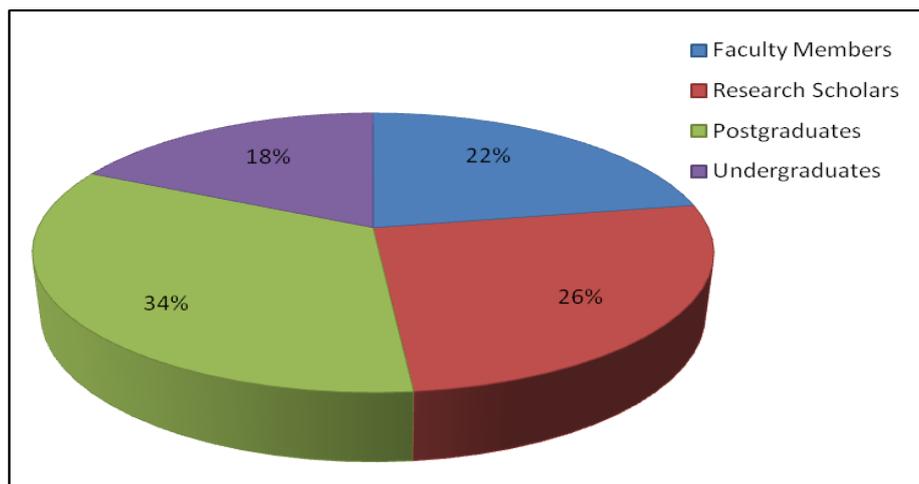| S. No.	Library users	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires received	Percentage %
1	Faculty Members	105	98	22.27%
2	Research Scholars	135	115	26.14%
3	Postgraduates	195	148	33.64%
4	Undergraduates	85	79	17.95%
	Total	520	440	100.00%

Fig. 1 Distribution of questionnaires to the library users

The data presented in table 1 clearly shows that out of 520 questionnaires distributed, 440 questionnaires were received duly filled, representing 84.61% response rate. The data obtained through theses questionnaires were analyzed statistically by applying appropriate statistical tools.

Table 2: Frequency of access e-consortia resources

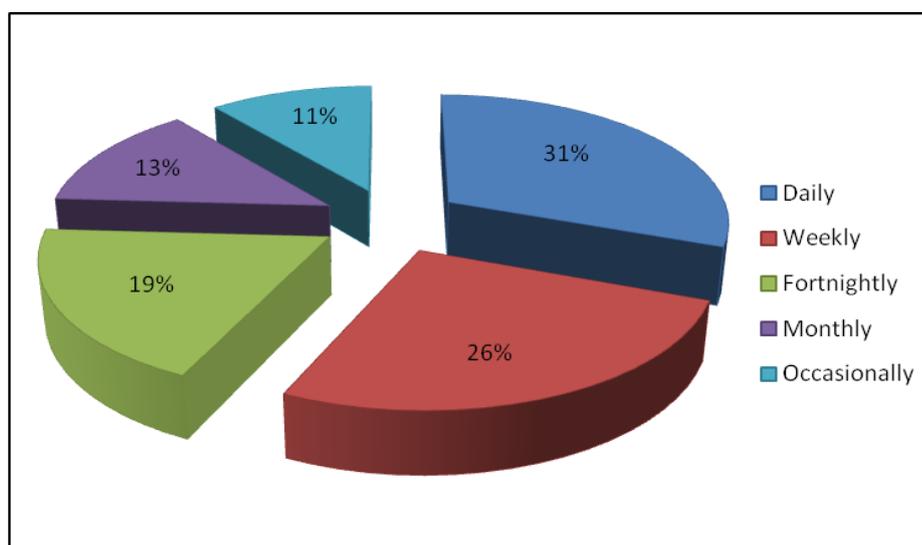| S. No.	Frequency of Access	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Daily	135	30.68%
2	Weekly	115	26.14%
3	Fortnightly	84	19.09%
4	Monthly	58	13.18%
5	Occasionally	48	10.91%
	Total	440	100.00%

Fig. 2 Frequency of access e-consortia resources

The data analysis and presented in table 2 revealed that the majority of respondents (30.68%) used these resources daily basis while 26.14% used them weekly. Additionally, 19.09% used them every fortnightly, 13.18% used them monthly basis and remaining 48 (10.91%) library users use the e-consortia resources occasionally. This indicates their interest in using e-consortia resources.

Table 3: Purpose of the Use of E-consortia

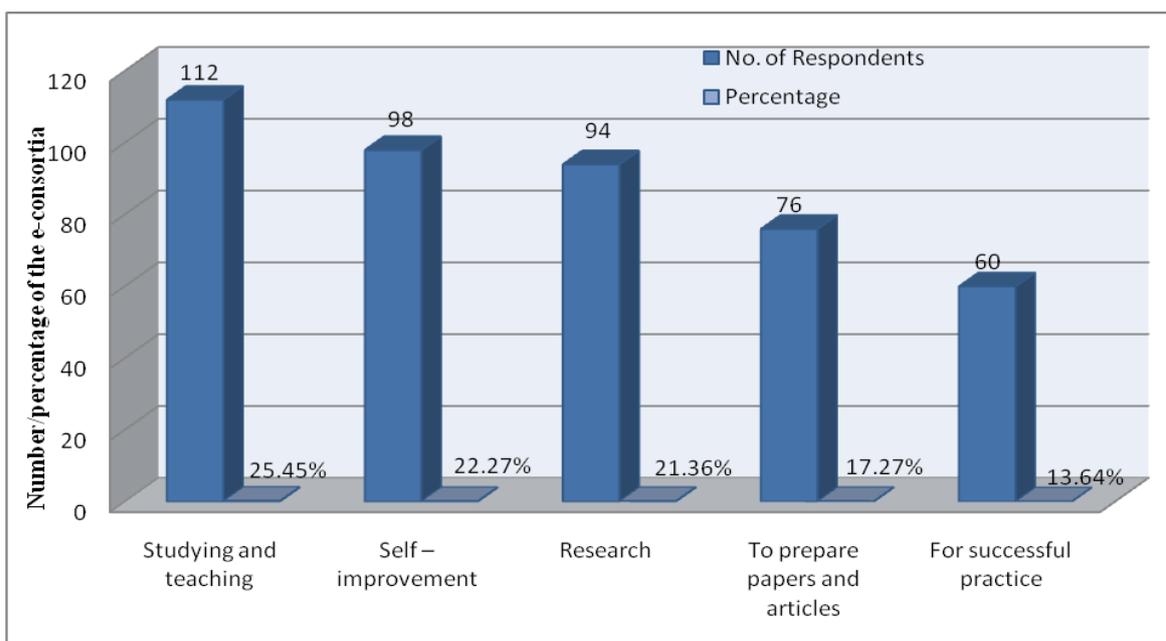| S. No.	Statements	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Studying and teaching	112	25.45%
2	Self – improvement	98	22.27%
3	Research	94	21.36%
4	To prepare papers and articles	76	17.27%
5	For successful practice	60	13.64%
	Total	440	100.00%

Fig. 3 Purpose of the Use of E-consortia

The analysis of the purpose of uses as listed in table 3 revealed that 'studying and teaching' is the first purpose and being used mostly by E-consortia users. The purposes of self-improvement, research and writing papers and articles also realised as their second, third and fourth preference. The E-consortia are used in university libraries for successful practice as their last preference.

Table 4: Popularity of e-resources

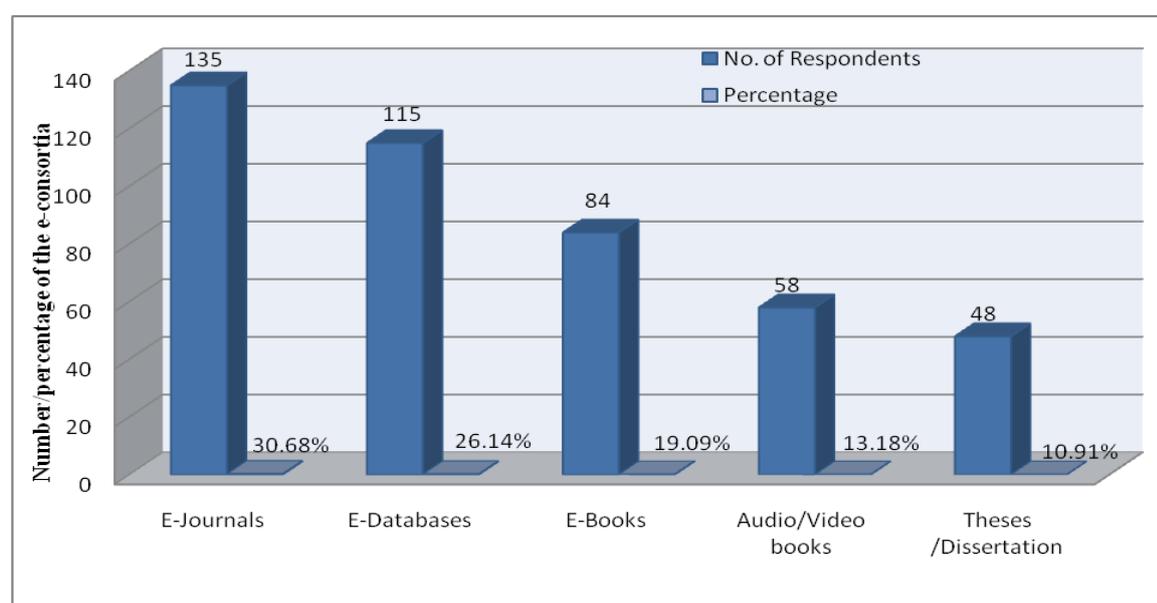| S. No.	E-Consortia Resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	E-Journals	142	32.27%
2	E-Databases	119	27.05%
3	E-Books	83	18.86%
4	Audio/Video books	51	11.59%
5	Theses /Dissertation	45	10.23%
	Total	440	100.00%

Fig. 4 Popularity of e-resources

The data analysed and presented in table 4 revealed that most respondents preferred e-journals (32.27%) and e-databases (27.05%) to meet their academic needs, followed by e-books (18.86%) and audio/video books (11.59%). Only 10.23% of users searched for e-theses/dissertations on e-consortia.

Table 5 : Satisfaction level with E-consortia resources and Services

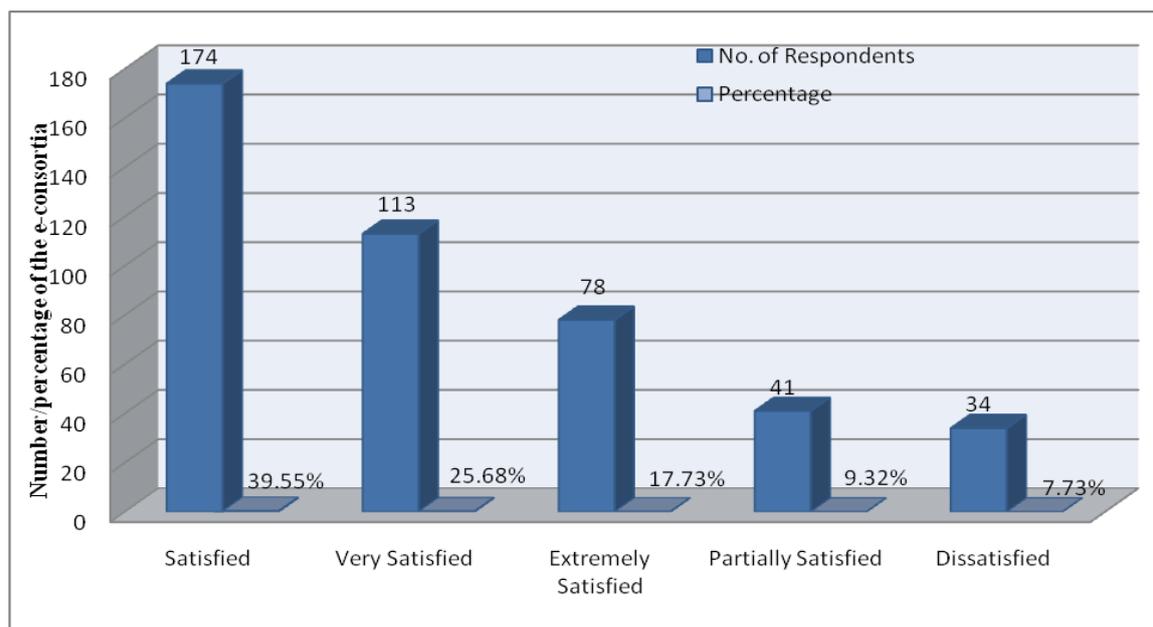| S. No.	Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Satisfied	174	39.55%
2	Very Satisfied	113	25.68%
3	Extremely Satisfied	78	17.73%
4	Partially Satisfied	41	9.32%
5	Dissatisfied	34	7.73%
	Total	440	100.00%

Fig. 4 Satisfaction level while using E-consortia resources and Services

The analysed data presented in table 5 analysis revealed that the majority (39.55%) of library users were well satisfied with the available subscribed e-consortia resources and services, followed by very satisfied (25.68%) and extremely satisfied (17.73%). 9.32% of respondents were partially satisfied. Only 7.73% of e-consortia users were dissatisfied with the resources.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine information seeking habits of users of university libraries available in south Rajasthan by taking samples from users belonging to all courses to get an overview of their information seeking habits. University library authorities are supported on the basis of the study to organized e-resource awareness workshops on regular basis to evaluate the users subscribed e-consortia. Most of the pre-decided objectives are met within the results.

However, the library and information system has the primary responsibility to reach a minimum level of requirement so as to be capable of handling the complex information needs and demand. Over all it is strongly established fact that library and information system is the life blood of a university. So it is strengthening for information provision and to create important avenues of information circulation within the university library users.

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