



Users' Attitude of E-books at Noorul Islam University, Kanyakumari district : A Case Study

K.P.Sivakumar, Noorul Islam University, Kumaracoil, Tamilnadu 629 180.
Email:sivavinsall@gmail.com

R. Sreedevi, Department of Commerce, Holy Cross College (Autonomous),
Nagercoil, Tamil Nadu 629 002. Email: sreewinsall@gmail.com
(Affiliated to Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli)

Abstract

This paper attempts to bring out the user attitudes and user interest of e-Books collection in the Noorul Islam University Library. The collection development policies of university libraries are driven by the information seeking behaviour and extent of use of resources by students, researchers and teachers. It is essential to understand the gaps in preferences and experiences of users of e-books in academic libraries so that the collections of e-books can be customized to meet the users' preferences. The purpose of this study is to understand how students, teachers and research scholars access, browse and use e-books in Noorul Islam University, Kumaracoil, Kanyakumari district, Tamilnadu. The study has identified factors that encourage or discourage the use of e-books in academic libraries

Keywords: User Study, Books, Electronic Books, Kanyakumari district

Introduction

In the digital library environment, electronic information has gained momentum and achieved its own gain among the University libraries and their user groups. Access to digital content has transformed our approach to collection development and management and it will continue to do so, more importantly it has transformed our users approach to information seeking and users. Following this trend, libraries started including e-books in their collections to enhance their services. This study has used systematic scientific survey to understand the gaps between users' expectations and the actual facilities that e-books provide to support their information seeking activities. This survey will help in understanding the reading behaviour, preferences and experiences of users for e-books as textbook or reference books; to identify, features which encourage or discourage the circulation of e-books in academic libraries. It will assist in providing enhanced student-centric services and making judicious and optimum use of scarce financial resources of libraries. The study will serve as a framework for future surveys, which may be conducted to examine the evolution of e-book usage in academic libraries.

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Noorul Islam University

Noorul Islam University comprising the Noorul Islam College of Engineering as its constituent teaching unit, has been declared as a Deemed-to-be-University by the Ministry of Human Resource Development. The educational institution- Noorul Islam College of Engineering, had a humble beginning in the year 1989 with two under graduate engineering programs with an intake capacity of 80 students, has now metamorphosed itself into one of the best educational institutes in the southern region of India offering 17 Undergraduate, 21 Post Graduate, 8 M.Phil programmes and Ph.D degree in all disciplines.

Objectives of the study

Following are the objectives of the study

- To understand the awareness among users about the availability of e-Books.
- To know the preferences of users for the format of books (print or electronic), when books are used as textbooks, scholarly publications, leisure read, general reference, dictionary or encyclopaedia.
- To study the satisfaction with collection of e-Books.
- To evaluate the access and reading behavior for e-Books.

Methods of the study

The study used questionnaire-based survey method to collect the data. The target population for the study included students enrolled in undergraduate or postgraduate courses, research scholars and faculty members of Noorul Islam University. Random sampling approach was adopted for the study. There are totally 150 questionnaires have been distributed among the faculty, students and scholars who use the e-books collection and the researcher received 121 filled in questionnaires. The collected data has been analyzed and presented in the form of table for the inferences and possible suggestions were made accordingly.

Literature Review

Viji and Selvam (2011) in their study on "Utilization of open access E-resources in Academic libraries : A study" discussed about open access e-resources, types, e-books, and e-journals and brief about the users of the e-resources. The methodology adopted for the study used listing of open access resources along with web site with brief information. Apart from that, merits and debits and demerits of e-resources in general were discussed.

Baladhandayutham and Chellappandi (2013) have conducted a study on “Use of Internet services and sources by the students of Engineering colleges in Madurai district :A study”. The paper discussed academic uses of internet among the students of engineering colleges in Madurai district in Tamilnadu. In the era of information technology, technical and professional educational institutions have played a significant role in shaping the future of tomorrow’s societies and these internet sources have distinct advantages over the print version. The present study demonstrated and elaborated various aspects of internet use, such as frequency of internet use, purpose of seeking information, favorite search engine, devices prefer to store the information from the internet, favorite E-mail provider, problem facing and satisfaction level of users with the internet facilities provided in the Engineering Colleges of Madurai district.

Data analysis and results

Awareness about Availability of E-books

Lack of awareness about e-Books is the prime factor behind poor usage of e-Books, despite best efforts made by libraries for improving circulation of e-Books Central Library has been using multiple communication channels to spread awareness about the availability of e-Books, perceiving that preferences of users for communication channels may differ. To understand popularity of various communications channels, the users were asked to specify the communication channels from which they learnt about the availability of e-books in the library.

Table : 1 - Use of Communication channels for providing information about e-Book collections

Communication Channel	Actual effectiveness Respondents Presage
Library Website	73 (60.3)
Library Catalogue	29 (24.0)
Colleague	32 (26.4)
Teacher	11 (9.1)
Information Brochure of Library	8 (6.6)
Orientation Programmes	6 (5.0)
Publisher	2 (1.7)
Staff of Library	3 (2.5)
Total No. of respondents	121

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Users have been referring to multiple communication channels. Seventy-three (60.3%) of the respondents learnt about e-Books through the library website and 29 (24.0%) got the information from library catalogue. Thirty-two (26.4 %) of the respondents got information from colleagues and 11 (9.1%) got through teachers. Thus, about 30 per cent users relied on human support, i.e., support from colleagues, teachers, library staff and orientation programmes. Substantial number of users rely on human support for getting information about e-Books .

Preferred format of book for different academic purposes

The preferences of electronic or print formats of books differ with the purposes of reading book. Change in preferences with the nature of books is statistically examined with binomial test, as shown in

Table 2 - Preferred format of book for different academic purposes

Nature of book	Preferred format				Difference in e-book and print book preference
	e-books	Print books	Both	Total	
	No percentage	No percentage	No percentage		
General reference books	12 (12.1)	14 (14.1)	73 (73.7)	99	No difference
Dictionary / encyclopedia	21 (24.4)	11 (12.8)	54 (62.8)	86	No difference
Journals	44 (42.7)	10 (9.7)	49 (47.6)	103	e-book preferred
Research monograms	23 (28.4)	7 (8.6)	51 (63.0)	81	e-book preferred
Thesis & dissertation	22 (22.2)	24 (24.2)	53 (53.5)	99	No difference
Fiction	21 (23.6)	36 (40.4)	32 (36.0)	89	No difference
Leisure	7 (9.3)	35 (46.7)	33 (44.0)	75	Print book preferred
Text books	3 (3.2)	39 (41.9)	51 (54.8)	75	Print book preferred

Users preferred electronic version for perusing journals and research monograms, whereas print versions were preferred for textbooks and leisure reading. The use of textbook entails reading most of chapters, page by page, hence reading printed books on screen is tiring. Distinctive features of e-books facilitate their use as reference materials in research. Users prefer electronic format for reading short, specific and non-academic content.

Extent of usefulness of e-books for different academic purposes

This survey further assessed the extent of usefulness of e-books for different academic purposes, as elaborated in Table 3.

Table: 3

Extent of usefulness of e-books for different academic purposes

Extent of usefulness of e-books	As textbooks	As reference source	For assignments and seminars
	Respondents percentage	Respondents percentage	Respondents percentage
Considerably	36 (29.8)	77 (63.6)	65 (53.8)
To some extent	71 (58.7)	37 (30.5)	47 (38.8)
Not at all	5 (4.3)	3 (2.5)	5 (4.1)
Not applicable to me	9 (7.6)	4 (3.3)	4 (3.3)

From the above table it is clear that maximum percentage (58.7%) respondents pointed out that e-books catered to their textbook requirements to some extent, seventy seven respondents (63.6%) pointed out that e-books supported as reference sources for their research activities, maximum percentage (53.8%) said that e-books are used for assignments and seminars. It indicates that maximum percentage of respondents are using the usefulness of e-books for different academic purposes.

Degree of satisfaction with strength of e-Books collections

Few statements pertaining to the distinct features of e-books, such as easiness, quickness and user-friendliness in information retrieval and the extent of coverage of various disciplines in e-book packages subscribed by the Library, and requested the users to express the extent of agreement with these statements on a

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Likert scale of five points. The weighted mean score of agreement with each statement, reflected in the rightmost column of Table 4, was computed by assigning weight of -2 to strongly disagree; -1 to disagree, 0 to neutral, 1 to agree and 2 to strongly agree. The high value of the weighted mean score of the agreement indicates the extent of agreement with that statement by a large number of respondents.

Table : 4
Degree of satisfaction with strength of e-Books collections

Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean score of agreement
Print Collection of the Library meets my academic & research needs.	32	45	13	13	5	0.80
E-books available with the Library meet my academic & research needs	15	50	20	13	7	0.50
Support extended by library staff in retrieving e-books is satisfactory	13	49	27	18	2	0.49
E- books are easily accessible whenever I need them	17	33	36	14	2	0.48
E-books older than five years are rarely referred by me	8	31	22	29	7	0.04

SA: Strongly agree, A : Agree, N: Neutral, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly disagree

From the above table, it is found that thirty-two students strongly agreed that print book collection in the library met their requirements and only 15 students strongly agreed that e-Book collection met their needs. It indicates that e-Book collection was not strong enough like print book collection. Previous studies have highlighted that all that is required is not available as e-Books. 28 respondents did not agree with the statement that they did not refer to e-Books older than five years, which infers that library needs to subscribe to old e-Books.

Factors which encouraged reading of e-books**Table: 5****Factors which encouraged reading of e-Books**

Reading of e-Book is encouraged by	Respondents percentage
Recommendation of colleague	34 (28.1)
Recommendation of teachers	44 (36.4)
Requirements of curriculum	39 (32.2)
Recommendation of search engine on keywords typed by me	45 (31.2)
Recommendation of renowned database/aggregators offering good titles in my discipline	23 (19.0)
Recommendation of social media (blog, twitter, face books) having students, research scholars and teachers as members	22 (12.2)

Forty five respondents (31.2 %) were encouraged to read specific titles of e-book on recommendations made by search engines while 44 (36.4%) read on the recommendation of teachers. Thirty four (28.1%) respondents read of e-book titles recommended by colleagues.

Access and reading behaviour for e-Books

The survey endeavours to understand the evolution of reading behaviour induced by e-Books. Table 6 shows different devices used to read e-Books.

Table :6**Preferred methods for reading e-Books**

Preferred methods for reading e-Books	Respondents Percentage
Print relevant contents of e-book	36 (29.5)
Read on laptop	94 (77.7)
Read on mobile phone	18 (14.9)
Read on e-book reader	7 (5.8)

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Ninety-four (77.7 %) respondents preferred reading e-books on their laptops, while 36 (29.5 %) took printouts of the portions relevant to their study and research needs. Such users were fond of reading print books.

Conclusions

The present study gives a snapshot of the perception and experiences of students and researchers with e-books. They perceive a bright and promising future for e-Books, and think that e-Books will gain popularity over time. Library users are not comfortable with the idea of dropping print books even if their electronic counterparts are available in library. The print and e-Books will coexist in academic libraries in future. Users do not appreciate the idea of dependence on e-readers and availability of the e-Books during subscription period only. A complete online reading habit is yet to become the norm.

The results of this study cannot be generalised as the survey is confined to students, researchers and faculty members of one research university. Further research needs to be undertaken with a larger sample of the user population across different learning and research institutions before the findings could be generalised. The authors recommend that similar kind of studies should be undertaken on a regular basis to understand rapid evolution in users' perception of e-books.

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