



ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES IN THE DIGITAL AGE– AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

Shajimon Scaria* Dr. A. Ganesan**

*Research Scholar, PRIST Deemed to be University, Thanjavur.

**Director Libraries, PRIST Deemed to be University, Thanjavur.

Abstract

E-resources are becoming the core part of information dissemination and the academic community is well versed in the use of Information Technology. Unless the information centers can provide the digitized information through electronic resources in updated form the modern academic community may not rely upon the libraries for their information needs. The academic libraries have to be updated using all the available electronic resources to satisfy the information needs of the challenging academic community. Software used in E-Resource section of many libraries is not competitive to support the information needs of the academic community. So the students and researchers who are using the electronic resources in libraries are not fully satisfied with the facilities in the e-resource section. Why can't we start online information services through the information centers like library in this digitized age? By this facility the information seekers can put their questions in online mode and a bit of information as answer can be received from librarians. In this changing scenario mobile applications should be introduced to access and use library services from their cell phones. The academic community who rely upon mobile phones for everything will enjoy the library facility in depth. The academic libraries should have the facility to lend out already loaded E-Books for its users. Students can create and upload digital knowledge in videos and audios if a media lab is arranged in academic libraries. The library management should prepare space in the library to sit together and make loud intellectual discussions.

Keywords: *Information seekers, E-Resources, Future Libraries, Online Information Services, Mobile Applications.*

Introduction

The intellectual growth and development of any academic community is based on the level of information they acquire. The way through which the information disseminated is also important. The right information from the right resources in a right way can only satisfy the information need of the researchers and scholars. As we know, we are in the information explosion era and the libraries are not mere storage centre of books but the information disseminating centers. Unless the information centers can provide the digitized information through electronic resources in updated form the modern academic community may not rely upon the libraries for their information needs. E-resources are becoming the core part of information dissemination and the academic community is well versed in the use of Information Technology. ¹A study on the academic use pattern of library resources by students in National University of Fiji says that dramatic changes have happened in recent years when the Electronic Resources were introduced in library services.

Whether the academic libraries are becoming outdated from academic community? In a Librarian's perspective the problem should be discussed in depth. The use of library resources in college libraries and university libraries should be taken into account. If the students are not attracted by the academic libraries, which are considered as the heart of the campus and the centre of Higher Education, the reason should be investigated by the intellectual community. Only the peripheral use of library



resources in academic libraries cannot fulfill the intention behind establishing such libraries spending huge amount by the authorities and agencies like UGC, MHRD etc.

Literature Review

1. Now the library services are considered as the backbone of academic institutions the user's satisfaction must be sensed periodically. It will help the library authorities to make it more effective to help the students in their researches and investigations. Unless we are considering the information seeking behavior of the academic community in depth they may not be satisfied with the present day library services.
2. According to Nirupama Chohda and Neeru Gupta (2017) almost 70 percent of the academic community is well versed in electronic journals and databases. The study is useful for the academic librarians in improving the shortcomings of their libraries to attract the intellectual community.
3. A study by N. Manjunadh and Dr. K Surendrababu on the Information seeking behavior of the research scholars in Bangalore University illustrates the effectiveness of library. About 76.4% research scholars are depending on the library in their research works. 36.2% students use library for writing their research papers and 25.4% use it for updating knowledge. 23.8% university students prepare for their competitive examinations using the library.
4. As per Darko Lacovist, new services in academic libraries have to be provided because of the growth of mobile applications and handheld devices such as smart phones, iPads, e-books etc. Almost 100% of the undergraduate students have an internet capable handheld device and it will increase the use of library services if the library supports mobile applications.
5. According to R Carr, user's wants and needs should be an integral part of a professional approach to library service planning in order to examine the contextual reasons for the differences between them.
6. George C Bright concludes that majority of the student community found general searches time consuming because of the massive amount of non-credible information which can be irrelevant to the topic. 29% of the graduate students use citation indexes to search for full text articles and papers. Electronic articles were preferred because of the ability to easily track and quickly build a body of literature.
7. Eric Jennings states that a different way that a library can engage its users by hosting events. One thing he had done in collaboration with two librarian colleagues and Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) is to host a discussion group for the faculty and students.
8. According to Matarazzo and Prusak the library value should be measured in user terms. It should address the stakeholders of the library not the librarians.

Use of Library Services: There should be an exponential growth in the use of academic library services in this information age by the academic community. Most modern electronic search technologies should be introduced in the academic libraries.

Level of ICT Skill of Academic Community.

A questionnaire was prepared to know the following ICT skill of college and university students.

1. Knowledge of Database Structures
2. Skills of online navigation techniques
3. Capability of using electronic library tools
4. Working experience in a network environment



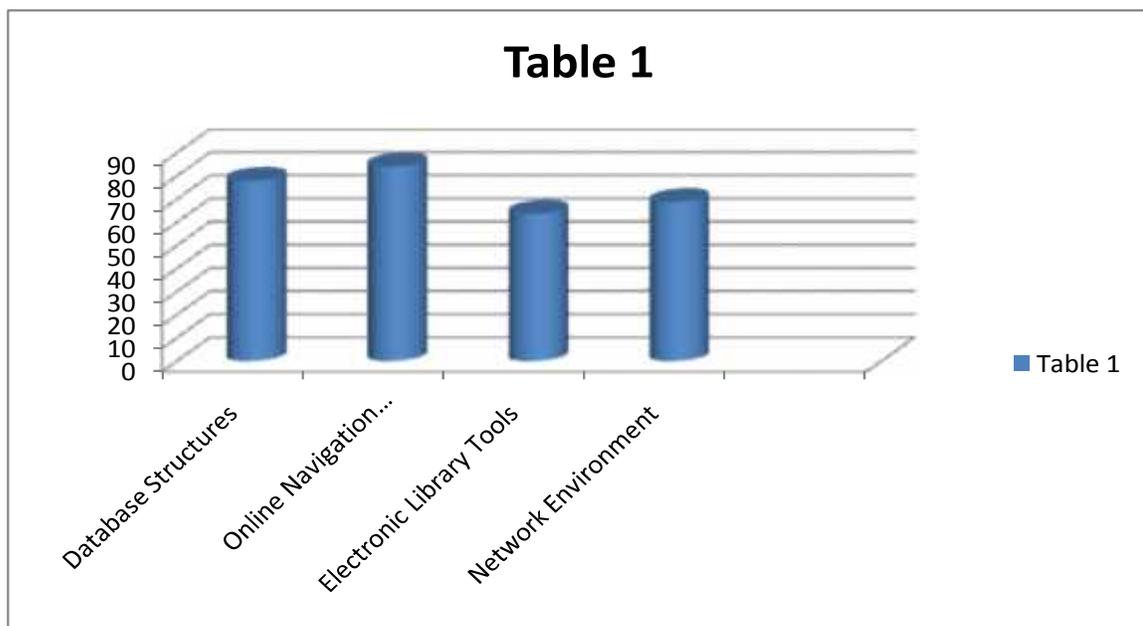
100 students from various colleges and universities are taken as a sample and questionnaires were distributed among them. 92 of them responded and the answers were consolidated as follows.

78.2% of the college and university students are well versed in the area of Database Structure.

84.5 % of the academic community has a thorough knowledge of handling online navigation techniques.

64% are aware of electronic library tools and they have experience in the use of such library tools. Almost 69% have working experience in a network environment.

Considering the above facts the academic libraries have to be updated using all the available electronic resources to satisfy the information needs of the challenging academic community.



Status of Academic Libraries in sharing Electronic Resources

As we know the level of ICT skills in the new generation academic community is very high the academic libraries also have to share its resources in electronic way. A questionnaire was distributed among 20 college librarians in the districts of Idukki and Kottayam in Kerala to investigate the level of Electronic Resource Sharing Capacity. It enquired the following information using the questionnaire.

1. Specify the E-Resources such as CD-ROM Titles, E-Data Base, E-journals, E-Reports, E-Books, E-Clippings etc in the library.
2. Number of Printers in E-Resource Section.
3. Details of the hardware devices in the E-Resource section other than printers.
4. Software used in E-Resource Section.
5. Collection Development policies for E-Resources.

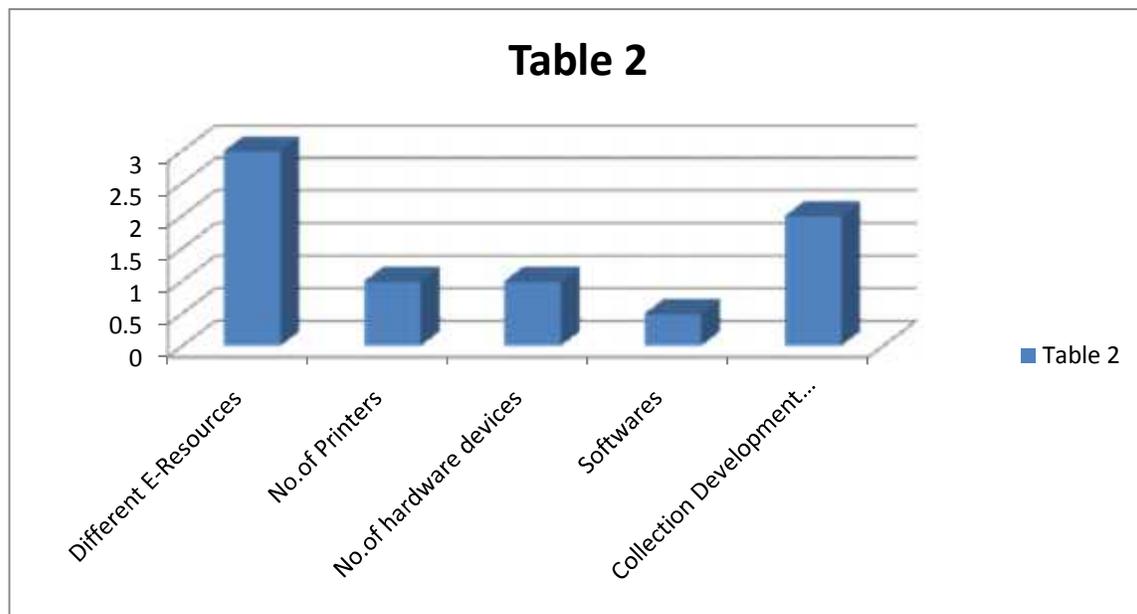
The maximum number of E-Resources shared by the libraries is only three. Almost all the libraries are using only one printer in the E-Resource section.



Out of these 20 academic libraries only a few libraries are using hardware devices other than printers in the E-Resource section.

Software used in E-Resource section is not competitive to support the information needs of the academic community.

Collection Development policies are also very insignificant.



Problems Encountered In Using Electronic Resources

The students and researchers who are using the electronic resources in libraries are not fully satisfied with the facilities in the e-resource section. Many of the libraries are just sharing their library resources in a conventional way. 100 students were taken as a sample and questionnaires were distributed among them. 90 students responded to the questions. The following questions were answered by the students.

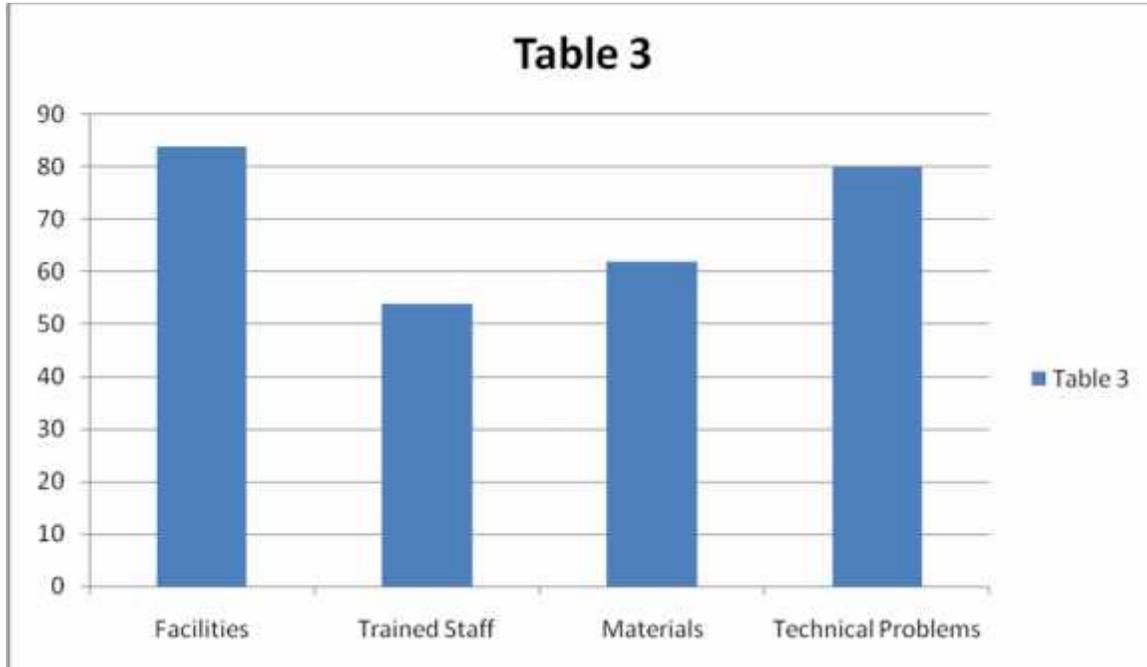
1. Lack of e-resource facilities are the major problem encountered in libraries.
2. Absence of trained staff in e-resource section is also a problem.
3. Needed materials are not available in the e-resource section.
4. Technical problems are also making so much delay in downloading e-resource materials.

84% of the academic community is of the opinion that adequate facilities are not seen in many of the academic libraries.

54% complain that there is no sufficient trained library staff in the e-resource section to help the information seekers.

62% says that the materials needed for research and other academic purposes are not available in the e-resource section of many of the libraries.

Technical problems such as download delay, unavailability of e-books etc. are the main difficulty for the information seekers who are reaching the e-resource section of academic libraries, say 80%.



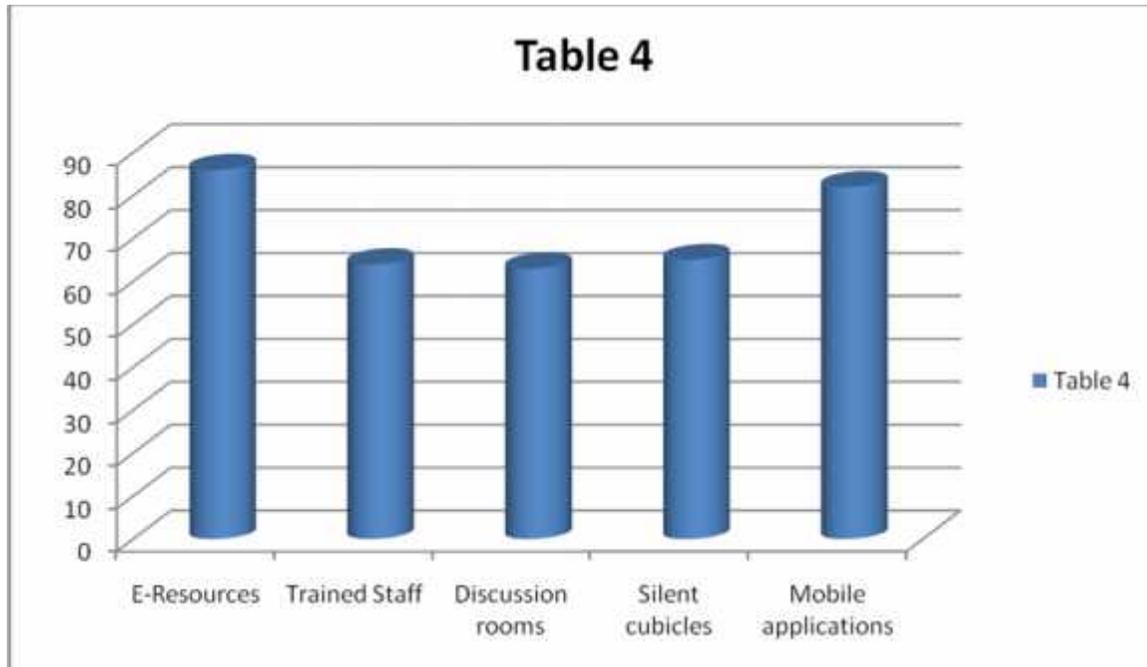
Satisfaction Level of Academic Library Users

Satisfaction of the library users have to be taken into account while we are analyzing the library services in the modern world. According to Ranganathan’s Second law of library science each and every library resources should be spared by its users. If they are not properly shared to its users the very existence of that library will be questioned. A questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 100 researchers and post graduate students and 94 of them responded to the following questions.

How much are you satisfied with the e-resource facilities like e-book, e-abstracts, e-bibliographies, e-graphics, e-journals?

Items	Satisfied	Highly Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Highly Dissatisfied	No answer
E-Book	8%		22%	70%	
E-Journal	59%	7%	32%	1%	1%
E-Bibliography	25%	8%	59%	4%	4%
E-Abstracts	18%	4%	72%	6%	
E-Graphics	20%		66%	12%	2%

Do you have any suggestions for improving the library facility more effective?



1. About 86% of the sample group answered that E-Resources section of the libraries should be more equipped to cope up with the information needs of the modern academic community.
2. 64% of the students and researchers responded that the library professionals should have effective trainings to know the information needs of the community.
3. 63% are of the opinion that discussion rooms having facilities for audio and video presentations should be arranged in academic libraries to share the knowledge and information we are getting from various resources.
4. 65% of the sample group opined that the quiet and silent area of the academic libraries should be more equipped with reference texts, high speed internet facilities and well equipped hardware so that the researchers can spend a lot of in literature review.
5. A very large number that is almost 82% suggested that mobile applications should be introduced in library services.

The Future Libraries: The future libraries should be digital libraries. Some of the facilities that can be brought in libraries in this digital era are mentioning below.

Online Information Services: As we know that we are living in the online business age. Majority of the village people are performing their purchases through online method. Online shopping is common even in the remote areas of our country. Why can't we start online information services through the information centers like library in this digitized age?. By this facility the information seekers can put their questions in online mode and a bit of information as answer can be received from librarians.

Mobile Applications: Mobile banking, mobile shopping, mobile flight booking etc are common in a developing country like India. Even the ordinary people know how to use these electronic facilities through their cell phone. As far as academic community is concerned majority of their day to day activities are done over their cell phones. In this changing scenario mobile applications should be introduced to access and use library services from their cell phones. The academic community who rely upon mobile phones for everything will enjoy the library facility in depth.



Mobile GPS Application in Library

Mobile GPS application is now common in our daily life to locate geographical places and routes. If this application is used in academic libraries the researchers and students can locate the library material within the library very easily.

Pre-loaded E-Books

The academic libraries should have the facility to lend out already loaded E-Books for its users. The library users can select the e-books they want from the collection of the library. Then the library authorities should load the e-books to a device supplied by the library and lend out the device to the user for a specific period.

Digital Media Lab in Academic Libraries

In libraries like information dissemination information generation is also possible. The academic community in this era is very active in using e-resources. Their creativity should be tapped by the academic libraries. Researchers can upload their findings; Students can create and upload digital knowledge in videos and audios if a media lab is arranged in academic libraries.

Noisy and Quiet Spaces

According to Kathryn Zickuhr Libraries should be the social hub of the community and to do that the customers have to be able to use mobile phones in the library, congregate around computers, sit and visit, laugh out loudly and be noisy. The main part of the library should be devoted to this and quiet spaces should not be in any open areas, but should be in smaller cubicles.

The library is imparting knowledge to its users not only through books, journals and e-resources but also through live discussions happening inside the walls of the library. So the library management should prepare space in the library to sit together and make loud intellectual discussions.

RFID in Libraries

According to Parul Gupta and Madhusudhanan Margam, the future of the academic libraries can be improved many times if generous funding is done to perpetuate RFID Technology in all potentially active academic libraries of India. Many of the academic libraries do not allow open access to its resources due to the fear of book theft. It is seen that in super markets, where open access is allowed to the customers, customer satisfaction is very high because the customers can select items as per their own choice. In a similar way RFID enabled library can attract its users for selecting books and other resources at their own choice and interest.

Conclusion

As the technology is moving very fast the academic libraries which are considered as the information centers should be well equipped with technological facilities. Especially E-Resources and E-Services should be considered very important because these e-resources and services play significant role for the functioning of academic libraries. Findings of this study reveal that only the conventional methods in the academic libraries cannot attract and satisfy the students and researchers. Many of the students are not satisfied with the level of e-resource sharing of the academic libraries. They expect more in the digitized era from the academic libraries.



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