

Chapter 34

Impact of Electronic Information Resources on the Mindset of Researchers

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study in hand was to assess the impact of advent of electronic information resources on some core aspects related to the research activity across agricultural libraries of Northern India. Six aspects have been covered in this study. Seven sampled universities were surveyed personally by the investigator for collecting data about the questions under investigation. A questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. Filled out questionnaires from 1,200 respondents were collected and processed with the help of SPSS statistical package. The response of the users for each statement under investigation has been collected through a simple 'Yes'/'No' option. Chi squared test has been administered to work out the significance of association between the parameters under study and the user opinion thereof. The majority of respondents are of the opinion that due to advent of e-resources and in view of the ICT developments the 'literature survey' (92.94%) and 'problem identification' (51.81%) has become easy and fast. The 'spirit to conduct more and more research' has increased among respondents (86.62%). Moreover, this has also enabled the users to 'complete' (84.31%) and 'publish' (89.97%) their research work in a lesser time than required in print era. A good percentage of respondents (46.26%) also agree that the 'cross comparison of findings of one's study with those of other studies has become easy and fast' (46.26%) in electronic era.

INTRODUCTION

It is not yet clear, whether the advent of electronic form of information has brought any economy in the phenomenon of information availability or not? On one hand the average cost is seen to increase at a fast pace, making it difficult to procure more and more e-resources (Ylotis, 2005). However, on the other hand the availability of information in electronic form has paved a way to use a single source by more

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than one user at a time across geographically distant areas. New modes of acquiring information which allows purchase on an article-by-article or chapter-by-chapter basis have emerged (Chapman, 2004). The introduction of communication and computer technology has led to the emergence of information networks, where all participating libraries are interconnected electronically for exchange or sharing of their information and has lead to the establishment of “consortia” which has widened access to an unimaginable range of resources at a highly reduced cost (Singh, 2006).

Searching the information has also improved as a large number of search engines, subject catalogs and directories, subject-based gateways, etc. have emerged as means and aids to search more specific information and avoid any junk. But at the same time the number of platforms available for hosting and communication of scholarly output is so huge that it is not humanly possible to know and search across all such platforms. However, the concept of ‘Federated Search’ seem to have come with a remedy by evolving a series of ‘Federated Search Engines (FSEs)’ both as commercial and open source software.

The availability of information resources in electronic format and the advent of e-mailing facility have revolutionized the delivery of information. We can deliver a piece of information available either as ‘digitally born electronic documents’ or ‘scanned copies of print material’ to a distant aspirant through e-mail against a highly negligible involvement of cost.

The digital library software like that of DSpace, Green Stone, Fedora, and the like can be used for maintaining a web operable digital library capable of providing access on anytime anywhere basis to registered library members subsequent to authentic access.

BACKGROUND

The word research as an activity is a complex phenomenon comprising of identification of problem, survey of relevant literature available about the study, applying a suitable method to find a solution to a problem, arrival at the findings, cross comparison of one’s findings with those of others, etc. It is also necessary to publish the research findings so as to bring one’s work into the notice of peer community to achieve both positive and negative comments. The research activity as such involves a lot of time, money and effort. The availability of the full text of previously conducted research works is inevitable for conducting research and thus plays a vital role in motivating or de-motivating the researchers in a specific domain of knowledge. There is a wide spread notion that the advent of e-resources have laid a positive impact on most of the core aspects associated with the ‘research activity’. The study in hand is an attempt to work out the proportions of users who agree that the advent of e-resources has laid a positive impact on six of the core aspects related to the ‘research activity’.

The study has been conducted with following research questions in mind:

1. If the problem identification as a research activity has become easy or difficult?;
2. Has the literature survey/review become faster, easier, economical and accurate than print era or not?;
3. Whether the process of cross comparison of research findings has become more flexible and wider than print era or not?;
4. Is there any impact of advent of e-resources on the spirit of researchers to conduct research?;
5. Does it take more or lesser time to complete the research at hand?; and

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