



SEARCH STRATEGIES AND INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF FACULTY MEMBERS AND RESEARCH SCHOLARS USING ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

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Abstract:

Effective use of electronic resources depends not only on the availability of information but also on users' ability to formulate searches, select appropriate information sources and retrieve relevant documents. This article examines search strategy, information-seeking behaviour and problems encountered while using e-resources among faculty members and research scholars in three universities in Tamil Nadu. The analysis is based on 736 valid responses obtained from a larger survey population. The original study used descriptive and inferential statistical procedures including percentage analysis, weighted average, ANOVA, chi-square and correlation. The findings indicate that 51.4% of respondents occasionally experienced difficulty in formulating search strategies. Downloading pages was a major problem for 25.9% of Anna University respondents, while slow access was reported by 38.4% of Bharathidasan University respondents and downloading problems by 31.8% of Agricultural University respondents. Overall, 28.8% identified slow access as a major problem. Search engines were the most common method of searching, used by 45.4% of respondents, whereas only 14.4% used library portals. Google ranked first among the search engines reported in the study. In addition, 41.6% indicated that e-resources contributed to improved professional competency. The findings highlight the importance of information-literacy training, advanced search skills and user-friendly library portals. Universities should help academic users move beyond general search engines toward effective scholarly discovery and database-search techniques.

Key Words: Search Strategy; Information-Seeking Behaviour; Electronic Resources; Search Engines; Information Literacy; Academic Users

Introduction:

The thesis includes search-strategy formulation, problems encountered during searching, methods of searching and the influence of e-resources on academic efficiency as separate components of the investigation. The growth of digital scholarship has made the effective use of electronic information an important component of university teaching, learning and research. Academic libraries increasingly provide access to electronic journals, books, databases, reference sources and web-based services. Understanding how users interact with these resources is therefore necessary for effective library planning.

Background of the Study:

The doctoral study on which this article is based examined the perception and usage of electronic resources in three different university environments in Tamil Nadu. It considered computer literacy, research productivity, experience of e-resource use, library facilities, purpose and barriers, search strategy and user satisfaction. The original thesis used a questionnaire survey of faculty members and research scholars and organized the investigation around these dimensions.

Statement of the Problem:

Large quantities of digital information do not automatically result in effective information retrieval. Users may have difficulty formulating searches, experience slow access or rely heavily on general search engines instead of specialized library portals and databases.

Objectives of the Study:

- To assess difficulties experienced in formulating search strategies.
- To identify common methods used for searching e-resources.
- To identify problems encountered during electronic information retrieval.
- To examine the influence of e-resource use on professional competency.
- To identify implications for information-literacy training.

Methodology:

Research Design:

A descriptive research design was adopted in the original study.

Population:

The population comprised faculty members and research scholars of Anna University, Bharathidasan University and Agricultural University in Tamil Nadu.

Sample:

A total of 894 questionnaires were distributed and 736 usable questionnaires were returned, giving an 82.32% response rate. The final respondents comprised faculty members and research scholars from the three surveyed universities.

Sampling Technique:

Simple random sampling was adopted. The researcher obtained lists of faculty members and research scholars from the concerned departments and selected respondents using the sampling procedure described in the thesis.

Data Collection:

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire covering demographic characteristics, computer literacy, research productivity, experience and frequency of e-resource use, library facilities, purpose and barriers, search strategies and user satisfaction. The questionnaire was reviewed by experienced researchers and experts, and a pilot survey involving 20 faculty members and 10 research scholars was conducted before final data collection.

Statistical Techniques:

The original study used percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, one-way ANOVA, chi-square, weighted-average methods and rank correlation. The specific techniques reported in each article are used descriptively in accordance with the original thesis.

Results and Discussion:

The original study provides detailed evidence about search behaviour and retrieval problems among the three university groups.

Indicator	Result
Search strategy difficulty	51.4% occasionally experienced difficulty in formulating search strategies.
Searching method	45.4% searched through search engines.
Library portals	14.4% used library portals.
Slow access	28.8% overall reported slow accessing as a major problem.
Professional competency	41.6% reported influence of e-resources on improved professional competency.
Search engine ranking	Google ranked first in the original weighted-average analysis.

The results should be interpreted within the scope of the original survey. They describe the perceptions and practices of the 736 respondents and should not be generalized beyond comparable populations without further research. The pattern across the three universities indicates that electronic resources had become an important component of academic information use, while access, digital skills, service support and institutional differences continued to influence the user experience.

Major Findings:

- Search engines were the dominant route for information retrieval.
- Library portals were used by a relatively smaller proportion of respondents.
- Search-strategy formulation remained a difficulty for many users.
- Slow access and downloading problems affected retrieval efficiency.
- E-resource use was perceived to contribute to professional competency.

Conclusion:

The findings suggest that digital information literacy should extend beyond basic computer operation. Academic users need skills in search formulation, source selection, database navigation, filtering and evaluation. University libraries can improve information retrieval by combining user education with intuitive portals and reliable access infrastructure.

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