

A Study of E-Resources by Users in Selected Libraries of Law Institutions/ Universities in Delhi/NCR

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ABSTRACT:

The development of ICT has made a sea change in the information access particularly in the fields that are diverse and need more flow of information with sophisticated retrieval systems. Traditionally information access had many issues that would ultimately dishearten the users mostly due to poor information storage and retrieval systems. But, with the advent of modern electronic resources, which helped to shower the rain of information equally to any users without any discrimination. The present study was aimed to probe the many facets of use of electronic resources among diverse users in different institution in Delhi/NCR. The study highlights that users are quite well aware of the subscribed legal resources and are frequent users of online resources. The study could be used to assess the overall impact of the electronic resources on the overall impact of the academic activities.

Keywords: E-resources, E-mail, Internet, law libraries, User study, Library websites.

INTRODUCTION:

Academic libraries of any nature, medicine, law, arts and so on are actually the hub of knowledge and are undoubtedly an integrated part since ages to academic settings. Libraries in their climax have supported multiple formats to help the scholars in their pursuits, from papyrus to paperless; libraries have always stood relevant to the myriad needs of the scholars. Even in the digital era, when everything is available in ubiquitous ways, users are no more reliant to visit libraries; they better prefer to sit in their comfort zones to access information anytime, anywhere. Such changes in the traditional system has presented a wide scope of challenges and therefore made libraries to rethink about how to stay relevant.

Law libraries are no exception in the changing face of learning ecosystem, the advent of web and subsequent proliferation of electronic resources; law libraries are more frequently facing challenges of access to their users. There is no getting around the fact that in many disciplines or professions, print resources still dominate the discourse. However, over the last several years a significant transformation has been noticed in collection development policies and practices. Print medium is increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials (Sharma, 2009). Similarly “the transition from print to electronic medium apart from resulting in a growth of electronic information has provided users with new tools and applications for information seeking and retrieval (Ani, 2008).

Law libraries, even the best managed ones, have certain issues; the user base is always humongous and the prices of buying the hard copies are always exorbitant so is in the subscription of e-resources.

Importantly, libraries are facing a radical change in the way people find and use information resources, a change that all information professionals need to understand (Herring, 2002). The ever increasing needs of the law professionals in the ever growing information market, which in other terms is called as the explosion of information, followed by the shrinking budgets, price escalation etc., have become the serious problems in providing adequate and suitable information services by library and information centers. Moreover, the rapid growth of e-resources over the years and the complexity in providing a good information retrieval system has posed a new challenge for the professionals and users. For users to get timely access of information.

With so many challenges amid transition of resources from print to electronic and in some cases using both electronic and print. The time demands and investigation about how well would electronic resources fit in the library settings, to understand the role of electronic resources in the changing user pattern, the impact of proliferation of resources on the professionals viz-a-viz the academicians and for that matter the research scholars, in the law libraries of selected law institutions of Delhi/NCR.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGY:

Apart from knowing the many facets of use of electronic resources in information delivery and access, it was important to investigate the utilization of electronic resources by special users of law libraries from different institutions in Delhi/NCR.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- i) To explore the different electronic information resources and to identify their importance in the field of law;
- ii) To ascertain the awareness of the special users in accessing the electronic resources of their libraries;
- iii) To highlight the importance of using electronic databases viz-a-viz print counterparts;
- iv) To understand the frequency of accessing e-resources and the impediments faced thereof.

The present study was conducted using a sample of 250 library users from the various select institutions. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed in person and through e-survey tools among the users, of which only 300 filled in questionnaires were received. After a deep sorting, ambiguous, exaggerated and semi-filled questionnaires were rejected, filtering only 250 questionnaires for final study. The questionnaire consist 18 questions probing different aspects of the study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE:

There is a huge literature available on the use and awareness of electronic resources. a number of studies conducted over the years has added enormous studies being conducted on the electronic resources and their impact on the users. User satisfaction, awareness, adoption and so on are the most discussed ones. There has been a slow transition earlier from print to electronic, due to myriad reasons, but, lately there are studies indicated a paradigm shift in this transition. Back in the days when electronic devices were scanty around and the focus was less in accessing information through electronic ways, studies show in people more eager to use electronic resources for varied reasons. Tenopir (2003) in his study on the usage of electronic resources highlighted that both students and faculty members who reported for the survey

indicated they are rapidly adopting electronic resources to their academic pursuits. Another study by Bar-Ilan et al., (2003) also found that the use of electronic resources is influenced by the age of the faculty members in Israeli universities. The study concluded that young members of the academic staff were heavy users of both electronic databases and e-journals than their senior counterparts.

Several other studies revealed that the use of e-resources in academic settings. Some of these studies yield different results regarding academics awareness of electronic resources and enhancing academic activities. One such study by Isibika and Kavishe (2018) in Mzumbe University accentuated that academic staff and students were to some extent aware about the subscribed e-resources of their library. Likewise, Kumar and Kumar (2010) analyzed the use of electronic resources in Indian universities; the results found that a significant number of the respondents reported that they use such resources for their academic work. There are ample reasons for using electronic resources for various purposes in academics, some of the prominent works conducted thereof are, Madhusudhan (2010) conducted a study at Kurukshetra University, found that 94 percent of the users use electronic resources for their research work, 54 percent reported using for specialized information and rest 42 percent use to stay relevant in the age of changing information ecosystem. The other area that is quite important in the transition of information resources, from print to electronic was the training of staff and users in managing and using electronic resources for their optimal usage. To investigate the need of training of users in the field of law, their competency of using legal databases, the study concluded that most of the users had the basic skill of using the resources. It was also found that there is a need of encourage confidence (Constable, 2007).

Although there are some positive aspects in the use of electronic resources in some disciplines while few disciplines face certain impediments in terms of using electronic resources. The legal discipline in many ways is facing enormous bottle necks in delivering information to users. Several studies highlighted different issues in this area include, lack of awareness and state of art retrieval system (Kumar and Kumar, 2010). Lousy information and technology infrastructure, poor internet connectivity or in some cases downloading issues (Zabed, 2014).

In fact there are still some major issues that come in the way of accessing electronic resources, best information retrieval system and storage of up to date resources is one hurdle that is faced by a considerable number of the users. The reason is that users as well as the faculty members have not realized the importance of electronic systems and are less aware about using the resources.

FINDINGS:

A total of 250 out of 500 respondents turned up for the study (a response rate of 50 percent) students and research scholars from four prominent universities responded to the questionnaire and online survey. The university breakup of the respondents is given in the Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Institution wise breakup of the Respondents

S. No	Name of the University	URL	Number of the Respondents
01	Faculty of Law, DU	http://lawfaculty.du.ac.in/	73
02	Faculty of Law, JMI	https://www.jmi.ac.in/law	43
03	National Law University, Delhi	https://nludelhi.ac.in	56

04	Indian Law Institute, Delhi	http://ili.ac.in/	34
05	Amity Law School, Noida	https://www.amity.edu/als/	44
			Total 250

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Of all the respondents who reported for the survey, a significant number 185 (74 percent) were male and 65 (26 percent) were female.

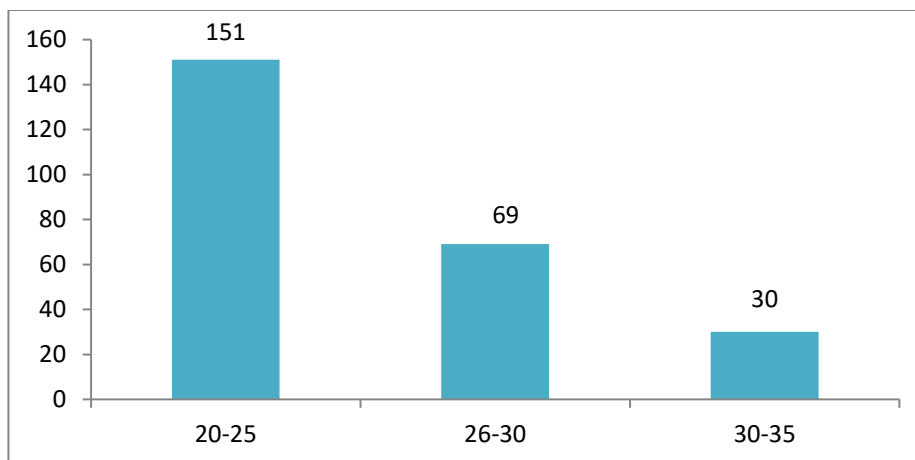
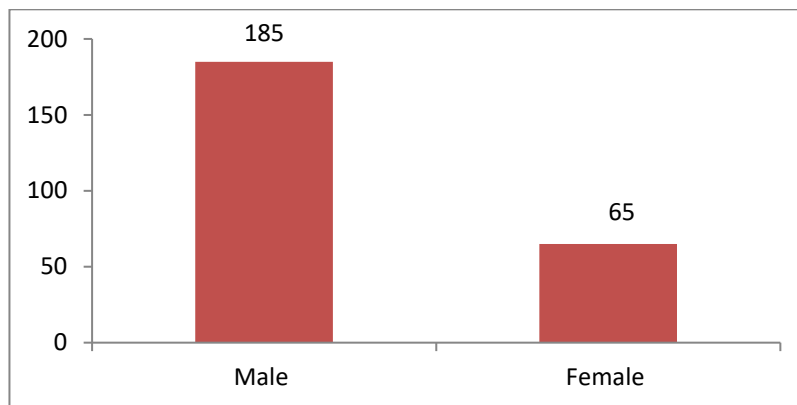


Figure 1.2: Age category of the respondents

As indicated in Figure 1.2, a sizeable number of the respondents 151() are of the age group 20-25, followed by age group 26-30 reported by 69() and the last age group with least number of respondents 30() is 30-35.

LEVEL OF AWARENESS:

Before understanding the different facets of electronic resources and their impact on the legal academia, it is pertinent to know if the user categories are aware of the resources that their library subscribes. Pertinently, in the ICT era, likelihood is that almost every user is well aware of the resources available on the internet. Yet, the question remains elusive how aware are they about the subscribed information sources.

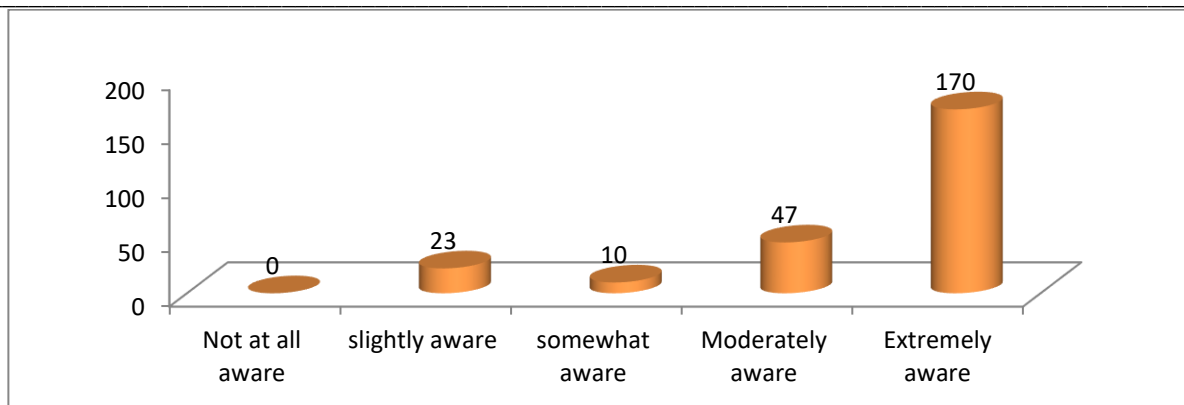


Figure 1.3: Awareness of subscribed electronic resources

Interestingly, the study accentuates that a significant number 170() of the respondents are ‘extremely aware’, followed by ‘moderately aware’ reported by 47(). These results are par with the study by Yebowaah and Plockey (2017) who in their study concluded that 65 per cent of respondents were aware of e-resources in Development Studies. The least scored category reported by 10 () was ‘somewhat aware’ and ‘not at all aware’ received 0 score. One more category ‘slightly aware that received 23() score was actually reported by first year students.

Overall the results are quite satisfactory and an indication of the fact that users do use electronic resources for their academic pursuits.

FREQUENCY OF USING E-RESOURCES:

Respondents were asked to report the frequency with which they access the subscribed electronic resources of their libraries. This question aimed to understand the intensity of the use and accentuates the urgency of the usage of electronic resources in the law field.

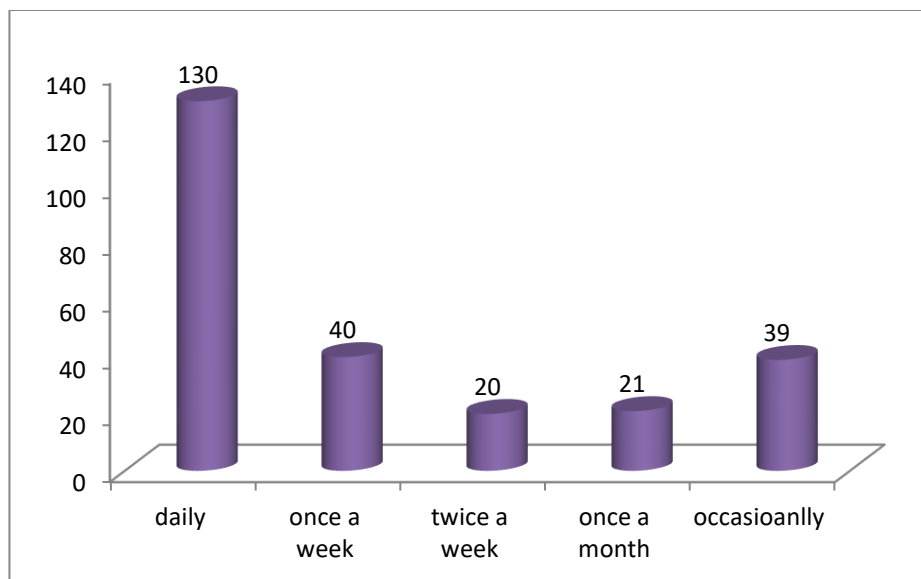


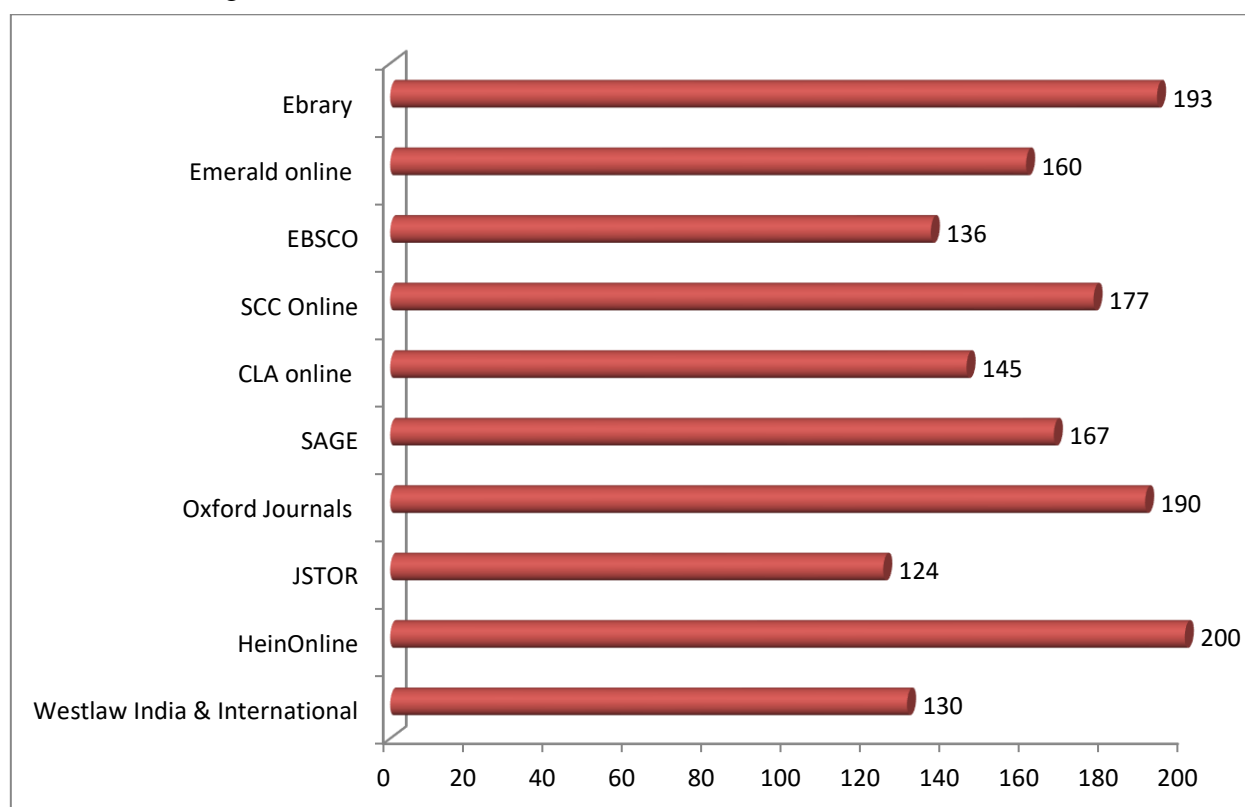
Figure 1.4: Frequency of using e-resources

Figure 1.4 reveals that majority of the respondents 130() indicated accessing e-resources daily. once a week was indicated by 40(), followed by the category ‘occasionally’ indicated by 39(). The other two

categories ‘once a month’ and ‘twice a week’ were indicated by least number of the respondents 21() and 20() respectively.

LIBRARY SUBSCRIBED E-DATABASES ACCESS:

The best thing about online database is that it can be accessed anytime, anywhere and unlimited number of users. Moreover, it has a cutting edge information retrieval system that helps to access information in an efficient and timely manner. Table 1.5 highlights the accessibility of some of the prominent online legal databases.



Note:

Percentage exceeds 100 percent because respondents were allowed multiple answers.

Figure 1.5: Access to subscribed databases

Figure 1.5 shows that a large proportion of the respondents access ‘Hein Online’ reported by 200(80 percent) and ‘Ebrary’ reported by 193(77 percent) databases subscribed by the libraries.

The next important database reported by 190(76 percent) of the respondents is “Oxford Journals” followed by ‘SCC Online’ reported by 177(71 percent) and ‘SAGE’ reported 167(30 percent). Likewise, the other important databases indicated by the respondents are ‘Emerald online’ reported by 160(64 percent), ‘CLA online’ reported by 145(58 percent) and ‘Westlaw India and International’ 130(52 percent). The least score was reported in ‘JSTOR’ by 124(50 percent).

CONCLUSION:

The study aimed to investigate the use of electronic resources in the law Institutions of Delhi /NCR and the impediments the users and policy makers face. This was incumbent in the sense that law users have diverse needs of resources ranging from online to print and sometimes both and users in comparison with

other disciplines are always significant in number so are their demands. How useful are the resources to the users and how satisfied are the users accessing legal resources was a central importance of this study. Here in this study it was found that users access frequently the subscribed resources and are quite well aware of all resources. This is satisfying in the way that in the legal studies that in many respects are highly technical and dynamic requires up-to-date and timely access to resources in e-format.

One more interesting fact of the study was to highlight the awareness of users towards subscribed resources. It was surprising to find that majority of the users are well aware of the resources, indicates therefore that e-resources are pertinent to support research and learning process and for that matter teaching. It is evident from the study that although there are myriad impediments that hamper the progress of accessing information sources and services, but, the results show a promising impact on the academic activities of the users.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS:

The study will serve as a benchmark to the policy makers to help users with more relevant technologies and services. Moreover, it will help the libraries to improve the information storage and retrieval systems so that more users are motivated to access resources, not only in the campus but in ubiquitous environment. There is an urgent need to organize orientation programmes and promotional campaigns to highlight the importance of legal online resources and aware legal fraternity to exploit the resources to a maximum level.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

Although the study is a humble endeavor to understand the use of e-resources in the legal studies in different institutions of Delhi/NCR. However, it is limited to a restricted geographical area and there is likelihood that it doesn't represent the overall usage of electronic resources in the other faculties of law across the country.

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