

Full Length Research Paper

Internet use among the faculty members and the students in the Professional Colleges at Tirunelveli Region: an analytical study

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Internet is the gateway for libraries and information centers to enter the Electronic Information Era and is providing the information, generated by different organizations, institutions, research centers and individuals all over the world. This paper is an attempt to investigate the use of Internet among the faculty member and the students of Tirunelveli Region in Tamil Nadu. For this purpose a survey was carried out using questionnaire tool. A well structured questionnaire was distributed among the 400 teachers and students of all the professional colleges in Tirunelveli Region. The response rate was 90 per cent. The present study demonstrates and elaborates the various aspects of Internet use such as, frequency of Internet use, most frequently used place for Internet use, purposes for which the Internet is used, use of Internet services, ways to browse the information from the Internet, problems faced by the users and satisfaction level of users with the Internet facilities provided in the colleges. The findings indicated that 48.89% of respondents use internet from 1-3 years, 22.77 % of respondents use internet from more than 5years. The study reveals that more than one third of the respondents (37.23%) acquired their internet skill through training from the college. The study found that most of the respondents 50.83% use internet for presenting paper.

Keywords: Internet, websites, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Bulletin Board Services (BBS), Search Engines, Information needs.

INTRODUCTION

The information and communication technology revolution is sweeping through the world and the gale has even caught up with developing countries like India. Information and communication technologies have introduced new methods of teaching and conducting research and have been brought into education facilities for online learning, teaching and research collaboration. While some college communities in some countries enjoy free or inexpensive Internet access, students and faculty/staff in India must pay for time spent accessing the Internet, whether at a cyber café or in the library (some of the library they are providing free access). To improve ICT services in the library, therefore, researchers need to show how students and faculty/staff are using the Internet in the academic environment. In the era of networked information, Internet, the largest worldwide

network of networks, has emerged as the most powerful tool for an instant access to information. Information is now just a 'finger touch' distance away from the user and it would not be inappropriate to say that the Internet has become the biggest global digital information library which provides the fastest access to the right kind of information in nano-seconds of time to end-user at any time and at any place in the world. The Internet has become the most extensively used information source that empowers the average person to get in roaming with the latest information. Today's users can no longer depend on conventional information sources to cope with the latest developments in their respective fields.

The use of the Internet in the educational environment has enabled easy access to many resources, and information sharing has, therefore, significantly in-

creased. Moreover, the prevalence of this sharing has brought additional benefits in that these resources can be used in any location and any time. Although the efficiency of this technology, it is evaluated with use of proportion of the desired results in student achievement does not exactly come out and is difficult to determine. Hence, much research has been conducted over time to understand the reasons for this situation. Since adolescents, especially some university students sometimes, use the Internet for reasons other than educational (they explore the funny view of the Internet). The effect of the Internet in education is, hence, relatively limited. In this study, efficiency and effectiveness of access to resources on the Internet, rather than examination of Internet use has been investigated. In addition, we have sought to identify the impacts of Internet resources used by university students in their project, and which effects of the internet are observed during project elicitation phase.

Internet use, especially in education, has been investigated for some time, and many different studies, exist in literature about that subject. In the study of D'Esposito and Gardner (1999), Internet usage trends of the university students, and college student perceptions of the Internet and a traditional library were presented. This study showed that when university students have the opportunity to use internet resources, almost all of them prefer to use these, rather than classical libraries for their studies, but when the information source satisfaction in research needs is considered, the students' trends are in the direction of using both. In addition, Cheung and Huang (2005) emphasized the effects of the Internet as an effective teaching tool in university education, and proposed that many university teachers publish their course materials via the internet. They suggested that it is insufficient for university lecturers and administrators to use the Internet as a good teaching tool, and that students' internet use should also be investigated.

Literature Review

Ray and Day (1998) conducted their study to determine the level of use of electronic resources and how students feel about various issues surrounding electronic resources. In their paper titled, "Student Attitude towards Electronic Information Resources", they used questionnaire method. The findings of their study are that 91 per cent of respondents acknowledged access to a networked computer via university, and also that more internet access is from work place than from home. The most popular electronic resources used were CD-ROM and the internet. Only 37.5 per cent of the sample population used electronic journals as an information tool.

Becker (1998) conducted a study on the Internet use by 2250 teachers from public and private schools in the U.S. The study revealed that 90% of the teachers had

Internet access. More than half of the teachers (59%) had Internet access at home. A majority of the teachers (68%) used Internet to find information resources for preparing their lessons.

Singh (1998) conducted a research study on the use of Internet by the librarians in Malaysia. The main findings of the study indicated that 90% of the respondents used the Internet for work related purposes. Most of the respondents were recent users.

Voorbij (1999) examined the use of the Internet amongst students and academicians in the Netherlands. A questionnaire was distributed among 1000 members of the academic community and three focus-group interviews were also held with faculty members. The study revealed that the Web was being used primarily to search general, factual, ephemeral or very specific information. The study also revealed that students and academicians faced many problems while searching the Web.

Lenares (1999) in his research study titled "Use of electronic journals at research institution" found that there was rapidly growing acceptance of electronic journals by faculty within the scholarly community. The increase in electronic journals usage is accompanied by a decrease in the frequent use of print journals. Print journal usage, however, continues to dominate electronic journal usage. Only 14 per cent of respondents used electronic journals frequently as compared to 65 per cent using print journals frequently. Questionnaire was sent through e-mail to randomly selected faculty members from the university directory.

Williams (1999) reported the use of information technology and the Internet in his project entitled "Information Technology in Michigan: Adult and Teen Survey Report." The results indicated that the majority of the respondents (72%) used the Internet at least once a week and 45% at least once a day.

Laite (2000) surveyed 406 graduate and undergraduate students from Shippensburg University. The survey showed that 57.6% of the undergraduate students used the Internet 1-2 times per week and another 37.1% used it 1-2 times daily. More than 50% of the graduate students used Internet 1-2 times per week and 37.7% used it 1-2 times daily. The survey showed that the most used Internet service was e-mail. A hundred percent of the graduates and undergraduate students used e-mail service.

Crawford and Daye (2000) studied "A Survey of the Use of Electronic Services Glasgow Caledonian University library". The survey used observational and questionnaire based method. The questionnaire was administered both on paper and electronically. The results show that most of the respondents were full time students and were using PC rather than Mac, 18 per cent used CD-ROMs and only 13 per cent used online databases. About one-third of the respondents had problem in using the electronic information floor (elf).

Information searching restricted to bulk of the work is the same as that done in other parts of the university.

Nicholas et al. (2003) conducted a study in the UK to examine the use of the web for health information and advice. More than 1300 people were surveyed. The study showed that 66% of the respondents accessed the Internet from home, 28% from work place and the remainder (6%) used a combination of both work place and home.

Kanaujia and Satyanarayana (2003) conducted a study of the Science & Technology community of Lucknow city to assess the level of awareness and demand of web based learning environment among Science & Technology information seekers. The major findings of the study revealed that 49.2% users browsed the Web for more than 2 to 4 hours and 14% for more than 5 hours a day. The study further showed that 36.6% users consulted e-journals regularly on the Internet, 40.4% used Internet for consulting technical reports, 24.8% to find online databases and 10.4% for telnet service.

Chen and Pen (2008), in their study, examined the basic relationship between the internet use of university students and their academic performance, interpersonal relationships, psychosocial adjustment and self evaluations. They prepared a questionnaire and collected 49,609 university juniors' comments about the questions. The results show that non-heavy internet users have better relationship with administrative staff, academic grades and learning satisfaction than heavy users. They claimed that the heavy internet users were likely than non-heavy users to be depressed. This study provoked us to search the raising trends in use trap sites among university students.

Need for the Present Study

The ever increasing member of people accessing Internet coupled with recent explosion of information resources on the Internet may have considerable implications for teaching, learning and research. Teachers and students are depending more and more on the Internet for their various education purposes. The present survey is, therefore, an attempt to assess the effectiveness of Internet as an educational tool, and what role it actually plays in the educational system with special reference to the Professional colleges in Tirunelveli. The Internet is an inseparable part of today's professional colleges educational system. Professional colleges invest a good deal of amount on providing this facility to both the teachers and students. It is, therefore, important to find out upto what extent they are utilizing this facility. As Professional colleges provide Internet facility to both the teachers and the students and expect them to utilize it for education purposes. It is necessary to conduct a study to determine whether Internet is used for academic activities

and how the Internet has influenced the academic efficiency of the target users. The study also explores the satisfaction level of the users with the Internet facility provided by the professional colleges under study. The study has particularly been taken upto assess the benefits of Internet over conventional documents.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the present study are as follows:

- To find out the use of the Internet by the teachers and students in professional colleges under study
- To find out the purpose for which the internet is being used by faculty members and students
- To find out the frequency of Internet users among the faculty members and students
- To find out the place where the Internet uses by the faculty members and students
- To find out the methods of the Internet uses by the faculty members and students
- To find out the problems faced by the respondents while using the Internet
- To find out the awareness of the services provided on Internet
- To make the suggestions to improve the Internet services

METHODOLOGY

The study used a questionnaire, with 20 questions spread over the following areas General profile of the respondent, experience of Internet use, frequency of Internet use, place of Internet use, purpose of Internet use, methods of Internet learning skills, use of Internet services, problems face while using the Internet and favourite search engines. To facilitate quantification and analysis of data, mainly close-ended questions were used along with checklists and rating scales. A random sample of 320 students and 80 faculty members of professional colleges located in Tirunelveli region, was selected and questionnaires were distributed among them. Of those, 360 (90 %) questionnaires were returned completed.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of data is the ultimate step in research process. It is the link between raw data and significant results leading to conclusions. This process of analysis has to be result oriented.

Population Study

Personal detail section of the questionnaire provides

Table 1. Category wise distribution of Respondents

Category	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Faculty	68	18.88
Students	292	81.12
Total	360	100.00

Table. 2 Sex wise distribution of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	214	59.44
Female	146	40.56
Total	360	100.00

Table 3. Experience of Internet Use

Years of Experience	Number	Percentage
Less than 1 year	38	10.56
1-3 years	176	48.89
3-5 years	64	17.78
5 years and above	82	22.77
Total	360	100.00

Table 4. Internet Use Frequency

Duration	Number	Percentage
Daily	113	31.38
Weekly twice	132	36.67
Weekly	80	22.23
Monthly	35	9.72
Total	360	100.00

information regarding the category and different qualifications as can be seen from Table 1. It is shown in table 1, 81.12 % of populations studied were students and only 18.88 % of total were faculty members, who can use internet for different purposes.

It is shown in table 2, 59.44 % of populations studied were males and only 40.56 % of total were females, who can use internet for different purposes.

Experience of Internet Use

As indicated in Table 3 shows that 48.89% of respondents use internet from 1-3 years, 22.77 % of respondents use internet from more than 5years followed by 17.78% of respondents use internet from 1-3 years. Only 10.56 % have less than 1year of experience of Internet use.

Frequency of Internet Use

In response to the question how frequently do you use Internet? The respondents have responded in different ways (Table 4) Majority of the respondents used Internet weekly twice (36.67%), daily (31.38%) and weekly (22.23%). Only few respondents (9.72%) used internet monthly.

Time Spent on Internet

As indicated in Table 5 out of 360 respondents 38.34 % spent time on Internet for 1-2 hours, 26.38 % of respondents spent time on Internet for less than 1 hour. Around one fifth of the respondents (20%) spent time on Internet for more than 3 hours. Only a very few respondents (15.28%) spent time on Internet for 2-3 hours.

Table 5. Time spent on Internet

Duration	Number	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	95	26.38
1-2 hours	138	38.34
2-3 hours	55	15.28
More than 3 hours	72	20.00
Total	360	100.00

Table 6. Internet Skill learning Method

Method	Number	Percentage
Training from the College	134	37.23
Self study / Instruction	97	26.94
From Friends	53	14.72
External Sources	76	21.11
Total	360	100.00

Table 7. Place of Internet access

Location	Number	Percentage
College	156	43.33
Café	110	30.55
Home	94	26.12
Total	360	100.00

Table 8. Purpose of using Internet

Purpose	Number	Percentage
Literature search	163	45.27
E-mail	107	29.72
presenting paper	183	50.83
Reading recommended coursework	124	34.44
Entertainment	76	21.11

Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices

Methods of Internet Learning Skills

Table 6 shows more than one third of the respondents (37.23%) acquired their internet skill through training from the college, 26.94% learned from self study, 21.11 % of the respondents learned from external sources. Only 14.72 % acquired skills from friends.

Place of Internet Use

Table 7 highlights the location from where the Internet and electronic resources are mostly accessed by the

respondents. A majority of the respondents i.e.43.33% access the Internet from the College, while 30.55% also access from café. Another 26.12% access Internet from home.

Purpose of Using Internet

From the table 8, it is clear that most of the respondents 50.83% use internet for presenting paper. 45.27% of respondents use internet for literature search. 34.44% of respondents use internet for reading recommended course work and 21.11% respondents use for entertainment.

Table 9. Most Frequently used Internet Services

Services	Number	Percentage
E-mail	113	31.38
WWW	156	43.33
Search Engines	184	51.11
File Transfer Protocol (FTP)	107	29.72
Bulletin Board Services	56	15.55
Archive	82	22.77
Chatting	93	25.83
Frequently Asked	68	18.88
Any other	124	34.44

Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices

Table 10. Respondents with Satisfaction on Search Engines

Name of the Search Engines	Number	Percentage
Yahoo	86	23.88
Google	114	31.67
Rediff	46	12.78
Alta Vista	38	10.56
Lycos	32	8.88
Bingo	26	7.23
HotBot	18	5.00
Total	360	100.00

Use of Internet Services

Table 9 indicates the use of Internet services. The use of e-resources and Internet services in order of preference is 51.11% search engines, 43.33% respondents use internet services for World Wide Web followed by 34.44 % use internet services for other works like examination etc., 31.38% use internet services for E-mail, 29.72 % use internet services for File Transfer Protocol, 25.83 % of respondents use internet services for chatting and 22.77 % use internet for Archive. Only a few respondents use internet services for frequently asked (18.88%) and Bulletin Board Services (15.55%).

Favourite Search Engines

A study of data in table 10 indicates the respondents satisfaction on search engines. It can be assessed with the help of 7 search engines. The respondents' satisfaction towards utilization of 7 search engines can be observed from the following discussion. 31.67% of respondents use Google search engines followed by 23.88 % use Yahoo, 12.78 % use Rediff, 10.56 % use Alta Vista, 8.88% use Lycos, 7.23 % use Bingo and 5 % use HotBot. It could be seen clearly from the above

discussion that respondents have high level use of search engines such as Google and Yahoo.

Constraints in use of ICT

Though electronic information have become a common source among the academic and research communities, the majority of users stated that they have difficulties to use internet. The specific problems faced by the users are given in table11. More than one third of respondents stated that inadequate number of PCs, ICT not present in syllabus and no campus computer network. Around one fourth of the respondents stated that no Internet connectivity in the college, lack of support from IT staff, lack of time to use and e-resources not available in library. The study shows that only a very few colleges there is no computer lab.

Satisfaction with the Internet Facilities

Table 12 only 36.67% of respondents were fully satisfied, 10.56% of the respondents average satisfied, 24.16% of respondents least satisfied and 28.61% of respondents no comments.

Table 11. Problems accessing electronic information

Reasons	Number	Percentage
Inadequate number of PCs	134	37.22
Lack of support from IT staff	95	26.38
ICT not present in syllabus	126	35.00
Lack of time to use	84	23.33
No computer lab	42	11.66
E-Resources not available in library	83	23.05
No campus computer network	126	35.00
No Internet connectivity	108	30.00

Note: Total sample exceeds the required size since the questions are multiple choices

Table 12. Level of Satisfaction

Satisfaction Level	Number	Percentage
Fully satisfied	132	36.67
Average satisfied	38	10.56
Least satisfied	87	24.16
No Comment	103	28.61
Total	360	100.00

Table 13. Internet use can replace Library Services

Option	Number	Percentage
Yes	132	36.67
No	228	63.33
Total	360	100.00

Internet use can replace Library Services

A majority of the respondents (63.33%) feel that the Internet services cannot replace the Library services. Only 36.67% of the respondents feel that Internet services can replace Library services table 13.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are made to improve the use of the Internet by the faculty members and students of the professional colleges in Tirunelveli region:

- The Internet and allied technologies should be included in the curriculum of legal studies
- The time of Internet service should be increased, if possible the service should be round the clock. So that the users can maximum consume this service.
- More computers with latest specifications and

multimedia kit should be installed, so that users can maximum use this service.

- Electronic version of the journals should be subscribed by the library.
- All the colleges should have their own website, so that users can easily get the academic news and college's websites should be regularly updated.
- Some orientation training programmes should be organized by the colleges at regular intervals so that the maximum users can improve their excellence or proficiency in the use of the Internet for academic purposes.

CONCLUSION

The fast growth of information and communication technology and particularly the Internet has changed traditional methods of research, storage, retrieval and communication of information. Now a day's, internet has

emerged as the most powerful medium for storage and retrieval of information. The Internet facility has enabled the teachers and students to enhance their academic excellence by providing them the latest information and access to worldwide information. The present study has highlighted the existing situation of the Internet services provided by the professional colleges in Tirunelveli Region, Tamil Nadu. The situation is not, however, very satisfactory from the library point of view. Only some professional college libraries have Internet facility, and even this is not extended to the users. So, it should be extended to all the professional college libraries. The information on the Internet is not usually available in an organized way and the users are unable to get pin pointed information from the Internet. In order to make the Internet more beneficial, the library staff who have acquired a good deal of efficiency in the collection, organization and retrieval of information should feel duty-bound to see that the users are able to obtain right information at the right time. For this, they should organize and classify the information on a website in such a way that the users are able to find easily the information they need for their studies and research purposes. The library services supplemented by Internet services can prove a great boon to the users in getting the right information at the right time.

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