

Use of Search Engines and Search Strategies: a Comparative Study of Rural and Urban LIS Students in Universities of Karnataka, India

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Searching, accessing and evaluating digital content is crucial for postgraduate students. In order to effectively search the internet for information, the search strategies that make the process easier and faster must be understood. The search engine is used to retrieve relevant query-based information. It consists of crawling, indexing, ranking and querying modules and a page repository for temporarily storing web pages. This study investigates the usage patterns of search engines and the application of search strategies among rural and urban postgraduate Library and Information Science (LIS) students in universities across Karnataka, India. A total of 13 state universities were established and 11 universities offered library and information science programs. A structured questionnaire was designed and distributed among 153 LIS postgraduate students across 11 universities in Karnataka, India. The data were analyzed to identify usage trends, behavioural patterns and differences in search strategy application between rural and urban respondents. The data were analyzed using SPSS software. The findings showed that 94.11% of students used the Internet daily. Google was the most widely used search engine among rural and urban students (mean = 4.88), followed by Yahoo (mean = 3.47) and Bing (mean = 2.56). The study also found that Dogpile (mean = 1.67) is one of the most used meta-search engines. However, with regard to Boolean search techniques: 79.08% of rural students responded that they are using Boolean logic, compared to only 6.53% of urban students. Despite these disparities, both groups expressed a shared interest in learning search strategies, primarily through classroom instruction and online sources. The study highlights a critical need for structured user education programs within the LIS curriculum. Universities should incorporate specialized training modules, online tutorials, and webinars focusing on effective search strategies. By enhancing students' information literacy and search capabilities, these interventions can significantly improve academic performance and better equip future LIS professionals to meet the dynamic challenges of the digital information landscape.

Keywords: *Postgraduate students; Search engines; Search strategies; Search techniques*