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THE USE OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY BY UNDERGRADUATES OF THE FACULTY OF DENTAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

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The main objective of the study was to investigate ICT awareness and ICT skills among 2nd and 3rd year undergraduates of the Dental Faculty, University of Peradeniya. Other objectives were to examine the types of ICT services used by undergraduates (such as the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), and webOPAC); to identify techniques used to search for information; to identify the purposes of using the Internet; and to identify obstacles faced by undergraduates when accessing ICT services in the library. A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data.

A Hundred and fifty questionnaires were administered. The majority of the respondents were females. Although the library has the OPAC, only 7.9% of the students use it. Seventy three percent of students prefer the Card Catalogue. Of the 2nd years students 20 (17.5%) said that ICT facilities provided for them were adequate, but 22.8% of the 3rd years indicated that the facilities provided were inadequate to fulfil their information needs. Regarding the use of search techniques, 47.68% of the 2nd year students and 50.83% of the 3rd year undergraduates said they do not use the search tools available with the OPAC. A majority of these students also said that they were not aware of these library services. Regarding the search engines, 74.1% of 2nd years and 75% of 3rd year undergraduates said they used Google. Yahoo was used by about 44.4% and 41.7% of 2nd and 3rd year students, respectively. Third year students used the Internet to find e-journals and to browse the web.

The Dental Faculty and Library Services of the University of Peradeniya should consider the following recommendations: They should pay more attention to improving ICT usage among students and promote ICT services. More attention should also be paid to the content of the library orientation programme. The Computer Aided Lab (CAL) unit should be equipped with more computers and should be updated with necessary software. A library awareness programme should be introduced and a faster Internet facility should also be established.