

THE SEARCH FOR ELECTRONIC INFORMATION BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA: A STUDY.

Chamani Gunasekera
Main Library, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

Introduction

As a result of the rapid development of Information Communication Technologies (ICT), electronic information resources (E-resources) have increased substantially providing access to a variety of such resources. E-resources can broadly be defined as “information accessed by a computer that may be useful as bibliographic guides to potential sources but which may also appear as cited references in their own right”(Graham, 2003). At present E-resources have become popular among the academic community especially in the universities which have access to global electronic information resources. Academic libraries spend large amounts of money for subscriptions to E-resources, and therefore, these libraries have a responsibility to evaluate whether these resources are utilized by the user community to gain maximum benefits from them.

The postgraduate students who are presently following the Masters in Education programme at the University of Peradeniya were selected as the population for the present study. The specific objectives of this study can be detailed as follows:

1. To find out types of E- resources used by these students.
2. To examine the frequency of use of E- resources by them.
3. To identify the place of access of E-resources.
4. To examine the user satisfaction towards E-resources.

Methodology

A survey and a self-administered questionnaire were used as the main research instruments for data collection. Since the study population is small, the entire population of 46 students was surveyed. 68% of the respondents were females while 32% were males. A total of 46 questionnaires were distributed to respondents and 41 duly completed questionnaires were returned thus giving a response rate of 89.1 %. Data

collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS package and results were presented as descriptive statistics.

Results and discussion

Types of E-resources used

75.6 % of the respondents use websites followed by 70.7% who use online catalogues. Of the respondents, 68.3% use full text databases while 65.8% of the respondents use electronic journals. More than 60% of the respondents use online databases and only 29.3% of them use electronic books for their postgraduate studies.

Purpose of using E-resources

45% of respondents use E-resources for their research work while 40% of them use E-resources to update their subject knowledge and 37% use them for studying course work. Of the respondents, 25% use E-resources for writing assignments and 21% use them to obtain current information related to their studies.

Frequency of using E- resources

More than 26% of the respondents frequently use E-resources while 19.5% of them access these resources a few times a week and 14.6% of them access the resources at least once a fortnight.

Accessing E-resources

Approximately 44% of the respondents prefer to access E-resources at the University library while cyber cafés were preferred by 34% of the population and 29% preferred to access this resource using their personal computers.

User satisfaction on E-resources available in the library

The survey revealed that respondents were satisfied with both the E-resources provided by the library and the user awareness programs conducted. However, the results further revealed that the respondents are not completely satisfied with the assistance provided by the library for the use of E-resources.

Conclusion

Resulting from this survey, it is recommended that the infrastructure facilities in the library be enhanced for utilization of electronic resources. The institutional bandwidth should be further increased and more internet points should be provided in the library. The library needs to conduct more user awareness programs on E-resources for the postgraduate students and should offer special information literacy courses for them to improve their skills in searching for electronic information. Furthermore, the library needs to take measures to provide more instructions and navigation aids describing the E- resources and it is recommended that an effective marketing strategy through posters, emails, notices should be adopted for increasing user awareness on E- resources.

References

Graham, S. R. (2003). *Historians and electronic resources: a citation analyses`*, *JAHIC*, vol.3, no.3, pp. 18-24.