Use of Internet for Information Seeking by the Faculty Members of University of Kashmir: A Survey

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ABSTRACT

The paper is an attempt to survey use of internet for assessing information seeking behaviour among faculty of University of Kashmir. A pre- structured questionnaire adminstered among the faculty in various Departments of the University.It reveals that e-mail is the most used service of internet while "Google" and "Yahoo" are often used search engines. Internet explorer is termed as highly used web browser and slow speed as a problem in accessing the internet.Concludes that younger members are using internet more and gender impact is predominant in time spent over internet.

KEYWORDS

Information Seeking Behaviour; Search Strategies; Search Engines; Gender impact; Faculty- University of Kashmir.

PAPER TYPE *Survey cum Research*

INTRODUCTION

"Information seeking behavior is mainly concerned with who needs what kind of information for what reasons; how information is found, evaluated and used." **(Kumar, 1990)**. Advances in the information and communication technologies have changed the way the information is being produced, processed and accessed. Due to the availability of information in electronic form internet has become a powerful medium for access of information. Besides, launch of World Wide Web and subsequent emergence of Search engines,

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directories, etc has made the information easily retrievable but owing to over abundance of information on cyber medium, users find it difficult to locate the relevant information. Hence information professionals need to understand the information requirements and information searching habits of their clients to assist them in getting relevant online information. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to make an exploratory study of faculty of university of Kashmir in assessing their information seeking behaviour via Internet.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers have undertaken different studies on information seeking behavior of diverse users in various environments which fall beyond the scope of the present survey. The following lines, however, sum up few surveys carried out during the recent decade. **Spink and Janson (2004)** made an attempt to find out various aspects of web searches, users using web terms in queries, various types of searches i.e. medical, sex, e-commerce, multimedia, etc. They have analysed vast sets of web query data provided by various Web companies from 1997- 2003. **Badu and Markwei (2005)** tried to find out the extent of awareness in use of Internet and its resources by academic staff and post graduate students of the University of Ghana. **Nasreen (2006)** in her study for PhD explores and understands the nature of media practitioners in Karachi regarding information seeking. **Manhas (2008, September)** focuses on the role of internet and electronic resources in dental colleges and hospitals of Punjab. **Trivedi and Joshi (2008)** study Paramukhswami Medical College in Karamsad (Gujrat) to assess the computer and internet usage among health care professionals, besides information seeking behaviour. **Prasad and Singh (2009)** tried to determine the use of online journals and

databases to assess current user characteristics associated with use of online resources at the Faculty of Science, Banaras Hindu University (Varanasi).

UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR

The University of Kashmir (Srinagar) has 54 post graduate departments under 10 faculties. The University Library system (renamed as Allama Iqbal Library since July, 2002.) is the largest system of the state to fulfil needs of the academic community. The university has a dedicated network facility utilizing V–SAT and Radio link connectivity etc for ensuring 24*7 internet facility through 48 computers installed in its Internet Access Centre besides adequate Departmental and personal computational facilities. It also provides online access to various resources for about 7000 users. **(University of Kashmir, 2009)**

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the purpose, nature and type of information retrieved via the Internet.
- To identify the search engines and web browsers frequently employed in searching the information.
- To find out the relationship between various parameters (like member gender, age, years of experience, status, academic discipline and frequency) and the internet use.
- To know about the level of satisfaction in accessing various internet resources and tools.

SCOPE

The scope is limited to faculty members of the University of Kashmir who are on the rolls of the university as on 2009.

HYPOTHESES

- Younger faculty spends more time on internet compared to elder group.
- Gender has a significant impact on the span of time spent over internet

METHODOLOGY

Survey method was chosen to gather the data using random sampling technique. A pre structured questionnaire drafted, distributed among 145 faculty members of different disciplines, which received 84.82% response. In order to reveal findings and test hypothesis, the data was analyzed by drawing percentages as well as by applying certain statistical tests like Correlation and Regression analysis using SYSTAT package. Regression analysis especially helped to find out the relationship between the amount of time spent and gender, age, status and experience of internet use.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Distribution of users

Among 123 faculty, majority (75.60%) comprise males with about 25.20% in 41-45 age group; 21.32% in 31-35 age group and 19.51% in 26-30 age group. Forty six members belong to the Faculty of Science while 33 hail from the Faculty of Social Science. The others constitute 16 from Languages, 10 from Law, 05 from Education and Management. Mainly (73.98%) respondents are Assistant Professors followed by Associate Professors (9.75 %).Out of majority of Assistant Professors, most of them (44.71%) possess the experience upto five years and 17.88% more than five years practice while 15.44% and 11.38% with 15-20 years and 10-15

years skill respectively. However, 3.25% have more than 25 years of teaching knowledge.

- **Internet and Computational Facilities**

Most (98.37%) members claim to possess computers and equally internet connectivity (87.80%).The internet hook up at their homes reveal that 49.59% have BSNL enabled services. A less percentage are subscribing to the other internet service providers. 24.39% have the internet facility at their homes since one year, 8.94% since 2 years and 13% since 3 years but 11.38% are using the internet in their residences for more than 3 years.

- **Location**

Respective department seem to be the most preferred place of internet access(82.92%) when University library internet section is the second choice(60.97%) and 52.03% make use of their residence facilities. Cyber café is the least preferred site for access.

- **Experience and Frequency**

Most users (44.71%) have 4-10 years experience in accessing internet and 21.95% members for about 2-4years. Small percentage (6.50%) use the internet for less than six months. Normally 65.04% use it on daily basis, 23.57% use 2-3 times per week while 4.06% use 2-3 times a month and rarely. On weekly basis, 26.01% spend 2-4 hours and 18.69% spend 5-6 hours per week. More than 20 hours per week is being spent by 8.94% members.

- **Purpose**

The faculty members use internet for various purposes. Majority (82.11%) reveal its use for research. Latest information in concerned subject forms the other criteria (76.42%). A large number of faculty (60.16%) report its need for teaching while most(54.47%) for publishing articles/research papers.

- **Service**

Among various internet resources, e-mail is used at least once during a day by users (66.66%). E-conferences & News service is never used by about 40.65% of the faculty. E-journals and Catalogs/Citations are again never used by 21.95% and 43.08% of the members respectively. On-line search is carried out by 53.65% of the at least once a day. Other internet resources are never used by majority of them (69.10%).

- **Problems**

Major problem listed is slow speed of internet access (78.04%). Reporting vast amount of information by some members (20.32%) on the internet but lack of adequate knowledge of internet use (16.26%) and unfamiliarity with search methods(11.38%) have made it difficult to them to organise and decipher. Besides, limited number of computers by some faculty members is reported.

- **Use**

The network based services, INFLIBNET and UGC-INFONET are accessed by many (27.64% and 40.65% users respectively) while DELNET, ERNET and NICNET by less members (3.25%, 12.19% and 6.50% respectively).

- **Web address and Browser**

Typing the web address is the most used technique of browsing information on internet (65.85%). The other preferred way of browsing internet is using search engine (62.60%), Subscribed databases and other ways by 12.19% and 1.62% members respectively. Among the web browsers, Internet Explorer is the most often used (79.67%). Netscape and Mozila is never used(by 80.48%, 82.11% members respectively). Google is as usual most favourite search engine (82.92%) of faculty members. The next preferred search engine is yahoo (58.53%) and many search engines are either never or rarely used by them.

Among various search strategies, 65.04% often search the information by subject, 48.78% search by title of journal, 46.34% by keyword and 33.33% by author. ISBN (80.48) and any other search strategy (88.61) are never used by them. The information regarding the frequency of using print resources indicate that 44.71% of faculty has decreased tendency of using print resources while 26.01% claim that their tendency of using print resources has increased. But 26.82% show no change in their frequency of using print resources after using internet resources.

- **Satisfaction**

Majority of users (56.09%) are satisfied and a sizable (38.21 %) are highly satisfied with the overall use of internet. Again majority (54.47%) are highly satisfied with use of e-mail service and quite a large number (35.77%) feel quite satisfied. Users are satisfied with use of on-line databases (40.65%) but many (34.95%) show indifference towards it. Many are highly satisfied in on-line journals (21.95%) and 5.69% are dissatisfied in their use. Use of search engines is the matter of satisfaction among 41.46% teachers and equally 37.57% members rate them highly satisfactory.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND TESTING HYPOTHESIS

Table1: Regression summary for Dependent Variable: Time Spent (library analysis)

R= .47627881 R^2= .22684151 Adjusted R^2= .21059868
F (5,238) = 13.966 p<.00000 Std. Error of estimate: 1.4489

N=244	Beta	Std. Err. of Beta	B	Std. Err.of B	T(238)	p-level
Intercept			4.692852*	0.820710*	5.71804*	0.000000*
Gender	-0.139271*	0.058914*	-0.529328*	0.223914*	-2.36397*	0.018884*
Age	-0.054613	0.088782	-0.066135	0.108406	-0.61007	0.542398
Status	0.092374	0.078586	0.252713	0.214990	1.17546	0.240985
Exp.	-0.006581	0.086454	-0.001340	0.107608	-0.07612	0.939389

Amount of time spent by faculty members was taken as the Dependent Variable and regressed on Gender, Age, Status, and experience of internet

use. A relationship in the form of Multiple Regression was obtained. It was found that gender has a significant impact on the amount of time spent per week on internet **(Table 1)**.

The correlation analysis was performed between gender, age, status, time spent, frequency and experience. A positive correlation between gender and frequency was obtained i.e., female faculty members use internet more frequently than the male faculty members. A negative correlation between gender and time spent was found thus revealing that amount of time spent on internet by the male faculty members is more than the female faculty members.A positive correlation was found between age and frequency which means that with the increase in the age, the frequency of internet increases. Also a negative correlation between age and time spent shows that with the increase in the age the amount of time spent on internet decreases **(Table 2)**.

Table 2: Correlations (Library Analysis)

Marked correlations are significant at p< .05000
n=244 (case wise deletion of missing data)

Variable	Gender	Age	Status	Frequency	Time Spent	Experience
Gender	1.00	-0.16*	0.12	0.16*	-0.18*	-0.12
Age	-0.16*	1.00	-0.64*	0.17*	-0.16*	0.71*
Status	0.12	-0.64*	1.00	-0.11	0.16*	-0.63*
Frequency	0.16*	0.17*	-0.11	1.00	-0.44*	0.06
Time Spent	-0.18*	-0.16*	0.16*	-0.44*	1.00	-0.11
Experience	-0.12	0.71*	-0.63*	0.06	-0.11	1.00

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Most of the users belong to age group of 41-45 years from the faculty of science are designated as assistant Professors. This proves the hypothesis that younger one are more availing the facility and gender impact is more favourable for females. Majority of them possess computers and internet

connection in their respective departments and also more than half at respective residences mainly through BSNL service provider. The respective Department is the most preferred place for using internet and majority of the faculty members uses internet for research purpose. Most often used service at their homes is e-mail. Various network based services except **INFLIBNET** and **UGC-INFONET** are rarely used by them. Use of web address and search engine are the most preferred ways of internet browsing. Most often used web browser is Internet Explorer. Google and Yahoo are the most often used search engines. Searching the information on the internet is mainly executed by subject. Almost for half of respondents, the frequency of using print resources after using internet resources has decreased.

It has been observed that lack of knowledge and awareness to use the latest information and communication technologies act as obstacles for their maximum utilization. Due to lack of ICT literacy, faculty members do not get satisfactory retrieval of relevant information. There may be some other reasons also which hinder the speedy retrieval of the required information, like working condition of internet, slow speed of access, etc. Keeping in view these findings, following suggestions are put forward:

- Most users are not well aware of the activities, collections and other aspects of the library. So the library should develop a website or enhance the present one to cover information about the library, its activities, collections, and methods of access. It should also provide weekly or fortnightly updates regarding the information resources, Lists of subscribed journals or the content pages of the journals preferrably emailed to the concerned faculty members as per his/her interest. It will evolve in due course of time.

- Since the majority of the faculty members are not well versed with various internet resources, online databases, this certainly advocates for providing a regular and rigorous training programme particularly on how to find information on the Web. Faculty members should be made aware by arranging talks on topics such as Internet, Web, virtual libraries, e-journals, directories, subject gateways, etc describing their benefits.
- Consortia-based subscription to electronic resources provides access to wider number of electronic resources at substantially lower cost. Therefore the university should join hands with other concerned institutes in the region to expand and enhance the information resources available to their students and faculty.
- The lack of organization of the material on the web result that faculty members are not able to hunt the quality information. So measures need to be undertaken for making optimal utilization of the e-information resources by sensitizing users with subject directories, subject information gateways of various disciplines etc.
- More allocation to develop the infrastructure, equipment and staff training to enable to get sufficient facilities and guidance about e- resources more effectively and adequately. Besides, Reference librarians could use their time in a better way by focusing on assisting users in finding information and resources.

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