
Online Journals in the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU): A User Survey

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ABSTRACT

With a sharp rise in the quantum of journals, every modern library has adopted them as an economically viable alternative to the print media. Some of the publishing agencies like the Chemical Abstracts Society have gone to the extent of bringing out only the soft copies. This paper is an attempt to assess the state of art of one of the most modern university libraries of the country, Jawaharlal Nehru University Library (New Delhi). Data for the study was collected through survey method from the students, research scholars and faculty members on various aspects of services pertaining to online journals accessible in the University. The role of online journals and their utilization in higher education has been discussed, focusing mainly on examining the status of the services available, their clientele, purpose and hurdles in retrieval. The user perception of services as well as the remedial measures for further improvement is discussed.

KEYWORDS

Use Studies; User Studies; Online Journals; e-Resource Usage; Jawahar Lal Nehru University (JNU)

PAPER TYPE *Survey cum Research*

INTRODUCTION

We are passing through an era of rapid technological and socio-economic change. Such a vital change makes us believe that we are living in an information society. The technological advances have replaced traditional services and processes with electronic versions which are attractive and economically feasible for almost all the activities of human beings especially for the higher education. In academic libraries, the technological revolution in the last

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four decades has made tremendous impact on the ways the information is collected, processed, stored, retrieved and disseminated. Majority of the sources of information, especially, the journals are now available on electronic media like CD-ROMs and Internet. Because of these advancements, information reaches the people in a shorter span of time in an economic way. With the advent of electronic journals the term electronic publishing also emerged side by side which refers to the art of distribution of information in electronic format (**Singh & Sharma, 2004**) when 'Online journals' are defined as journals published electronically (or on the web) rather than printed on paper. Some online journals are available in either print or electronic format; others are published only on the web (**Online Journals, 2009**). They can be accessed via electronic transmission. Studies have documented that the introduction of online journals has an impact on the use of the library. With the introduction of full text on CD-ROM, **Bane (1995)** and **Rogers (2001)** has noted a decline in the use of the print collection. This trend continued with the availability of remote access to full-text online journals (**Rogers, 2001; & Montgomery & Spark, 2000**). Results of a study by **De Groote and Dorsch (2003)** at an academic health sciences library show print journal usage decreased significantly following the introduction of online journals, regardless of whether a journal was available only in print or both online and in print.

THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Jawaharlal Nehru University is one of the few central universities of India which have earned reputation in imparting the best quality higher education. Its university library is a knowledge centre which has rich resources mainly in Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences. It is housed

in a nine-storey tower building and has a carpet area of about one lac sq. ft. It is situated in the midst of the academic complex of the University as a hub of all the academic activities of the university. Several centers of the university have been declared by the UGC as “centres of excellence”. These centres include *Centre for Historical Studies, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Centre for Political Studies, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Centre for the Study of Regional Development*, all in the School of Social Sciences. In addition to them, three Science Schools i.e. School of Physical Sciences, School of Life Sciences and School of Environmental Sciences have also received the UGC recognition as “centers for excellence”.

The library has a total collection of 5.45 lacs which includes books, serials, non-book materials etc. It subscribes to 965 journals and also receives 148 journals as gift and in exchange. The collection is organized subject wise on different floors under three major streams i.e. Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences. The library subscribes to a large number of online journals, the list of which is available with its website at www.jnu.ac.in.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To examine the level of popularity and use of online journal services, place of their accessibility and use vis-a-vis the print journals.
- To assess various factors responsible for non -use of online journals; and
- To seek opinion about authenticity, and satisfaction level of online journals

SCOPE

The study is limited to only 100 students, research scholars and faculty members though its circumference could have been much broader, keeping the student and faculty strength of JNU in view. Furthermore, the research highlights the findings of only 76 respondents out of 100 selected respondents.

METHODOLOGY

In order to collect comprehensive, reliable and relevant data for the study, the questionnaire was used as data gathering tool. The questionnaires were personally distributed to 100 under-graduate and post-graduate students, research scholars and faculty members of different departments and schools of the Jawaharlal Nehru University. Only 90 filled up questionnaires were received back by the investigator. The investigator selected only 76 responses for the purpose of analysis because of the incomplete responses from the rest 14 questionnaires.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**➤ Purpose of Use**

All the respondents use online journal services, although the purpose of browsing varies. 26.31% respondents consult journals for complementing their course work and 9.21% use them for teaching purposes. Most respondents 63.15% use online journals for their research work. The second largest category (36.84%) consults them for updating purpose.

➤ Use

Mainly 44.73% respondents use online journals daily, 35.52% consult them twice or four times a week and . 19.73% make it once a week.

➤ **Accessibility**

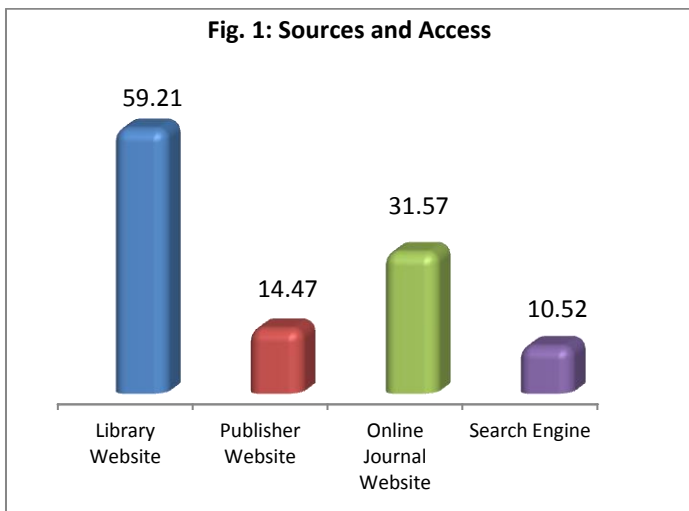
68.42% users consult online journals in the central library; 7.89% in their respective departments and the second largest group of users(50%) make their usage in the university computer centre.

➤ **Preference**

32.89% users prefer online journals and 48.68 prefer print versions of journals over online journals. 8.42% users have no preference over online or print journals.

➤ **Source and Access**

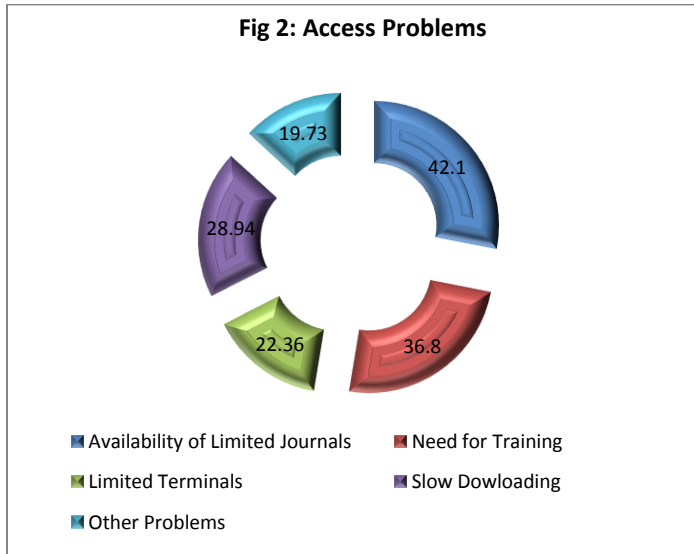
It is clear from **Fig. 1** that the library website is the first preference for 59.21% users in locating their resources, while (31.57%) users locate their resources directly from the websites of online journals. 14.47% users locates online journals through publisher website while 10.52% access the journal content through search engines.



➤ **Access Problems**

42.10% users are facing problems of non-availability of online journals in their respective subject areas while 36.80% are of the view that they need

professional training for better utilization of online journals. Shortage of computer terminals is experienced by 22.36% whereas 28.94% face problems because of poor speed, with 19.73% experiencing some other problems (Fig.2).

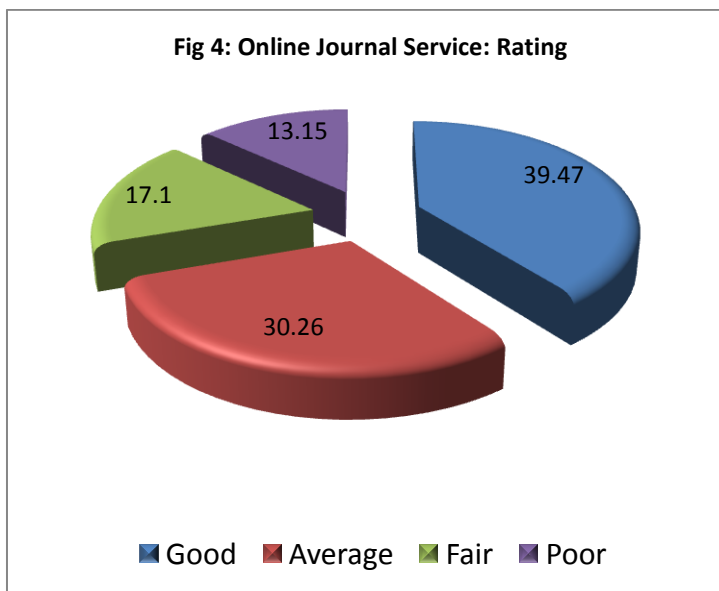
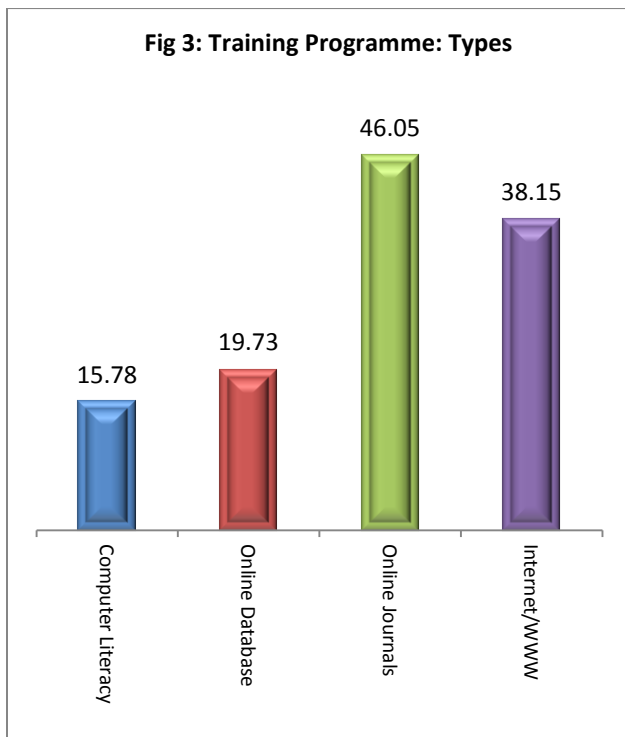


➤ **Training Programme: Types**

15.78% users are in need of training in basic computers and 19.73% favouring training in the use of online databases. 46.05% want to receive training in using online journals and 38.15% need Internet training for better utilization of online journals and databases (Figure 3)

➤ **Rating of Online Journal Services**

All of the respondents reacted the question about satisfaction with availability of online journals and databases subscribed. Figure 4 deciphers that 39.47% users opine that journals and databases are good in terms of their relevance to the subject. 30.26% rate them average, 17.10% fair and 13.15% poor.



SUGGESTIONS

The present study puts forward the following suggestions for improvement of online journals services in the university:

- To improve the speed of Internet connection for enhancing the download process.
- Encouraging the popularization of the concept of open sources, virtual, electronic, and digital libraries among the students, research scholars and faculty through orientation / user education programmes.
- The accessibility and use of UGC's InfoNet facilities need to be promoted.
- Some more awareness and training campaigns are required with the help of experts from the online publishing agencies. Such an awareness can be enhanced through the following means:
 - Publishing information pertaining to online journals and database in the university newsletters;
 - Head of the departments and faculty members be informed immediately about the latest online journals and databases;
 - Library clientele should be sent e-mails alerts about the new updates in online journals and database subscribed by the library;
 - Updates on the library webpage as well as on the university websites;
- Faculty should give the students more assignments on latest topics so that they could frequently consult online journal and databases;
- Library should organize regular workshops to promote the usage of online journals;

- Library should subscribe sufficient number of online journals especially in the area of Social Sciences.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the majority of the users are aware and satisfied with the online availability of journals. It is found that most of the users consult online journals in the Central Library, Computer Centre and some other departments for not only updating their knowledge but to collect relevant information for their research work and teaching. The users locate online journals through the websites of online journals, publishers and search engines. Some users experience difficulties in locating the desired journals in their respective subjects due to lack of guidance, slow Internet speed and limited number of terminals available for the users. Majority of users are in favour of training programmes for better exploitation of resources as most of them feel that lack of training is a barrier in providing better services. However, it is a common feeling that the online journals will not replace the traditional print format but complement them as a new medium of scholarly communication.

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