



# INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

## Information Seeking Behaviour of Research Scholars of State Universities of Haryana: A Study

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### Abstract

In the contemporary information age, the study emphasizes the indispensable role of information in decision-making, teaching, learning, and knowledge enrichment across diverse domains. It recognizes libraries as crucial hubs for learning and underscores their significance in modern education. The research aims to investigate the information needs, seeking behaviour, and satisfaction levels of research scholars in Haryana's state universities, focusing on how libraries can optimally support scholars in their academic pursuits. Additionally, the study highlights the profound impact of chemistry on daily life and acknowledges its reliance on extensive information transfer and utilization. Overall, the research seeks to enhance understanding and support for scholars in various research areas.

**Keywords:** Information, Information seeking behaviour, Library, Research.

### Introduction:

'Information' encompasses various meanings, serving as a fundamental necessity for individuals to meet their responsibilities effectively. In the ongoing Information Era, the act of seeking information remains crucial, presenting challenges in finding, organizing, and utilizing information. Information professionals play a vital role in acquiring and delivering relevant resources to meet individual needs. In the modern world, characterized by rapid developments, information has become an indispensable resource for survival, influencing every facet of life. In information science, the cognitive approach to defining information underscores its conceptual and transformative nature. Belkin (1978) emphasizes the modified conceptual structure associated with a text, shaped by purpose and the creator's knowledge of the recipient. Ingwersen (1995) sees information as the outcome of transforming cognitive structures, capable of influencing the recipient's knowledge. Dervin & Nilan (1986) define information as a construct of human creation, and Turnor (1988) views it as a pivotal resource

with the potential to instigate societal change and improvement. According to Turner, information holds the transformative power to bring about societal change and improvement.

### **Information Seeking Behaviour:**

Information behavior encompasses all human actions related to information sources, including active and passive seeking and use. Information seeking behaviour specifically refers to purposeful efforts to acquire information, reflecting the complex pattern of actions and interactions individuals engage in when seeking information for various purposes.

Wilson's (2000) framework guides the exploration of information seeking behaviour, uncovering its complexities influenced by knowledge, accessibility, and relationships. This study investigates components like attitude, activity, and psychological temperament, shedding light on individual or group information seeking behaviours, while emphasizing the role of psychological states in predicting user activity (Boyd, 2004).

### **Electronic Information:**

Navigating the challenge of acquiring and storing printed information in libraries, especially given space constraints, prompts a shift towards electronic publishing amid rising raw material costs (Lakshmana Moorthy & Karisiddappa, 1996). Recognizing electronic publishing as documents created and disseminated in electronic format through ICT processes (Lancaster, 1989), this study delves into the realm of e-resources. Defined as digitally created non-print materials, encompassing Bulletin Boards, CD-ROMs, Discussion Lists, and Websites (Jones & Cook, 2000), e-resources emerge as a practical solution for the evolving landscape of scholarly communication.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives are proposed for the study:

1. To recognize the reason for information need of research scholars in the state universities of Haryana.
2. To survey the methods of information seeking of research scholars of Chemistry department.
3. To identify the frequency of requirement of various information sources used by the research scholars.
4. To study the purpose, types and frequency of using e-resources by research scholars of Chemistry in the state universities of Haryana.
5. To assess the level of satisfaction among the research scholars in using their respective library collection.
6. To find out the major problems faced by research scholars in university libraries of Haryana and to seek their suggestions for improvement of the library services.

## **Hypotheses of the Study**

- 1) The frequency of requirement for traditional information sources by research scholars of state universities in Haryana is independent of the type of the sources used by them.
- 2) The reasons for information need of research scholars are independent of their universities.
- 3) The frequency of requirement for information services to research scholars is independent of the service used.
- 4) The methods of information seeking by the research scholars are independent of their universities.
- 5) The level of satisfaction of research scholars on library collection is independent of the type of resource used by them.

## **Scope of the Study**

Libraries primarily aim to meet patrons' information needs, requiring a deep understanding of the information-seeking behaviour of students, research scholars, and academic staff. This study analyses the factors influencing "INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF RESEARCH SCHOLARS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES OF HARYANA," focusing on how scholars acquire information in Haryana universities.

## **Significance of the Study**

Recognizing the indispensable role of electronic resources in higher education is crucial for research scholars. These resources, vital for communication, information retrieval, and instructional support in teaching and research, mirror a shift in user preferences from traditional printed materials to electronic mediums like email, CD-ROM, and the World Wide Web. Libraries are adapting to this transformation by integrating electronic resources, providing improved accessibility, portability, and instant downloads. This study, approached from the perspective of a research scholar, seeks to assess the contemporary use of electronic resources among faculty members, investigating their impact on academic and research pursuits. The research also explores aspects such as awareness, satisfaction, resource ranking, library performance, and challenges faced during access, offering valuable insights for scholars navigating the evolving landscape of online information.

## **Research Methodology**

To complete the study survey method was adopted. The questionnaire was designed and distributed among the research scholars state universities of Haryana region. Data gathered through personally administering a structured questionnaire at the field.

## Data collection

Data collection utilized the questionnaire method, a popular choice for extensive inquiries. A total of 140 questionnaires were distributed to individuals in various colleges, primarily in person and with the assistance of friends. Ultimately, 102 fully completed questionnaires were received, forming a representative sample for the study. The study focused on research scholars in the chemistry departments of three Haryana state universities—Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra (KUK); Guru Jambheshwar University, HISAR (GJU); and Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak (MDU)—to understand their information needs and seeking behaviour.

## Limitations of the Study

1. This study is limited to the state universities in Haryana state.
2. The study is confined to the Ph.D. research scholars.
3. The study is limited to only chemistry departments of the selected universities.

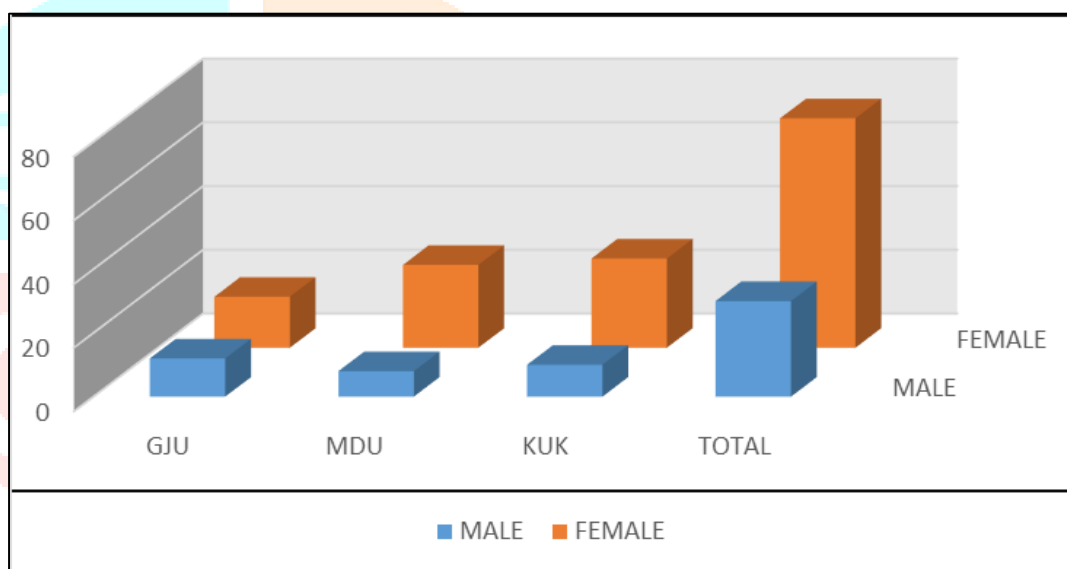
## Review of Literature

Ayinde et al. (2021) examined the information needs and sources of Nigerian electorates, revealing that print media and social platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook are crucial for election-related information. Lee (2020) explored the motivations behind employees' social media behavior, finding individual, interpersonal, and organizational factors influencing communicative behaviors. Mohammed & Kamalanabhan (2020) discovered a positive impact of social capital on employees' tacit knowledge-seeking behavior and its connection to creative performance. Pahlevan Sharif & Naghavi (2020) focused on financial information-seeking behavior and literacy among youth, emphasizing the role of planned behaviors and family financial socialization. Clark and Johnstone (2018) examined research practices among undergraduate music majors, revealing overconfidence, limited experience, and citation challenges. Dr. K. Surendra Babu's 2018 survey on Bangalore University research scholars found a predominant reliance on the Internet for reading (32.3%), with high usage for email (98.5%) and Google searches (91.5%). Despite awareness of electronic resources, scholars faced challenges such as inadequacy in the library (61.5%) and outdated materials (26.9%). In 2015, Israel conducted a descriptive survey investigating Undergraduates' Computer Skills and Use of Online Information Resources. Through questionnaire responses analyzed descriptively, the study revealed a noteworthy 98.5% consensus among participants, emphasizing the positive influence of computer skills. The findings underscored widespread computer literacy and frequent engagement with online resources among undergraduates.

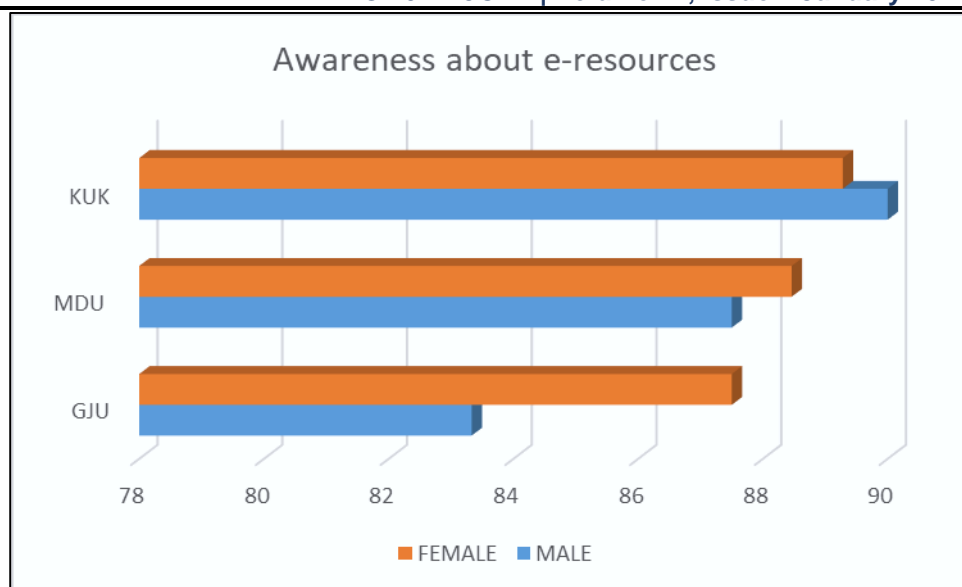
**Data Analysis & Interpretation****1) Demographics Details**

- Out of the total respondents it was observed that 41.7% of research scholars were males and 48.3% were females. MDU had least number of male respondents whereas GJU has highest male respondents.

UNIVERSITY	MALE	FEMALE	MALE to FEMALE (%)
<b>GJU</b>	12	16	75
<b>MDU</b>	8	26	30.8
<b>KUK</b>	10	28	35.7
<b>TOTAL</b>	30	72	41.7

**Table 1: Demographics of the population****Fig. 1 Demographics of the population****2) Awareness about resources**

- Survey reveals that the most of the respondents were utilizing and aware about resources and services as shown in Fig2. More than 80 % in each category male or female are aware about resources which is a good number. Rest of the research scholars are not aware about e-resources, it is so because they are fresher and yet to start their research.



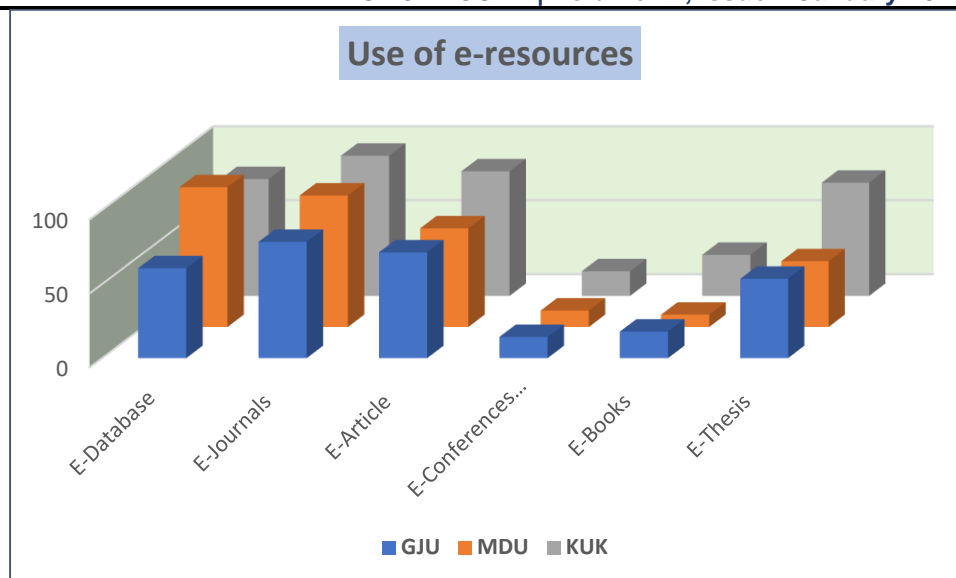
**Fig. 2 Awareness about e-resources**

### 3) Use of various E-Resources

- Research scholars of GJU are using e-journals (78.57 %) and e-articles (71.43 %) as their primary source of information whereas e-conference proceedings are minimum.
- In MDU, e-Database (94.44%) and e-journals (88.89%) top the chart.
- KUK scholars use most of e-journals and e-articles. The trend is same as for GJU.
- Most preferred source are e-journals unanimously whereas conference proceedings do not excite much research scholars.

S. No.	E-Resources	GJU	MDU	KUK
1.	E-Database	60.71	94.44	78.95
2.	E-Journals	78.57	88.89	94.74
3.	E-Article	71.43	66.67	84.21
4.	E-Conferences Proceeding	14.28	11.11	16.67
5.	E-Books	17.86	8.33	27.78
6.	E-Thesis	53.57	44.44	76.54

**Table 2: Use of various E-Resources**



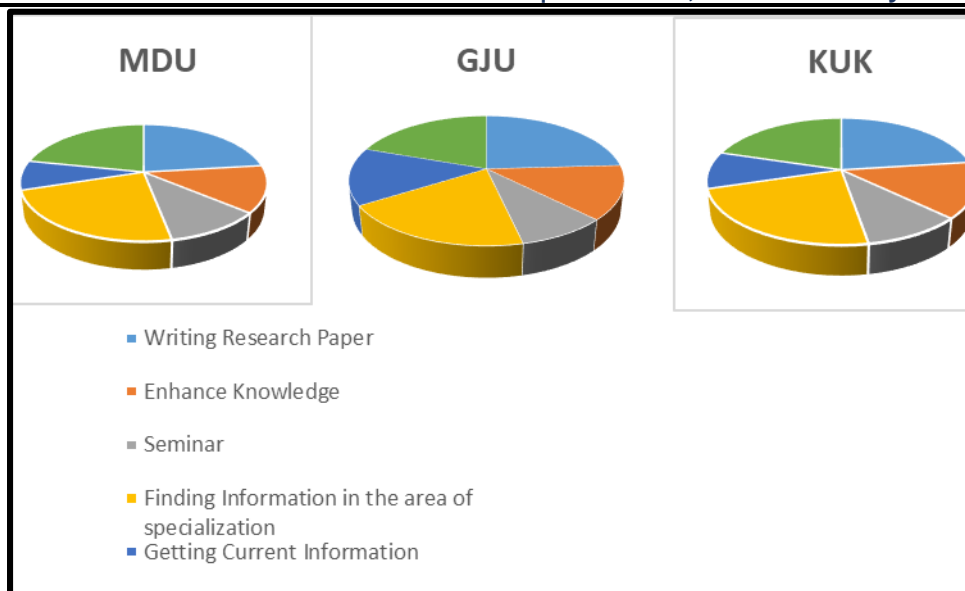
**Fig. 3 Use of various E-Resources**

#### 4) Purpose of Using Resources and Services

- Study shows that majority of the research scholars use resources for writing research papers and research work.
- GJU scholars have maximum usage of resources for gaining current information in three of the universities.
- Seminars are not given much importance to access resources.

S. No.	Purpose	GJU	MDU	KUK
1.	Writing Research Paper	96.42	94.44	89.47
2.	Enhance Knowledge	53.57	52.78	55.26
3.	Seminar	35.71	44.44	39.47
4.	Finding Information in the area of specialization	78.57	94.44	89.47
5.	Getting Current Information	57.14	33.33	36.84
6.	Research work	78.57	88.89	78.94

**Table 3: Purpose of Using Resources and Services**



**Fig.4 Purpose of Using Resources and Services**

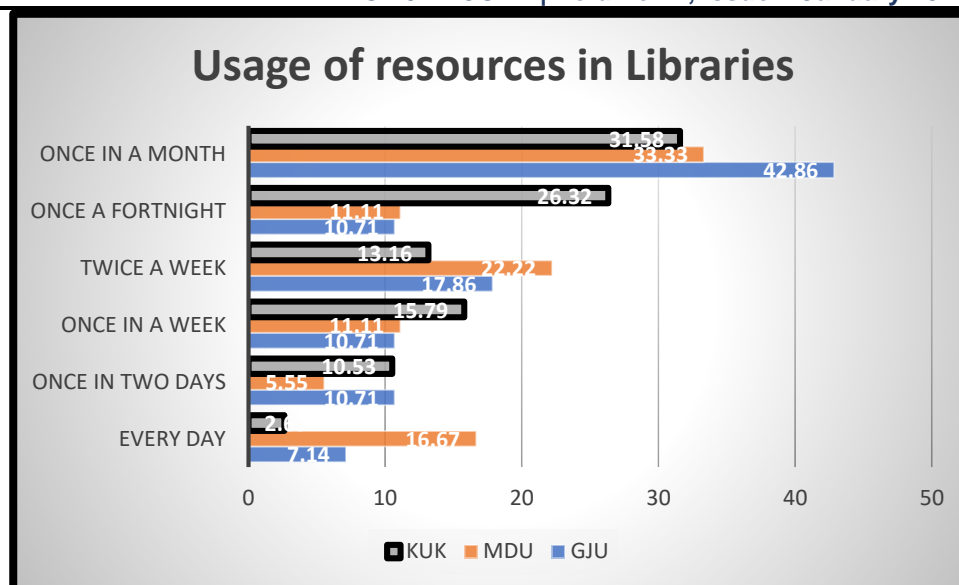
**5) Usage of resources in Libraries**

- It has been found that respondents were not visiting libraries very frequently. The preferred place for resources was research labs or personal usage than library.

S. No.	Frequency	GJU	MDU	KUK
1.	Every Day	7.14	16.67	2.63
2.	Once in Two Days	10.71	5.55	10.53
3.	Once in a Week	10.71	11.11	15.79
4.	Twice a Week	17.86	22.22	13.16
5.	Once a Fortnight	10.71	11.11	26.32
6.	Once in a Month	42.86	33.33	31.58

**Table 4: Usage of resources in Libraries**





**Fig. 5 Usage of resources in Libraries**

### 6) Reasons not to Visit Library

- It has been found that majority of scholars did not visit library due to lack of timing (overworked) as the lab work is quite tedious in chemistry. So, they prefer to search for resources in labs itself.

#### a. Formal Training/Orientation

- Survey shows that 54% students received training sometimes on usage of library resources and services and 11% students and never received training/orientation on usage of library resources. So, it is concluded that majority of students had received training sometimes on usage of library resources and services.

#### b. Impact of Training/orientation

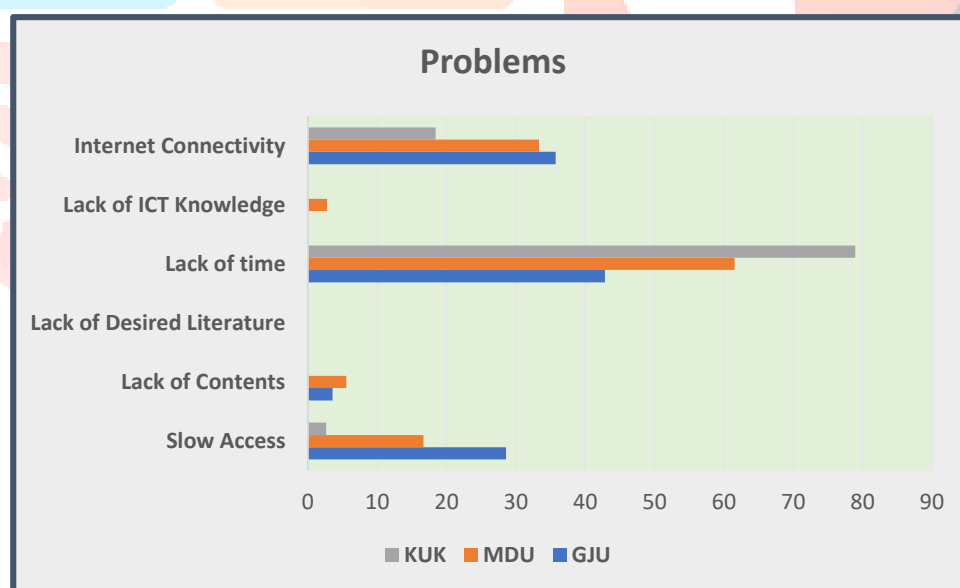
- Result revealed that 53% of the students were constantly able to search faster to find documents easily. They had positive impact with respect to regular visits to library as compared to those who were not trained. So, it is concluded that majority of faculty after having received the training on library resources and services feels that they were able to search faster, find documents easily, positive impact with respect to regular visits to library, faculty had positive impact with respect to awareness of the library new resources and services and students had positive impact with respect to time saving, positive impact with respect to faster information retrieval.

## 7) Difficulties Faced by Research Scholars

Students often found shortage of latest journal, followed by outdated material, non-availability of internet facility, information sources are too far off, technical problem (power/system failure), material is not available on the shelf, digital library services are limited to the library and campus area, lack of awareness of the availability of material, and shortage of computer.

S. No.	Problem faced	GJU	MDU	KUK
1.	Slow Access	28.57	16.67	2.63
2.	Lack of Contents	3.57	5.55	-
3.	Lack of Desired Literature	-	-	-
4.	Lack of time	42.86	61.54	78.95
5.	Lack of ICT Knowledge	-	2.78	-
6.	Internet Connectivity	35.71	33.33	18.42

**Table 5: Difficulties Faced by Research Scholars**



**Fig. 6 Difficulties Faced by Research Scholars**

## Findings in Relation to Hypothesis

Before coming to the conclusion of the study, I would like to jot down my findings once again with respect to the hypothesis we proposed for the study.

- 1) The frequency of requirement for traditional information sources by research scholars of state universities in Haryana is independent of the type of the sources used by them.**

Our very first hypothesis has been proved wrong by our study. From the data that we analysed (Table 5.2), it is evident that the requirement of the users are different based on the resources they are using most frequently.

- 2) The reasons for information need of research scholars are independent of their universities.**

Our data shows that the research scholars need for resources are almost similar in all the three universities. Thus, this hypothesis is true.

- 3) The frequency of requirement for information services to research scholars is independent of the service used.**

Table 5.3 and 5.4 show that the frequency of requirement is highly dependent on the service required by research scholars. Therefore, this hypothesis has failed.

- 4) The methods of information seeking by the research scholars are independent of their universities.**

The overall methods for seeking information have similar trends in all three universities.

- 5) The level of satisfaction of research scholars on library collection is independent of the type of resource used by them.**

The most of students of chemistry department were not able to visit the library due to their workload in the labs. So, library collection had no significant effect for their study.

## Conclusion

Research scholars' information-seeking behaviour has shifted from traditional libraries to E-resources, with a focus on digital platforms like e-books and e-journals. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) surge has significantly increased user capabilities. The study highlights the strengths and weaknesses of electronic and print sources, emphasizing the importance of ongoing staff education, positive user relations, and user education workshops for optimal library usage. It acknowledges the psychological aspect influencing information-seeking behaviour in library systems.

## Recommendations

On the basis of findings and conclusion of the study following recommendations have been made to implication of library resources and services.

### Library Resources and Services

- ✓ There is a need to provide orientation/training on regular basis on usage of new library resources and services and on information literacy.
- ✓ There is a strong need to implement in outdated library resources and services due to the (surrounding environment) international curriculum, corporate world expectation, changes in curriculum, changes in teaching methodology and learning methodology.
- ✓ There is a need to recommend the use of more resource sharing facilities between libraries because no library can own everything required by the users. Resource sharing is cost effective and environment friendly.
- ✓ There is a strong need to implement ICTs in libraries to keep pace with the changing information environment to exploit its benefits.
- ✓ Future libraries must be more user-centred rather than system-centred.
- ✓ In addition to basic services, libraries should popularize advanced library services including IT based and strive for their maximum utilization and access them any time and from anywhere.
- ✓ A need has been felt to create awareness among faculty and students about methods of searching documents in library and they should be familiarized with all the methods of searching documents.
- ✓ Regular user surveys should be conducted to ascertain the information needs of users, information use pattern, and use of the resources and services of libraries and users satisfaction with these. It will facilitate librarians to identify the gaps and enable them to strengthen the resources and services where needed.
- ✓ While social networking tools can help libraries go where their users are, many librarians see challenges in determining which tools to use, how many resources to devote, and how to assess effectiveness.

## Suggestions

In the light of the analysis and findings of the survey, the following suggestions are made for the effective use of e-resources provided by the library.

- The library should take initiative for organizing user Education Programme and short-term training.
- The library should conduct feedback/user surveys to determine the needs of users from time to time.
- Extra bandwidth should be sought by the library so as to provide faster access that will save users time, thus becoming a source of motivation to use e-resources. This will also solve the problem of slow downloading.
- Trained staff should be appointed to assist the users in accessing the information.
- Wi-Fi connectivity should be available in all the areas of the university campus.
- The users should be intimated about new arrivals of e-journals.

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