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A Study of Library Usage Patterns and Information-Seeking Behaviour of Users in Academic Libraries in the Digital Age

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Abstract: *The rapid development of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the functioning of academic libraries and the information-seeking behaviour of their users. Traditionally, academic libraries were primarily dependent on printed books, journals, reference materials, and physical reading facilities. However, the emergence of digital technologies, online databases, e-books, electronic journals, institutional repositories, and internet-based information services has changed the ways in which students, research scholars, and faculty members search for and utilise academic information. The present study examines library usage patterns and information-seeking behaviour among users of academic libraries in the digital age. It focuses on the frequency of library visits, preferred information sources, utilisation of electronic resources, search strategies, digital literacy, user preferences, and challenges encountered during information retrieval.*

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Library Usage Patterns, Information-Seeking Behaviour, Digital Resources, Digital Literacy, Information Retrieval, Higher Education

I. INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries play an important role in the development of higher education by providing access to information, knowledge, research materials, and learning resources. They serve as essential academic centres for students, teachers, research scholars, and other members of educational institutions. In the traditional library environment, users mainly depended on printed books, newspapers, journals, reference materials, catalogues, and personal assistance from librarians to fulfil their information requirements. However, the development of information and communication technology has transformed traditional library services into digital and technology-oriented information systems. The availability of the internet, electronic databases, online public access catalogues (OPAC), e-books, e-journals, digital repositories, and academic search engines has significantly influenced the information-seeking behaviour of library users.

In the digital age, users increasingly prefer quick, convenient, and remote access to academic information. Students frequently use online platforms for assignments, examinations, presentations, and academic projects, whereas research scholars depend on scholarly databases, electronic journals, research repositories, and citation-based search techniques. Kumari and Sharma (2021) emphasised that understanding users' information needs and information-seeking behaviour is essential for improving the effectiveness and utilisation of academic library services. Similarly, Bhattacharjee and Goswami (2025) observed considerable preference for digital platforms among undergraduate students, while also identifying underutilisation of traditional library collections.

Information-seeking behaviour refers to the activities and processes through which individuals recognise their information needs, identify appropriate sources, search for information, evaluate its relevance and reliability, and use the retrieved information for academic or personal purposes. Library usage patterns, on the other hand, represent the frequency, purpose, duration, and nature of users' interaction with library resources and services. Both concepts are

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closely related because users' information requirements influence their choice of resources, search methods, and frequency of library utilisation. Therefore, understanding these patterns is necessary for developing effective, accessible, and user-centred academic library services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To examine the library usage patterns of students, teachers, and research scholars in academic libraries.
To identify the major information needs and information-seeking behaviour of academic library users.
To analyse the utilisation of printed and electronic information resources.
To examine users' preferences regarding digital libraries, online databases, and academic search engines.
To identify the major problems faced by users while accessing and retrieving academic information.
To assess the role of digital literacy and library orientation programmes in improving information-seeking skills.
To suggest appropriate measures for improving library utilisation and information services in higher education institutions.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research approach to examine library usage patterns and information-seeking behaviour among users of academic libraries in the digital age. The study is designed around a review of relevant literature and a proposed framework for examining users' interaction with traditional and digital library resources. Secondary information is drawn from published research papers, academic journals, books, scholarly publications, and studies relating to digital libraries and information-seeking behaviour. A questionnaire-based survey may also be used in an institutional application of this framework to collect primary information from undergraduate students, postgraduate students, research scholars, and faculty members.

The major variables include frequency of library visits, purpose of library utilisation, preferred information sources, use of electronic resources, internet access, search techniques, information literacy, and satisfaction with library services. Descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation may be used for analysing primary survey data. Chi-square tests and correlation analysis may be applied to examine associations between user characteristics, digital literacy, and resource utilisation. No original survey results are claimed in this review paper.

INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY USERS

Information-seeking behaviour represents a systematic process through which users identify, locate, evaluate, and utilise information to satisfy their academic and research requirements. The process begins when an individual recognises an information need and searches for suitable sources. Users may consult books, journals, electronic databases, internet search engines, institutional repositories, research publications, and subject specialists.

Kumari and Sharma (2021) discussed different information-seeking activities, including starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, and extracting information. These activities explain how users identify initial sources, follow references, explore relevant materials, distinguish between useful sources, monitor developments, and extract relevant information. Such activities remain important in the digital environment, where users must navigate large volumes of information and select reliable academic content.

Information-seeking behaviour is influenced by several factors, including the purpose of information, availability of resources, digital literacy, search experience, language proficiency, internet accessibility, and institutional support. Users with advanced information literacy skills generally demonstrate greater ability to formulate search queries, apply filters, identify scholarly sources, and evaluate information credibility.

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CHANGING LIBRARY USAGE PATTERNS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The digital transformation of academic libraries has created significant changes in the ways users access information. Earlier, users were required to visit libraries physically to consult books, journals, and reference materials. Today, electronic resources and remote-access facilities allow users to obtain academic information from different locations.

The increasing availability of e-books, e-journals, online databases, institutional repositories, and digital catalogues has expanded opportunities for academic research. Digital resources provide several advantages, including quick retrieval, remote availability, search flexibility, and access to multiple information sources. However, printed books and other physical resources continue to remain relevant, particularly for detailed reading, reference consultation, and examination preparation.

Bhattacharjee and Goswami (2025), in their study of undergraduate students in Tripura, reported that 53.17% of respondents frequently used online media for information seeking, whereas library collections were comparatively underutilised. Their findings demonstrate the growing influence of digital platforms on students' information practices and the need for academic libraries to improve their digital infrastructure and awareness programmes.

ROLE OF DIGITAL LITERACY IN INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Digital literacy is an essential skill in the modern academic environment. It refers to the ability of individuals to access, search, evaluate, understand, and effectively use digital information. Academic library users require digital literacy to identify appropriate databases, construct search queries, use Boolean operators, apply search filters, download scholarly publications, and manage references.

Students with limited digital literacy may experience difficulties in identifying authentic academic information and distinguishing scholarly publications from unreliable online content. Information overload, irrelevant search results, incorrect references, and misleading online information can further complicate the information-seeking process.

Academic libraries can improve digital literacy through user orientation programmes, information literacy workshops, online tutorials, research assistance, and practical training sessions. Librarians should guide users in selecting appropriate databases, evaluating information sources, and using digital tools responsibly.

FACTORS INFLUENCING LIBRARY USAGE AND INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Several institutional, technological, and individual factors influence library usage and information-seeking behaviour.

Availability of Information Resources: The availability of relevant books, journals, electronic databases, and research materials directly influences users' decisions to utilise library services.

Digital Infrastructure: Reliable internet connectivity, computers, library management systems, and remote-access facilities encourage users to access digital resources.

Information Literacy: Users with better information literacy skills can identify relevant information more effectively and utilise library resources efficiently.

Academic Requirements: Assignments, examinations, research projects, dissertations, and teaching activities influence the frequency and purpose of library usage.

Accessibility and Convenience: Easy access to library services, suitable opening hours, mobile-friendly platforms, and remote information facilities influence user preferences.

Staff Assistance: Professional guidance, reference services, and technical support help users overcome difficulties in accessing and retrieving information.

Awareness of Library Services: Users who are familiar with available databases, electronic journals, catalogues, and digital repositories are more likely to utilise library resources effectively.

ANALYSIS OF MAJOR DIMENSIONS OF LIBRARY USAGE PATTERNS

The following table presents the major dimensions that can be examined to understand library usage patterns and information-seeking behaviour among academic library users.

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Table 1. Major dimensions of library usage and information-seeking behaviour

Dimensions	Major indicators	Academic significance
Frequency of library visits	Daily, weekly, monthly visits	Measures physical library utilisation
Purpose of library use	Study, research, assignments, examination	Identifies academic information needs
Printed resources	Books, journals, newspapers	Evaluates traditional resource utilisation
Digital resources	E-books, e-journals, databases	Measures electronic resource utilisation
Information sources	OPAC, Google Scholar, repositories	Identifies preferred search platforms
Search strategies	Keywords, Boolean operators, browsing	Examines information retrieval skills
Digital literacy	Online searching and source evaluation	Measures users' technological competence
Staff assistance	Reference and research guidance	Examines professional support
User satisfaction	Accessibility, relevance, convenience	Evaluates library service effectiveness

ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN IMPROVING INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

Academic librarians play an important role in guiding users towards appropriate and reliable information sources. Their responsibilities extend beyond traditional activities such as book issuing, cataloguing, and classification. In the digital environment, librarians provide assistance with online databases, electronic journals, institutional repositories, reference management tools, research consultations, and information literacy programmes.

Librarians also help students and research scholars understand advanced search techniques and evaluate the authenticity of scholarly publications. They can organise workshops on plagiarism awareness, citation management, academic databases, and responsible use of artificial intelligence tools. Effective communication between librarians, teachers, and students can further improve awareness and utilisation of available resources.

II. CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the changing nature of library usage patterns and information-seeking behaviour in academic libraries in the digital age. The development of information and communication technologies has transformed the traditional library environment by introducing electronic journals, e-books, online databases, digital repositories, and remote-access facilities. Students, teachers, and research scholars increasingly depend on digital information sources to fulfil their academic and research requirements. However, traditional library resources continue to maintain their importance in higher education. Effective utilisation of academic libraries depends on resource availability, digital literacy, technological infrastructure, professional assistance, and user awareness. Academic libraries should adopt a balanced approach that integrates traditional resources with modern digital facilities. Continuous improvement in information services, user education, and technological infrastructure can strengthen the academic contribution of libraries and support effective teaching, learning, and research activities.

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