

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

---

12-18-2021

## Use and Awareness of Open Access Legal Information Resources by the Law College Students in Western Maharashtra: An Empirical Study in India

Madhukar Bapu Togam

*ILS Law College Pune*, madhukar.togam@ilslaw.in

Prakash Babanrao Jadhav

*Yashwantrao Chavan Law College, Pune*, jadhavpb06@yahoo.co.in

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

---

Togam, Madhukar Bapu and Jadhav, Prakash Babanrao, "Use and Awareness of Open Access Legal Information Resources by the Law College Students in Western Maharashtra: An Empirical Study in India" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6761.  
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6761>

# Use and Awareness of Open Access Legal Information Resources by the Law College Students in Western Maharashtra: An Empirical Study in India

Togam Madhukar

Librarian

ILS Law College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Email: [madhukar.togam@ilslaw.in](mailto:madhukar.togam@ilslaw.in)

and

Jadhav Prakash Babanrao

Librarian

Yashwantrao Chavan Law College, Pune, Maharashtra, India

Email: [jadhavpb06@yahoo.co.in](mailto:jadhavpb06@yahoo.co.in)

## Abstract

This article discussed about the use and awareness about the open access legal resources in the state of western Maharashtra region in India. Researcher tried to find out the awareness, sources of awareness, among law students about open access legal resources i.e. JUDIS (Judgment Information System), Bombay High Court Judges Library, Supreme Court Judges Library (SUPLIS), India Code Information System, Indian Kanoon Legal Information Institute of India. Then researchers revealed the data about the frequency and purpose of using these resources. Research finds out the user perception about quality of open access resources from users' point of view and subsequently, discussed the satisfaction level of users and problems being faced by the students during use of these resources. Study reveals that (44.5%) respondents were from LLB program and 60.7% respondents were aware about these resources. It also reveals that (65%) respondents were using India kanoon, 77 (20.8%) users using National Digital Library portal, 74 (19.9%) respondents using Bombay High Court Judgments, 67 (18.1%) Supreme Court Judges Library. social media, Teachers and Library Staff are main sources of knowledge. 191 (46.5%) responses mentioned as Less awareness about open access legal information resources. Henceforth, law librarians should be taking initiatives for making awareness among law students by conducting more library orientations and extra library lectures and 44.9%) respondents replied with good comment for quality of open access resources in users point view and 61.7% respondents were satisfied. Most of users using open access resources by as and when required.

**Keywords:** Open Access Resources, Legal Information Resources, Commercial Legal Resources, Law Students, Use and awareness, Empirical Evidences, Use satisfaction, Problems of Open Access Resources, Western Maharashtra, India

*“Information is power only if you can take action with it. Then, and only then, does it represent knowledge and, consequently power”.* (Daniel n.d.) **Daniel Burrus**

## **INTRODUCTION:**

“Information in law is not only important in the advancement of a case but also important to prevent useless litigation. Proper information helps to convince client in bringing or resisting an action. Lawyers have to identify the pertinent legal sources. However, there is no all-inclusive single window open access online legal information system prevailing in India. Some initiatives have been taken by government but these resources are not user-friendly and majority of these resources are incomplete”.(Zade and Lichode 2020) Addition to that due to the invention of Information and communication technology (ICT) the publishing industry is transforming from printing to digital mode or web mode. Because of this, most of the publishers are trying to publish their intellectual content in the online format with indexing for easy retrieval purposes. Many commercial and open source online legal databases are available in the market nowadays and they are very substantial for every law student, researchers, teachers and legal practitioners. These online legal information resources are very much beneficial for updating their knowledge in the legal domain and frequently used by them. Additional subscription is required for access for commercial databases i.e Westlaw, Lexis Advance, SCC Online, HeinOnline, Manupatra, AIR Online, Corporate Law Advisor, Tax Sutra, Taxman, etc. Law libraries has to pay a huge amount for the access of these resources at the same time some open access legal resources are available in the public domain which are free of cost and provide valuable information for legal professionals. For example, JUDIS (Judgment Information System), Bombay High Court Judges Library, Supreme Court Judges Library (SUPLIS), India Code Information System, Indian Kanoon Legal Information Institute of India Considering this thought researcher felt that there should be study on the use and awareness of open access legal information resources by law students in the state of Maharashtra, India.

## **OPEN ACCESS MOVEMENT:**

Expansion of open access started in the USA and initially carried by the Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement and the National Library of Education launched Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) in 1966. Project Gutenberg-DE was launched by Gunter Hille in 1994. Various free online databases providing leading articles were also launched. Open access movement was initiated in the mid 1990's to promote to promote free, immediate, permanent web wide access to peer reviewed journals. Open access was initiated in the developing countries and marked by three notable declarations known as Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) in 2002, (<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/>), Bethesda statement in June 2003, ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethesda\\_Statement\\_on\\_Open\\_Access\\_Publishing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bethesda_Statement_on_Open_Access_Publishing)), and Berlin declaration in October. 2003, (<http://www.berlin9.org/about/declaration/>)

A major step towards open access movement is the launching of Wikipedia by Jimmy Wales in 2001. HP-MIT released DSpace in 2002 OAI-compliant open-source software for archiving eprints and other academic content. The Directory of Open Access Journals was launched by Lund University financed by Open Society Institute in 2003, covering list of almost all academic and research journals available full text for open access all over the world. In 2006 Informatics India launched Open J-gate with search facilities of open access journals.(Singh et al. 2012)

### **There are four OA models available for journals.**

- 1. OA free model:** Journals indexed in DOAJ for which neither author nor reader/library has to pay
- 2. Green OA:** Subscription-based model with 12-48 months embargo or moving wall period.
- 3. Gold OA:** Author pay model, surviving on Article Processing Charges (APCs)
- 4. Predatory OA:** Pay and Publish model in which the peer review process and standard publishing practices are overruled. (Nagarkar 2021)

## **OPEN ACCESS LEGAL RESOURCES IN INDIA:**

Open access legal resources are available in the public domain which are free of cost and provide valuable information for legal professionals. For example, JUDIS (Judgment Information System),

Bombay High Court Judges Library, Supreme Court Judges Library (SUPLIS), India Code Information System, Indian Kanoon Legal Information Institute of India. Various government and non-governmental agencies are involved in for free access to legal and law related information in India. The pioneering efforts were made by National Informatics Centre (NIC) (<http://www.nic.in/>) during launching various sites providing online legal information like INDIACODE, Law Commission of India, ministerial websites and various high courts. In pursuance various independent private initiatives are taken like Legal Services India and PRS Legislative Search. The Government agencies and departments have established its web portals at national and state level to provide digitized legal information for public awareness and free distribution of law and law related information to the public. (Singh et al. 2012)

**DEFINITION OF OPEN ACCESS:** BOAI definition of open access • By "open access" to this literature, we (BOAI) mean its free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, (<http://digital-scholarship.org/cwb/WhatIsOA.html>)

**Open access** is the ‘free, permanent, immediate, full text, online access, for any user, web-wide, to digital scientific and scholarly material, primarily research articles published in peer-reviewed journals. (Ch 2011).

## **RESEARCH PROBLEMS / STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The present research makes an attempt to study A study of Use and Awareness of Open Access Legal Information Resources by the Law College Students in Western Maharashtra.

1. Whether Law students are aware about open access legal information resources or not?
2. Whether Law students are using open access legal information resources or not?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

“Literature review is a cohesive report of the earlier research published in the form of articles, conference proceedings, research reports etc. it is systematically synthesized write-up covering all

relevant research on the given topic. Literature review is written by reading and understanding earlier research". (Kumbhar 2014)

Author outline the Open Access concept and specific Indian initiatives were mentioned and described. It also evaluates the Open Access movement in India and concludes with suggestions and recommendations for improving the Open Access scenario in India. (Bist and Mohanty 2006)

Researcher discussed about Open access resources (OAR) is an important part of the user community by which students, researchers, scholars, even faculties get solutions of their problems with just a click from their PCs. It Also discussed the role and usefulness of the concepts of open access and open access resources. (Ch 2011) Study analyses that the awareness and perception towards **open access resources** among the **management students** and faculty members. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents (82.95%) were **aware** about open access resources and use for their academic activities. Various purposes and reasons for using open access resources, various problems facing and satisfaction level of the respondents towards the awareness and use of open access resources was also discussed in the study. (Bala and Partap 2018) This study identifies various open access resources that are popular among legal community in India. The findings of the study reveal that majority of respondents were aware of open access resources. The main purpose of using these resources were for case law searching. Majority of the respondents have stated that legal information available in open access resources are not organized properly and was a hindrance in usage.(Bhardwaj and Goundar 2018) Conducted a study on uses a pattern of online information resources by students for academic purposes in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. The study found that majority of users were aware of online resources, majority of users using Google search engine for searching information. The study also highlighted the majority of users use online information for study purpose and improving knowledge. They also found that most of the respondents were satisfied with online resources. The researcher suggested that the university library should provide online video lectures, online institutional repositories and online reference sources.(Gowridevi, Ramakrishna, and Sasikala 2020) Study reveals that majority of the respondent's access e-resource weekly and the majority of the respondents are access e-resource for study purpose. 95% students have good opinion about e-resources. It was also discovered that majority of the respondents are facing slow server problem while they accessing e-resources.(Hegde, Hemvathi, and Dhanendra 2020) Researcher focused on the importance of open access resources and its authenticity. He has

discussed about national digital library of India and other initiations. i.e., Shodhganga (Electronic Thesis and Dissertation). Researcher also highlights the awareness of open-access e-resources, its usefulness and the most useful open-access platform. (Chanda 2020) Author identifies various open access resources that are popular among legal community in India. The findings of the study reveal that majority of respondents are aware of open access resources. The main purpose of using these resources were for case law searching. This paper analyses the benefits involved in providing free public online access to the “public legal information” of the Indian legal system. (Zade and Lichode 2020)

After browsing literature available, it was found that there is less study conducted before and not done such study in Maharashtra, India with reference to open access legal information resources in the context of awareness and use from the law students, Therefore, Researcher thought to carry out the research. The study will help to all researchers, academicians, teachers and academic law librarians.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the awareness of open access legal information sources among law students
2. To find out sources of awareness about open access resources
3. To find out the frequency and purpose of using these resources
4. To rate the quality of open access resources
5. To know the satisfaction level of students about open access resources
6. To reveal the problems being faced by the students using these resources.

## **SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF STUDY**

This study is limited to the law college students learning in the state of Western Maharashtra region, India and researchers have selected the random sample methods for distributing the structured questionnaire. Questionnaire was distributed through WhatsApp groups by contacting the librarian’s community working in the legal domain/Law Colleges. Researcher received 4 responses from the respondents. The data has collected during the period of 26 May, 2020 to 24 June 2021, near about one year and one month span kept for the data collection.

## **METHODS**

Researchers have selected the online survey method by developing google form for the study and Structured questionnaire (Online) used as a tool for data collection. Researcher received 474 responses from the respondents. For the present study sample, a random sampling technique has been used to collect data. After receiving all the responses, data has been tabulated and analysed in MS excel and accordingly, graphs have been prepared.

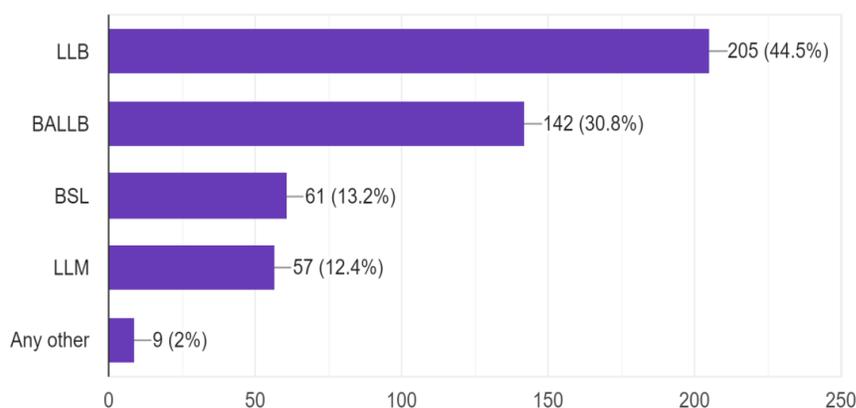
## RESULTS/FINDINGS

### Distribution of Respondents as per Course/Program

Graph No. 1 reveal that out of 474 respondents, 205 (44.5%) respondents were from LLB program, 142 (30.8%) respondents were from BALLB, 61(13.2%) respondents were from BSL, and 57(12.4%) were from LLM program while 9 (2%) respondents replied as others. It shows that most of the respondents were from LLB three years course.

3. Which Course /Programs you are belongs from?

461 responses



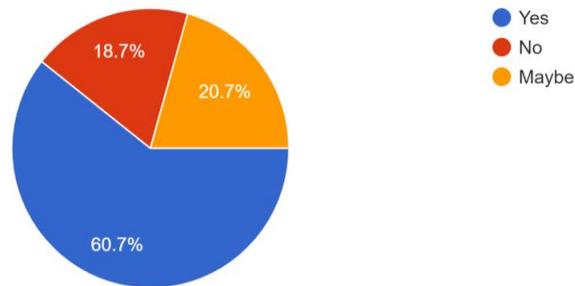
Graph No. 1 Distribution of Respondents as per Course/Program

### Awareness about Open Access Legal Resources

ICT gave the various options to users for fulfillment of their information needs. Researcher tried to find out the awareness of open access resources among law students. Fig No. 2 reveals that students were aware about open access legal information resources. Out of 474 respondents, 60.7%

respondents were aware about these resources. 18.7% respondents replied with 'No' it means they are completely unaware about open access legal resources. Remained 20.7% respondents replied as 'May be'. So, they are in ambiguity mode.

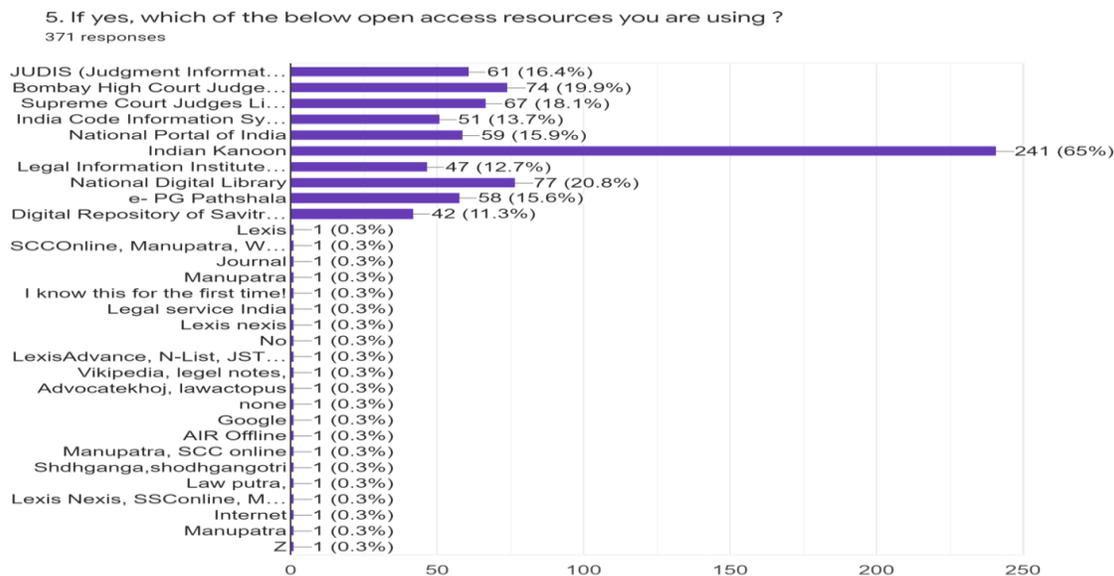
4. Are you aware about open access legal resources?  
460 responses



Graph 2 Awareness about Open Access Legal Resources

### Use of Open Access Resources by Students

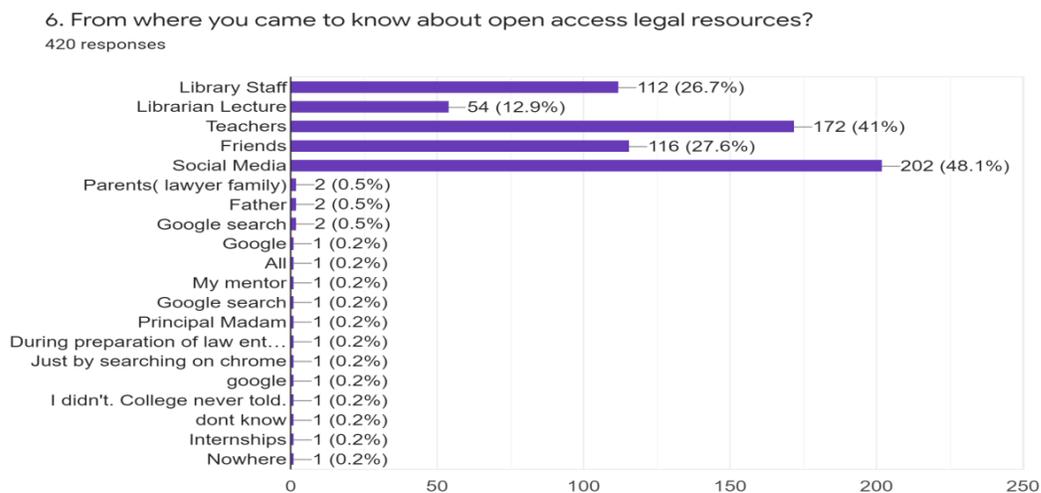
Researcher tried to find out the most familiar/used open access resources through this study. Fig No. 3 reveals that 241 (65%) respondents were using India kanoon, 77 (20.8%) users using National Digital Library portal, 74 (19.9%) respondents using Bombay High Court Judgments, 67 (18.1%) Supreme Court Judges Library, then 61 (16.4%) Judgement Information System, 59 (15.9%) National Digital Library, 59 (15.9%) were using National Portal of India, 58 (15.6%) e-PG Pathshala, 51 (13.7%) were using India Code Information System, 47 (12.7%) were using Legal Information Institute of India, 42 (11.3%) Digital Repository of Savitribai Phule University Pune while remaining resources used by respondents with 1 (0.3%).



Graph 3 Use of Open Access Resources by Students

### Source of Knowledge about Open Access Legal Resources

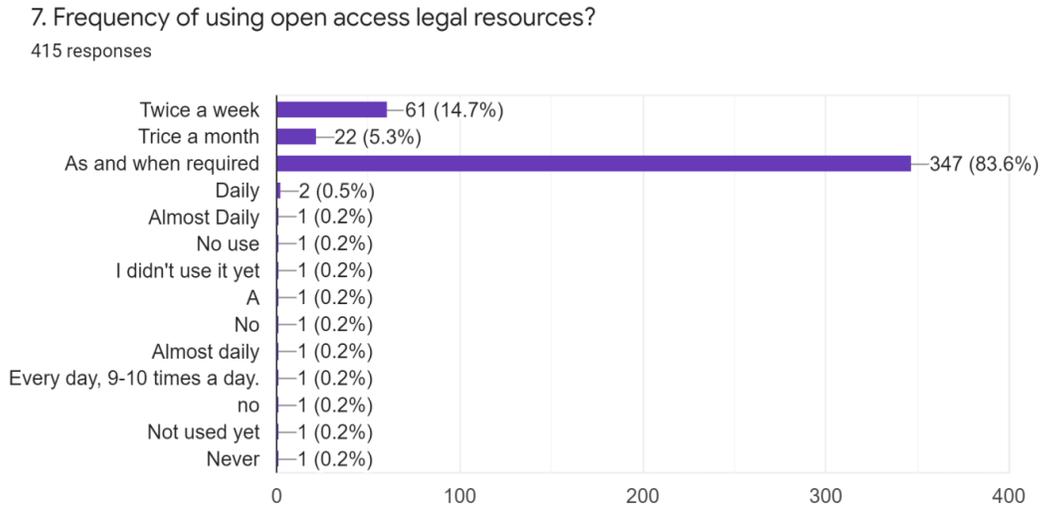
Fig No. 4 reveal the data about sources of knowledge of about open access legal information resources. Out of 474 respondents 202 (48.1%) source of knowledge social media, 172 (41%) from teachers, 112 (26.7%) from Library Staff, 116 (27.6%) from Friends. It shows social media, Teachers and Library Staff are main sources of knowledge.



Graph 4 Source of Knowledge about Open Access Legal Resources

## Frequency of Use of Open Access Legal Resources

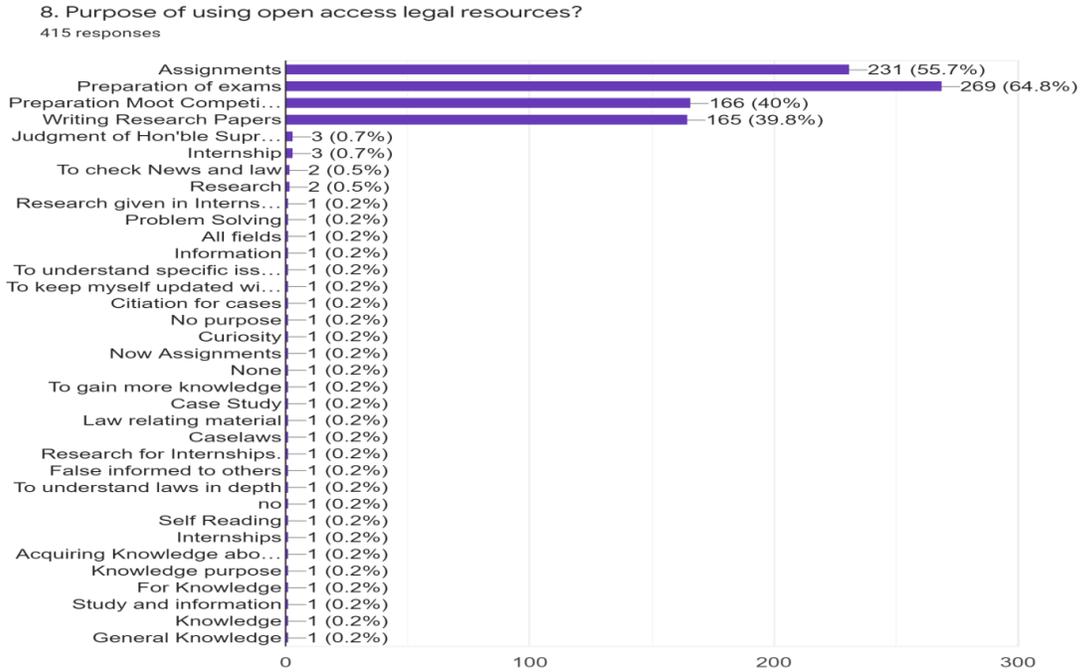
Fig No. 5 reveals that Frequency of use of open access legal resources. Out of 474 respondents, 347 (83.6%) were using open access resources as and when required, 61 (14.7%) were using Twice a week, 22 (5.3%) Trice a month, 2 (0.5%) daily, while others 1 (0.2%). It means most of users using openaccess resources by as and when required.



Graph 5 Frequency of Use of Open Access Legal Resources

## Purpose of Using Open Access Legal Resources

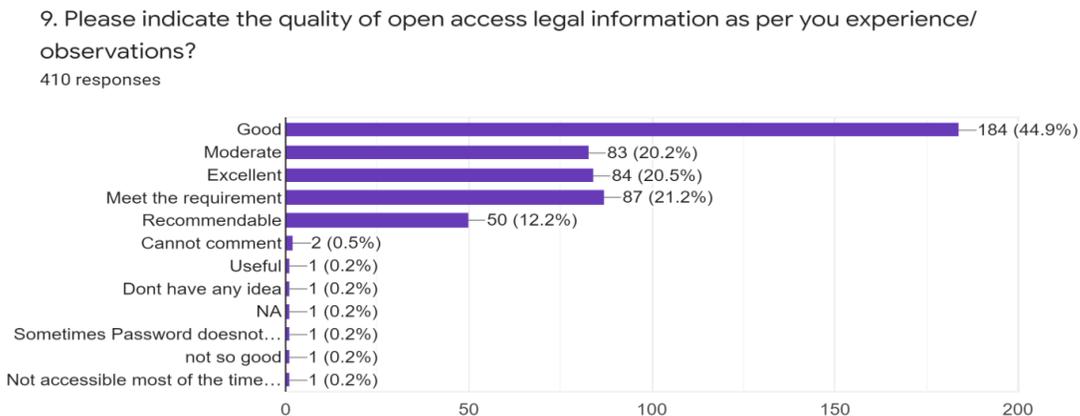
Fig No. 6 reveal that out of 474 respondents, 269 (64.8%) respondents 'purposes for preparation of examination, 231 (55.7%) mentioned for assignments, 166 (40%) for preparation of moot court competition, 165 (39.8%) respondents for writing research paper, then rest of respondents 3 (0.7%) for Judgment of Hon supreme court.



Graph 6 Purpose of Using Open Access Legal Resources

### Quality of Open Access Legal Information as Per Experience

Researcher tried to reveal the quality of open access legal resources by users' point of view. Fig No. 7 reveal that out 474 respondents 184 (44.9%) respondents replied with good comment, 83 (20.2%) replied with moderate value, 84 (20.5%) saying that these resources are excellent, 87 (21.2%) respondents said that these resources meeting their information requirement needs, 50 (12.2%) respondents saying that this resource can be recommend to others for use.



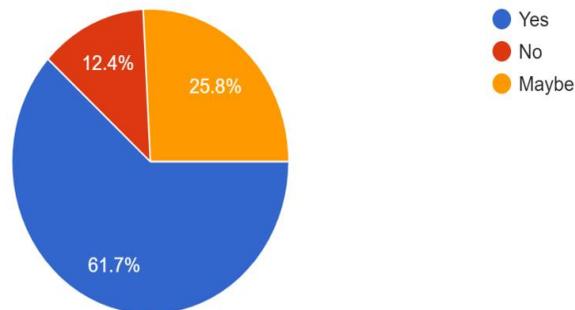
Graph 7 Quality of Open Access Legal Information as Per Experience

## Satisfaction with Open Access Legal Information

Researcher tried to find out the satisfaction level of users with open access legal information resources. Fig No. 8 indicate that 61.7% respondents were satisfied and 25.8% respondents were replied as May be, it means that they could not make any judgment on the satisfaction level. While 12.4% respondents mentioned as they were not satisfied with these resources.

10. Are you satisfied with open access legal information?

426 responses



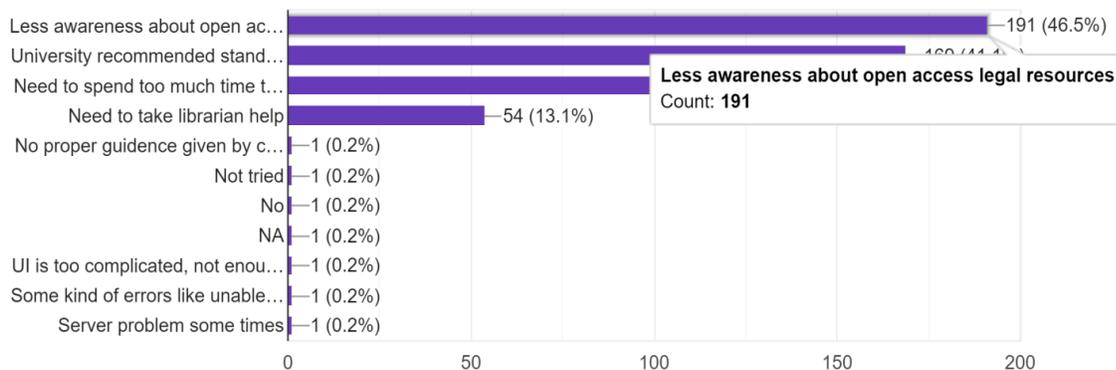
Graph 8 Satisfaction with Open Access Legal Information

## Problems Faced for Access to Open Access Legal Information

Fig No. 9 indicate that problems faced by users for accessing these resources, 191 (46.5%) responses mentioned as Less awareness about open access legal information resources,

11. What are the problems you generally faced for access to open access legal information?

411 responses



Graph 9 Problems Faced for Access to Open Access Legal Information

## **MAJOR FINDINGS:**

- Research reveals that (44.5%) respondents were from LLB program, it shows that most of the respondents were from LLB three years course.
- It shows that 60.7% respondents were aware about these resources.
- Research shows that 20.7% respondents replied as 'May be'. So, they are in ambiguity mode. It also reveals that (65%) respondents were using India kanoon, 77 (20.8%) users using National Digital Library portal, 74 (19.9%) respondents using Bombay High Court Judgments, 67 (18.1%) Supreme Court Judges Library.
- It reveals that social media, Teachers and Library Staff are main sources of knowledge.
- Most of users using open access resources by as and when required.
- (64.8%) respondents' purposes for preparation of examination, 231 (55.7%) mentioned for assignments, 166 (40%) for preparation of moot court competition, 165 (39.8%) respondents for writing research paper
- (44.9%) respondents replied with good comment for quality of open access resources in users point view and 61.7% respondents were satisfied.
- 191 (46.5%) responses mentioned as Less awareness about open access legal information resources. Henceforth, law librarians should be taking initiatives for making awareness among law students by conducting more library orientations and extra library lectures.

## **CONCLUSION**

Open access legal information resources are helpful to law students and lawyers for fulfillment of their information needs. However, survey reveal that lack of awareness of open access resources is found among students of law in Western Maharashtra, India. Need to be create more awareness programs by orientations and extra lecture and hands on trainings. Open access resources are not in the organized manners as per scientific classification. Therefore, there is need to improvement in organization part. The research also found that (64.8%) respondents' determinations for preparation of examination. As most of the colleges and institution situated in the rural area in India and they are having financial problems to subscribe the commercial resources as they are very much expensive. Henceforth, computers science professionals or Library and Information

Science Professionals should take the initiative for making these resources in organized manner, so that it will be more user friendly and can be avail for deprived students.

## REFERENCES

1. Bala, Renu, and Bhanu Partap. 2018. "Awareness and Perception towards Open Access Resources among the Students and Faculty of Management Science: A Case Study of TIMT, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana." *Journal of Information Management* 5 (1): 15. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2348-1773.2018.00003.6>.
2. Bhardwaj, Akashdeep, and Sam Goundar. 2018. "Student's Perspective of ELearning and the Future of Education with MOOCs." <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.17725.92643>.
3. Bist, Rajender Singh, and V Patnaik Mohanty. 2006. "OPEN ACCESS MOVEMENT AND OPEN ACCESS INITIATIVES IN INDIA," 11.
4. Ch, Velmurugan. 2011. *OPEN ACCESS RESOURCES AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE – AN INTRODUCTION*.
5. Chanda, Anupam. 2020. "Open Access E-Resources and Its Usefulness in Today's Changing World: A Study." *Journal of Information Management* 7 (2): 89–96. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2348-1773.2020.00011.9>.
6. Daniel, Burrus. n.d. "Daniel Burrus Quote." A-Z Quotes. Accessed December 16, 2021. <https://www.azquotes.com/quote/1419585>.
7. Gowridevi, R., K. Ramakrishna, and C. Sasikala. 2020. "Use Pattern of Online Information Resources by Students for Academic Purpose in Andhra University, Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India: A Study." *Pearl : A Journal of Library and Information Science* 14 (2): 158. <https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6922.2020.00020.0>.
8. Hegde, Muralidhar, Hemvathi, and S. Dhanendra. 2020. "Usage of E-Resources by Business Management Students of Mangalore: A Case Study." *Journal of Library and Information Communication Technology* 9 (2): 51–55. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2456-9399.2020.00014.0>.
9. Kumbhar, Rajendra. 2014. *Library and Information Science Research: Methods and Techniques*. Pune: Universal Prakashan.
10. Nagarkar, Shubhada. 2021. "Open Access Publishing," February.

11. Singh, Ranbir, Srikrishna Deva Rao, Priya Rai, and Akash Singh. 2012. "ACCESS TO LEGAL INFORMATION & RESEARCH IN DIGITAL AGE," 335.
12. Zade, Miss Kajal, and Rupatai Lichode. 2020. "Survey On Open Access To Legal Information System" 7 (1): 3.