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## Exploring the Awareness and Usage of Electronic Library Resources Among Students at College Level in Assam

Krishna Hazarika Dr

Jawaharlal Nehru University, [krishnaahazarika47@gmail.com](mailto:krishnaahazarika47@gmail.com)

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# **Exploring the Awareness and Usage of Electronic Library Resources Among Students at College Level in Assam**

## **Abstract**

The current research paper explains how familiar and frequently students at College in Assam used electronic library resources. A descriptive survey method gathered information from 150 students via a questionnaire. Findings indicated a significant lack of awareness among students regarding electronic resources, with 61% of respondents expressing unawareness due to a lack of prior knowledge. Consequently, many students continued relying on traditional library systems for their research needs.

Furthermore, only a small fraction (16%) of students knew about the existence of electronic library resources but rarely utilized them for academic purposes. Among these aware students, 37% used these resources once a week, while 31% used them twice a week. The study concludes that the limited awareness among students resulted in the underutilization of electronic resources.

**Keywords: Electronic Library Resources, Awareness, Utilization.**

## **1.1 Introduction**

In the past ten years, electronic resources have become a big deal in academic libraries. This shift happened because of the growth in information technology, which changed how libraries collect materials (Nataranjan & Santhi, 2012). Libraries have turned digital, with books and magazines becoming e-books and e-magazines (Akpojotor, 2016). This change has made it easier to share information globally. E-journals, e-books, databases, and other web resources are now accessible even in remote areas. Jone (2008) in Akpojotor (2018) suggested that electronic resources solve storage issues and manage information flow by removing physical limits on storing, accessing, and sharing information among many users quickly.

The rapid advancements in technology have significantly changed how people seek information, making it quicker and cheaper to find what they need in libraries. Electronic information resources refer to data presented electronically, accessible through computer networks (Johnson et al., 2012). These resources, such as e-books, digital libraries, online journals, e-learning tools, and tests, represent the latest developments in academic libraries, thanks to the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Nataranjan & Santhi, 2012).

The evolving preferences of the users for information have pushed librarians to adapt by prioritizing electronic resources. It is crucial for users to understand the availability and management of these electronic resources (Dadzie, 2005). Academic libraries are gradually transitioning from traditional print documents to electronic resources due to changing user needs and the popularity of e-resources. Consequently, libraries are reshaping their collection development policies, ensuring equal access to information (Kesavan, 2009).

Libraries are no longer confined to solely housing printed materials like books or journals but now encompass online and electronic-driven content (Yebowaah & Plockey, 2017). Electronic library resources play a crucial role in offering information to various users, fostering collaborative research efforts, using communication tools, and promoting knowledge creation and sharing.

While electronic resources don't replace printed materials, they complement them by providing access to a vast array of library materials (Okazie, 2016). The shift from printed to online resources in libraries is due to the transformation brought by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) advancements (Bajpai et al., 2016).

Despite the importance of electronic resources, user colleges of Assam seem largely unaware of their existence within the library, leading to underutilization of these services. This lack of awareness hampers effective learning and research activities, unaware of it highlights the need for improved awareness to encourage greater utilization. Surprisingly, there is very limited research on awareness and utilization of electronic library resources at Colleges level of Assam, underscoring the necessity for conducting this study.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

The study is being conducted across three colleges situated in the upper part of Assam, encompassing students from diverse academic backgrounds such as arts, commerce, and science. Among these students, some are currently enrolled in undergraduate degree programs, while others are on the verge of commencing their master's degree studies at the university level.

### **1.2.1 Research Questions**

The objective of this study was to comprehensively analyze the utilization and awareness of electronic library resources among students. The specific objectives included:

1. Assessing the current awareness levels among students regarding electronic library resources.

2. Identifying and prioritizing the specific e-library resources that students predominantly consult and rely on.
3. Evaluating the extent to which students utilize electronic library resources in their academic pursuits.
4. Identifying and understanding the challenges faced by students when accessing electronic library resources, aiming to highlight obstacles that hinder effective utilization.

### **1.2.2 Hypothesis**

**a.** The study may concluded that there is not a significant link between awareness of the students and their use of electronic library resources.

**b.** On the contrary, the study may did find evidence supporting a significant relationship between awareness of the student and their utilization of electronic library resources.

## **1.3 Literature Review**

### **1.3.1 Awareness of Electronic Resources**

The word 'Awareness' refers to knowing about specific information and is demonstrated through certain behaviors (Akpojotor, 2016). Oni and Ahiauzu (2008) also defined 'Awareness' as having knowledge about something existing or understanding a situation or subject based on information or experience. It can also be understood as having knowledge or perception of a situation, consciousness, recognition, realization, understanding, and acknowledgment concerning a particular situation or development. The awareness of technological changes in recent years has significantly changed how information is accessed, stored, and shared (Tsakomas & Papatheodorou, 2006). In the past, academic libraries primarily relied on physical collections, but now they are increasingly shifting to the digital realm. Students need to be aware of the availability of such resources to support their academic endeavors. With technological advancements and the emergence of e-publishing, various online resources like full-text databases, e-journals, e-books collections, and major bibliographic databases are accessible on local, national, and international scales (Prangya & Rabindra, 2013 in Akpojotor, 2016). They argued that awareness is crucial for utilizing electronic information resources. Accessibility to closed-access materials is more challenging for users, whereas open-access resources are easily found and utilized by students for their academic needs. Over the years, the use of electronic library resources has positively

impacted teaching and research. Through these resources, researchers, academics, and students gain access to a wealth of global information, particularly via the Internet, enriching their scholarly pursuits.

### **1.3.2 Utilization of Electronic Resources**

Zimmermann (1951) posited that resources aren't inherent; they develop over time, indicating that recognizing resources without utilizing them renders them meaningless. The utilization of electronic library resources holds significant relevance for students as beneficiaries. Cambridge English Dictionary (2017) defines 'utilization' as the effective use of something to achieve specific objectives. Hence, in the era of information technology, the utilization of electronic library resources is not merely an option but a necessity (Dar et al., 2017 in Yebowaah & Plockey, 2017). Libraries have progressively engaged in resource sharing to cut costs and meet user demands, establishing a direct link between libraries and information services. This connection significantly influences knowledge discovery and dissemination in the digital age. Information technology has substantially improved library services, complementing the advancements in the field. Beyond ICT, libraries provide users with opportunities to access and effectively utilize both online resources and other services (Prakash, 2017 in Yebowaah & Plockey, 2017).

Research by Bhukuvhani et al. (2012) revealed that 86.7% of respondents used one or more electronic information resources for teaching and research. A mere 13.3% of lecturers indicated non-usage of electronic information sources. Among participating lecturers, 66.67% attended EIRST workshops provided by the University library, while 33.33% did not.

Yebowaah and Plockey (2017) studied the awareness and use of electronic resources in university libraries at the university for development studies library. Their findings showed that only 7.7% of respondents utilized e-resources every week, while 15.4% used them twice a week. Additionally, 42.3% used e-resources once a month, and 34.6% used them sporadically. Those categorized as sporadic users are not regular patrons of the library's resources.

The discussion suggests that many lecturers are aware of the e-resource facilities in the library, yet a significant portion (67.5%) do not utilize these resources. This indicates that certain factors may be influencing the use of resources in the Library.

### **1.3.3 Electronic Library Resources**

Electronic library resources (ELRs) are often considered synonymous with virtual and digital libraries, yet experts debate their equivalency. Yury Stolyarov, a notable figure in librarianship,

described "virtual library" as a metaphorical and conditional term with synonyms like automated, electronic, computer, and online. Eduard Sukiasyan, an expert in library terminology, emphasized the practicality of the term "electronic library" in defining such collections. The evolution of ELR definitions mirrors changes in libraries' roles, interactions with traditional libraries, and adaptations to technological advancements.

In this context, an electronic library resource is defined as the provision of primary (actual materials) and secondary (information about materials) electronically through communication networks, accompanied by the necessary infrastructure. It encompasses various information formats like full-text databases, e-journals, image collections, multimedia (CDs, tapes, internet, web technology), e-discussions, e-news, data archives, email, and online chatting (Thanuskodi, 2012). These resources span electronic periodicals, CD-ROMs, databases, and more, all accessible and, at times, modifiable through computer systems (Thanuskodi, 2012).

Studies, such as Oni et al.'s (2016) research on the 'awareness and utilization of electronic resources by students of Benson Idahosa University Benin City, Edo State Nigeria,' identified commonly consulted e-library resources. The survey revealed that students frequently accessed e-books (96, 80%), e-journals (88, 73%), e-newspapers/magazines (79, 66%), and Wikipedia (68, 57%). These findings align with Kumbar et al.'s (2005) study, indicating students' frequent use of digital resources and services. However, Adetimirin (2008) contradicted this by suggesting low ICT use among undergraduates in Nigerian universities.

The majority of students were found to use e-resources for study (e-books), research (e-journals), information/pleasure (e-newspapers/magazines), and reference (Wikipedia). Additionally, Omotayo (2010) investigated the use of electronic journals, reporting varying frequencies of usage: 8.98% daily, 37.35% weekly, 41.63% bi-monthly, and 13.88% monthly, with occasional usage at 8.16%.

#### **1.4. Challenges Associated with the Use of Electronic Library Resources**

Popoola (2008) as cited in Oni et al (2016) suggests that university libraries might fail to fulfill the information needs of certain users, leading them to rely on personal collections for research. The primary reason for not using electronic resources is cited as a lack of time, followed by unfamiliarity with computerized searching methods. Chisenga (2004) as referenced in Oni et al (2016) conducted a study on ICT usage in African Public Library Services. Despite most libraries having internet access, very few provided web-based information services. The study identified

four barriers hindering effective electronic resource provision: lack of strategic planning, inadequate or unreliable funding, limited use of the internet for providing services, and inconsistent user training in new ICT services.

Yebowaah and Plockey (2017) highlighted various challenges associated with e-resource usage in libraries. Findings showed that 52.5% of respondents faced issues with passwords, while 38.8% encountered problems due to low internet speed. Additionally, inadequate library staff and lack of librarian assistance were noted as challenges by 12.5% of respondents each. Around 11.3% mentioned a lack of computers in the library affecting their usage, while 6.3% faced problems due to insufficient or no bandwidth. Lastly, 2.5% of respondents identified the attitude of library staff as a challenge.

### **1.5 Methodology**

As the methodology of the current paper adapted and modified the approach employed by Oni et al (2016) for a comparable study conducted at Benson Idahosa University in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. The study utilized a descriptive survey design to investigate the awareness and usage of electronic resources among students from three colleges: Nanda Nath Saikia College, Nabin Bordoloi College, and Mariyani College in Upper Assam. To collect data, questionnaires were distributed to the students.

The participant of the study included all students who could access their college libraries. Purposive sampling was employed, selecting only those students present in the library during the study period. One hundred and fifty students were present including all three colleges during this time and constituted the study's sample size. The questionnaire titled "Awareness and Utilization of Electronic Library Resources among Students of Colleges in Upper Assam" was utilized as the data collection instrument, divided into two sections. The first part gathered respondents' background information, while the second part contained structured statements or items aiming to gather information on the students' awareness and use of electronic resources.

The data collected from the completed questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, presenting the findings in frequencies and simple percentages.

### **1.6 Findings and Discussion**

This part of the paper discusses and analyzes the data collected in the field regarding how much students from three colleges in Upper Assam know about electronic library resources. It is

organized based on the research objectives: finding out how aware students are of these resources, which e-library resources they use the most, how much they actually use these resources, and what difficulties they face when trying to access them. It also includes background details about the students, which will be covered in the next part.

Sex	Number	Percentage
Female	106	71
male	44	29
Total	150	100

**Table1.0: Sex Distribution of Respondents**

Table 1.0 displays the distribution of respondents by sex ratios. It reveals a substantial majority (71%) of the respondents being females, while males comprised only 29%. This indicates that a higher percentage of female students utilize library resources compared to male counterparts.

Awareness Level	Number	Percentage
Low	111	61
Medium	35	23
High	24	16
Total		

**2.0 Awareness of Electronic Library Resources by Respondents**

Table 2.0 clearly indicates that the awareness among students about electronic library resources is notably low. A total of 111 respondents, representing 61%, rated their awareness level as 'Low'. This suggests that most students in colleges still rely on the traditional library system for their assignments and further knowledge in their courses. Consequently, they are unaware of the significance or availability of electronic library resources for their personal studies or research. This aligns with the conclusions of Ojo and Akande (2005) regarding students' low awareness of electronic information resources at the University College Hospital (UCH) in Ibadan, Nigeria. Additionally, Abinew and Vuda (2013) cited in Akpojotor (2016) also discovered a lack of



awareness among students regarding e-library resources, with a majority expressing limited knowledge about their existence.

However, a small portion (16%) of respondents rated their awareness level of e-library resources as 'High', indicating that some students are indeed fully informed about the presence of electronic library resources.

E-Library Resources	Number	Percentage
e-Journal	25	16
e-Book	12	8
e-Dissertation/Project	74	49
e-Newspaper/ magazine	9	7
e-Dictionaries	30	20
Total	150	100

**Table 3.0: Electronic Library Resources Frequently Used by Students**

The data in Table 3 shows that students made use of various electronic resources for their studies. These included e-Journals, e-Books, e-Project work/dissertations, e-Newspapers/Magazines, and e-Dictionaries. Notably, the majority (49%) of respondents utilized e-dissertations/projects, followed by dictionaries at 20%. Interestingly, e-journals were the third most consulted electronic resource among respondents. The least used electronic library resource was e-newspapers/magazines.

Use of E-Library Resource	Number	Percentage
All days in the week	15	10
Four times a week	11	7
Three times a week	23	15
Two times a week	45	31
One time a week	56	37
Total	150	100

**Table 4.0: Utilization of Electronic Library Resources by Respondents**

Table 4 displays how students utilized electronic library resources. The data shows that all interviewed students made use of these resources throughout the week, indicating they were used for different purposes at different times. However, the overall utilization among students appears to be quite low. The majority (37%) mentioned using the e-library resource once a week, followed

by 31% who used it twice a week. Interestingly, some students visited the e-library resources daily, with 10% indicating they accessed them every day of the week.

Challenges	Number	Percentage
Lack of ICT Knowledge	18	12
Insufficient ICT facilities	45	30
Slow internet speed/Poor network	36	24
Unskilled ICT librarians	20	13
Difficulties in reading from the screen	31	21
Total	150	100

**Table5.0: Challenges with Utilization of the e-library Resources by Respondents**

As per the field data the Table:5 illustrates the challenges encountered by students in utilizing e-library resources. These challenges encompass a spectrum from students' lack of ICT knowledge to difficulties in reading from the screen.

The primary challenge reported by the majority (30%) of respondents was insufficient ICT facilities. Following this, 24% of the respondents also mentioned encountering issues with slow internet speed or poor network connectivity. Other challenges faced by respondents in accessing e-library resources included difficulties in reading from screens, students' lack of ICT knowledge, and unskilled ICT librarians.

So, from these findings we can assume that the preference of girls in Upper Assam's three colleges for using the library more than boys could be influenced by various factors. One possible reason might be the social construct and cultural norms that encourage girls to spend more time in quieter, studious environments like libraries compared to boys. This social conditioning may steer them towards utilizing library resources more frequently. This is not our objective of this current work, so we are not going into details, but may a door for further research on socio-cultural aspects.

Moreover, coming into our current research the low awareness about electronic library resources among students, regardless of gender, indicates a need for improved promotion and education about these resources. The predominant use of traditional resources such as e-dissertations/projects and dictionaries suggest a comfort level or familiarity with these materials rather than with newer

electronic formats like e-newspapers/magazines. The overall low utilization of e-library resources might also stem from limited exposure in effectively using these digital tools. With it the insufficient ICT facilities and slow internet speed, reported by the majority of respondents, pose significant challenges. These issues hinder access to electronic resources, affecting both genders equally and impacting the overall educational experience. Additionally, difficulties in reading from screens, lack of ICT knowledge among students, and the presence of unskilled ICT librarians further contribute to the challenges faced in utilizing e-library resources.

Hence, to address this situation, efforts can be made to enhance awareness about electronic resources through workshops, seminars, and campaigns. Improving ICT infrastructure, providing better training and support for students and librarians, and ensuring a more user-friendly interface for accessing e-library resources could significantly improve utilization among students. Equal access and awareness for both boys and girls regarding these resources can level the educational playing field and enhance overall learning outcomes.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

The findings of this research shed light on the nuanced patterns of library usage among students in Upper Assam's three colleges, revealing a notable inclination of girls towards library utilization compared to boys. Despite the prevalence of various electronic resources for academic pursuits, the awareness and utilization of these resources remain considerably low among students.

E-dissertations/projects emerged as the most frequently utilized electronic resource, suggesting a keen interest in materials directly aiding academic work. Interestingly, while e-journals ranked third among the consulted electronic resources, e-newspapers/magazines were notably the least used, indicating a potential divergence in preferences regarding academic versus leisurely reading materials.

The frequency of e-library resource usage depicted a spectrum, with the majority of students accessing these resources once or twice a week, while a smaller percentage engaged with them on a daily basis. However, this highlights an opportunity to integrate these resources more comprehensively into the students' academic routines.

The research also unveiled several challenges hindering the optimal utilization of e-library resources, primarily revolving around insufficient ICT facilities and issues related to internet speed or network connectivity. Moreover, difficulties in reading from screens, students' lack of ICT knowledge, and the expertise of ICT librarians emerged as additional barriers.

Addressing these challenges and improving the awareness and accessibility of electronic resources could significantly enhance the academic experiences of students in these colleges. Initiatives aimed at bolstering digital literacy, upgrading ICT infrastructure, and providing comprehensive training for both students and librarians can facilitate a more effective and integrated use of e-library resources.

Ultimately, this research underscores the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap between available electronic resources and their optimal utilization, ensuring students have equitable access to the wealth of information and learning opportunities facilitated by electronic libraries.

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