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# **Assessment of Information Literacy Skills among Students of Alagappa University, India**

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## **Abstract**

This study assessed and the use of information skills among the students of Alagappa University Central library users. Simple random sampling technique is used in the study. The scope of the study covered various aspects like awareness in library sources and services, both printed document and electronic documents.; Knowledge about the item usually covered in the catalogue and including Internet; familiarity use ICT and Online Database; Information literacy a determining factor in the development of the information society. The study shows that the majority of the students accessing internet in university central library and the maximum number of students are using various information resources for developing their knowledge and prepare the seminar, conference and writing journal article. The study also analyzed that the main problem of the lack of electricity was the prime barriers to the use of the computer by university library users.

**Keywords:** Information Literacy, ICT, University library User, Information Seeking and Information Resources.

## **Introduction**

Literacy is traditionally assumed as the ability to read and write. The term's meaning has been expanded to include the ability to use language, information available from various sources in many formats, such as images, printed text and CD ROMs, Database and websites. Information literate one needs to know why information is needed, when information is a need, and how to find information and how to use all of these sources and think critically about the available information.

Students need to be able to work effectively with information, using it at all levels of Bloom's Taxonomy (remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating). Information literacy involves traditional skills such as reading, researching, and writing; but new ways to read and write have also introduced new skills.

Information literacy is critical for the present students, it advances critical thinking methodologies and thinking aptitudes – making inquiries and looking for answers, discovering data, affecting hypotheses, evaluating sources and settling on choices encouraging and effective students, successful givers, certain people, and, certain people and capable subjects. The library represents the lifelong learning.

## **Literature Review**

Liew, Foo, and Chennupati (2000), the study conducted an exploratory that while reading an e-journal is not the same as reading a printed one, many are beginning to acknowledge the possibility that electronic documents (e-documents) offer users advanced features and novel forms of functionality beyond what is possible in printed form. Years ago Brophy (1993), noticed that the benefits of electronic assets over print incorporate speed, convenience, capacity to look through different records in the meantime, capacity to spare, print and rehash seeks, more continuous refreshing and the capacity to access from outside the library.

Thanuskodi (2012) identified Public libraries are essential since they improve literacy, stimulate imagination and expand personal horizons. They also inform and empower citizens, enable access to a common cultural heritage and support education at all levels. Also, a positive relationship is observed between public library and literacy level, which in turn, contributes to increase in economic productivity. Extensive studies were undertaken to study the role of public libraries in information society, value of services offered and use of the resources. Assessing the effectiveness of libraries is the order of the day. In order to keep up with the current trends, libraries must constantly evaluate its functions. Evaluating through user perspective is result based. Because users are the ultimate beneficiaries and can suggest effective measures to improve the existing facilities in libraries. This study evaluates library services and gives suggestions for the improvement of district central libraries in Tamilnadu, India.

Oketunji (2002) surveyed to study the application of computer and communication technology to information handling. The use of these technologies requires training, which brings about information literacy. Information literacy includes library literacy, media literacy, computer literacy, research literacy, and critical thinking skills. Information literacy, as viewed by Bruce and Candy (2006), is a worldwide issue, with especially strong efforts and examples in North America, Australia, South Africa, and Northern Europe.

Audunson and Nordlie (2003) study showed the categories of information literacy into three main groups. The first group according to them describes technical capabilities, that is, computer literacy. The study was found that for each dimension, the authors distinguish several levels of competence, from basic competence to super-user competence to in-depth competence and consider information literacy as the sum of different kinds of literacy.

Boekhorst (2003) conducted a study was showed that all definitions and descriptions of information literacy presented over the years can be summarized in three concepts: The ICT concept which refers to the competence with which to use ICT to retrieve and disseminate information. The information resources concept, this refers to the competence to find and use information independently or with the aid of intermediaries, and finally, the information process concept of information literacy, which refers to the process of recognizing the information need, retrieving, evaluating, using and disseminating of information to acquire or extend knowledge.

Thanuskodi (2009), India has significant advantages in the 21st century knowledge race. It has a large higher education sector – the third largest in the world in student numbers, after China and the United States. The library is the chief instrument for accumulating and using our intellectual heritage. Formal education can be conducted effectively and efficiently only with well-equipped libraries. Today, libraries are connected to a vast ocean of Internet-based services. Electronic resources are developing rapidly. Academic libraries are the nerve centres of their institutions, and must support teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The situation in academic libraries in India is the same as that of academic libraries the world over; however, Indian libraries must provide maximum information with limited resources. This article explores the Indian higher education environment in relation to academic libraries.

Powell and Case-Smith (2003) conducted a study majority of the occupational therapy graduates prefer to use information resources that are readily available to them, such as advice from their colleagues or supervisors (79%) and the Internet (69%), rather than the evidence available in the journal literature. Twenty-six percent (26%) of the graduates have searched MEDLINE or CINAHL at least once since they graduated. A formal library instruction session was considered useful by 42% of the graduates, and 22% of the graduates found informal contacts with librarians to be useful.

## **Objective of the Study**

- To examine the information literacy skills of the respondents at Alagappa University.
- To identify the competency level of information literacy among the students of the Alagappa University.
- To make a comparison of the level of information literacy skills among the students about various resources
- To identify areas of strengths and weakness in information search techniques used by the students.
- To elicit the knowledge of modern communication tools related to Information technology.
- To find out the status of information literacy programs offered by the Central Library.

## **Scope of the Study**

The study mainly focuses on the Information literacy skills of students in identifying, locating, searching, accessing, retrieving and using information from both print and electronic sources of information. The sample of this study covers 132 students out of the 165 respondents, assessment of information literacy.

## **Methodology**

The tool used for data collection was a questionnaire. Data had been collected from the students of various departments of Alagappa University. In the present study, a questionnaire was carefully designed to collect required data from University central library users only. Totally 165 questionnaires were simple randomly distributed for the Alagappa university central library users. Out of 165 questionnaires, 132 were responded and the response rate (80%). Among the 132 users, 58 respondents (43.93%) were male and 74 respondents (56.06 %) were female each construct expressed a statement which had to be evaluated. The collected data were tabulated using Excel and it was analyzed through the statistical tools, such as average and simple percentages. The questionnaire covered varied areas the first category was about demographic information; the second category was to determine the library use; the third category was about cataloging skills and internet skills. The questionnaire focuses on the key questions such as the types of libraries approached, frequency of visits made to libraries, purpose of library visits, use of Internet for getting information, where and how the users access Internet and search information online, while using Internet problems faced by the users, Knowledge about the parts of the book,

Awareness about the method followed for shelving books, Knowledge about the item usually covered in the catalogue, Catalogue search capabilities, way of finding information, Opinion on the usefulness of library Orientation/ User Education Programs etc..

Questionnaire language was simple, easy and clear and according to the level of students. The questionnaire was examined by the experts of the field and changes were made on the bases of feedback and instructions. Major findings of the survey were analyzed and summarized in the following section.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

**Table 1. Gender- wise distribution**

It has shown that gender-wise distribution of respondents. In the total 132 respondents, the majority of respondents 74 (56.06%) fitted to the female and 58 (43.93%) of respondents were male. The result then showed that the majority of the respondents were female and the numbers of male respondents were comparatively less.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	58	43.93
Female	74	56.06
<b>Total</b>	132	100.00

**Table 2. Use Internet resource**

The table 2 shows, the use of internet resources among the users are highly positive. Among the students surveyed majority 123 (93.18%) state that they are using the internet resources.

<b>Internet Resources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	123	93.18
No	9	6.81
<b>Total</b>	132	100.00

**Table 3. Where do you access the Internet**

The result in Table 3 shows that most of the respondents 74 (56.06%) have to use the university and college library to gain access to the internet facility. Followed by 15 (11.36%) of the respondents opted for cyber café, 26 (19.69 %) access the internet at Home, 17 (12.87%) of the respondents access the internet at any other place.

Place of Access	Frequency	Percentage
University/College library	74	56.06
Cyber café	15	11.36
Home	26	19.69
Any other place	17	12.87
<b>Total</b>	132	100.00

**Table: 4 Frequency of Visits Library**

Table 4 indicated that majority 43 (32.57%) of the respondents are using library Daily and followed by 27 (20.45%) of the respondents are using weekly, 23 (17.42%) of the respondents are using monthly, 21 (15.90%) of the respondents are using fortnightly and least of the respondents are using occasionally 18 (13.63%).

Frequency of Visits	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	43	32.576
Weekly	27	20.45
Fortnightly	21	15.90
Monthly	23	17.42
Occasionally	18	13.63
<b>Total</b>	132	100.00

**Table: 5 Most Frequently sources of information (More than one answer)**

It is most of the respondents (71.96%) found to be using E- journal frequently followed by books (65%), E-resources nearly (54.54%). Among other sources frequently used, they are using Online Database (46.96%), Newspaper (47.72%) and Reference collection by (22.72) and (15.15%) are using sources for Employment purpose.

Types of Documents	Frequency	Percentage
E-journal	95	71.96
Books	86	65.15
News Paper	63	47.72
Employment	20	15.15
E-Resources	72	54.54
Reference collection	30	22.72
Online Database	62	46.96
Any Others	21	15.90

**Table: 6 Knowledge about the parts of the book (More than one Answer)**

The respondents have given answers indicating the level of understanding. The students have knowledge about various parts of the books and their importance. Majority of the respondents states that the index (68.93 %) is a place where they can find other documents on the topic. The least of the respondents (7.57 %) has stated that any other.

<b>Knowledge about the book</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
The Glossary	43	32.57
The Index	91	68.93
The bibliography	21	15.90
The table of content	13	9.84
Any other	10	7.57
I don't know	15	11.36

**Table: 7 Purpose of visiting the library (More than one Answer)**

Table 7 has shown that majority of the respondents visit the library to find resources to write up articles. The analysis 50 (37.87%) of respondents reveals that the most of the highest percentage of them are visiting the library to prepare for seminar/conference and writing a journal article and followed by that other purpose is to read newspaper, Magazines, and to know employment information 49 (37.12%) available for the students. The least percent of the respondents 10 (7.57%) visit for taking a photocopy.

<b>Purpose of visiting the library</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To borrow and return books	42	31.81
To read newspaper/ Magazines/ Employment Information	49	37.12
To consult reference books	27	20.45
By reading textbooks	43	32.57
To prepare the seminar/ Conference/Writing journal article	50	37.87
Net Surfing	36	27.27
To use photocopy	10	7.57
Use these and dissertations	29	21.96
To know the latest arrivals in the library	38	28.78



**Table: 8 Awareness about the method followed for shelving books (More than one Answer)**

Table 8 has shown that majority 62 (46.96%) of the respondents are searching by author, followed by 45 (34.09%) of the respondents are using by title and 30 (22.72%) of the respondents are using by ISBN, 41(31.06%) of the respondents are using by call number. Only ten respondents have stated that they are not aware of the searching option. The findings have shown that author and Title is the most significant choice to of shelving books by central library users.

The findings show that the majority of them is found to be having adequate Search capabilities to find out, what they needed from the catalogue. Majority of them has given the correct search option.

<b>Search option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
By Author	62	46.96
By ISBN	30	22.72
By Title	45	34.09
By Call Number	41	31.06
I don't Know	10	7.57

**Table: 9 Awareness about the use of Call Number (More than one Answer)**

Table 9 has shown that use of call number by the respondents. The majority of the respondents 52(39.39%) know the use of call number for browsing the shelves for similar books, followed by 46(34.84%) of the respondents to locate a book in the library and 37(28.03%) of the respondents to check out a book.

<b>Use of Call Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
To locate a book in the library	46	34.84
To check out a book	37	28.03
Browse the shelves for similar books	52	39.39

**Table: 10 Method of finding a book (More than one Answer)**

Table 10 has shown that 36 (27.27%) majority of the respondents are finding a book in searching the bookshelves personally and followed by in 34 (25.75%) respondents are finding book with the assistance from library staff and 20 (15.15%) of the respondents are used to Self-guided search using subject guides, The least of the respondents 15 (11.36%) using other methods.

<b>Method of finding a book</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
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Searching the bookshelves personally	36	27.27
Self-guided search using subject guides	20	15.15
With the assistance from library staff	34	25.75
With the assistance from co-students	21	15.90
Others	15	11.36

**Table 11 Opinion on the usefulness of library Orientation/ User Education Programmers**

Table 11 has shown that majority 102 (77.27%) of the respondents find library orientation and user education programs as for developing knowledge and learning the ability to read and write. Only thirty respondents' states library orientation and user awareness program as not useful.

<b>Opinion on the usefulness</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Useful	102	77.27
Not useful	30	22.72

**Table 12 Suggested areas where IL Programs are required (More than one Answer)**

Table 12 has indicated that majority 43 (32.57%) of the respondents requires information literacy programs the use of electronic sources, 32 (24.24%) of the respondents has suggested for Institutional Repositories, 24 (18.18%) of the respondents has the need for programs on printed sources, 24 (18.18%) of the respondents are in need of In-house Databases and 28 (21.21%) of the respondents are asking for CD-ROM Database. The least 12 (9.09%) of the respondents have opted for Specific Application sources and 15 (11.36%) of the respondents has suggested for programs on Online Database.

<b>Suggested areas on IL are required</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Use of printed sources ( Library Classification & Catalogue)	24	18.18
Use of electronic sources	43	32.57
Specific Application sources	12	9.09
Online Database	15	11.36
OPAC	23	17.42
Institutional Repositories	32	24.24
In-house Databases	24	18.18
CD-ROM Database	28	21.21

**Table 13 Problems faced by the respondents in using the internet**

It has shown that a lack of electricity power is being the major barriers to the use of information sources. It has represented by 59 (44.69%) of the respondents. Moreover, Overload of Information on the Internet has been another interruption which critically affected the use of information resources is clearly identified with 42 (31.81%) of the respondent's rates. On the various barriers as insufficient skills, it takes a long time to view/download pages, Lack of IT knowledge and a limited number of the computer.

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Slow access speed	38 (28.78%)	11 (8.33%)	53 (40.15%)	17 (12.87%)	13 (9.84%)
A limited number of computer	39 (29.54%)	24 (18.18%)	20 (15.15%)	33 (25%)	16 (12.12%)
Overload of Information on the Internet	42 (31.81%)	33 (25%)	27 (20.45%)	18 (13.63%)	12 (9.09%)
It takes a long time to view/download pages	36 (27.27%)	27 (20.45%)	17 (12.87%)	32 (24.24%)	20 (15.15%)
Lack of IT knowledge	39 (29.54%)	17 (12.87%)	29 (21.96%)	36 (27.27%)	11 (8.33%)
Lack of electricity power	59 (44.69%)	12 (9.09%)	10 (7.57%)	21 (15.90%)	30 (22.72%)

### **Suggestions**

The present study reveals that the University library has an extended provision for the students to use the resources in the Alagappa University central library. The main intention is to assess the level of the library and information skills of students in the optimal use of library facilities, sources, and services.

Majority of the users are aware of the services but not much aware of the library tools and practices and they are confusing. Hence, they must be trained well to find out and use information effectively; the impact of information literacy on research depends on huge measures not only on technology, and how users choose to use information. It has been observed from the analysis that information literacy programs are vital in the university central library (AUCL).

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