

## DIGITAL INFORMATION LITERACY

### A SURVEY AMONG RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF VELLORE DISTRICT

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#### Abstract

*This research article describes the survey of digital information literacy among research scholar of the arts & science research scholars residing in Vellore district. A detailed analysis and discussion of the data obtained through questionnaires. The survey reveals that scholars feel that library has a greater role to play for the promotion of digital information literacy among its user community. The survey suggests that the University should start inter-disciplinary initiatives to promote digital information literacy, with active collaboration from the Departments of Computer Applications, Library and information Science, and the other core areas of study, actively engaged with research activities. This joint venture will help to orient the research scholars about the available accessibility, and use of digital resources in their area of research. The findings of this study are helpful for administration of the concerned regional body for policy formulation.*

**Keywords:-** Information, ICT, Information Literacy, Digital Information Literacy, Internet

#### Introduction

In the age of information explosion, the society is undergoing numerous transformations due to rapid development and diffusion of in all sections of human life. They are irresistible intruders into various fields such as education, business, health, agriculture, production, engineering, technology and space exploration

etc. As a result of these complexities ICT have marked ahead concurrently at a rapid rate to facilitate dissemination of information in digitized media from different source and different formats.

Information users are bewildered by a variety of digitized information. The process of identifying and selecting the specific information has become an extremely complex task. Many users fail to properly locate evaluate and use internet based information due to lack of understanding of technology and the structure of internet based information [1]. And due to complexities of information in electronic form the users are unable to access collect and retrieve it. Hence in this crucial condition it is the need of the day to empower the users to provide right and effective direction to access digital information which can be effectively practised by the promotion of information literacy in digital era [2].

With the above technological background the present survey has been undertaken in order to study the digital information literacy and digital competency level of the research scholars doing their M.Phil and Ph.D in the Arts & Science faculties in Vellore district of Tamil Nadu where Thiruvalluvar University has been affiliating the colleges.

#### Digital Information Literacy

Borgman[3] defines access to information as “connectivity to a computer network and to available content, such that the technology is usable, the user has the requisite skills and knowledge, and the content itself is in a usable and useful form”.

The 21st century literacy is the set of abilities and skills where oral visual and digital literacy overlap. Hence people of the century should be digitally literate in order to access the Internet to find, manage and edit digital information for their own used. Every day new innovations and ideas are generated in the field of ICT. Hence in order to cope with the situation one has to face the rapid changes of the

upcoming technology, and digital literacy need to be practised among the users in this fast developing digital era.

In simple terms digital literacy is the ability to properly use and evaluate digital resources. Tools and services and apply it to the learning process. Paul Gilster [4] defines digital literacy as ‘the ability to understand and use multiple form of information from a wide range of sources when it is presented via computers’. Digital literacy is a set of skills to access evaluate, collect and use digital information and sources in an effective way.

### Methodology and Scope

Survey method has been adopted to accomplish the study. A structured questionnaire seeking information on details of the scholars, level of computer literacy, digital information competency, training and orientation role of library services etc was designed and distributed among the M.Phil and the Ph.D scholars of Arts & Science residing in Vellore District. Out of 137 scholars (92 M.Phil and 45 Ph.D), 115 returned the duly filled in and valid questionnaire are received in time. The data obtained from the responses were tabulated and interpretations were drawn as follows.

### Analysis of Data and Disclssion

Analysis denotes critical examination of assembled materials, keeping in mind the purpose of study and its possible bearings in a scientific discovery [5]. For analysis and interpretation of the data collected, tables, diagrams and simple statistical tools such as mean, percentage and cumulative percentage are used. In the present survey 115 scholars responded and the data provided by them have been analysed as follows.

### Computer Literacy

The survey reveals that all 115 (100%) scholars who responded to this survey are computer literate. Most of them have received informal and others received formal education in computer application. It is clear from the Pie Chart that more than half of the scholars, i.e. 50% of respondent have informal education in computers either by self learning or by the help of their fellow students and teachers. However, 24% students have completed their certificate in computers and 7% scholars have completed their diploma in computers and 13% scholars have studied undergraduate level courses in computer applications and 6% scholars have studied postgraduate level courses in computer applications.

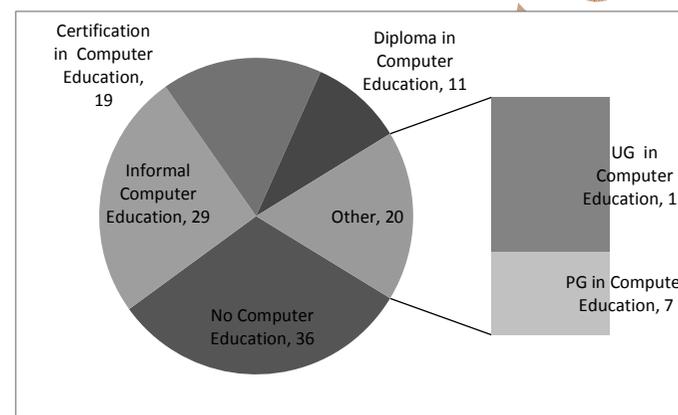


Figure - 01: Computer literacy level of research scholars

### Knowledge of Searching, Identifying and Downloading Information from Web

The research scholars reveals that there is a positive search trend among them in arts & science subjects to acquire knowledge and skill to search, identify and download the required information from the internet, 95.7% of research scholars have replied positively to the question whether they are competent to search, locate and retrieve information they need from the internet.

### Use of Instructional Tools and Packages

The figure 2 indicates the pattern of use of scholarly resources in digital form by the respondents' research scholars under study. It is observed that e-journal is the most popular form of e-resource that 42% scholars are utilising this to get an idea of previous research studies done. Next to e-journals, e-books are another form of e-resource in which 23% scholars are using them for their study and research, because it cheap one and easily accessible. 18% of research scholars are utilising the E-Databases. Electronic thesis and dissertations used by 19% scholars. Similarly, 13% of research scholars use Digital Institutional Repositories.

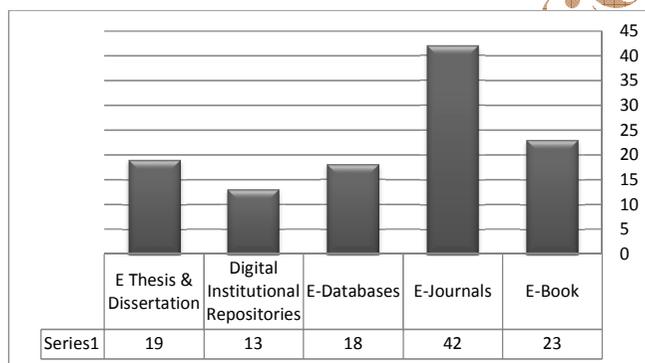


Figure - 02: Use of instructional tools and packages

### Evaluation of Digital Resources

Digital resources should be evaluated, because it is very much needed before it is part to use for further research. There are various criteria for evaluation, which include authenticity, reliability, sustainability, authority etc. The survey discloses that most of the scholars. i.e., 61.10% scholars consider 'usability' as the most important criteria for evaluation of the digital resources. A few of them 20% and 29% scholars consider 'reliability and authenticity' respectively as the most important criteria for evaluation of digital resources.

### Use of Documents in PDF Format

Most of the scholarly e-documents are stored in PDF formats, which is system independent. The scholars should know how to use them and should know download of free acrobat reader software for accessing of resources. The survey reveals that more than half of the scholars, i.e., 67.4% of scholars know the use of acrobat reader and documents in PDF format. However, 22.6% of research scholars do not know the usage of PDF format

### Copy Right issue of Electronic Resources

A significant number of respondents, 62.2% are of the opinion that copyright is one of the most important issues associated with the use of digital information. However, 37.8% of the scholars are well aware of digital copyright matters.

### Training / Orientation on the use of Digital Resources

The following figure shows different modes of training the scholars use the digital resources effectively.

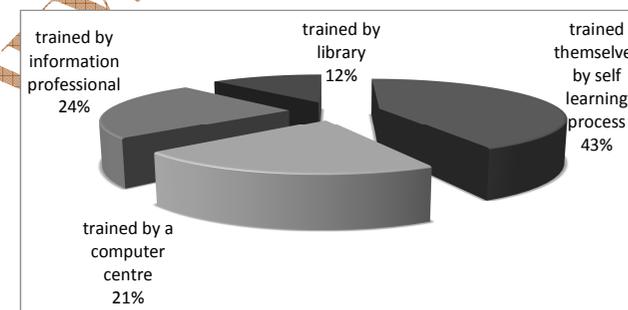


Figure - 03: Orientation on the use of Digital Resources

The above figure 3 indicates that most of the scholars i.e. 43% have trained themselves by self learning process. However 21%, 24% and 12% of research scholars have been trained by a computer centre, information professional and by the library respectively.

### Medium to be used for digital information literacy programs

The scholars have opined that the following media used for information literacy programmes would be undertaken by the Library.

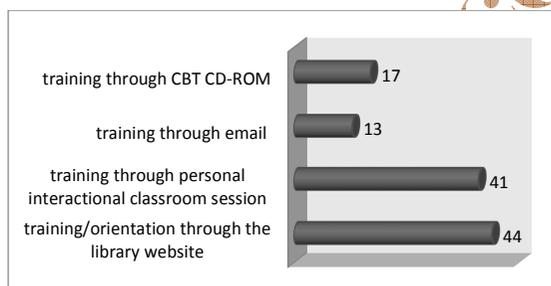


Figure - 04: Digital information literacy medium

Figure 4 indicates that 44% of research scholars would like to have training/orientation through the library website if it is there, anybody will be able to train himself/herself by browsing the library website from anywhere, and 41% and 13% of scholars want personal interventional classroom session and email respectively to be the medium for information literacy programme. Only 17% of scholars are of the opinion to have manuals on CBT CD-ROM.

### Major Findings of the Survey

1. It was found from the survey that every research scholars of arts & science faculties of Vellore District have computer competencies and digital information literacy atleast at minimal level.

2. Research scholars have knowledge of internet applications, resources, and services. They have necessary skills of searching, retrieving, and making use of the digital information for their research activity which is positive trends.
3. E-journals were found to be the most popular form of electronic resources that the scholars are using followed by e-books.
4. There is a need for awareness on use of other internet resources such as e-databases, electronic theses and dissertations, institutional repositories, etc.
5. Most of the scholars requested that the library should take a lead role for the promotion of digital information literacy among the research scholars.
6. The scholars requested that personal instruction and instructions through Library websites might be useful techniques for spreading digital information literacy.

### Suggestion

1. The research scholar should get an exposure to the digital resources on internet search techniques, online information retrieval, use of multimedia information kits, searching, locating, evaluating, and using information sources.
2. Library orientation programmes should be conducted on how to use the digital materials available in the library.
3. The vendors of different digital products could be requested to conduct orientation or training sessions on how to use the e-resources.
4. Different instructional materials, explaining the availability and procedure on how to use the digital resources should be distributed to the research scholars.
5. The University should stall an inter-disciplinary initiative to promote digital literacy among the academic and research community.

6. The department of Computer Applications, Library and Information Science along with the core departments should join this venture to make aware the research scholars on the availability, accessibility and use of digital resources in their area of research.

### **Conclusion**

The magnificent changes in the digital era affect the information users in different ways. There is an educational imbalance between rapidly developing technologies, knowledge and competency of the users. Majority of the user lack necessary skills on usage of digital technology. Hence educating the scholars to use information technology and to take the advantage of vast information resources in digital format has become one of the important educational objectives for the research community. The present study intended to find out the research scholars' digital literacy level. Although the scholars have basic knowledge of digital information they still need a systematic programme to enhance their digital information competencies further.

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