

## USE OF E-RESOURCES AMONG SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH SCHOLARS AT CENTRAL LIBRARY, MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** - *The present study is aimed at assessment of e-resources usage by the research scholars belonging to the School of Social Sciences of Mizoram University, Aizawl. A questionnaire survey was conducted amongst 150 Research Scholars of various departments like Political Science, Public Administration, History & Ethnography, Psychology and Social Work under the School of Study. The study tried to find out the how e-resources support academic and research work of the Social Science researchers.*

**Keywords:** e-resources, research scholars, ICT.

### Introduction

The twentieth century was shaped by sweeping changes in communication technologies. The emergence and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is the century's most significant development affecting scholarly communication. The application of computers to information processing has brought several products and services to the scene. Consequently, the academic community has undergone tremendous changes during these years, assuming new dimensions influenced by technology-driven applications. Libraries have witnessed a great metamorphosis in recent years both in their collection development and in their

service structures. Thus, libraries are using technology to improve the management of scholarly information to strengthen and speed access to scholarly information not held locally<sup>1</sup>. Over the last several years, a significant transformation has been noticed in collection development policies and practices. Print medium is increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials (Sharma, 2009)<sup>2</sup>. Ani (2008)<sup>3</sup> quoting Tsakonas and Papatheodorou (2006), states that, "the transition from print to electronic medium apart from resulting in a growth of electronic information has provided users with new tools and applications for information seeking and retrieval. Electronic resources are invaluable research tools

that complement the print-based resources in a traditional library setting.

### **1. Previous Studies**

Sohail and Ahmad (2011)<sup>4</sup> had carried out a study for measuring the usage of online journals by Faculty members, Researchers and Post-Graduate students at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). One of the major findings of the study was that 86.67 percent of the respondents felt that they are in need of regular training programme to make effective use of UGC-Infonet consortia to support them in their academic and research work.

Murthy (2008)<sup>5</sup> conducted a study regarding usage of UGC-Infonet resources and found that “the trend of high use of e-resources by the Indian scholars helped in reducing information gaps between rural and urban, privileged and less privileged, and unreachable frontiers within the country.

Commenting on the advantages of electronic resources, Dadzie (2005)<sup>6</sup> writes that electronic resources are invaluable research tools that complement the print- based resources in a traditional library setting. Their advantages according to her include: access to information that might be restricted to the user due to geographical location or finances, access to more current information, and provision of extensive links to additional resources related contents.

A study conducted by Mounissamy and Rani (2005)<sup>7</sup> clearly represents that “the usage and usability of electronic journals by research

scholars and faculty members of National Institute of Technology, Tiruchirappalli”. The study reveals that 67 percent of researchers and 33 percent of faculty members regularly access and use the electronic resources for varied purposes.

### **2. Mizoram University Library: An Overview**

Mizoram University Central Library started along with its parent body, the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Mizoram Campus in the year 1979. Mizoram University Library witnessed tremendous growth after the establishment of Mizoram University. Since its inception the library supports the educational, research and learning functions of the University and a number of services are directed to these efforts. It also caters to the needs of the students and teachers at large. The mission of the library is to efficiently provide services and access to quality academic information resources, irrespective of format and location to university students, faculty and staff. At present, the library has a total collection of 95,818 volumes of books and 10776 volumes of bound periodicals. The Library at present subscribes to 226 Journals, 48 General periodicals and 13 dailies. The total Library membership is 2,277 i.e. 270 UG, 1,084 PG Students, 80 M.Phil, 463 Ph.D scholars, 208 Teachers, 16 Guest Lecturers, 2 Departmental Libraries and 154 Non-teaching staff<sup>8</sup>.

### **3. Trends and Development of E-Resources at Central Library, Mizoram University**

Owing to the emergence of information technology and its application in libraries, traditional print resources are being replaced by electronic versions with benefits for libraries and its users apparent in many ways. Users can access, download and print out papers quite easily. The problems of missing issues, binding, subscription and damage of papers have also been solved. Electronic journal consortia are a boon to the libraries, as with this cooperation, the cost of basic journals can be shared, and library budgets can be utilized in the right positive way<sup>9</sup>.

Considering the diversity of resources required and ICT infrastructure available in the universities, the universities had been covered under the UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium Project under three different phases. Mizoram University Library entered the development phase of e-resources in the year 2006 when the university was covered under Phase-III of UGC-Infonet Consortium. As a result, the user community of Central Library, Mizoram University currently has access to a large number of e-resources. A wide selection of e-journals from the prominent publishers like Emerald, Oxford University Press, Wiley-Blackwell, Taylor and Francis, Portland Press, JSTOR, Project Muse,

etc have been provided to the students, research scholars and Faculty members of the university. Moreover, the faculty members have been provided with computers with Internet access and the e-resources provided through the consortium could be accessed through Local Area Network (Intranet) of the University<sup>10</sup>.

### **4. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were:

- To know the awareness of e-resources among the Social Science Research Scholars of Mizoram University
- To identify the opinion of the research scholars on their preferences of information sources
- To determine the frequency of usage and the reasons for using e-resources
- To find out the problems faced while accessing e-resources.

### **5. Methodology**

Questionnaire method was used to collect the necessary primary data keeping in view the objectives of the study. A questionnaire was designed with questions like frequency of library visit, preferences of information sources, purpose and frequency of using e-resources, etc.

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed among the research scholars from the five disciplines under the School of Social Sciences like Political Science, Public Administration, Psychology, History & Ethnography and Social

Work. Of these, 111 research scholars responded to the questionnaire. The final response rate was 74 percent.

## 6. Data Analysis

The collected data has been analyzed according to the objectives of the study. Simple percentage analysis has been followed to analyze the data in the present study.

### 7.1 Gender of the respondents:

Personal detail section of the questionnaire provides information regarding gender. Analysis of the study by gender has been discussed under Table 1

**Table-1: Gender of the respondents**

Gender	No. of Response	Percentage
Male	52	46.8
Female	59	53.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>100</b>

A study of data in the table indicates the gender of the respondents. It could be noted that out of the total 111 respondents 52(46.8%) constitutes the Male population while 59(53.2%) of them are Females. It can be concluded that female respondents constitute more in number (i.e., 53.2% of the total 111 respondents) than male respondents, indicating the presence of female domination among the social science research scholars of Mizoram University.

### 7.2 Frequency of library visit

The frequency of library visits by the users is usually influenced by factors such as collection, organization and maintenance of the library resources along with the library services. The

frequency of visits to the library helps to know the use of the library and is an index to judge the utilization of the library resources. If users visit the library frequently, it can be implied that they are benefitting from the library resources. The analysis of frequency of visit to the library by the faculty members and research scholars is placed below in Table-2.

**Table-2: Frequency of library visit**

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage
<b>Daily</b>	7	6.3
<b>2-3 times a week</b>	18	16.2
<b>Weekly</b>	82	73.9
<b>No Response</b>	4	3.6

From Table-2 it has been observed that majority of the social science research scholars i.e 82 (73.9%) made weekly visit to library, whereas 18 (16.2%) visited the library 2-3 times a week. There are only 7 (6.3%) who made it a point to visit the library daily. 4 (3.6%) do not respond to this question.

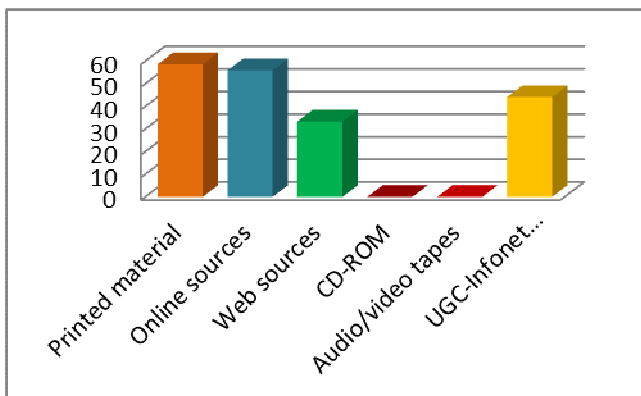
### 7.3 Preferences of information sources

The resources available in the library are basically the subscribed Journals and online resources freely available through UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium. In the present study, an opinion was sought regarding the information sources preferred by the research scholars which is presented in Table-3 supported by Graph-1 for better clarity.

**Table-3: Preferences of information sources**

Sources of information	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Printed material	65	58.6
Online sources	62	55.9
Web sources	37	33.3
CD-ROM	0	0
Audio/video tapes	0	0
UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium	49	44.1

**Graph-1: Preferences of sources of Information**



The users visit the library to fulfill their information needs by consulting the documents available in the library. Different types of information sources were listed in the questionnaire. Table- 3 supported by Graph reveals the use of different sources and their preferences by the respondents. The table shows that 65(58.6%) social science research scholars preferred to use printed material while online sources are used by 62(55.9%). The table further reveals that 49(44.1%) of the respondents used the UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium for their academic and research work. In this information age, with the availability of more and more

information accessible to the users, most of the users prefer to use the e-resources due to its flexibility and convenient access.

**7.4 Purpose of using e-resources**

Electronic resources along with print resources have become an integral part of a library collection. Also, a remarkable shift of choice from print resources to e-resources has taken place by users for information. Accordingly, a large number of e-resources are being acquired by libraries. The e-resources are used for various purposes such as study for research, publication, e-journals, e-books, career information, entertainment, etc which also differs from user to user. Social Science researchers were asked about the purpose of using the e-resources. Even though the purposes are many, the main purpose and the responses of the respondents are given in Table-4.

**Table-4: Purpose of using e-resources**

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Writing an article/paper	36	17.73
Writing a book	2	0.99
To update knowledge	54	26.60
Preparing notes	21	10.34
Supporting academic and research work	90	44.33

*Note: Multiple answers were permitted*

The respondents’ purpose of gathering information from the e-resources can be observed from the following interpretation. 90(44.33%) of the social science researchers used the electronic resources for supporting academic and research work which is followed by 54(26.6%) research

scholars who used the resources to update knowledge. The table also further reveals that 36(17.73%) social science research scholars used the e-resources for writing an article or paper.

**7.5 Types of e-resources frequently used**

In recent years, e-resources have become the “library’s important storage”. Table-5 presents the use of different types of e-resources frequently used by the research scholars of Mizoram University

**Table-5: Types of e-resources frequently used**

Types of e-resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
e-database	10	4.44
e-journals	77	34.22
e-books	39	17.33
e-articles/ e-reprints	64	28.44
e-newsgroups/magazines	16	7.11
e-theses/ dissertations	19	8.44

*Note: Multiple answers were permitted*

Data presented in Table-5 shows the types of e-resources frequently used by the social science research scholars. E-journals played an important role in the academic and research activities of the social science research scholars as 77(34.22%) of them are using the resources provided through it. e-articles/e-reprints have been used by 64(28.44%) while e-books have been used by 39(17.33%).

**7.6 Frequency of using e-resources**

Electronic resources have effectively become an integral part of work and study in higher education. It is an important indication of how

electronic resources are utilized. Frequency of use is an important measurement regarding how e-resources contribute to the mission statement of the library and consequently to the institution’s effectiveness. The frequency of using e-resources by the respondents also depends on the nature of library’s collections, organizations, maintenances and services. The frequency of use of e-resources by the research scholars is shown in Table-6.

**Table-6: Frequency of using e-resources**

Frequency of use	No of Respondents	Percentage
All the time	33	29.73
Few times a day	3	2.7
Daily	17	15.32
2-3 times a week	20	18.02
Weekly	12	10.81
Few times a month	26	23.42

Table-6 revealed the frequency of using e-resources by the respondents. Only 33(29.73%) social science research scholars access e-resources all time. It is also surprising to note that 26 (23.42%) of the scholars used the e-resources few times a month which is followed by 17 (15.32%) scholars who used the e-resources daily.

**7.7 Advantages of using e-resources**

One of the main advantage of using electronic resources is its easy accessibility regardless of the limitation of time, location and physical space (Fox and Logan, 2005; Agnew et al, 2006). The advantages of using electronic resources have been presented below in Table-7.

**Table-7: Advantages of using e-resources**

Advantages	No of Respondents	Percentage
Less time in searching	47	22.07
Availability of the journal much before the print copy	23	10.8
Simultaneous usage	16	7.51
Easy accessibility	67	31.46
Downloading facility	50	23.47
Author can be contacted directly through e-mail	1	0.47
Archival facility	9	4.23

*Note: Multiple answers were permitted*

The table reveals the multiple opinions regarding the advantages of using e-resources. The table shows that 67(31.46%) social science researchers are of the opinion that the main advantage is easy accessibility while 50(23.47%) felt that the advantage is the downloading facility. 47(22.07%) are of the opinion that Less time in searching is the advantage of using e-resources. The responses presented through the table shows that e-resources have many advantages for the research scholars in getting the required information which is useful for their academic and research work.

**7.8 Problems in accessing e-resources**

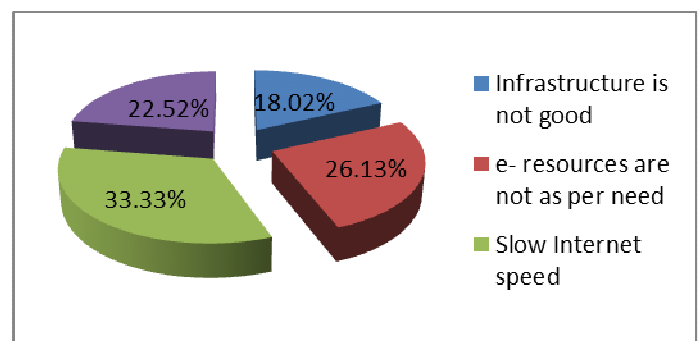
It is interesting to observe the problems in accessing the available e-resources. The study sought to find out the main problems users had with accessing e-resources. Determination of the problem helps the library and information centers to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of its

services. To understand the problems faced by the research scholars, the problem is divided into four different categories as shown in Table-8 supplemented by Graph-2.

**Table-8: Problems faced**

Problems	No of Respondents	Percentage
Infrastructure is not good	20	18.02
e- resources are not as per need	29	26.13
Slow Internet speed	37	33.33
Lack of Internet browsing skills	25	22.52

**Graph-2: Problems faced**



A study of data in the table and graph indicates the problems faced by the respondents in accessing e-resources. A total number of 37(33.33%) social science researchers expressed that the main problem is Slow Internet speed while 29(26.13%) felt that e-resources are not as per need. Analysis further reveals that there are 25(22.52%) of the researchers who Lack Internet browsing skills and followed by 20(18.02%) who claimed that Infrastructure is not good.

## 7. Findings

The analysis of the data collected through the questionnaires has revealed a number of findings with regard to use of electronic resources for supporting academic and research work by the social science research scholars of Mizoram University.

- Among the social science research scholars, female dominance is observed where the percentage of female respondents reaches to 53.2% out of the total respondents.
- 73.9% Social Science Research scholars visit the library weekly which is highest in the frequency of library visit.
- Regarding preferences of information sources, 58.6% research scholars still prefer to use printed material.
- With regard to the purpose of using e-resources, 44.33% of the research scholars' main purpose of using e-resources is to support academic and research work.
- The type of e-resources mostly used by the social science research scholars is e-journals (34.22%).
- 29.73% of the Research scholars are using the e-resources at all time.
- With regard to the advantages of using e-resources, 31.46% of the social science research scholars expressed that easy accessibility is the major advantage of using e-resources.

- 33.33% of the social science researchers are dissatisfied with e-resources mainly because the speed of Internet is very slow.

## 8. Suggestions

There is no doubt that e-resources has assumed the role of providing a medium of scientific information and today's users can no longer depend only on conventional information resources to cope with the latest developments in their respective fields. The present study has investigated on how the electronic resources have been utilized by the faculty members and research scholars of Mizoram University. Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forwarded to improve and maximize the optimum utilization of e-resources among the faculty members and research scholars.

- The University networking and Internet service need to be strengthened by improving the bandwidth for quick access to the available e-resources.
- Besides UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium, more e-resources in various disciplines need to be subscribed.
- The Central Library needs to arrange various users' orientation programmes for faculty members for the optimum use of available e-resources.
- E-books and other e-resources should be acquired by the library besides e-journals and databases.



- More high speed computer terminals should be installed in various departments, departmental libraries, computer laboratories with access to Internet.
- Library may provide content updates of e-resources to the faculty members at regular intervals.
- Wi-Fi campus needs to be developed so that faculty members can use online e-resources and Internet within the campus according to their suitability.
- Library should conduct users' survey to know the usage of e-resources and the future needs of the users particularly the faculty members from time to time.

## 9. Conclusions

The emerging technologies have revolutionized the information seeking behavior of users around the globe. The new information modes like e-resources have dynamically changed the way information is gathered, organized, accessed, stored and consumed. E-resources are the need of the hour for academic and research activities and help them in faster access and retrieval of information in various disciplines<sup>11</sup>.

The study revealed that electronic resources and services provided by the Central Library are not fully utilized, and many students are still depending on printed resources more than electronic resources to support their academic and research work. This may be mainly due to lack of

awareness and lack of competencies in the use of the library's electronic resources. The findings of this study have provided important insights to take appropriate measures to achieve a higher level of awareness and skill by the user.

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