Introduction

Today, India is the third largest higher education system in the world (after China and USA) in terms of enrolment. However, in terms of the number of institutions, India is the largest higher education system in the world with 17,973 institutions (348 universities and 17,625 colleges). Out of 348 universities 101 are Deemed Universities and 13 are Institutions of National Importance. Looking to the huge structure of higher education in India it needs a sound institutional framework to keep higher education on proper functioning. Library, the heart of university system has been playing a crucial role in achieving the mission of the higher education. But, due to insufficient funds, libraries have been forced to cut on subscriptions of journals and other reading materials and the Internet facility in the libraries has become an inseparable service to bridge the gap the library users and resources. Universities invest a good amount on providing Internet service to the students, research scholars, teachers and staff. It is, therefore, important to find out up-to what extent the universities in Assam are providing the Internet service through its libraries and how the users are availing Internet service.
1.1. **NEED FOR THE PRESENT STUDY**

One of the characteristics of last few decades has been the remarkable growth in the technological means of collecting, processing and transmitting information. Internet, the network of networks is the most important means that has made all these processes very easy. The number of people accessing Internet has been increasing very rapidly as it has got considerable implications for teaching, learning and research. In universities teachers and students are depending more and more on the Internet for their various educational purposes. The present study is, therefore, an attempt to understand the effectiveness of Internet use as an educational tool, in the university library system with special reference to Assam.

As university libraries provide Internet facility to academic community and expect them to utilize it for educational purposes, it is necessary to conduct a study to determine how the Internet is being used for academic activities and how the Internet has influenced the academic efficiency of the target users. The study also explores the satisfaction level of the users with the Internet facility provided by the university libraries under study. The study has been taken up to assess the benefits of Internet received by the users community of the university libraries.

1.2. **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The scope of the present study is limited to the following:

- The study includes only the libraries/universities (central and state) available in Assam.
The study is again primarily concerned with the Internet users in the surveyed university libraries that have been selected randomly.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Today it is beyond the working ability of any library to cater and satisfy the information requirements of the users without using modern information technology and specially the Internet. The present study is an attempt to find out the pattern of using the Internet by the students, research scholars, teachers and staff of university libraries in Assam. My objectives of the study are as follows:

* To assess internet facilities provided by the university libraries in Assam;
* To study the information professionals' attitude towards the usage and benefits of Internet;
* To identify the different purposes for which the Internet is being used by the students, research scholars, teachers, and staff;
* To find out the problems faced by the respondents while using the Internet;
* To identify users' awareness about internet & its tools;
* To provide necessary suggestions and remedies for Internet related problems.

1.4. FIELDS OF STUDY

The libraries and information professionals have a vital role to play in bridging
the information gap. Information in any form located anywhere in the world can be accessed by any user at the touch of a button and at negligible cost through the Internet Library and information professionals should know what is Internet, why it is used and how they can get different types of services from it. It is neither possible nor feasible to discuss all aspects of Internet within the study. The present study discusses only some of the important aspects of Internet relevant to libraries. Results of the survey of University libraries and Users’ in respective libraries have been presented.

1.5. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

1. Utilization of full potential of Internet services on the university libraries of Assam is yet to be realized;

2. Inadequate Internet services as available in the university libraries in Assam would not usher information revolution in academic world;

3. Internet users in university libraries are not aware about the different tools and services of Internet as they do not get required training from the staff;

1.6. METHODOLOGY FOLLOWED

A researcher should have a thorough knowledge of all research methods that are commonly employed in the field of educational research so that he/she can select the most suitable and most appropriate methods. The methods for tackling research on my topic are mainly – Survey Method, Personal Experience and Experimentation. Survey Method has been applied aiming at studying the present state or conditions and for
pointing out the future needs of the process by providing foresight for planning future course of action. The tools for collecting data have been questionnaires, interview and observation.

Personal Experience is one of the most fundamental methods of discovering the solution and tackling the problems. As I had experience of using the Internet and providing the service to the users while working in Tezpur University Library as Information Scientist so, I have applied the knowledge acquired for studying various aspects of Internet use and obtaining solution.

1.7. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

The thesis has been organized into seven main chapters along with preliminary pages, annexures and bibliography as discussed below.

Chapter-1 provides brief description about the need for the present study, scope of the study, objectives of the study, fields of study, research hypotheses, methodology and summary of chapters.

Chapter-2 presents review of Indian and foreign literature (printed and on-line) published around the world.

Chapter-3 discusses overview of Internet and its usage in University libraries. It defines Internet and describes history, benefits, disadvantages, different services of internet. The chapter presents usage statistics of Internet in India and other parts of the world. It also discusses the academic usage of Internet particularly in University libraries.
Chapter-4 provides detailed analysis and interpretations on data received from surveyed University libraries of Assam. The chapter discusses the growth of university libraries viz., KKHL, LNBL, BMPL, TUCL and RL, introduction of computer, introduction of Internet service in university libraries and so on.

Chapter-5 deals with surveyed Internet users in University libraries. In this chapter problems faced by the users, frequency of Internet use, purposes of using Internet, awareness on various services of Internet etc. have been discussed.

Chapter-6 describes the strategies for promoting use of Internet in libraries. Some selected websites have been mentioned here for the benefit Internet users.

Chapter-7 deals with recommendations and conclusions. Summary of the major findings have been discussed here and objectives as well as hypotheses have been verified. It also presents implications of the study, limitation of the study and focus on further research areas.

Annexures and bibliography have been presented in the last part of the thesis.