CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

Sources of information available via the Internet are increasing exponentially, leading to steady increase in the use of Internet for education and research. Since past few years, free online information sources like e-journals, e-books, e-databases have increased considerably. Earlier, information and knowledge were passed by word of mouth or through manuscripts, and communication was a slow process. Today, it is passed from one individual to an infinite number of other users through a number of media and formats which makes rapid and widespread dissemination of information possible (Thanuskoči and Ravi, 2011).¹

Networked learning is an educational form that is closely associated with the development and deployment of computer networks and the rise of a networked society (Steeples, 2002)². The growth of the internet and more recently the Web have made it conceivable that education can take place in a learning environment that is based on instant communication and the ability to search a vast array of resources. Despite these rapid social changes, the university resists transformation and provides what has been called a resourceful constraint to activities.

Technology is a transformative force. It has multiplied our channels of communication, has provided unprecedented access to information, and has freed people and organizations from the geographic bounds that once limited their circle
of influence. Technology’s prophets have long envisioned a world in which all people will have access to virtually unlimited information and where learning will be limited only by individuals’ natural abilities and ambitions. Technology is the most oft-cited means to this end. The Truman Report, which laid the groundwork for the G.I. Bill, focused considerable attention on the promise of AM radio as a means of democratizing and universalizing learning. Similar claims were made about television as an educative force. But the hype has never quite squared with the hope (Brown and Duguid, 2000)\(^3\). Cornford and Pollock (2002)\(^4\) note that despite the development of networked technologies that hold out the prospect of distributed learning the campus refuses to disappear. They claim that the idea of a virtual university rests on the idea that learning simply relies on the timely distribution of texts, sounds and images, in short information. By way of a contrast they note that the campus provides a number of resources as well as constraints and the persistence of the campus illustrates the need to take the resources afforded by place seriously and not be seduced by an apparently simple translation of education to the virtual and an informational view of learning.

Electronic Information Sources (EIS) may be defined as all those documents that are available in the electronic or digital form. The tools employed by traditional libraries, the environment and the whole concept of library services have undergone drastic changes owing to the advancements in the fields of information, communication and technology. Card catalogue which was reckoned as a convenient device for easy bibliographic search has become out dated when compared to the facilities offered by electronic applications. This scenario enjoins
information skills training for both staff and readers and has drawn in a radical transformation within Library and Information System (LIS). From physical providers of information, libraries have become gateways to networked information providing access rather than holdings. A database, a structured collection of related data, is one of the most familiar types of EIS. EIS offer vast opportunities for the rears. The information need can be delivered from the most appropriate sources instantly and the user can sharpen dynamically. Electronic information can therefore provide a number of advantages over traditional print based sources. One main advantage, especially to those with limited access the library, is their availability from outside the library by dial-up access. This underscores the importance of electronic resources which has to be integrated with the library systems (Devarajan and Joseph, 2011).  

Electronic sources can be classified into 3 categories depending upon the organization of information content: 1. Primary sources: These are nascent thoughts embodied in journal articles, theses and dissertations, patents, standards, research reports, trade literature, conference proceedings, government publications like Acts, Bills and proceedings of parliaments and other legislative bodies, government reports, etc. 2. Secondary sources: They are data bases like chemical abstracts, indexing and abstracting periodicals, reference books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, handbooks, translations, text books and the like. 3. Tertiary sources: these are bibliography of bibliographies, guides to literature, yearbooks, directories, state of the art reports, trend reports, information digests, review articles, etc (Devarajan and Joseph, 2011).
Internet is considered as the single biggest electronic information source (EIS). Some of the major internet sources of information and databases are: (i) AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture) (ii) Free Medical Journals (iii) Medical Journals and Books (iv) Medline / PubMed (v) The Oxford English Dictionary (vi) Online Medical Dictionary (vii) Encarta online (viii) Oxford Text Archive (ix) Centre for Electronic Text in the Humanities (x) Shakespeare Full text, CHEMDEX – Chemistry related internet resources (xi) Economics working papers Archive (xii) Internet movies database (xiii) Encyclopedia of mythology (xiv) World city maps (xv) Britannica online etc.

There are several institutions providing electronic information to information seekers at large. Some of them are: Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education, American Association of University women, American Psychological Association, American Association of University Professors, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, and world bank social indicators of development (Devarajan and Joseph, 2011)\(^7\).

Electronic resources are the information which can be stored in the form of electrical signals usually, but not necessarily on a computer. In other words, it also means the information available on the internet (\url{www.allwords.com/word-electronic+resource.html})\(^8\). An electronic resource is any information source that the library provides access to in an electronic format (\url{www.libanswers.utep.edu})\(^9\). Electronic resources refer to those materials or services that require a computer for access, manipulation, or reproduction including, but not limited to, numerical, graphical and textual files, electronic journals, bibliographic or full-text databases.
and Internet resources (http://www.arl.org/sc/marketplace/license/licprinciples.shtml). According to AACR2, an electronic resource is: "material (data and/or program(s) encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device or a connection to a computer network." This definition does not include electronic resources that do not require the use of a computer, for example, music compact discs and video discs (http://www.oclc.org/support/services/worldcat/documentation/cataloging/resources.en.html). A pronounced move from print subscriptions to electronic resources in all types of libraries has fundamentally impacted the library and its users. With the influx of resources such as e-journals; e-books; index, abstract, and/or full-text databases; aggregated databases; and others, the shift to electronic resources is rapidly changing library operational and organizational procedures. Electronic resource management in libraries constitutes research and practice, provides comprehensive coverage of the issues, methods, theories, and challenges connected with the provision of electronic resources in libraries, with emphasis on strategic planning, operational guidelines, and practices (Yu and Breivold, 2008).

1.1. Background of the Research Issue

There is increasing access to computers, knowledge in computer use, internet connectivity, access to CD-ROM databases, on-line databases and full text journals. This necessitates investigation into relevance, use and use pattern of digital resources among the user community. It will be interesting to study,
whether users make appropriate use of digital resources in relations to printed sources. For the research community to make best use of electronic sources it is necessary to have access to digital resources. So it became relevant to determine the awareness of, access to and attitude towards digital resources by the research community. The penetration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has impact on almost all walks of life. Owing up of such facilities by the community is a clear indicator of the incorporation of the new technology to the research activities and it is significant to study this aspect in the changing information and technology environment.

Research scholars from different disciplines often have different needs with regard to the types of resources they want and how they ultimately use resources in educational contexts. Many faculties want to build their own re-aggregated resources, using their own materials and mixing them with resources they have collected along the way. They are concerned about the significant inadequacy of the technologies available to them, first to manage the array of available resources, and then to integrate them into teaching practice in and out of the classroom. The networked digital environment has enabled the creation of many new kinds of works that are accessible to end users directly, and many of these resources have become essential tools for scholars conducting research, building scholarly networks, and disseminating their ideas and work.

In this context the present study is to investigate the awareness, attitude and use of digital resource by research scholar in the research departments under the university of Kerala is a relevant topic.
1.2. Title of the study

The title of the study is “An Investigation into Awareness, Attitude and Use of Digital Resources by Research Scholars in University of Kerala”.

1.3. Definition of key terms

The following key terms are defined:- Investigation, Awareness, Attitude, Use, Digital Resources, Research scholars, University of Kerala.

Investigation: Investigation means to observe or inquire into in detail (www.freedictionary.com/investigation)\(^\text{13}\). In this study, investigation stands for research about awareness, attitude and use of digital resources by research scholars.

Awareness: It means having knowledge or cognizance (www.freedictionary.com/awareness)\(^\text{14}\). In this study, awareness stands for the awareness of research scholars about digital resources.

Attitude: Attitude means a state of mind or a feeling; disposition (www.freedictionary.com/attitude)\(^\text{15}\). In this study, attitude stands for the attitude of research scholars about digital resources.

Use: Use means to put into service or apply for a purpose (www.freedictionary.com/Use)\(^\text{16}\). In this study, use means the use of digital resources by the research scholars.
**Digital Resources:** A digital resource is anything which is published in computer-readable format. A digital resource is any information source that the library provides access to in an electronic format. Digital resources include: full-text journals, newspapers, company information, e-books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, theses and dissertations, economic data, digital images, industry profiles, market research, career information, etc.\(^{17}\). The resources which are transcribed into a digital form for processing by a computer are digitized resources (McLeod, 1986)\(^ {18}\).

**Research Scholar**

The Research Scholar is defined as: An individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar types of institutions\(^ {19}\).

**University of Kerala:**

The University of Kerala, formerly the University of Travancore, is an affiliating university located in Trivandrum in the State of Kerala, India. It was established in 1937, long before the birth of the State of Kerala in India, by a promulgation of the Maharaja of Travancore, Sri Chithira Thirunal Balarama Varma who was also the first Chancellor of the university. Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer, the then Diwan of the State, was the first Vice-Chancellor. It was the sixteenth university to be set up in India. In 1954, the unified State of Kerala came into being with most of Travancore and the whole of the State of Cochin and Malabar area of Madras presidency becoming part of it. The Kerala University Act
(Act 14 of 1957) was brought into force and the University of Travancore was renamed University of Kerala (www.cukerala.ac.in)\textsuperscript{21}.

1.4. Objectives

The major objectives of the study are:

- to survey the digital resources available in the research departments under the University of Kerala.
- to examine the awareness, attitude and accessibility of digital resources by research scholars.
- to find out the information needs in using digital resources by research scholars.
- to study the barriers in using digital resources by the scholars.
- to examine the relative use of digital resources by research scholars in Science and Technology, Humanities and Social Science disciplines.
- to examine the relative use of printed documents and digital resources by research scholars.
- to understand the use pattern of search engines by the research scholars for using digital resources.
- to examine the purposes for which research scholars use digital resources and how far those resources help the researchers in their research work.

1.5. Hypotheses

The present study formulated the following hypotheses:

- The digital resources available in the Kerala University research departments are not adequate to meet the information needs of the researchers.
✓ There are significant variations in the use of digital resources by research scholars in various disciplines.
✓ There are significant variations in the information use pattern of research scholars in various disciplines.
✓ Research scholars have positive attitude towards digital resources in relation to printed sources.

1.6. Scope and Limitations

The present study investigates the awareness, attitude and use of digital resources among the research scholars from 42 departments in the University of Kerala. The study is limited to full-time research scholars only in all the research departments. Further, the information regarding Hardwares, Printers and electronic resources and sources available in the libraries was collected from the Librarians of all 42 departments.

1.7. Significance

For a long time, librarians and information scientists had neglected one of the most important components of the library – the user. The utilization process of research literature is very minimal. Therefore, a research aimed at understanding the awareness, attitude and use of digital resources by research scholars in the research departments under the University of Kerala is significant. Direct questioning of research scholars in research departments will help to discover the characteristics, information requirements, behavior, attitudes, opinions, priorities, problems and evaluation of the users. An adequate knowledge about the researchers and their demands is necessary to design the library and information services for researchers more effectively.
1.8 Organization of the study

The thesis is divided into six chapters:

Chapter-1. The first chapter introduces the background, in which the study was undertaken, states the title, explains the definition of the key terms, enumerates the objectives of the study, and explains the hypotheses, scope and limitations of the study, significance of the study.

Chapter-2. Provides review of related literature gives a summary of selected studies relating to use of digital resources by research scholars.

Chapter-3. Third chapter describes Methodology of the study, population, various methods adopted in the data collection, variables for the analysis and statistical tools used for data analysis.

Chapter-4. This chapter gives a survey of digital resources in the research departments under the University of Kerala

Chapter-5. This chapter presents the analysis and interpretations of the data collected through interview from librarians. This chapter also presents the detailed analysis and interpretations of data collected from the user population.

Chapter-6. The sixth chapter ‘Findings suggestions and Conclusion’ presents major findings, tenability of hypotheses, areas for further study, suggestions for improvement of the use of digital resources by the research scholars in all the research departments in the university of Kerala followed by Bibliography and Appendix I and Appendix II.
REFERENCES


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