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## Original Research Article

## Awareness and use of electronic resources by research scholars of Karnatak University, Dharwad: A study

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Electronic resources have become vital in the 21st century. The paper aims to comprehensively examine the electronic resources used by research scholars of faculty of Social Science, Karnatak University, Dharwad. This paper further emphasizes the awareness level, usage, purposes, frequency, difficulties, benefits, and search techniques used when using electronic resources.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** A systematic questionnaire was used in the investigation. The questionnaire was issued to 100 researchers from the Faculty of Social Science, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

**Results:** Out of 100, 84 completed responses were received, yielding an overall response rate of 84%. The study indicates that the majority of users are aware of various types of E-resources and that these resources may impact their academic activities at the institution.

**Conclusion:** The study should assist university libraries in better-educating faculty, researchers, and students about e-resources. It will also help them organize more proactive end-user training programs that will raise awareness of using e-resources effectively.

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## 1. Introduction

The introduction of electronic resources has significantly changed the position of all libraries and information centers throughout the world during the last decade. The user community has expressed a strong desire to obtain increasingly more information online. Advancements in ICT, electronic databases, and e-book technologies have transformed the field of informatics.<sup>1</sup> As users shift from printed documents to electronic resources, they need to understand the availability and organization of e-resources such as online journals, databases, ETDs, government publications, and newspapers in information centers'. As a result, it is time for Indian information professionals

to examine the several important dimensions of electronic resources while successfully channeling them into the users' curious minds by acknowledging and dealing with some of the challenges associated with e-resource use.<sup>2</sup> All of the library's information resources that are only accessible online through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) resources are referred to as ERs in the context of this work. All forms of electronic collections, including e-books, e-journals, online public access catalogs (OPACs), CD-ROM databases, Internet resources, online databases, and multi-media resources, are under their purview. According to the body of existing scholarship, these resources are thought to be pertinent to students' academic and lifetime learning. ERs are an essential part of the academic community since they allow users to obtain up-to-date information in the right format rapidly.<sup>3,4</sup>

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E-resources are digital versions of material that may be accessed via computer networks and electronic systems.<sup>5</sup> They include a variety of digital content formats that people can use and access. E-resources come in a variety of formats and represent the latest developments in ICT. E-books, e-magazines, e-journals, e-learning instructors, e-libraries, and online assessments are examples of these resources. These days, academic environments depend more and more on these forms as trustworthy sources for creating and disseminating information.<sup>6</sup> E-resources are extensively utilized in many domains, such as government, business, libraries, and education. Because of their alluring features, which include flexibility, content, ease of access, remote access, and real-time distribution, the use of e-resources in academic settings has increased dramatically. Nowadays, a large number of governmental, commercial, and academic institutions provide their patrons with electronic resources in their library collections.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the current era, knowledge of e-resources is essential. According to Ansari, awareness is the condition of knowing something exists or comprehending a particular circumstance or problem at the moment.<sup>8</sup> Thus, knowledge of e-resources is crucial for the advancement of the educational system and libraries in the twenty-first century.<sup>9</sup> These days, it is essential for both teachers and students to understand the value and application of electronic resources. Furthermore, no specific ICT skills are required of the professors or students to use e-resources effectively and efficiently for their research and academic endeavors.<sup>10,11</sup>

Dr. S.R. Ranganathan's work, *The Five Laws of Library Science*, emphasizes that libraries are constantly evolving. This statement is always correct for libraries, which are expanding daily in terms of collection, new services, technology adoption, human resources, and collection types.<sup>12</sup> "Electronic resources and services" refers to the variety of digital and electronic information sources that students and teachers have access to in an academic setting. The shift from print to electronic document delivery systems has occurred very quickly, and libraries and information services have undergone tremendous adjustments to effectively supply electronic resources to the academic community.<sup>13</sup>

A vital part of e-resources, e-journals have grown in popularity among library patrons. Because they are available 24/7 and worldwide, e-journals are widely used. When it comes to publication time and the capacity to connect with all subscribers simultaneously, e-journals have an edge over print journals. The advantage of e-journals is that several people can access them at the same time. Depending on their permissions and access rights, many readers may save and print articles at the same time. The issue of missing issues is somewhat mitigated by electronic journals. This will be especially helpful for large campuses because numerous readers from various departments will be

there.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, electronic journals, online databases, e-books, web-based resources, and a variety of other electronic resources are rapidly replacing the traditional resources found in modern libraries.<sup>15</sup> The topic of why people would want to use an electronic version over a print one—which appears to load more slowly and might not be as user-friendly—has become increasingly pressing as a result of the development of online resources over the last decade. It is believed to save time when a resource is available from the desktop because it can eliminate the requirement of visiting the library.<sup>16</sup>

Electronic resources are considered information mining sites that can be accessed concurrently by a large number of users from limitless points using modern ICT gadgets. They are polished and redesigned and are frequently kept in cyberspace in the most compact and tangible form. According to Graham "electronic resources" are generally understood to mean information that can be accessed using a computer. While these resources are rarely used as cited references on their own, they can be helpful as bibliographic leads to possible sources. Additionally, e-resources are those digital documents that are made accessible to library patrons via a computer-based information retrieval system.<sup>17</sup> The majority of e-resources can be accessed through the Internet, which is considered to be the most appropriate and widely used channel.

## 2. About Institute

Karnataka University was established in 1949. There are 51 Postgraduate Departments in various topic fields. The Faculty of Social Science at Karnatak University, Dharwad offers 14 departments that provide quality education and modern skills in the subject to students from the region, leading to bachelor's, master's, and doctorate degrees in social science. The Social Science Departments are also actively engaged in teaching, research, and career counseling. This job-oriented course has been updated by using cutting-edge technology in teaching and training at the degree, postgraduate, and research levels.

## 3. Literature Review

Several studies have evaluated patrons' awareness and use of electronic information resources in Indian business and management institutions. The current investigation was conceived and carried out using information from the literature. Tenopir et al. made a substantial contribution to the usage of electronic journals by scientists by defining three phases: early, evolving, and advanced<sup>18</sup> Information resources, also referred to as electronic resources of information, are digital publications that are readily available online at any time and from any location. Through computer networks and electronic systems, these resources offer a vast array of content and information that may be

accessed. E-resources, as described by Obande et al. are information sources that have been encoded and formatted such that a computer's processor can read and process them. These resources are accessible remotely via a network like the internet.<sup>19</sup>

Sharma found that academic staff members were fully aware of the e-resources and facilities accessible in electronic books, journals, theses, and OPACs. It is strongly advised that faculty members increase their computer and internet literacy to search for and access e-resources at their universities.<sup>20</sup> Kotur and Mulimani discovered in their study that a lack of support from library professionals, as well as a lack of orientation and awareness programs regarding the subscription of e-resources available in the library, are key causes of users' decreased library utilization.<sup>21</sup> User training and orientation/awareness workshops for academics and staff should be organized to help them look for and use e-resources. More online tutorials and user guides/manuals about services and e-resources should be created and given to users, and library staff should directly help users in using online resources.<sup>8,9,22</sup>

Okunoye highlighted that electronic resources are academic materials utilized for research, teaching, and learning. Thus, faculty and students must have an excellent understanding of e-resources for advancement academically.<sup>23</sup> According to Habib et al. the study found that medical college users were only somewhat happy with the e-resource resources provided in the library. The study also identified several significant problems that users encounter when utilizing e-resources for academic purposes, including inadequate IT infrastructure, limited full-text journal access, energy crises or load shedding, slow internet speed, lack of printing facilities within the institution, information overload, and lack of training or orientation.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, Murithi et al. the main problems with utilizing e-resources were a lack of network devices, poor internet connections, lack of necessary materials, power outages, difficulty finding pertinent databases, restricted or no access to specific data, the prevalence of irrelevant information, and trouble filtering search results.<sup>24</sup>

Libraries are considering subscribing to e-journals due to their advantages over print media, as the number of e-journals available in electronic form is increasing daily. Users and library operations are impacted by the abrupt transition from print to digital materials. Libraries must demonstrate a return on their investment and offer the greatest resources possible to their patrons.<sup>20</sup>

Wadekar and Nagarkar explored online database management in Indian university libraries. The study used the Techniques for Electronic Resource Management (TERMS) framework to analyze the workflow of ERs, including database selection and acquisition, renewal procedures, infrastructure availability, and challenges in managing online databases at university libraries. The

study found that university librarians were attempting to successfully deploy ERs. Challenges noted include a lack of awareness of ER lifespan, standard procedures, collection development, and preservation rules, the user needs assessment, negotiation skills, and competent staff.<sup>25</sup> Kaur and Walia examined how Indian management libraries generate ER collections. The study explored the various types of electronic resources (ERs) accessible in management libraries, budget allocation, responsibility, selection, acquisition, authentication, and accessibility, as well as obstacles faced by libraries in creating ER collections.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Scope

The current study is confined to the Research Scholars Faculty of Social Sciences of Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka (India).

#### 5. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to find out:

1. To know the awareness, use, and impact of e-resources among research scholars;
2. To understand the purpose and frequency of using e-resources by Research Scholars;
3. To identify the significant hurdles faced by research scholars while accessing e-resources;
4. To investigate the utilization of various forms of online databases;
5. The study aims to identify issues encountered by research scholars when using e-resources and online databases;
6. To assess user satisfaction levels.

#### 6. Materials and Methods

The purpose of this study is to examine the knowledge, application, and effects of electronic resources among research scholars of the social science departments of Karnatak University, Dharwad. A questionnaire approach was used for this investigation. With the study's objectives in mind, an internet tool was used to create a structured questionnaire. For this study, we circulated a questionnaire to 100 participants and received 84 responses. The gathered information was examined and then tabulated for presentation.

##### 6.1. Data analysis

The 100 questionnaires were distributed to social science research scholars at Karnatak University in Dharwad during their PhD course work. Only 84 completed surveys were

received from 35 male and 49 female researchers. Data was collated and analyzed using an Excel sheet to have a better knowledge of e-resource usage and awareness among researchers.(Table 1)

Data from (Table 2) was analyzed, and it was discovered that 25 and 24 research scholars (29.76% & 28.57%) have been using them for 3-4 & 5-6 years respectively. 20 (23.81%) researchers have been using them for 1-2 years, 9 (10.71%) of the Social Science research scholars have been using e-resources for less than a year and 6 (07.61%) have been using them for more than 6 years. The data presents a positive picture, with research academics using more and more e-resources over time.

This survey also indicates determining which electronic resources social science research fellows at Karnatak University, Dharwad use the most for their research. Respondents were asked to provide input on the following statement. According to the table above, 82 (97.62%) of respondents use the Shodhganga database. 75 (89.29%) use the N-List database. 71 (84.52%) prefer the IndiaStat database. Only 12 (14.29%) of research scholars choose the Web of Science database.(Table 3)

## 7. Awareness of E-Resources

1. **Use of Consortium:** Indian university libraries have access to the E-journal consortium formed by INFLIBNET under UGC, MHRD, and GOI, which serves as a primary source of information for teachers, research scholars, and students. (Table 4) shows that 69 (82.14%) research scholars access e-resources under the consortium for research works.
2. **Easy Access to E-Resources:** To assess research researchers' comfort using e-resources in college and university libraries. (Table 4) shows that 68 (80.95%) research scholars feel comfortable accessing e-resources at libraries, while 16 (19.05%) are uneasy.

## 8. Purpose of Using E-Resources

Understanding the respondents' reasons for using electronic information resources (EIRs) will help you comprehend their impact. To determine the impact on academic activities, the following (Table 5) purposes were questioned. According to (Table 5), 79 (94.05%) of the respondents said they use EIRs for research work, followed by 78 (92.86%) to write research papers, and 76 (90.48%) said they use them to stay current in their field. 61 (72.62%) and 59 (70.24%), respectively, are receiving enhancing knowledge and for teaching purposes.

## 9. Search Strategy

Developing search skills can help users make the most of e-resources. By employing effective search techniques, users can locate relevant and excellent material. Titles and

authors are often difficult for users to remember. According to (Table 6) data, 72 (85.71%) of users use keywords to find the information they need, compared to 68 (80.95%) and 59 (70.24%) who utilize subject headers and Boolean operators, respectively.

## 10. Ways to Locate E-Resources

Libraries, like living organisms, constantly expand their collections by subscribing to new resources. The question is how customers can access up-to-date information about the library's subscribed E-resources regularly. (Table 7) shows that while 39 (46.43%) are using library staff to help them find e-resources, 18 (21.43%) are using trial and error to find e-resources, and 12 (14.29%) are knowing from their research supervisors or guide. 9 (10.71%) are getting information through library orientation programs, and 6 (7.14%) are asking their friends for help.

## 11. Problems Faced while accessing E-Resources

(Table 8) shows the challenges that research academics experience while accessing and using e-resources. The majority of users 36 (42.86%) said their most common problem is a lack of access to laptops or personal computers. This is followed by 24 (28.57%) who claimed a lack of the essential abilities to access e-resources and 14 (16.67%) who stated that proper software, such as PDF support, is the next most common problem.

## 12. Training/User Orientation Programmes for Maximum Use of E-Resources

Training is an important activity to make maximum utilization of the library users. (Table 9) reveals that the majority of scholars 69 (82.14%) felt that they needed proper training to potentially utilize the e-resources in their research works, whereas 15 (17.86%) respondents, said they were comfortable using the e-resources with their current knowledge and abilities.

## 13. Findings

Researchers studying Social Science reported that "shodhganga" was the database that they used the most (97.62%), followed by N-List (89.29%), IndiaStat (84.52%), DOAJ (78.57%), JGate (75.00%), EPWRF (73.81%), and Web of Science (14.29%), which was the least used database.

The majority of social science research scholars use e-resources to complete their PhD work (94.05%), followed by writing research papers (92.86%), keeping up-to-date subject information (90.48%), enhancing subject knowledge (72.62%), and teaching purposes (70.24%).

**Table 1:** Gender-wise distribution of respondents

Sl. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	35	41.67%
2	Female	49	58.33%
Total		84	100%

**Table 2:** Age Group Wise: How long have been using E-Resources

Age Group	Less than 1 Year	1-2 Years	3-4 Years	5-6 Years	More than 6 Years	Total %
23-25	1	4	5	3	3	16 (19.04)
26-28	2	5	5	5	2	19 (22.62)
29-31	3	4	5	6	1	19 (22.62)
32-34	3	4	6	5	0	18 (21.43)
35-37	0	3	4	5	0	12 (14.29)
Total	9	20	25	24	6	84 (100 %)

**Table 3:** Use of databases by social science research scholars

	EPWRF	IndiaStat	JGate	Web of Science	DOAJ	N-List	Shodhganga
Yes	62 (73.81%)	71 (84.52%)	63 (75.00%)	12 (14.29%)	66 (78.57%)	75 (89.29%)	82 (97.62%)
No	22 (26.19%)	13 (15.48%)	21 (25.00%)	72 (85.71%)	18 (21.43%)	9 (10.71%)	2 (2.38%)
Total	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)

\*Multiple choices were given

**Table 4:** Awareness of E-Resources and easy access

	E-Resources under Consortium	Easy in Access
Yes	69 (82.14%)	68 (80.95%)
No	15 (17.86%)	16 (19.05%)
Total	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)

**Table 5:** Purpose of using E-Resources

Responses	Research Work	Enhancing Knowledge	Writing Research Papers	For Teaching Purpose	For keeping up-to-date subject information
Yes	79 (94.05%)	61 (72.62%)	78 (92.86%)	59 (70.24%)	76 (90.48%)
No	05 (05.95%)	23 (27.38%)	06 (07.14%)	25 (29.76%)	08 (09.52%)
Total	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)

\*Multiple choices were given

**Table 6:** Search strategy

Responses	Subject Heading for Searching Information	Keywords (Search Terms)	Field Searching (Title, Author, Year)	AND, OR, NOT (Boolean Operator)	Internet Search Engines (Google, Yahoo, Alta Vista)
Yes	68 (80.95%)	72 (85.71%)	55 (65.48%)	68 (80.95%)	59 (70.24%)
No	16 (19.05%)	12 (14.29%)	29 (34.52%)	16 (19.05%)	25 (29.76%)
Total	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)	84 (100.00%)

\*Multiple choices were given

**Table 7:** Ways to cocate E-Resources

Source	Response
Trial and Error	18 (21.43%)
With Guidance from Library Staff	39 (46.43%)
With Suggestions from Friends	6 (7.14%)
With Guidance from the Supervisor	12 (14.29%)
Library Orientations	9 (10.71%)
Total	84 (100.00%)

**Table 8:** Problems faced while accessingE-Resources

Source	Response
Lack of Skills	24 (28.57%)
Lack of Availability of Personal Laptops	36 (42.86%)
Problems with Accessing Appropriate Software	14 (16.67%)
Field Searching (Title, Author, Year) to find the Articles	10 (11.90%)
Total	84 (100.00%)

**Table 9:** Training/user orientation programmes

Responses	Total
Yes	69 (82.14%)
No	15 (17.86%)
Total	84 (100.00%)

The study also reveals that the majority of Social Science research researchers used e-resources for 3–4 years (29.76%), 5–6 years (28.57%), 1-2 years (23.81%), and less than a year (10.71%).

It was discovered that the majority of social science research scholars were having trouble accessing e-resources because Lack of Availability of Personal Laptops (42.86%), which was followed by a lack of search skills (28.57%), Problems with Accessing Appropriate Software (16.67%), and lack of search strategy field searching (11.90%).

Following the study, it was also shown that the majority of how researchers and scholars locate e-resources is with guidance from library staff (46.43%), followed by trial and error on their own (21.43%).

Additionally, it was discovered that researchers in the social sciences use keyword search (85.71%) as their primary method of accessing databases and e-resources, followed by subject headings for information searches and Boolean operators (80.95%), as well as Internet search engines (Google, Yahoo, Alta Vista) (70.24%).

The study reveals that the majority of research scholars (80.95%) are happy with the e-resource and database provided by the university.

Further investigation revealed that 82.14% of SS researcher academics were recommended to take part in more user orientation sessions to make the most use of e-resources.

#### 14. Suggestions

Based on an analysis of e-resource utilization among research scholars at Karnatak University, Dharwad, the following recommendations are made to enhance e-resource usage and awareness.

1. The central library should organize department-specific training and orientation programs for teachers and students to maximize the use of accessible e-resources. Organize product demonstrations and trials for new resources from publishers to keep consumers up to date on the latest advancements in their industries.
2. Implement high-speed Wi-Fi and LAN connection in campus and hostels, with appropriate security features for users.
3. The central library should implement content alert services, bulletin board services, library newsletters, social media platform posting, training programs, and online tutorials of the subscribed e-resources and databases to save users' time when looking up information about the availability and use of e-resources.
4. Researchers need to increase their literacy skills.
5. The development of web-based library services for researchers is necessary.
6. To enhance library services and draw in more patrons, new technology like e-book readers (kindle readers), self-help kiosks, QR codes, RFID Technology, etc. may need to be made possible in libraries.

- The central library should regularly collect user feedback to improve awareness and use of library resources among the patrons.

## 15. Conclusion

College and university libraries are modernizing their infrastructure to attract more users and provide a more user-friendly digital environment through the use of ICT technology. UGC collaborates with INFLIBNET to provide e-resources and databases to college and university libraries through a consortium. E-resources are becoming increasingly popular among library users due to their user-friendliness. Access to a wide range of e-resources and databases on desktops boosts research quality and confidence in faculty and students, allowing them to stay current in their fields. Users rely largely on e-resources for rapid access to information.

The study finds that Karnatak University, Dharwad frequently uses electronic resources. Most research researchers are both dependent on and well aware of e-resources. To maximize the use of these resources, the necessary infrastructure should be made available. The majority of users (69) (82.14%) said that to utilize e-resources for academic work effectively, they needed sufficient training; therefore, the library should regularly hold training sessions on both newly acquired and existing resources to the needs and requirements of the users. To optimize utilization while also assisting users in using e-resources 24/7, the library needs to educate them about these services. According to the statistics gathered, most users lack the necessary search abilities to find pertinent information. As a result, the library ought to provide instruction on search strategy so that patrons are knowledgeable about sophisticated search techniques, wildcard search, and Boolean search.

## 16. Source of Funding

None.


## 17. Conflict of Interest

None.


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