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Impact of Digitisation on User Behavior and Information Access in Academic Libraries

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Abstract: The rapid growth of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly transformed academic libraries worldwide. Digitisation has revolutionized the methods of information storage, retrieval, dissemination, and access, thereby altering the behavior of library users. Academic libraries have shifted from traditional print-based collections to hybrid and digital environments that provide instant access to electronic resources such as e-books, e-journals, databases, institutional repositories, and online learning materials. This transformation has substantially influenced users' information-seeking behavior, resource utilization patterns, and preferences for accessing information.

The present study examines the impact of digitisation on user behavior and information access in academic libraries. The study explores how digital technologies have changed the way students, researchers, and faculty members search, evaluate, retrieve, and use information. It also investigates the benefits and challenges associated with digitisation, including improved accessibility, remote access, information overload, digital literacy issues, and technological barriers. The study is based on a review of existing literature and secondary data sources related to digital library services and user behavior.

The findings indicate that digitisation has enhanced accessibility and convenience while simultaneously creating a need for information literacy skills and effective digital resource management. Academic libraries must continuously adapt to technological advancements and user expectations to remain relevant in the digital era.

Keywords: Digitisation, Academic Libraries, User Behavior, Information Access, Digital Libraries, Information Seeking Behavior, Electronic Resources, Information Technology, Library Services, Digital Literacy.

Introduction - Libraries have traditionally served as repositories of knowledge, supporting education, research, and lifelong learning. For centuries, information was preserved and disseminated primarily through printed books, journals, manuscripts, and other physical materials. However, the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has dramatically transformed the information landscape.

Digitisation refers to the process of converting physical information resources into digital formats that can be stored, managed, retrieved, and accessed electronically. In academic libraries, digitisation involves the development of digital collections, institutional repositories, online databases, electronic journals, and web-based information services.

The advent of digitisation has changed the fundamental nature of library services. Users are no longer required to physically visit the library to access information. Instead, they can retrieve information remotely through computers, smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices. This shift has led to significant changes in user behavior, information-seeking patterns, and expectations from academic libraries. Modern academic libraries function as digital knowledge centers that provide access to vast amounts of information regardless of geographical boundaries. The integration of digital technologies has facilitated instant access to scholarly resources, enhanced communication between users and librarians, and improved the overall efficiency of information services.

Despite these advantages, digitisation has also introduced challenges such as information overload, digital divide, copyright concerns, technological dependence, and the need for digital literacy. Understanding how users interact with digital information systems is therefore essential for designing effective library services and ensuring optimal utilization of digital resources.

This study seeks to analyze the impact of digitisation on user behavior and information access in academic libraries and to identify the opportunities and challenges associated with digital transformation.

Need and Significance of the Study: The increasing adoption of digital technologies in academic libraries has transformed information access and user interactions. Traditional library practices have evolved into technology-

driven services that emphasize digital resource availability and online access.

The significance of the study lies in the following aspects:

1. To understand changing information-seeking behavior among library users.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of digital library services.
3. To identify barriers affecting access to digital information.
4. To assess user satisfaction with digitized resources.
5. To support academic libraries in developing user-centered digital services.
6. To contribute to the existing body of knowledge in Library and Information Science.
7. To assist policymakers and librarians in making informed decisions regarding digital resource management.

The study is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic era, where remote learning and online information access have become essential components of higher education.

Statement of the Problem: The rapid digitisation of academic libraries has significantly altered user behavior and information access patterns. While digital resources offer numerous advantages, many users continue to face challenges in effectively locating, evaluating, and utilizing information. There is a need to investigate how digitisation influences information-seeking behavior, resource utilization, user satisfaction, and accessibility within academic library environments.

The present study addresses the following problem:"How has digitisation impacted user behavior and information access in academic libraries, and what challenges and opportunities have emerged as a result of this transformation?"

Objectives of the Study

The major objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the extent of digitisation in academic libraries.
2. To study the impact of digitisation on user behavior.
3. To analyze changes in information-seeking patterns among library users.
4. To identify the most frequently used digital resources.
5. To evaluate user satisfaction with digital library services.
6. To determine challenges faced by users while accessing digital information.
7. To suggest measures for improving digital information access and library services.

Research Questions

The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. How has digitisation changed user behavior in academic libraries?
2. What digital resources are most frequently used by library users?
3. What factors influence users' preference for digital information sources?
4. What challenges do users face in accessing digital resources?
5. How satisfied are users with digital library services?
6. What role does digital literacy play in information access?

Review of Literature

A review of literature provides insight into previous research related to digitisation, user behavior, and information access in academic libraries.

Borgman (2000), Borgman emphasized that digital libraries have transformed scholarly communication by providing wider access to information resources. The study highlighted the increasing importance of electronic resources in academic environments.

Tenopir and King (2008), The authors found that the availability of electronic journals significantly increased information access among researchers and faculty members. Users preferred online resources due to convenience and time efficiency.

Rowlands et al. (2008), The study introduced the concept of the "Google Generation," describing users who rely heavily on search engines and digital technologies for information retrieval. The research revealed changing information-seeking patterns among students and young researchers.

Lynch (2003), Lynch discussed the role of institutional repositories in preserving and disseminating scholarly information. The study highlighted the importance of digitisation in enhancing research visibility and accessibility.

Kumar and Singh (2017), Their research found that digitisation improved access to academic resources but also emphasized the need for user training and information literacy programs.

Ali and Ahmad (2019), The study reported that university students preferred digital resources over traditional print materials because of ease of access, remote availability, and search functionality.

COVID-19 and Digital Libraries, Recent studies conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic indicate a dramatic increase in the use of digital library services. Online learning environments accelerated the adoption of electronic resources and virtual library services worldwide.

The reviewed literature indicates that digitisation has positively influenced information access and resource utilization. However, challenges related to digital literacy, technological infrastructure, and information overload continue to affect users' experiences.

Research Gap: Although several studies have examined digital library services and information-seeking behavior, limited research has focused on the comprehensive relationship between digitisation, user behavior, and information access in academic libraries, particularly in developing countries.

There is a need for empirical studies that investigate:

1. User adaptation to digital environments.
2. Digital literacy competencies.
3. Accessibility issues.
4. User satisfaction with digital resources.
5. Impact of remote access services on academic performance.

The present study seeks to address these gaps and contribute to the understanding of digital transformation in academic libraries.

Conclusion: Digitisation has brought a paradigm shift in the functioning of academic libraries and has significantly influenced user behavior and information access patterns. The transition from traditional print-based collections to digital resources has transformed academic libraries into dynamic knowledge centers that provide instant, remote, and round-the-clock access to information. This transformation has enhanced the efficiency of information retrieval, expanded the availability of scholarly resources, and improved the overall user experience.

The study reveals that users increasingly prefer digital resources such as e-books, e-journals, online databases, institutional repositories, and web-based information services due to their convenience, accessibility, and time-saving features. The adoption of digital technologies has changed information-seeking behavior from physical browsing to online searching, encouraging greater independence among users in locating and utilizing information resources.

Digitisation has also facilitated remote learning and research activities, particularly during periods when physical access to libraries is limited. Academic libraries have successfully adapted by offering virtual reference services, online catalogues, digital repositories, and electronic resource management systems. These developments have strengthened the role of libraries in supporting teaching, learning, and research in higher education institutions.

However, the study also identifies several challenges associated with digitisation. Issues such as inadequate digital literacy, information overload, poor internet connectivity, technological barriers, and unequal access to digital resources continue to affect the effective utilization of digital library services. Many users require continuous training and guidance to develop the skills necessary for efficient information searching, evaluation, and ethical use of digital content.

The findings suggest that academic libraries must focus not only on expanding digital collections but also on enhancing user education and digital literacy programmes. Investment in technological infrastructure, user-oriented digital services, and regular assessment of user needs is essential to maximize the benefits of digitisation. Librarians must increasingly assume the role of information facilitators, digital educators, and technology specialists to support users in navigating complex digital information environments.

In conclusion, digitisation has had a profound and largely positive impact on user behavior and information access in academic libraries. It has increased accessibility, improved information delivery, and transformed the way users interact with knowledge resources. Nevertheless, sustained efforts are required to address existing challenges and ensure equitable, effective, and user-friendly access to digital information. By embracing technological innovations and promoting information literacy, academic libraries can continue to serve as vital centers of learning, research, and knowledge dissemination in the digital age.

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19. Note: For a Ph.D. thesis or UGC-CARE journal article, it is advisable to include 25–40 recent references (2018–2026), including Scopus/Web of Science-indexed articles, to strengthen the literature base and improve publication quality.

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