DIGITAL LITERACY SKILLS AMONG STUDENTS AND RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF THE LAW SCHOOL, BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY, VARANASI, INDIA: A STUDY

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the findings on digital literacy skills among students and research scholars of the Law School, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. For the purpose of data collection, 100 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 90(90%) responded. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents were male designated as LLB between 20-24 age groups. 78(86.67%) greater part of respondents use digital resources daily. It is also clear that highest numbers of 58(49.57%) respondents are using digital resources to update their subject knowledge in the field.

Keywords: digital literacy, digital resources, IT skills, Students, Searching techniques, BHU

Introduction

In this digital era, the continuous development in the digital technologies, it is essential for every person to cope with this development. To utilize the maximum benefits of such technological advancement everyone must be digitally literate. On the other hand, keeping digital gadgets does not mean digital literate. For becoming digital literate means one has to have skills to participate in the digital society. It includes both the ability and handling of ICT tool as and when need arises. At the same time as everybody witnessed, it is become a part of our life. It help learners to performance their tasks with effective and increased manner and also it gives greater engagement or satisfaction and more positive attitudes to learning. Hence, the government must take initiatives at grassroots level through various programme.

Without initiative it will also hinder communication at universally and make wider the digital divide which affects country progress.

Background of the Study

The Law School is one of the earliest Faculties established in the Banaras Hindu University, when teaching started in 1921-22. The modern building of Law School was sponsored by the Ford Foundation. During Prof. Anandjee's Deanship, the Law School reached a new height. The foundation stone of present building was laid down by the former Prime Minister of India, Late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri on 28th December, 1964. The Law School is located at a prominent place on the first semicircle around central registry and is housed in a beautiful building constituting the complex. The structure is same as that of Harvard Law School. The Law School has been pioneer in introducing full time three year LL.B course of studies and two year full time LL.M. programme. It has taken a lead and perhaps the only Law School in India in introducing two years full time special courses of LL.M. in Human Rights and Duties Educations.

It is the first Law School in India to introduce clinical legal education and legal aid program to cater the needs of the poor. The Law School has also taken a lead to introduce community oriented courses of law introducing Law Environment, Law and Country and Town Planning, Law and Poverty, Law and Population, Law and Animals and Many more which were unheard to most of the Law colleges of India. There are number of students who are doing research work in the area like Law of Taxation, Constitutional Law, Personal law, Intellectual Property Rights, International Law and many more subjects. The Law school is publishing a first rate law journal in the country on annual basis. Eminent Indian and foreign scholars contribute research papers for publication in journal. To promote skill of advocacy and love for legal profession for among the Law students, Moot Court Society is established in the Law School. The Banaras Law School was one of the Six Universities in India to start clinical legal services. The model developed by Law School has been judged as the best model by Honorable Mr. Justice P. N. Bhagwati, former Chief Justice of India (http://www.bhu.ac.in/lawfaculty/).

Review of Literature

Prakasha & Muniyappa (2017) carried a study on digital literacy among students and research scholars of Faculty of science Bangalore University. The findings of the study shows that 75% responded expressed that they need electronic information in addition to traditional print sources. It was also clear that the library would take initiative in promoting information literacy at the university level. In similar study, Saubari & Baharuddin (2016) undertook a research study to develop the awareness of digital literacy among students. The study was based on the three points framework stated in their work, digital literacy are preferred to use for students to apply it in their real life for knowledge seeking purpose. Therefore, this study has highlighted the on-going and growing concern for students to aware about the digital literacy which can less your burden for knowledge seeking approach and the new technologies learning method. Brar (2015) conducted a study among the health science professionals i.e. teachers and postgraduate students of Guru Gobind Singh Medical College (constitute college of Baba Farid University of Health Sciences), Faridkot. The questionnaire and interviews methods were adopted to collect the required data from the respondents for the study. Bansal (2015) examined and revealed that a good percentage of students from commerce stream possess their own desktop, laptop and smart phones. 45.52 % students are familiar with E-mail whereas in the case of Twitter, Blog and Skype the figure is very low. The author has suggested improving the current picture, digital literacy skills must be imparted to every graduate because of this only they can become a part of the knowledge society.

On the other hand, Shabana Tabusum et al. (2014) studied and reveal that the present study was undertaken in the Tiruvallur District of Tamil Nadu to understand the digital competency of Arts and Science Students with special reference to three colleges. The study was conducted to check the level of use of digital resources and the proficiency in the using digital information. 300 questionnaires were distributed among three colleges in and Tiruvallur Districts, of which 224 questionnaires were selected for further Statistical analysis. Cordell (2013) considered that digital literacy is a more recent concept than information literacy and can relate to multiple categories of library users in multiple types of libraries. The authors further stated that determining the relationship between information literacy and digital literacy is essential before revision of the ACRL Standards can proceed. Abdollahyan & Ahmadi (2011) investigators revealed that they have developed a new method based on the experiences of other scholars but more applicable to the case of Iran and academic ground of research. The study included 376 undergraduate students. The findings of this survey indicate that generally student's digital literacy skills are not desirable. It further shows that a direct and positive relation between times spent on internet and

familiarity with digital literacy skills. The study also finally attached several measures that would help them to predict student's digital literacy skills. Blummer (2008) expressed in his study that the practices of these individuals through three perspectives, including: studies centered on general youth populations, research discussing innovative programs targeting students from low income families, and articles tracking digital literacy competencies among young immigrant learners. Further, the study highlighted that young people's efforts to express themselves through their own online literacy. To this end it remains essential that educators correlate students' digital literacy habits in their personal lives to instructional practices in school.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives of the study are:

- To find out the frequency of use of digital resources;
- To identify the purpose of using digital resources;
- To find out the types of digital information used for academic activities;
- To examine the preferred location to access digital resources;
- To identify IT skills possessed by respondents; and
- To identify the information searching techniques used by students and research scholars.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in the Law School, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. In this research study survey method was adopted. For collecting of data from the respondents' questionnaire was administered. Investigators have visited to the Law School, Banaras Hindu University personally. 100 questionnaires were distributed among the students and research scholars, out of which 90(90%) responded. The analysis of data presented in the subsequent sections is based on the responses received from the students and researchers of the Law School, Banaras Hindu University.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. **Demographic Information**

The demographic profiles of users reveals sex, age group and education level which is summarized below that the total 90 users are differently designated in the categories of 'LLB' 44(48.89%), 'LLM' 30(33.33%) and 'Research scholars' 16(17.78%). The majority of users 62(68.89%) are of male followed by 28(31.11%) female. On the other hand, the age wise break up depict that 42(46.66%) users belong to age group of '20-24' years', followed by 25(27.78%) users in the age group of '25-29' while 23(25.56%) fall in the range of '30-34' years'. As a result majority of the respondents are male designated as LLB between 20-24 age groups (Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Frequency (N=90)	%
Sex	Male	62	68.89
	Female	28	31.11
Age	20-24	42	46.66
	25-29	25	27.78
	30-35	23	25.56
Education Level	LLB	44	48.89
	LLM	30	33.33
	Research Scholar	16	17.78

2. **Frequently of Use of digital resources**

The frequency of use of digital resources in Table 2 shows that the largest group of students and research scholars used digital resources daily 78(86.67%). followed by once in a two days 6(6.67%), once in a week 3(3.33%), twice in a week 2(2.22%) and occasionally 1(1.11%). It is clear from the table 2 that a greater part of students and research scholars 78(86.67%) use digital resources daily.

Table 2 Frequently of Use

Use	Frequency	%
Daily	78	86.67
Once in a two days	6	6.67
Once in a week	3	3.33
Twice in a week	2	2.22
Occasionally	1	1.11
Total	90	100.00

3.Purpose of using digital resources

The analysis of purpose of using digital resources is given in Table 3. Data reveals that the purpose of using digital resources to update subject knowledge 58(49.57%) followed by to prepare course materials for study and to write research paper 16(13.68%), to attend the conferences/seminars 13(11.11%), to support research 9(7.69%) and to carry out project work 5(4.27%). It expose that highest number of respondents 58(49.57%) are using digital resources to update their subject knowledge in the field.

Table 3: Purpose of using digital resources

Purpose	Frequency	%
To prepare course material for study	16	13.68
To update subject knowledge	58	49.57
To support research	9	7.69
To attend the conference/seminar	13	11.11
To carry out project work	5	4.27
To write research paper	16	13.68
Total	117	100.00

4. Preferred Location to access digital resources

Respondents were asked to state their preferred location to access digital resources. From Table 2 it is clear that hostel 55(37.41%) followed by cyber library 25(17.00%), central library 24(16.33%), department library 19(12.93%) and home 24(16.33%). It indicates that students and research scholars' mostly preferred location to access digital resources was in the hostel 55(37.41%).

Table 4: Location to access digital resources

Location	Frequency	Percentage
Department Library	19	12.93
Central Library	24	16.33
Cyber Library	25	17.00
Hostel	55	37.41
Home	24	16.33
Total	147	100

5. Types of digital information resources used

The preferences stated by the users on various types of digital resources are as follows, most of the respondents used websites 56(30.94%) followed by e-journals 34(18.78%), ebook 28(15.47%), e-database 24(13.26%), news group/mailing list 23(12.71%) and e-newspapers 16(8.84%). The findings show that the large number of the respondents used websites, e-journals, e-book, e-database and news group/mailing list while the e-newspapers used by very less as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5: Types of digital information resources used

Types of information sources	Frequency	%
E-Books	28	15.47
E- journal	34	18.78
E-database	24	13.26
E- Newspapers	16	8.84
News group/Mailing list	23	12.71
Website	56	30.94
Total	181	100

6. Awareness of digital resources

The awareness of digital resources reveals that 59(24.28%) students and research scholars said that they are well known about All India reporter (AIR) followed by Manupatra 49(20.16%), Banaras law journal and Supreme court journal (SCJ) 39(16.05), West law India 24(9.88%), Allahabad law journal 21(8.64%)

and CD-ROM database 12(4.94%). Analyses show that majority of students and research scholars were aware of digital resources available in their subject domain as given in table 6 below.

Table 6: Awareness of digital resources

Digital Resources	Frequency	%
CD- ROM Database	12	4.94
Manupatra	49	20.16
West law India	24	9.88
Banaras law journal	39	16.05
All India Reporter(AIR)	59	24.28
Allahabad law journal	21	8.64
Supreme court Journal(SCJ)	39	16.05
Total	243	100

7. Information technology skills possessed

Table 7 depicts that 73(58.40%) of the respondents have possessed internet surfing skills followed by multimedia 26(20.80%), MS-office 15(12.00%) and programming language 11(8.80%). It is clear from the study that majority of 73(58.40%) students and research scholars' possessed internet surfing skill.

Table 7: IT skills possessed

Types of IT skill	Frequency	%
Internet surfing	73	58.40
MS-office	15	12.00
Multimedia	26	20.80
Programming Language	11	8.80
Total	125	100.00

8. Search tools used for collecting of information

Table 8 reveals that a large majority of students and research scholars 78(50.98%) are using search engine for collecting of information. On the other hand 26(16.99%) used web portals followed by subject gateways 20(13.08%), online bibliographic databases 12(7.84%), digital library 9(5.88%) and institutional

repository 8(5.23%). The result shows that maximum number of students and research scholars 78(50.98%) were using search engines for collecting searching of information.

Table 8: Search tools used

Types of Search Tool	Frequency	%
Search engine	78	50.98
Subject gateways	20	13.08
Digital library	9	5.88
Institutional Repository	8	5.23
Online Bibliographic databases	12	7.84
Web portals	26	16.99
Total	153	100

9. Searching techniques used for information

Table 9 shows that majority of 61(45.86%) students and research scholars use basic search technique for searching of information followed by 32(24.06%) field search title/URL etc., advance search 21(15.79%), Boolean operator 12(9.02%) and truncation 7(5.26%). Analysis revealed that majority of 61(45.86%) students and research scholars use basic search technique for searching of information.

Table 9: Searching techniques used

Searching Technique	Frequency	%
Base search	61	45.86
Advanced search	21	15.79
Boolean operator	12	9.03
Truncation	7	5.26
Field search title/URL.etc	32	24.06
Total	133	100

10. Impact of digital resources on your academic activities

Respondents' expressed impact of digital resources on your academic activities. Table 10 shows that access to an updated information 61(40.40%), wider range of information 34(22.52%), easier access to information 32(21.19%) and faster access to information 24(15.89%). The study revealed that the majority of 61(40.40%) students and research scholars access to an updated information.

Table 10: Impact of digital resources on your academic activities

Impact	Frequency	%
Access to an updated information	61	40.40
Easier access to information	32	21.19
Faster access to information	24	15.89
Wider range of information	34	22.52
Total	151	100

Major Findings

- The result of the study shows that a majority of the respondents are male designated as LLB between 20-24 age groups.

- It is clear from the study that majority of students and research scholars 78(86.67%) used digital resources daily.

- It expose that highest number of 58(49.57%) respondents are using digital resources to update their subject knowledge in the field.

- It indicates that the mostly preferred location to access digital resources was in the hostel 55(37.41%).

- The findings show that the large number of the respondents used websites, e-journals, e-book, e-database and news group/mailing list etc.

- Analyses show that majority of students and research scholars were well aware of digital resources available in their subject domain.

- The result shows that greatest number of students and research scholars 78(50.98%) were using search engines for collecting of information.

- Analysis revealed that mainstream of 61(45.86%) students and research scholars are using basic search technique for searching of information.

Conclusion

The present study revealed that greater part of respondents use digital resources in daily basis. It was found that they were using digital resources to update their subject knowledge. The investigators also pointed out that majority of respondent were well aware of digital resources available in their subject domain. Digital literacy is a broader concept that is frequently increasing. It consists of developing new skills and knowledge which provides awareness and advanced level thinking skills. Therefore, it is

essential to integrate digital literacy in educational core curriculum to appropriate utilization of digital information resources by the academic community.

Acknowledgement

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