

Impact of Usage of web for the Learning Behavior of the Distance and Off Campus Learners: A study conducted at the Virtual Resource Centre of the OUSL library

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The Internet now spreads dynamically around the world by giving distinctive advantages to human beings. The technology reduces the barrier between knowledge domain and the knowledge users by providing information through the superhighway. Today, the Web is evolving aggressively as the easiest and cheapest knowledge-harvesting platform and it attracts more knowledge harvesters than conventional means. It was observed that the modern learner is always preferred to use the information for their study purposes using Web sites.

The main objective of the study is to explore Influence and Impact of Internet to the Learning Behavior of the Open and Distance learners.

For the study, a sample of 75 library users was used and which was stratified upon the nature of the population; i.e. undergraduate students, postgraduate students, and academic staff. A Questionnaire was administered among 75 subjects. Other than the survey, 20 users were interviewed as focus group and the same 20 were observed for their information searching behaviour. Data Collected was analysed to obtain the behavioural pattern in gathering information for their study purposes and to meet other professional information needs. The SPSS was used to perform the analysis.

According to the study significant numbers of undergraduates' students, use Web as main supplementary tool for studying and they strongly believed reliability of the sites accessed. However, in case of post graduates students, they preferred the conventional library usage as main supplementary tool than the Web. But it was observed that the postgraduate users use the web with thorough knowledge about the scholarly sites and its contents. Significant number of users strongly preferred using the Internet facilities within the library rather than using the access in the computer labs elsewhere in the campus. The reason identified for this behaviour was identified as; within the library the users are allowed and supplied with the necessary course materials, recommended texts and other relevant materials available in the library. It is also observed that their 'learning flow' is not disturbed as happened in other computer labs. Moreover the learners are in a learning culture within the library.

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