

Full Length Research

Web searching behavior: A case study among the library users of Silchar Medical College

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In the developing world time is a crucial factor and availability of timely information is the necessity for success of any programme. Web has been emerged as the most powerful tool for the instant access of millions of information resources. This paper highlighted the result of a survey of web searching behaviour among the library users of Silchar medical college. The present study attempts to examined web searching behavior of library users, in terms of user's demographic background, capability with web, purpose of use, searching skills, search techniques, frequency of use, favorite search engine, level of satisfaction, Impact on academic excellence etc. For the present study the researchers adopted survey method and questionnaire as a data collection tool. A questionnaire comprising of 13 questions have been distributed among randomly selected 300 library users which comprised of students only from various branches of Silchar medical college. Out of the distributed 300 questionnaire a total of 260 filled in questionnaire have been received by the investigator. The result of the study shows that majority of the user were using this technology for updating their knowledge, preparing class note and course related study.

Key words: World Wide Web, Internet, Information and Communication Technology, HTTP protocol, Medical College.

INTRODUCTION

WWW or Web is a significant educational tool and has become a vital instrument for teaching, learning and research purpose. Initially the Web was developed at CERN (Geneva) by Tim Berners-Lee and became almost a synonym for Internet itself (Poulter, 2003). In fact, the two terms are not synonymous; both are separate but related things. The Internet is a massive network of networks, while the web is a way of accessing information over the medium of the Internet by using the HTTP protocol. Impact of web has been felt in everywhere; libraries are also using this technology in their day to day work for providing various services to the user community. Feeling the wonderful avenues of web

the library users are also depending more and more on the facilities of Web for their professional as well as personal requirement. The main objective of this study is to analyse the web searching behaviour of the library users of Silchar medical college (SMC). There are some other objectives also like;

- To know the demographic profile of the respondents;
- To know the purposes of using the web;
- To find the frequency and experience of web searching;
- To know how far web is supporting the library

user in growing their knowledge.

- To know the favorite search engine among the respondents;
- To ascertain the impact of web on the library user.
- To know the level of satisfaction among the respondents;
- To trace out the problems faced by the respondents while using the Web.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study covers only the web searching behaviour of the library users of the Silchar Medical College (SMC), Silchar. The teacher and the staffs of the SMC are excluded from the present study as they visited the library very less for searching the relevant information. The limitation of the study lies in the fact that it covers only the library users of the SMC, Silchar and the generalization beyond this population is limited.

METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is a science that studying how research is done scientifically. It is a way to systematically solve the research problem by logically adopting various steps. For the present study entitled "Web searching behaviour: a case study among the library users of Silchar medical college" survey method has been adopted. For collecting data related to the present study questionnaire has been taken as a research tool. A self-designed questionnaire comprising of 13 questions have been prepared based on the objectives of the study by the researcher himself and has been circulated personally to each and every respondent through simple random sampling technique. A total of 300 questionnaires have been distributed among the library users of SMC and out of which 260 questionnaires was returned back by the respondents which exhibited a response rate of 86.67%. The data which were collected through the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed by simple statistical techniques in this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Selected important literatures found relevant to the present study are given as follows.

An informative review of web searching studies by Jansen and Pooch (2001) compares the searching characteristics of web users with those of users of traditional IR systems. They found differences in the behavior of the two categories of searchers in using terms per query, searching session length and use of

Boolean operators or advance search features. Ebersole (2005) reviews the research conducted in 1998-99 examining students' perceptions and uses of the Web for academic purposes. The results of the content analysis of sites visited by students suggest that students believe the Web to be an important and valuable resource. Kumar (2010) did a study and study result revealed that more than three quarters of respondents finds important sites in the subject areas are not known by them, and more than half indicated that they faced the problem of finding relevant information. Thanuskodi (2011) in his study found that the researchers in the sciences (100%) have a positive attitude toward the Internet and they feel comfortable gaining information through it for academic and personal purposes. Above mentioned studies indicated that a good number of literatures have focused on how users search the web and discussed on several factors related to web search behavior but not a single study has been done on web searching behaviour of medical learners, so these study will surely help to understand their web searching behaviour.

SILCHAR MEDICAL COLLEGE (SMC), SILCHAR: AN OVERVIEW

Silchar Medical College (SMC) started its journey in 1968. It is a government runs medical college cum hospital located at Silchar in the southern Assam. It is the only referral hospital in the southern part of Assam, also referred to as the Barak Valley. Being situated in a strategic geographic location, it also renders its services to the ailing community of the neighboring states like Mizoram, North Tripura, West Manipur and South Meghalaya. Silchar medical college gets the recognition of MBBS course by MCI in 1976. A total of 100 students are admitted in SMC, Silchar for Degree courses and 45 students for P.G courses annually. From 2010 onwards SMC, Silchar comes under the affiliation of Srimanta Sankaradeva University of Health Sciences.

CENTRAL LIBRARY SMC, SILCHAR

The Central Library of SMC, Silchar is housed in the first floor of the Administrative Block. It is a well-equipped library, centrally located with easy access to the students, faculty members and other users. The college has been provided with the facility of connection to the National Medical Library with access to more than a thousand of Online Medical Journals. The Library is kept open from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM on all working days except on Saturday. On every Saturday the Library is kept open from 8:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The library is having a number of computers with multimedia facility. Internet Services have been provided by the NIC through the National

Table 1. Response Rate

No. of Questionnaire Distributed	No. of Questionnaire Received	No. of Questionnaire not Received	Percentage (%) of Response
300	260	40	86.67

Table 2. Gender wise distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	154	60
Female	106	40

Table 3. Experience as a Web user

Experience of web searching	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than one 1year	9	3.46
1 - 2 years	17	6.54
2 - 3 years	25	9.62
3 - 4 years	78	30.00
More than 4 years	131	50.38
Total	260	100

Knowledge Network. Keeping in view with the latest development of information technology, CDS/ISIS, an integrated software management package have been installed to cover all the functions of library.

DATA ANALYSIS

RESPONSE RATE

The self-designed questionnaire prepared by the researcher himself has been distributed among the randomly selected 300 numbers of library users of SMC, Silchar. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 260 respondents have returned back the filled in questionnaire with a satisfactory response rate of 86.67%. (Table 1)

GENDER RATIO OF THE RESPONDENTS

Out of the 260 respondents of the present study 154 respondents were male whereas 106 respondents were female. The ratio of the male and female respondents was 60:40 (Table 2, Figure 1).

WEB SEARCHING CHARACTERISTIC OF RESPONDENTS

WEB SEARCHING EXPERIENCE

The respondents were asked to mention about the period, since they had been using the Web. Table 3 shows that a majority of the respondents that is 131 (50.38%) have been an experience of web searching for more than 4 years, 78 (30.00%) of them 3 to 4 years, 25 (9.62%) of them 2 to 3 years, 17 (6.54%) of them 1 to 2 years and 9 (3.46%) respondents respond that they have been using Web for less than 1 year. This indicates that library users of Silchar medical college have a long experience of using the Web.

LOCATION OF WEB USE

The largest group of the respondents 251 i.e. 96.53% reported that their favourite place for accessing the web was Home/Hostel, followed by 186 (71.53%) respondents searched at their department itself, 140 (53.85%) respondents at central library, 45 (17.30%) respondents at cybercafé and only 12 respondents opined that they accessed at other places (Table 4).

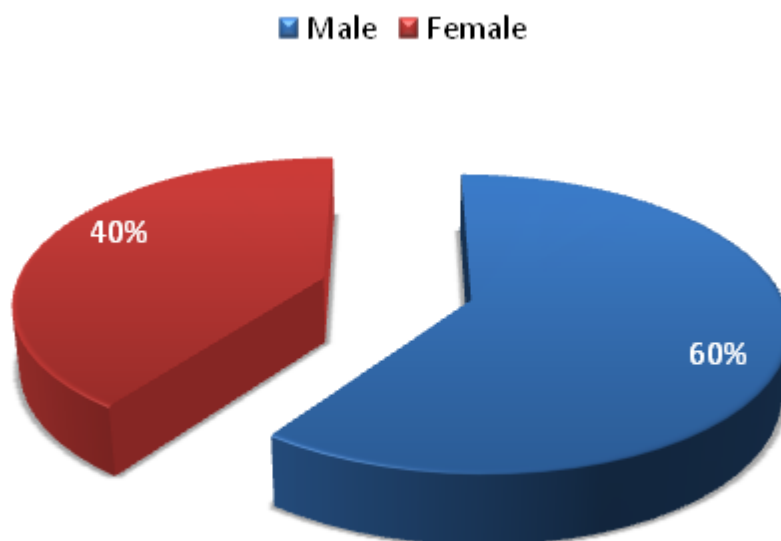


Figure 1. Gender Ration of Respondent

Table 4. Location for using web

Location	Frequency	Percentage (%)
At Central Library	140	53.85
At Department	186	71.53
At Home/Hostel	251	96.53
At Cybercafé	45	17.30
Other Place	12	4.61

WEB SEARCHING GEARS

The respondents were asked to mention their gears or gadgets, which they used for web searching. Table 5 revealed that 71.92% library user used smart phone for web searching which is the highest. The below table show the full picture of the data collected.

FREQUENCY OF WEB SEARCH

The respondents were asked to mention how often they used the Web. The results indicate that 98 (37.69%) respondents search the web on 'daily' basis which followed by 60 (23.07%) 'at least once a week' basis whereas only 48 (18.47%) responded that they search

the web for 'At least once a fortnight' basis. It is understood from the analysis that Web has a great impact on their life and they prefer to use the Web on daily basis (Table 6).

PURPOSE OF WEB SEARCHING

The main objective of this question was to find out the purpose of searching the web. Analysis shows that highest number of respondents 55.72% searches the web for class assignments, 45.38% for communications, 39.61% for downloading multimedia i.e. video, audio, software etc., 42.67% for social networking, 35.76% for doing research work, 32.30% for online shopping and 27.30% for online ticket booking. The finding indicates an

Table 5. Use of Gears

Gears	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Laptop	141	54.23
Desktop	91	35.0
Smart Phone	187	71.92
GSM mobile	54	20.76
Other	12	4.61

Table 6. Frequency of Web Search

Frequency of Web Search	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	98	37.69
At least once a week	60	23.07
At least once a fortnight	48	18.47
At least once a month	39	15.00
Rarely	15	5.77
Total	260	100

Table 7. Purpose of Web searching

Web Searching Purpose	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Class assignment	145	55.72
Research work	93	35.76
Communications	118	45.38
Accessing news and current affairs	79	30.38
Social networking	111	42.67
Online ticket booking	71	27.30
Online shopping	84	32.30
Downloading Multimedia	103	39.61
Other	9	3.46

emergent dependence of the respondents on Web-based information resources for education purposes. The finding confirms that web is an important communication means where students can maintain and expand interactions among colleagues, families and other groups with common interests (Table 7, Figure 2).

SEARCHING TECHNIQUE

Table 8 shows that almost all the respondents prefer to use search engine for searching information on the web. 96.53% of the respondents use search engines and only

3.46% respondents type the web address directly, which shows that majority of the respondents is not aware about the web addresses of the particular website of their need.

FAVORITE SEARCH ENGINE

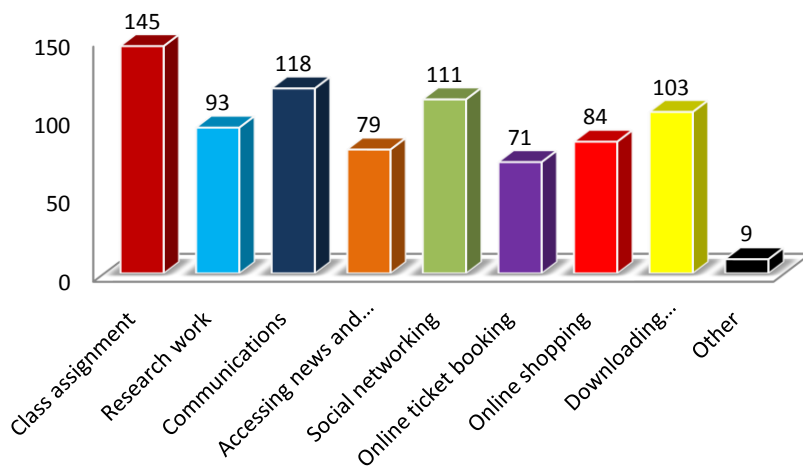
Table 9 revealed that most of the respondents that is 80.38% use Google search engine for finding their required information from the web which trailed by Yahoo 11.53%, MSN 2.69, others 1.15 and Alta Vista 0.76. It reveals from the analysis that most Google is the most

Table 8. Ways to search information on the web

Ways to search	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Type the Web address directly	9	3.46
Use search engines	251	96.53
Any other	0	0.00%

Table 9. Use of web search engines

Search Engines	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Google	209	80.38
Yahoo	30	11.53
Excite	0	0.00
MSN	7	2.69
Alta Vista	2	0.76
Lycos	0	0.00
Guruji	0	0.00
Others	3	1.15
Total	251	100.00

**Figure 2.** Purpose of web searching

favorite search engine.

BROWSING HITS

Below table revealed that most of the respondents prefer

to visit only the results of the first page of search engine for a particular query. A majority of the respondents 187 are satisfied that initial ten (10) results are good enough to answer their information needs. 41 respondents marked the 2nd option that is 20 hits (Table 10)

Table 10. Browsing Hits

Hits	Frequency	Percentage (%)
10	187	71.92
20	41	15.76
30	18	6.92
40	07	2.70
50	04	1.53
More than 50	03	1.15
Total	260	100

Table 11. Method of learning web searching skill

Methods	Frequency	Percentage (%)
By trial and error method	138	53.07
By friends help	59	22.69
By professional courses	41	15.67
By help from college staffs	18	6.92
Other	04	1.53
Total	260	100

Table 12. Problems in web searching

Problems	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low bandwidth	89	34.23
Difficulty in retrieving relevant information	46	17.69
Irrelevant information	37	14.23
Cost problem	25	9.61
Privacy problem	9	3.46
Unaware of the important sites in specific field	34	13.07
It takes too long to view/download pages	18	6.92
Other	0	0.00
Total	260	100.00

METHOD OF LEARNING WEB SEARCHING SKILL

Table 11 shows that Trial and error method was the commonly used method for learning web searching skills, a total of 138 respondent's i. e.53.07% used this followed by 59 (22.69%), 41 (15.76), 18 (6.92%) and 04 (1.53%) numbers of respondents opined that they acquired web searching skills by friends help, by professionals courses, by help from college staffs and others methods respectively.

PROBLEMS IN WEB SEARCHING

Web searching is not at all free from problems. This study

also reveals the same. The respondents of the present study were asked about their problems in searching the information on web. The Below Table 13 shows that a large number of the respondents 34.23% face the problem of low bandwidth followed by 17.69% difficulty in retrieving relevant information, 14.23% of irrelevant information, 13.07% of unaware of the important sites in specific field, 9.61% of cost problem, 6.92% it takes too long to view/download pages, and lastly 3.46% for privacy problem (Table 12)

LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

The respondents were asked to mention about their level

Table 13. Level of satisfaction

Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Satisfied	101	38.84
Partially satisfied	64	24.61
Fully Satisfied	84	32.30
Not satisfied	09	3.46
Partially not satisfied	0	0.00
Fully not satisfied	0	0.00
Don't know	02	0.76
Total	260	100

of satisfaction with the information retrieved through the web. 38.84% of the respondents opined that they were satisfied, 32.30% fully satisfied, 24.61% partially satisfied whereas 3.46% opined that they were not satisfied with the retrieved information through the web. The study result also shows that two respondents do not have any idea regarding their level of satisfaction. No one has marked partially not satisfied and fully not satisfied (Table 13).

DISCUSSIONS

Bhatti and et.al (2011) conducted a survey on the use of Internet by social scientist at BZ University, Multan. 38% respondent pointed out that lack of knowledge and training about Internet information retrieving techniques is a major problem for Internet access whereas in the present study 34.23% respondent opined that low bandwidth was the major problem in accessing the web which was similar with the study of Kaur (2000), where 76.5% of the respondents facing the problem of slow internet speed. This problem needs to be solved in priority basis to promote easy and fast access of web. To solve these problems authority should have to ensure regularly the better performance of the servers, computers and others hardware and software, have to allocate and spend adequate fund for building proper ICT infrastructure in college campus. Result of the present study also shows that Google is the most favourite search engine among the respondents, 80.38% used it for searching on the web which was consistent with the findings from Sinha (2010) study. The study result revealed that 96.53% of the respondent's accessed web either from their home or hostel which is may be because 71.92% of the respondents have smart phone, 54.23% laptops and 35% have desktop of their own.

Present study found that a total of 71.39% of respondent were satisfied with the initial ten (10) results retrieved by the search engine for any query term and they believed that this results were good enough to

answer their information needs which is similar to the study result of Malik and Mahmood (2009). A study conducted by Chandran (2000) on use of Internet resources and services in S. V. University, Tirupathi environment indicated that more than 25% of the respondents used the Internet for 2-3 times a week but in present study 37.69% respondents searching the web on daily basis which shows that the respondents of the present study were regular web user and prefer web as an informative media for meeting their peculiar information needs.

CONCLUSION

World Wide Web (WWW) has emerged as the single most powerful vehicle for providing access to unlimited information. Web is an inseparable part of today's higher educational system. The present study reveals web searching pattern of the library users of Silchar medical college. From the present study it has been cleared that the library users of Silchar medical college finds web as a powerful tool for meeting their information needs. Web facility has enabled the library user to enhance their academic excellence by providing them the latest information and access to worldwide information. The dependency on the web and its services is increasing day by day and the respondents of the present study are also feeling the same. They depend more and more on the web for their various educational purposes. With other studies conducted in India and abroad about web searching behaviour, this study also witnessed that web plays a great role among the students. There are some inherited problems associated with the proper use of web services. The above suggestions will surely help the college authority to overcome the constraints and provide better facilities to the users. There is a massive scope for future research in web searching behaviour and comparison of web search behaviour among the library users of different medical colleges of Assam.

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