Usage of Online Databases and User Perceptions Towards the Facilities Provided:
a case study at University of Moratuwa

By

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ABSTRACT

In the past the main role of the libraries was ownership and storage. But today it has been replaced by accessibility and availability of materials. Developments of these new services mainly depended on the feed back of the end users. Therefore, conducting of user surveys was very important to obtain the exact situation of the library services.

There were two aims of this case study. First aim was to present a comparison and an evaluation of user interfaces and the functionality of web based e-journals and databases. The second aim of the study was to find out the extent of accepting electronic journals and databases by the users. The objectives of the study were to explore the use of online databases, the user perception towards online databases, user satisfaction with facilities provided by the library for using online resources and the factors that affect the usage of these resources.

Data for the study was obtained from the usage statistical reports (provided by the vendors) and the user survey. The participants of the user survey were dawn from four categories of the University, academic staff members, postgraduate students, undergraduate students and students of Institute of Technology – University of Moratuwa (ITUM). Total of 400 participants were selected for the survey. Online journal and database features were analyzed according to pre-defined guidelines based on user friendliness and functionality.

Many similarities and few differences were found among the features of electronic journals and databases. The main difference was found in the area of query formulation. Common retrieval features included Boolean operators, phrase searching, match of exact words or phrases, truncation and wildcard characters. Interpretation and implementation of these features had differences among the online journals and databases.

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Analysis confirmed that frequency of use of electronic databases have been restricted only to few databases. A low usage level was observed for the online journals compared to print journals. Academic members and postgraduate students had higher online resource usage than the undergraduate students and ITUM students. The major difficulties examined within the study included, lack of computer and Internet facilities, lack of awareness to electronic resources provided by the library, ineffective communication channels, inefficient support of the library and irrelevancy of articles in the provided databases.