

Evaluating the use of scholarly databases by undergraduates at Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology

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Scholarly databases are a vital component of academic learning and research, offering access to peer-reviewed journals, e-books, and conference proceedings. The Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT) invests significantly in subscribing to major scholarly databases such as IEEE Xplore, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight. However, it remains uncertain whether these resources are being effectively utilized by students. This study aimed to evaluate the use of scholarly databases by final year undergraduates in the Faculty of Computing at SLIIT. These students were chosen as they depend heavily on scholarly databases for coursework and final year research. The population of 300 students with active library memberships was identified through the Library Management System (LMS), and a sample of 169 was selected using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table and simple random sampling. Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire, with 130 valid responses received (76.9% response rate). The findings revealed that 31% of students used databases weekly, 25% used them rarely, and 18% had never used them. IEEE Xplore was the most frequently accessed database (76%). Scholarly databases were primarily used for final-year research (66%), assignments (62%), and group projects (53%). Key challenges included a lack of search skills (41%), reliance on free online resources (34%), and difficulty in evaluating sources (23%). To address these challenges, students proposed step-by-step guides (68%), short video tutorials (67%), and easier remote access (47%). The study concludes that although students recognize the value of scholarly databases, their effective use is limited by a lack of awareness and confidence. Addressing these issues through structured training, simplified access, and stronger promotion can improve student engagement and ensure that the university's investment in these resources more effectively supports teaching, learning, and research.

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