Dependency on E-Resources among Social Science Faculty in Iranian Universities

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ABSTRACT: The present study is aimed at assessment of e-resources dependency by Iranian social science faculty members. A total of 232 faculty members from various universities from Iran were randomly selected. A questionnaire measuring dependency on various e-resources: e-books, e-journals, e-tutorials, online databases, CD-ROM databases and e-reports was prepared by the investigator and administered to the sample selected. Statistical methods like descriptive statistics and chi-square tests were employed to verify the hypotheses. Results revealed that Iranian faculty members were more dependent on all the e-resources selected for the study. It was also observed that Iranian faculty members were more dependent on e-journals, followed by e-books, and Online data bases and least on e-reports. The reasons for dependency on various e-resources have been discussed.

I. Introduction

Electronic information resources, in reality have become the backbone of many academic organizations. The awareness and use of electronic information sources by faculty members depends mainly on skills of each individual to locate discrete knowledge elements. Information explosion has increased in the amount of electronic information sources available on the web. Electronic information resources help to expand access, increase usability and effectiveness and establish new ways for individuals to use information to be more productive in their endeavors. Awareness of electronic resources may aid the users in keeping abreast with current developments in their respective subject fields, in contrast with print media. The use of electronic information resources is necessary for users mainly because the electronic resources provide better, faster and easy access to information than information accessed through print media. Electronic information resources can be relied upon for timely information which upholds the quote: right information to right user at right time.

II. Literature Review

Numerous studies have been undertaken to explore the electronic information sources. Lee (2002) published a handbook on building electronic resource collections, beginning with a definition of electronic databases and the general principles of collection development and then proceeding to discuss the purchase and use of e-books and e-journals as well as methods of user access. The author highlights the collection development activities of assessing, acquiring, and delivering electronic databases from initial appraisal through acquisition, budgeting, installation, marketing, and evaluation.

Linda Ashcroft and Chris Watts (2004) stated that there are similar issues in the take-up of e-books to those of other electronic resources, such as e-journals. These include changes in professional and management skills, such as collection development, marketing and evaluation, user education, technological skills and communication skills.

Bayugo and Agbeko (2007) reported on a survey of convenient access to, and use of, electronic databases (CD-ROM and online) with full-text journals and their effect on information seeking behavior of health sciences faculty at the College of Health Sciences of the University of Ghana. The survey documented faculty¡¯s preferences of print and electronic resource, and the specific databases and full-text journals. The results showed that faculty member were unaware of the two full-text journal databases (HINARI and PERI) available at the library. Hence they resorted to PUBMED as their source of access to full-text articles. They concluded that most faculties now prefer using electronic access to information (CD-ROM/online) to traditional print indexes and abstracts.

Dugdale (2001) emphasized the contradiction facing those who are attempting to create equality of access to information while new aspects of inequality may be created. This may occur even where all members theoretically possess equal access to the same material.

Fisher (1998) briefly reviewed information¡¯s checkered history and critically analyzed electronic information sources with particular reference to social science CD-ROMs and the Internet. The content of such databases is nothing as geographically and culturally diverse as we are led to believe. This unequal and discriminatory supply of information, aided and abetted by increasing commoditization, is both the product of, and an influence on, the quality of academic research and teaching. Information professionals can take steps to mitigate information inequality.

Stabler (1991) explained that end users of CD-ROMs often need assistance in database content, search protocols, and use of computers. There is a necessity for a good training program to develop a positive attitude, competency of staff, and

consistency of service. He described a model training program developed by the New Mexico State University Library. By using a team approach of a subject specialist and the CD-ROM coordinator, the staff could be trained quickly and efficiently. The training focused on database content, software comparison and application, and basic knowledge of computers.

The literature on the dependency on e-resources was scanty. The current study attempts to find out the level of dependency on electronic information sources by the social science faculty members in Iran.

III. Objectives of the Study

There are two objectives of the study:

1. To study the dependency on different types of electronic sources by Iranian social science faculty members
2. To understand the preferences of e-resources by Iranian social science faculty members.

IV. Hypothesis

Iranian social science faculty members differ significantly in their dependency of e-resources by type: e-books, e-journals, e-tutorials, CD-ROMs, online databases, and e-reports.

V. Research Methodology

The study covered a total of 232 social science faculty members from six universities in Iran. The universities selected were Ran University, Shiraz University, Ahvaz University, Karman University Esfahan University, Tehran University, and Mashhad University. The questionnaire method was used to elicit data on the dependency on various e-resources by the faculty members in Iran. A set of questions were formulated based on the needs and objectives of the study. The questionnaires were personally distributed to 232 members who were selected randomly. Further, statistical methods like chi-square tests and descriptive statistics were employed using SPSS for Windows (version 16.0).

VI. Findings

Table 1: Frequency and percent values for dependency on various e-resources by Iranian social science faculty members and results of chi-square tests

Responses		E-resources					
		E-books	E-journals	E-tutorials	Online database	CD ROMs	E-reports
No dependency	F	4	4	19	10	22	51
	%	1.7	1.7	8.2	4.3	9.5	22.0
Depend rarely	F	31	25	39	55	62	48
	%	13.4	10.8	16.8	23.7	26.7	20.7
Depend occasionally	F	54	38	56	43	46	62
	%	23.3	16.4	24.1	18.5	19.8	26.7
Depend frequently	F	72	88	85	74	68	59
	%	31.0	37.9	36.6	31.9	29.3	25.4
Depend highly	F	71	77	33	50	34	12
	%	30.6	33.2	14.2	21.6	14.7	5.2
Total	F	232	232	232	232	232	232
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Chi-square		72.27	107.61	55.33	47.10	31.45	34.68
P value		.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Mean dependency		3.75	3.90	3.32	3.43	3.13	2.71

Note: F = Frequency

Table 1 presents frequency and percent values for dependency on various e-resources by Iranian social science faculty members. The table also presents results of chi-square tests and descriptive statistics. The following highlight the analysis of the results.

1. **E-books**: The finding shows that 30.6% of the participants depended on e-books highly, 31.0% depended frequently, 23.3% depended occasionally, 13.4% depended rarely, and the remaining 1.7% did not depend on e-books. Chi-square test revealed a significant difference between groups of responses ($X2=72.27$; P=.000). The mean dependency score was found to be 3.75.

2. **E-journals**: The finding shows that 33.2% of the participants depended highly on e-journals, 37.9% depended frequently, 16.4% depended occasionally, 10.8% depended rarely, and the remaining 1.7% did not depend on e-journals. Between these responses, a significant difference was observed. Chi-square value of 107.61 was found to be significant (P=.000). The mean dependency score was found to be 3.90.

3. **E-tutorials**: The finding shows that 14.2% of the participants depended highly on e-tutorials, 36.6% depended frequently, 24.1% depended occasionally, 16.8% depended rarely, and the remaining 8.2% did not depend on e-tutorials. Chi-square test revealed a significant difference between groups of responses

(X2=55.33; P=.000). The mean dependency score for e-tutorials was found to be 3.32.

4. **Online databases**: The finding shows that 21.6% of the participants depended highly on online databases, 31.9% depended frequently, 18.5% depended occasionally, 23.7% depended rarely, and the remaining 4.3% did not depend on online databases. Between these responses, a significant difference was observed. Chi-square value of 47.10 was found to be significant (P=.000). The mean dependency score was found to be 3.43.

5. **CD-ROMs**: The finding shows that 14.7% of the participants depended highly on CD-ROMs, 29.3% depended frequently, 19.8% depended occasionally, 26.7% depended rarely, and the remaining 9.5% did not depend on CD-ROMs. Between these responses, a significant difference was observed. Chi-square value of 31.45 was found to be significant (P=.000). The mean dependency score was found to be 3.13.

6. **E-reports**: The finding shows that 5.2% of the participants depended highly on e-reports, 25.4% depended frequently, 26.7% depended occasionally, 20.7% depended rarely, and the remaining 22.0% did not depend on e-reports. Between these responses, a significant difference was observed. Chi-square value of 34.68 was found to be significant (P=.000). The mean dependency score was found to be 2.71.

On the whole, Iranian faculty members depended highly on all the e-resources selected except for e-reports. They were more dependent on e-journals, followed by e-books and online databases and less dependent on e-reports.

VII. Conclusion

The main findings of the present study are as follows:

1. Iranian social science faculty members were highly dependent on all the e-resources selected for the study;
2. Iranian social science faculty members were more dependent on e-journals, followed by e-books, and online databases and least on e-reports.

All the social science faculty members in the participating Iranian universities have been provided with computers and net facilities. Furthermore, they have been given free net connections at their residences through their universities. Some of the campuses are WI-FI enabled. Easy access contributes to their high dependency on e-resources.

Of all types of e-resources, e-journals and e-books are the two that the Iranian social science faculty members depended on most. The reason could be that most of the social science faculty members in Iran are trying to obtain their doctoral and post doctoral degrees. Some of them are trying to pursue their doctoral and post doctoral degrees in other countries. This brings more dependency on e-journals and e-books.

The Iranian universities have special reward systems for those who publish articles or books at international level. This factor also motivates the faculty members to be more dependent on e-resources like e-journals and e-books.

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