

# A Comparative Study of Use of the Library and the Internet as Sources of Information by Graduate Students

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study was conducted to compare Internet use and library use among graduate students. It was based on the assumption that graduate students use the Internet more than the library. Literature on library and the Internet were reviewed. Here adopted convenient sampling technique to select the sample for the study. Data was collected using questionnaires. Collected data was statistically analyzed and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Findings of the study indicated students do not bypass the library in satisfying their information need. They use both the library and the Internet, although Internet usage was more than the library, hence the Internet was the most preferred source of information. It was recommended that the library should be upgraded to meet recent advancement in research.*

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## 1. Introduction

Information is a vital and an indispensable component of any academic environment. It makes for effectiveness in any academic system. Both faculty and students need to use information daily in their various academic endeavors. For decades, faculty and students have actively used the library and its resources as their main information source. Alemna, (2000) states that for centuries libraries have served as repositories of information and knowledge that have provided the vital underpinnings for socio- economic, political and cultural development in any civilization. Their relationship with cultural progress has been so interdependent that it is needless to argue whether man's cultural advancement merely produces libraries as by product. We now live in the information age where access too many Internet resources is just a few clicks away. The Internet is a technology, which has gained more popularity in many countries across the world, is no exception. The Internet as a medium of communication and source of information has enabled students, researchers, business information seekers and information professionals to access information to enhance their work and communicate effectively.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation has a number of libraries on its campus.

Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation Library is the biggest and the central library of the Institute. In addition to the VMRF

library there are various departmental libraries on campus. The collections of these libraries are subjected specific. Almost all the departments under the faculties and schools of the Research Foundation have their own libraries. Graduate students have adopted and continue to use the online information retrieval for their academic and research work at the expense of or without considering the importance and the quality of the traditional information centers as observed by the researcher. However, merely using the Internet was not guarantee quality and good information. Even though the Internet has large amount of information, the relevance, quality, and authenticity should not be neglected. The question to ask then is why do the graduate students continue or preferred using the Internet to the library as sources of information? Should the importance, quality, and authentic information derived from the library be relegated in place of the Internet?. The researcher had observed that graduate students spent a lot of time at the Graduate Center searching the Internet than in libraries. The Graduate School computer laboratory looked like it was taking over from the libraries on campus. It was observed that graduate students attributed research for a paper to searching for information online. The main purpose of the study was to compare graduate students use of the library and the Internet as sources of information.

### **1.2 Objectives**

The study seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- To determine the factors that encourage or discourage the students from using libraries.
- To investigate the frequency and purpose of Internet use.
- To find out the extent to which the Internet helps graduate students in their academic work.
- To determine the extent to which graduate student use the Internet more than the library.
- To find out what type of need influence the selection of one information source over the other.
- To determine problems students face when using the Internet and the library.
- To make recommendations for effective use of these sources.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study brought to bear the services found in the library and the services available on the Internet. It is hoped that results of the study will help to improve service delivery to graduate students in the Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation. In addition, the study adds to existing literature on students' information behavior patterns and information needs.

## **2. Related Literature**

This study is based in the broader field of information behavior. More specifically in the context of information seeking behavior as defined by Willson (2000) as “ the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web)”. The study therefore focuses on how students interact with both manual and computer based systems. It also investigated which system they prefer using and the motivation to select one system to the other.

### **2.1 The library and Library Use**

Reding (2005) indicates that from a social, cultural and economic point of view libraries play a fundamental role in our society. They are the collectors and stewards of our heritage; they are organizers of the knowledge in the books they collect – adding value by cataloguing, classifying and describing them; and, as public institutions, they assure equality of access for all citizens. They take the knowledge of the past and present, and lay it down for the future.

### **2.2 Use of libraries and Internet among Students**

A research conducted by Niels (2006) found that students do not bypass the physical libraries and it is also evident that the use of physical libraries and digital resources complement each other. The place of google in the students' information is prominent and positively correlated to use of traditional library resources.

In a multi-disciplinary study conducted by (George et al, 2006) which explored the information seeking behavior of graduate students found that students rely heavily on the Internet as well as the Research Foundation libraries' online resources for

information, though still using the physical library for hard copy materials such as books, journals and papers. Few graduate students in the study mentioned influences such as difficulty in locating information or the need for convenience and speed when using the Internet.

### **3.1 Population**

The target population of this study was graduate students of the VMRF whose total was more than 850 at the time of the study. Graduate Students of the Research Foundation belong to a common group of students pursuing postgraduate studies.

### **3.2 Sampling Technique**

Using convenience sampling, the researcher adhering to the objectives of the study, selected respondents who were conveniently available. Alreck and Settle (1985) state that it is seldom necessary to sample more than 10% of the population to obtain adequate confidence in your generalization. In line with this, the researcher considered the entire graduate student population at the time of the study and took a sample of 15% of the 800 population. This derived 120 students from different disciplines. Participants were therefore sampled based on their availability and willingness to complete the questionnaire.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure**

The study involved a questionnaire. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources include textbooks, journals, magazines and the Internet. The primary source was the questionnaire. The researcher distributed questionnaires to respondents personally. The questionnaire consisted of both closed ended and open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed the respondents to express themselves freely by providing their own answers. The closed ended questions on the other hand, required specific answers from respondents. Some of the questions were ranked, while in others options were made available to respondents.

### **3.4 Data Analysis and Presentation**

Responses from the collected data were statistically analyzed and interpreted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) into frequencies with the corresponding percentages and tables to illustrate the results of the study. Quantitative programs like the SPSS enable the data entry of mainly quantitative data. The researcher adopted direct entry of data into the system and not by using software such as a database management software or spreadsheet package, where the resultant files could have been imported into SPSS. The researcher also defined the data types, the variable labels, and the values etc, using SPSS interface. SPSS offered an easy graphic user interface that made coding data very simple.

## **4. Results**

This section describes the results. The results are presented in tables and charts according to the various following sections.

- Background of the Graduate Students
- Library Use by Graduate Students
- Internet Use by Graduate Students
- Other Sources of Information Used by Graduate Students

### **4.1 Background of the Graduate Students**

In order to ascertain the background information of the graduates, the respondents were required to state their gender, year of study, as well as their course of study.

#### **4.1.1 Gender of Respondents**

The results show that most of the respondents representing 73.9% were males. The females were only 26.1%. This means that the majority of the graduate students sampled were males. This is a true reflection of the situation on Research Foundation of VMRF campus as the male graduate students outnumber the female students.

#### **4.1.2 Course Year of Study**

When the respondents were asked to indicate their course year, the results show that 50.3% of the respondents who were in the first year. Those in the second year accounted for 49.7% of the total respondents. This shows almost equal proportions of first year and second year graduate students.

#### 4.1.3 Course of Study of Respondents

For their courses of study, 35% (42) of the respondents indicated that they were pursuing graduate degree in Engineering whilst 22.5% representing (27) of the respondents indicated they were pursuing graduate studies in the faculty of science and 25 % of the respondent indicated they were pursuing graduate studies in the Pharmacy. Few were from the MBBS and BDS.

Degree type	Frequency	Percent
BE	42	35
B.Sc (Nursing)	27	22.5
M.B.B.S	9	7.5
BDS	12	10
Pharmacy	30	25
<b>Total</b>	120	100

Table 1. Degree type

#### 4.2 Sources of Information

The results in Table 2 show the sources from which respondents obtained their information for academic work.

Sources of Information	Frequency	Percent
Library and Internet	65	54.16
Internet only	29	24.16
Library, Internet, others	13	10.83
Library only	11	9.16
Library, books	2	1.66
Total	120	100

Table 2. Sources of Information

The results in Table 2 show that 24.16% (29) of the respondents' used the Internet only while 9.16% (11) used libraries only. 54 (65%) of the respondents indicated that they used both libraries and the Internet. The most effective means of obtaining useful information was by using the Internet. However 13% (10.8) and 1.6% (2) of the respondents respectively, indicated that they use libraries, and or Internet and other available sources of information. Generally, libraries and the Internet were the two main sources by which graduate students obtained information. When the respondents were asked to indicate the purpose of library use, some 17.0% mentioned among other things, the provision of literature to supplement lecture notes, others 6.7% (stated that they wanted to keep abreast with studies, to read notes 7.3% and to borrow books 0.6% Also, others 33.9% used the library for two, 29.7% for three or 10.9% for all four purposes mentioned earlier. This indicates graduate students use the library for various academic activities. In response to whether libraries play any role in their education, majority 97.0% of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Thus, only 3.0% disagreed. This means that majority of the respondents had a positive regard for the role libraries play in their academic life.

#### 4.3 Internet use

It was quite evident that the use of Internet was popular among graduate students. As much as 97.5% (117) of the respondents use the Internet, whilst only 2.5 % (3) indicated they do not use the Internet. This means that majority of the respondents use

the Internet. Asked how they were introduced to the use of the Internet, most of the respondents indicated that they were introduced to the Internet by friends 32 (26.6%) or learnt it themselves 56.6% (68). But a few 16.6% (20) indicated it was by formal training.

<b>Introduction to Internet use</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
Learned by themselves	68	56.66
Introduced to Internet by Friends	32	26.66
Formal training	20	16.66
<b>Total</b>	120	100

Table 3. Introduction to Internet use

The results in Table 3 show that quite a number learned the use of the Internet by themselves and only few had formal training. Regarding the purpose for using the Internet. In response, they indicated that they use the Internet to either conduct research or search for information. Others however use it to communicate with colleagues and friends via email. It was interesting to note that although most of the respondents use the Internet, the majority 60% confirmed they do not always get the information they need. Only 40% confirm they always get the information they search for on the Internet. The respondents however agree that the Internet provides them with information to supplement lecture notes and obtain up to date information relating to their field of study. From the results most 53.9% of the respondents use the Internet often whilst the remaining 46.1% use the Internet most often. This confirms the popularity and use of Internet by graduate students. It was observed that the majority 87.3% were of the view that the Internet was very useful and the remaining 12.7% accounted for those who indicated that the Internet was useful. This means that the Internet was an important tool for studies among graduate students.

#### **4.4 Other Sources of Information Used by Graduate Students**

The researcher further gathered that the media, interaction with experts and colleagues and research paper were other means by which they obtain information. The type of information they seek were current and relevant information for academic work, news and current affairs, research work, technical/statistical information and diversified views on economic, social and political issues.

#### **5.1 Summary of Findings**

- The analysis of the data revealed that student do recognize the important role of libraries in education.
- Student see the library as a conducive environment for studies, provides relevant and realistic information for research, provides supplementary material for their education and many more; as the factors that encourage them to use the library.
- The study confirmed the popularity and use of Internet among graduate students.
- The main motivation for using the Internet was to conduct research or search for information as well as to communicate.
- Students see the Internet as very helpful in academic work.
- Majority of students indicated that they use the Internet more than the library
- The main reasons for the preference include readily availability of information, faster access to information and the large amount of information available on the Internet.
- The organization of information for easy search, updated, current and relevant information were factors that will make them prefer the library to the Internet.
- The main difficulties to effective use of the Internet by student include information overload, difficulty in locating relevant information and slow data transmission rate.
- The major problems encountered in accessing information in the library include, inadequate opening and closing hours, not familiar with search processes at the library, unfriendly or not helpful staffs and inability to borrow books.

## 5.2 Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the use of libraries and Internet facilities located on the Vinayaka Missions Research Foundation campus. The study covered graduate students in the sciences and humanities. Since data was collected on a particular campus and facilities available on that campus it will be unfair to generalize the findings to other campuses with different facilities. Also data presented in this paper was collected in summer 2007. Therefore the findings might be outdated since facilities on the Internet have changed enormously since then.

## 6. Conclusions

This study was conducted to compare graduate students Internet use and library use. It was based on the assumption that graduate students used the Internet more than the library. The findings of the study indicate that students do not bypass the library in satisfying their information needs. They use both the library and the Internet, although the Internet is used more than the library and it is also the most preferred source of information. Students also make use of sources such as the media, lecture notes and interaction with their lecturers and experts in their research areas. Most library services are well patronized, while most Internet services are much underutilized.

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