

A Comparative Study of use of the Internet and the Library as Sources of Information by Graduate Students in the Libyan Academy

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Abstract: *The researcher took a sample to compare the use of the Internet and library use among students. The result was that students use the Internet more than the library. Literature was reviewed on the library and the Internet. The researcher also used an appropriate sampling method to select the sample for the study. Data were collected using the following questionnaires, which show the accuracy and examination. The collected data were analyzed and analyzed statistically. The results of the study showed that students do not skip the library to meet their information needs. They use both the library and the Internet, although the use of the Internet was more than the use of the library, so the Internet was the most preferred source of information. It has been shown that there is an absolute necessity to develop the library and support it with all sources of information including all the vessels to contribute to meet the needs of the beneficiaries in completing their scientific research*

Keywords: academic library, internet, student, computer

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 to 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 and Ghana, 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.

Robinson (2006) states that in 2004, seventy million American adults logged onto the Internet in a typical day. Over 95 percent of U.S. public libraries provided Internet access. Students, many faculty, and laypeople turn to online information sources before print or the library. As a result, library use, especially for walk-in reference questions and preparation for school and college reports has declined.

2. Material and Methods

The Central Library of the Academy of Higher Studies was opened in 2007 after the contents of the old library, which

was in one of the study buildings, was transferred. It includes a large number of books, references and dictionaries in various disciplines in both Arabic and English. The library follows the decimal classification process, which works on the largest libraries, such as the Library of Congress and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, etc. The library facilitates access to intellectual production and the dissemination of library services in all forms and types in accordance with international standards. In the construction of its network of internal computers and external communications in the framework of its plan to create an integrated information network infrastructure connected to the Internet (Internet) and the employment of informatics in its educational and administrative operations. The network includes more than 600 computers distributed as follows:

The main hall (Information Technology Center) is open to public use throughout the day for all students and employees of the Academy. In addition 6 specialized laboratories equipped with all possibilities.

The network has been established at the highest international standards by connecting its fiber optic terminals and wireless Internet connection with a dedicated line (leased) from the microwave at an initial speed of 4 MB per second, expandable to 8 Mbps.

Postgraduate students have adopted and continued to use online information retrieval for their academic and research work at the expense of or without taking into account the importance and quality of traditional information centers as noted by the researcher. However, just using the Internet does not guarantee quality and good information. Although the Internet contains a large amount of information, it should not neglect the relevance, quality and originality. The question then arises: why do graduate students continue or prefer to use the Internet as a source of information? Should the importance, quality, and authentic information derived from the library be relegated in place of the Internet?

The researcher noted that graduate students spent a lot of time at the Graduate Research Center in the Internet compared to the libraries

The results show that most (57) of the respondents representing 71.25 % were males. The females were only 28.75% (23). This means that the majority of the graduate. All the analyses were carried out with SPSS (SPSS 22.0 for windows, SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA.).

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Sources of Information

The results in Table 3.1.1 show the sources from which respondents obtained their information for academic work.

Table 3.1.1: Sources of Information

SOI	Frequency	Percent (%)
Library and Internet	44	55
Internet only	17	21.25
Library, Internet, others	7	8.75
Library only	10	12.5
Library, books	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

The results in Table 3.1.1 show that 21.25% (17) of the respondents' used the Internet only while 12.5 % (10) used libraries only. 44 (55%) 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 8.75% (7) and 2.5% (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.

4. Library use by Students

In response to whether the respondents used libraries, about 97.5% (78) of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Thus, only 0.0% (2) of the respondents indicated that they do not use the library. This is an indication that majority of the graduate students used the library for academic work.

The researcher also sought the opinion of the respondents on the importance of library use. (Fig 4.1)

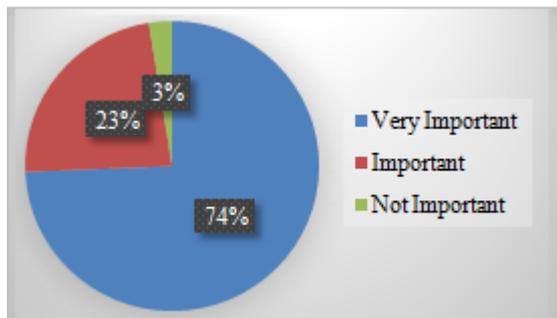


Figure 4.1: Level of important in library

The results in Fig. 4.1 show that 23% (18) of the respondents indicated that the use of the library is important. And a few of them stated that it is not important. Also, about

74% (55) rated the use of the library as very important. This means that the majority acknowledged the importance of libraries.

The respondents who could not rule out the fact that libraries play a role in their education gave various reasons as shown in Table 4.1

Table 4.1: Role of libraries in education

Role of libraries in education	Frequency	Percent (%)
Provides authentic reference materials	7	8.75
Provides materials that students cannot afford to buy	5	6.5
Provides relevant and realistic information for research	31	38.75
Provides a conducive environment for studies	9	11.25
It is a repository of centuries of knowledge	10	12.5
Provides supplementary material	11	13.75
Serves as a major source of information	7	8.75
Total	80	100.0

The results in Table 4.1 show that quite a number 38.75% (31) of the respondents indicated that libraries provide relevant and realistic information for research while a few 6.5% (5) stated that the library provides materials that students cannot afford to buy. This shows that most of the graduate students sampled had high regard for the role of libraries in education.

On the other hand, the few who did not agree that library plays a role in education indicated that they obtain all the information they need from the Internet 0.6% (1), rarely visit the library 1.2% (2) and that most of the reference books were outmoded 0.6% (1).

The results in Table 4.2 show the frequency of use of the library by graduate students.

Table 4.2: Frequency of library use

Frequency of library use	Frequency	Percent (%)
Often	39	48.75
Occasionally	22	27.5
Very often	17	21.25
Never	2	2.5
Total	80	100.0

It can be observed from Table 4.2 that 27.5% (22) of the respondents use the library occasionally, 48.75% (39) use the library often and only 2.5% (2) had never used the library. This is quite encouraging to note that graduate students patronize the libraries for the purposes of studies or sourcing for information to supplement lecture notes. The library services patronized by others include database search, reserve collection and photocopy services.

In patronizing the library, students encounter some difficulties. The major problems encountered by graduate students in accessing information in the library included the working hours. The opening and closing hours for the libraries was inconvenient.

5. Internet Use

It was quite evident that the use of Internet was popular among graduate students. As much as 98.8% (75) of the respondents use the Internet, whilst only 1.2 % (2) 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 36.25% (29) or learnt it themselves 51.25% (41). But a few 11.25% (9) indicated it was by formal training (Table 4.3)

Table 4.3: Introduction to Internet use

Introduction to Internet use	Frequency	Percent (%)
Learned by themselves	41	51.25
Introduced to Internet by friends	29	36.25
Formal training	9	11.25
Total	80	100.0

The results in Table 4.3 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% (48) confirmed they do not always get the information they need. Only 40% (32) 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 53.75% (43) of the respondents use the Internet often whilst the remaining 46.25% (37) use the Internet most often. This confirms the popularly and use of Internet by graduate students.

It was observed that the majority 87.5% (70) were of the view that the Internet was very useful and the remaining 12.5% (10) accounted for those who indicated that the Internet was useful. This means that the Internet was an important tool for studies among graduate students.

The top rated Internet services patronized by most respondents were electronic mail (e-mail), chatting and the World Wide Web. Most use the email and the World Wide Web daily. However, the use of net newsgroup multimedia streaming, video conferencing and rich site summary was not popular among respondents. They hardly patronize these services. Occasionally some use the File Transfer Protocol (FTP).

The results in Fig. 4.2 below show the usefulness of Internet to academic work.

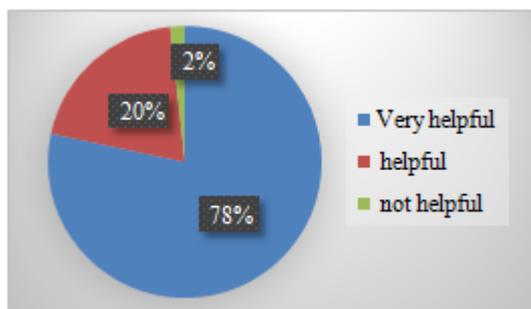


Figure 4.2: Helpfulness of Internet to academic work

From the results in Fig. 4.2, it can be observed that most 78.2% (63) of the respondents were of the view that the Internet was very helpful to their academic work. About 20.6% (16) however said it was helpful. Only 1.2% (1) said it had not been helpful to their academic work. On the whole, the majority of the respondents had a positive regard for the usefulness of the Internet to academic work.

6. Conclusion

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.

It is difficult to generalize the results of this study since it was the first of its kind in a Libyan university. Furthermore, no study was found that examined all of the parameters addressed in this study. There has been enormous advancement in technology since this study was conducted, especially in the area of access to the Internet. With Internet access currently available on mobile devices owned by almost every student in Libya, it is recommended that a similar study is conducted focusing on how students use current advancement in technology available to them to satisfy their information needs.

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