



INFORMATION COMPETENCIES OF LIFE SCIENCE RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF MIZORAM UNIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra15640>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra15640

ABSTRACT

Purpose: The study tries to reveal the literacy skills of research scholars under school of life science in Mizoram University. **Methodology:** The study is based on empirical study. For collecting data, a close ended questionnaire was framed and distributed among the present research scholars in their respective departments during the field survey. Among those 50 research scholars, 41 responded the questionnaire which is 82% of the total population. To meet the objectives of the present study, a structured questionnaire was circulated to 50 research scholars under school of Life Science. Various e-resources were also consulted for the background of the study. The data collected were analyzed using relevant statistical tools.

Results: From the result of the analysis, majority of the research scholars are from the department of zoology, while the highest response rate is from biotechnology department which is having the least research scholars. Maximum of the research scholars are heavily accessing internet and rely on electronic document but textbook or documentary sources cannot be kept aside in this technological world as number of research scholars are still accessing them.

Applications of this study: The findings of the study can help to cater what types of information sources would be more appropriate and reliable for the research scholars so as to enhance the collection in the central library.

KEY WORDS: Information knowledge, Digital competencies, Documentary and non-documentary

INTRODUCTION

The information competency of a user to the information defines the aspects of user studies where the users make an effort to bring about the interrelationship of various concepts of information relating to their studies. This is a mandatory component irrespective of types of users to search information through literature available whether those literatures are in prints or electronic form or both. It is a recognized mechanism and a technique for searching for information which ultimately leads to derive satisfaction or dissatisfaction among the users (Kumar, 2004). Therefore, the behavioral approach of users with respect to their fields plays a very crucial role in the collection development of the library resources as well.

REVIEW OF LITERTURE

Singh (1997) in the book on 'University libraries: a current appraisal' mentioned about the function of the university library and pointed out that, it is an integral component in the higher education system. She argued that in the absence of proper information and knowledge infrastructure education system cannot sustain and achieve its mission. She further, stated that studying at a university implies enhances the capability to search, evaluate and use relevant information.

Rodriguez and Angelica (2002) on 'The role of university libraries in Latin America in the promotion of democracy and diversity' described need of the diversity of library materials' in the collections. They further viewed that, the main values of librarians is intellectual freedom, free access to information and equity in access. Libraries, in general, promote values. They inferred that, even if one of the main goals of university libraries is to support education and research, it cannot abandon their role as a place where different social policies, theories and ideologies meet. They emphasized on the study of different art and cultural.

Baxter and Marcia (2003) in their paper on 'Identity and Learning: Student Affairs: Role in Transforming Higher Education' identified that self-definition plays a crucial role in complex learning. They viewed that, the article offers a framework for making identity central in learning to promote learning and self-authorship. They mentioned about four examples of this framework in multicultural education, community development, academic advising, and teaching offer student affairs educators a foundation for leading educational transformation.

Mahajan (2005) in her article on 'Academic Libraries in India: A Present-Day Scenario' discussed education which aims to impart knowledge and makes good citizens. She submitted her views



that, libraries are the repositories of knowledge and it forms an integral part of education.

Rao (2009) on the ‘Role of University Libraries in the Scholarly Communication System’ reported that, owing to technological changes in the information and communication technologies, particularly the Internet, many changes are taking place in the traditional scholarly communication system. He further described the importance and impact of e-journals on academic publishing and the need for universities to adopt ‘open access’ initiatives and create institutional repositories.

Korobil, Tilikidou and Delistavrou (2006) in their paper on ‘Factors that influence the use of library resources by faculty members’ pointed out that majority of the faculty of Technical Educational Institution (TEI), Thessaloniki, Greece use fewer e-resources than printed resources for accessing their information needs. Their result shows that the use of e-resources is higher in the School of Business Administration and Economics among those who hold a Ph.D. degree.

SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study of the library users is becoming more and more pragmatic as it pave the way for the effective and smooth functioning of the library resources. To have a well developed and satisfied the users’ requirements, it is necessary to carry out what type of documents the users seek in order to satisfy their information needs. Therefore, sorting out the aspect of the users from different variation and different subject is much necessary to gain the idea and knowledge of what types of information to be collected in the library.

Mizoram University was created by an Act of Parliament (No. 8 of 2000) and it became functional from 2nd July, 2001. It was accredited ‘A’ grade by NAAC in 2014 and 2019. It was also awarded ISO Certification in 2018. The University was ranked as one of the top 100 Universities in India, assessed by the NIRF rankings from 2016 to 2023 under MHRD. In the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2022, Mizoram University secured 1st Rank in North-East Region of India. Mizoram University ranked 1st among the central universities of the North East region by bagging the 13th position in the Indian Institutional Ranking Framework (IIRF) 2023’s Top 20 Central Universities category. The University has 39 functioning academic departments offering UG, PG and Ph.D. programmes under 10 Schools of Study.

The study covers the entire research scholars from the three departments viz, Botany -16, Zoology – 21 and Biotechnology -13 which is 50 research scholars in total population under School of Life Science in Mizoram University.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To evaluate the users’ preference on visiting hours of the library.
2. To find out the most used sources of information in the library.
3. To verify the access preferences (documentary or non-documentary) in the library.

METHODOLOGY

The study is based on empirical study. For collecting data, a close ended questionnaire was framed and distributed among the present research scholars in their respective departments during the field survey. Among those 50 research scholars, 41 responded the questionnaire which is 82% of the total population. To meet the objectives of the present study, a structured questionnaire was circulated to 50 research scholars under school of Life Science. Various e-resources were also consulted for the background of the study. The data collected were analyzed using relevant statistical tools.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The study covers the total numbers of 50 research scholars from different three departments under School of Life Science and the numbers of respondents were shown in details in Table – 1 below.

Table -1: Total Number of Respondents

Sl.No.	Department	QD	QR	%
1.	Botany	16	13	81
2.	Zoology	21	17	81
3.	Biotechnology	13	11	85
4.	Total	50	41	82

Source: Field Survey

Abb. QD - Questionnaire Distributed, QR – Questionnaire Received

As seen from the Table-1, the respondents from each department have cross over 80% which is sufficient to represent the outcome result for their respective departments. In Botany 13 research scholars out of 16 has responded the questionnaire which is 81% of the population, and in Zoology, 17 out of 21 responded the questionnaire which is also 81% of the population and Biotechnology has the highest response rate which is 85% of the population. So, from the total 50 questionnaire, 41 were received comprising 82% of the total population.

The author has listed the timing of the library visited into four uneven so as to satisfy the target population. Library being approach from different field and corner, therefore it is best to know the most convenient time the user’s used the library. The following Table 2 shows the preference and convenient time to visit the library.

Table 2: Convenient Time to Visit the Library

Sl.No.	Time	Botany	%	Zoology	%	Biotechnology	%
1.	Before 10am	3	23	2	12	0	0
2.	10:00am to 2:00pm	7	54	5	29	6	55
3.	2:00pm to 4:00pm	2	15	8	47	2	18
4.	After 4:00pm	1	8	2	12	3	27
	Total	13	100	17	100	11	100

Source: Field Survey



Table-2 shows the convenient time of different departments' research scholars to visit the library. In Botany and Biotechnology department, majority of the research scholars i.e. 54% and 55% respectively prefer or visit the library during 10am to 2pm, while in Zoology department maximum numbers of the research scholars which is 47% of them visited the library during 2pm to 4pm which is found to be their convenient time. So, the convenient time of the research scholars from each department is not the same which is the library has to open a wide hand so as to make the library resources helpful to its users.

It is necessary to question the users what is the most sources used by them so as to satisfy their information needs. Table-3 shows in details the information sources used by the research scholar from each department.

Table-3: Use of Information Sources

Sl.No.	Sources	Botany	Zoology	Biotechnology
1.	Text Book	6 (20%)	12 (24%)	8 (23%)
2.	Electronic Documents	8 (27%)	15 (29%)	11 (31%)
3.	Periodicals, Magazines, Newspapers	9 (30%)	9 (18%)	6 (17%)
4.	Conference/Seminar Proceedings	3 (10%)	7 (14%)	5 (14%)
5.	Theses/Dissertation	4 (13%)	8 (16%)	5 (14%)
	Total	30	51	35

Source: Field Survey, n=116 (30+51+35) N=41 (13+17+11)

The above Table-3 shows the detail of use of information sources by research scholars from different departments. The research scholars in Botany department heavily used periodicals, magazines and newspapers i.e. 30% as their information sources which is followed by electronic documents i.e. 27%. In both Zoology and Biotechnology department, majority of the research scholars i.e. 29% and 31% respectively used electronic documents as their information source which is followed by text book i.e. 24% and 23% respectively. Here, the numbers of respondents have increased because of that research scholars have opted more than one source of information which increased the number of respondents in each department.

To ascertain the documents or materials needed by the library to meet the users' requirement, it is necessary to expose the most preferred search documents from the library users which will be effective for the library staff in promoting their collections. Table-4 display the preferred searching documents by the respective research scholars from each department.

Table-4: Preferred Searching Documents

Sl.No.	Documents	Botany	Zoology	Biotechnology
1.	Textbook	8 (22%)	14 (25%)	9 (20%)
2.	Reference Tools	4 (11%)	5 (9%)	5 (11%)
3.	Retrospective	6 (17%)	8 (15%)	7 (16%)
4.	Current	7 (19%)	11 (20%)	8 (18%)
5.	Bibliographies	2 (6%)	4 (7%)	3 (7%)
6.	Research Reports	4 (11%)	6 (11%)	6 (14%)
7.	Others	5 (14%)	7 (13%)	6 (14%)
	Total	36	55	44

Source: Field Survey, n=135 (36+55+44) N=41 (13+17+11)

As seen from the data, the numbers of respondents have increased due to the research scholars opted for more than one document as their preference. Table-4 shows the detail of research scholars' preference on searching the documents in the library. Text book is the most preferred search document in each department by the research scholars which is 22%, 25% and 20% in Botany, Zoology and Biotechnology respectively. Again, current document is the next most preferred search document in Botany, Zoology and Biotechnology comprising 19%, 20% and 18% respectively. The least preferred search document in each department is Bibliographies which is 6% in Botany and 7% in both Zoology and Biotechnology.

Now a days, we are blending with different kinds of information sources for getting our required information, the sources could be of documentary form as well as non-documentary form. So, to know what to prioritize the collection development of the library material with regards to the information needs by its users, then, it is a must to discover the access preference from the users. Table-5 has shown the access preference in the library by research scholars from different department.

Table-5: Access Preference in the Library

Sl.No.	Access System	Botany	Zoology	Biotechnology	
1.	Open System	11 (58%)	14 (54%)	9 (64%)	
	1.1	Internet	9 (47%)	11 (42%)	5 (36%)
	1.2	Intranet	2 (11%)	3 (12%)	4 (29%)
2.	Close System	8 (42%)	12 (46%)	5 (36%)	
	Total	19	26	14	

Source: Field Survey, n=59 (19+26+14) N=41 (13+17+11)

Table-5 has displayed the detail of access preference by the total population from three departments. Here the material to be opted for the respondents was distinguish in two broad systems, one is open system which comprises mostly to the e-resources and the other one is close system which include all the other related documentary forms collected in the library.

It was found from Table-5 that majority of the research scholars from each department preferred to access to internet i.e. 47%, 42% and 36% in Botany, Zoology and Biotechnology respectively. So, it could be concluded that maximum number of the respondents preferred to access to internet than those documentary sources available in the library. This may be due to the study area of the paper that their information needs and access are mostly relying on the internet.

FINDINGS

1. Department of Zoology has the maximum number of research scholars while Biotechnology Department has the least research scholar but has the highest response rate.
2. Research scholars from both Botany and Biotechnology departments most convenient time to visit the library is during 10:00am to 2:00pm while in Zoology department, the most convenient time is 2:00pm to 4:00pm.
3. Electronic document is the most heavily used sources by maximum of the research scholars from each department.



4. Textbook is still leading as their most preferred search document by majority of the respondents.
5. Internet access was heavily preferred by maximum number of the respondent.
6. Majority of the scholars obtained their required information through hybrid mode.

EMPIRICAL BASED SUGGESTIONS

1. Since textbook is still the most favoured search document by the respondents, availability of more numbers of textbook must be given a priority when the library is to be enhanced.
2. Internet must be upgraded for easy accessibility by all scholars. This will enable them to access the required information in a shorter duration and will aid them in saving their time and effort.
3. Since libraries are to be well equip with various search engines, subscription of more numbers of e-applications which are feasible for research is highly recommended.

CONCLUSION

The environment we are living in is an information society and most of the information seekers seek for the types of catching-up information to get their information requirement. Therefore, it is apparent that they are deeply depends on the internet so as to get their needs within a very short time instead of going to the library and systematically search for their desired information. That is why majority of the population were looking forward to the internet to acquire their requirements. Even though internet was heavily used by the research scholars, textbook still plays a very dominant role as we can see from the findings, so the library with regards to its collection development, still needs to pay priority in increasing syllabus-based textbook so as to meet the library users' information need. Nevertheless, majority of the scholars' access internet for acquiring their needs, resources and materials in the library cannot be kept out of hand as it is the place where they can get genuine and authentic information to succor their work.

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