

**INFORMATION LITERACY IN THE DIGITAL ERA AMONG
THE POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ARTS AND SCIENCE
COLLEGE IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT**



ABSTRACT

The paper deals with information literacy in the digital era among the postgraduate students of arts and science colleges in the Kottayam district. The objectives of this study are to find out the ability of users to identify their needs of information, to find out the users' competency to evaluate the information, and to suggest the improve the competency of users. A Sample of 4 colleges is selected from various categories such as Government Colleges, Autonomous Colleges, Self-Financing Colleges, and Aided Colleges. From each college 120 students are selected as samples. The major findings are, Majority of the students fail to identify the correct source of information and its nature. They lack awareness of information sources. Some students are aware of the content of the journal. So, the librarian must take an active part in the teaching-learning process. They should suggest curriculum-related projects in which the students would be actively helped by them and also the librarian must teach the students how to evaluate information sources. So that students can identify relevant and reliable information effectively.

Keywords : *Information Literacy, Information Skills, Lifelong Learning, Information explosion.*

Introduction

“Literacy” simply means the ability to read and write. Literate people are able to read and write, then understand their own languages and are able to express their thoughts in writing. The concept of literacy is increasing. Now it is extended to critical thinking. Critical thinking helps in problem-solving. In the 21st century or modern era, technological explosions are very fast. A vast amount of information is available online, but it cannot distinguish the accurate from the inaccurate. So, we should be able to identify suitable or accurate sources.

Information is processed or organized data. In the academic field information literacy helps everybody, especially students to achieve their goals and to succeed in academic performance. The Association of College and Resource Libraries (ACRL) defines Information Literacy as follows: “Information Literacy of integrated activities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued and the use of information in creating new knowledge and learning.” The term “Information Literacy” was first used

by Paul Zurkowski, President of ‘The Information Industry Association (IIA). His vision for information literacy skill development was not library centric but advocate for a universal approach in its delivery across all trades, occupations, and professions.

Relevance of the Study

Information literacy skills enables a person to locate the right information and use them critically. This helps them in their lifelong learning. Due to information explosion and data smog, students face many difficulties to locate, evaluate and use the information. The authenticity, validity, and reliability of the information should be evaluated before using

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the information. Only a person with information literacy skills can evaluate the information rightly. So, this type of study on the basis of information literacy in the digital era among the PG students of Arts and Science colleges in Kottayam districts is very important.

Objectives

- 1) To study the ability of users to identify their needs of information
- 2) To study the efficiency of users to acquire the information
- 3) To study the users' competency to evaluate the information
- 4) To suggest the improve the competency of users

Methodology

A Sample of 4 colleges is selected from various categories such as Government College, Autonomous College, Self-Financing College, and Aided College. From each college 120 students are selected as samples. The questionnaire is distributed among sample students and the filled-up form is collected and tabulated.

Findings

1. Response Rate

120 Questionnaires are distributed to each college

Table 1
Response Rate

Sl. No	College	No. of questionnaires distributed	No. of questionnaires received	Percentage
1	C M S College, Kottayam	120	108	90
2	K G College, Pampady	120	102	85
3	Govt. College, Nattakom	120	99	82.5
4	Ettumannorappan College	120	90	75
	Total	480	399	83.12

Table 1 shows that more than 83.12 returned the filled-up questionnaire. C M S College shows the highest rate of return with 90%. The Ettumannorappan College has the minimum response

2 Purpose of Library Visit

Table 2

Purpose of Library Visit

Sl. No	Purpose	No. of Students	Percentage
1	Recreational reading (newspapers & magazines)	294	49.49
2	Consulting Reference (Education & Research)	201	33.84
3	Preparing Competitive Exams	63	10.61
4	Reading Textbooks	237	39.9
5	Net surfing	216	36.36

Table 2 shows that the highest percentage of them (49.5%) are visiting the library for a recreational reading followed by those who purpose is reading the textbooks. The number of students using the library seriously for academic purposes is less.

3. Source of Information

The purpose of the question was to find out if students understand the characteristics of various document types. In order to be able to choose the appropriate document type for their needs to be familiar with the information cycle. The correct response from each college is given in the following table 3.

Table 3
Awareness of Source Type

Sl. No	College	Correct Response	Percentage
1	C M S College, Kottayam	21	19.44
2	K G College, Pampady	18	17.65
3	Govt. College, Nattakom	27	27.27
4	Ettumannorappan College	18	20
	Total	84	64.6

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Table shows that only 65.6% of students correctly identify the primary source of data. Except for the students from Govt. In college, most students failed to identify the nature of different sources of information.

4. Information Literacy Skill

Table 4
Information Literacy Skill

No	Information literacy skill	% of students
1	Awareness of different types of information sources	43
2	Awareness of Quality criteria of Journals	21
3	Awareness of shelving scheme	78
4	Awareness of Advanced Search Strategies	38
5	Awareness of Open Access Journals	41
7	Awareness of plagiarism	24

Table 4 shows that students are not familiar with the quality criteria of journal.

Suggestions

- ❖ A paper on Information Literacy should be included in the curriculum for both UG and PG students. For the UG students basics or preliminary paper and for P G students advanced paper.
- ❖ The librarian must take an active part in the teaching-learning process. They should suggest curriculum-related projects in which the students would be actively helped by them.
- ❖ The librarian should collaborate with other subject teachers on a regular basis to provide the needed information to the students at the right time.
- ❖ The librarian must teach the students how to evaluate information sources. So that students can identify relevant and reliable information effectively.

Conclusion

Today libraries are functioning in a hybrid environment. Most of the libraries are providing traditional as well as ICT-based services. So each librarian should

himself/ herself be information literate and should be able to have interests and awareness about information literacy. This study aims to suggest suitable measures that help the students to find relevant information in an effective manner and thus enhance the quality of education.

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