Chapter 9

Electronic Information Resources:
Boon for Academic and Research Development

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ABSTRACT

The study gives an empirical view about the advent of electronic information resources (EIRs) with respect to their impact on the overall academic and research development. The chapter is the outcome of a survey conducted across seven agricultural universities of North India while using a questionnaire as a data collection tool. It is understood that the e-resources have really proved to be a boon for academic fraternities comprising of the students, teachers, and the researchers. The majority of them are now feeling much more comfortable and competent to search the information of their own. The electronic availability of the information has enabled them to generate new and diversified research ideas and as such the research output has improved both in quantity and quality. So, it is understood that at an average, the advent of e-resources has laid a positive impact on the core academic affairs (i.e., the study, teaching, and research).

INTRODUCTION

The academic fraternity i.e. the students, teachers and the researchers are dependent on the availability of the information relevant to their fields of study and research. The quantity and quality of their academic output is directly proportional to the quantity and quality of information of their relevance. Electronic Information Resources are actually the electronic counter parts of the print information. However, due to the advent of electronic form of information and intelligent information processing and communication technology the academic and research activities are observed to have gone through a great improvement across the globe. The most significant advantage with the electronic form o information

resource is that it can be used by more than one user simultaneously and that it can be made accessible on anytime anywhere basis thus eradicating the restrictions/barricades of time and place of access. The information can now be shared through better, economical, faster, wider and flexible means. However, cost of information resources in electronic form is much more than their print versions (Selvaraja, 2014). It proves individually difficult for economically poor libraries to subscribe to each and every electronic source of information they need. It is for this reason that new avenues of subscription, like that of de-mand driven acquisition, article level subscription, chapter to chapter procurement, etc. are coming up as new means to mitigate the shock of their costliness. So yet a situation of uncertainty is seen wherein the availability of information seems to be both improved, as well as impaired, so for as its electronic form is concerned. The study has been conducted with an objective to arrive at an overall conclusion, whether the availability of information resources in electronic form has resulted in an improvement in the academic and research pursuits or not. This main objective was sought to be realized by finding answers to following research questions.

- Has the advent of e-resources got any bearing on competence of users with respect to searching of information?;
- Has the rate of generation of new ideas increased or decreased?;
- What is the impact of advent of e-resources on quantity of research output?;
- What is the impact of advent of e-resources on quality of research work?;
- Have the chances of citation of research output been increased or decreased due to advent of elec-tronic availability of information?;
- If the duplication of research has diminished or enhanced in electronic era?; and
- Whether the menace of plagiarism in electronic era has increased or decreased.

As pointed out above a situation is observed wherein it is not easy to state that whether the electronic availability of information happens to facilitate the study, teaching and research in academic institutions or otherwise. Unless the things on this account are clear it difficult for the libraries to have a compre-hensive shift from print form to electronic form. That is why almost all the libraries in India and more likely in other developing countries are still hybrid in nature, possessing both print and electronic forms of information resources. A need is thus felt to see what type of impact the newly emerging electronic manifestations of information resources have laid on the core academic and research pursuits. The academic pursuits include a composite array or series of activities and associated attributes, ranging from initial curricular goals, career targets, teaching affairs, guiding principles. At the same time the research pursuits involves the generation of new ideas, exploring the means and methodologies to find solutions to new problems, final presentation of research findings and delineating the future discourse of prospects. The pursuits of academics and research are purely associated with application of mind and thus a number of mind related aspects are involved in the process. There is a deep relation between the academic/research pursuits and the availability of information. The study in hand is an attempt to find out different manifestations of this intrinsic relation between academic/research pursuits and the electronic availability of information. An attempt is made to collect opinion of the actual stakeholders that is the students, scholars and the teachers and assess the overall influence of the advent of e-resources on the core aspects related to the basic academic and research activities.

Four out of seven states of northern India, viz. Delhi, Himachal Pradesh (HP), Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Punjab have been selected randomly as a cluster for investigation. Seven well established

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