

ULA Academic Sessions – 2014

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Reaching the students with e- resource facilities

Authors : Shirani Dharmarathne, Deputy Librarian, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Nayana Wijayasundara, Librarian, University of Sri Jayewardenepura

Abstract

The Library, University of Sri Jayewardenepura as a well established academic library caters for undergraduates, postgraduates, academic and non academic staff members of the five faculties of the university. The library spends a large sum of money to purchase books, periodicals and e-databases annually. In 2014 access was given to our users for five major databases through the consortium of University Grants Commission namely Emerald, SAGE Research Methods, Oxford Journals, Taylor and Francis and Wiley online and in addition for the subscribed database JSTOR.

The objective of the study was to examine the importance of IL (Information Literacy) sessions conducted by the library staff to the students with regard to the knowledge imparted on information seeking aspects. With this objective library conducted sessions on e -resources. Though the library conducts such programs for all the categories of patrons only the sessions conducted for undergraduates were selected for the present study. Participants included third year and fourth year undergraduates of Faculties of Management Studies and Commerce, Applied Sciences and Medical Sciences and the total population was 308.

Content of the program covers Introduction to the library, Information Resources on different media and types, steps in searching information, searching techniques and formulation of search strategy, Services offered by the library and Library Website.

Pre assessment and a post assessment were done using questionnaires in order to evaluate the awareness and use of library resources and to evaluate the session and to get their suggestions and recommendations.

According to the pre assessment it was found that 90 % of undergraduates have not visited the library website before the session. 98% of them have not used the electronic databases available. 75% of the participants have stated that they have used only “Google” for searching information for their studies. 9% of the participants have used “Google Scholar”. 5% of them have stated that they are using databases but names were not specified. Others have not indicated anything. 97% of them were not familiar with any type of Advanced searching options such as Boolean, Phrase searching, Wild card characters and Truncations.

There is no difference among the 3rd and 4th year undergraduates, or gender wise or faculty or department wise. Almost all have indicated that they use Google search engine to find out required information but not the Google Scholar.

According to the post assessment, participants have evaluated the sessions were highly useful and useful. 99% of them felt that it would be much beneficial if they were given this type of sessions in their first or second year of the course of study. All (100%) participants have confirmed that after the session they would be able to retrieve information more efficiently and effectively using advanced search techniques and use scholarly databases for their studies rather than using search engines.

Since the results of this study showed that poor awareness about the electronic databases among students, there is a need to emphasize on that fact. One successful way is to collaborate librarians with teaching faculty to reach the students. It can be of a continuum from one –shot programmes to a credit-based module on information literacy.

Key Words : Academic Libraries, Information Literacy, User Education

Extended Abstract

Introduction

The Library, University of Sri Jayewardenepura as a well established academic library caters for undergraduates, postgraduates, academic staff members and non academic staff members of the five faculties of the university. The library spends a large sum of money to purchase books and periodicals annually and it subscribes to a number of electronic resources specially bibliographic and full text databases. In 2013/2014 access was given to five major databases through the consortium of University Grants Commission namely Emerald, SAGE Research Methods, Oxford Journals, Taylor and Francis, Wiley online. Also the library subscribed to JSTOR database.

The digital resources available in a library play a prominent role in facilitating access to the required information to the user in an expediency manner (Adeniran, 2013). As the library contains a considerable amount of electronic information resources and spends a significant amount of its budget for these resources enhancing of usage is a must and a responsibility of the librarians.

The objective of the study was to examine the importance of IL (Information Literacy) sessions conducted by the library staff to the students with regard to the knowledge imparted on information seeking aspects. With this objective library conducted Information Literacy sessions.

Materials and Methods

Though the library conducts such programs for undergraduates as well as for postgraduates, only the undergraduate sessions conducted during 2014 were selected for the present study. Participants included Third year and Fourth year undergraduates of Faculties of Management Studies and Commerce, Applied Sciences and Medical Sciences. As third year and fourth year undergraduates are carrying out their research projects special attention was focused to these categories. Total population was considered as the sample which was 308.

Content of the program covers Introduction to the library, Information Resources on different media and types, steps in searching information, searching techniques and formulation of search strategy, Services offered, Library Website and especially on electronic databases. Power point presentations together with hands on sessions were conducted. Also they were assigned activities during the session. Usually a session lasted for 3- 4 hours.

A pre assessment was done using a questionnaire as the instrument to get aware about the participants background information, their awareness, knowledge on Electronic resources, searching strategies and to check whether they visit the library website and multimedia center of the library.

After the session it was evaluated using a questionnaire and asked about the session and their suggestions and recommendations.

Results and Discussion

According to the pre assessment it was found that 90 % of undergraduates have not visited the library website before the session. 98% of them have not used the electronic databases available. 75% of the participants have stated that they have used only “Google” for searching information for their studies. 9% of the participants have used “Google Scholar”. 5% of them have stated that they are using databases but names were not specified. Others have not indicated anything. 97% of them were not familiar with any type of Advanced searching options such as Boolean, Phrase searching, Wild card characters and Truncations.

According to the post assessment, participants have evaluated the sessions were highly useful (90%) and useful (10%). Also they have suggested conducting such type of sessions during first and second years. Also it was found that Emerald Inc. has stated that according to their statistics highest usage was indicated by University of Sri Jayewardenepura.

All (100%) participants have confirmed that after the session they would be able to retrieve information more efficiently and effectively using advanced search techniques and use scholarly databases for their studies rather than using search engines.

The findings of this study revealed that majority of the undergraduates have not visited the library website and have not accessed any of the electronic databases available through the library. This may be due to the lack of skills on advanced search techniques such as Boolean, Phrase searching, Wild Card Characters and Truncations. This is supported by the findings about the high usage of the common search engine “Google” and the low usage of the “Google Scholar”. Cockrell and Jayne(2002) have also found that undergraduates would rather stick with their World Wide Web search skills than try to learn the skills needed for searching scholarly databases.

Further it was revealed that insignificant number of undergraduates have used electronic databases, but not conversant way as they could not remember at least the name of the database they used. There is no change in the pattern of usage by gender or by the level of study.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

Mere having availability and providing access to electronic databases is not sufficient. Librarians need to play a major role in marketing those especially among the main stakeholders; academics and students. Since the results of this study showed that poor awareness about the electronic databases among students,

there is a need to emphasize on that fact. One successful way is to collaborate librarians with teaching faculty to reach the students. It can be of a continuum from one –shot programmes to a credit-based module on information literacy. Naqvi (2012) based on a research study on use of electronic databases at GPBUAT, India has also recommended that university library should intensify their awareness campaigns concerning the availability of databases and e –resources. He has also recommended that for maximum utilization of databases of e – resources , library should provide orientation assistance to the users and at least one credit course should be implemented. So these recommendations are applicable to Sri Lanka too.

References

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