

Use of Online Databases in the Faculty of Arts at Aligarh Muslim University and University of Delhi

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Abstract

This paper examines the use and purpose of use of online databases among the users of Faculty of Arts in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and University of Delhi (DU). For this study, survey method was used to find out the level of use, level of satisfaction, problems and training needed for accessing the online databases. A total number of 467 and 1772 questionnaires were distributed among the Faculty members, Research scholars and Postgraduates in faculty of Arts in AMU and DU, out of which 389 and 1463 were completed and returned back by respondents, showing overall response rate of 83.29% and 82.56% from AMU and DU respectively. The result reveals that user groups of DU are more aware and use online databases more than users of AMU. The study further reveals that the majority of the users access the online databases for retrieving information mainly for teaching and research purposes. Annual Review and JSTOR are the most widely used database in Faculty of Arts. The study concludes with some suggestions for better utilization of online database among users in faculty of Arts in AMU and DU.

Keywords: Online Databases, ICT, Faculty of Arts, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), University of Delhi (DU).

1. Introduction

The developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) especially the advent and rapid expansion of Internet and networked technologies have made drastic changes in the way information is collected, stored, retrieved, and distributed. It also enables users to access and share vast amount of online information resources at free or low cost with high speed. Online database is one of the products of information and communication technologies that provide information generated by different organizations and publishers all over the world.

The application of ICTs to library services has no doubt greatly transformed the nature and pattern of information handling, services and cooperation in libraries and information centres worldwide. The ICTs have undoubtedly provided opportunities for the provision of variety of information services. The most prominent information service offered by ICTs is the database oriented services. The introduction of online databases in libraries has greatly improved the efficiency of its services and brought out the recently published information sources in a

more convenient and easy to use format to users. Thus, within a short span of time, online databases have become an important information source for libraries to support learning and research activities.

1.1. Online Databases

Gray (1976) defines online databases as “a collection of bibliographic information stored in a computer having retrospective search is made possible remotely computer through the use of softwares”. Online database is a record of related digital information concerned with either general information or any specific subject field, which is arranged in a uniform format to retrieve information easily through internet or online networks. These databases are regularly updated file of digitized information, in which the content is revised usually on a regular basis to provide current information to users. Soyizwapi (2005) states that the electronic databases can be accessed from remote locations and users have no need to go to the library to use information sources. By online databases, users can access distant located information simultaneously through timesharing process irrespective of time and their locations. In online databases, computer system answers the queries as quickly as it received from users, showing the results according to users preferences, i.e., what they required, how it is displayed and if they required any modification, then it can be modified according to their needs. These databases have become important and useful information sources for libraries and information centres, which can be accessed anywhere irrespective of all geographical limits. Chowdhury (2010) discussed the different types of online databases. The databases mainly divided into two major divisions i) reference databases and ii) source databases, which further categories as bibliographic databases, full text databases, statistical databases, image databases on the basis of nature and scope of the contents.

Online databases open up great opportunities for academicians and researchers to find and access a corpus of knowledge. They have emerged as very valuable and useful sources for timesaving and R&D activities. Some popular online databases include Emeraldinsight, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR have provided targeting the library users with opportunities and sources for learning. Users from different academic fields all over the world use online databases to seek latest information in their areas of study, to consult different electronic resources. However, use of online databases in academics has grown substantially in recent years, although problems of access, lack of skills, and applicability of information remained barriers to effective use of online databases as a source of information.

2. Earlier Studies

Computerized database is one of the outcomes of an application of computer technology to education. These are continuously gaining fame in academic world because of the capability of problem solving and information handling practices (Parisi, 1985). An academic database is an excellent tool for information retrieval, referencing and sharing of data (Uwimana and Melius, 2010). The use of these databases had broadened the scope of the researches by providing the literature in facilitating the research activities in such a way that was not possible with print journals (Kozak, 2007). They are the excellent tools to access information, rather than a mere item of any library's collection (Rice, 1985).

Use of online databases improves the quality of research and academic work by providing enriched contents on different subjects of study. Hence, the databases are widely used for research, teaching and getting new informational sources of education (Khan and Zaidi, 2009; Mannan, Zaidi and Bharati, 2009; Atakan, 2008). Dukic (2010) reported that the faculty members in the Croatian University, used online academic databases as a relevant source of scientific information. Bates (1996) revealed that the use of databases was quite low among the humanities scholars. The study found that printed materials were the most preferred information format amongst the students. It recommended a promotional campaign before introducing electronic information sources to library users. Reichel (1983) mentioned certain advantages and features of online databases, which include comprehensiveness, multiple database searching, free-text searching, currency and alert service. Better and quick access to information with convenience is a real benefit of online searching. The primary advantages of using electronic sources mentioned by Rogers (2001) are easy access, 24-hour availability and less time-consuming in getting information.

Simple search was regarded as a most favourable search technique, whereas advanced searches were used rarely only for getting some specific information. The librarians have to teach users about the potentials of advanced searching in literature searching (Kattimani, 2010). Mercado (1999) suggested that the library users should learn how to search and know about critical thinking skills for databases and keyword selection. The investigators, Koovakkai and Noor (2006), Atakan (2008), Madhusudhan (2010), and Maharana, Bipin and Behera (2010) identified the problems related to lack of guidance, slow access speed, poor connectivity, poor facility, erratic power supply, inadequate number of systems while making the use of e-databases. While, Ali (2005) stated that lack training to access digital resources, trained manpower, variation in users demand, financial support, improper of ICT

infrastructure, etc., are some of the factors that hinder the use of e-resources. As training and organization of workshops are the modes of enhancing users' skills and getting requisite results, libraries should provide information in both electronic and print formats to communicate current information either on the particular database or about other library's electronic resources (Adams and Bonk 1995).

3. Need and Purpose

Online Databases are an excellent and popular tool for online information searching that is widely used in various disciplines, especially in science and technology. A number of studies have been conducted to measure the use and impact of online databases in science related fields and these have shown positive results.

The aim of the study is to ascertain the level of use of online databases and pattern of usage of online databases subscribed by the libraries of select Universities. The study attempts to assess the use of online databases by the postgraduates, research scholars and faculty members in the faculty of Arts in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and University of Delhi (DU).

4. Significance of the Study

The study aims to identify the importance and use of online databases in the field of Arts. The results of the study will help to:

- Make optimum use of Online Databases in the field of Arts.
- To identify the issues that restricted the users in making use of online database services.
- Improve the library services in terms of reconsidering the existing database services in the libraries.

5. Scope and Limitations

The use of online databases is gaining momentum in Indian higher education as these are generally used by faculty, staff and students for obtaining information. It assists libraries in providing authentic and current information to enhance teaching, learning and research activities in their respective institutions. The study tries to identify the usage level of different online databases and various problems experienced by the users while using online databases. The target population of the present study is restricted to faculty members, research scholars

and postgraduates in the Faculty of Arts in Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and University of Delhi (DU).

6. Objectives of the Study

Online databases in academic libraries comprises of significant part of its collection. The study offers to identify the accessibility and use of online databases in libraries under study along with its user's satisfaction and barriers faced while using of online databases. The objectives of the study are:

- i. To investigate the awareness and use of online databases in the Faculty of Arts in AMU and DU.
- ii. To compare the use of online databases in the field of Arts.
- iii. To ascertain the most popular online databases among the users.
- iv. To assess the impact of online databases on users' study/work.
- v. To identify the most used search technique for retrieving the information.
- vi. To know about the constrains faced by users while using online databases.
- vii. To identify the level of satisfaction in using the database services in the select universities and to suggest suitable solutions.
- viii. To know various training programs provided by the libraries to users as well as staff for utilization of available resources.

7. Hypothesis

The study attempts to test the following hypothesis:

- i. Majority of users in participating libraries prefer to use Basic search for retrieving the information.
- ii. Satisfaction level regarding the use of online databases is high among the users of AMU than DU.

8. Methodology

Research Methodology is the systematic investigation involves the various steps used by a researcher in studying the research problem. It involves the process of identifying adequate sample by using appropriate sampling techniques, methods for collecting data, tabulation of collected data and use of statistical methods for analyzing the data.

8.1. Population and Sample

To achieve the objective of the study mainly three variables were selected for the study. The population from which a sample was drawn included registered postgraduate students, research scholars (Ph.D. and M.Phil.) and faculty members in the faculty of Arts at Aligarh Muslim University and University of Delhi. Random sampling method was used for the selection of respondents for the study.

8.2. Pilot Survey

The questionnaire used was pre-tested in a pilot survey to ascertain whether the questions were clear, understandable and relevant. A questionnaire was distributed to a sample population of 27 research scholars and postgraduate students registered in the Faculty of Social Sciences in the Central University of Himachal Pradesh. As a result of the pilot study and on the basis of the feedbacks, some questions were added, modified or removed from the questionnaire.

8.3. Data Collection Method

The survey method was employed to obtain the necessary information required for the study. A total of 467 and 1772 validated questionnaires were administered randomly among the faculty members, research scholars and post graduates of the Faculty of Arts in AMU and DU respectively, to determine the use and usage differences among the various user groups. Out of 467 questionnaires distributed in AMU, 422 (90.36%) questionnaires were returned back including 31 (83.78%) from faculty members, 176 (96.70%) from research scholars and 216 (87.10%) from PG students. Due to the incomplete responses, out of 422, 389 (83.29%) questionnaires were selected for the study including 29 (78.37%) from faculty members, 172 (94.50%) from research scholars and 188 (75.81%) from PG students. In DU, a total of 1772 questionnaires were administered, out of which 1571 (88.65%) were returned back, of whom 38 (82.61%) belonged to the faculty members, 427 (90.08%) to research scholars and 1106 (88.34%) to PG students. The investigators considered only 1463 (82.56%) completely filled in questionnaires for the final analysis, of whom 36 (78.36%) responses were obtained from faculty members, 419 (88.39%) from research scholars and 1008 (80.51%) from PG students. The ultimate response rate of online database users of AMU and DU is found to be 83.29 percent and 82.56 percent respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: Response Rate

Users	Questionnaires Administered		Number of Questionnaires Received		Number of Questionnaires Analyzed	
	AMU	DU	AMU	DU	AMU	DU
Faculty Members (FM)	37 (29.83)	46 (28.39)	31 (83.78)	38 (82.61)	29 (78.37)	36 (78.36)
Research Scholars (RS)	182 (37.75)	474 (39.43)	176 (96.70)	427 (90.08)	172 (94.50)	419 (88.39)
PG Students (PG)	248 (43.82)	1252 (40.20)	216 (87.10)	1106 (88.34)	188 (75.81)	1008 (80.51)
Total	467 (39.84)	1772 (39.69)	422 (90.36)	1571 (88.65)	389 (83.29)	1463 (82.56)

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data which are collected through questionnaires from the faculty members, research scholars and post graduates of the Faculty of Arts in AMU and DU have been organized and analysed.

9.1. Awareness about Online Databases

In order to find out the respondents awareness level about databases available in the library of AMU and DU, the respondents were requested to indicate their level of awareness on Likert 3 point scale of measurement. Their responses are presented in table 2 as given below:

Table 2: Awareness about Online Databases

S. No.	Level of Awareness	AMU			DU		
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008
1.	Extremely Aware	-	-	-	31 (86.11)	174 (41.52)	432 (42.85)
2.	Neutral	18 (62.06)	57 (33.13)	38 (20.21)	5 (13.88)	135 (32.21)	350 (34.72)
3.	Slightly Aware	11 (37.93)	115 (66.86)	150 (79.88)	-	110 (26.25)	226 (22.42)

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

Table 2 shows respondents' awareness of online databases in the libraries of AMU and DU, 62.06% faculty members are aware about the available online databases to some extent, whereas, 66.86% and 79.88% post graduate students and research scholars respectively are less aware about the availability of online databases in AMU. However, the situation was somewhat different in DU, where most of the users were extremely aware of the available online databases, i.e., faculty members (86.11%), research scholars (41.52%) and post graduate students (42.85%). It is clear from the analysis that users of F/O of Arts in DU are more aware of online databases than users in the AMU.

9.2. Purpose of Using Online Databases

Table 3 indicates the purpose of using online databases by the users of Faculty of Arts of AMU and DU. The responses received from the respondents reveals that in the Faculty of Arts of AMU, 100% faculty members and research scholars use online databases for teaching and research work respectively, while 93.18% of the PG students use it for preparing notes/ assignments. In DU, majority of the faculty members (94.44%) use online databases for teaching purpose, however all the researcher scholars (100%) completely depend on online databases for their research and 89.18% PG students prefer it for preparing notes/ assignments.

Table 3: Purpose of using Online Databases

S. No.	Purpose	AMU			DU		
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008
1.	Research work	13 (44.82)	172 (100)	-	29 (80.55)	419 (100)	756 (75)
2.	Preparing notes/ Assignments	8 (27.58)	136 (79.06)	175 (93.18)	-	340 (81.14)	899 (89.18)
3.	Presentation/Project	14 (48.27)	120 (69.76)	122 (64.89)	11 (30.55)	309 (73.74)	883 (87.59)
4.	Writing papers	16 (55.17)	121 (70.34)	44 (23.40)	22 (61.11)	395 (94.27)	564 (55.95)
5.	Teaching	29 (100)	-	-	34 (94.44)	41 (9.78)	-
6.	To update knowledge	20 (68.97)	86 (50)	89 (47.34)	20 (55.55)	363 (86.63)	514 (50.99)

(Multiple responses were permitted)

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

9.3. Most Used Online Databases

Table 4: Most used Online Databases

S. No.	Online Databases	Rank	
		AMU	DU
1.	Annual Review	1	2
2.	Cambridge University Press	4	9
3.	Encyclopedia Britannica	9	3
4.	Emerald Management	8	10
5.	JSTOR	3	1
6.	Oxford University Press	2	4
7.	Project MUSE	5	8
8.	Sage Journals Online	6	6
9.	Science Direct	10	5
10.	Springer Link	7	7

Rank on the basis of mean

The libraries of AMU and DU are acquiring a number of prominent online databases through different sources for searching the information in the field of Arts. The data in table 4 on the use of online databases in Faculty of Arts shows that Annual Review is the most frequently used online database in AMU followed by Oxford University Press, JSTOR etc.,

while Science Direct ranks at tenth position. The database JSTOR ranks first as per usage by the users of DU, followed by Annual Review, Encyclopedia Britannica, Oxford University Press and so on.

9.4. Search Methods Used

The data in table 5 reveals that among the different types of search techniques, viz., basic, advanced and expert, offered by databases, the user groups in AMU i.e. 89.53% research scholars followed by PG students (84.57%) and faculty members (62.06%) mostly prefer the basic search technique to seek the information. In DU, users were more aware of online databases, but still prefer to search through basic search followed by advance search, expert search and citation locator. 96.89% research scholars followed by PG students (88.98%) and faculty members (88.88%) are using basic search for searching the information. The finding of the study reveals that in the F/O Arts users mostly like to use simple and easy techniques offered by databases.

Table 5: Search method used preferably

S. No.	Search Method	AMU			DU			Total
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008	
1.	Basic Search	18 (62.06)	154 (89.53)	159 (84.57)	32 (88.88)	406 (96.89)	897 (88.98)	1666 (89.95)
2.	Advanced search	11 (37.93)	18 (10.47)	29 (15.42)	24 (66.66)	364 (86.87)	746 (74)	1192 (64.36)
3.	Expert search	-	-	-	8 (22.22)	66 (15.75)	31 (3.07)	105 (56.69)
4.	Citation locator/ Cited Reference search	-	-	-	-	75 (17.89)	51 (5.05)	126 (68.03)

(Multiple responses were permitted)

(Figures in parentheses are percentages)

The analysis shows that majority of the users i.e. a total of 1666 respondents (89.95%) in the participating libraries prefer to use Basic search for retrieving information. According to the above analysis and discussions, it can be concluded that majority of users in participating libraries prefer to use Basic search for retrieving the information. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

9.5. Preferred Form of Source

The responses tabulated in table 6 shows that all the user groups from F/O Arts of AMU, i.e. 81.39% research scholars followed by PG students (75.53%) and faculty members (65.51%) mostly like to use print sources for their work/study. User groups in DU, i.e. 65.15% and 52.08% research scholars and PG students respectively still prefer to use print or

traditional sources for their studies, while faculty members (94.44%) seem to be more advanced with electronic resources than other user groups. It is revealed from the analysis that the use of online sources is still in its infancy in the Arts subjects

Table 6: Preferred form of source

S. No.	Preferred Format of Information	AMU			DU		
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008
1.	Print Form	19 (65.51)	140 (81.39)	142 (75.53)	6 (16.66)	273 (65.15)	525 (52.08)
2.	Electronic Form	10 (34.48)	32 (18.6)	46 (24.46)	34 (94.44)	146 (34.84)	483 (48.21)

(Figures in parentheses are percentages)

9.6. Problems faced while using Online Databases

An effort was made to know the problems being faced while using online databases by the users of F/O of Arts of the select universities. The responses are given in table 7.

Table 7: Problems faced while using Online Databases

S. No.	Problems	AMU			DU		
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008
1.	Retrieval Problems (Irrelevant Retrieval)	21 (72.41)	160 (93.02)	142 (75.53)	26 (72.22)	301 (71.83)	705 (69.94)
2.	Language barriers	3 (10.34)	20 (11.62)	42 (38.29)	-	20 (4.77)	366 (36.30)
3.	Technical problems	7 (24.13)	77 (44.76)	73 (38.82)	10 (27.77)	231 (55.13)	815 (80.85)
4.	Connectivity(Slow speed)	18 (62.06)	152 (88.37)	135 (71.8)	30 (83.33)	314 (74.94)	868 (86.11)
5.	Non supportive library staff	12 (41.37)	78 (45.34)	120 (63.82)	18 (50)	240 (57.27)	536 (53.17)
6.	Networking Problems	2 (6.89)	96 (55.81)	96 (51.06)	32 (88.88)	259 (61.81)	652 (64.68)

(Multiple responses were permitted)

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

It is very clear from table 7 that in AMU, 93.02% research scholars followed by PG students (75.53%) and faculty members (72.41%) are facing the problem of irrelevant retrieval while using the online databases, however connectivity (slow speed) is another problem faced by 88.37%, 71.8% and 62.06% of the research scholars, PG students and faculty members respectively. On the contrary, in DU, majority of users i.e. 86.11% of PG students followed by faculty members (83.33%) and research scholars (74.94%) are facing the problem of improper connectivity, while 72.22% faculty members, 71.83% research

scholars and 69.94% PG students had complained about problems related to retrieval. Other problems mentioned by the users are the same in both the universities.

9.7. Satisfaction Level

Table 8 shows the satisfaction level of respondents with the available databases in select libraries. The data in table 8 reveals that in AMU, faculty members (55.17%) are more satisfied than PG students (42.55%) and research scholars (41.27%), while in DU the majority of faculty members i.e. 86.11% followed by research scholars (61.81%) and PG students (61.01%) are satisfied with online databases. This is evident that the DU users groups are more satisfied with the online databases available through the library.

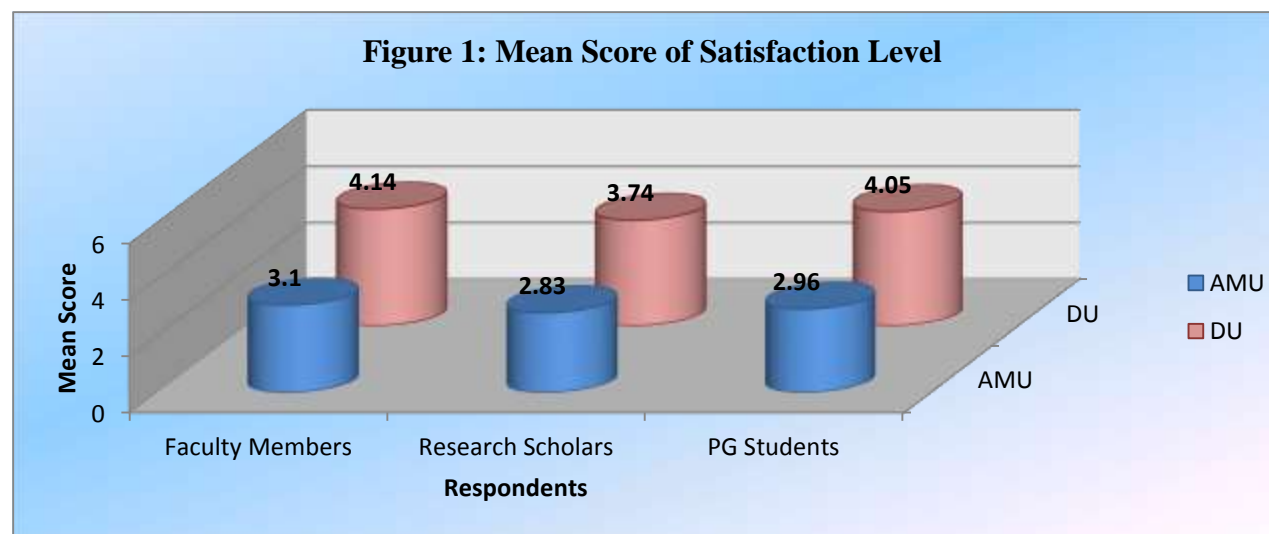
It is found from table 8 that in F/O Arts of DU, majority of users i.e. faculty members (Mean 4.14), PG students (Mean 4.05) and research scholars (Mean 3.74) are satisfied with the available online databases through the library and occupied first rank. However, majority of users in AMU i.e. faculty members (Mean 3.10), PG students (Mean 2.96) and research scholars (Mean 2.83) are neither satisfied/nor dissatisfied with the available online databases in the library and placed in the second rank. The mean score of satisfaction level of respondents of AMU and DU has been shown in Figure 1. Therefore, the hypothesis stating that the satisfaction level regarding the use of online databases is high among the users of AMU than DU, could not be proved. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Table 8: Satisfaction with the Online Databases available in library

1= VD: Very dissatisfied, 2= D: Dissatisfied, 3 NS/ND: Neither satisfied/nor dissatisfied, 4= S: Satisfied, 5=HS: Highly satisfied

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

S. No.	University	Respondents																				
		Faculty Members							Research Scholars							PG Students						
		1	2	3	4	5	M	R	1	2	3	4	5	M	R	1	2	3	4	5	M	R
1.	AMU	0	13 (44.82)	0	16 (55.17)	0	3.10	2	0	101 (58.72)	0	71 (41.27)	0	2.83	2	0	88 (46.8)	20 (10.63)	80 (42.55)	0	2.96	2
2.	DU	0	0	0	31 (86.11)	5 (13.88)	4.14	1	0	56 (13.36)	50 (11.93)	259 (61.81)	54 (12.88)	3.74	1	0	0	89 (8.82)	615 (61.01)	134 (13.29)	4.05	1



9.9. Type of support provided by the library in the use of online databases

For maximum usage of online databases, it is necessary that users should be guided in using the online databases available in the university library. Table 9 indicates that majority of respondents i.e. 77.65% and 76.06% of research scholars and PG students respectively of the F/O Arts in AMU get help in the use of online databases through library staff, whereas 65.51% faculty members choose online tutorials in the use of online databases. In DU, faculty members (80.55%) go through the online tutorials to learn more about online databases, however 87.5% research scholars get acquaintance through training/orientation programs, while 86.5% PG students prefer to get help from library staff in using the online databases.

Table 9: Type of support provided by the library in the use of online databases

S. No.	Type of support	AMU			DU		
		FM N=29	RS N=172	PG N=188	FM N=36	RS N=419	PG N=1008
1.	Training/ Orientation Programmes	11 (37.93)	70 (40.69)	56 (29.78)	26 (72.22)	367 (87.5)	324 (32.14)
2.	Online tutorial	19 (65.51)	59 (34.3)	54 (28.72)	29 (80.55)	230 (54.89)	305 (30.25)
3.	Guides or leaflets on using databases	10 (34.48)	76 (44.18)	62 (32.97)	16 (44.44)	252 (60.14)	486 (48.21)
4.	Personal help by library staff	16 (55.17)	146 (77.65)	143 (76.06)	21 (58.33)	299 (71.36)	872 (86.50)
5.	Electronic/Virtual reference service	4 (13.79)	19 (11.0)	23 (12.2)	18 (50)	203 (48.44)	143 (14.18)

(Multiple responses were permitted)

(Figures in parentheses are percentage)

10. Finding & Conclusion

With the advancement in ICT technologies, academic university libraries are moving towards the digital environment. To tune up with the ever-changing demands of users, academic libraries are subscribing a large number of online databases. The study reveals that online databases provided by the libraries of AMU and DU are not fully utilized by the users of F/O Arts and many users are still depending on printed resources for their teaching or study. In both the universities, user groups use online databases mostly for teaching and research works and seem quite satisfy with online database services. It is recognized that the amount of online database usage is low in AMU in comparison to DU. In both the university, users got training and individual instruction in using the online databases. However, the users of DU are having a good knowledge of online databases than users of AMU, but they still like to use print sources more rather than using online databases. This study will be helpful in reorienting online database services in academic libraries and to coordinate them with ever changing demands of the users.

11. Suggestions

This study, therefore, recommends the following suggestions for maximum utilization of available online databases in the library:

- The results of this study suggest that the libraries should institute training and awareness programmes for both users and staff in using and searching the online databases. In addition, library staff should provide assistance through manuals and handbooks on the use of online information resources and should also assist users through online and in-person assistance.
- Libraries have to improve internet infrastructure and increase the number of computer terminals with access to online information resources.
- The results propose that 24x7 access to online resources at the user's place can increase the acceptance and use of online databases.

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