



Use Of Search Engines By Students In College Libraries: A Study Of User Behaviour

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Abstract:

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies has significantly transformed the landscape of academic libraries and information access. In the digital era, search engines have emerged as one of the most widely used tools for retrieving information, especially among students in higher education. Search engines such as Google, Bing, and Yahoo provide quick and easy access to vast amounts of information, making them an essential component of academic research and learning. In this context, understanding how students use search engines within college libraries becomes crucial for improving information services and enhancing academic performance.

The present study aims to examine the use of search engines by students in college libraries, with a particular focus on their information-seeking behaviour. The study investigates the level of awareness, frequency of use, purpose of usage, preferred search engines, and challenges faced by students while accessing information through search engines. It also seeks to identify patterns in user behaviour and evaluate the effectiveness of search engines in meeting academic information needs.

The study is based on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to students from selected college libraries. A descriptive research design has been adopted to analyse user behaviour in a systematic manner. The sample consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students who regularly visit the library and use digital resources. The data collected has been analysed using simple statistical tools such as percentage and frequency distribution to present a clear picture of usage patterns.

The findings of the study reveal that a majority of students are highly dependent on search engines for their academic work. Most respondents reported using search engines on a daily or weekly basis, indicating their integral role in the learning process. Among various search engines, Google was found to be the most preferred due to its ease of use, speed, and accessibility. Students primarily use

search engines for purposes such as completing assignments, preparing notes, accessing study materials, and gaining general knowledge.

However, the study also highlights several challenges faced by students in effectively using search engines. A significant number of respondents reported difficulties in identifying reliable and authentic sources of information. Many students lack advanced search skills, which affects the quality of information retrieved. Issues such as slow internet connectivity, information overload, and lack of proper guidance further hinder effective utilisation. The findings indicate that while search engines are widely used, their academic potential is not fully realised due to gaps in information literacy.

The study further reveals that there is a need for libraries to play a more active role in guiding students towards effective use of search engines. Librarians can contribute by organising training programmes on information literacy, teaching advanced search techniques, and promoting the use of credible academic resources. Integrating search engine training into library orientation programmes can significantly improve students' ability to retrieve relevant and reliable information.

In conclusion, the study emphasises that search engines have become indispensable tools for students in college libraries. While their usage is widespread, there is a clear need to enhance students' search skills and awareness of quality information sources. Strengthening digital literacy initiatives and improving library support services can bridge the gap between access and effective utilisation. The study provides valuable insights for librarians, educators, and policymakers to develop strategies for optimising the use of search engines in academic environments.

Keywords:

Search Engines, Information Seeking Behaviour, College Libraries, Students, Digital Information Resources, Information Retrieval, User Behaviour, Academic Libraries, Internet Use in Education, E-Resources

1.1 Introduction:

The advent of information and communication technology (ICT) has brought a significant transformation in the way information is accessed, retrieved, and utilized in academic environments. In the digital age, search engines have emerged as powerful tools that enable users to locate vast amounts of information within seconds. Students in higher education increasingly rely on search engines such as Google and other web-based platforms to meet their academic and informational needs. This shift from traditional print resources to digital sources has redefined the role of college libraries, making them not only repositories of knowledge but also facilitators of digital information access.

In college libraries, the use of search engines has become an integral part of students' information-seeking behaviour. Students frequently use search engines for various academic purposes, including completing assignments, preparing for examinations, accessing study materials, and conducting research. The ease of use, speed, and accessibility of search engines make them a preferred

choice among students. However, despite their widespread use, there are concerns regarding the effectiveness of search engine usage, particularly in terms of the quality and reliability of information retrieved. Many students lack the necessary skills to evaluate sources critically and to use advanced search techniques, which may affect their academic performance.

In this context, it becomes essential to study the user behaviour of students in relation to search engine usage within college libraries. Understanding how students access, utilize, and perceive search engines can provide valuable insights into their information needs and challenges. The present study aims to examine the patterns of search engine use, identify the purposes and frequency of usage, and explore the difficulties faced by students. The findings of this study will be useful for librarians, educators, and policymakers in designing effective information literacy programmes and improving digital library services to enhance the academic experience of students.

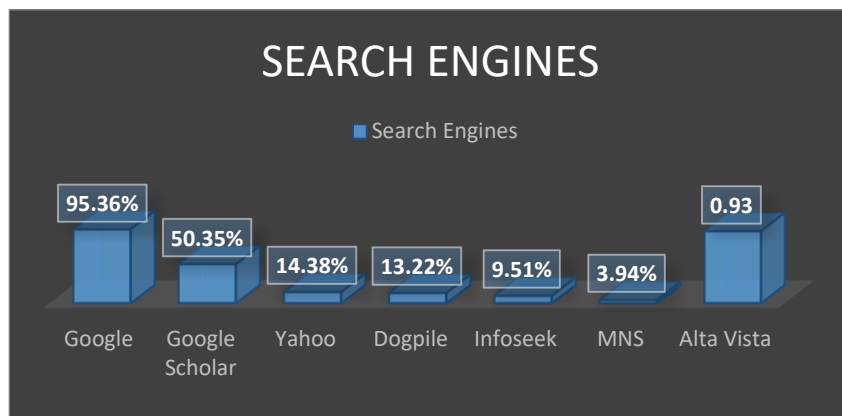
1.2 Objectives of the Study:

- ✓ To identify the level of awareness of search engines among students in college libraries.
- ✓ To examine the frequency of use of search engines by students for academic purposes.
- ✓ To analyse the purposes for which students use search engines (e.g., assignments, research, general knowledge).
- ✓ To identify the most preferred search engines used by students.
- ✓ To study the information-seeking behaviour of students while using search engines.
- ✓ To assess the level of satisfaction of students with search engine results.
- ✓ To identify the challenges and problems faced by students in using search engines.
- ✓ To evaluate the effectiveness of search engines in meeting students' academic information needs.
- ✓ To examine the level of digital literacy and search skills among students.
- ✓ To suggest measures for improving the effective use of search engines in college libraries.

1.3 Data Analysis & Interpretation:

1.3.1 Level of Usage of Search Engines by Students

Search Engines	Valid %	Decision
Google	95.36	Very High
Google Scholar	50.35	High
Yahoo	14.38	Moderate
Dogpile	13.22	Moderate
Infoseek	9.51	Moderate
MNS	3.94	Low
Alta Vista	0.93	Low



Source: Primary Data

Analysis:

The table presents the level of usage of various search engines by students in college libraries. Among all the search engines, Google records the highest usage percentage of 95.36%, indicating a very high level of use among students. Google Scholar occupies the second position with 50.35% usage, showing a high level of preference for academic searching. The usage of Yahoo (14.38%), Dogpile (13.22%), and Infoseek (9.51%) is moderate. On the other hand, MNS (3.94%) and Alta Vista (0.93%) show a low level of usage among students.

Interpretation:

The data indicates that students strongly prefer Google because of its simplicity, speed, accuracy, and wide availability of information. The considerable usage of Google Scholar shows that students are also aware of academic and scholarly resources for study and research purposes. The comparatively low usage of Yahoo, Dogpile, Infoseek, MNS, and Alta Vista suggests that these search engines are either less popular, outdated, or less useful for academic information retrieval. The findings reflect the changing trend of students toward modern and efficient digital search platforms.

Finding:

The study finds that Google is the most extensively used search engine among college students, while Google Scholar is widely used for academic and research-related information. Other search engines are used only by a small proportion of students. The overall findings reveal that students mainly depend on popular and efficient search engines for accessing digital information resources in college libraries.

1.3.2 According to the Users, which is the best search engine in college library

Responses * Search Engines (N=431)										
Search Engines	R1 %	R2 %	R3 %	R4 %	R5 %	N		Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
						Valid %	Missing %			
Alta Vista	0 (0.0)	4 (0.93)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	4 (0.93)	427 (99.07)	0.8	1.79	Low
Yahoo	21 (4.87)	32 (7.42)	9 (2.09)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	62 (14.38)	369 (85.61)	12.4	14.24	Moderate
MSN	2 (0.46)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	5 (1.16)	10 (0.23)	17 (3.94)	414 (96.06)	3.4	4.39	Low
Infoseek	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	10 (2.32)	11 (2.55)	20 (4.64)	41 (9.51)	390 (90.49)	8.2	8.54	Moderate
Google	406 (94.19)	4 (0.93)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	411 (95.36)	20 (4.64)	82.2	181.52	Very High
Dog Pile	9 (0.02)	5 (1.16)	10 (2.32)	19 (4.41)	14 (3.25)	57 (13.22)	374 (86.77)	11.4	5.41	Moderate
Google Scholar	82 (19.02)	123 (28.54)	12 (2.78)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	217 (50.35)	214 (49.65)	43.4	54.38	High

Source: Primary Data

Analysis:

The table entitled “According to the Users, which is the best search engine in college library” presents the opinions of 431 respondents regarding various search engines used in college libraries. The data reveals that Google is the most preferred search engine among users. Out of 431 respondents, 411 (95.36%) selected Google, with the highest mean score of 82.2 and a “Very High” decision level.

Google Scholar is the second most preferred search engine with 217 respondents (50.35%) and a high mean score of 43.4, indicating significant usage for academic and research purposes.

Other search engines such as Yahoo, Dog Pile, and Infoseek received moderate responses, while Alta Vista and MSN recorded very low usage among respondents. The table clearly indicates that traditional search engines like Alta Vista and MSN are becoming less relevant in the academic environment compared to modern and specialized academic search platforms.

Interpretation:

The findings indicate that students and library users highly depend on Google for accessing information because of its speed, simplicity, accuracy, and wide availability of resources. The high preference for Google Scholar further suggests that users are increasingly inclined toward scholarly and research-oriented information sources for academic work, assignments, and research activities.

The comparatively low preference for other search engines reflects the dominance of Google-based services in the digital information environment of college libraries. It also suggests that users prefer search engines that provide easy access to reliable, updated, and comprehensive information resources.

Findings:

The study finds that Google is the most popular and widely used search engine among college library users, followed by Google Scholar. The dominance of these platforms highlights the growing dependence of students on digital search tools for academic and research purposes. Traditional search engines such as Alta Vista, MSN, and Infoseek are rarely used, indicating a major shift toward advanced and user-friendly search technologies in college libraries.

1.4 Major Findings:

- 1.4.1 The study reveals that Google is the most preferred search engine among college library users with 95.36% responses, indicating its dominant role in information searching.
- 1.4.2 Google received the highest mean score (82.2) and was ranked under the “Very High” category, showing maximum user satisfaction and acceptance.
- 1.4.3 Google Scholar emerged as the second most preferred search engine with 50.35% valid responses, reflecting its importance for academic and research-related information.
- 1.4.4 The high usage of Google Scholar indicates that students are increasingly using scholarly search tools for assignments, projects, and research activities.
- 1.4.5 Yahoo received only moderate preference among respondents, suggesting that its use in academic libraries has declined significantly.
- 1.4.6 Dog Pile and Infoseek were found to have moderate levels of usage, but they are far less preferred compared to Google and Google Scholar.
- 1.4.7 Alta Vista showed the lowest level of usage among respondents, indicating that it is almost obsolete in present-day academic information searching.

- 1.4.8 MSN search engine also recorded very low usage, demonstrating limited awareness and acceptance among library users.
- 1.4.9 The findings indicate that students prefer search engines that provide quick access, relevant results, user-friendly interfaces, and comprehensive digital information resources.
- 1.4.10 Overall, the study confirms that modern academic users are highly dependent on Google-based digital search platforms for accessing information in college libraries, while older search engines are gradually losing relevance.

1.5 Conclusion:

The present study entitled “Use of Search Engines by Students in College Libraries: A Study of User Behaviour” reveals that search engines have become an essential part of academic and research activities among students in college libraries. The study highlights that the majority of students frequently use search engines for accessing academic information, completing assignments, preparing seminar presentations, and supporting research-related work. Search engines provide quick, easy, and wide access to information resources, thereby increasing the efficiency of learning and information retrieval.

The findings of the study indicate that students mostly prefer popular search engines due to their simplicity, speed, and availability of vast information. The study also shows that students are increasingly dependent on digital sources and internet-based information services available in college libraries. Search engines help users to access e-books, e-journals, articles, dissertations, websites, and other scholarly materials conveniently.

At the same time, the study identifies certain problems faced by users while using search engines, such as information overload, difficulty in evaluating authentic information, lack of advanced searching skills, slow internet connectivity, and limited awareness about scholarly search tools. These challenges affect the effective utilisation of search engines for academic purposes.

The study further concludes that college libraries play an important role in guiding students towards effective and ethical use of search engines and digital information resources. Library professionals should organize orientation programmes, user education, and information literacy training to improve students’ searching skills and awareness regarding reliable academic sources.

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