

Internet Use and Its Impact on Library Usage by Trainees at Naval and Maritime Academy (NMA), Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study focused on the impact of Internet on Library usage in the Naval and Maritime Academy (NMA), Sri Lanka. In this study, two hundred trainees attached to NMA were given a semi structured questionnaire to collect data. It shows that the usage level of NMA library is very low due to the personal laptops given with dongles to the trainees to access Internet directly. It is also noted that the opening hours of the library and the location hamper the use of library. The researcher recommends that adequate funding to be made available to the library to provide electronic resources and to introduce training programs to enhance the knowledge of trainees on information retrieval and citation techniques to maintain academic honesty. The researcher also recommends to introduce a plagiarism software to the NMA library to prevent violation of copyrights.

Keywords: *Electronic resources, Plagiarism, Information retrieval, Naval and Maritime Academy*

Introduction

Internet is one of the most important tools for human beings and has become an important part of their lives. It provides access to vast amount of information both subscribed and free. Therefore, it can be identified as the most powerful tool which could be used to access information and it also plays a vital role in the teaching, research and learning process. With the advent of the Internet, major changes can be seen in the academic communities' approach, the way they seek information and the methods they employ for teaching and learning activities. Therefore, most higher educational institutes provide Internet facilities to teachers and students and encourage students to use the Internet for their study purposes. Hence Internet is rapidly becoming a key component in higher education.

The Naval Maritime Academy (NMA), Trincomalee is one of the main training establishments of the Sri Lanka Navy which conducts training for both officers and sailors in the Sri Lanka Navy. It conducts training for officers under categories of officer cadets training, midshipmen training, sub lieutenant technical courses and junior naval staff course. Further NMA conducts petty officer qualifying courses, leading rate qualifying courses, phase III courses and various other courses for sailors. Classroom lectures, research work, group studies and individual studies are the component of academic studies at the NMA. Other than the academic studies, trainees undergo physical training as a requirement of the system of the training, which is entirely focussed on converting civilians into military personal. The NMA library plays a major role in these training processes.

NMA is having the best library in the Sri Lanka Navy situated about 800m away from the trainees' accommodation area. The library is fully air-conditioned, computerized, furnished and well stocked with books of many disciplines, and it has well qualified staff. Other than the lending and reference sections, the library has a separate newspaper section where all the important daily/weekly newspapers and periodicals are available. "Nenasala" unit is available with Internet, photocopy and scanning facilities, but still they do not subscribe for any electronic databases.

All the officers and sailors, who were trained at the NMA during the period that this study was conducted, were given an opportunity to purchase a laptop on easy payment scheme from the welfare package introduced by the Sri Lanka Navy in 2007. Therefore most of the Officer Trainees (OT) and Sailor Trainees (ST) had their own laptops and dongles to access the Internet.

Research Problem

Having identified the importance of a well-equipped library, the Government has spent a great deal of money building an Academic Library with many facilities for the NMA students. Therefore, it is important for NMA students to make use of these services and facilities for study purposes. However, it has been observed that the usage of the NMA library is decreasing. Although this is common to libraries all-over the world, it is necessary to increase the usage of the NMA library to a considerable extent to do justice to the large amount of expenditure to enhance the resources and services of the NMA library.

The nature of utilization of NMA library depends on many factors. Ranawella and Jayasinghe (2014) has undertaken a study to investigate the factors that affect the optimal utilization of the NMA library. According to this study one of the main factors that directly affects the utilization of the NMA library is the opportunity given to access the Internet on individual basis. Therefore, it is very important to identify the factors that influence the increase of the Internet usage more than the library usage and then to find remedial measures to increase the utilization of the NMA library.

Objectives of the Study

Objectives of the study are as follows.

- To identify the factors that influence the utilization of the Internet more than the other NMA library facilities.
- To suggest suitable recommendations to higher authorities to increase the utilization of NMA library.
- To identify the required training programs to use the Internet efficiently.

Review of Literature

The Internet is very useful for the students because it allows them to obtain required academic information, but there may be other possibilities which could be harmful to their academic experience. Suhail and Bargees (2006) has undertaken a study to investigate the positive and negative effects of excessive Internet use on undergraduate students in Pakistan. The authors have constructed the Internet Effect Scale (IES) to determine the effects of Internet use and identified seven dimensions, i.e. psychological problems, educational problems, behavioural problems, interpersonal problems, physical problems, Internet abuse, and positive effects. The authors have identified that the excessive Internet use could lead to a host of problems of educational, psychological, physical and interpersonal nature. However, a great number of students have reported positive than negative effects of Internet use.

Ayub, Hamid and Nawawi (2014), have investigated the times spent on the Internet for academic and non-academic purposes. The survey was based on 1675 students in Malaysian Institutions of Higher Education randomly selected from five different fields of study, viz. engineering, computer sciences, sciences, agriculture and social sciences. Researchers found

that, on average, the participants accessed the Internet 4.48 hours per day. The study shows that there are significant differences in the time spent using the Internet among students in different fields of study. They have also found that the students in social sciences, agriculture and computer sciences mostly use the Internet for academic purposes. Analysing the data of all the students in the study sample, researchers have found that the total time spent on the Internet is weakly correlated with the time spent online specifically for academic purposes. According to their analysis for social science students, a low but significant positive correlation exists between the overall time spent online and the time spent on the Internet for academic research. However, for science students, a negative low correlation has been observed. The researchers have not found any correlation between the Internet access duration and the use of the Internet for academic purposes among the students in the fields of agriculture, engineering and computer sciences.

Parmar (2015) has investigated the different uses of the Internet, and how students at Navsari campus of Navsari Agricultural University use the Internet facilities. The study also concentrated on various factors that affect the Internet usage. As per the findings, respondents mostly use the Internet to search information followed by reading newspapers, downloading research articles, new information, e-mails and job applications.

Hasim and Salman (2010) have studied the factors that affect the sustainability of Internet usage by Malay youth in Kota Bharu, a rural town in the north east of peninsular Malaysia. The study showed that issues relating to security concerns and interruptions and usage have a negative effect on the sustainability of Internet usage.

Sahin, Balta and Ercan (2010) have conducted a study to identify the way university students access the Internet and other resources, how they gather their course project requirements during the project elicitation phase, and their trends in the literature review using the Internet. The study also concentrated on the diversity of Internet resources which are used for homework and course project studies, and the reliability and accessibility of these resources have also been investigated and assessed. The study has shown that the students accept the library resources as reliable, and many of the successful students have used reliable Internet and library resources together on their homework and projects elicitation phases. They have also identified that less accessible and more secure Internet resources are the most useful and

reliable information. Using highly accessible Internet sites may give fast results but the reliability of those results cannot be ensured.

Methodology

To collect data, survey method was used and a questionnaire consisting of both close-ended questions as well as open-ended questions was distributed among 100 Officer Trainees (OT) and 100 Sailor Trainees (ST). During the study period, 165 officers and 2180 sailor were trained at the NMA. Stratified simple random sampling method was used to improve the representativeness of the sample while reducing sampling error. Microsoft Excel was used to enter and analyse the data. Based on the analysis of the data the recommendations were made.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data was done on following aspects to meet the stated objectives. The way trainees spend their leisure time is very important to identify the sample and the findings are tabulated in Figure 1.

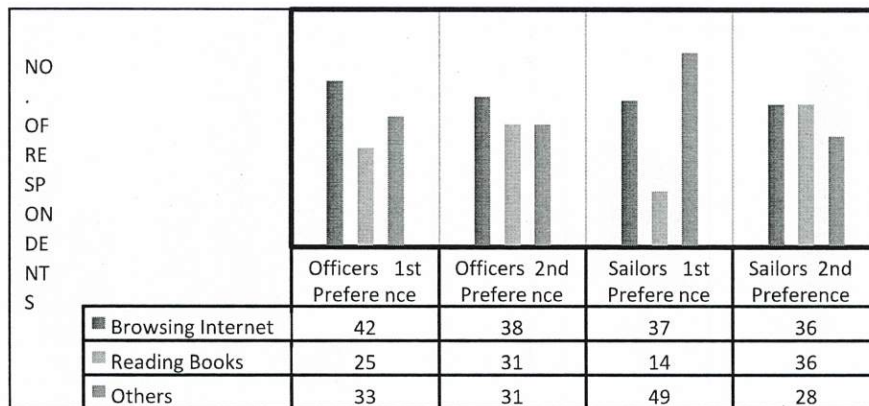


Figure 1: Leisure time activities of the trainees

Only 25% OTs and 14% STs stated that their most preferred way of spending their leisure time was reading printed books. Out of the trainees whose 1st preference was not quoted as reading printed books, 41% OTs and 42% STs marked reading printed books as their 2nd preferred way of spending their leisure time. That shows that there is a possibility to improve the habit of reading printed books in the library among the trainees reducing their tendency for browsing the Internet in their leisure times.

At NMA, some academic tasks are based on further reading and research work. Therefore, it is very important to identify the preferred way of finding information which is necessary for studies.

Table 1 –Preferred way of finding information for research and studies

Way of Finding Details	Officers	Sailors
Reading Books	12	21
Browsing Internet	88	79

As shown in Table 1, 88% of the OUTs and 79% of the STs browse the Internet to find information required for their studies. According to Figure 2 and Figure 3, only 83% OTs and 46% STs who represent 65% of the total sample have laptops for their own use. However only 69% OTs and 25% STs of the total sample have their own dongles to gain access to the Internet. That means only 47% of the total sample has dongles.

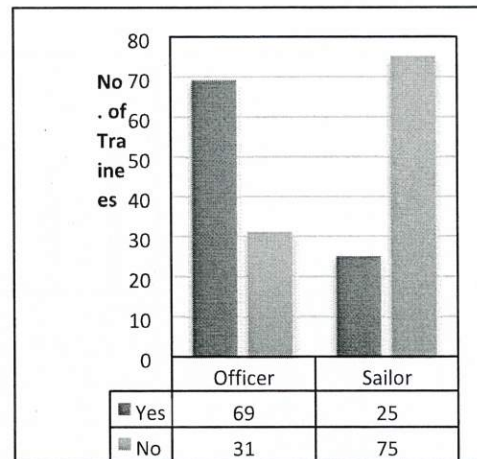
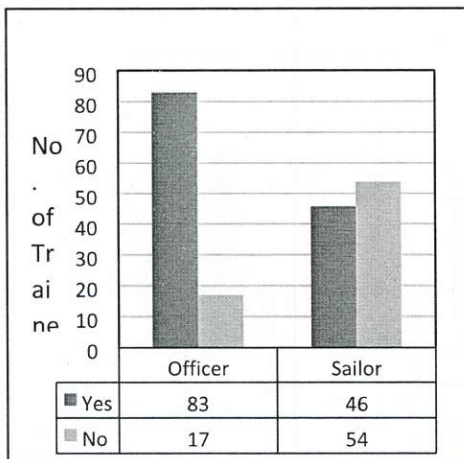


Figure 2: Availability of Personal Laptops Figure 3: Availability of Personal Dongles

Even though most of the STs do not have their own dongles, it seems that they manage to find other sources of Internet access to browse for the required information. To identify the reasons for opting for Internet usage rather than the library, data were gathered only from the trainees who browse the Internet to find information relevant to their studies, and the results are depicted in Figure 4.

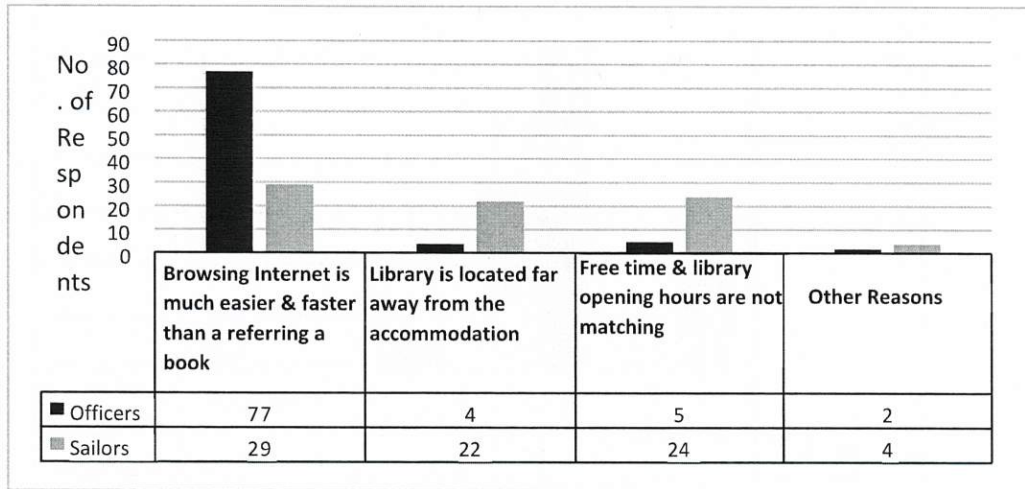


Figure 4: Reasons for browsing Internet to find Information relevant to their studies

According to Figure 4, 88% of the OTs said that browsing Internet was much easier and faster than referring books to fulfil their information needs. Only few pointed out different reasons such as library location and the inconvenient opening hours. However, as per the sailor’s point of view, 37% of sailors said that browsing the Internet is much easier and faster than referring a book. However, 58% sailors highlighted that the location and opening hours of the library was a barrier to use the library.

Question 4 focused on the accuracy of the information retrieved from the Internet. The statement, “When compared to printed books, Internet contains some incorrect and irrelevant information as well” was used to collect students’ perceptions on the accuracy of the information retrieved from the Internet and the findings are tabulated in Figure 5.

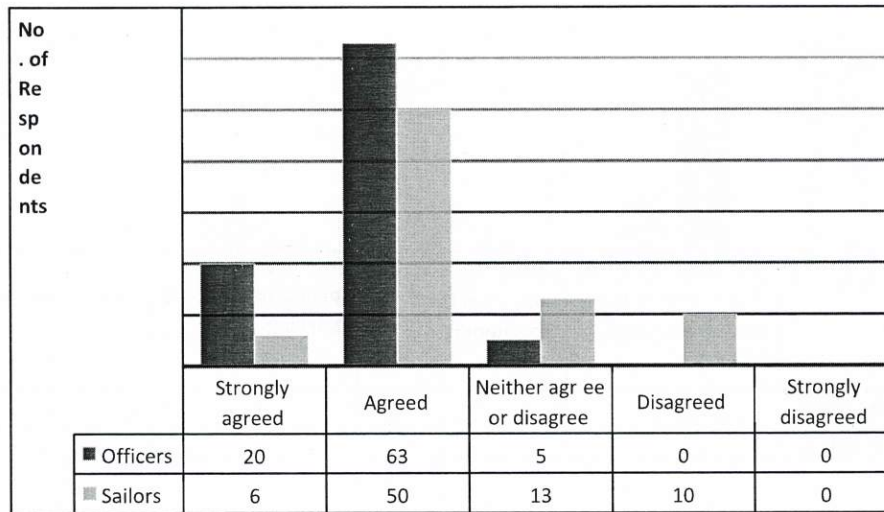


Figure 5: Responses for the question whether the respondents agree with the idea that Internet may contain some incorrect and irrelevant information when compared to printed books.

Trainees who browse the Internet to find information were questioned to analyse whether they knew the reliability of information in the Internet. According to the Figure 5, 94% of the OTs and 71% of STs know that the information on Internet is not always reliable, but 6% of OTs and 16% STs did not have any knowledge on the reliability of information on the Internet. Although 88% of trainees who use the Internet to find information knew that the information in the Internet is not always reliable, they still prefer to browse the Internet to find information.

Out of 88 officers and 79 sailors who used the Internet to find information, only 10 sailors disagreed with the statement “When compared to printed books, Internet contains some incorrect and irrelevant information as well”. The remaining 157 trainees were questioned to analyse the reasons why they used the Internet more than the library and the data was tabulated in Figure 6.

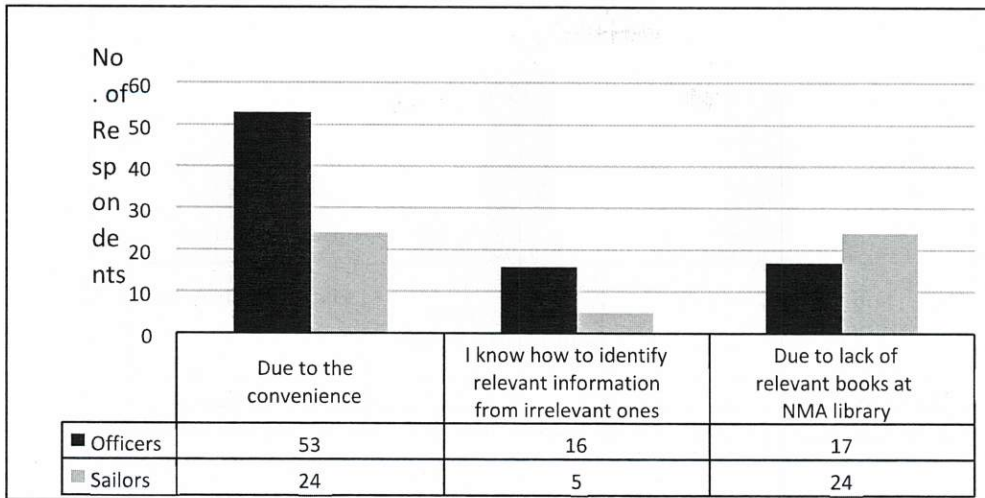


Figure 6: Reasons given for preference for data in the Internet despite the awareness of their inadequate reliability

It is shown that, 60% OTs and 35% STs browsed the Internet to find information due to convenience, but out of those only 18% OTs and 7% STs knew how to find relevant and accurate information through the Internet. This indicates that the large majority of OTs and STs are not capable of finding relevant and accurate information through the Internet, and this situation is not at all acceptable in an educational and training institution. Hence, it is essential that proper training should be given to the students at NMA, and also a conducive environment should be arranged for them to retrieve accurate and relevant information without any difficulty.

At the same time 19% OTs and 35% STs stated that relevant study materials are also not available in the library. That was the reason that they preferred to use the Internet to find information. Seventy seven persons (53 OTs and 24 STs) mentioned that they prefer the internet due to the convenience and their responses were categorized in Figure 7.

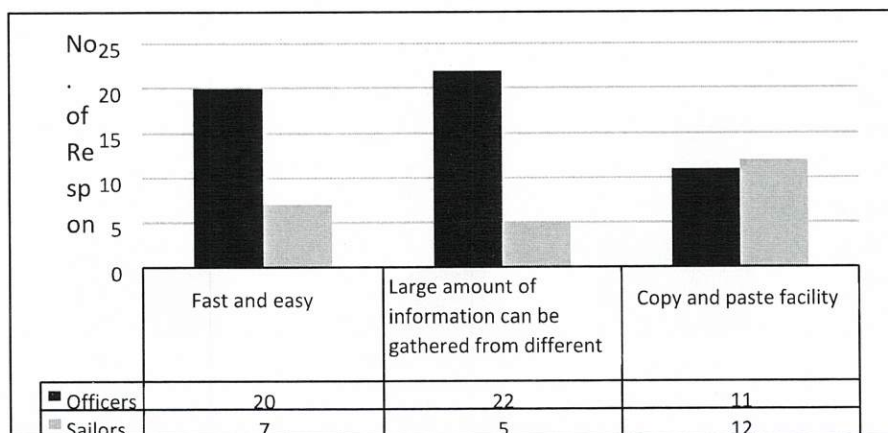


Figure 7: Reasons for using Internet rather than reading a book to find information

As shown in the Figure 7, 35% of trainees use the Internet because it is fast and easy whereas another 35% trainees use the Internet to find the required information because the Internet gives a large amount of relevant information from different sources within a short period of time. Other 30% use the Internet to copy and paste others' work.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study show that most of the trainees wish to use the Internet rather than using printed material to satisfy the information needs because of the convenience. According to the findings, the students identify several reasons why they consider the searching of information in the Internet convenient, i.e. quick and fast retrieval of information, availability of a large amount of information in different sources and the efficient usage of information by using the copy paste facility. However, only a few of the trainees knew how to find relevant information quickly by searching the Internet. Further, they were not aware of the danger of copy-pasting that would render their research documents unacceptable due to plagiarism. The NMA librarian should address this issue, and the library should hold appropriate training programmes on searching technique, citation of works for the trainees. This would educate them on how to find reliable web sites to gather relevant and reliable information quickly and on how to use them in research reports without becoming guilty of plagiarism.

It is also recommended that NMA must use reliable plagiarism detecting software as a precaution to detect and prevent the unethical academic practice of plagiarism. At the same time an effort must be taken to encourage students to use plagiarism-detecting software, and

also supervising staff should be encouraged to have discussions with students to achieve the best out of the available facilities.

The use of reliable Internet resources is very important for academic studies, especially in academic courses, which require review of literature. NMA trainees should be encouraged to use academic and reliable resources in their projects and assignments for successful investigations. Therefore, problems related to accessibility of reliable academic sources should be solved by the NMA administrators, which can be done by paying more attention to e-resources to encourage using modern technology and this could increase the library usage automatically. Therefore, more funds should be allocated to subscribe to e-journals, e-libraries, e-books, online-databases as academic resources for related courses and trainees should be encouraged to use them for their academic work.

In addition to the above, this study also identified that the library opening hours are not compatible with trainees' free time. Therefore, it is recommended to take remedial actions to adjust the time-table to match with the library opening hours.

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