

Print Still the Preferred Source of Information: A Users Survey of Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah (BGSB) University

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Abstract

In this ever and fast changing world where technology has intruded into almost every sphere of human activity and sources of information are no exceptions to it. Society has imbibed and embraced electronics in its every form & content and electronic information is just simply a by-product of such a wonderful gift of electronics to human beings. Man has moved from manual to mechanical and to deal with information products manually in this automated and mechanical world has almost moved out of human domain. Contrary to this fact, present study has been carried out to assess the use of printed sources of information in electronic era by students, teachers and scholars in their study, teaching and research activities. Attempt was made to look as how far the preference is given by students, teachers and scholars to conventional means of information dissemination. The study has been undertaken to assess the need and importance of printed sources of information and preference given to print by user community over electronic sources of information. The study do has paid emphasis over the constant procurement of printed sources of information by libraries and information centers and how scholars still have strong disposition towards publishing their research results in printed and hybrid journals rather in electronic journals alone.

Keywords: Electronic resources; Printed resources; Information technology; Information; Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University (BGSBU).

Introduction

From conventional to contemporary period man has come across a long way in making use of different sources of information. During ancient time's exchange of information used to take place only in the form of oral communication[1], as no means were developed to read, write, or record the ideas and thoughts. Dependence on the scholarly people was more as they could retain information in their minds for longer periods and knowledge used to die with the death of

a person.[2] What came to the rescue of human kind was the ability or trait development by human beings to read, write, record and preserve the information. This blessing not just revolutionized the life of ancient man but modern man is reaping the benefits of it equally even today. With the passage of time man learned to devise newer, better and more modern means of recording knowledge with the intention to help posterity to reap its dividends. We have already transgressed the path of recording and propagating knowledge from manuscripts, to printed material, printed material to microforms (microfilms & microfiche) magnetic tapes etc. and of the late same is being done in the electronic form. Huge number of documents are being published in the electronic format, e-journals, e-books, e-newspapers etc with recording mediums like, CD's, DVD's, Hard Disks etc supplement with services like Internet where services of Wiki's, Blogs, RSS, Groups etc. along with web 3.0 technology are a few to name which has not

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just opened the new vistas of information and knowledge management but also in its Handling, Distribution, Organization, Preservation, Creation to its timely and judicious exploitation.

Despite having so many advantages of electronic sources of information and the so many things happening around us with regard to accessing authentic and authoritative sources of information, print is one such unique and oldest forms of information communication and dissemination which has not just survived all along but is being still seen and one of the dominant forms of information production and communication. People still prefer to consult printed sources of information despite so much revolution in information handling. For that matter we can see libraries and information centers all across the globe are still spending most part of their budgets on the procurement of printed sources of information. There is no second thought in it that print for its own reason has survived so long and still we don't see any immediate threat to the existence of print, especially keeping in view the amount of information being still published in printed format. At times and places people do prefer print over electronic sources for its unique & different advantages to other forms of publication.

Review of Literature

Lancaster in his transformative volume entitled *Towards Paperless Information Systems*[3] once said that world is heading towards a paperless society, he had projected

that by 2000 AD we shall be having libraries in a desk, but later he admitted that paper cannot be taken out from society completely. Indeed we have moved to this direction but at the same time paper has moved with us hand in hand and I believe none of us can think of paperless society. We all are used to paper in its every form in such a way, that if taken out of our lives we will grow brainsick. No doubt we have moved a great deal towards the electronics and have embraced electronics and its byproducts in almost every form & sphere of our day to day activity and electronic source of information is just one important by product of it.

Michael Eisen, board member of the German chemical society, the GDCh, and head of the editorial board of the journal *Angewandte Chemie* while writing about the pleasure and importance of print journals, believes that high-quality journals such as *Nature* and *Science* and, in chemistry, *Angewandte Chemie* and *Journal of the American Chemical Society* should continue to appear in all their published formats, including print and by not doing so they are risking the quality of these prestigious journals which could gradually decline their standard.[4] He further maintained that the attraction and the beauty of the printed versions of the Journals like, *American Chemical Society*, *Journal of Organic Chemistry*, *Accounts of Chemical Research* and *Organic Letters* is that they provide distinct advantages to browse their content even during breakfast at home and readily take in information, which is not in the case of

Internet Penetration: Share and User Percentage

| Regions | Penetration Percentage | Global Share of Penetration | Global User Percentage |
|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| Asia | 27.50 | 08.19 | 44.80 |
| Europe | 63.20 | 18.83 | 21.50 |
| North America | 78.60 | 23.42 | 11.40 |
| Latin America/Caribb | 42.90 | 12.78 | 10.40 |
| Africa | 15.60 | 04.64 | 07.00 |
| Middle East | 40.20 | 11.97 | 03.70 |
| Oceania | 67.60 | 20.14 | 01.00 |
| World | 34.30 | | |

(Internet world status on population and usage)[7]

electronic journals, which are about the lengthy opening of individual web pages, article by article.

An article entitled *Print is dead? Not so Fast*, by Newtek - The Small Business Authority, published in *Forbes* magazine highlights about the advantage of print over electronic publishing. The article upholds about the tangibility of print, credibility of information of being more legitimate, of being more aesthetic and having better outreach than online.[5] More importantly (Alshaali & Varshney, 2005)[6] in their study observed that people read digital screen text 20% – 30% slower than printed paper. Access to internet by less than 35% global population followed by digital divide mostly evident between rural-urban populace where people are still devoid of having access to information technology in turn supports the cause of working towards the survival of print.

From the above tabulation we can clearly see that internet penetration or for that matter even the internet user percentage is not evenly distributed across the Globe. Most of the developed countries have more than 50% internet penetration and still there are countries which have less than 1% penetration. Under the prevailing circumstance talking about the obsolescence of print or paying greater emphasis on e-resources is almost a good like sin. There is urgent need to see to it that equal importance or even greater importance be given to printed publications and more than 65% populace all across the globe relies heavily on print.

The advent of new medium does not necessarily invalidate the former one, as television could not be invalidated by the radio,[8] even today both have their own importance, same holds true about print. Electronic sources of information have indeed come as a handy source of information and are gaining popularity among masses. Michelle M. Wu in his work *Why Print and Electronic Resources* maintains that print is a time-tested format that continues to fulfill promises, which technology has yet to deliver.[9]

Need and Purpose of Study

In this electronic era of Information and Technology, where (IT) has transformed the information seeking behavior of user with the offerings like E-books, E-Journals, databases and so many other electronic sources of information. Among everything we at central library of the university had been receiving a good number of requirements from various teaching departments to procure various types of printed sources of information for Study, Teaching and Research purpose by Students, Scholars and Teachers of university. In view of above fact it was conceptualized as to why not assess the likeliness and preference among users towards the printed sources of information in this electronic age. The study will definitely help to develop better understanding about the need and importance of print and its subsequent survival and sustenance. The study is also imperative from the point that print cannot be outrightly rejected as it is still having wider and broader user base. Penetration of print is far greater and far broader than electronic sources of information, which has got a select user group, even if we go by the figures nearly 35% global population has got access to internet and 65% rely heavily on print for their information requirements.[10] Importance of the present study is equally important for the fact that in haste we should not let print die a premature death, need is to ensure and secure the sources of information for the rest of the 65% global populace.

Objectives of the Study

- To assess the importance and relevance of Printed Sources of Information (PSI) in technological era.
- The preference among users towards the PSI in electronic era, especially the frequency with which they make use of printed sources of information.

Limitations & Scope of the Study

Some of the respondents have not responded to various questions which otherwise could have made some significant difference in findings. Since the study is confined to a particular institution as such how far the findings have bearing upon society at large, is very difficult assess. People most of the time conceal the truth and may pretend to be more techno savvy which as a matter of fact may hamper the findings.

In the present study attempt was made to introspect this particular gray area which more or less has remained neglected for to the fact that acceptance of electronic resources among user community is on increase, besides the study has scope for further investigation which can be taken at institutional level.

Methodology

To assess the use of Printed Sources of Information for Study, Teaching and Research Purpose by Students, Scholars and Faculty members, survey method of investigation, stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the sample. To collect the data, questionnaire (Specifically Designed) was circulated among 300 respondents, with a pretest done on 30 questionnaires to assess the effectiveness of language and its easy understanding. For easy understanding and better response rate questionnaires were personally distributed and collected. Interview technique was also employed where ever required to get the feedback about the survival & sustenance of print in the prevailing electronic environment which has endangered the existence of print. Feedback obtained through interview techniques have been put under observation headings.

Data Analysis

For executing common operation like, addition, subtraction, drawing percentage etc data was put to excel format. In all cases the percentage has been drawn up to the two

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire and Rate of Response

| No. of Questionnaires distributed | Total no. of responses |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 300 | 196 (65.33%) |

Table 2: Gender-Wise Distribution of Respondents

| Gender | No. of Respondents |
|---------|--------------------|
| Males | 132 (67.34%) |
| Females | 64 (32.65%) |
| Total | 196 |

decimal places only.

Distribution of Questionnaire and Rate Of Response:

In all 300 questionnaires were distributed among students, scholars and teachers of the university, out of which 196 responded which accounts 65.33% response percentage, which is quite good to assess the various aspects of study for which it has been undertaken.

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gross response percentage remained 65.33% viz. 196 respondents, 64 respondents were females which account 32.65% of total response and 67.34% of males having total male respondents 132.

Distribution of Respondents by Age

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents by different age group; most of the responses were received in the age group

Table 3: Age-Wise Distribution of Respondents

| Age in years | No. of Respondents |
|----------------|--------------------|
| 20-25 Years | 110 (56.12%) |
| 26-35 Years | 60 (30.61%) |
| 36-45 Years | 16 (08.16%) |
| 46-55 Years | 08 (04.08%) |
| Above 56 Years | 02 (01.02%) |
| Total | 196 |

Table 4: Status/Designation-Wise Distribution of Respondents

| Status of Users | No. of Respondents |
|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Under graduate students | 48 (24.48 %) |
| Post-Graduate Students | 42 (21.42 %) |
| Research Scholars | 12 (06.12 %) |
| Teachers | 94 (47.95 %) |
| Total | 196 |

of 20-25 years, constituting 56.12% of total response, followed by 30.61% response from the age group of 26-35 years. 8.16% respondents are from age group of 36-45 years, 4.08% respondents fall under the age group of 46-55 years and just 01.02% response belong to the age group of above 56 years. The interesting fact here we can see is the response percentage decreases with the increase in age group for reasons unknown. Still the most prominent among them can be, people falling under higher age groups, mostly either tend to avoid to respond such questionnaire or don't find time to participate in such investigations.

Secondly, mostly as the levels of age increases the number of people working or serving in higher education institutions decreases as such the response percentage mostly remains low.

Distribution of Respondents by Status of Users

Questionnaires were distributed among different teaching and research departments of the university as per the intake capacity of each department. Respondents mostly comprised of final year students followed by research scholars and faculty members. In all 196 respondents responded, constituting 65.33% response percentage. Of the total respondents 47.95% are teachers, 24.48% are undergraduate students, 21.42% postgraduate students and 6.12% are research scholars.

Frequency of Use of Printed Sources

Table 5 represents the overall frequency distribution of use of printed sources of information by user community. From the tabulation it is evident that books, monographs and reference sources like dictionaries,

Table 5: Frequency Distribution of Use of Printed Sources of Information

| Listed Sources | Ranking frequency | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| | Daily | Weekly | Monthly | Hardly | Never | No Comments |
| Books/Monographs | 46 (23.46) | 36 (18.36) | 30 (15.30) | 10 (5.10) | 08 (4.08) | 66 (33.67) |
| Reference Sources (Bibliographies, handbooks, indexing/abstracting sources) | 16 (8.16) | 10 (5.10) | 32 (16.32) | 28 (14.28) | 30 (15.30) | 80 (40.81) |
| Dictionaries/Encyclopedias/Glossaries | 52 (26.53) | 16 (8.16) | 14 (7.14) | 26 (13.26) | 18 (9.18) | 70 (35.17) |
| Other Reference Sources | 40 (20.40) | 26 (13.26) | 26 (13.26) | 22 (11.22) | 12 (6.12) | 70 (35.71) |
| Patents/Reports/Standards/S pecifications | 06 (3.06) | 16 (8.16) | 20 (10.20) | 32 (16.32) | 48 (24.48) | 74 (37.75) |
| Conference/Workshop/Semin ar Proceedings | 08 (4.08) | 20 (10.20) | 38 (19.38) | 30 (15.30) | 24 (12.24) | 76 (38.77) |
| Scientific/tech. Journals/Periodicals | 08 (4.08) | 16 (8.16) | 38 (19.38) | 32 (16.32) | 24 (12.24) | 78 (39.79) |
| Review Articles/thesis | 04 (2.04) | 18 (9.18) | 28 (14.28) | 32 (16.32) | 30 (15.30) | 84 (42.85) |
| All the above mentioned sources | 180 (11.47) | 158 (10.07) | 226 (14.41) | 212 (13.52) | 194 (12.37) | 598 (38.13) |

Table 6: User's Preference towards the Use of Newspapers

| Respondents | Total respondents | Print | Online | Response Skipped |
|-------------------------|-------------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| Under graduate students | 48 | 26 (54.16) | 18 (37.50) | 04 (08.33) |
| Post-Graduate Students | 42 | 24 (57.14) | 12 (28.57) | 06 (14.28) |
| Research Scholars | 12 | 09 (75.00) | 03 (25.00) | 00 |
| Teachers | 94 | 72 (76.59) | 15 (20.27) | 07 (07.44) |
| Total | 196 | 131(66.83) | 48 (24.48) | 17 (08.67) |

Table 7: User's Preference to Publish Their Research Results

| Respondents | Total respondents | Print Journals | Online Journals | Hybrid Journals | Response Skipped |
|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Under graduate students | 48 | 13(27.08) | 15(31.25) | 11(22.91) | 09(18.75) |
| Post-Graduate Students | 42 | 16(38.09) | 08(19.04) | 16(38.09) | 02(04.76) |
| Research Scholars | 12 | 04(33.33) | 03(25.00) | 05(41.66) | 00 |
| Teachers | 94 | 43(45.74) | 21(22.34) | 17(18.08) | 13(13.82) |
| Total | 196 | 76(38.77) | 47(23.97) | 49(25.00) | 24(12.24) |

Table 8: Preferred Features of Print

| Options | Respondents |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Publishers/Journal's prestige | 60 (22.72) |
| Reliability of Published information | 70 (26.51) |
| Stability/durability of the document | 48 (18.18) |
| Simple to use (without gadgets) | 26 (09.84) |
| Authoritative source | 36 (13.63) |
| Others | 10 (03.78) |
| No comments | 14 (05.30) |

encyclopedias, glossaries etc are the most consulted printed sources of information 23.46% respondents make use of books/ monographs on daily basis, which is 26.53% in case of references books. 18.36% consult books and monographs on weekly basis, 15.30% on monthly basis, 5.10% respondents say they hardly use such sources, 4.08% have reflected that they never make use of books. While as 20.40% respondents say they do go for other reference sources of information on daily basis, 13.26% use other reference sources on weekly basis and equal number on monthly basis. 11.22% respondents say they hardly make use of such sources of information and 6.12% have never used any other source of information at all. The other reference sources used by respondents are Internet, Peer Groups, Subject experts and other printed reference sources of information including books for

competitive exams, Subject Books, General Studies and other Aptitude Testing Books etc.

The other printed sources consulted on daily basis include 4.08% respondents make use of Scientific/Technical Journals/Periodicals, 3.06% use of Patents/ Reports/Standards/ Specification, 4.08% consult sources like conference/workshop/seminar proceedings and 2.04% use review articles/thesis etc.

Accordingly, to assess the overall usage frequency of printed sources of information, from the tabulation it emerged that 11.47% respondents consult printed sources in all the mentioned categories on daily basis, 10.07% respondents do the same on weekly basis. 14.41% respondents consult such resources on monthly basis. On average 38.13% respondents have not replied to each question.

User's Preference towards the Use of Newspapers

From the above tabulation and bar graph we can see 66.83% people still love to read newspaper in its printed format, 24.48% respondents are of the view that they prefer to read online version of newspaper. 8.67% respondents preferred to skip this particular question. From the above tabulation, it becomes also appearing that younger generation is more inclined towards the use of electronic sources than the older ones. We can see there is a sharp decline in the share percentage of people using print and electronic newspapers as we move from UG students down to teachers. Most of the newspapers irrespective of their reputation all across the globe are almost freely available on internet. Though, as on date only 35% population across the globe has access to internet but what is more astonishing fact is that the most of the internet users love to read newspapers in printed format. People still subscribe to printed form of newspapers and are ready to pay for its subscription rather to access it free of cost on internet.

User's Preference to Publish Their Research Results

Keeping view the growing trend towards the publishing of e-journals, respondents were asked about their preference to publish their research results in print or electronic format. On the whole 38.77% respondents have replied that they would love to publish their research results in print journals, 23.97% respondents replied that they would publish the same in online journals. The interesting figure which emerged from the above response is 25.00% respondents have replied that they would prefer to publish research results in hybrid journals (Journals published in both electronic and print format).

Distribution of Respondents by Features of Printed Sources

In response to above question 22.72% respondents believe that the prestige of the

publisher/Journal is very important for the efficiency of work and a healthy reason for consulting such sources of information. 26.51% respondents believe that printed sources of information are preferred from the reliability point of view, as the information published in printed journals is more reliable to that of online and electronic sources of information. 18.18% respondents prefer printed sources of information for the fact that these documents are more stable and durable. Still more 9.84% respondents are of the opinion that printed sources of information are preferred because of their simple use, as these sources of information need not any extra gadgets for consultation as is in the case of electronic sources of information. 13.63% respondents view that printed sources are preferred for being authoritative sources of information. 3.78% respondents use printed sources of information for other reasons and 5.30% have not commented to this particular question, the reasons can be either they prefer totally to go with e-resources or they believe these features of a printed source hardly make any difference in their use.

Argument in Support of Printed Sources of Information (PSI)

Print is not dead, for a variety of reasons.

Print will become obsolete only the day people cease to write on paper, because, writing on paper in itself is a tale of prints survival.

- Publishers have already switched over to hybrid form of publishing, dealing with both electronic and print forms of publishing. [11] The hybrid publishing completely reflects the wariness of publishers about going completely digital and the corroboration of fact that print is still the preferred source of information, otherwise had it not been so they would have opted for one form of publishing only.
- To digitize centuries old information which lies in the form of print is also another area of concern. Various govts have already started projects to digitize

such information, but the question arises how far it is going to be profitable and bringing the same into practice without getting completely digital will only once again reaffirm of going hybrid, hence survival of print.

- Use of technology/electronic gadgets is the added cost involved in the access of electronic sources of information, while as same is not required in conventional form of reading material viz. Print.
- Despite having most of the newspapers freely available on Internet, people hardly go for online newspapers, perhaps for the fact the satisfaction they draw from reading a printed matter is far more and far greater than what they may draw from digital content.
- People always have apprehensions about the authority of the online sources of information as most of time we have seen people questioning the reliability and authenticity of online information or the digital content.[12]

Other reasons for the survival of print sources are

- It is always difficult for one to read continuously from any electronic gadget, these gadgets develop sufficient strain upon the eyes and mind of a reader.
- One cannot carry always a gadget with oneself to read any document that too with other support accessories to keep gadget functional all the time.
- Wear and tear of electronic gadgets is a common phenomenon, and by the time one repairs ones gadget need is to keep substitute gadget handy so as to enable one to keep going without affecting ones routine work. Hence a costly affair.
- Familiarity with use of electronic gadgets is also the key area, people may not be fully aware of the use of gadgets, hence may lead to either misuse or under-use of electronic gadgets.

- It is always cumbersome to use online sources of information, as the pages are either lengthy, size of the font is not mostly of advisable size, colour combinations are not suitable for eyes. Besides online usage always distracts from main source.
- Electronic sources are sources of more input and less output, while as printed sources are contrary to it.
- Fascination of browsing printed sources, while having breakfast, lunch, dinner etc is the added advantage of print, which is missing in electronic sources.
- Printed sources can be used at length without putting much strain on eyes; while as electronic sources develop strain from the very first moment of browsing.

Major Findings and Suggestions

- ❖ Majority of users still prefer to use printed material in the form of Books/Monographs etc. on daily basis for the study, teaching and research purpose; hence libraries are bound to carry on with the conventional methods of Information and knowledge acquisition along with electronic sources. A good number of users are of the opinion that despite being well versed with the use of technology to access and use electronic sources of information, they prefer to use printed sources for a good number of advantages which it has over that of electronic sources of information.
- ❖ Technology has always been keeping us on toes for one or the other reason and one among them is to update with each new change. Fast and unwarranted changes in technology keep always people hunting that next moment it may become obsolete. So to make all electronic sources compatible with new technology is always a worrying and hectic activity. While as in case of printed sources of information it is not so. One can easily keep records for

hundreds of years together and still thereafter can again be used easily.

- ❖ In countries like India where nearly 75% people live in rural areas and more than 30% people live below poverty line are mostly devoid of technology for one or the other reason and the foremost they lack of access to technology. Lack of technological skill, Digital Divide, Un-affordability, and many more are a few to name. it would be insane to think or say that why these people do not make use of e-resources, and for overall growth and development we have to make printed sources of information available to them.
- ❖ No doubt ICT has revolutionized the world in every sphere of human activity and even if technology is going to devour other mediums of information handling we should let it happen at gradual pace. In India more than 75% people are computer illiterate and same holds true about rest of the world. So for that matter it is our moral responsibility to let them as of now carry on with printed sources of information and side by side work on to develop their skill in using ICT tools for handling information.
- ❖ When we talk of Information Technology (IT) the first thing which strike to our mind is the Computers, but we must never forget that information is the only activity which technology handles. But once we talk about IT, credit most of the time is give only to technology, while as the technology is simply a tool which we have devised to help handle information in most effective manner. For this purpose we can define Information Technology as 'Handling of information with the help of technology' because this is the only purpose which technology (Computers, ICT) serves. Handling of information is the only activity which computers perform for human beings in one or the other way.
- ❖ Reference sources in printed format are the most preferred one, as people like to use such sources in printed format the most.

Conclusions

In all we can say printed sources of information are very much there and E-resources does not appear a potential threat to it, hence one can emphatically say that print cannot be totally taken out from the human life. People still prefer to use printed sources of information with great zeal and enthusiasm. No doubt internet and e-resources together have changed the information seeking behavior of people manifold; electronic sources of information have become an integral part of information handling and its dissemination. The most appealing argument which is being made in favour of use of printed sources of information is its easy use. People can sit for hours together to read a particular book or a document but it is not so when taken the case of electronic sources of information. People have come across a number of problems with regard to their health and other related matter while using electronic source which is totally absent in printed matter.

In the end we can say printed sources of information are still preferred by people, even for that matter print is even preferred over electronic sources of information, among a particular group of people. Procurement and subscription of books and Journals in libraries and other information centre has not declined to that level as was expected may have due to subscription of e-resources, and those who visit these institutions of learning mostly come to consult books and journals in printed form. In the end we can say print cannot be completely taken away from human activities for its own essence vis-à-vis taste and liking.

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