

# 10. Internet usage in Social Science Research: A Study of University of Kashmir (J&K)

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## Abstract

*The internet considered as the electronic mobile library in cyberspace provides an almost universal infrastructure for accessing the information with almost global reach. The statistics reveal that most Internet users in India are aged between 15 -34 years; thus this age group encompasses Indian higher education students who are normally of ages between 19 and 34 years. Internet and online communication have proliferated since the early 1990's and the positive implications of this achievement are clearly witnessed in the field of research. Internet is being brought into more and more usage by researchers and it plays indispensable role in the scientific world. Advances in computer technology have enabled the Internet to serve as a platform not merely to seek information, but also to exchange ideas and knowledge with other users, and obtain expert opinions via email, teleconferencing, chatting and other avenues. Internet also plays a significant role in the presentation and publication of research. In the process of data collection, internet proves more economical in terms of time and money and it can reach large stock of population very easily no matter at what distance people are surfing the internet.*

*The present study was conducted at University of Kashmir in the State of Jammu and Kashmir where from a sample of 100 research scholars was selected through random sampling method from different departments in the faculty of social sciences. Surveys were conducted to get information by in-depth interviews/discussions, focus group discussions, questionnaires and observations. The variables selected were use of internet, frequency of internet use, place of internet access, purpose of using internet and impact of internet on research.*

## Key Words:

Internet, Research, Computer, Cybercafé, Library

## Introduction

At the dawn of information age professionals are experiencing new vigor in the field of information collection, processing and retrieval. The internet considered as the electronic mobile library in cyberspace provides an almost universal infrastructure for accessing the information with almost global reach. During the 1990's the use of internet has grown tremendously in the number of people using it. According to the internet society, a nonprofit society dealing with the study and promotion of internet usage, 134 countries had full internet connection and an additional 52 countries had limited access in 1996. It has been revealed through various surveys conducted by International Data Corporation and Matrix Information and Directory Services that there were around 53 to 57 million internet users worldwide in the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. The number of Internet users is growing explosively worldwide, with 44.8% Internet users coming from Asia alone. In India, Internet users have increased very rapidly too. This is a reflection of the current digital era, with the Internet being integrated into our everyday lives.

Undoubtedly, internet and online communication have proliferated since the early 1990's and the positive implications of this achievement are clearly witnessed in the field of research. The statistics reveal that most Internet users in India are aged between 15 -34 years; thus this age group encompasses Indian higher education students who are normally of ages between 19 and 34 years. In the present scenario internet has proved to be an essential source for data collection and data processing in research lexicon. It links researcher to a wealth of information sources from around the world. It collects data from respondents logged on at remote computers and this web based data offer many advantages. Internet also plays a significant role in the presentation and publication of research. In the process of data collection, internet proves more economical in terms of time and money and it can reach large stock of population very easily no matter at what distance people are surfing the internet. Internet is being brought into more and more usage by researchers and it plays indispensable role in the scientific world. In a limited span of time, internet has become an integral unit for library and information centres. Advances in computer technology have enabled the Internet to serve as a platform not merely to seek information, but also to exchange ideas and knowledge with other users, and obtain expert opinions via email, teleconferencing, chatting and other avenues.

## Objectives

The present study is conducted to investigate the application of internet in social science research and its implications. It aims to identify the significance of internet and its services

over the traditional sources of data collection. The study is also meant to analyze the problems faced by the social science researchers while accessing the internet.

## Methodology

The present study was conducted at University of Kashmir in the State of Jammu and Kashmir where from a sample of 100 research scholars was selected through random sampling method from different departments in the faculty of social sciences. Surveys were conducted to get information by in-depth interviews/discussions, focus group discussions, questionnaires and observations. Out of total 100 respondents, 90 questionnaires were received back resulted a response rate of 90 percent. The variables selected were use of internet, frequency of internet use, place of internet access, purpose of using internet and impact of internet on research.

## Results and Discussion

The findings of the present study and their relevant discussion in light of the objectives and variables under study are presented below:

The respondents were asked certain questions to ascertain the awareness, utilization and purpose of internet access. Table 1 given below shows that 81.11 percent respondents use internet regularly and 18.89 percent respondents do not use internet at the campus.

**Table 1: Use of Internet**

Usage of internet	No. of Researchers	Percentage
Yes	73	81.11 %
No	17	18.89 %
Total	90	100

*Source: Primary Data*

The frequency of internet use depends upon the available facilities at the university and services provided. Table 2 shows that the majority of 38.35 percent respondents use internet on daily basis. About 17.81 percent respondents use internet once in a week, whereas 13.70 percent of the respondents use once in a fortnight. Similarly 13.70 percent of the respondents use internet once in a month and this is followed by 16.44 percent respondents using internet occasionally.

**Table 2: Frequency of Internet Use**

Frequency	No. of Researchers	Percentage
Daily	28	38.35
Once in a week	13	17.81
Once in a Fortnight	10	13.70
Once in a month	10	13.70
Occasionally	12	16.44
Total	73	100

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 3 given below reflects the place where from researchers access the internet. The majority of 41.10 percent respondents access the internet from departmental library. About 27.40 percent respondents access internet from home followed by 17.80 percent respondents surfing the internet from university library and a figure of 13.70 percent from cybercafé.

**Table 3: Place of Internet Access**

Place of Access	No. Of Researchers	Percentage
Departmental Library	30	41.10 %
University Library	13	17.80 %
Cybercafé	10	13.70 %
Home	20	27.40 %
Total	73	100

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 4 reveals that majority of 84.93 percent respondents use internet for the purpose of research. They make use of internet for data collection and data processing. About 78.08 percent respondents use internet for email purposes. This is followed by 48.83 percent respondents surfing internet for online database and about 30.13 percent

respondents using internet for general information. Sports and news got relatively less preference. The findings clearly indicate that majority of research scholars are focused towards their research and make use of internet for the same.

**Table 4: Purpose of using Internet**

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>No. of Researchers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Email	57	78.08 %
Online Database	32	43.83%
News	19	26.02 %
Sports	7	9.58 %
General Information	22	30.13 %
Research	62	84.93 %

*Source: Primary Data*

Table 5 reveals the impact of internet on research. It is evident that majority of 83.56 percent respondents strongly agree that the internet has a significant impact on research. About 16.44 percent respondents indicated agree.

**Table 5: Impact of Internet on Research**

<b>Impact of Internet on Research</b>	<b>No. of Researchers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Strongly Agree	61	83.56 %
Agree	12	16.44 %
Uncertain	.....	.....
Disagree	.....	.....
Strongly Disagree	.....	.....
Total	73	100

*Source: Primary Data*

The above data indicates that majority of research scholars make use of internet for data collection, processing and presentation of data with varying frequency. Most of the researchers use internet on daily basis in their respective departmental libraries.

## Conclusion

The internet as a medium of communication and information collection is gaining importance in the field of higher education. It has proved to be an indispensable tool in the process of research. The effective use of internet in libraries in India has become a necessity with raising standard of education and competition. Research scholars should be provided with well equipped internet facilities for the sake of information collection, information processing and sharing results in general with open scientific community. Research related to Internet use need to be an ongoing endeavor because computer technology advances rapidly and usage habits change accordingly.

User education programs for social science scholars should be conducted at regular intervals regarding the effective use of internet. Efforts should be made to increase the speed of the internet access and shorten the time it takes to view and download web pages. Information regarding the popular and the latest websites with their addresses should be displayed on the notice board in the computer lab.

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