

# Use of the Internet and e-Resources for Legal Information: A Case Study

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## Abstract

Since past few years free online information sources like e-journals, e-books, e-databases have increased considerably. The traditional library systems are going to transform into digital library systems. Information-seeking is important for lawyers, who have access to many dedicated electronic resources. The Internet and CD-ROM were the most frequently used IT-based sources and facilities. Results of the present study show that 93.33 % of students used Internet in searching and retrieving information they needed. Study reveals that the majority of respondents access the Internet from the College and the majority of the respondents feel that the Internet and electronic resources cannot replace the Library.

## Keywords

Internet, e-resources, online help, Information needs, legal studies.

## Introduction

“Legal Education is essentially a multi-disciplined, multi-purpose education which can develop the human resources and idealism needed to strengthen the legal system ....A lawyer, a product of such education would be able to contribute to national development and social change in a much more constructive manner.”

Until recently the legal profession was a predominantly manual, paper-based legal information services industry. However, the legal information scene is in the midst of great change. At present, the known and trusted publishers of printed legal information are the

vendors of commercial databases who publish electronic court decisions, statutes, legal periodicals and reviews as well as various secondary resources such as encyclopedias and textbooks. As a vehicle of distribution for their electronic products, these vendors are increasingly using the Internet and web technologies, including law firm intranets and corporate or academic portals, to provide legal researchers with ready access to a vast amount of current as well as retrospective coverage of legal information resources. Except for the commercial databases that are subscription-based, many institutional websites offer free or open access to legal and other information resources. These resources, at a minimum, supplement the established legal information providers' efforts of electronic legal information publishing.

Sources of information available via the Internet are increasing exponentially. This comes with a steady increase in Internet use for legal education and for research. It is changing the way legal professionals obtain information. They use the Internet and electronic resources to do things like accessing legal information. Legal students depend more and more on the Internet and e-resources. Thus the main purpose of the present study is to investigate the users' searching behaviour for retrieval of information on the web. The study also aims to know the use of internet and e-resources.

## Literature Review

The Internet is widely used in medicine and has made an impact in research, training, and patient care (Ajuwon, 2006). A review of literature reveals the use of Internet and electronic resources for patient care. Physicians use the Internet and electronic information resources to obtain answers to patient specific questions and to keep abreast of developments

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in clinical medicine (Thompson, 1997; Koller et al., 2001). Asemi (2005) did a case study of Medical Sciences University of Isfahan (MUI), Iran. The results of the study showed that all the respondents used the Internet frequently because all faculties had an Internet connection. It was revealed that the researchers of the university were getting quality health information and patient care through the Internet. Fifty-five percent of respondents searched for scientific health information through the Internet because the university library provided access to databases and online journals students and staff. The Kentuckiana Digital Library (2005) points out the academic significance of the e-library, recognizing the use of appropriate technology and defining it as "an organized collection of selected digital resources created to support scholarship, research and teaching". It states further that the use of appropriate technological standards by e-libraries will facilitate permanent

access to the digital resources.

### Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study was to analyze the patterns of use of Internet and electronic resources, the Internet skills of the legal students, and problems faced by them while using the Internet and electronic resources. Investigate whether the Internet can replace the library.

### Methodology

The present study is confined to the final year students of Central Law College, Salem. A total number of 150 questionnaires (consisting of 15 questions) were distributed to the students. Of these 140 respondents filled and returned the questionnaires. The over all response rate of the survey was 93.33%. The responses were analysed for frequencies, percentages and cross tabulation to organize the data for further analysis.

## Analysis and Discussion

### Profile of Respondents

**Table-1 Age of Respondents**

Age Range	Number	Percentage
21 - 25	96	68.57
26 - 30	44	31.42
Total	140	100

**Table-2 Responses by Gender**

Gender	Number	Percentage
Male	87	62.14
Female	53	37.85
Total	140	100

It is clear from Table-1 68.57 % of the respondents are 21-25 age group, remaining 31.42 % belongs to 26-30 age group. Table-2

describes 87 (62.14 %) of respondents were male, while 53 ( 37.85 %) were female.

### Use of Internet & e-resources

**Table-3 Experience of Internet Use**

Years of Experience	Number	Percentage
1-3 years	96	68.57
3-5 years	34	24.28
5 years and above	10	7.14

Table-3 shows that on an average majority of the respondents have ranged 1-5 years experience of Internet use. 24.28% of the

respondents reported that they have 3-5 years experience of Internet use. Only 7.14 % have more than 5years of experience of Internet use.

**Table-4 Internet Skill Rating**

Rating	Number	Percentage
Expert	17	23.8
Average	81	57.85
Below average	42	30
Total	140	100

The respondents were asked to indicate their skill of internet literacy. It is evident from Table-4 that majority of the respondents (57.85%) have

an average level of Internet skill. 30 % of the respondents reported that they have below average level of internet skill. Only 23.8 % admitted that they are expert in internet skill.

**Table-5 Internet Skill learning Method**

Method	Number	Percentage
Training from the College	84	60
Self study / Instruction	27	19.28
From Friends	23	16.42
External Sources	6	4.28
Total	140	100

Table -5 shows more than half acquired their internet skill through training from the college,

19.28 % learned from self study, 16.42 learned from friends. Only 4.28% acquired skills from external sources.

**Table-6 Place of Internet access**

Location	Number	Percentage
College	117	83.57
Café	15	10.71
Home	8	5.71
Total	140	100

Table-6 highlights the location from where the Internet and electronic resources are mostly accessed by the law students. A majority of the

respondents, i.e.83.57% access the Internet from the College, while 10.71% also access from café. Another 5.71 % access Internet from home.

#### Frequency of Internet Use

**Table-7 Internet Use Frequency**

Duration	Number	Percentage
Daily	27	19.28
Weekly twice	25	17.85
Weekly	78	55.71
Monthly	10	7.14
Total	140	100

In response to the question how frequently do you use Internet? The respondents have responded in different ways (Table-7) Majority

of students used Internet weekly (55.71%), daily (19.28 %) and weekly twice (17.85%). Only few students (7.14) used internet monthly.

**Table-8 Most Frequently used Internet & e-Resources**

Services	Number	Percentage
E-mail	15	10.70
E-journals	37	26.42
E-books	18	12.85
E-Databases	58	41.42
DVD / CD-ROMs	12	8.57
Total	140	100

Table-8 indicates the use of Internet services and electronic resources. The use of e-resources and Internet services in order of preference is

41.25 % E-databases, 26.42 % E-journals, 12.85 % E-books, 10.70 % e-mail and 8.57 % DVD/ CD-ROMS.

**Table-9 Level of Satisfaction**

Satisfaction Level	Number	Percentage
Fully satisfied	52	37.14
Average satisfied	26	18.57
Least satisfied	37	26.42
No Comment	45	32.14
Total	140	100

Table-9 only 37.14 % of respondents were fully satisfied, 18.57 % of the respondents

average satisfied, 26.42 % of respondents least satisfied and 32.14 % of respondents no comment.

**Problems of Internet use**

**Table-10 Problems of Internet use**

Problems	Number	Percentage
Slow Internet access speed	67	47.85
Longtime to view / download	38	27.14
Difficulty in finding relevant information	17	12.14
Internet connectivity always off	18	12.85
Total	140	100

Table-10 shows problems faced by the users in surfing. 47.85 % of the respondents find slow Internet access speed, 27.14 % of the respondents find longtime to view / download

Web pages, 12.14 % of the respondents find it difficult to get the relevant information from the Internet. 12.85 % of the respondents also reported that Internet connectivity always off.

**Traditional and E-Library**

**Table-11 Do you think Internet & e-resources can replace the Library**

Variables	Number	Percentage
Yes	37	26.42
No	103	73.57
Total	140	100

A majority of the respondents (73.57%) feel that the Internet and electronic resources cannot replace the Library. Only 26.42% of the

respondents feel that Internet and electronic resources can replace Library because they find it difficult to get the relevant information on the Internet.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forward to improve the use of the Internet and electronic resources among the legal students.

- The Internet and allied technologies should be included in the curriculum of legal studies
- Libraries of Law colleges should subscribe more e-journals and e-databases.
- Some orientation training programmes

should be organized by the colleges at regular intervals so that the maximum users can improve their excellence or proficiency in the use of the Internet for academic purposes.

- The qualified IT staff should be appointed to provide the expert guidance to users about e-resources and Internet.
- Efforts should be made to increase the speed of the Internet access and shorten the time

it take to view and download web pages.

- Development of a subject gateway for legal information on the Internet;
- Steps should be taken by the library to orient the law students to use Internet for searching legal information more effectively;

### Conclusion

The fast growth of information and communication technology and particularly the Internet has changed traditional methods of research, storage, retrieval and communication of information. Now a days internet has emerged as the most powerful medium for storage and retrieval of information. The present studies observed that majority of users are not aware of e-resources. In this connection library authority, may take initiatives to improve the information searching on the Internet among users.

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