Librarians' Perspectives on the Procurement of Electronic Resources

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Abstract

This study investigates the perspectives of librarians in procuring electronic resources from thirteen Tamil Nadu universities. It focuses on the criteria librarians use for selecting e-resources and their perceptions of acquisition methods. A Google Form questionnaire was distributed to 65 library professionals, with 62 completing the questionnaire. The findings will inform future strategies to enhance the availability and accessibility of e-resources in academic libraries, improving the overall educational experience for students. Understanding librarians' perspectives and criteria can lead to more effective acquisition strategies and improved library services..

Keywords
Type of resources; Criteria for selection; vendor reputation; Methods to Acquire.

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1. Introduction

The digitization of print media has introduced a new concept: electronic resources. These resources are defined as materials that require computer access or any electronic product that provides a collection of data. This includes full-text databases, electronic journals, image collections, multimedia products, and numerical or graphical data, all of which are marketed commercially. Electronic resources can be delivered through various formats such as CD-ROM, tape, or the Internet. These resources offer several advantages over traditional print materials. They allow for easier manipulation and searching of data, which enhances accessibility and usability. Additionally, providing information electronically can be more cost-effective than acquiring physical information resources. There are also savings in storage and maintenance, as electronic resources do not require physical space. In some cases, electronic formats may be the only available option for certain types of information.The advancements in scientific publishing and the pricing policies of publishers present both challenges and opportunities for academic libraries. Libraries must navigate these changes to purchase and manage serial publications within their limited budgets effectively. The shift towards electronic resources necessitates a strategic approach to resource acquisition and management, ensuring that libraries can continue to meet the needs of their users in an increasingly digital world.

The library and information services of the 21st century are fast changing. With the rapid development of electronic publishing, libraries are acquiring reading materials such as printed books and journals and arranging to provide access to various learning resources in electronic form.The Internet has given rise to the development of electronic versions of printed library reading materials like books, journals, reports, conference proceedings, monographs, etc., which have brought changes in the collection development policies of academic libraries. The role of librarians is vital in selecting and procuring relevant electronic resources judiciously within limited available finance. Electronic resources represent an increasingly important component of the collection-building activities of libraries. "Electronic resources" refer to those materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe, or handheld mobile device. They may either be accessed remotely via the Internet or locally. Some of the most frequently encountered types are:

- E-journals;
- E-books;
- Full-text (aggregated) databases;
- Indexing and abstracting databases;
- Reference databases (biographies, dictionaries, directories,
- Encyclopaedias, etc.);
- Numeric and statistical databases;
- E-images; and
- E-audio/visual resources

Electronic journals encompass information products such as electronic journals and links to e-journal collections like gateways and publishers such as JSTOR, Project Muse, and Science Direct. The users can search e-journals by title. They can browse e-journal titles alphabetically as well as by subject category. Sometimes, a hierarchical outline of subject categories or an A to Z Index of subjects is also available. Currently, most of the university libraries facilitate e-journal collections and databases.

2. Profile of Study Area

Tamil Nadu, India's fourth-largest state, is located on the country's southern coast, surrounded by Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, the Indian Ocean, and the Bay of Bengal. The state has a diversified manufacturing sector, leading in various industries such as automobiles, engineering, pharmaceuticals, garments, textile products, leather products, chemicals, and plastics. The state's gross state domestic product (GSDP) is estimated to be Rs. 28.3 trillion (US$ 342.82 billion) in 2023-24, with a CAGR of 11.66% between 2018-19 and 2023-24. The tertiary sector contributed 54.33% to the state's Gross State Value Added (GSVA) in 2020-21, followed by the secondary sector at 32.72%. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) reported that cumulative FDI inflows in the state amounted to US$ 8.50 billion between October 2019 and March 2023. In September 2021, UAE-based DP World announced an investment of Rs. 2,000 crore (US$ 271.68 million) to establish numerous projects in Tamil Nadu.

Tamil Nadu has the highest Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education among the big states in India, with 49% for 18 to 23-year-olds. The state has a higher GER than Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. The state-owned universities in Tamil Nadu are among the top-performing in India. 1. University of Madras, 2. Annamalai University 3. Madurai Kamaraj University 4. Anna University5. Bharathiar University6. Bharathidasan University7. Mother Teresa Women's University8. Alagappa University9. Manonmaniam Sundaranar Universit10. Periyar University11. Tamil Nadu Open University12. Thiruvalluvar University13. Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University.

3. Review of Literature

Adeleke (2015) surveyed Library and Information Science faculty members at the University of Pittsburgh, revealing variations in their use of electronic journals. The study found that faculty members preferred full-text databases, electronic journals, and databases with indexes and abstracts. They believed electronic journals were reliable, accurate, responsible, helpful, and practical for meeting their demands. Ekwelem V. O (2016) examined students' use of electronic resources at Mowe, Nigeria's Redeemer's University library. The study found that electronic resources significantly improved undergraduate students' academic performance but still required improvement in using these tools. Jaspal Kaur (2017) studied humanities professors at the University of Punjab in Lahore, Pakistan, finding that 69% preferred print and electronic materials. 55% of respondents said that using electronic resources reduced the time needed to obtain information, while 13% said it had grown. However, they found it challenging to seek information due to the information explosion (87%).

Balasubramanian and Santhanakumar (2022) conducted a study on the "Torrential impact of discursive digitized repositories in the university libraries of Tamilnadu" using questionnaire-based survey methods. The study found that members used various information sources for teaching, research, and academic work, with some preferring online resources like books/reference books, law reports, statutes, and journals. Some respondents preferred ICT-based library resources over print resources, with most stating excellent computing skills. In conclusion, the availability and advancement of e-resources may help library and information science and its users.

4. Statement of Problem

Libraries today have access to various e-resources such as e-journals, e-books, online databases, and more. The primary objective of any library is to

provide quality information services that satisfy users' needs by making optimal use of available resources. To achieve this, libraries develop their policies for acquiring e-resources. These policies ensure easy access to all e-resources, provide authentic information and make resources available everywhere. The policy should follow library standards such as BSI (Bureau of Indian Standards) and ISO (International Standards Organization) and comply with the laws of IPR and copyrights. Acquisition policies also provide safeguards for libraries in disputes or other situations. E-resources can be acquired by various means, such as through publishers, information/service providers, vendors, individuals or associates of institutes in India, or institutional access to e-resources. So, the researcher tried to analyze the opinions of the selected university libraries about the procurement process for e-resources.

5. Objectives of the study

- ✓ To analyze the respondents' opinions about the criteria for selecting E-resources.
- ✓ To evaluate the selected librarians' perceptive of the methods of acquiring e-resources.

6. Null and Alternative Hypotheses

H_O: There is no significant association between the respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction.
H_1: There is a significant association between the respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction.

7. Scope of the study

The present study is focused on the e-resources procurement process in the state-owned libraries in Tamil nadu. The researcher covered all thirteen universities in the Tamil nadu. The study analyses the respondents' opinions about the criteria for selecting E-resources and evaluates the selected librarians' perceptive of the methods of acquiring e-resources.

8. Methodology

The study targets library professionals working in state-owned libraries in Tamil Nadu. All thirteen universities in the state were chosen as sample units. To create a comprehensive and effective questionnaire, the researcher used previous studies and the objectives of the current study as a basis. Meeting every librarian in person was impossible, so a Google Form questionnaire was sent to sixty-five library professionals working in state-owned universities in the study area. Only 62 respondents completed the questionnaire in full.

9. Limitations

- ⇒ The study area is limited to the state of Tamilnadu only**.**
- ⇒ The researcher selected only the state-owned universities,

10. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Age and Educational Qualifications of the Respondents

Sl. No	Frequency of Library visit	<35 Years	35 - 45	>45 Years	Total
1.	P.G with M.Phil., Ph.D.	9	10	15	34
2.	P.G with NET / SET	4	5	7	16
3.	P.G with NET / SET, Ph.D.	3	4	5	12
	Total	**16**	**19**	**27**	**62**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 1 discloses the age and educational qualifications of the respondents. It is observed that 27 respondents were above 45 years old, followed by 19 respondents aged 35 – 45 years and 16 respondents below 35 years. Moreover, 34 respondents have the educational qualifications of P.G with M.Phil., Ph.D., 16 respondents P.G with NET / SET, and 12 respondents have P.G with NET / SET, Ph.D.

Table 2: Respondents' Opinions about the Ranking of E-Resources

Sl. No	E-Resources	WAS	Rank
1.	E-Books	2.876	**V**
2.	E-Journals	3.468	**II**
3.	E – Databases	3.762	**I**
4	E - Thesis, Projects, Dissertations	3.421	**III**
5	E-portfolios	2.649	**VII**
6	Digital repositories	3.172	**IV**
7	E Index &E catalogues	2.753	**VI**
8	Others	2.465	**VIII**

(Source: Primary Data)

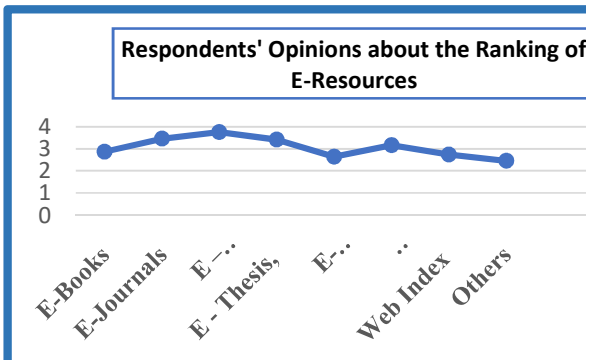


Fig 1

Table 2 reveals the weighted average score-based ranking of respondents' opinions about the importance of e-resources. The first rank is allotted to "Databases" with an average score of 3.762, followed by the second rank allotted to the variable "E-Journals. The third rank is assigned to E-Thesis, Projects, and Dissertations.

11. Selection of E-resources

Academic communities increasingly rely on electronic resources as their primary scientific communication. These resources have gradually replaced traditional mediums that had been in use for centuries until the emergence of electronic media. As a result, electronic resources have become an integral part of academic and research library collections. The tools used to select the e-resources are very important. Since many tools are available, selecting the best one is a challenge the librarian faces. The present study revealed that university librarians use multiple tools to select e-resources. In a survey, respondents were asked to give their opinions about various tools used while selecting an e-resource.

Table 3: Selection of E-Resources

Sl. No	Selection of E-Resources	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Faculty Recommendations	13	20.43
2.	Students Recommendations	10	15.49
3.	Publishers/Vendor's catalogue	7	10.71
4	Demonstrations from vendors	8	12.52
5	Surfing Websites	7	11.20
6	Consulting other librarians	6	8.90
7	Free online trial access	5	7.91
8	Visit vendors exhibitions	4	6.43
9	Publishers review in journals	3	5.11
10	Others	1	1.32
	Total	**62**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table3 presents respondents' opinions regarding the e-resources selection process followed in the university libraries of Tamilnadu. It was observed that 20.43% of students believed that e-resources were selected based on faculty recommendations, followed by 15.49% who said they were selected based on students' recommendations. 12.52% of respondents indicated that e-resources were selected based on vendor demonstrations. Additionally, 11.20% of respondents stated that e-resources were selected by surfing websites, while 10.71% reported that it was based on publishers/vendor catalogues. 8.90% of respondents stated that e-resources were selected by consulting other librarians

Table 4: Association between the Respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction.

Sl. No	Selection of E-Resources	Correlation Value	Sig. Value	Result
1.	Faculty Recommendations	0.712	< 0.05	Significant
2.	Students Recommendations	0.693	< 0.05	Significant
3.	Publishers/Vendor's catalogue	0.671	< 0.05	Significant
4	Demonstrations from vendors	0.612	< 0.05	Significant
5	Surfing Websites	0.774	< 0.05	Significant
6	Consulting other librarians	0.765	< 0.05	Significant
7	Free online trial access	0.721	< 0.05	Significant
8	Visit vendors exhibitions	0.683	< 0.05	Significant
9	Publishers review in journals	0.739	< 0.05	Significant
10	Others	0.512	< 0.05	Significant

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 4 reveals Carl Pearson's correlation between the Respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction with the e-resources available in the university libraries of Tamilnadu. The correlation values of all the variables are more than 0.60, and the corresponding significance value is less than 0.05. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant association between the Respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction.

12. Criteria for Selection of E-resources

Libraries should have a selection policy that guides professionals in purchasing items. This policy should include specific criteria relevant to the library's objectives, such as excellence in artistic, literary, and visual content, appropriateness to the level of user, authoritative and varying perspectives on controversial issues, accessibility, and ability to stimulate intellectual and social development. Librarians must consider the authenticity, public demand, general interest, content, and use circumstances of each item they purchase. For libraries serving minors, librarians must consider age, social and emotional development, intellectual level, interest level, and reading level. Technical criteria should also be included in the policy.

Table 5: Criteria for Selection of E-resources

Sl. No	Criteria for Selection of E-resources	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Subject Relevance	12	18.62
2.	Authenticity of information	9	13.84
3.	Design and usability	8	12.85
4	Ease of accessibility	7	11.37
5	Pricing	8	12.36
6	Vendor Reputation	6	10.21
7	Technical Requirements	5	7.91
8	Licensing Agreements	4	6.43
9	Preservation	3	5.11
10	Other	1	1.32
	Total	**62**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

According to Table 5, the respondents were asked about their university libraries' criteria to select E-resources in the study area. Most respondents (18.62%) stated that their libraries choose e-resources based on subject relevance. Authenticity of information was the second most commonly cited criterion, with 13.84% of respondents selecting it. Design and usability of the e-resources was the third most frequently mentioned criterion, with 12.85% of respondents indicating it as the basis for selection. Other criteria included pricing of e-resources (12.36%), easy usability of the e-resources (11.37%), and vendor reputation (10.21%). Some respondents also mentioned technical requirements (7.91%), licensing agreements (6.43%), and preservation (5.11%) as selection criteria.

13. Methods to Acquire E-resources

Acquisition is a crucial process for collecting and developing electronic resources. It involves obtaining and receiving physical library materials or online resources. Although the process for acquiring electronic resources is similar to that of print resources, there are some slight differences. For instance, pre-order investigation and ordering specific tasks may vary between the two formats. Unlike print resources, e-resource acquisition involves purchasing access rights to remote databases, and the library does not own or house a single resource. Once a selector or selection committee has chosen a resource to add to the library's collection, the standard acquisition process of locating and acquiring the resource occurs. The optimal way to provide access to electronic books/journals in university libraries is through a subscription to online databases that can be accessed through the Internet.

Table 6: Methods to Acquire E-resources

Sl. No	Methods to Acquire E-resources	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Purchase	20	32.45
2.	Subscriptions	22	34.93
3.	Consortia	11	17.46
4	Free resources	8	12.19
5	Others (sponsorship)	2	2.97
	Total	**62**	**100**

(Source: Primary Data)

Table 6 presents the respondents' opinions regarding their libraries' methods of acquiring e-resources. It can be observed that 34.93% of the respondents stated that their libraries subscribe to the proper cent of required e-resources, while 32.45% purchase these resources. Additionally, 17.46% of the respondents mentioned that their libraries obtain resources

through the consortia movement. Notably, 12.19% prefer free resources, while only 2.97% of the respondents mentioned that their libraries rely on other sources to purchase e-resources.

14. Findings

- ✓ It is observed that 27 respondents were above 45 years old, followed by 19 respondents aged 35 – 45 years and 16 below 35 years. Moreover, 34 respondents have the educational qualifications of P.G with M.Phil., Ph.D., 16 respondents P.G with NET / SET, and 12 respondents have P.G with NET / SET, Ph.D.
- ✓ The first rank is allotted to "Databases" with an average score of 3.762, followed by the second rank allotted to the variable "E-Journals. The third rank is assigned to E-Thesis, Projects, and Dissertations.
- ✓ It was observed that 20.43% of students believed that e-resources were selected based on faculty recommendations, followed by 15.49% who said they were selected based on students' recommendations. 12.52% of respondents indicated that e-resources were selected based on vendor demonstrations. Additionally, 11.20% of respondents stated that e-resources were selected by surfing websites, while 10.71% reported that it was based on publishers/vendor catalogues. 8.90% of respondents stated that e-resources were selected by consulting other librarians
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- ✓ Carl Pearson's correlation between the Respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction with the e-resources available in the university libraries of Tamilnadu. The correlation values of all the variables are more than 0.60, and the corresponding significance value is less than 0.05. Hence, it is concluded that there is a significant association between the Respondents' opinions about the selection process of E-Resources and their satisfaction.
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15. Conclusion

Electronic resources represent a dynamic and competitive aspect of modern libraries and information communication. These resources encompass a wide range of materials, including e-books, e-journals, articles, newspapers, theses, dissertations, databases, and CD-ROMs, serving as viable alternatives to traditional print media. They offer the most up-to-date information, making knowledge and awareness of these electronic resources essential for rapid improvement in library services. Academic libraries must raise awareness about the various e-resources available to provide quality and timely services to their user communities. E-resources empower faculty, students, and research scholars by directly delivering instant, relevant, and comprehensive information to their doorsteps. Electronic databases significantly enhance access to information, necessitating careful planning to optimize the use of space, funds, and time. Recognizing these benefits, many institutions are increasingly focusing on expanding their e-collections. By prioritizing the development and implementation of e-resources, academic libraries can better meet the evolving needs of their users and remain at the forefront of information dissemination in the digital age.

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