

# Assessing the User Perceptions and Preferences of Electronic Resources on Academic Library Collection Management

Mushvig Imamverdiyev  
ADA University, Baku, Azerbaijan  
*mimamverdiyev@ada.edu.az*

**Abstract** — This paper studies the effect of users perceptions and preferences of electronic resources management on academic libraries. The individuals’ different points of view were examined in terms of ease of use, usefulness and effectiveness on academic setting. This exploratory study investigated the information-seeking behavior of faculty members, students and researchers and its effect to electronic resources acquisition. The interest toward print and electronic resources were compared and the study concluded with the suggestion of electronic resources management strategy in Azerbaijan academic libraries.

**Keywords** — *user perception; electronic resources management; academic library; collection development*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Providing the academic information and information services to the Academic community is the major role of Academic Libraries. Depending on users and their needs libraries acquire its collection. Some users prefer print books rather than their colleagues who prefer electronic resources. They were separated into groups in between by their information seeking behavior and digital literacy.

The new technologies strived the libraries to develop its collection with the electronic resources and determine its new collection management policy considering the users attitudes.

It has become common for research libraries to spend large portions of their collection budgets on these resources; ongoing annual subscriptions account for nearly 70% of the collection budgets in academic libraries. When libraries stored only physical copies of journals, there were limitations based on physical space within the library for how many journals a library could subscribe to and subsequently store. These factors have given rise to the increase in number of electronic resources available to libraries[1].

Some Academic Libraries decide to organize their Collection with electronic resources considering the wide range of user needs ignoring the attitudes of users who are in favor of hard copies. However, the librarians help the scholars and faculty to adopt the electronic environment. Michigan University Library (2012) started to digitize the entire collection. In addition, there has been a recent trend toward the digital humanities, with humanities scholars embracing a wide range of digital tools. As a result, it is important to examine the

ways that e-books are being adopted by humanists for the purposes of teaching and research [2].

## II. USER PERCEPTIONS AND PREFERENCES

The advent of electronic resources and their increase caused transition from print to electronic resources among the users and libraries. It was the subject of researchers and librarians study to learn the users perception and preferences past decades. Different research methodologies were applied in order to determine the users’ attitudes and behavior toward the electronic book modules, scholarly journal article databases and various electronic resource modules. Researches during the past 10 years have focused on how academics perceived the transition from print to electronic scholarly communications. This research has shown a trend in which researchers are becoming more accepting of electronic resources and increasingly utilizing them as their primary sources[3].

According to Tenopir, user preferences and behavior can be categorized generally as following:

### 1. Differences among users:

- Differences by subject discipline
- Differences by user status or workplace
- Differences by task
- Differences by age or gender

### 2. Information-seeking behavior and preferences, including differences between print and electronic resources:

- Browsing versus searching
- Preferences for print or electronic resources
- Awareness of electronic resources
- Search strategies
- Reasons for using the resources
- Sources of information about resources
- Self-evaluation of system navigation

### 3. Perceived advantages of electronic resources and preferences, including:

- How electronic resources improve workflow or save time

- Preferred features of electronic information systems
- Currency and timeliness of sources
- 4. Perceived disadvantages or concerns about electronic resources, including:
  - Technological or service problems
  - Archiving
  - Problems or confusion with information systems
  - Preferred formats for reading
  - Electronic versus print resources
- 5. Library policy and financial issues:
  - Willingness to pay for electronic information
  - Willingness to cancel print journals in favor of electronic
  - Other library budgetary issues that affect users [4].

Obviously, the information seeking behavior of faculty and researchers is different than undergraduate and graduate students. Faculty and students information demands differ their scope of resource and content requirements. Subject area is another effective factor of user attitude toward electronic resources. Mahe, Andrys and Chartons' research provides that enthusiasm for electronic journals and patterns of use vary even among fields of science. Chemists and physicists use them frequently, while earth scientists and mathematicians see fewer advantages[4]. Although high percentages of faculty members use electronic journals, they still use a variety of sources, including print, for their readings. In 1999, Lenares found that although 90% of physical sciences faculty respondents at ARL libraries used electronic journals, half reported that they read articles from electronic journals infrequently [4]. According Brockman et. al study, researchers in other studies found no relationship between age and searching skills, although the researchers observed that younger users are more likely to browse on the computer, while older users prefer print journals for browsing [4].

Defining the users preference is a challenge for the libraries and librarians. Individual users' preference of electronic books cannot be the adequate reason for the library to develop its collection with the electronic books. Librarians have to be sure of the wide audience of users prefer electronic books or journals in their study or paper works.

Analyzing the electronic books usage can entice the librarians with extended numbers of downloads and clicks. Although, the e-resource providers try to help the librarians to get the exact usage statistics through the admin site, these statistics do not reflect true face of users preference. For instance, if the user only find the e-book and use it only a few minutes, database automatically count this a usage statistics instead of review of e-book. Thus, examination of numbers of usage carries this study to observe users that perhaps the preference and re-usage of electronic resources do not reflects the reality.

### III. THE EFFECT OF USERS ON COLLECTION MANAGEMENT

Academic libraries are in its way to be assertive on their collection management. They have its tight budget it is important that the resources they buy are justifiable and well used by students and academics. Offering the new collection should refer the previous interest and assessed impact of usage. Libraries measure their users attitudes and resource usage, and importance of the resource for its potential users.

If e-resources are organized to meet the users request and demand, and users can learn how to use e-resources (Information literacy ability needed) then library collection able to easily build up its best collection with the right range of print and electronic collection as well as determined subjective collection.

Collection must take into account the characteristics of the community. User –oriented evaluation can research human information seeking behavior, receiving information and filtering it. In academic environment user-oriented evaluation involves faculty members and students, researcher and librarians. User can be specified by its types, characteristics, educational level, experience, information needs of the users, different satisfaction factors. Moreover the users information literacy is another prime point on acquiring the electronic collection.

Organizing electronic collections the starting points are its intended usage and the corresponding user needs. User needs identify the content of collection and its subject ranges. The users' attitudes predetermine the range of content that is needed. Appropriate collection and ease of use will attract the user group and cause expanding of its coverage.

In 2015, ADA University Library conducted a survey among its users in order to determine the users perceptions awareness, and usefulness of electronic resources that provided by the Library. The respondents of survey indicated their positive attitude toward the electronic resources and their awareness of wide range of electronic resource collection. However, some concerns and negative attitudes also appeared on the results. Some users still prefer print books who assume the harmful effects of electronic text formats for long-length time study.

More than half of the respondents supported the e-books because of its searchable features through the content. Remote access is another positive futures of the e-resources.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Given the divergent needs of our users—the use of print resources for immersion in a text and the use of electronic resources for searching and information gathering—it seems that libraries can try one of two strategies. Either we can purchase duplicate print and electronic copies of books whenever possible, or we can try to determine which sorts of books are more likely to be used in one format or the other and target our selection accordingly[5].

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