

# Computer Literacy Skills of Public Library Users in Trivandrum: A Case Study

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## Abstract

The study aims to ascertain the computer literacy skills of users of public libraries in Trivandrum district of Kerala. The study is confined to the A-grade public libraries (under the State library council) in Urban, Semi-urban and rural areas of Trivandrum district. A questionnaire was used for collecting data. A total number of 450 questionnaires were distributed out of which 393 were returned. The study reveals that the respondents possess essential computer skills. Majority The widely used web browser is Google chrome and the social networking site is Facebook. From the study it can be seen that there isa need for equipping public libraries with new technology.

**Keywords:** Computer Literacy Skills, Kerala, Network Literacy, Public Library

## 1. Introduction

Computers and Information Technologies have grown over the past two decades. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) have completely transformed the way people communicate both locally and globally. Rapidly growing Information Technology has necessitated changes in libraries. Not only public libraries need to adopt new technologies, but also have to play a role in bridge any gap in users' ability to use ICTs. Citizens are nowadays increasingly turning to web based electronic sources and services for information.

This study aims to assess the computer literacy skills of users of public libraries in Trivandrum district of Kerala. Trivandrum is the state's major academic hub and a home to most number of research centres ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education\\_in\\_Kerala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_Kerala)). Public libraries coming under the State Library Council were selected for the study.

## 2. Review of Literature

Shayna Pekala (2017) said that over the last decade, libraries have taken advantage of emerging technologies to provide new discovery tools to help users find information and resources more efficiently. Vilgi and Joshi (2017)

has made an attempt to evaluate the present status of the public libraries affiliated to the Kerala State Library Council, in Thrissur district of Kerala in terms of grade, infrastructural facilities, total collection of books, annual issues of books, no of periodicals and social activities, etc. Martzoukou and Elliott (2016) have provided an outlook of the need for digital literacy skills which should incorporate in the MLIS curriculum. A qualitative, multiple case study research design was chosen, using an analysis of policy documents and existing training programs offered by the libraries together with semi-structured interviews of public librarians and library management. Hines (2014) discusses Multimodal literacy: what is it and what does it mean for librarians and their users? How will the newfound attention to the differing ways users consume multimodal content so prevalent in the digital world affect us in library land? How can we best move forward?

Muniya and Padmini (2014) have highlighted the importance of information literacy programmes in academic libraries and how the institution will be benefited by implementing information literacy programmes. Swapna et al., (2012) report a study on library instruction needs assessment conducted with incoming doctoral students in two online programs in education. The differences in prior skills and experiences of the two

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groups highlighted the importance of needs assessments and learner analyses as well as course-or program-specific instructional design in information literacy instruction for online students. Based on students' reported skills, education librarians structured both the content and format of instruction to help students succeed in their programs and build lifelong skills.

Mohamed and Abdul (2010) in a study try to ascertain ICT literacy among library professionals of Calicut University. Midhula and Pillai (2015) investigate the awareness and usage of internet resources among visually challenged students in Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala.

### 3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Find out the computer and communication technology literacy skills among the users,
2. Determine the network literacy skills among users,

3. Assess the level of knowledge in using network search in the library, and
4. Identify the familiarity with social networking sites.

## 4. Methodology

The data for the study was collected using a structured questionnaire. 450 questionnaires were distributed in the Urban, Semi-urban and Rural areas of Trivandrum district. The study population comprised of users of 9 A-grade libraries under the State Library Council from the three regions. A total of 393 questionnaires were returned (87.33%).

## 5. Results and Discussions

### 5.1 Computer, Internet and Social Media Literacy Skills

For assessing computer, Internet and social media literacy

**Table 1.** Users' familiarity with software

Familiarity with Software	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
MS Office	94	45.2%	118	52.0%	109	47.6%
Web designing	12	5.8%	33	14.5%	30	13.1%
O/S Software	40	19.2%	33	14.5%	60	26.2%
DBMS	37	17.8%	32	14.1%	20	8.7%
N.A.	6	2.9%	11	4.8%	0	0.0%
Others	19	9.1%	0	0.0%	10	4.4%

**Table 2.** Users' preferences of information media

Device you prefer to store data	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
CD	34	21.1%	25	15.5%	59	28.4%
DVD	5	3.1%	23	14.3%	25	12.0%
Pen drive/ Flash drive	103	64.0%	101	62.7%	89	42.8%
Blue ray disk	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	2.4%
Portable hard disk	13	8.1%	12	7.5%	15	7.2%
N.A.	6	3.7%	0	0.0%	15	7.2%

**Table 3.** Purpose of using computer

Purpose you utilize computer skills	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Personal use	61	28.0%	65	38.2%	30	21.6%
For study	85	39.0%	60	35.3%	44	31.7%
For general awareness	42	19.3%	40	23.5%	65	46.8%
Self-efficiency	24	11.0%	5	2.9%	0	0.0%
N.A.	6	2.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

**Table 4.** Users and Internet search

Do you conduct internet search in library	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
N.A.	6	4.6%	6	4.5%	5	3.9%
Yes	37	28.5%	64	47.8%	59	45.7%
No	87	66.9%	64	47.8%	65	50.4%

**Table 6.** Usage of browsers for information

Browsers you use for Information	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Google chrome	56	43.1%	59	41.0%	94	72.9%
Internet explorer	23	17.7%	16	11.1%	0	0.0%
Mozilla Firefox	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	3.9%
Netscape	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Maxthon	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Opera	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Nil	51	39.2%	69	47.9%	30	23.3%

skills awareness in use, frequency of use, purpose of use, familiarity with software, level of knowledge in using network, familiarity with social networking sites etc. were asked to the respondents to meet the objectives of research.

While looking at the gender, age, educational qualification and designation of users, it is found that majority of respondents were male in Urban and Semi-urban region. In rural it was female, the respondents' were mainly under the age group of 11-35yrs. (i.e. youth) and all are educated.

### 5.2 Computer Literacy Skills

For assessing the computer awareness, the respondents were asked about the use of computers. Results show that 90% of urban, 76.9% of semi-urban and 84.5% of rural area users were aware of the use of computers. Results' regarding the frequency of use of computer indicates that in urban and rural areas majority are daily users. While in semi-urban the respondents replied that they use computers once in a week.

**Table 7.** Users and search strategy

Search strategy used	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
N.A.	26	16.9%	17	11.6%	0	0.0%
Type the required statement in search box	32	20.8%	60	41.1%	74	41.3%
Type keywords in search box	60	39.0%	69	47.3%	70	39.1%
Type the keywords using Boolean operators	12	7.8%	0	0.0%	30	16.8%
Use wild card/truncations	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Don't know	24	15.6%	0	0.0%	5	2.8%

**Table 8.** Users' familiarity with social networking sites

Social Networking sites in which profile created	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
N.A.	26	15.8%	36	25.9%	19	10.6%
Face Book	92	55.8%	98	70.5%	100	55.9%
Twitter	33	20.0%	5	3.6%	30	16.8%
Google Talk	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	15	8.4%
Blogs	14	8.5%	0	0.0%	10	5.6%
Others	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	2.8%

- a) *Familiarity with Software:* Respondents were asked to indicate their familiarity with software (Table 1). The data reveals that respondents in Urban (94; 45.2%), Semi-urban (118; 52%) and Rural area (109; 47.6%) are familiar with MS office.
- b) *Preferred Device to Store Data:* The data (Table 2) shows that pen drive is the most preferred device selected by the users in all the three regions for storing data.
- c) *Purpose of using Computers:* Urban, Semi-urban and Rural area respondents were asked to express the main purpose of using computers. Urban users used computers in relation to their study while semi-urban users used it in relation to personal work.

### 5.3 Network Literacy Skills

Internet literacy is a subset of computer literacy, which is generally defined as the basic knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by all citizens to be able to deal with computer technology confidently in their daily life (Chou, Tsai & Chan, 2006). Internet skills are becoming very important nowadays for accessing the vast ocean of information

- a) *Internet search in library:* The users of public libraries were asked to indicate whether they search the Internet in the library. Majority of respondents replied that they are not conducting any internet search in the library. This is probably due to non-availability of

**Table 9.** Purpose of using social networking sites

Purpose of Using Social Networking Sites	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
N.A.	26	12.5%	36	20.2%	19	12.8%
Personal use	40	19.2%	60	33.7%	80	53.7%
Communication	62	29.8%	54	30.3%	45	30.2%
Discussion	56	26.9%	23	12.9%	0	0.0%
Recreation	24	11.5%	5	2.8%	5	3.4%
Others	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

**Table 10.** Users’ knowledge improvement and use of social networking

Has Your Knowledge Improved Using Social Networking Sites?	Urban		Semi-urban		Rural	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Yes	92	70.8%	86	64.2%	70	54.3%
No	38	29.2%	48	35.8%	59	45.7%

adequate number of computers and Internet bandwidth in public libraries. Respondents were asked to rate their knowledge in using internet on a three point scale. (Table 5).

- b) *Browsers for Searching:* Table 6 indicates that the most used browser by the respondents in all the three areas is Google Chrome.
- c) *Search Strategy Used:* Most users merely type a few keywords in the search box to carry out searches and are not familiar with any advanced search devices.
- d) *Knowledge in Using Boolean Operators:* Respondents were asked to indicate the Boolean operators used for their search to access the required information. Table 8 reveals that majority in Urban; Semi-urban and Rural area users use the Boolean operator “AND”.

### 5.4 Use of Social Networking Sites

- a). Computer literacy skills encompass familiarity with the use of social networks.
- b). Most of the users had a Gmail ID that Facebook is the

most used social networking site by the users in all the three regions (Table 9).

- c) *Purpose of Using Social Networking Sites:* Urban users expressed that communication is the main purpose of using social networking sites, while in Semi-urban and Rural area respondents used social networking sites for personal purpose.
- d) *Improvement in level of knowledge:* Respondents states that their level of knowledge improved by using social networking sites.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of the study show that users of public libraries make extensive use of computers. They seem to be familiar with MS Office. The most preferred browser is the Google Chrome. While they do search the Internet, their familiarity with more advanced search features appeared to be of a low order. Public libraries should adopt a proactive approach in enhancing computer literacy among users.

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