



# Transforming User Engagement: Awareness and Utilization of Information Sources At Sikkim University Library

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigates how students, faculty, and researchers perceive and use the library's resources and services. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 70 purposively selected respondents through a structured questionnaire, supplemented by library records and scholarly literature. Findings reveal high awareness and usage of print books (85.7% aware, 65.7% frequent users), but significantly lower engagement with digital resources only 60% were aware of online databases, and just 35.7% used them frequently. Research support services showed the widest gap: 55.7% awareness but only 20% frequent use. Key barriers include a lack of understanding (45.7%), insufficient digital training (40%), limited access to technology (31.4%), and complex online interfaces (25.7%). A chi-square test confirmed a statistically significant relationship between awareness and utilisation ( $\chi^2 = 41.39$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study concludes that targeted awareness campaigns, mandatory digital literacy workshops, infrastructure upgrades, and user friendly interfaces are essential to bridge usage gaps. Strategic recommendations include integrating library training into the curriculum and improving discovery tools. Ultimately, the research underscores the need for a user centred approach to align Sikkim University Library's evolving services with academic demands in the digital age, thereby enhancing accessibility, satisfaction, and scholarly support.*

**Keywords:** Awareness, Utilisation, Library Resources, Digital Services, User Education, Engagement, Sikkim University, Information Literacy, Academic Libraries, User Satisfaction

**Received:** 11 October 2025, Revised 30 November 2025, Accepted 3 December 2025

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## **1. Introduction**

Academic libraries play a vital role as hubs for knowledge acquisition, research facilitation, and the promotion of intellectual development within educational institutions. In this regard, the Sikkim University Library serves as a key resource centre, addressing the varied informational needs of its students, researchers, and faculty members. With a comprehensive collection of print and digital materials, the library is well equipped to support the academic endeavours and scholarly goals of its users. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of library resources largely depends on patrons' awareness and usage behaviours. Despite progress in information access technologies, numerous users remain unaware of the full range of available services, including specialised databases, e-resources, and customised research support. Challenges such as insufficient user training, gaps in digital literacy, and infrastructural issues frequently hinder optimal utilisation, thus limiting the library's potential influence. This research aims to investigate the awareness, accessibility, and utilisation of information sources and services within the Sikkim University Library. By examining user behaviors, preferences, and satisfaction levels, it seeks to reveal essential insights that can guide strategic improvements. The study will also address the obstacles users face, such as limited access to technology or inadequate support, and offer practical recommendations to address these challenges. In an era when libraries are increasingly adopting innovative technologies, understanding user engagement is crucial. This study emphasises the necessity of cultivating a user-focused approach to ensure that the library's resources and services remain both relevant and easily accessible. By raising user awareness and enhancing resource distribution, the Sikkim University Library can strengthen its position as an active contributor to academic excellence and intellectual growth. This investigation not only contributes to the evolving discourse on library effectiveness but also highlights the critical intersection of technology, accessibility, and user satisfaction in academic libraries.

This inquiry not only contributes to the ongoing discussion of library effectiveness but also underscores the critical relationship among technology, accessibility, and user satisfaction in academic libraries.

## **2. Literature Review**

Wilson's (2000) model of information seeking behaviour highlights the significance of user motivation and contextual elements in accessing library resources. While it identifies barriers such as a lack of awareness and technical skills, it does not consider the influence of digital technologies in reshaping contemporary academic libraries. Kaur and Rani (2008) investigated the awareness and use of electronic resources among university students in India, revealing low familiarity with databases and e-journals. However, their research does not examine the potential benefits of user training programs for improving resource utilisation. Likewise, Kumar and Singh (2011) emphasised the importance of user-centric services in Indian academic libraries, yet their findings overlooked the effects of resource visibility and promotional tactics on user engagement. Ali and Nisha (2013) examined the acceptance of e-resources in academic libraries and noted a gradual increase in their use. Still, issues such as users' digital literacy remain unaddressed. Thanuskodi's (2015) study on resource usage in universities in South India found a preference for traditional resources over digital options. Still, it did not account for how awareness campaigns might influence this preference. Borah (2017) examined library practices in Northeast India, emphasising traditional methods while disregarding the integration of advanced library technologies.

Joshi and Sinha (2018) evaluated user satisfaction in academic libraries, identified infrastructural deficiencies,

but did not propose targeted technological solutions. Chandel and Saikia (2019) underscored the importance of ICT in enhancing library services but failed to acknowledge the necessity of continuous user training to keep pace with technological change. Bhatt and Singh (2020) pointed out the advantages of resource discovery tools but noted that ignorance and inadequate training hindered their effectiveness. Mehra and Sharma (2021) examined how mobile technology influences library use, finding increased accessibility but overlooking obstacles such as device limitations and connectivity issues. Sharma and Das (2023) studied user attitudes towards library services in Northeast India. They emphasised the demand for improved digital resources, but did not provide concrete strategies to close the gap between resource availability and user engagement. Together, these studies indicate notable research deficiencies, including a lack of emphasis on user training initiatives, inadequate integration of conventional and digital resource utilisation, and insufficient attention to visibility and marketing. Additionally, the difficulties encountered by users in remote regions like Sikkim remain inadequately investigated. This research aims to address these gaps by examining awareness, use, and engagement with library resources and by proposing actionable strategies to enhance academic library services.

### **3. Research Objectives**

The primary aim of this study is to conduct a comprehensive investigation into how users of the Sikkim University Library perceive, access, and interact with its information resources and services. To achieve this overarching goal, the study is guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the awareness levels of library users regarding the available information sources and services at Sikkim University Library. This includes evaluating users' familiarity with both physical (e.g., print books, journals, reference materials) and digital resources (e.g., e-journals, databases, institutional repositories), as well as support services such as reference assistance, interlibrary loan, information literacy workshops, and online catalogue systems.
2. To analyse the utilisation patterns of both traditional and digital resources among different categories of library users. The study seeks to understand how frequently and for what purposes users engage with various types of resources. It will explore differences in usage behaviour across user groups such as undergraduate and postgraduate students, research scholars, and faculty members and identify trends in the preferences, frequencies, and purposes of use (e.g., coursework, research, leisure reading).
3. To identify barriers faced by users in accessing and effectively utilising library resources and services. This objective focuses on identifying practical, technical, cognitive, or systemic challenges that hinder the optimal use of library resources. Potential barriers may include a lack of awareness, inadequate digital literacy, poor internet connectivity, limited resource availability, complex navigation of digital platforms, or insufficient training.
4. To evaluate user satisfaction with the quality, accessibility, relevance, and timeliness of library resources and services. The study will assess how well the library meets user expectations regarding content relevance, ease of access, responsiveness of services, the physical and virtual environments, and overall support for academic and research needs.

5. To propose evidence based, actionable recommendations for improving awareness, optimising resource utilisation, and enhancing service delivery at Sikkim University Library. Building on the empirical findings, the study will formulate practical strategies to bridge identified gaps. These may include targeted outreach programs, user education initiatives, infrastructure upgrades, improved digital interfaces, and policy level interventions to strengthen the library's role as a dynamic academic support centre.

## 4. Research Methodology

This study employs a descriptive research design, which is particularly suited for exploring the current state of user awareness, behaviour, and satisfaction in real world settings. The design enables a systematic documentation and interpretation of how library users interact with available resources and services, without manipulating variables.

### 4.1 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises active users of Sikkim University Library, including undergraduate and postgraduate students, doctoral researchers, teaching faculty, and non-teaching academic staff. Given the heterogeneous nature of this population, purposive sampling was used to select a representative sample of 70 respondents. This approach ensures inclusion of diverse user categories, thereby capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences. Efforts are made to achieve proportional representation across academic levels, disciplines, and library use frequency.

### 4.2 Data Collection Methods

Data is collected through a mixed methods approach, combining both primary and secondary sources:

- **Primary Data:** A structured questionnaire serves as the main instrument for data collection. It includes:
  - Closed-ended questions (e.g., Likert-scale items, multiple-choice) to quantify awareness levels, usage frequency, satisfaction ratings, and perceived barriers.
  - Open-ended questions to gather qualitative insights into user experiences, suggestions, and unmet needs.
  - The questionnaire is pre-tested with a small group to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability before full-scale administration.
- **Secondary Data: Supplementary information is drawn from:**
  - Library usage statistics (e.g., circulation data, database login records),
  - Annual reports and service logs from the Sikkim University Library,
  - Relevant scholarly literature on academic library usage, user behaviour, and service evaluation in Indian and global contexts.

### 4.3 Data Analysis System

The collected data undergoes a two-pronged analytical process:

- **Quantitative Analysis:** Responses to closed-ended items are coded and analysed using descriptive statistics,

including frequency distributions, percentages, means, and cross-tabulations. This facilitates the identification of usage patterns, satisfaction levels, and common barriers across user groups.

- **Qualitative Analysis:** Open-ended responses are transcribed and subjected to thematic analysis. Responses are coded iteratively to extract recurring themes, user concerns, and innovative suggestions. This enriches the quantitative findings with contextual depth and user voice.

#### 4.4 Ethical Considerations

Informed consent is obtained from all participants, and confidentiality of responses is strictly maintained. Participation is voluntary, and respondents are assured that their input will be used solely for academic research purposes.

#### 4.5 Expected Outcomes

The methodology is designed to yield a holistic understanding of user library interactions at Sikkim University. The findings will not only highlight existing strengths but also pinpoint critical gaps in service delivery and resource accessibility. Ultimately, the study aims to inform strategic planning, policy development, and user-centered improvements that align the library's offerings with the evolving academic and informational needs of its community.

### 5. Hypothesis

Based on the background and discussions, we propose a simple hypothesis for this work as follows.

1. **H1:** There is a significant relationship between the awareness of information sources and the utilisation of library resources at Sikkim University Library.

### 6. Data Analysis

#### 6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The table below shows the demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the study.

Category	Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic Level	Students	45	64.3
	Faculty	15	21.4
	Researchers	10	14.3
Gender	Male	38	54.3
	Female	32	45.7
Library Usage	Daily	25	35.7
	Weekly	30	42.9
	Monthly	15	21.4

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics (n = 70)

The majority of respondents are students (64.3%), followed by faculty (21.4%) and researchers (14.3%), indicating that students are the library's primary users. Gender representation is relatively balanced, with 54.3% male and 45.7% female respondents, reflecting inclusive access to library services. Library use is frequent: 42.9% visit weekly and 35.7% visit daily, underscoring the library's integral role in users' academic routines.

## 6.2 Awareness of Library Resources

Library Resource	Aware (%)	Not Aware (%)
Print Books	85.7	14.3
E-Books	71.4	28.6
Online Databases	60.0	40.0
Physical Journals	78.6	21.4
Research Support Services (e.g., Reference, Guidance)	55.7	44.3

Table 2. Awareness of Library Resources (n = 70)

- Print books are the most widely recognised resource (85.7% awareness), followed by physical journals (78.6%) and e-books (71.4%).
- Awareness drops notably for online databases (60%) and research support services (55.7%), with nearly half of respondents unaware of these critical digital offerings.
- This gap suggests a need for targeted outreach and training to enhance awareness of advanced library services.

## 6.3 Utilisation of Library Resources

Library Resource	Frequently Used (%)	Occasionally Used (%)	Rarely Used (%)	Never Used
Print Books	65.7	28.6	5.7	0
E-Books	48.6	37.1	14.3	0
Online Databases	35.7	40.0	15.7	8.6
Physical Journals	45.7	32.9	14.3	7.1
Research Support Services	20.0	28.6	30.0	21.4

Table 3. Utilisation Patterns of Library Resources (n = 70)

## Observations

Print books are the most actively used resource, with 65.7% of users accessing them regularly. E-books and physical journals also show strong usage, though room for growth remains. Online databases and research support services are significantly underutilised. Only 35.7% frequently use databases, and just 20% regularly use research support despite their academic value. The disconnect between awareness and actual usage (especially for digital tools) points to potential barriers such as usability, training, or accessibility.

### 6.4 Barriers to Utilisation of Library Resources

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Lack of awareness	32	45.7
Insufficient training on digital resources	28	40.0
Limited access to technology	22	31.4
Complexity of online resources	18	25.7
Inadequate research support services	15	21.4

Table 4. Reported Barriers to Resource Use (n = 70)

The most significant barrier is a lack of awareness (45.7%), reinforcing the need for proactive communication strategies. Insufficient training (40%) and limited access to technology (31.4%) further hinder digital engagement. The perceived complexity of online platforms (25.7%) may deter users, especially those less familiar with digital tools. These findings collectively highlight the necessity of user education, simplified interfaces, and infrastructure improvements.

We compared awareness and collective utilisation of the resources, and the results are presented in the following figure.

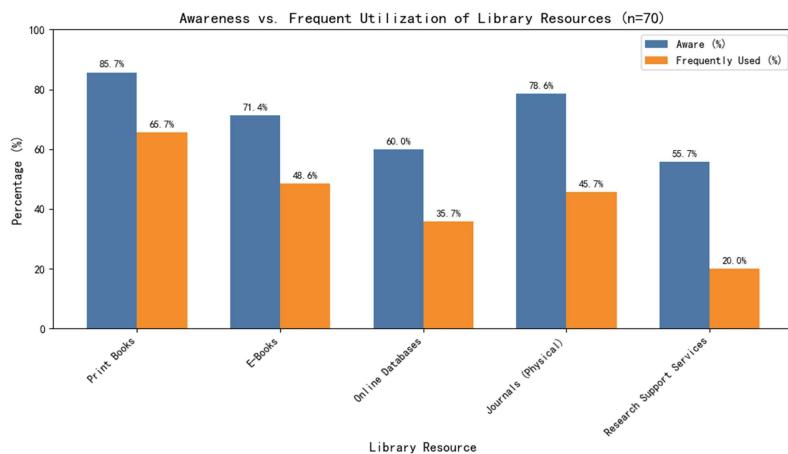


Figure 1. Awareness and Frequent Utilization of library resources

- **Blue Bars:** % of respondents aware of the resource

- **Orange Bars:** % who use it frequently

We infer that the Print Books show the highest awareness and usage, whereas the Research Support Services exhibit the most significant gap: 55.7% aware but only 20% use frequently.

Further evidence indicates that, across all resources, usage is notably lower than awareness, suggesting opportunities to improve engagement.

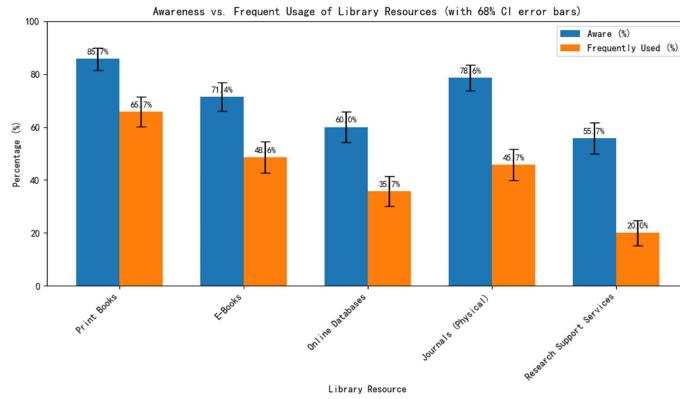


Figure 2. Error bars of mean values

The potential errors are estimated using the standard error and are presented in Figure 2.

- The error bars show  $\pm 1$  standard error (SE) of the percentage estimate.
- This approximates a 68% confidence interval (assuming normality).
- SE is calculated using the formula for a proportion:

$$SE = \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} \times 100$$

where  $p$  = proportion (e.g., 0.857 for 85.7%) and  $n=70$ .

### Inferences:

- Research Support Services has the most significant gap between awareness ( $55.7\% \pm 5.9\%$ ) and frequent use ( $20.0\% \pm 4.7\%$ ).
- Print Books show high awareness and usage, with relatively small error bars (due to high proportions and sample size).
- For all resources, the error bars do not overlap between “Aware” and “Frequently Used”, suggesting the gaps are meaningful (though formal testing would require raw data).

Below is the summary of the confidence interval.

### 6.5 Confidence Interval Summary Table

Resource	Aware (%)	95% CI (Aware)	Frequently Used (%)	95% CI (Frequent)
Print Books	85.7	[77.5, 93.9]	65.7	[54.6, 76.8]
E-Books	71.4	[60.8, 82.0]	48.6	[37.0, 60.2]
Online Databases	60	[48.5, 71.5]	35.7	[24.5, 46.9]
Journals (Physical)	78.6	[69.0, 88.2]	45.7	[34.1, 57.3]
Research Support Services	55.7	[44.1, 67.3]	20	[10.6, 29.4]

Table 5. Confidence Interval Summary

The results of the confidence level calculation are presented below.

Non-overlapping CIs (e.g., Research Support: [44.1, 67.3] vs. [10.6, 29.4]) indicate a statistically significant gap between awareness and frequent use. Even for Print Books, where usage is highest, the CIs do not overlap confirming the gap is real. The largest absolute gap remains in Research Support Services, with awareness peaking at approximately 67% at the upper CI, whereas frequent usage barely reaches 29% at the upper bound.

### 6.6 Hypothesis Testing

#### Hypothesis 1:

- **H1:** There is a significant relationship between awareness of information sources and the utilisation of library resources at Sikkim University Library.

- **Ho :** There is no significant relationship between awareness of information sources and the utilisation of library resources.

A Chi-square test of independence will be used to assess whether awareness (categorical: aware/not aware) and utilisation (categorical: frequently/occasionally/rarely/never) are statistically associated. This test is appropriate given the categorical nature of the data and will help determine if awareness meaningfully influences usage behaviour.

#### Test Selection and Approach:

To test the hypotheses, we will use the Chi-square test for independence, as we are testing the relationship between categorical variables (e.g., awareness and utilization). The Chi-square test will help determine if there is a significant association between two variables.

Formula for Chi-Square Test:

The Chi-square statistic is calculated using the following formula:  $\chi^2 = \sum (O-E)^2 / E$  Where: O = Observed frequency  
E = Expected frequency

The degrees of freedom ( $df$ ) are calculated as:  $df=(r-1)*(c-1)$

Where:

- $r$  = number of rows in the contingency table

- $c$  = number of columns in the contingency table

#### Example Data Table for Hypothesis Testing (Chi-Square Test)

Testing the relationship between the awareness of Online Databases and the frequency of their utilization.

Sl. No.	Awareness \\ Utilization	Frequently Used (n=25)	Occasionally Used (n=30)	Rarely Used (n=10)	Never Used (n=5)
1	Aware	18	5	2	0
2	Not Aware	7	25	8	5

Step-by-Step Calculation for Chi-Square Test

1. Step 1: Calculate the expected frequency for each cell.

The expected frequency for each cell is calculated using the formula:

$$E = (\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}) / \text{Grand Total}$$

For example, the expected frequency for the first cell (Aware & Frequently Used) is:

$$E = (Row Total = 25) \times (Column Total = 18) / 70 = 6.43$$

Repeat this calculation for each cell in the table.

2. Step 2: Calculate the Chi-Square statistic.

For each cell, use the formula  $\chi^2 = (O - E)^2 / E$ , and then sum the values for all cells

#### Expected Frequencies Table

Sl. No.	Awareness \\ Utilization	Frequently Used	Occasionally Used	Rarely Used	Never Used	Row Total
1	Aware	6.43	7.5	4.29	2.78	20
2	Not Aware	18.57	22.5	12.71	7.22	50
3	Column Total	25	30	10	5	70

Table 6. Expected Frequencies Table

**Step 3. Perform the Chi-Square Calculation:**

Sl. No.	Awareness \ Utilization	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup>
1	Aware & Frequently Used	18	6.43	25.38
2	Aware & Occasionally Used	5	7.5	0.83
3	Aware & Rarely Used	2	4.29	1.46
4	Aware & Never Used	0	2.78	2.78
5	Not Aware & Frequently Used	7	18.57	7.91
6	Not Aware & Occasionally Used	25	22.5	0.22
7	Not Aware & Rarely Used	8	12.71	2.37
8	Not Aware & Never Used	5	7.22	0.44
$\chi^2$				(O-E) <sup>2</sup>
$\chi^2$				<b>41.39</b>

Table 7. Steps in Chi Square Calculation

**Step 4:** Determine the degrees of freedom (df):

The degrees of freedom are calculated as:

$$df = (r-1)*(c-1) = (2-1)*(4-1) = 1 \times 3 = 3$$

## Step 5: Compare the calculated Chi-Square value with the critical value.

Using a Chi-Square distribution table at a significance level of  $=\alpha 0.05$  and  $df = 3$ , the critical value is approximately 7.815.

Since the calculated  $\chi^2 = 41.39$  is greater than the critical value of 7.815, we reject the null hypothesis  $H_0$ .  
Inferencing

For Hypothesis 1: There is a significant relationship between the awareness of online databases and the utilisation of library resources at Sikkim University Library.

## 7. Strategic Implications for the Library

The data reveal a clear preference for traditional resources, such as print books, in both awareness and use.

However, digital and support services despite their academic relevance remain underused due to awareness gaps, insufficient training, and access challenges.

Resource	Action
Research Support	Launch targeted workshops; integrate into curriculum
E-Books / Databases	Provide training sessions; improve discovery tools
Print Books	Maintain current services (high satisfaction)
Physical Journals	Promote digital alternatives or streamline access

## 8. Implementation of the Outcome of the Study

1. Launch awareness campaigns (e.g., workshops, email newsletters, in-library displays) to highlight digital resources and research support services.
2. Implement mandatory or voluntary training sessions on using online databases, e-books, and reference tools.
3. Improve digital infrastructure to ensure reliable access to technology across user groups.
4. Simplify user interfaces and provide step-by-step guides to reduce perceived complexity.
5. Gather ongoing feedback to tailor services to user needs and measure the impact of interventions.

By addressing these gaps, Sikkim University Library can enhance equitable access, boost engagement, and better support the academic and research missions of its diverse user base.

## 9. Findings

The study highlights the essential role of awareness and training programs in optimising resource utilisation at Sikkim University Library. It reveals a significant relationship between awareness and resource usage, with users more likely to utilise resources they are aware of. Training programs significantly enhance both utilisation and user satisfaction, particularly for digital resources. The findings suggest a need for targeted awareness campaigns to address gaps in understanding, particularly regarding digital resources. Furthermore, expanding the digital infrastructure and updating traditional library services will align with the growing preference for online resources, fostering greater user engagement.

## 10. Conclusion

The study on awareness and utilisation of information sources at Sikkim University Library highlights critical aspects of user engagement with library resources. A strong correlation between awareness and utilisation emphasises the importance of targeted awareness campaigns to inform users about the library's offerings,

particularly digital resources such as e-journals and online databases. Training programs play a pivotal role in enhancing user satisfaction and engagement, particularly for users unfamiliar with digital tools, underscoring the need for regular workshops on digital literacy. The findings also reveal a growing preference for online resources, marking a significant shift from traditional formats like books and print journals, which calls for an expansion of the library's digital infrastructure to meet evolving academic needs. However, barriers such as limited awareness and insufficient training highlight the necessity for user friendly systems and robust support services. These improvements can foster greater accessibility, satisfaction, and effective utilisation of the library's resources.

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