



## Evaluation of Tarbiat Modares University Digital Library from Users' Point of View

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### ABSTRACT

Since using DL services is physically simple, most users are willing to take advantage of these services. However, if DL does not meet the users' expectations in terms of being up-to-date and the quality of content of resources, the users will lose their confidence in the services and the users' tendency for revisiting the library will decrease.

**Purpose:** The aim of this study is to evaluate the viewpoints of the users of Tarbiat Modares University DL, to determine its strengths and weaknesses, and give some recommendations to provide better services.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The study was carried out by selecting 420 users of Tarbiat Modares University DL to learn about services provided by the library. This is an analytical survey and the data was collected by using two different questionnaires.

**Finding:** The results obtained showed that 94.7% of all users have used the DL. 63.7% of the users got familiar with internet and have learned browsing the databases of the library through personal attempts and 32% learned about these items by attending educational workshops. Among the different services provided by the DL, the highest percentage of users (72.68%) used specialized websites. Totally, 62.5% of the study population was familiar with Rose-net network, and 51.8% of them use the network.

**Originality/Value:** The study shows that Users tend to use the digital library are growing.

**KEY WORDS:** Digital Library; Tarbiat Modares University; Library user; User satisfaction.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Today, internet has made possible the access to integrated information without time and place limitations for the people all over the world. Thus, libraries, particularly digital libraries, try to provide their users with the possibility of accessing and using the knowledge produced all over the world at any time and place they are in. So, a sound understanding of the user population as well as novel information tools and technologies in order to create interaction between new information technologies and selection of information materials proportional to the users' need is of main activities of libraries (Baker, 2006).

As the digital information centers and libraries have established since some years ago, one can evaluate these centers from their users' viewpoint and determine their strengths and weaknesses. Hence, the current study evaluated Tarbiat Modares University as one of the most important centers of knowledge production in the country, which has provided the possibility of accessing the updated digital information for its users. Evaluation and getting familiar with the users' point of view will lead to understanding priorities, final goals, real needs, and overall attitude of the user population; and defining the library's strategy for improvement of its services.

Okhovati (1998) in her thesis "evaluating the status of using internet by faculty members of Iran, Tehran, and Shahid Beheshti Medical Sciences Universities", she indicated that more than half of the user (58.7%) were moderately familiar with internet, out of which 49.6% learned how to use internet with the help of their friends and colleagues. Among the various internet services, electronic mail (93%) and web (75.6%) were the most accessible services. Moreover, these two internet services were the most commonly used internet services (91.5% and 72.3%, respectively).

Pousti (2000) added using quantitative analysis, in evaluation of faculty members' knowledge, use, and satisfaction of current computer services in central library of Isfahan University of Technology,

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demonstrated that more than 71% of the users were satisfied with the current services. Their main satisfaction factors were the possibility of searching the databases personally, free services, and searching by topic specialists or librarian (Haji Shamsaei, 2007).

Zolfali nejad (2001, quoted from Haji Shamsaei, 2007) in another thesis evaluated attitude of users of informatics and computer center of Shahid Bahonar University, Kerman, toward Rose-net network services and method of accessing its information. He concluded that Rose-net has different strengths, which are listed according to their priority as: making possible the access to databases and electronic journals in one place, possibility of searching all current database simultaneously, and relationship of Rose-net and major data publishers around the world. The weaknesses of Rose-net are: its current information is not update, slow speed in connections, limitation of databases, restricting the use of required databases, and changes of passwords. The applications of Rose-net for users are accessing the latest results and information resources, carrying out scientific and research studies, and taking the advantage of specialized databases of electronic journals. Among the databases in Rose-net, full text and full image database and electronic database and journals were used more frequently. By studying the users' satisfaction of services of Iran Information Center and Scientific Documents Library.

Mousavi Shoushtari (2003) demonstrated that performing research studies and thesis projects are the most frequent uses of the library. The mean score of visitors' knowledge of the services of the library showed the little knowledge of users about the library services.

Haji Shamsaei (2007) in another study "evaluation of services and DL of Islamic Azad University, Tehran Science and Research Branch, from users' point of view", reported that 84.1% of the studied population has used the above-mentioned services, of which 70.6% were familiar with internet and searching databases, and 53.6% and less than 1.9% used specialized websites and FTP service, respectively. The highest percentage of users of the database (88.4%) was M. Sc. Students used these databases for their informational needs.

Zhang (2003) in evaluating the rate of use of electronic information resources by the U.S. researchers of information and library sciences, demonstrated that electronic mail and then web browsers are the most frequently used services used by the researchers. Furthermore, Zhang reported availability, satisfaction, specialized knowledge, and technological skills as the effective factors in the use of internet by researchers, and indicated that the presence of robust information centers to provide information is crucial to attract library users.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive survey, through which one can achieve the systematic information of the sample population to get a better view of the different aspects of considered population i.e., behavior, attitude, beliefs, and perception.

### Significance of the study

The importance and use of the study by gathering data about the users depends on the person to whom the data is presented and the situation and type of presentation. By accomplishing the study, the increase in use of the services and ultimately improving the general view of users toward DL is expected.

### Research questions

- a) How long do users make use of the DL services?
- b) How did users get familiar with search in current databases of the DL?
- c) Which one of the services was used more frequently?
- d) How successful the library was in meeting the needs of its users?
- e) How satisfied the users are with the DL?
- f) What are the recommendations of users for improvement of the DL services?

### Population of the study

The study population was graduate students (M. Sc. and Ph. D) and faculty members of Tarbiat Modares University. Considering the extension of the population, 420 individuals were selected according to Cochran table using stratified random sampling.

### Data collection methods and tools

In this study, the data gathering tool were questionnaires. It should be noted that two questionnaires were used for this purpose; i.e., one for the students and the other one for faculty members.

**Data analysis**

The data gathered was analyzed using SPSS software for descriptive analysis using frequency distribution tables, diagrams, and also one-way ANOVA.

**3. Findings**

According to Table 1, 94.7% of the study participants use the services of DL of Tarbiat Modares University, of who the highest and lowest percentages of use were of M. Sc. (98.1%) and Ph. D students (87.7%), respectively.

**Table 1- Distribution of users that using from DL**

Users group	MSc students		PhD student		Staff		Sum	
Options	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Yes	269	98.1	74	87.7	53	89.8	396	94.7
No	5	1.8	11	12.9	6	10.1	22	5.3
Sum	274	100	85	100	59	100	418	100

**Table 2- Distribution of user’s usage from DL in week (hr)**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
Time (hr)	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than one	3	1.06	-	-	-	-	3	0.7
1-2	24	8.7	9	10.5	-	-	33	7.8
2-4	41	14.9	26	30.5	7	11.6	74	17.61
4-6	109	39.6	17	20	16	26.6	142	33.8
6-8	84	30.5	31	36.4	21	35	136	32.3
8-10	9	3.2	1	1.17	11	18.33	21	5
Over 10	5	1.8	1	1.17	3	5	11	2.6
With no answer	-	-	-	-	2	3.3	-	-
Sum	275	100	85	100	60	100	420	100

As Table 2 shows, 33.8% of the users take advantage of the DL services 4-6 hours a week. Among the users groups, the highest percentage of M. Sc. students, Ph. D. students and faculty members make use of the services 4-6 hours a week (39.6%), 6-8 hours a week (36.4%), and 6-8 hours a week (35%), respectively. As observed in Table 3, most participants (84.3%) got familiar with the services through personal attempts, and the lowest percentage of participants (3.3%) noted they got acquainted with browsing in the DL databases by attending educational workshops.

**Table 3- Distribution of user’s familiarity with search in available databases in DL**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
Axes	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Book study	66	39.6	30	45	20	50	116	42.9
In educational	24	14.2	6	9	4	10	34	33.3
Guidance of librarian	48	28.8	17	25.5	4	10	69	25.5
Guidance of friends	65	39	26	39	-	-	91	33.7
From programs	16	9.6	3	4.5	1	2.5	20	7.4
Individual exercise	132	79.2	59	88.5	37	92.5	228	84.3

**Table 4- Distribution of used services from users in DL**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
Axes	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Email	77	46.2	17	25.5	11	27.5	105	38.8
Public web sites	50	30	11	16.5	5	12.5	66	24.4
Private web sites	103	61.8	45	67.5	25	62.5	173	64
Roze net uses	46	27.6	47	70.5	28	70	121	44.8
News groups	11	6.6	2	3	2	5	15	5.6
FTP	2	1.2	1	1.5	1	2.5	4	1.9
Telnet	3	1.8	3	4.5	1	3.5	7	2.6
Search engine uses	98	55.8	30	45	20	50	148	54.8

Considering Table 4, it can be concluded that among the various services provided by the DL, the highest percentage of the users (54.8%) make use of specialized websites and only 1.9% of them take advantage of FTP service. However, most M. Sc. Students (53.3%) take advantage of internet search engines and most faculty members (62.5%) use databases of Rose-Net Network.

**Table 5- Distribution of level of user's information needs supplement with use of DL**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low	9	3.2	-	-	1	1.6	10	2.3
Middle	58	21.9	3	3.5	11	18.3	94	17.1
High	14.5	52.7	35	41.1	31	51.6	211	50.2
Very high	63	22.9	44	51.7	17	28.3	124	29.5
Without answer	-	-	3	3.5	-	-	3	0.7
Total sum	275	100	85	100	60	100	420	100

**Table 6- Distribution of level of total agreement of users from digital library**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Low	7	2.7	1	1.1	-	-	8	1.9
Middle	62	22.5	19	22.5	8	13.3	89	21.1
High	176	64	42	49.4	28	46.6	246	58.5
Very high	30	10.9	21	24.5	23	38.3	74	17.4
Without answer	-	-	2	2.3	1	1.6	3	0.7
Total sum	275	100	85	100	60	100	420	100

Considering the fourth research question and according to Table 5, it is evident that 50.2% of the users evaluated the role of the DL in meeting their information needs to be "high". Among the three groups of users, 52.7% evaluated the role of the DL to be "high", while 57.7% of Ph.D. users evaluated its role as "very high" and 51.6% of faculty members evaluated its role as "high".

As show in Table 6, 58.5% of the users were highly satisfied with the services provided by the DL. The satisfaction level of M. Sc. students, Ph. D. students, and faculty members were 64%, 49.4%, and 46.6%, respectively, and as can be seen, the highest level of satisfaction is of the M. Sc. students.

According to Table 7, increase in the number of PCs, increase in the number of databases, longer working hours of the library, and the presence of expert staff were the recommendations proposed by 74.6%, 63.3%, 52.7%, 41.2% of the users, respectively, to improve the quality of the services provided.

**Table 7- Distribution of user's suggestions for effective use from digital library**

Users group	MSc students		PhD students		Staff		Sum	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Access to collection	96	59.3	42	64.6	30	81.1	168	63.6
Training workshop	45	27.8	13	20	4	10.8	62	23.5
Information with brusquer publication	42	25.9	25	38.5	16	43.2	83	31.4
Seminar	25	15.4	6	9.2	1	2.7	32	12.1
E-Guidance	34	21	12	18.5	2	5.6	48	18.3
Increase of Computers No.	125	77.2	54	83.1	18	48.6	197	74.6
Increase of work time of center	95	58.6	33	50.8	11	29.7	139	52.7
Qualified employee existence	73	45.3	26	40	9	25	108	41.2

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Totally, 94.7% of the participants used services of the DL of Tarbiat Modares University. Of the three participants groups, 98.1% of M. Sc. students made use of the services. This is in agreement with the findings of the thesis carried out by Efatnejad (2002), indicating that only few participants did not use IT services. Findings of the current study indicate that a low percentage of the users (15.9%) did not take advantage of the DL services. Moreover, in another thesis, Setoudeh (1998) considered familiarity with computer as an effective factor in using electronic resources. According to the findings of current study, since

some users of the library, faculty members especially, are not familiar with computer or do not have good knowledge of working with computer, they proportionately make use of the DL less frequently. Therefore, it is noteworthy that faculty members use DL less frequently than the students. According to the findings of the study carried out by Matthews (2002), there was a significant statistical difference between faculty members of Department of Social Sciences and other departments of Utah State University in term of using internet. In this study, also, a significant statistical difference was observed among the three groups in terms of making use of the DL.

Considering the amount of time the user take advantage of the services during a week, it was demonstrated that 33.8% of the users make use of the services 4-6 hours a week. Among the users, 39.6% of the M. Sc. students use the services 4-6 hours a week, while 36.8% and 35% of Ph. D. students and faculty members take advantage of the services 6-8 hours a week, respectively.

The findings indicate that 84.3% of the participants got familiar with the services of DL by personal attempts, and 3.3% (the lowest percentage) mentioned they have attended the educational workshops to get familiar with the services. Contrary to these findings, Tajedini (2005) noted books as the main tool of getting familiar with web search engines for most students.

Finding of Zhang (2003) indicated that electronic mail and web browsers were the most frequently used services by researchers. Moreover, Okhovati (1998) demonstrated that electronic mail and web were the most available services. Also, the study carried out by Scime (2005) showed that electronic mail was the most frequently used service by the users. However, all these results are contrary to the findings of current study. According to findings of the study, the highest percentage of the users (64%) took advantage of specialized websites, and the lowest percentage (1.9%) made use of FTP service. However, among the services of the DL, 55.8% of the M. Sc. students made use of search engines, while 70% of the faculty members took advantage of databases of Rose-net. 50.2% of the users indicated that meeting their information needs with the DL is high and 2.3% indicated this to be low.

Concerning the overall satisfaction of the users with the DL, 58.5% of the participants were highly satisfied with the services, while the lowest percentage (1.9%) of the participants expressed little satisfaction with the services. This can indicate the appropriate quality of the services provided by the library. Nevertheless, the status should not be considered optimum, and it should be tried to optimize these services. Most users recommended increasing the number of PCs (74.6%), and the least recommended item was to hold seminars on effective use of the DL. According to the findings of current study, one of the most important recommendations which was also mentioned by Nouruzi Chalaki (2000) is to increase the number of PCs.

Contrary to the findings, one of the most important suggestions of users of internet center of Shiraz Medical University in of this study the study carried out by Salajeghe was to provide educational courses on the uses of internet. Moreover, Okhovati (1998) mentioned that holding workshops and educational courses to improve faculty member's knowledge of computer and internet was one of the most important suggestions of the users. Thus, taking the suggestions of the users into consideration and trying to implement them in order to improve the services of information centers and digital libraries is one of the most important consequences of this study.

## **5. Suggestions**

1. Holding educational workshops to make users, particularly faculty members, more familiar with digital libraries and the method of browsing and retrieving digital data.
2. Holding educational workshops for students to make them more knowledgeable about methods of using DL, as well as the method of digital data search and retrieve, to make them be able to search in databases of the information centers and digital libraries and retrieving the appropriate resources on their own.
3. Holding in-service workshops for staff of the DL to improve their knowledge and make them able to guide students correctly while using the DL services.
4. Promotion and introduction of different service of the DL, particularly the databases of Rose-net network, and support the users on how to use the databases with hard copy instructions.
5. Expansion of DL in a way the user can easily reach its site, and the number of PCs does not be a limitation.
6. Carrying out similar studies to increase the users' satisfaction with the services provided by such information centers.

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