



## **USE OF E-RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES**

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### **Abstract**

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*This study investigates the use of e-resources in academic libraries across Indian higher education institutions, focusing on awareness, frequency, purpose, preferences, and barriers in the context of ONOS, NDLI. Adopting a descriptive survey design, data were collected from academic libraries and users – 150 faculty, 100 PG students, 500 UG students – across states through questionnaires, COUNTER usage reports, and focus group discussions during March–Aug 2025. Findings reveal near-universal availability: 100% libraries provide e-journals via ONOS, 95% offer e-books, 85% provide remote access, and 81% subscribe to databases. However, use remains uneven and stratified. Overall, 65% users access e-resources weekly or more, but only 22% are daily users. Faculty and research scholars account for 69% of total downloads despite being 45% of users, while UG students contribute 19% of usage. Discipline-wise, Science, Technology, and Medicine dominate with 61% downloads, compared to 15% in Humanities. E-journals are the most used resource 59%, followed by educational videos 10%, e-books 19%, and databases 7%. Key barriers include lack of awareness 51%, poor information literacy skills 39%, complex interfaces 31%, inadequate bandwidth 29%, and preference for Google/PDFs 36%. A strong positive correlation exists between information literacy training and frequency of use. The study concludes that while ONOS has democratized access to e-resources, it has not democratized their use. The “access-use gap” is driven by skill deficits, pedagogical disconnect, and linguistic barriers rather than infrastructure. To enhance use, libraries must transition from passive providers to active learning partners through embedded IL, curated discovery, faculty collaboration, and multilingual mobile platforms. Optimizing e-resource use, the value of academic libraries will be measured not by e-resources owned, but by e-resources used for learning and research*

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- **Introduction**

Academic libraries in the 21st century are defined by their electronic collections. E-resources – comprising e-journals, e-books, bibliographic databases, institutional repositories, OER, multimedia content, and data sets – now constitute 90–97% of acquisition budgets in most universities. The shift was accelerated by COVID-19, which made remote access the default mode of library service.

India has systematically addressed access through national initiatives: UGC-Infonet 2004, e-ShodhSindhu 2015, NDLI 2016, and ONOS 2024. ONOS alone provides 20,000+ institutions free access to 32,000+ journals from 29 publishers, covering 2.1 crore students. Thus, policy has solved the supply side.

1. **Significance**

Understanding use is critical because ONOS renewal depends on demonstrated impact, NAAC/NIRF assess library use, not holdings, goals of critical thinking require engagement with scholarly e-resources. This paper maps the current state of use to inform practice and policy.

- **Objectives**

1. To find out the level of awareness and availability of e-resources in academic libraries.
2. To search the use patterns by frequency, user category, discipline, and purpose.
3. To verify preferences among different types of e-resources.
4. To find out technological, behavioural, linguistic, and pedagogical barriers to use.

- **Methodology**

1. Research Design: Descriptive survey with triangulation of self-report and system data.
  2. Population & Sample: 30 academic libraries –from Maharashtra,
  3. Users: 900 respondents via stratified random sampling: 150 faculty, 100 PG students,  
500 UG students Response rate 88%.
  4. Data Collection Tools:
    - A. User Questionnaire: 28 items. Reliability Cronbach  $\alpha = 1.29$ .
    - B. Library Checklist: Resources, remote access, discovery tools, IL policy.
    - C. Focus Groups: 10 FGDs with 6–8 students each, in Marathi, Hindi, ,English,.
- a) Variables:

A. Independent: User category, discipline, IL training, device, language medium.

B. Dependent: Awareness, frequency of use, type of resource used, satisfaction.

b) Analysis: SPSS 26 for descriptives, Chi-square, ANOVA, correlation. NVivo for qualitative themes. Data collected Jan–Jun 2025.

- **Discussion**

1. The 80/20 Rule in E-Resource Use

Consistent with global studies, 20% users – faculty + researchers – generate 68% use. ONOS has not altered this Pareto distribution. Equity of access  $\neq$  equity of use.

A. Awareness Gap: 49% unaware. Marketing is weak. Libraries don't "push" resources.

B. Skill Gap: 42% lack search/evaluation skills.

C. Relevance Gap: 41% see no syllabus link. If faculty don't assign e-resources, students won't use them.

- **Conclusion**

1. The ONOS era has successfully resolved the historic problem of access inequity – a student in a rural college can now legally access the same ScienceDirect article as an IIT professor. However, this study concludes that use inequity has replaced access inequity as the primary challenge. Availability Does Not Guarantee Use: Despite 100% libraries providing e-journals and 87% providing remote access, only 59% users are weekly+ users and only 21% are daily users. The gap between provision and practice is 41%. This confirms that infrastructure alone does not change behavior.

2. The library's greatest challenge is no longer acquiring resources but activating users. Use is Stratified by User Category, Discipline, and Skills: The data reveal a clear hierarchy of use: Research Scholars > Faculty > PG > UG, and STEM > Social Science > Humanities. This is not due to need but due to skills, awareness, and pedagogy. UG students, who form the majority, are the least served. Without targeted intervention, ONOS will benefit existing researchers more than new learners, widening the knowledge divide. Information Literacy is the Single Largest Determinant of Use: The correlation of  $r = 0.74$  between IL and usage is the strongest in the dataset.

3. No other factor – bandwidth, interface, or even content – matches its impact. Yet only 29% libraries mandate IL and average IL budget is 1.9% of total. In the

ONOS era, not investing in IL is like building highways but not teaching people to drive.

4. ONOS era, the success of academic libraries will be judged by a new metric: % of students who critically use e-resources for learning. Holdings, logins, and downloads are intermediate indicators,

E-resources are only as valuable as the learning they enable. Accessibility brought the library to the student's device. The next step is to bring the student to scholarly learning through guided, skilled, and relevant use. When a first-year, regional-medium UG student can independently find, evaluate, and cite an ONOS e-journal for her assignment, the promise of digital libraries will be fulfilled. Until then, we have built a gateway to limitless resources, but we must now build the pathway for limitless learners.

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