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Information Skills and ICT Competency in Library Professionals

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Article History:	Abstract	
Received on: 13 Feb 2025 Revised on: 02 Apr 2025 Accepted on: 10 May 2025	In the digital age, the role of library professionals has evolved significantly, with increasing reliance on Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools and digital resources. This study explores the information skills and ICT competencies required by library professionals to efficiently manage, access, and disseminate information in academic and research environments. Information skills—such as searching, evaluating, organizing, and presenting data—are fundamental for effective library services. ICT competency encompasses the ability to use computers, library management software, digital repositories, databases, and online communication tools. The study also investigates the correlation between socio-economic factors, educational qualifications and professional experience with the level of ICT competency. Data was collected through structured questionnaires distributed among library professionals across universities in Tamil Nadu.	
Keywords: Information Skills, ICT Competency, Library Professionals, ICT Skills in Libraries.		

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INTRODUCTION

Education has consistently involved a sensitive dimension of human interaction, wherein the transmission of knowledge and information has played a central role across societies. In this context, it becomes essential to examine the patterns of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) usage among professionals, research scholars and students.

The initial category of skills identified pertains to basic ICT competencies. These include fundamental technical abilities such as operating a keyboard and mouse, using a scanner, browsing the internet, and managing application software including word processors, email platforms, and presentation tools.

These skills also encompass the following cognitive and information-handling abilities:

Recognizing the need for information;

Identifying appropriate approaches to address the information gap, including the selection of suitable sources;

Constructing effective strategies for locating relevant material, such as defining the information need;

Accessing, navigating, and querying electronic databases;

Comparing and evaluating information from diverse sources;

Organizing, applying, and communicating information appropriately depending on the context;

Synthesizing existing knowledge and contributing to the development of new insights.

According to a position paper by the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), the development of information

literacy can be represented as a progressive model. This model traces a continuum from the foundational stage of the competent information user through to higher levels of expertise. The conceptual 'pillars' described suggest that through iterative practice, individuals evolve from basic competency to advanced proficiency in information use. These stages are grounded in the integration of both fundamental library and ICT skills.

Beyond these core competencies, a third domain of skills has emerged, comprising personal, professional, and managerial capabilities. These enable staff to navigate changing roles, harness the full potential of ICT, and support the delivery of high-quality information services. The objectives of fostering such skills include:

Equipping all citizens with the digital literacy necessary for participation in the information society;

Enabling inclusive engagement in civic functions, such as online voting;

Enhancing workforce productivity in an increasingly digital, knowledge-based economy;

Empowering individuals to benefit from the information revolution through online banking, distance education, and lifelong learning;

Strengthening consumer confidence through broad awareness of privacy and security in online communication, including e-commerce and digital payments.

The necessity of widespread access to ICT resources and the cultivation of information literacy is thus evident.

Significance of Information Skills

The proliferation of the Internet and other digital resources has raised critical concerns regarding the quality and reliability of

information. Many undergraduate students rely primarily on online content beyond their prescribed reading lists. Consequently, there is a growing need to critically assess the authenticity, accuracy, and credibility of these resources—issues that are typically less pronounced in established academic publications. Printed materials such as books and journals undergo rigorous quality control, including vetting by reputable publishers, authors with scholarly credentials, and selection by academic staff, as well as institutional library acquisition policies aimed at meeting educational needs.

The Seven Core Information Skills

The following competencies represent the fundamental components of information literacy:

Recognizing a need for information;

Distinguishing appropriate methods to address the information gap;

Constructing effective strategies for locating information;

Locating and accessing information sources;

Comparing and evaluating information from various origins;

Organizing, applying, and communicating information contextually;

Synthesizing and building upon existing knowledge to contribute to new understanding.

Methodology

The transformation in telecommunications and rapid technological advancements has significantly altered library operations globally. Automation has had a notable impact on all core functions of libraries. This study aims to assess the extent to which library professionals in Tamil Nadu possess and apply ICT skills in their institutions, with

particular emphasis on the timely dissemination of information and continual professional development.

Sampling

A census-based approach was adopted, covering all library professionals employed across universities in Tamil Nadu. The sample included:

Total number of universities: 32 (comprising 21 public universities and 11 deemed universities);

Total respondents: 403;

Male respondents: 254;

Female respondents: 149.

Data Collection

Relevant data were gathered through a mailed questionnaire administered to library professionals at the identified institutions. These professionals constituted the primary respondents for the study.

Data Analysis

The data collected were systematically classified and tabulated using computer software. Percentage analysis was used for general interpretation and diagrammatic or graphical representations were provided where necessary to support the findings.

Skills of library professionals across all universities in Tamil Nadu

Table 1 Institution wise Distribution of Respondents

S.No	institution	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Universities	238	59.06
2	Deemed University	165	40.94
	Total	403	100.00

In this study, socio-economic status encompasses factors such as income, religion,

marital status, gender, educational qualifications, and employment status. The investigator aims to examine the association between these socio-economic factors and the IT skills of library professionals across all universities in Tamil Nadu.

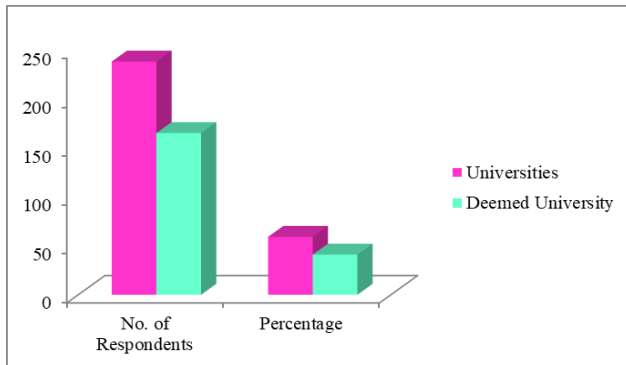


Figure 1 Institution wise Distribution of Respondents

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents based on their institutions. Among the 403 respondents, 59.06% are employed at universities, whereas 40.94% work in deemed universities. This indicates that the majority of respondents are university employees.

A comprehensive examination of the data presented in **Table 2** reveals the educational qualifications of the 403 respondents.

Approximately one-third of the respondents hold an undergraduate degree, 28.78% have attained postgraduate qualifications, 27.50% possess an M.Phil degree, and the remaining 10.42% have achieved a Doctoral Research Degree.

An analysis of the data presented in **Table 3** reveals the institution-wise access to library infrastructure facilities among the respondents. University respondents rank highest, with a mean score of 3.58 on a 5-point scale, indicating greater access to library infrastructure. In comparison, respondents from Deemed Universities hold the second position, with a mean score of 3.09.

Conclusion

The study of information skills and ICT competency among library professionals reveals that these skills are essential for effectively managing modern library services. With the rapid advancement of technology and the increasing digitization of information resources, library professionals must possess strong ICT competencies to support users in accessing, evaluating, and utilizing information efficiently, many library professionals demonstrate basic information

Table 2 Education wise Distribution of Respondents

S.No	Education	No. of Respondents	Perce-n-tage
1	Under graduate	136	33.75
2	Post graduate	116	28.78
3	M.Phil degree	109	27.05
4	Ph.D. degree	42	10.42
	Total	403	100.00

Table 3 Institution wise respondents access to library infrastructural facilities

Institution	Library catalogue	OPAC	Web	Subject gate way	Specialized service	Collection of web sites	Total
University	4.42	4.56	3.12	3.89	3.45	2.05	3.58
Deemed University	3.49	4.42	2,52	2.89	2.79	2.48	3.09
Total	3.83	4.47	2.79	3.07	3.11	2.10	3.23

skills and familiarity with common ICT tools, there is a continuous need for training and skill enhancement to keep pace with evolving technologies. Enhanced ICT competency empowers library professionals to offer improved services such as digital cataloging, online reference assistance, and effective management of electronic resources. Information skills and ICT competencies is crucial for library professionals to maintain the relevance and efficiency of libraries in the digital era. Institutions should invest in ongoing professional development programs to equip library staff with the necessary skills to meet the demands of modern information environments and to contribute meaningfully to academic and research communities.

Ethical Approval

No ethical approval was necessary for this study.

Author Contribution

All authors made substantial contributions to the conception, design, acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work. They were involved in drafting the manuscript or revising it critically for important intellectual content. All authors gave final approval of the version to be published and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring its accuracy and integrity.

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