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Print vs. Digital: Parallel Narratives of Resource Preferences and Library Strategies in Deemed-to-be-Universities in Karnataka

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to compare user preferences for print/digital resources and analyse how selected deemed universities in Karnataka develop parallel library strategies to accommodate both print and e-resources effectively. This study is confined to an analysis of the usage of print and electronic resources by the library's usersin selected universities.Employing a descriptive survey methodology, quantitative data were collected from a stratified sample of 211 users, including PG students, research scholars, and faculty, alongside insights from librarians. The data was analysed based on the responses by the users and librarians. In this study, analysis reveals a fundamental strategic divergence, Sri Devaraj Urs Academy of higher education and research maintains a print-centric model (60% budget allocation) with a general collection and high-frequency user visits primarily to update knowledge. In contrast, Yenepoya to be deemed university has adopted a digital-first strategy (55% e-resource budget), curating vast print and electronic research collections, resulting in user engagement focused on active research tasks.Likely reveals a strong preference for digital resources for accessibility, alongside a persistent need for print for deep engagement, with library strategies evolving into hybrid models.This study's originality stems from its dual-perspective analysis of both user preferences and library strategies within the under-researched context of selecteddeemed-to-be-universities in Karnataka. It provides a valuable, transferable framework for understanding this evolution and making informed, strategic investments in library collections.

Key Words: Academic Libraries, Collection Development, Collection Strategy, Electronic Resources, Print Resources, User Studies.

1. Introduction

Academic libraries have traditionally been regarded as the intellectual foundation of higher education institutions. With the advancement of information and communication technologies,

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these libraries have evolved into hybrid knowledge centres where print and digital resources coexist. This transformation has significantly altered collection development practices, access models, and user engagement. As Corrall and Jolly (2019) observed, academic libraries are expanding their roles and services to remain central to their institutions in a digital age. In Karnataka, a state known for its robust higher education system, deemed-to-be universities operate within a competitive and technology-driven academic landscape. Their libraries must strategically balance traditional print collections with rapidly expanding electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books, and online databases. While digital resources enhance accessibility and remote use, print materials continue to support deep learning and discipline-specific needs. Moreover, the development of high-quality digital content remains essential for improving access to knowledge resources (Pandey & Kumar, 2020).
Despite extensive discussions on print versus digital formats, there is limited empirical evidence examining how this balance is managed within deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka. The nature of the problem lies in understanding actual resource allocation, user preferences, and institutional strategies in this evolving environment. Therefore, this study presents a data-driven analysis based on survey responses from librarians and users to examine resource preferences and library strategies in selected institutions.

2. Review of the Literature

In the academic library, especially in the prestigious higher education universities,print and e-resources play a very important role. Ikolo (2014) in his study, revealed that the majority of the respondents still consult more print resources than their electronic sources. The study also revealed that ease of use and familiarity with print sources were among the reasons for their preference for using print sources.Pandita & Singh (2016) conducted a comprehensive analysis of resource procurement preferences in higher learning institutes across India, revealing a significant trend towards electronic resources. Their findings indicate shifts in budget allocations favoring e-resources, highlighting an overarching trend of diminishing interest in print resources among academicians. While digital resources are increasingly preferred for research and academic work, print materials continue to hold relevance in academic environments (Prasad & Lal, 2023).
In a similar study by Yamson, Appiah, & Tsegah (2018) undergraduate students were surveyed to assess their perceptions, usage, and preferences for electronic versus print resources. Their findings indicate shifts in budget allocations favoring e-resources, which highlights an overarching trend of diminishing interest in print resources among academicians. Another study by Idiegbeyan-Ose et al., (2019) recommends that libraries should maintain hybrid collections, as both resources were found to be relevant sources of information for teaching, learning, and research. Furthermore, Sanika (2020) highlights various motivating features and challenges related to the access and usage of e-books among users of engineering college libraries in Mumbai. Amirtharaj, Raghavan, & Arulappan (2023), in their study, offer a timely and well-structured examination of format preferences among university students in Oman. Using a robust sample and a validated survey instrument, the authors provide clear empirical evidence that while students value e-books for portability and spend more time using them, they strongly prefer print books for in-depth academic activities like note-taking and exam preparation. The study result by Baboo and Khare (2025) demonstrates a clear preference for e-resources among users in centrally funded institutions of Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, who have varying degrees of inclination towards print and hybrid formats.

A critical review of existing literature reveals

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several gaps. First, there is a lack of integrated studiesthat simultaneously examineuser preferences and institutional library strategies within a single research framework. Second, limited empirical research is available on deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka, despite their growing prominence in higher education. Third, most studies emphasise either print or digital resources independently, without sufficiently exploring how libraries develop parallel strategies to balance and optimise both formats. Although existing studies provide valuable insights into print and digital resource usage, they fall short in addressing the interrelationship between user preferences and library strategy formulation, particularly in the context of deemed-to-be universities. This gap necessitates a focused empirical investigation that examines both dimensions concurrently. The present study attempts to bridge this gap by analysing user preferences alongside library strategies in selected deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka, thereby contributing context-specific and policy-relevant insights to LIS research.

3. Objectives of the Study

The primary aims of this research are listed as:

- To analysethe print & electronic holdings ratio and annual acquisition budgets allocated to each format.
- To know the yearly budget allocation for the library resources.
- To analyse the user frequency and user perception regarding print and e-resources.

4. Methodology

The study employed a quantitative research design to examine the usage patterns and preferences of print and electronic resources among library users in selected deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to librarians and library users, including postgraduate students, research scholars, and teaching faculty. The questionnaire elicited information on frequency of use, format preference, and perceptions of print and digital resources. The study population consisted of librarians and Library Users From Sri Devaraj URS Academy of Higher Education and Research (Sduaher), Kolar, and Yenepoya Deemed to be University, Mangalore.The study population comprised 2,023 registered library users: PG students (N = 985), research scholars (N = 161), and staff (N = 877). A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation of each category. A total of 211 respondents (10.4%) were selected, including 129 PG students (13.1%), 42 research scholars (26.1%), and 40 Staff (4.6%). The collected data were coded and analysed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies and percentages, along with appropriate inferential methods where necessary. Participation in the study was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was strictly maintained. The scope of the study is confined to the analysis of print and electronic resource usage in the selected deemed-to-be universities, and the findings are based on self-reported data, thereby limiting their generalizability to sduaher and yenepoya deemed to be university for the period under investigation.

5. Data Analysis and Interpretations

Data is analysed and tabulated using frequencies and percentagesto summarise user demographics, preferences, and usage patterns.

5.1. Demographic details of the Respondents

The table 1 explains that the sample is predominantly composed of postgraduate students (60%), with research scholars and faculty/staff equally represented (20% each).

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Table 1: Demographic distribution of survey participants (N = 211)

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	Rounded Percentage (%)
User Category	PG Students	126	60
	Research Scholars	43	20
	Faculty/Staff	42	20
Gender	Male	82	39
	Female	129	61

This indicates the findings are most representative of the student experience. A significant majority of respondents are female (61%), suggesting the results may reflect a gender-oriented perspective on library resource use.

The study's findings are primarily influenced by the experiences of postgraduate students and reflect a stronger female perspective on library resource utilisation. Major differences in preference between male and female users should be noted as an area for further investigation.

5.2. Purpose of visiting the Library

The data presented in the Table 2 reveals a clear divergence in the primary role of the library at each institution.

Table 2: Library visitingpurpose

S.No.	Purpose of visit	SDUAHER	YENEPOYA	Chi-square tests
1	To Barrow Books	42	56	.116
2	Research work/Project work	35	59	.000
3	To get a photocopy/print	14	42	.205
4	To update knowledge	64	62	.463
5	To Use Digital Library/Internet	13	25	.055

SDUAHER users primarily visit to update knowledge (62.7%), indicating the library is chiefly used as a space for independent study and keeping current with academic developments. YENEPOYA shows a more utilitarian and research-driven purpose. While "updating knowledge" is also high, there is significantly greater activity for research/project work (54.1%) and borrowing books (51.4%).

There is a statistically significant difference in library visits for "Research Work/Project Work" between the two institutions, with Yenepoya users utilising the library for this purpose more frequently.

5.3. User Usage Frequency of Library Resources

The data in the Table 3 reveals a stark contrast in user engagement between the two universities.

Table 3: Frequency of usage of library resources

University	Daily	Twice a week	Once a week	Once every 15 days	Once a month	Occasionally	Total
SDUAHER	41	17	15	23	3	3	102
YENEPOYA	21	23	14	23	15	13	109

SDUAHER shows a pattern of high-frequency engagement, with the highest proportion of users (40.2%) visiting daily. This suggests a strong, integrated culture of regular library use. YENEPOYA

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demonstrates a more moderate and distributed usage pattern. The highest proportion of users (21.1%) visit twice a week, with significant numbers visiting less frequently (once a week to once a month). This indicates a more sporadic or task-specific use of library resources.

The library at SDUAHER is a central academic resource for its users, while YENEPOYA's library is used more periodically. This fundamental difference in user behaviour must be a primary factor in comparing the effectiveness and accessibility of print versus e-resources between these institutions.

5.4. Annual Budget allocation to the Library Resources by the Librarians

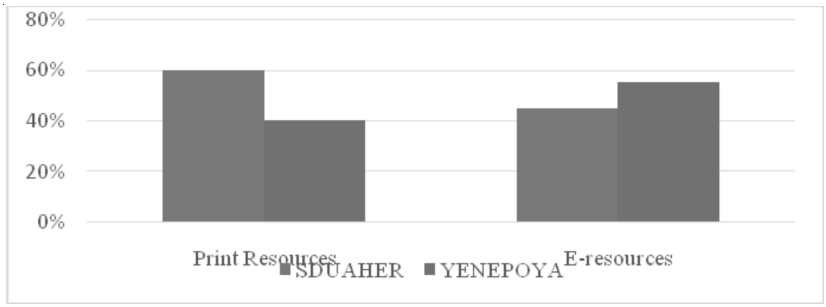

Figure 1: Annual budget allocation for the library resources (%)

The budget allocation reveals a definitive strategic priority for each institution.SDUAHER allocates the majority of its budget (60%) to print resources, indicating its commitment to developing its physical collection as a core asset. YENEPOYA invests more heavily (55%) in e-resources, signalling a strategic shift towards e-resources.

5.5. User preferences for Library Resources at Yenepoya Library

Based on the data, a clear preference for core academic digital resources is evident, though print retains significant value for certain materials. E-journals are the most frequently used resource overall (60% frequent use), indicating their critical role in research.

Table 4: User preferences for the use of print and electronic resources in the library

S. No.	Types of library resources	Very frequently/ Frequently	Occasionally/ Rarely	Never	Total
	Print Resources				
1	General Books (fiction, novel, prose, poem, etc.)	36	49	17	102
2	Textbooks/ Reference books	66	27	9	102
3	Journals/back volumes	48	43	11	102
4	Newspapers	54	31	17	102
5	Magazines	42	36	24	102
6	Maps/Atlases/Large Prints	31	46	25	102
7	General Books	29	29	44	102
	E-resources				
1	E-Books	45	38	19	102
2	E-Journals	60	19	23	102

3	E-Databases	42	30	30	102
4	E-Thesis and Dissertations	41	38	23	102
5	Audio/Video Materials	33	41	28	102

Text and reference books in print format remain highly essential (65% frequent use), suggesting a persistent need for print for deep, sustained engagement. Conversely, niche print resources like maps/ atlases and general books show the highest "never" use (44%), highlighting a shift towards digital for non-core materials.

The data support a hybrid library model where strategic investment must prioritise e-journals and e-books while maintaining core print collections for key academic functions. There is a significant behavioural divide in print usage, likely driven by specific research needs or personal preferences. Conversely, the adoption of e-resources is more universal and integrated into regular research practices. This demonstrates a clear overall user preference for and reliance on electronic formats, while print maintains a vital but more niche role for a subset of users.

5.6. User preferences for Library Resources at Yenepoya Library

The data reveal a strong, dual preference pattern where format necessity dictates use. Audio/Video Materials (79%) and certain General Books (86%) in print show the highest frequency use, indicating that resource type, not just format, is a primary driver.

Table 5: User preferences for the use of print and electronic resources at YenepoyaLibrary

S. No.	Types of library resources	Very frequently/ Frequently	Occasionally/ Rarely	Never	Total
	Print Resources				
1	General Books (fiction, novel, prose, poem, etc.)	86	15	8	109
2	Textbooks/Reference Books	18	71	20	109
3	Journals/back volumes	54	44	11	109
4	Newspapers	55	37	17	109
5	Magazines	49	46	14	109
6	Maps/Atlases/Large prints	71	32	6	109
	E-resources				
1	E-Books	56	33	20	109
2	E-Journals	51	33	25	109
3	E-Databases	62	26	21	109
4	E-Thesis and Dissertations	60	32	17	109
5	Audio/Video Materials	79	22	8	109

The surprisingly low use of text/reference books in print (18%) suggests a potential shift towards digital alternatives for core academic functions or issues with collection currency. Conversely, E-Databases (62%) and E-Theses (60%) are heavily used, confirming that digital is preferred for research-intensive resources.

This necessitates a hybrid strategy that prioritises digital for research and audio-visual for engagement while critically evaluating the ROI on maintaining extensive print reference collections. E-resources are the dominant and preferred medium for research and academic work. Print collections, with one potential exception, are peripheral to the core user experience, serving a niche or declining role. This

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aligns perfectly with the library's strategic budget allocation, favouring e-resources.

6. Discussion

The results demonstrate clear institutional differences in collection priorities and corresponding user behaviour. The substantial variation in budget allocation, with SDUAHER allocating 60% to print resources and Yenepoya allocating 55% to e-resources, appears to influence patterns of use within each university. Corrall and Jolly (2019) argue that academic library strategies, particularly collection development decisions, must align with institutional goals and user needs. In the present study, Yenepoya's greater financial commitment to electronic resources corresponds with higher levels of reported e-resource usage, especially for research and project work.The strong preference for e-resources across both institutions is consistent with earlier empirical findings. Thanuskodi (2012) reported that students and researchers increasingly rely on electronic resources due to ease of access and time efficiency. Similarly, Tenopir, Christian, & Kaufman (2012) found that researchers internationally demonstrate sustained and growing engagement with electronic scholarly materials as part of their research workflow.The high proportion of respondents indicating "frequent" or "very frequent" use of e-resources in the present study aligns with these observations, suggesting that electronic formats are now embedded in academic practices.At the same time, the polarisation observed in print usage, where a considerable segment reported "Never" using print, while a smaller group used it frequently, indicates that print collections continue to serve specific academic purposes. This pattern reflects the transitional nature of hybrid libraries (Olelude, 2023) which highlights the coexistence of digital expansion alongside selective but continued demand for print resources.

Differences in the purpose of library visits further contextualise these findings. SDUAHER users primarily visited to update knowledge, while Yenepoya users reported research and borrowing as dominant purposes. These variations suggest that user engagement is shaped not only by format availability but also by institutional orientation and academic emphasis. Overall, the findings establish a relationship between institutional investment strategies and user behaviour, while also confirming broader patterns of increased reliance on electronic resources documented in prior studies.

7. Conclusion

This study analysed print and digital resource preferences in two deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka by linking institutional budget allocation with actual user behaviour. Its contribution lies in the comparative approach, demonstrating how collection development priorities influence patterns of academic engagement within a shared regional context. The findings show clear institutional differences: SDUAHER allocated 60% of its budget to print resources, whereas Yenepoya devoted 55% to e-resources. These priorities were reflected in usage trends. Print use was polarised, with many users reporting no use and a smaller group engaging regularly. In contrast, e-resources were used frequently by the majority across both institutions. Library visit purposes also varied, with SDUAHER users primarily seeking knowledge updating, while Yenepoya users focused on research and project work. At Yenepoya, the shift toward a digitally oriented research environment appears largely established. Overall, the study confirms that budgeting and collection strategies shape user engagement, while preference for electronic resources remains strong across contexts. Print continues to hold selective academic relevance. Future research may apply this framework to other universities and disciplines, supporting the development of evidence-based hybrid collection models aligned with evolving academic needs.

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