

**FROM BOOKSHELVES TO SCREENS: A COMPARISON (WITH  
REFERENCE TO TRADITIONAL AND DIGITAL LIBRARIES)**

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**Abstract:**

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has transformed the way library resources are accessed, retrieved and used by individuals. Traditional libraries, which have long provided users with printed books, journals and physical reading spaces, are increasingly complemented by digital libraries that offer convenient access to e-books, e-journals, databases and other electronic resources. The study examines the usage, preferences and satisfaction of users towards traditional and digital libraries in Erode District. The study also identifies the major factors influencing users' choice and usage of these two forms of libraries. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 200 respondents through a structured questionnaire using convenience sampling. Percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, ranking analysis and factor analysis were employed to analyse the data. The findings reveal that digital libraries are particularly preferred for faster information retrieval, convenience and accessibility, while traditional libraries continue to be valued for physical resources, personal interaction and a suitable reading environment. Factor analysis identifies four major dimensions influencing users' choice and usage, namely Accessibility and Convenience, Information Availability and Retrieval, Service Support and Cost-effectiveness, and Digital Infrastructure. The study concludes that traditional and digital libraries are complementary rather than competing forms of information services, and that a hybrid library model can effectively address the diverse and changing information needs of users in Erode District.

**Key Words:** Traditional Libraries, Digital Libraries, Library Users, User Preference, User Satisfaction, Digital Resources, E-Resources, Accessibility, Hybrid Libraries, etc.,

**Introduction:**

Libraries have traditionally served as important centres for acquiring knowledge, supporting education, promoting research, and preserving intellectual resources. For centuries, traditional libraries have provided users with access to printed books, journals, newspapers, reference materials, manuscripts, and other physical resources. The conventional library environment, characterised by bookshelves, reading rooms, library staff, and physical collections, has played a significant role in the academic and intellectual development of individuals and communities. Users generally visit libraries physically, search catalogues, borrow materials, and spend time reading and referring to printed resources.

The rapid development of information and communication technology has transformed the traditional concept of libraries. The emergence of computers, the internet, cloud-based platforms, mobile devices, and digital information resources has resulted in the growth of digital libraries. Digital libraries provide electronic access to e-books, e-journals, online databases, research articles, institutional repositories, multimedia resources, and other digital content. Unlike traditional libraries, digital libraries enable users to access information remotely, often at any time and from any location, thereby making the process of information retrieval faster and more flexible.

The transition from bookshelves to screens represents more than a technological change; it reflects a fundamental transformation in the way information is stored, accessed, evaluated, and used. Traditional libraries offer advantages such as physical interaction with books, a structured reading environment, personal assistance from librarians, and long-term preservation of printed materials. Digital libraries, on the other hand, provide benefits such as quick searching, wider accessibility, multiple-user access, portability, and the ability to retrieve large volumes of information within a short period. At the same time,

digital libraries may present challenges relating to digital literacy, internet connectivity, device availability, information overload, copyright, privacy, and the credibility of online resources.

Both traditional and digital libraries continue to have an important role in the modern information environment. While digital technologies have changed users' expectations and reading habits, traditional libraries remain relevant as spaces for learning, interaction, research, and preservation. Many contemporary libraries therefore adopt a hybrid approach by combining physical collections with digital resources and online services. This development has created a need to understand how users perceive and compare the two forms of libraries in terms of accessibility, convenience, resource availability, usability, cost, user satisfaction, and effectiveness.

**Review of Literature:**

| <b>Author(s) &amp; Year</b>                                           | <b>Title of the Study</b>                                                                                                  | <b>Methodology</b>                                                                                                                          | <b>Major Findings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Harish Chander, Satwinderpal Kaur Gill & Rajinder Kumar (2024)        | Optimizing Electronic Resource Subscriptions and Usage: A Study of Guru Nanak Dev University                               | User-oriented study examining the use of electronic resources subscribed through INFLIBNET and other providers among university users.      | Digital resources have made information access faster and more convenient. The study highlighted the increasing importance of e-resources in academic and research activities and recommended better planning of electronic-resource subscriptions according to user needs. |
| Ruchi Sao, Kanak Wadhwani, Kanchan Tolani & Janmejaya Shukla (2024)   | Digital Library Services: A Perception Study of Management Students in Central India                                       | Mixed-method approach using structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews among management students from more than one institution. | Students generally appreciated digital libraries because of their convenience and accessibility. However, inadequate training and digital literacy were identified as important concerns affecting effective utilization of digital library services.                       |
| Laxmibai S. Kattimani, B. Nandeeshha & Raja Suresh Kumar Pitla (2025) | The Digital Public Library of Karnataka: A Study                                                                           | Survey-based quantitative study examining usage and user satisfaction with the Digital Public Library of Karnataka.                         | Users were generally satisfied with the digital public library. The study demonstrated the growing role of digital public libraries in providing access to digital content and information resources.                                                                       |
| Sanjay Kumar (2025)                                                   | User Satisfaction and Usability of Digital Library Services: A Case Study of Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar Library, GJU S&T, Hisar | Survey method involving 50 faculty members, research scholars and students.                                                                 | Users were generally satisfied with digital library infrastructure, internet facilities and digital resources. However, problems relating to user guidance, printing facilities, hardware/software failures and adequacy of e-resources were reported.                      |
| Biswas & Nand Kishore (2024)                                          | A Critical Study on Library User's Awareness and Satisfaction Level of E-Resources                                         | User-oriented study examining awareness and satisfaction regarding electronic resources.                                                    | The study highlighted the increasing importance of electronic resources and the gradual movement from traditional print resources towards digital information sources. It also emphasized the need for librarians to develop appropriate digital skills and services.       |
| Patel Adam Burhansab, M. Sadik Batcha & Muneer Ahmad (2025)           | A Study on Library Resources with Services Satisfaction Based on Library Users Affiliated Colleges to Solapur University   | Survey-based study of library users from 26 affiliated colleges of Solapur University, Maharashtra.                                         | The study found that a large proportion of respondents were satisfied with library resources and services, indicating the continuing importance of library facilities alongside the expansion of digital resources.                                                         |
| Study of District Central Libraries,                                  | Understanding User Perceptions and Expectations in Public                                                                  | Structured questionnaire survey covering 837                                                                                                | Users highly valued traditional library services, particularly study spaces, staff support and opening                                                                                                                                                                      |

|                  |                                                                                |                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Telangana (2026) | Library Services: Evidence from District Central Libraries in Telangana, India | respondents from district central libraries across Telangana. | hours. At the same time, they expressed strong expectations for improved digital services, e-resources, training and online platforms. This strongly supports a hybrid library model combining traditional and digital services. |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

#### **Research Gap:**

There is limited research comparing traditional and digital libraries specifically in Erode District. Most existing studies focus separately on library usage, e-resources, awareness, or user satisfaction. Therefore, there is a need for a study that directly compares traditional and digital libraries in terms of accessibility, convenience, resource availability, usage, user preference, and satisfaction among library users in Erode District. The present study attempts to fill this gap by examining the shift from traditional bookshelves to digital screens and understanding users' preferences towards both types of libraries

#### **Objectives of the Study:**

- To compare the usage, preferences and satisfaction of users towards traditional and digital libraries in Erode District.
- To identify the factors influencing users' choice and usage of traditional and digital libraries in Erode District.

#### **Research Methodology:**

The study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to compare the usage, preferences and satisfaction of users towards traditional and digital libraries in Erode District. The study was conducted among users of traditional and digital library services in Erode District. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected directly from the respondents through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were collected from books, journals, research articles, library reports, websites and other relevant sources. A sample of 200 respondents was selected using convenience sampling. The questionnaire covered the demographic profile, usage pattern, preferences, satisfaction and factors influencing the choice and usage of traditional and digital libraries. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the opinions of respondents. The collected data were coded, classified and analysed using appropriate statistical tools such as percentage analysis, mean, standard deviation, ranking analysis and factor analysis. Factor analysis was used to identify and group the major factors influencing users' choice and usage of traditional and digital libraries. The findings were presented through tables with suitable interpretations to achieve the objectives of the study.

#### **Limitations of the Study:**

- The study was limited to Erode District and therefore the findings may not be applicable to users of traditional and digital libraries in other districts.
- The study was based on a sample of 200 respondents, and a larger sample may provide wider representation of library users.
- The study adopted convenience sampling, which may limit the generalisation of the findings to the entire population of library users.
- The study mainly depends on the information provided by respondents through a questionnaire. Therefore, the accuracy of the findings depends on the respondents' understanding and honest responses.

#### **Analysis and Interpretation:**

Table 1: Comparison of Usage, Preferences and Satisfaction towards Traditional and Digital Libraries

| S.No | Factors                        | Traditional Library Mean | Digital Library Mean | Difference | Rank |
|------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|------------|------|
| 1    | Ease of access                 | 3.72                     | 4.31                 | 0.59       | III  |
| 2    | Convenience of use             | 3.68                     | 4.28                 | 0.60       | II   |
| 3    | Availability of resources      | 4.02                     | 4.25                 | 0.23       | VI   |
| 4    | Speed of information retrieval | 3.41                     | 4.36                 | 0.95       | I    |
| 5    | User preference                | 3.85                     | 4.18                 | 0.33       | V    |
| 6    | Overall satisfaction           | 3.91                     | 4.22                 | 0.31       | IV   |

The table indicates that users give greater importance to the speed, convenience and accessibility offered by digital libraries. Speed of information retrieval ranks first, with a digital library mean score of 4.36 compared with 3.41 for the traditional library. This shows that users find digital libraries more effective for locating information quickly. Convenience of use ranks second, with mean scores of 4.28 for digital libraries and 3.68 for traditional libraries, indicating a preference for the flexibility and ease of digital access.

Ease of access ranks third, with a mean score of 4.31 for digital libraries compared with 3.72 for traditional libraries. Overall satisfaction ranks fourth, with digital libraries recording a mean score of 4.22, while traditional libraries record 3.91. User preference ranks fifth, with mean scores of 4.18 for digital

libraries and 3.85 for traditional libraries. Availability of resources ranks sixth, although both types of libraries receive relatively high mean scores, with 4.25 for digital libraries and 4.02 for traditional libraries.

Overall, the findings suggest that digital libraries are more preferred by users because of their faster information retrieval, convenience and accessibility. However, traditional libraries continue to remain important, particularly for users who value physical resources and a conventional library environment. The findings indicate that both traditional and digital libraries have their own advantages, and a combination of both services may provide greater benefits to library users in Erode District.

Table 2: Comparison of Traditional and Digital Libraries Based on Selected User Characteristics

| Demographic Variable       | df (Between) | F-Value | Sig. (p-value) | Result          |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|----------------|-----------------|
| Age                        | 3            | 4.286   | 0.006          | Significant     |
| Gender                     | 1            | 2.174   | 0.142          | Not Significant |
| Educational Qualification  | 3            | 5.214   | 0.002          | Significant     |
| Occupation                 | 4            | 3.682   | 0.006          | Significant     |
| Monthly Income             | 3            | 4.638   | 0.004          | Significant     |
| Frequency of Library Visit | 3            | 5.127   | 0.002          | Significant     |
| Internet Usage             | 2            | 3.846   | 0.023          | Significant     |
| Digital Literacy           | 2            | 6.214   | 0.002          | Significant     |

The table shows that users' comparison of traditional and digital libraries differs significantly based on age, educational qualification, occupation, monthly income, frequency of library visits, internet usage and digital literacy, as their p-values are less than 0.05. However, gender does not show a significant difference, as its p-value is greater than 0.05. The findings indicate that users' background and level of digital exposure play an important role in their usage, preferences and satisfaction towards traditional and digital libraries in Erode District.

Table 3: Factor Analysis of Factors Influencing Users' Choice and Usage of Traditional and Digital Libraries

| S.No | Factors Influencing Choice and Usage       | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 | Factor 4 |
|------|--------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1    | Ease of accessing library resources        | 0.812    | -        | -        | -        |
| 2    | Convenience of using library services      | 0.786    | -        | -        | -        |
| 3    | Availability of library resources          | 0.754    | -        | -        | -        |
| 4    | Speed of information retrieval             | -        | 0.824    | -        | -        |
| 5    | Availability of e-books and e-journals     | -        | 0.801    | -        | -        |
| 6    | Availability of updated information        | -        | 0.746    | -        | -        |
| 7    | User-friendly library services             | -        | -        | 0.835    | -        |
| 8    | Availability of librarian support          | -        | -        | 0.779    | -        |
| 9    | Cost-effectiveness of library usage        | -        | -        | 0.812    | -        |
| 10   | Internet and digital facility availability | -        | -        | -        | 0.861    |

| Factor   | Dimension                              | No. of Items | Eigenvalue | % of Variance |
|----------|----------------------------------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| Factor 1 | Accessibility and Convenience          | 3            | 2.684      | 26.84         |
| Factor 2 | Information Availability and Retrieval | 3            | 2.341      | 23.41         |
| Factor 3 | Service Support and Cost-effectiveness | 3            | 2.106      | 21.06         |
| Factor 4 | Digital Infrastructure                 | 1            | 1.127      | 11.27         |
| Total    |                                        | 10           | 8.258      | 82.58         |

The factor analysis identifies four major dimensions influencing users' choice and usage of traditional and digital libraries in Erode District. Factor 1, named Accessibility and Convenience, consists of ease of accessing library resources, convenience of using library services and availability of library resources. It has an eigen value of 2.684 and explains 26.84 per cent of the total variance.

Factor 2, named Information Availability and Retrieval, includes speed of information retrieval, availability of e-books and e-journals and availability of updated information. This factor has an eigen value of 2.341 and accounts for 23.41 per cent of the total variance.

Factor 3, named Service Support and Cost-effectiveness, comprises user-friendly library services, availability of librarian support and cost-effectiveness of library usage. It has an eigen value of 2.106 and explains 21.06 per cent of the total variance.

Factor 4, named Digital Infrastructure, consists of internet and digital facility availability. It has an eigen value of 1.127 and contributes 11.27 per cent of the total variance. Overall, the four factors explain 82.58 per cent of the total variance, indicating that accessibility, information availability, service support and digital infrastructure are important factors influencing users' choice and usage of traditional and digital libraries in Erode District.

#### Suggestions of the Study:

- Improve Accessibility and Convenience: Libraries should provide easy access to both traditional and digital resources and offer flexible services according to users' needs.
- Increase Availability of Resources: Libraries should increase the availability of updated books, e-books, e-journals, databases and other relevant learning materials.

- Improve Information Retrieval: Digital library systems should provide simple search facilities to help users find the required information quickly and efficiently.
- Strengthen Digital Infrastructure: Libraries should provide adequate computers, high-speed internet, Wi-Fi and other digital facilities to encourage the effective use of digital library services.
- Provide User-Friendly Services: Library websites, digital platforms and search interfaces should be simple and easy to use, particularly for users with limited digital skills.
- Strengthen Librarian Support: Librarians should provide proper guidance and assistance to users in accessing e-resources, databases and digital library services.
- Conduct Digital Literacy Programmes: Regular training and awareness programmes should be organised to improve users' knowledge and skills in using digital library resources.
- Maintain Affordable Services: Libraries should provide digital resources and services at affordable or minimum cost so that users from different economic backgrounds can access them.
- Promote Hybrid Library Services: Traditional and digital library services should be integrated to provide users with the advantages of both physical and online resources.
- Regularly Assess User Needs: Libraries should periodically collect feedback from users and improve their services based on changing information needs and technological developments.

### **Conclusion:**

The study concludes that both traditional and digital libraries play an important role in meeting the information and learning needs of users in Erode District. Users' choice and usage of library services are mainly influenced by accessibility and convenience, information availability and retrieval, service support and cost-effectiveness, and digital infrastructure. The findings indicate that digital libraries provide greater convenience, faster information retrieval and easy access to updated electronic resources, while traditional libraries continue to be valuable for physical books, personal interaction and a focused learning environment. The study also highlights the importance of improving digital facilities, internet connectivity, updated resources and user-friendly services. At the same time, traditional library services should be strengthened to meet the needs of users who prefer physical resources. Therefore, an integrated or hybrid library system combining the advantages of traditional and digital libraries can provide better access, convenience and satisfaction to users. Libraries in Erode District should continuously improve their resources, infrastructure and user support services according to the changing needs of users and technological developments.

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