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ABSTRACTS

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Information technology usage by academics in Sri Lankan universities

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The commercial arrival of the Internet in conjunction with the convergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has generated a creative turmoil in all walks of life including a thirst for research among academic communities. The proliferation of ICT in higher education and the expansion of Internet and electronic based information and services further amplify the chasm between the information 'have' and 'have nots'. Those on the wrong side of the divide may have less opportunity to participate and engage in formal education, especially in university education (Damarin, 2000). Changes in education are likely to mean that ICT skills will become the 'indispensable grammar of modern life' and a 'tool for lifelong learning (DFEE, 2000).

The main objective of this research is to identify the IT usage by academics for their studies. In this study the term 'academics' represents undergraduate students.

Undergraduates in Sri Lankan universities are the study population. The sample of the study is a selected set of 367 students based on small sample techniques. The survey method is used as the research method and quantitative and qualitative data collection method is used as the data collection techniques of this study. To analyze the data, the SPSS statistical software package was used.

The computer literacy of the university academics rate was 89%. There were disparities of computer usage among faculties, study year and degree. Academics' internet usage in the university was satisfactory. Majority were having e mail accounts. Most of students spent one or two hours per day to access Internet and they use popular Internet services such as WWW, e mail, downloading and chat room. There are useful services such as Bulletin Board Services, Newsgroups, and Databases available on the Internet,that the academics are not familiar with. Students' knowledge about search techniques and their e resources usage was unsatisfactory. The study also revealed that the students' online databases usage had the last place in the sequence of students mostly preferred information sources. Lack of information in local language, majority of information in English medium, lack of computer literacy and infrastructure facilities are the major barriers among academics in using computer and Internet in the university. The majority highly required special training on the use of computer and Internet technology effectively. The academics' computer and Internet usage was good, but their effective usage of information technology for their study was not satisfactory as revealed by the end results of the study.