

# **Use and Awareness of E-Resources by Social Scientists: A Comparative Study of Banaras Hindu University and Aligarh Muslim University**

**Ashok Kumar Shukla<sup>1</sup>; Dr. Rajani Mishra<sup>2</sup>**

Research Scholar, Deptt. of Library & Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, UttarPradesh<sup>1</sup>; Associate Professor, Deptt. of Library & Information Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, India<sup>2</sup>

*akshukla1234@rediffmail.com, rajanimishra5@gmail.com*

## **ABSTRACT**

*E-sources have been a boon to the research community as ICT advancements have made them a major source of scholarly communication. E-resources emerged as a new and powerful tool in the electronic environment, as an aid in teaching, learning, and research. The purpose of this paper is to determine the level of awareness and use of e-resources among social scientists at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). A well-structured questionnaire has been administered to the social scientists of the BHU and AMU to collect data regarding the use of e-resources. The study focuses on the methods used by social scientists to search and browse e-resources, as well as their satisfaction levels and problems faced. However, it has been found in this study that a lack of training is a barrier to the proper and full utilization of e-resources.*

**KEYWORDS:** E-resources, Social Scientists, ICT, User Studies, Banaras Hindu University, Aligarh Muslim University.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Electronic publishing has ushered in a new era of accelerated communication and information sharing. E-resources have got importance in the academic library over the last few decades, due to the ever-growing use of ICTs and its effect on library collection development policies, which is the result of change user demands for pinpointed and comprehensive information in a short period of time. With the increased popularity of e-resources, traditional libraries are gradually transitioning from print resources to e-resources to increase users' access to information. ICTs application in libraries has created numerous opportunities for the creation and dissemination of e-resources. E-journals, e-books, e-theses, and e-databases are the most frequently accessed e-resources while JPG, PNG, DOC & PDF being the most accessed formats by users (Swain, 2012).

"User studies" are studies that are conducted to determine the use of any communication medium, such as primary, secondary, and other resources. The user study is mainly concerned with studying information processing activities of users. It essentially implies the investigation of the demand or need and utilisation for information. The main goal is to use it, and the user is the most important and dynamic component of the library and information system. In the last several years, many research studies have focused on how people use electronic resources or on their feelings about electronic and print resources in the library (Swain & Panda, 2011).

The term "social science" refers to a group of scholarly disciplines that study various aspects of human society. It is a collection of academic disciplines that investigate how and why people behave as individuals and groups.

A "social scientist" is someone who conducts teaching and research in any of the following disciplines: psychology, economics, sociology, history, anthropology, and political science.

BHU and AMU has been the centre of study of this paper. BHU is an internationally renowned organization located in the holy city of Varanasi and was established in 1915 by visionary Pt. Madan Mohan Malviya through Parliamentary legislation known as the BHU Act.

While AMU is a residential academic institution of international renown. Founded in 1875 as Mohammadan Anglo-Oriental College, which got its current name, AMU, by an Act of Parliament in 1920.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

E-resources have been the most widely used by the academic fraternity for their growth and development in the field. Here is a systemic literature study to establish this fact.

In their article, Kaur and Verma (2009) investigated user awareness and other motivating factors to use the library's e-resources. Majority of users are aware of e-journals and the consortium.

Natarajan, et al. (2010) surveyed 117 faculty members and researchers at Annamalai University on the use and perception of electronic resources and found that the use of e-resources were low. The reasons of low usage were lack of time and awareness, subject coverage, and slow speed of downloading.

Chinnasamy and Lakshmi Sankari (2011) studied Internet resources, services and their use by 270 students of Salem District college libraries. It was found that 66.4%, respondents, access the Internet from a Cyber Café. Over 58% of respondents use the Internet primarily for educational purposes. Google and Yahoo search engines more popular than other search engines.

According to Allison et al. (2012), the use of e-resources is influenced by both human and institutional factors such as users' information literacy, low bandwidth, and the availability of limited resources.

According to Masilamani and Esmail (2016), majority of female respondents (49.38%) agree that lack of assistive devices (i.e. connections, downloads, printing equipment) limits the use of electronic resources. In addition, majority of male respondents (52.34%) agreed that relevant electronic resources should be provided to users' based on their profile and interests.

Vilgi and Ray (2018) investigated use of e-resources by students and faculty members of the Federal Institute of Science and Technology (FISAT), Kerala. According to the study, 46.57% of respondents prefer both print and

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electronic formats on the daily basis. E-journals are the most popular type of e-resource and the main constraint in its use is low internet speed.

A study of the use of electronic journals by researchers and postgraduate students at the University of Delhi and the Jamia Millia Islamia revealed that users at the University of Delhi are more satisfied with their access to e-journals and e-databases in the library. Regardless of that some issues were encountered while accessing e-journals. Sohail et al. (2019) further recommended that e-journal facilities and services in libraries be enhanced.

Mishra and Shukla (2020) discovered in their study that social scientists at BHU face no major challenges while searching electronic resources because they are an integral part of the BHU library system and are subscribed in a large number, for a variety of academic purposes, to BHU academia.

Moustapha (2021) investigated the use of electronic resources by the patrons of Kwara State University library. He discovered that of various types of e-resources available, electronic books received the most responses. He investigated usage frequency of electronic resources and recommended that besides electronic books availability of other e-resources, particularly CD-ROMs and DVDs should be increased in the libraries.

Midha and Kumar (2022) investigated user awareness and use of open educational resources (OERs) in North Indian central universities. They discovered that the academic communities of North Indian central universities are well aware of OERs. E-PG Pathshala is the most popular and widely used platform for e-resources, followed by NPTEL and YouTube. A lot of users only use OERs to prepare class notes, whereas the majority of faculty members and academic researchers use OERs to enhance their professional competency.

All these studies reveal various aspects of e-resource usage by various users in different contexts. However, no comparison study concerning the use of e-resources by BHU and AMU social scientists has been conducted. As a result, this topic has been chosen for the study.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

On the basis of the research gaps following objectives have been set for the study:

- ✓ To determine the awareness of E-Resources and the search strategy used by Social Scientists.
- ✓ To examine Social Scientists' purpose, frequency of use and format of e-resources.
- ✓ To examine the methods used by Social Scientists to update their knowledge with the latest developments in their fields.
- ✓ To ascertain the difficulties that Social Scientists face in gaining access to E-Resources.
- ✓ To know how to improve Social Scientists' use of E-Resources.

### **4. SCOPE & METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

The scope of present study includes Social Scientists of Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi and Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh.

Various scientists and faculty members engaged in teaching and research in different departments (i.e. Economics, History, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work and Political Sc.) under the Faculty of Social Sciences of both universities have been included in this study.

The total number of social scientists at BHU and AMU is 128 and 134, respectively. The above numbers have been obtained from the websites of both universities.

The survey (questionnaire) method was used in this study. To collect the necessary data, a structured questionnaire with predefined objectives was used.

\*Some tables (Table nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 8) show response percentage to be more than 100% is due to multiple-choice opted by the respondents.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A total of 128 questionnaires were distributed in BHU, with 90 (70.31%) completed questionnaires received. Similarly, 134 questionnaires were distributed at AMU, with 82 (61.20%) completed questionnaires received. All the received questionnaires were used for data analysis and interpretation.

Out of the total respondents who returned the filled-up questionnaires, 100% of respondents in BHU, as well as AMU, were aware of various e-resources.

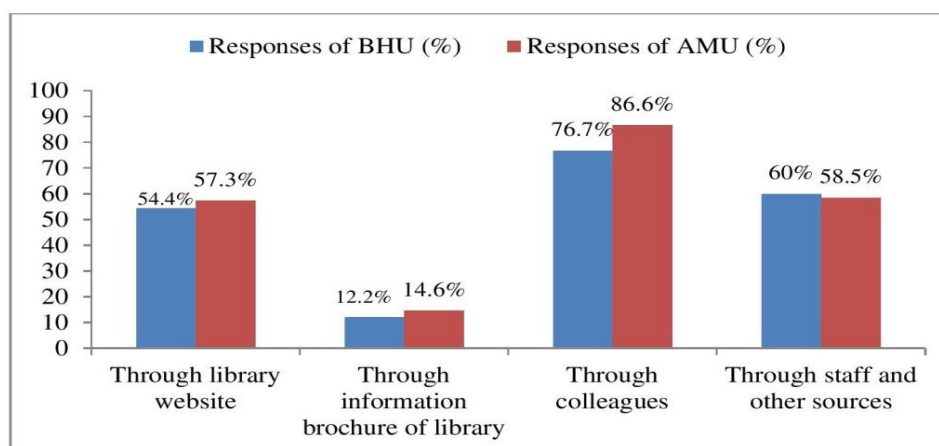
### 5.1 Sources of Awareness of E-Resources

Social scientists use different sources to access e-resources. Based on the study, social scientists at BHU and AMU get knowledge of various e-resources through various sources.

**Table 1:** Sources of Awareness to E-Resources

S.No.	Sources of Awareness	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Through library website	49 (54.4)	47 (57.3)
2.	Through information brochure of library	11 (12.2)	12 (14.6)
3.	Through colleagues	69 (76.7)	71 (86.6)
4.	Through staff and other sources	54 (60.0)	48 (58.5)

The study reveals that 54.44% of social scientists at BHU and 57.3% at AMU seem to have been aware of e-resources via ‘the library website’ followed by 12.2% and 14.6% obtaining knowledge of e-resources from ‘information brochures of the library’ within BHU and AMU. Similarly, 76.7% of social scientists at BHU and 86.6% of AMU learnt about e-resources ‘through their colleagues’. 60% and 58.5% at BHU and AMU got the awareness of e-resources ‘through staff and other sources’ respectively.



**Sources of Awareness to E-Resources**

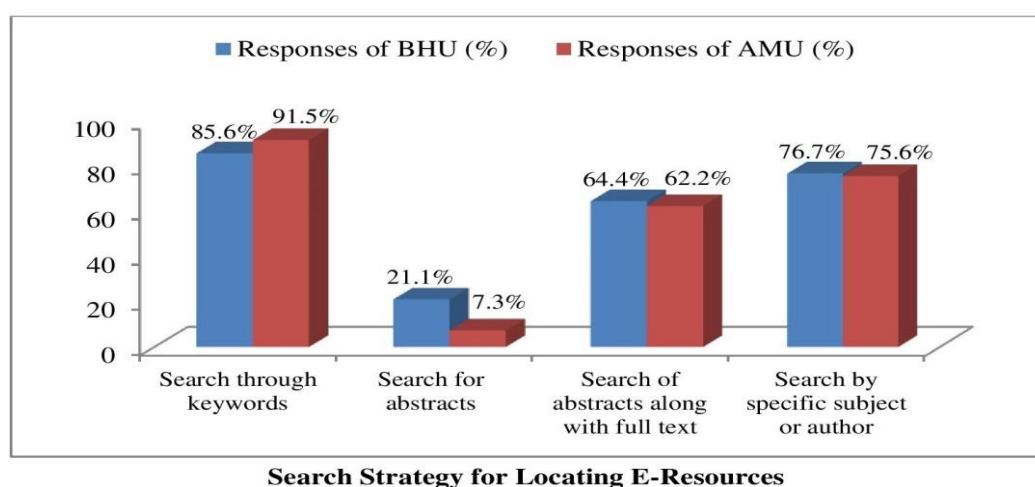
## 5.2 Search Strategy for Locating E-Resources by Social Scientists

Table 2 shows the search strategy followed by social scientists at BHU and AMU for searching and retrieving information from e-resources.

**Table 2:** Search Strategy for Locating E-Resources

S.No.	Search Strategy	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Search through keywords	77 (85.6)	75 (91.5)
2.	Search for abstracts	19 (21.1)	06 (7.3)
3.	Search of abstracts along with full text	58(64.4)	51 (62.2)
4.	Search by specific subject or author	69(76.7)	62 (75.6)

In Table 2 above it is observed that 85.6% of the social scientists of BHU and 91.5% of AMU social scientists searched e-resources “through keywords”. The next significant search strategy was “specific subject or author” by 76.7% social scientists of BHU and 75.6% AMU.



## 5.3 Purpose of Usage of E-Resources

Different users use e-resources for a variety of purposes. Given the importance of this factor, the data gathered has been presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Purpose of Using E-Resources

S. No.	Purpose of using E-Resources	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Research purpose	80 (88.9)	75 (91.4)
2.	Study and Teaching	83 (92.2)	79 (96.3)
3.	Update subject knowledge	52 (57.8)	54 (65.8)
4.	Writing papers/article/books /projects	32 (35.6)	33 (40.2)

According to Table 3, the majority of social scientists, 83 (92.2%) in BHU and 79 (96.3%) in AMU, use e-resources for study and teaching.

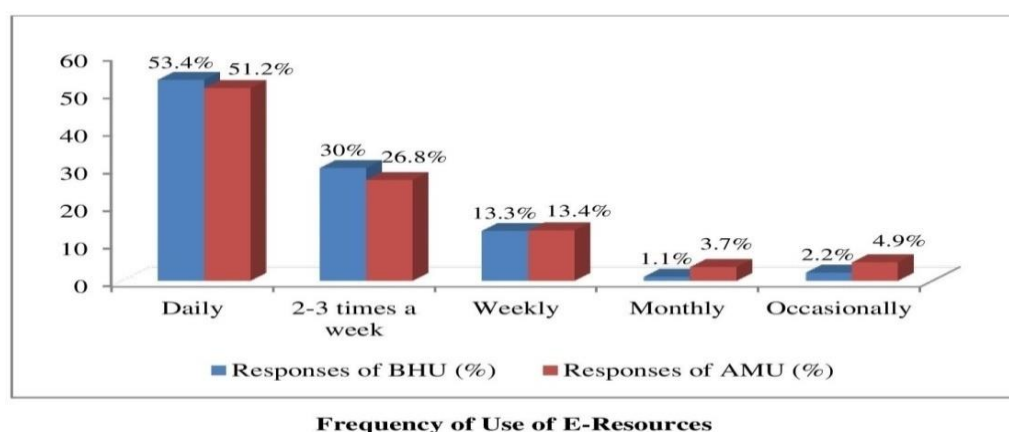
## 5.4 Frequency of Use of E-Resources

An essential factor in tracking use of e-resources is to assess the time spent in searching e-resources. To facilitate the study, the respondents were asked (in Table 4) how frequently they use e-resources.

**Table 4:** Frequency of Use of E-Resources

S. No.	Frequency	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Daily	48 (53.4)	42 (51.2)
2.	2-3 times a week	27 (30.0)	22 (26.8)
3.	Weekly	12 (13.3)	11 (13.4)
4.	Monthly	01 (1.1)	03 (3.7)
5.	Occasionally	02 (2.2)	04 (4.9)

The study shows that out of 90 at BHU and 82 at AMU respondents, the maximum number, i.e. 48 (53.4%) and 42 (51.2%), respectively, used e-resources "daily".



### 5.5 Format of E-Resources Used by Social Scientists

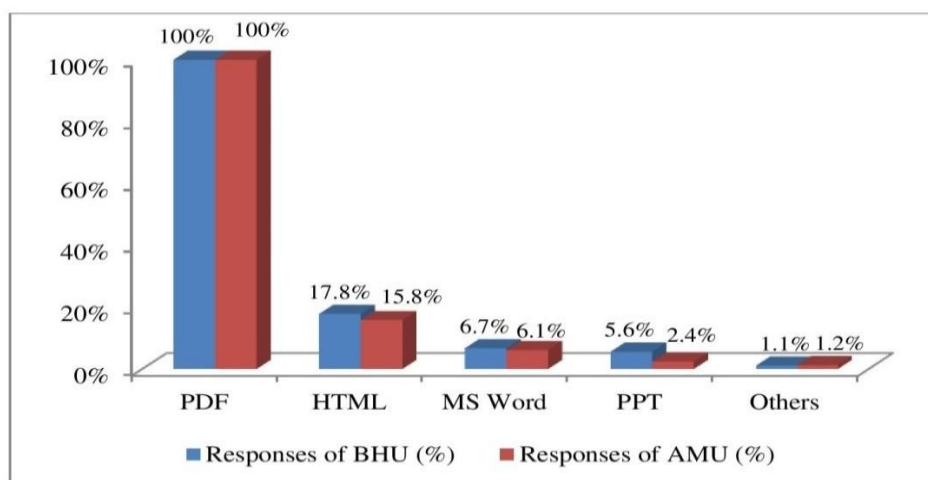
E-resources are available in a variety of formats. The results of the investigation into the format of e-resources generally used by social scientists are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Format of E-Resources Used by Social Scientists

S. No.	Format of E-Resources	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	PDF File	90 (100.0)	82 (100.0)
2.	HTML File	16 (17.8)	13 (15.8)
3.	MS Word File	06 (6.7)	05 (6.1)
4.	PPTs	05 (5.6)	02 (2.4)
5.	Others	01 (1.1)	01 (1.2)

Table 5 shows that all (100%) of the social scientists at BHU and AMU read e-resources in PDF format, which is best for downloading, organizing and studying the required e-resources.

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**Format of E-Resources Used by Social Scientists**

Thus, “PDF” is the most preferred format used by 100% of social scientists at BHU and AMU.

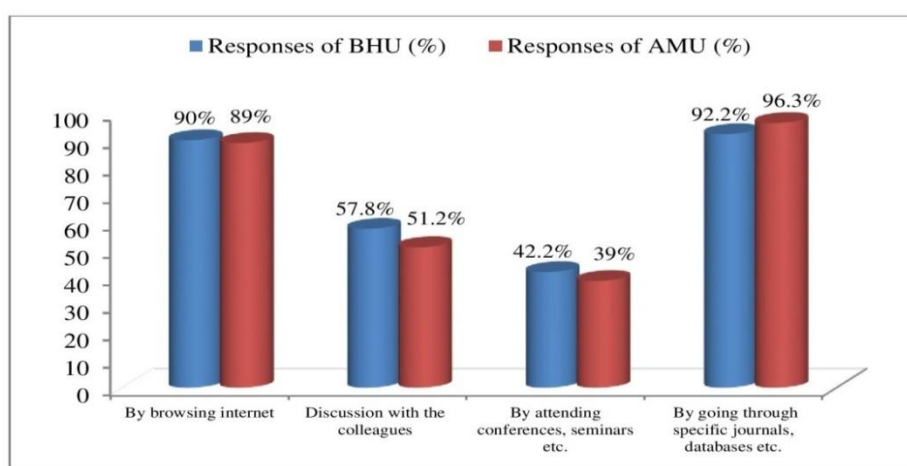
### 5.6 Improvement and Updating the Knowledge base of Social Scientists

E-resources play an important role in teaching and research, and there are several ways to improve the use by the social scientists in the university library. Table 6 displays the data gathered in this regard.

**Table 6:** Methods for Improving and Updating the Use of E-Resources by Social Scientists

S. No.	Methods for Improving and Updating the Use of E-Resources	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	By browsing internet	81 (90.0)	73 (89.0)
2.	Discussion with the colleagues	52 (57.8)	42 (51.2)
3.	By attending conferences, seminars etc.	38 (42.2)	32 (39.0)
4.	By going through specific journals, databases etc.	83 (92.2)	79 (96.3)

As per Table 6, the majority of social scientists at BHU (92.2%) and AMU (96.3%) use a range of specific journals and databases, as well as the Internet, to keep up with the latest developments in the field.



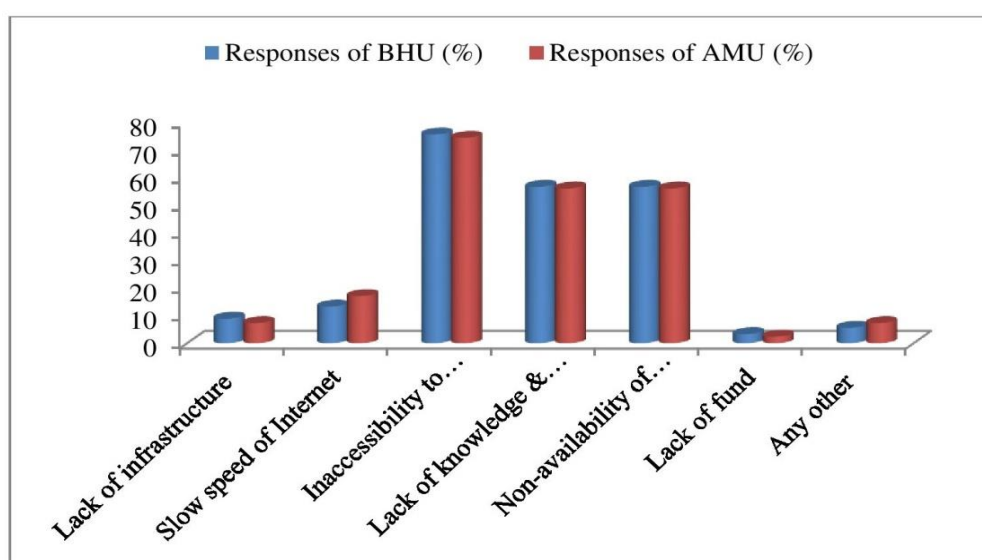
**Ways to Improve and Update the Use of E-Resources by Social Scientists**

### 5.7 Issues with the Use of E-Resources

In academic institutions, e-resources are a natural source of information. The majority of users had trouble in accessing the e-resources. Similar is the case with the social scientists at BHU and AMU. The difficulties they had accessing e-resources are shown data in Table 7.

**Table 7:** Problems Faced while Using E-Resources

S. No.	Problems in using E-Resources	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Lack of infrastructure	08 (8.9)	06 (7.3)
2.	Slow speed of Internet	12 (13.3)	14 (17.1)
3.	Inaccessibility to required databases (either not available or not subscribed)	68 (75.6)	61 (74.4)
4.	Lack of knowledge & training	47 (52.2)	45 (54.9)
5.	Non-availability of required full text	51 (56.7)	46 (56.1)
6.	Lack of fund	03 (3.3)	02 (2.4)
7.	Any other	5 (5.6)	06 (7.3)



**Problems Faced while Using E-Resources**

The study indicates that number of social scientists at BHU (75.6%) and AMU (74.4%) believe that "inaccessibility to the required database (either not available or not subscribed)" discourages them from accessing e-resources, while 52.2% of social scientists at BHU and 54.9% at AMU faced problems with "lack of knowledge and training" and nearly 56% faced "non-availability of required full-text," posing problem in accessing e-resources.

### 5.8 Useful Training Program for Accessing E-Resources

Users are not well versed in using e-resources and they require help to get their desired information. Sometimes, if provided with appropriate training or instructional programmes, they can do well in their work without any helps. Those who indicated an interest in participating in any training programme to improve their use of e-resources were asked which type of training would be most beneficial to them in accessing e-resources. Their response is tabulated in Table 8.

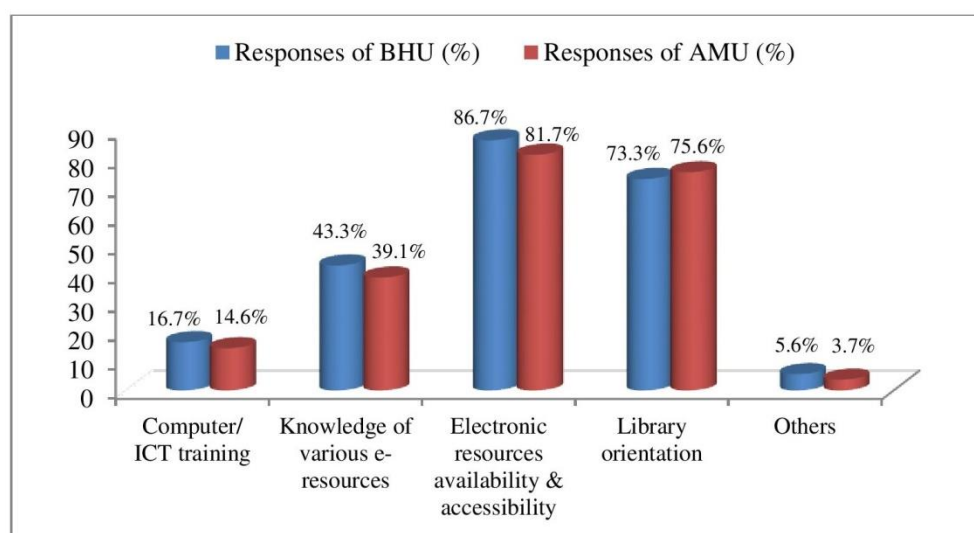


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**Table 8:** Types of Training Program for Accessing the E-Resources

S.No.	Types of Training Program	Responses of BHU (%)	Responses of AMU (%)
1.	Computer/ ICT training	15 (16.7)	12 (14.6)
2.	Knowledge of various e-resources (CD-ROMs, e-databases & library consortia)	39 (43.3)	32 (39.1)
3.	Electronic resources availability & accessibility (any type)	78 (86.7)	67 (81.7)
4.	Library orientation	66 (73.3)	62 (75.6)
5.	Others	05 (5.6)	03 (3.7)

Table 8 shows the modes of training that social scientists require to gain access to e-resources. The study found that the majority of BHU (86.7%) and AMU (81.7%) social scientists were interested in attending "electronic resources availability & accessibility" as a training programme, while 73.3% of BHU and 75.6% of AMU social scientists were interested in attending "library orientation" as a training programme.



**Types of Training Program for Accessing the E-Resources**

### **5.9 Discussion and Conclusion**

The major finding of the study revealed that 70.3% social scientists at BHU and 61.2% at AMU responded and all of them are aware and use various e-resources. They all came to know about various e-resources from their colleagues. The majority of respondents at BHU and AMU both searched e-resources via "using keywords" and "by specific subject or author." Majority of social scientists i.e. 92.2% at BHU and 96.3% at AMU use e-resources for study and teaching purpose on the daily basis. PDF is the most preferred format used by the social scientists of BHU and AMU.

The majority of social scientists at BHU (92.2%) and AMU (96.3%) use a variety of specific journals and databases, while 90% of BHU and 89% of AMU social scientists browse the Internet to stay up-to-date on the latest developments in their field. Majority of social scientists of BHU (75.6%) and AMU (74.4%) believe that "inaccessibility to the required database" discourages them from accessing e-resources.

The study also revealed that majority of BHU (86.7%) and AMU (81.7%) social scientists were interested in attending "electronic resources availability & accessibility" as a training programme, while 73.3% of BHU and 75.6% of AMU social scientists were interested in attending "library orientation" as a training programme.

The current study sought to compare the use of e-resources by social scientists at two well known Indian central universities, namely BHU and AMU. The major objectives of the study were met, and it is clear that the two universities are very similar in terms of social scientists' knowledge and use of e-resources. According to the findings of the study, all social scientists are aware of e-resources at both universities, maximum social scientists use e-resources in PDF form daily to satisfy their information need. They are consulting e-resources not only for study & teaching but also for research purposes, updating subject knowledge, and writing papers/article/books/projects. During the study, it was found that social scientists at both universities were having problems accessing e-resources. Some academicians need training to improve their use of e-resources. University library professionals must be proactive in working with the academic community to develop training programmes to help them use e-resources more effectively.

## **SUGGESTION**

Following are some suggestions for both the university libraries for improving the management and use of e-resources:

- Social scientists need to be encouraged for the better use of e-resources available through consortia or Institutional Repositories besides accessibility to subject-specific databases.
- There should be a dedicated library website with better infrastructure facilities for the benefit of social scientists to access and download electronic resources easily.
- The authorities should organise dedicated e-learning and training programs for social scientists in the libraries of both universities to improve the use of electronic resources.
- University libraries should provide specific electronic alerting services like RSS feeds, e-alerts etc. to increase the access to e-resources.
- University libraries should spend sufficient fund on purchasing electronic resources in both the universities.

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