

Access to select social media and the preferences of communication methods with the library: a gender-based analysis of new entrants

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Offering Information Literacy (IL)* programs, in addition to the traditional library tour, to the new entrants to the university is becoming vital, to prepare the students for the increasingly complex information environment in the university library. However, the IL program planners do not have a sufficient knowledge of the new entrants' information seeking behaviour, to plan more context-specific programs. To fill this knowledge gap, the principal researcher undertook a study in the Faculty of Law, at University of Colombo. Two objectives were formulated: 1) to study the pattern of the gender basis of access to select social media and e-mail, and 2) to investigate the gender-based preferences in communicating with the library through social media, e-mail and Short Message Service (SMS). The total population (250) enrolled in the Faculty for 2014/2015 academic year was surveyed using a structured questionnaire and SPSS (Ver. 22) was used to analyze and interpret data. The study established that there is an observed gender-based difference in the access to FaceBook (FB), Twitter and e-mail and in the preferences of communicating with the library through SMSs, but Cramer's V test proved that this correlation is not statistically significant. The study proved that, 78.4% have an e-mail account, 52.4% have an FB account but only 14.2 % have a Twitter account. Of the respondents, 91.8% are willing to communicate with the library using FB, Twitter and e-mail and 88.7% are willing to receive SMSs from the library. In planning the IL programs and information services for these respondents, it is recommended for the library staff to consider their preferences so that the information is delivered to the net-generation students in their preferred methods.

Key words: Undergraduates, Face Book, Twitter, e-mail, communication.

* Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning (ACRL 2015).