

USERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS E-RESOURCES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON LIBRARIES AS LOCAL KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURES

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Abstract

Academic libraries are being increasingly perceived as a significant local knowledge infrastructure that extends beyond the formerly peripheral role of print collection. They are at the nexus of digital integration, democratization of knowledge, and value creation to the people, through the provision of electronic resources (e-resources). This paper is a conceptual study of user attitudes and strategies towards e-resources in academic libraries and how they fall into the technology adoption and management paradigms. The paper uses the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), Information Behavior Model of Wilson, and Public Value Theory to know how perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, digital literacy, and institutional support influence the use of e-resources. The discussion elicits the place of the academic library as a support institution to education, but also to democratic participation and locality development. The authors summarize this paper and present policy, practice, and research implications of the significance of libraries in fostering equity and knowledge-based governance.

Keywords: academic libraries; e-resources; user attitudes; information behaviour; public value

1. Introduction

With the emergence of digital technologies, the role of academic libraries worldwide has undergone a fundamental change. Books and print collections were traditionally regarded as the primary possessors of libraries. They have now evolved and transformed into a mixed knowledge space, providing both physical and electronic resources (e-resources), including e-journals, e-books, digital databases, and institutional repositories. The resources in higher learning are the gateway to research, teaching, and innovation (Dadzie, 2005; Tenopir & King, 2001).

In addition to educational value, in contemporary times, academic libraries are now viewed as a local knowledge infrastructure with a more governance-related impact. Libraries help in digital inclusion, equity in knowledge, and civic engagement by making e-resources equitably available to everyone (Jaeger et al., 2014; Moore, 1995). In some other areas, like the state of Kerala, where there is robust decentralized governance, academic libraries supplement local self-government institutions by providing citizens with access to information required in the participatory decision-making process (Oommen, 2014).

It is thus important to understand how users interact with the e-resources in order not only to improve the services of the libraries but also to enhance their ability to create the impact of public value. It has also been found that the adoption of e-resources by the users is subject to the digital literacy, perceived usefulness, and institutional support (Okon, 2024; Sharma, 2019). Such behaviors are explained with the help of models such as TAM (Davis, 1989), UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003), and the Information Behavior Model developed by Wilson (Wilson, 1999). However, these views rarely relate the user attitudes to the outcomes of governance. That gap is bridged in this paper, which places attitudes towards the users in the context of the Public Value Theory (Moore, 1995) and makes libraries aware of their role as the democratizing institutions of knowledge.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Academic Libraries and E-Resources

The growth of e-resources has transformed library services globally. E-journals, e-books, and online databases are essential for academic work, offering convenience, up-to-date content, and global reach (Singh, 2020; Tenopir & King, 2008). At the same time, challenges persist, including a lack of awareness, usability issues, and unequal access (Dadzie, 2005; Thanuskodi, 2012). These challenges

are particularly pronounced in developing countries, where infrastructural gaps remain significant (Ayiah & Tamakloe, 2023).

2.2 User Attitudes and Information Behavior

User behavior towards e-resources is shaped by perceptions of usefulness, ease of use, and institutional factors. TAM highlights the usefulness and ease of use as central (Davis, 1989), while UTAUT adds social influence and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Wilson's model emphasizes broader barriers, including institutional and social constraints (Wilson, 1999). Empirical research confirms that training, peer support, and awareness campaigns improve adoption (Okon, 2024; Sharma, 2019; Tanzin & Atikuzzaman, 2024).

2.3 Libraries as Public Institutions and Knowledge Infrastructures

Governance-oriented research frames libraries as public institutions that generate public value by fostering equity, civic engagement, and knowledge democratization (Aabø & Audunson, 2012; Moore, 1995). Public libraries in particular are seen as spaces that reduce information asymmetries and promote community resilience. Academic libraries, when conceptualized as local knowledge infrastructures, similarly contribute to digital inclusion and evidence-based governance (Jaeger et al., 2014; UNESCO, 2015).

2.4 Global and Local Perspectives

While e-resources are widely integrated in the Global North, barriers such as weak infrastructure and digital divides persist elsewhere (Ayiah & Tamakloe, 2023; Robinson et al., 2015). In India, studies show that although adoption is growing, many users still lack adequate training or institutional support (Sharma, 2019; Thanuskodi, 2012). Kerala's high literacy rate and strong decentralized governance model make it a distinctive context for analyzing how libraries bridge digital and governance gaps (Oommen, 2014).

2.5 Synthesis of Literature

The literature reveals three patterns. First, e-resources are vital for academic and civic development, but adoption depends on awareness and support. Second, models such as TAM, UTAUT, and Wilson's framework explain adoption but underplay governance implications. Third, Public Value Theory offers a way to link user attitudes with governance, yet this connection remains underexplored. This theoretical study addresses that gap.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study adopts a multi-theoretical approach by combining models from information science with frameworks from public administration and governance studies. While user behavior has traditionally been analyzed using technology adoption models, this article argues that understanding users' attitudes towards e-resources in academic libraries requires a broader socio-political perspective. Academic libraries are not only educational service providers but also public institutions embedded within democratic and governance structures.

3.1 Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) describes user acceptance of technology based on two major constructs that include usefulness perception and ease of use perception (Davis, 1989). TAM has been extensively applied in the library setting to study the choices made by students, researchers, and faculty members regarding the adoption of e-resources (Sharma, 2019). When the e-resources are seen as enhancing the academic performance and are user-friendly, then they get adopted. On the other hand, when the systems are complicated or not in line with the requirements of the users, opposition ensues.

3.2 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

UTAUT is an extension of TAM in which the social influence is incorporated together with facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Applying to academic libraries, UTAUT proves that adoption is not only an individual choice but is also influenced by peers, faculty encouragement, institutional requirements, and infrastructural support. This is specifically the case in such situations as in Kerala, where the academic institutions are highly meshed with the local governance networks, and collective orientations also impact the individual technology behavior.

3.3 Wilson's Information Behavior Model

Information Behavior Model by Wilson (1999) takes a step further by indicating that information-seeking and use depend on needs, contexts, and barriers. Unlike TAM and UTAUT, which are concerned with individual cognition, the model by Wilson considers such structural and systemic limitations as low connectivity, lack of awareness, or inequality. These considerations may discriminate against the utilization of e-resources in cases of their availability through technology. The fact that Wilson identifies these barriers in the model makes the social justice element of library access a central concern in the governance and inclusion discussion (Robinson et al., 2015).

3.4 Public Value Theory

Public Value Theory (Moore, 1995) goes further than technology and behavior, and analyzes how the societal aspects of the public institutions contribute. In such a framework, libraries create a public value by making equity, transparency, trust, and participation of citizens possible. By providing access to e-resources, academic libraries are local knowledge infrastructures that decrease information asymmetries, increase civic literacy, and enable citizens to participate in the decision-making process (Aabø & Audunson, 2012). By doing so, libraries not only aid in education but also in the self-governance and consolidation of democracy in particular areas.

3.5 Integrative Perspective

When combined, these theories provide a multi-level analysis prism. Table 1 gives a general summary of the four key theoretical frameworks applied in this paper: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the Information Behavior Model developed by Wilson, and Public Value Theory. The given table underlines the main focus of each model, main constructs, and applicability to the research of user attitudes to e-resources in academic libraries. This comparison shows how the theories of technology acceptance reveal individual-level adoption, the model of Wilson explains the information-seeking behaviour and barriers, and the Public Value Theory relates the library services with the larger governance and other outcomes in society.

Table 1. Comparison of Theoretical Models Relevant to E-Resource Adoption

Model	Focus	Key Constructs	Relevance to E-Resource Adoption
Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989)	Technology acceptance	Perceived usefulness, Perceived ease of use	Explains how individual perceptions influence initial adoption of e-resources.
Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003)	Adoption and use behavior	Social influence, Facilitating conditions	Highlights the role of institutional support and peer norms in shaping adoption.

Wilson's Information Behavior Model (Wilson, 1999)	Information behavior in context	Information needs, Contextual factors, Barriers	Demonstrates how structural constraints (e.g., connectivity, cost, inequality) affect usage patterns.
Public Value Theory (Moore, 1995)	Governance and societal value	Equity, Participation, Transparency, Trust	Connects library services to broader governance outcomes and public good creation.

Figure 1 illustrates the vertical theoretical framework, which has been created in the study. The framework combines four significant viewpoints, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the Information Behavior Model by Wilson, and the Public Value Theory. In the top-to-bottom hierarchy, the figure presents the interplay between the individual-level attitudes and adoption factors (TAM and UTAUT) and information needs and barriers (Wilson) and eventually, the broader governance outcomes (Public Value Theory). At the base, there are academic libraries that are the infrastructures of local knowledge that create digital inclusion, equity, and public value.

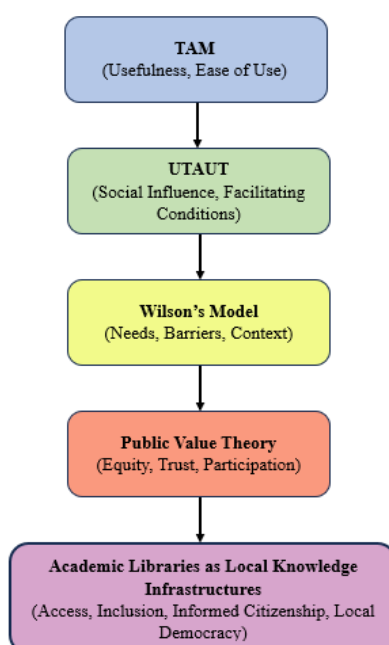


Figure 1. Integrated theoretical framework of e-resource adoption and public value in academic libraries

4. Discussion

4.1 User Awareness and Adoption

One of the most vital aspects of e-resource use is still regarded as user awareness. It possesses some students and faculty who merely make use of the traditional resources, as they are not aware of the level and the applicability of the e-resources. This is among the reasons why library outreach is significant. Awareness is not a single intervention but a process that needs to be dynamic to keep abreast with the changing technology and needs of the users. As an example, frequent workshops, in-curriculum digital literacy training, and continuous cooperation with professors may help show the usefulness of e-resources as something more obvious in the minds of the users.

4.2 Digital Literacy and Usability

Digital literacy does not mean that one is just capable of using electronics. It is linked to critical interpretation of online materials, the capacity to think through systems, and integrating the information in academic and civic tasks. Library interfaces are not easy to use and may be instructed poorly in how to proceed to access resources to hinder access and ruining the trust of users. Increasing digital literacy is, therefore, a social initiative of libraries, institutions of higher learning, and the government. One of how libraries can improve their credibility is through the ease of access, device friendliness, and sensitivity to local conditions of e-resource platforms in terms of language and culture.

4.3 Social and Institutional Influence

The mediating effect of social and institutional environment on e-resource adoption is very strong. Faculty approval, peer pressure, and administrative encouragement contribute to either the climate that enables the use or hinders the use. The range and power of e-resources are expanded as the information planning of academic institutions and local government institutions, including the decentralized system of Kerala, is combined. These symbiotic relationships between learning and government signify how libraries can become the analogues of local knowledge networks that will intercede between academic learning and societal growth.

4.4 Barriers and Information Behavior.

Structural barriers exist in spite of the level of technology development. Inadequate connectivity, excessive subscription, and poor socioeconomic status should reduce the inclusivity of e-resource access. When following the model developed by Wilson, we need to keep in mind that the intentions of the user need to be challenged by the systemic constraints. On the one hand, these barriers can be eliminated only through collaboration: governments should invest in digital infrastructure, universities should negotiate regarding access policies, and libraries should encourage open-access activities. The capacity to break these obstacles renders the libraries not just educative but also political in their activity that is guided to digital justice and information equity.

Figure 2 depicts the forces and obstacles that influence the user's attitude to e-resources in academic libraries. On the left-hand side, the enablers of adoption are expressed in the form of awareness, digital literacy, perceived usefulness, ease of use, institutional support, and peer influence. Barriers are depicted on the right, and they include poor usability, lack of awareness, limited connectivity, high subscription, and socio-economic disparities and institutional bottlenecks. In making the comparison between these factors, the figure brings out the dual elements that govern the effectiveness of the user in using the digital library services.

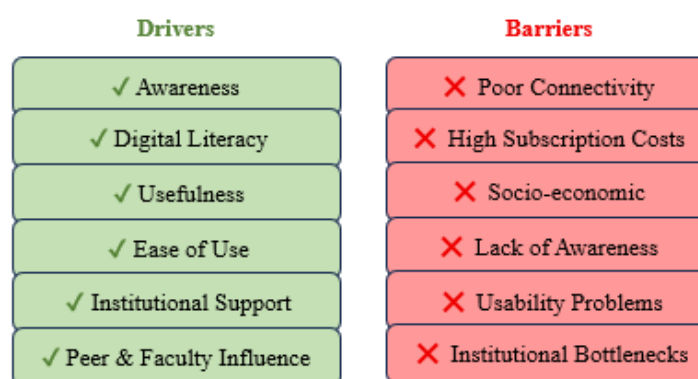


Figure 2. Drivers and barriers influencing user attitudes toward e-resources

4.5 Libraries as Public Value Institutions

When viewed through the lens of Public Value Theory, libraries emerge as far more than academic service providers. They act as public institutions that embody principles of equity, trust, and collective well-being. Each positive user experience with e-resources reinforces the legitimacy of libraries as institutions of democracy. In this sense, fostering positive user attitudes is not a narrow technical issue but a broader governance imperative. Academic libraries thus help build informed citizenries, support evidence-based policymaking, and reduce knowledge gaps that perpetuate inequality.

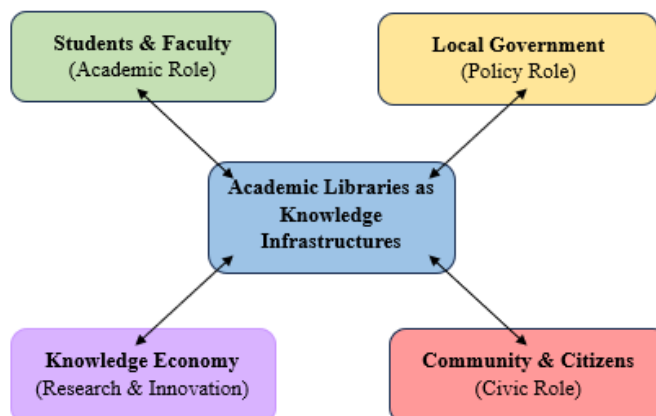


Figure 3. Governance model of academic libraries as knowledge infrastructures

Figure 3 illustrates the governance-oriented conceptual model that positions academic libraries at the center of local knowledge ecosystems. Surrounding the library are four key stakeholder groups—students and faculty (academic role), local government (policy role), community and citizens (civic role), and the knowledge economy (research and innovation). Bidirectional arrows highlight the reciprocal relationships between libraries and these actors, emphasizing their collective role in fostering digital inclusion, equity, and participatory governance.

4.6 Synthesis

Combined, these implications demonstrate that it is not possible to examine the attitudes to e-resources in a vacuum without relating them to the wider society and governance. Patterns of adoption are influenced by the combination of users' perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, institutional enabling factors, and structural constraints. Simultaneously, the patterns affect the capacity of libraries to make a contribution to the public sphere directly. Of relevance in the discussion is the fact that, since academic libraries shape the attitudes of the users, they, in turn, indirectly play a role in the quality of democratic governance, participatory citizenship, and paleo-local development.

5. Implications

This theoretical insight of this study has significant policy, practice, and future research implications. As local knowledge infrastructures, academic libraries can be important institutions to bridge the gap between education, technology, and governance. The policy, practice, and research implications of positioning academic libraries as local knowledge infrastructures are described in Table 2. It focuses on the role of libraries in digital inclusion and equal access (policy), better service provision and interaction with users (practice), and the creation of new paths to the exploration of the relationship between information behavior and governance and the value of the population (research). These implications can be viewed together to represent the multi-dimensional nature of libraries to foster both academic and democratic development.

Table 2. Policy, Practice, and Research Implications of the Study

Policy Implications	Practical Implications	Research Implications
Recognize academic libraries as strategic actors in governance and digital inclusion.	Adopt user-centered approaches through digital literacy programs and usability audits.	Test the integrated framework (TAM, UTAUT, Wilson, Public Value) in diverse contexts.
Integrate libraries into national and local e-governance, open access, and lifelong learning strategies.	Collaborate with local governments, schools, and community organizations to expand reach.	Conduct comparative and longitudinal studies on evolving user attitudes.
Provide subsidies for e-resources and invest in affordable digital infrastructure.	Embed librarians in governance projects such as local development planning or digital literacy campaigns.	Examine the role of emerging technologies (AI, big data, digital repositories) in shaping adoption.
Promote inclusive access policies that reduce socio-economic and regional disparities.	Strengthen institutional support and peer-driven adoption cultures within universities.	Explore cross-disciplinary connections between library science, governance, and information policy.

6. Conclusion

The attitudes of users regarding the use of e-resources in academic libraries have been discussed in the paper by integrating four theoretical frameworks, such as TAM, UTAUT, the Information Behavior Model created by Wilson, and the Public Value Theory. As a team, these structures will provide a comprehensive idea of the entire interaction between personal perceptions, social determinants, institutional settings, and governance needs in the formation of e-resources utilization. The discussion demonstrates that positive user attitudes do not only guarantee success in academics but also in the creation of value to the masses. As users discover the e-resources to be available, helpful, and trustworthy, they enhance their individual learning products, besides advancing the role of libraries as non-discriminatory members of society. Conversely, digital illiteracy or bad usability, or socioeconomic disparities are all forms of inhibitors that reduce not only adoption but also the potential of libraries as democratic infrastructures.

The end also notes that academic libraries need to rebrand themselves as stakeholders in the governance process. Libraries can transcend the academic sector and can be used to contribute to the development of this local area and civic empowerment through digital literacy promotion, barriers to access, and collaboration with local self-government institutions.

Finally, the provided study suggests that the future of academic libraries lies not only in the possibility of accessing e-resources but also in the possibility of building fair and participatory knowledge environments. Improving user beliefs and strategies toward e-resources is, therefore, both an academic concern and a governance concern, and is aligned with the broader agenda of establishing inclusive, knowledge-based, and democratic communities.

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