

**USER PERCEPTION TOWARDS ACADEMIC LIBRARY SERVICES:
A CASE STUDY AT UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA, SRI LANKA**

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The main purpose of the library is to provide information services that are useful and accessible to the users. However, it should be determined if the users use such services. Are they really aware of it? What kind of perceptions they have towards these services? The Objective of this study was to find answers to these research questions. The study was carried out in the Faculty of Arts, University of Peradeniya and the sample was 40 teachers and 400 students that was 20% and 10% of the population respectively. The response rate was 63% and 69% respectively. The survey inquired the perceptions of users towards certain aspects. Of the respondents 76% of staff and 74% of students agreed that library materials are current and up to date. A high level of agreement was shown (78% of staff and 87% of students) for the excellent assistance received from the library staff. Forty seven percent (47%) of staff and 39% students said that OPAC is useful but the level of agreement (staff 32% of and 19% of students) was low on the importance of library awareness programmes. Survey further measured the level of awareness and use of some of the services offered by the library. It was evident from the results that the level of awareness and usage of library services of both user groups were similar to some extent. Both staff (65%) and students (67%) showed a wide familiarity with the use of the internet facility provided by the library followed by the thesis collection having 62% of staff and 59% of students. Both staff (48%) and students (67%) used photocopy service whereas the usage of current periodicals (staff=14% and students 9%) and palm leaf collection (staff= 11% and students =6%) was less. A significant finding was the very low level of awareness and use of the Digital Library (staff= 6% and students =2%) and Inter Library Loan service (staff= 4% and students=00%). In general, the findings indicated that inadequate communication between the library and its users as well as lack of knowledge and the low state of awareness of certain services and resources and inadequate training to use the services are the main factors responsible for the ways users perceive the services offered by the library. The study concluded that users were not receiving the full benefit of the library services and that some of the services were underutilized. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the academic library should conduct comprehensive information skills development programmes to promote awareness and increase use of library services. It was recommended that regular orientation sessions should be conducted for students to raise their awareness of the library services, so that their usage will be increased. The survey further established a need for a better liaison between library and faculty staff. Therefore it is also recommended to identify strategies to develop library faculty collaboration.