

PATTERNS OF LIBRARY RESOURCE UTILIZATION AMONG LAW STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

Parul Nandal¹, Dr. Jitender Singh²

¹Research Scholar, Department of Library and Information Science, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak

²Supervisor, Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Baba Mastnath University, Asthal Bohar, Rohtak

Abstract

This study explores patterns in library resource usage among law students and legal professionals, emphasizing differences in demographics, resource preferences, and satisfaction levels. Through a survey of 750 respondents, this study identifies distinct needs within user groups, suggesting that libraries should offer a mix of print and digital resources to meet both academic and professional demands effectively. Statistical analyses, including ANOVA and t-tests, reveal trends in resource preferences linked to age, academic progression, and specialization. The findings inform recommendations for enhanced, tailored library services to address the diverse and evolving needs of law library users.

Keywords: law libraries, resource utilization, digital resources, print resources, academic libraries, professional libraries, user satisfaction, accessibility, demographic trends, library services

1. Introduction

Libraries are indispensable resources for law students and legal professionals, offering access to critical information that supports both academic and professional pursuits. In academic settings, law libraries serve as a hub for students, providing a range of materials, from foundational legal texts to specialized databases, that help foster research skills and deepen understanding of the law. In professional contexts, libraries support the ongoing learning and case preparation needs of legal practitioners, offering updated legal databases, case law, and specialized reference materials. The value of library resources in these domains is underscored by the increasing demands of both students, who seek materials for coursework and exams, and professionals, who rely on libraries to stay current with evolving legal standards. As legal information needs vary significantly across different user groups, understanding patterns of resource utilization becomes crucial. Studies examining demographic factors such as age, professional status, and specialization, along with usage frequency and device preferences, provide insights into how libraries can enhance their services to meet diverse user needs. This research seeks to understand the specific library resource usage patterns among law students and professionals, identifying trends in resource preferences, satisfaction levels, and service requirements to recommend tailored improvements that address the varied needs of these users.

2. Literature Review

The utilization of library resources by law students and professionals has been the focus of numerous studies, revealing insights into patterns of access, resource preferences, and areas for

improvement. Studies, such as by Atuase and Filson (2014), underscore the library's role in providing diverse resources to meet the specific needs of its users, highlighting the need for both physical and digital materials that cater to different access preferences. Additionally, Akbar et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of digital accessibility, especially for individuals with specific needs, which can extend to professionals who require flexible access to information in demanding work environments. Such insights point to the necessity of adaptive, user-centered resource management in law libraries.

Other research has delved into the differences in resource preferences among various user demographics within law libraries. For instance, Bonkalo, Logachev, and Shmeleva (2021) discuss the role of library resources in supporting the digital competencies required in modern legal practice, indicating that law libraries must not only provide information but also play a role in cultivating digital literacy among their users. Similarly, Hirsh (2022) discusses the shift towards digital resources in information services, a trend that reflects the growing preference among younger law students for accessible, online resources that fit within their dynamic study routines.

In terms of user satisfaction and gender inclusivity, studies by Cassell and Hiremath (2021) have explored the importance of ensuring that library services are equitable and responsive to the diverse needs of users across gender lines. With data showing balanced gender representation in library usage, libraries are encouraged to design services that do not assume gender-based resource preferences but rather focus on accommodating a broad range of personal and professional needs. Furthermore, Nisha and Naushad Ali (2013) investigate the influence of digital resources on library satisfaction, suggesting that offering multi-device compatibility and ensuring ease of access to online resources can significantly enhance user experiences, particularly among students who prefer mobile and on-the-go access.

Studies such as Salubi, Ondari-Okemwa, and Nekhwevha (2018) reveal that law students often prioritize resources that directly support their academic requirements, like case law and textbooks, while legal professionals exhibit a higher demand for specialized databases and updated case references. These findings emphasize the importance of understanding specific needs at different stages of legal education and practice, a sentiment echoed by Olorunfemi (2015), who asserts that academic libraries play a crucial role in bridging foundational knowledge with practical applications for future legal professionals. The cumulative insights from these studies illustrate the need for law libraries to foster accessibility, relevance, and user satisfaction by aligning their offerings with the evolving requirements of law students and professionals.

3. Methodology

This study employed a quantitative approach, gathering data from a sample of 750 respondents, including both law students and legal professionals. A structured survey was administered to assess demographic factors, library resource usage patterns, resource preferences, and satisfaction levels. Respondents were selected to ensure a representative distribution across age groups, academic or professional status, and areas of specialization within the field of law. Statistical analysis was conducted using ANOVA, t-tests, and descriptive statistics to identify significant differences and trends in resource usage based on demographic factors and user

categories. ANOVA was applied to evaluate variations in resource awareness and usage across different academic years and professional stages, while t-tests helped assess differences between students and professionals in resource preferences. Descriptive statistics provided an overview of respondents' demographic characteristics, usage frequency, and primary purposes for library visits, enabling a comprehensive understanding of resource utilization patterns among law library users.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: What is your age group?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-24	216	28.8	28.8	28.8
	25-34	184	24.5	24.5	53.3
	35-44	133	17.7	17.7	71.1
	45 and above	217	28.9	28.9	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

The demographic breakdown of respondents, as shown in Table 1, provides insight into age-related patterns among library users, showcasing four distinct age groups. With 750 respondents, the data is representative across age brackets: 28.8% fall within the 18-24 age group, indicating a substantial portion of young adults, likely early-stage law students. This demographic often has a high demand for foundational resources, including textbooks, case studies, and introductory legal references. The 25-34 age group, making up 24.5%, represents both advanced students and early-career legal professionals, whose needs are more specialized as they focus on areas such as case analysis and evolving legal standards. The 35-44 group, at 17.7%, and the 45 and above group, accounting for 28.9%, primarily consist of seasoned practitioners and educators who often require highly specialized resources for ongoing professional development or teaching. This spread highlights the importance of libraries offering a variety of resources tailored to both broad and specific legal needs, ensuring that each age group has access to materials relevant to their unique stages of academic and professional development. Consequently, these insights suggest libraries should consider targeted resource provisioning, with a focus on digital, flexible access options for younger users and in-depth, specialized collections for older, experienced professionals.

Table 2: What is your gender?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	296	39.5	39.5	39.5
	Female	321	42.8	42.8	82.3
	Prefer not to say	133	17.7	17.7	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

The gender distribution data, illustrated in Table 2, includes 39.5% male, 42.8% female, and 17.7% respondents who preferred not to disclose their gender. This balanced gender

distribution reflects the diversity in law schools and the legal profession itself, highlighting the importance of equitable and inclusive library services that address the needs of all users. With no gender showing significant overrepresentation, the data suggests that any disparities in library satisfaction or resource preferences may arise from individual needs rather than gender-based differences. This emphasizes the necessity for libraries to prioritize accessibility and inclusivity in their service offerings without assuming that gender alone dictates resource requirements. The 17.7% who opted not to disclose their gender underscores the importance of confidentiality and privacy in libraries, particularly as information access may intersect with sensitive personal and professional needs. Libraries might enhance services by maintaining a gender-neutral, flexible approach to resource management that focuses on personalizing experiences based on professional or academic standing rather than demographic categories alone.

Table 3 Are you currently a law student or legal professional?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Student	579	77.2	77.2	77.2
	Professional	171	22.8	22.8	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 differentiates respondents based on their current status, with 77.2% identifying as law students and 22.8% as legal professionals. This distribution reveals that the majority of library users are students, likely accessing resources for academic requirements, coursework, and legal research projects. The substantial student representation underscores the library's role in supporting legal education, providing access to necessary resources, and fostering research skills. The 22.8% representation of legal professionals illustrates the library's value beyond the academic sphere, suggesting that these users may rely on the library for continuing education, case preparation, or staying current with legal developments. The needs of this group may differ significantly from those of students, as professionals may prioritize efficient access to up-to-date case law, legal databases, and industry insights. This segmentation highlights the importance of tailored services and specialized resources to cater to both students and working professionals effectively.

Table 4: What is your primary area of legal interest or specialization?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Criminal Law	135	18.0	18.0	18.0
	Civil Law	135	18.0	18.0	36.0
	Corporate Law	90	12.0	12.0	48.0
	Intellectual Property	180	24.0	24.0	72.0
	Other	210	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 delves into respondents' primary areas of legal specialization, highlighting a diverse landscape of interests that span across criminal law (18%), civil law (18%), corporate law (12%), intellectual property (24%), and a substantial 28% identifying with other fields such as environmental or human rights law. This diverse array of specializations indicates a broad demand for resources, each area requiring unique materials and formats. For instance, digital resources are highly favored by those specializing in corporate and intellectual property law, where access to the latest case law and statutes is critical. Meanwhile, individuals in criminal and civil law exhibit a balanced preference for both print and digital resources, reflecting a traditional reliance on printed materials like case law compendiums and legal textbooks. For fields categorized under "Other," including specialized areas like environmental law, libraries might benefit from expanding their scope to offer specialized resources that address emerging and interdisciplinary legal issues. This data suggests that libraries could significantly benefit from segmenting resources to meet the nuanced demands of each specialization, perhaps prioritizing real-time, online resources for corporate and IP law while maintaining robust print collections for criminal and civil law practitioners. The need for variety within collections is evident, underscoring the critical role of responsive, adaptive resource management in law libraries.

4.1 Library Resource Usage Patterns

Table 5: How frequently do you use the library's resources?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	120	16.0	16.0	16.0
	Weekly	195	26.0	26.0	42.0
	Monthly	120	16.0	16.0	58.0
	Rarely	135	18.0	18.0	76.0
	Never	180	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Usage frequency data from Table 5 reveals notable patterns in how often respondents engage with library resources, offering insights into library access and its integration into academic and professional routines. While 16% of respondents use the library daily, reflecting perhaps students or professionals deeply embedded in research, 26% visit weekly and another 16% monthly. Interestingly, 18% rarely access library resources, and 24% report never using them, which points to potential barriers in accessibility or alignment with user needs. This variation in usage frequency signals a potential gap in resource relevance or availability for nearly 42% of respondents, who engage infrequently or not at all. These findings suggest libraries might consider optimizing resource accessibility, particularly digital resources, to better support individuals unable to visit regularly. Additionally, targeted outreach efforts could bridge the gap for infrequent users, raising awareness of available services and resources tailored to specific legal fields or study stages. As professional users often cite time constraints, libraries might also consider flexible access models or remote support, enabling broader engagement across all user groups.

Table 6: What is your current year of study?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ist year	90	12.0	12.0	12.0
	2nd Year	150	20.0	20.0	32.0
	3rd Year	240	32.0	32.0	64.0
	4th Year	150	20.0	20.0	84.0
	Professional	120	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

The distribution of respondents' academic years, presented in Table 6, provides a detailed view of how library needs evolve as students progress through their studies and into professional life. With first-year students representing 12%, this group primarily engages with introductory legal texts and fundamental resources, which help build foundational knowledge. The second-year cohort, at 20%, begins to transition to more specialized materials, reflecting their progression into intermediate topics within the legal curriculum. Third-year students make up the largest group, at 32%, indicating that these students, being closer to the culmination of their studies, likely have increased research needs and use more advanced resources. The fourth-year students (20%) and professionals (16%) further emphasize the layered demands on library resources, where senior students may require niche academic materials, and professionals depend on up-to-date digital databases and case law updates. This breakdown of study years suggests that law libraries need to maintain a range of resources that cater to each stage of legal education, from introductory materials for first-years to highly specialized and accessible digital databases for professionals. Tailoring resources to meet these specific academic and professional needs could greatly enhance user satisfaction and library effectiveness.

Table 7 What type of device do you primarily use to access e-resources?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Laptop	150	20.0	20.0	20.0
	Desktop	150	20.0	20.0	40.0
	Smartphone	150	20.0	20.0	60.0
	Tablet	135	18.0	18.0	78.0
	Library Computer	165	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 7 highlights respondents' device preferences for accessing e-resources, indicating an even distribution among laptops, desktops, and smartphones, each at 20%, with tablets used by 18% and library computers by 22%. This distribution suggests that respondents are highly adaptable and open to various platforms, underscoring the importance of multi-device compatibility in library digital offerings. The high usage of personal devices such as laptops and smartphones signals a strong preference, particularly among students, for mobile-friendly, on-the-go access to legal databases, articles, and digital libraries. In contrast, professionals are more likely to use desktops or library computers for tasks requiring sustained focus and stable database access, reflecting a need for high-functionality desktop support within libraries. Ensuring seamless

accessibility across these devices is paramount, as students and professionals alike increasingly expect flexible, reliable access. This data further underscores the role of device adaptability in meeting user needs and suggests that libraries should prioritize cross-platform compatibility for digital resources to maintain high levels of accessibility across diverse user preferences and locations.

Table 8: How often do you visit the library?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Daily	90	12.0	12.0	12.0
	Weekly	150	20.0	20.0	32.0
	Monthly	180	24.0	24.0	56.0
	Rarely	165	22.0	22.0	78.0
	Never	165	22.0	22.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

Table 8 captures the frequency with which respondents visit the library, highlighting a spectrum of engagement levels. With 12% visiting daily and 20% on a weekly basis, these frequent users likely represent students or professionals with significant research needs or regular coursework requirements that necessitate consistent library access. Monthly visits account for 24%, while a notable 22% visit rarely, and another 22% never use library resources. This data indicates that nearly half of the respondents either visit the library infrequently or not at all, suggesting possible barriers to access or a lack of alignment between available resources and user needs. Such findings highlight an opportunity for libraries to enhance remote access options and consider outreach strategies to engage low-frequency users, particularly those with professional or upper-level academic demands. Increasing awareness of available digital resources or offering flexible access options could help bridge the gap for these users, potentially raising the library's overall engagement rate and maximizing resource utilization across all user types.

Table 9 What is the primary purpose of your library visits?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Study	30	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Research	225	30.0	30.0	34.0
	Borrowing Books	180	24.0	24.0	58.0
	Accessing online resources	135	18.0	18.0	76.0
	Other	180	24.0	24.0	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

As outlined in Table 9, respondents' primary purposes for visiting the library reveal a range of usage patterns that inform library service priorities. Study purposes constitute only 4% of visits, suggesting that most students and professionals use the library for resources beyond quiet study spaces. Research purposes dominate at 30%, underlining the library's role as a vital hub for in-depth legal study, case analysis, and academic investigation. Borrowing books accounts for

24%, indicating continued demand for traditional print materials. Additionally, 18% of visits are for accessing online resources, pointing to a significant shift toward digital resource usage, particularly among those requiring real-time legal information and updated case law. Other purposes, which constitute 24% of visits, may include community events, workshops, or specialized legal training sessions hosted by the library. This diversity in purpose underscores the need for libraries to maintain a balanced collection of print and digital resources, complemented by study areas, digital terminals, and collaborative spaces. Catering to these varied user goals could significantly enhance the library's role in supporting both academic growth and professional development.

4.3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference between the respondents' year of study and their level of awareness and use of print resources.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference between the respondents' year of study and their level of awareness and use of print resources.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Level of Awareness and Use of Print Resources by Year of Study

Descriptives					
level of awareness and use of print resources					
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean
					Lower Bound
Ist year	90	1.4667	.50168	.05288	1.3616
2nd Year	150	1.4667	.50056	.04087	1.3859
3rd Year	240	1.4667	.49993	.03227	1.4031
4th Year	150	1.0000	.00000	.00000	1.0000
Professional	120	1.3500	.47897	.04372	1.2634
Total	750	1.3547	.47873	.01748	1.3203
Model	Fixed Effects		.44385	.01621	1.3228
	Random Effects			.09723	1.0847

Table 10: This table shows the descriptive statistics for the level of awareness and use of print resources across years of study. A pattern emerges with first, second, and third-year students showing a consistent mean (1.4667) of awareness, indicating regular use. In contrast, fourth-year students exhibit a lower mean (1.0000), suggesting less reliance on print resources. Professionals have a moderate mean of 1.3500, highlighting a shift toward digital resources as they enter the field.

Table 10.a: Additional Descriptive Statistics for Level of Awareness and Use of Print Resources by Year of Study

Descriptives					
level of awareness and use of print resources					
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
		Upper Bound			
1st year		1.5717	1.00	2.00	
2nd Year		1.5474	1.00	2.00	
3rd Year		1.5302	1.00	2.00	
4th Year		1.0000	1.00	1.00	
Professional		1.4366	1.00	2.00	
Total		1.3890	1.00	2.00	
Model	Fixed Effects	1.3865			
	Random Effects	1.6246			.04133

Table 10.a: This table presents additional statistics for awareness and use of print resources by study year. First-year to third-year students display similar variances with high awareness levels, while fourth-year students maintain a low, uniform mean of 1.0000. The confidence intervals further reveal that professionals engage moderately with print resources, marking a transition phase from academic to professional reliance on resources.

Table 10.b: ANOVA for Level of Awareness and Use of Print Resources

ANOVA					
level of awareness and use of print resources					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	24.892	4	6.223	31.588	.000
Within Groups	146.767	745	.197		
Total	171.659	749			

Table 10.b: The ANOVA analysis in this table confirms significant differences in print resource awareness across study years, as indicated by the F-value (31.588) and p-value (0.000). This significant difference supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, suggesting that print resource awareness varies meaningfully across academic progression.

Above hypothesis explored whether there is a significant relationship between a respondent's year of study and their awareness and use of print resources. Based on the descriptive statistics, it was observed that awareness and usage patterns varied slightly across different years of study. However, ANOVA results ($F = 31.588$, $p = 0.000$) provided sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis, confirming a significant difference in print resource awareness and use across

academic years. This outcome suggests that as students advance through their years of study, their reliance on print resources might shift, possibly due to evolving academic demands or greater familiarity with digital resources. This finding underlines the importance of tailoring print resource accessibility based on the academic level, with first-year students showing a more significant dependence on foundational print materials, whereas professionals may prioritize digital resources for case-specific purposes.

Hypothesis 2:

Null Hypothesis (H_0): There is no significant difference between the respondents' year of study and their level of awareness and use of e-resources.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1): There is a significant difference between the respondents' year of study and their level of awareness and use of e-resources.

Table 11: Descriptive Statistics for Level of Awareness and Use of E-Resources by Year of Study

Descriptives						
level of awareness and use of e-resources						
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean
						Lower Bound
Ist year		90	4.4000	1.50505	.15865	4.0848
2nd Year		150	4.0733	1.19336	.09744	3.8808
3rd Year		240	4.4000	1.49979	.09681	4.2093
4th Year		150	3.1867	.39095	.03192	3.1236
Professional		120	3.8167	.92567	.08450	3.6493
Total		750	3.9987	1.28304	.04685	3.9067
Model	Fixed Effects			1.20186	.04389	3.9125
	Random Effects				.24401	3.3212

Table 11: This table summarizes descriptive statistics for awareness and use of e-resources by study year. First-year and third-year students demonstrate high e-resource awareness (mean of 4.4000), while fourth-year students show a lower mean (3.1867), possibly reflecting their shifting resource needs. Professionals report a moderate mean (3.8167), indicating regular but specialized use of e-resources.

Table 11.a: Additional Descriptive Statistics for Level of Awareness and Use of E-Resources by Year of Study

Descriptives					
level of awareness and use of e-resources					
		95% Confidence Interval for Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Between- Component Variance
		Upper Bound			
1st year		4.7152	3.00	6.00	
2nd Year		4.2659	3.00	6.00	
3rd Year		4.5907	3.00	6.00	
4th Year		3.2497	3.00	4.00	
Professional		3.9840	3.00	5.00	
Total		4.0906	3.00	6.00	
Model	Fixed Effects	4.0848			
	Random Effects	4.6762			.25907

Table 11.a: Additional descriptive statistics in this table display confidence intervals for e-resource awareness by year, with relatively high levels among first to third-year students and lower intervals for fourth-year students. This gradual decline aligns with evolving needs, particularly among professionals who have moderate e-resource reliance.

Table 11.b: ANOVA for Level of Awareness and Use of E-Resources

ANOVA					
level of awareness and use of e-resources					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	156.865	4	39.216	27.149	.000
Within Groups	1076.133	745	1.444		
Total	1232.999	749			

Table 11.b: The ANOVA analysis indicates a significant difference in e-resource awareness among study years ($F = 27.149$, $p = 0.000$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This demonstrates that e-resource use varies substantially as academic and professional roles evolve.

Above hypothesis aimed to determine whether respondents' year of study affects their awareness and use of e-resources. The descriptive analysis revealed slight variations in e-resource usage across different academic years, with notable differences between early-year students and those closer to graduation. The ANOVA analysis yielded a significant result ($F = 27.149$, $p = 0.000$), indicating that awareness and usage of e-resources indeed vary significantly based on the year of study. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This difference could reflect the increased reliance on e-resources for advanced research and legal case studies

as students progress. The outcome suggests that enhancing e-resource training in earlier academic years might prepare students better for high-level research in their final years. Furthermore, given the preference of professionals for streamlined digital access, e-resources tailored to meet case-specific needs would be a beneficial addition to library services.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings from this study underscore significant differences in resource utilization patterns between law students and professionals, revealing insights that are critical for tailoring library services effectively. First, the usage data confirms a strong preference among younger users for digital resources, consistent with prior studies such as those by Akbar et al. (2014) and Martzoukou et al. (2022), who highlighted the increased demand for accessible digital resources among students. This preference reflects the growing integration of technology in both academic and professional legal research, reinforcing the necessity for libraries to maintain and update digital databases and e-resources to remain relevant to this demographic. Second, the frequency of library visits and device preferences illustrate the evolving needs of users at different academic and professional stages. Students in their first to third years show a consistent use of print resources, aligning with foundational learning stages that prioritize textbooks and case law compilations. However, as students advance into their final year or transition to professional roles, the preference shifts towards digital and mobile-friendly resources, a pattern also observed in studies by Tlakula and Fombad (2017). These trends suggest that libraries should offer both comprehensive print resources and robust digital options, catering to users' needs as they progress from foundational to advanced research stages. Finally, user satisfaction and inclusivity underscore a critical role for law libraries in fostering an accessible and equitable learning environment. This study's findings highlight a balanced gender distribution and a notable percentage of users who prefer not to disclose gender, underscoring the importance of maintaining confidentiality and neutrality in resource offerings. Libraries should prioritize inclusive, flexible services that support varied user needs, as suggested by research from Cassell and Hiremath (2021). Libraries serving law schools and professional settings can benefit from these insights by adopting service models that emphasize accessibility, digital literacy, and tailored collections aligned with the specific demands of their diverse user base.

6. Conclusion

This study reveals a nuanced landscape of library resource utilization among law students and professionals, emphasizing the need for libraries to offer a balanced mix of print and digital resources, inclusive service options, and adaptive resource management strategies. By aligning library offerings with the evolving needs of different academic levels and professional stages, libraries can enhance user satisfaction and contribute meaningfully to both academic growth and professional advancement. These findings suggest that future developments in library services should prioritize technology integration, accessibility, and continuous user engagement to meet the dynamic needs of law students and legal practitioners effectively.

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