

Analyzing the Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Research Scholars of Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore



Library Science

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T. THILAGAVATHI

Assistant Librarian, Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore – 641 043

ABSTRACT

Technology driven world brings changes in the learning process of the users. Due to the transformation in the learning process, the information needs and seeking pattern of the users are also changed. Information seeking is a conscious effort to fulfill the needs of the user. Researchers are in need of information to complete their investigation. Time is the major constraint for the researcher. Retrieval of relevant information is the Himalayan task for the researchers. The changing information needs of the user exert pressure in information dissemination process. This paper is an attempt to study the information needs and seeking behaviour of research scholars of Avinashilingam University for Women, Coimbatore. For evaluating the study a questionnaire was constructed and distributed among the research scholars of the University. The data were collected from the 166 respondents and statistically analyzed. E-resources and internet are the primary resources for the respondents. The findings of the study show that overflowing of information and low internet speed are the problems faced by the scholars while seeking information.

Introduction

Technology driven world brings changes in the learning process of the users in the academic Institutions. Due to the transformation in the learning process, the information needs and seeking pattern of the users have been changed. The users encounter numerous problems when searching for information to meet academic needs (e.g. an assigned research paper). The changing information needs of the user exert pressure in information dissemination process. Understanding the information needs of library clientele is necessary for planning and providing high quality library services as well as to avoid misallocating resources. Therefore, to keep pace with the changing information need, information centres have to use the modern technologies and introduce newer information systems for retrieval and dissemination process. Understanding the user is winning half the battle in the provision of Information services (Sridhar, 1988). Hence the libraries and information centers are user-friendly, ready to fulfill the needs of the user in a modified way.

The present study was confined to the information needs and seeking behaviour of research scholars of Avinashilingam University for Women in Coimbatore city in Tamilnadu. Coimbatore is the second largest city in the state of Tamilnadu, popularly known as "Manchester of South India" for the number of textile mills in and around the city. It is an educational hub of South India and the city has got 7 universities, 78 engineering colleges, 3 medical colleges, 35 polytechnic colleges and more than 150 Arts and Science colleges having a very high reputation in India and abroad. Coimbatore has an average literacy rate of 84.3 per cent, higher than the national average of 74.04 per cent. Female literacy is 78.92 per cent and the male literacy rate is 89.06 per cent in Coimbatore district.

Avinashilingam University plays a vital role in increasing female literacy rate in Coimbatore city. The university introduced innovative methods in teaching, evaluation, research and outreach programme. It provides an environment conducive to learning and development. The library attached with the Avinashilingam University is well equipped and up-to-date. To make best use of information sources and services of the library, it is indispensable to conduct a user study. This study is an effort to analyze the strength and weakness of the library.

Statement of the Problem

The research scholars are tech-savvy, ambitious, creative, collaborative, quick, multitasking and hyperaware. They need information with a single touch from the library. Time is another major constraint for them. The scholars expect services and resources to be available 24x7 in a variety of modes. To handle all these challenges, the librarians should serve as facilitators in acquiring and providing quality information. The librarians should re-evaluate their roles and offer innovative services with the emerging needs of the user with all available technologies and resources. In this situation, a user study is indispensable to study the strength and weakness of the existing resources, to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the services and also to introduce new

systems in the library to accommodate the various needs of the library users. This investigation is an attempt to assess the information needs and modify the retrieval techniques followed by the respondents and dissemination process of the library.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find the answers to the following questions:

1. To explore the information needs of the sample
2. To study the purpose of seeking information of the sample
3. To find out the various sources and channels of information used by the sample
4. To study the problems faced by the sample while seeking and using information
5. To study the extent of use of library services by the research scholars

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated in relation to the study:

1. There is no significant relationship among the scores of information needs and information seeking behaviour obtained by the researchers of various faculties
2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information needs and information seeking behaviour obtained by researchers of various faculties

Literature Review

Review of related study helps the researcher to develop clarity and comprehension. The findings of the earlier studies would guide the researcher in setting the hypotheses and objectives and enable to evaluate the validity of the findings. The attitude of the researchers is changing day-by-day. Researchers are interested in updating their knowledge, spending more time on the internet for retrieving information than the printed resources.

Sanjay Kumar (2013) conducted a survey using structured questionnaire to study the information seeking pattern of Arts and Sciences researchers of Banaras Hindu University. The results revealed that electronic journals were the most preferred source of information for both the groups of research scholars. More than half of the science researchers used online resources to gain nascent information while on the other hand still many of arts researchers used information published in print form. Information specialist seemed to be information intermediary to science scholars, while in case of arts researchers the same role was played by the librarians.

Wang (2012) acknowledged the information-seeking behaviors of academic researchers in the United States, China and Greece. The findings of the study indicated the importance of information seeking using informal channels, such as reciprocal interaction at conferences and contacts with colleagues and subject experts. Overlapping in access to information resources also blurred the

boundaries between different types of information systems. The result showed that the major Information seeking activities were handled in both traditional and diverse new ways in the Internet environment.

Seethalekshmi (2011) conducted a study on the use of e-resources by the students and research scholars of Faculty of Arts in the University of Kerala. Results showed that 56.67 percent of the respondents used internet for educational purposes and 19.16 percent of respondents used internet for checking e-mail. Google is the most preferred search engine for most of the respondents. Yahoo was their second choice. The purpose of using e-resources revealed that 49.2 percent of respondents used e-resources mainly for academic purposes, 27.5 percent respondents used it for seminar presentations and 11.7 percent used for project works. The findings of the study exposed that internet resources were the most used e-resources among the respondents from the Arts Faculty. It was also found from the analysis that most of the departments were not giving enough facility for the use of e-resources.

Haines et al (2010) assessed the information seeking behaviour of basic science researchers and its implications on library services. The variety of information sources used by the basic science researchers ranged from Internet to highly technical databases. To maximize the use of library resources and services by the respondents, the library resources must be accessible via departmental websites.

Methodology

The data for this study was collected using questionnaire among the research scholars of the Avinashilingam University for women, Coimbatore. The investigator consulted a group of experts and modified the questionnaire based on their comments. A questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed questions was prepared and distributed to one hundred and sixty six research scholars. The respondents were requested to fill in the questionnaire given to them. The sample represented the scholars from the following departments: Resource Management, Food Service Management and Dietetics, Food Science and Nutrition, Textiles and Clothing, Human Development, Home Science Extension Education, Lifelong Learning and Extension, Biochemistry, Biotechnology and Bioinformatics, Chemistry, Zoology, Botany, Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science, Psychology, Tamil, English, Economics, Hindi, French, Music, Management, Commerce, Tourism Management, Education, Special Education, Physical Education, Community College and Engineering. The responses received from one hundred and sixty six research scholars were tabulated and subjected to further statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Information Needs of Research Scholars

Information needs and information seeking behaviour of the sample is vital for developing library collections, upgrading facilities and improving library services to effectively meet the information needs of the user. Both descriptive and differential analysis are employed in the analysis of information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Researchers and Faculty Members.

Analysis of Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Researchers

Information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Research Scholars included were studied under the following heading: for doing research, to renew knowledge, to study further, for retrospective information, current information, statistical information, bibliographical information, research information, social information, professional and career information and government/non-government organizations' information (National/International). The five point scales with options very often, often, moderately, rarely, and very rarely and the scores assigned were 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The obtained responses were scored for a maximum score of 60. Faculty Members' scores were ranging from 44 to 59. Table 1 shows the distribution of scores

on information needs and information seeking behaviour of researchers of various faculties of the university:

Table 1 Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour Scores of Researchers of Various Faculties

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour Scores of Researchers					
Name of the Faculty	41 to 50		> 51		Total
	No. of Researchers	%	No. of Researchers	%	No. of Researchers
Business Administration	-	-	11	100	11
Community Education	-	-	2	100	2
Education	8	67	4	33	12
Engineering	1	20	4	80	5
Home Science	14	26	39	74	53
Humanities	19	70	8	30	27
Science	12	21	44	79	56
Total	54	32.54	112	67.46	

Of the 166 researchers, 32.54 percent have scored 41 to 50 and 67.46 percent scored more than 51. This proved that Information needs and information seeking behaviour of the researchers are very high. The obtained scores were further analysed using descriptive statistics and the results obtained for mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores for the information needs and information seeking behaviour of researchers and the results are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 Descriptive Analysis of Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Researchers of Various Faculties

Faculty	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum Score	Maximum Score
Business Administration	11	50.82	1.167	52	57
Community Education	2	54.5	0.707	54	55
Education	12	50.53	2.066	48	54
Engineering	5	55.2	0.836	54	56
Home Science	53	56.08	1.879	51	59
Humanities	27	50.51	3.0429	44	54
Science	56	56.11	1.676	51	59
Total/Average	166	53.392	1.6248	44	59

The results presented in Table 2 proved that the range of scores were from 44 to 59. The lowest mean score was 50.56 of Humanities researchers and the highest mean score was 56.11 researchers of Science. The overall mean score of the researchers was 53.425 with standard deviation + 1.615.

The obtained mean values on information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Faculty Members are presented as a bar diagram in Fig: 1:

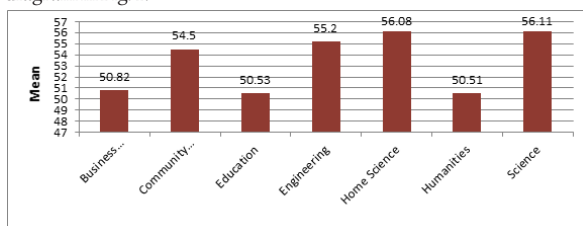


Figure 1 Mean Values on Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Researchers of Various Faculties

Since there were differences in the mean scores among the researchers on information needs and information seeking behaviour, the obtained data were further subjected to Analysis of Variance to test the statistical significance of the differences that existed and the results obtained are presented in Table 3:

Table 3 ANOVA results of the Differences of Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour among Researchers

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Square	F
Between Groups	1015.236	6	169.206	42.109**
Within Groups	638.908	159	4.018	
Total	1654.145	165		

**Significant at 0.01 level {Required table F df(6,159) at 0.01 level 2.8020}

The results presented in Table 3 proved that there were significant differences on means of Information Needs and Information Seeking of the 166 researchers from 7 faculties of the university, as the obtained F-value of 42.109 is greater than the table value of 2.8020 and is significant at 0.01 level. Hence, it is proved that there were significant mean differences.

Since significant F-value was obtained, the results were further subjected to statistical treatment using multiple paired mean comparisons and the results obtained are presented in Table 4:

Table 4 Multiple Paired Mean Comparisons of Information needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Researchers of Various Faculties

Business Administration	Community Education	Education	Engineering	Home Science	Humanities	Science
50.82	54.50					
50.82		50.53				
50.82			55.20			
50.82				56.08		
50.82					50.51	
50.82						56.11
	54.50	50.53				
	54.50		55.20			
	54.50			56.08		
	54.50				50.51	
	54.50					56.11
		50.53	55.20			
		50.53		56.08		
		50.53			50.51	
		50.53				56.11
			55.20	56.08		
			55.20		50.51	
			55.20			56.11
				56.08	50.51	
				56.08		56.11
					50.51	56.11

Table 4.35 indicates that researchers of Science faculty scored higher (56.11/60) in information needs and information seeking behaviour than the researchers of other six faculties namely, Home Science (56.08), Engineering (55.2), Community Education (54.5), Business Administration (50.82), Education (50.53) and Humanities (50.51). Hence it is concluded that the researchers of Science faculty possess better information seeking behaviour and information needs than the researchers of other six faculties.

Summary of Findings

The findings of the study are as follows:

- Majority of the respondents (77%) use library resources for research and other purposes and 23 percent of them use national and international library services.
- Use of internet is soaring among all categories of research scholars.
- Eighty percent of the reading materials in the library are in English.
- Most of the respondents (94 percent) were satisfied with the e-journals and e-databases and 88 percent of them were satisfied with internet and online resources.
- Majority (74 percent) of the respondents complained about the lack of indexing and abstracting services.
- Majority of the respondents (91 percent) were satisfied with the reprographic service.
- Eighty seven percent of the respondents were satisfied with the reference service provided in the library.
- While library resources were judged to be valid and accurate, they are also out-of-date.
- A majority of research scholars (79 percent) preferred library for doing their academic and research work.
- Use of the Internet is high, especially among younger research scholars.
- Most of the respondents (86 percent) use Google and yahoo, while others use msn.

Conclusion

Universities are the higher learning center and are known for its knowledge creation by conducting multidisciplinary research, following innovative teaching methods and collaborative learning strategies. So, the academicians, faculty and research scholars require additional resources. Hence the Librarians ought to think about new exciting means to quench the thirst of these users with the help of information technology. Involvement of users in the development plan of library infrastructure and services would certainly enhance the utilization of the library resources. Libraries must understand information-seeking behavior of users to re-engineer their services and provide information efficiently.

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