

## **Information Seeking Behaviour of Faculty Members in Select Affiliate Colleges of Periyar University**

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### **Abstract**

The study reports the most important aspects of Information seeking behavior of the faculty members, for whom the library and information centres are being maintained. A detailed questionnaire has been circulated and the data analyzed in relation to the availability of information services, the major information services used, the purpose of information seeking and the level of satisfaction.

The success of any library depends to a large extent on the selection of library resources. The selected resources should meet the needs and requirements of the end users. Libraries and information centres should take utmost care while selecting and acquiring resources, keeping in view the demands of their clientele. The availability of useful resources within the library will be beneficial to greater number of user to cater their information needs which in turn will increase the frequency of visits by users.

### **Key Words**

Information Seeking Behavior, Information Needs, e- journals, Arts and Science Colleges

### **Introduction**

To quench the thirst for information, users adopt numerous ways and means to access various channels of communication of information. Information explosion has paved the way to seek information in increasing variety and diversity at different levels, frequency, volume and use. This situation appears to be ambiguous and heterogeneous in character so that information needs of a particular group of users and information flow from a specific situation / organization are different to determine. The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. The increase in information available on the Web has greatly affected information seeking behaviour.

In Wilson's (1981, 1997) models, information-Seeking behaviour stems from a perceived need for information by the user. In response to this need, the user will place demands on the information system (e.g. library or database) and on other sources of information (e.g. textbook, lecturer, handouts and suchlike). Information needs do not operate in a vacuum but in particular context. The context includes the person (physiological, the effective and cognitive states), the role (the faculty) and his or her environment. Very few studies draw attention towards faculty members working in arts and science colleges. A questionnaire was designed in an effort to understand how faculties are responding to the changing methods of

information dissemination and to enable attention and resources to be directed and targeted where possible to meet those needs.

### **Information Needs**

According to Grover (1993) “information is that of diagnosing needs, prescribing a service that meets those needs, implementing that service and evaluating the outcome of this interactions”. Rath (1996) found the requirements of the user needs as follows which are self-explanatory:

- a. Current information
- b. Exhaustive information
- c. Everyday information
- d. Catching-up information

Lipetz (1970) found that the main objectives of studying information needs are “a) the explanation of observed phenomena of information use or expressed need; or better yet, b) the prediction of instances of information use, c) the control, and thereby improvement, of the utilization of information through manipulation of essential conditions, d) the description of observed information use, e) the definition of convenient and appropriate concepts for describing and dealing with information use, and f) the theorizing of casual or quantitative relationships between information use and associated factors”.

### **Information Seeking Behaviour**

Information behaviour encompasses information seeking as well as the totality of other unintentional or passive behaviours (such as glimpsing or encountering information) as well as purposive behaviours that do not involve seeking, such as avoiding information (Case, 2002). The phrase Information-Seeking Behaviours has been defined variously by different authors. According to Krikelas (1983) information seeking behaviours refers to – any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies perceived needs.

Wilson (2000) defines that information seeking behaviour is the purpose of seeking information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individuals may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library) or with computer based systems (such as the web). According to him, a general model of information behaviour needs to include at least the following elements: “an information need and its drives, i.e. the factors that give rise to an individual’s perception of need , and the process of actions involved in that response”. Normally people used to study small groups via observation or unstructured interviews. They have moved away from studying large groups via questionnaires and structured interviews. They attempt to generate information-seeking model.

### **Quantitative research**

- (i) Used predominately until the 1980s
- (ii) Provides statistical information

### **Qualitative research**

- (i) Richer data
- (ii) Does not start with hypothesis

### **Mixed methods**

- (i) Combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

### **Review of Literature**

The literature survey reveals that the published literature in this field is enormous and scattered. It was not possible to record all the literature and as such few omissions could not be avoided. Various studies have been carried out to examine the information needs and behaviour of different library user groups such as academicians, researchers, graduates and undergraduates, while other studies distinguish between these groups on the basis of their faculty (Hiller, 2002). There is a broad spectrum of research on library user studies across a variety of disciplines. Majid and Ai (2002) studied the use of information resources by computer engineering students in Singapore and found that the top four information resources in order of preference were books (94 percent), lecturers (89 percent), the internet (86 percent) and friends (84 percent). They relied heavily on printed sources of information and their use of electronic journals and databases was very low. According to Hartmann (2001), undergraduate students and faculty members experienced difficulty in locating items from the library collection and did not understand the processes for retrieving journal articles. Another study on faculty members reported that all participants felt that they had little need to look for information outside what faculty provided for them in their courses, and where information was needed they were able to acquire it using general search engines (Seamans, 2001). It was also found that the participants were comfortable using technology to learn and that web based modules could be used in the future to teach library instruction. Another study by Kerins, Madden and Fulton (2004) on graduate engineering students and faculties reveals that the internet was the first source of information used, and in another similar study on incoming first-year undergraduate students in Quebec, many reported that they used the internet extensively for finding course-related information (Mittermeyer, 2003).

Information seeking is a highly subjective process influenced by many factors and interactions between them (Weiler, 2005). Karlsson et al (2012) studied the information seeking competencies, practices and knowledge of university actors. It was done through the interview and observation study for the Finnish students, researchers and information specialists. Al-Muomen, Morris and Maynard (2012) employed a number of different approaches like questionnaire, face-to-face and online interviews for finding out the information seeking behaviour of faculties at Kuwait University and revealed various significant factors like library awareness, information literacy, organizational and environmental issues, source characteristics and demographics. Khosrowjerdi and Iranshahi (2011) analyzed the information seeking of graduate students at Tehran University and its dimensions in different disciplines, contexts and the relationships to other variables such as gender, task, knowledge, personality, experience and expertise. The relationships between information seeking behaviour and prior knowledge were tested and found positive. The study by Malliari, Korobili and Zapounidou (2011) on information seeking behaviour of faculties at the University of Macedonia revealed that their behaviour seems to be influenced by search experiences, computer and web experiences, perceived ability and frequency of use of e-resources and not by

specific personal characteristics. Vezzosi (2009) while analyzing information seeking behaviour of research scholars in the field of sciences explored the use of various types of information sources and revealed that research scholars heavily rely on internet for their research work.

### Objectives of the Study

- (i) To determine the extent of use of library resources and the satisfaction level.
- (ii) To study the problems faced by the faculties members while seeking information.

### Scope and Methodology

The study is carried out in 5 Arts and Science colleges affiliated to Periyar University, using a detailed questionnaire. Each college 25 questionnaire were distributed. The population for the study were 5 arts and science colleges. The sample size is 125 by adopting convenient sampling technique.

### Analysis and Findings

A detailed questionnaire was prepared and a total of 125 questionnaires were distributed (25 per institution) among faculty members.

### Distribution of the Purpose of information seeking

The respondents were asked to rank the purpose of information seeking. The data were analyzed based on the responses which indicates that out of 10 listed items, 92.3 % respondents seek information to keep abreast with current developments, followed by 91.3% to develop competence, 81.2% to Improve General knowledge, 77.1% for Workshop and seminar presentations, 74.6% Support research and so on.

Purpose of Information seeking	Responses
Keep up with current Developments	(92.3%)
Develop Competence	(91.3%)
Improve General Knowledge	(81.2%)
Workshop and Seminar Presentations	(77.1%)
Support Research	(74.6%)
Service or job Requirement	(68%)
Preparation for Lecturing	(55.8%)
Reading Purposes Only	(51.7%)
Writing a book or article	(45.6%)
Preparation for audio-video Programmes	(20.3%)

The respondents were asked to rank the problems faced while seeking information. The below table shows that majority of faculties (49.7%) are not aware of the existing resources in the library, followed by (40.6%) not aware of using the information retrieval tools, (36%) informed that the documents are old, (34%) said

that the materials are not available as per their requirements, (30.4%) informed that sources are scattered and so on.

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Materials are not available	(34%)
Library Staff are unwilling for service	(15.2%)
Information sources are so far located	(20.8%)
Lack of time	(26.9%)
Do not know how to use the information retrieval tools	(40.6%)
Information scattered in too many sources	(30.4%)
Information materials are old	(36%)
Don't know the sources available in the library	(49.7%)

### **Conclusion**

The success of any library depends to a large extent on the selection of library resources. The selected resources should meet the needs and requirements of the end users. Libraries and information centres should take utmost care while selecting and acquiring resources, keeping in view the demands of their clientele. The availability of useful resources within the library will be beneficial to greater number of user to cater their information needs which in turn will increase the frequency of visits by users. This scenario will be beneficial for the libraries and will convince the management that their fund is utilized effectively. The study reveals that Internet is the major source of information, as it is online and available anytime from anywhere. Libraries should enable high level internet connectivity for providing access to quality e-resources within and outside the libraries.

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