
**A SURVEY ON INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF
RESEARCH SCHOLARS OF AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY FOR
WOMEN, COIMBATORE**

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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.

Keywords: Information needs, Information seeking behaviour, Research scholars, Retrieval Techniques

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.

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 of the research scholars are divided into research, renew knowledge, study further, current information, statistical information, professional and career information. The three point scales with options very often, often and moderately and the scores assigned were 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The obtained responses were scored and analysed. Table 1 shows the distribution of scores on information needs of research scholars of the university:

Table 1: Information Needs of the Research Scholars

S. No.	Needs	Very often %	Often %	Moderately %
1.	Research	91	8	1
2.	Renew Knowledge	73	25	2
3.	Study Further	11	24	65
4.	Current Information	89	10	1
5.	Statistical Information	74	23	3
6.	Professional and Career development	88	11	1

Majority of the research scholars (91 percent) require information to perform their research work successfully and eighty nine percent of them were need up to date information in their subject field. Eighty eight percent of them impose information concerning professional and career development. Seventy four percent of the researchers need statistical information and seventy three percent of them need information to renew knowledge and eleven percent need information for study further. Sixty five percent of the research scholars were moderately concerned about their higher studies after completing research.

Information Sources Used

Sources of information are considered as primary, secondary and tertiary depending upon the originality of the information presented and the proximity to the source of information. The researchers get the information from books, current journals, back volumes of journals, reference resources (like encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories, yearbooks etc.), research reports, newspaper clippings, internet/online resources and e-journals.

The extent of satisfaction of the users regarding the available resources in the library is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Information Sources used by the Research scholars

S. No.	Library resources	Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Not satisfied %
1.	Books	23	18	59
2.	Current Journals	9	14	77
3.	Back Volumes	16	21	63
4.	Reference Resources	21	32	54
5.	Research Reports	11	46	43
6.	Newspaper Clippings	41	36	23
7.	Internet/Online resources	88	11	1
8.	E-Journals/Databases	94	5	1

Majority of the research scholars (77 percent) were not satisfied with the current journals and sixty three percent of them were not satisfied with the back volumes. Fifty nine percent were not satisfied with the current stock of books available in their fields as they find them inadequate for meeting their educational and research needs. Fifty four percent of them were not satisfied with

the reference resources available in the library and 43 percent of them felt that the research reports were not satisfied with the research reports. Forty one percent of the scholars were satisfied with the newspaper clippings. Majority of the scholars (94 percent) were satisfied with the e-journals and databases and 88 percent of them were satisfied with the internet /online resources.

Purpose of Seeking Information

Details regarding the purpose of seeking information by the users are detailed in Table 3:

Table 3: Purpose of Seeking Information

S. No.	Purpose	Responses %
1.	Teaching	52
2.	Research Work	98
3.	Writing and presenting papers	73
4.	Literature search/reference collection	85
5.	Renewing their knowledge	96
6.	General Awareness/updating knowledge	91
7.	Reading/Thinking process	87
8.	Discussion with Professional colleagues	88
9.	Recreational purposes	63
10.	Preparing/supplementing lectures	36

Ninety eight percent of the respondents sought information for doing their research work; ninety six percent were seeking information for renewing their knowledge and 91 percent for general awareness and updating knowledge. Eighty eight percent of research scholars utilized the library resources for discussion with professional colleague, 87 percent of the sample were using the resources for reading/thinking process, 85 percent for literature search, 73 percent were seeking information for writing and presenting papers, 63 percent for recreational purposes, 52 percent used the resources for teaching and 36 percent utilized the library for preparing and supplementing lectures.

Barriers Encountered

The barriers encountered by the research scholars while seeking information are elaborated in Table 4:

Table 4: Barriers to Information

S. No.	Barriers	Responses %
1.	Documents scattered to various sections	89
2.	Poor internet connectivity	91
3.	Number of books issued	98
4.	Insufficiency of computers	96
5.	Shortage of latest journals	62
6.	Circulation Timing	12
7.	Information in unknown language	35
8.	Dusty cupboards	57
9.	Lack of knowledge in using the resources	23

Majority of the research scholars (98 percent) thought that the number of books issued to them is less and it should be increased and ninety six were not satisfied with the number of computers. Ninety one percent were affected by poor internet connectivity and eighty nine percent faced problems in locating the documents scattered to various sections of the library. Sixty two percent of them were facing problems in the shortage of latest journals and fifty seven percent of them complained about the dusty cupboards. Information in unknown language is the problem for 35 percent of the scholars, 23 percent were facing difficulty in lack of knowledge in using the resources and 12 percent were not satisfied with the circulation timing.

Existing Library Services

The responses given by the sample on the library services are detailed below in Table 5:

Table 5: Library Services

S. No.	Services	Responses in %
1.	Information display and notification service	98
2.	Reprographic Service	91
3.	Reference/Referral Service	87
4.	Inter Library Loan/Resource Sharing	46
5.	Newspaper Clipping Service	85
6.	Bibliographical Service	83
7.	Current Awareness Service	54
8.	User Orientation/Motivation Service	92
9.	Selective Dissemination of Information Service	66

Majority of the research scholars (71 percent) were satisfied with the information display and notification service, 67 percent make use of reprographic service and 56 percent of them had a positive view of the reference/referral service. Forty nine percent of the samples were interested in the inter library loan service, 47 percent were satisfied with the newspaper clipping service, 36 percent of the research scholars expressed their satisfaction about the bibliographical service and 32 percent were satisfied with the current awareness service. Thirty one percent were satisfied with the user orientation service and 22 percent expressed their level of satisfaction to the selective dissemination of information service.

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.

DISCUSSIONS

Information seeking behaviour studies related to the researchers had been and have been conducted at various part of the world from time to time, which are studied thoroughly and presented in the review of literature and the findings of those studies coincide and differ with this study. The present study reveals that the majority of the respondents visits the library daily and finds the books and periodicals as excellent source of information. The less used sources are encyclopedia, patents, reports, directories, abstracting and indexing journals and unpublished sources. Most of them were satisfied with the library collections and services. The users visit the library for access current journals, reading newspapers, utilizing reprographic services and issuing/returning books. The respondents were fully aware of the available resources in their fields and were highly satisfied with the services of the library. Through this study it was proved that information needs could be the driving force leading to information seeking.

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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