

INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF FACULTY MEMBERS OF AVINASHILINGAM UNIVERSITY, COIMBATORE

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Abstract

Information is recognized as a vital source indispensable for the development of the individual and the society. Need for information is our basic need to perform our day-to-day activity. Information seeking is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in knowledge. This paper is an attempt to study the information needs and seeking behaviour of faculty members of Avinashilingam University, Coimbatore. For evaluating the study a questionnaire was constructed and distributed among the faculty members of the University. The data were collected from the 334 respondents and statistically analyzed. Books, journals and internet are the primary resources for the respondents. The findings of the study shows that overflowing of information, low internet speed, and lack of support from library staff are the problems faced by the faculty members while seeking information.

Keywords: Information needs, Information seeking behaviour, Faculty members, Information sources

Introduction

Information is recognized as a vital source indispensable for the development of the individual and the society. Exponential growth of information and its availability in various channels and formats leads to the problem of retrieving and dissemination. The information flow on all sides brought changes in the users' information needs and seeking behaviour. 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.

The present study was confined to the information needs and seeking behaviour of faculty members 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 faculty members are well qualified and ready to render their service at all times. 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 faculty members are involved in class preparation, lecturing, publishing of papers and attending/presenting papers in conferences. Hence, they are in need of information regarding the current developments in their specific subject field. Overflowing of information and its availability in various channels and formats were the problems faced by the faculty members while seeking information. In order to satisfy the specific needs of the respondents, the librarian should find out the ways of fulfilling it. 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 by 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 faculty members

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between the availability of the resources in the library and the information needs of the respondents

2. There is no significant relationship between the technology and the users of the library
3. There is no significant relationship between the information retrieval channels/systems and the information seeking behaviour of the sample and
4. There is no significant relationship between the quality of the services rendered by the library and the usage of the library

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.

Sonia Kumari et al (2013) conducted a study on the information needs and information seeking behaviour of teachers of NIT, Kurukshetra. Out of the total 142 questionnaires distributed among the teachers, 114 responded. Maximum teachers visited the library to borrow books, use periodicals, journals and reference materials for different purposes but their frequency of visit immensely varied while maximum of them (53.5 percent) never used audio-visual material as a source of information. The study revealed that teachers were least concerned with government documents, dissertation/thesis and proceedings of conferences as sources of information. Maximum teachers (97.4 percent) were aware of back volume of the journals. It was also found that maximum teachers were satisfied with the library collections. Maximum users used circulation service, reference service, computerized service and photocopying service.

Mutafa, Che Su (2012) conducted a study on information seeking behaviour of faculty members of university in Malaysia and Nigeria. The findings revealed that Internet is considered increasingly as a crucial information resource for the faculty members. The study attempted to explore the collaboration between internet activity, technology acceptance and information seeking behaviour of faculty members from two different countries. The findings of the study indicated a positive relationship between the three variables under study in the two countries. The results of the survey suggested that both technical and cultural readiness are necessary to successfully implement internet information resources, and that design strategies could accommodate cultural issues.

Jayadev Kadli (2011) investigated the information seeking behaviour of the faculty members of Commerce Colleges in Mumbai in the changing ICT environment. The faculty members seek out information to keep abreast of current developments in their field through reading current issues of print journals/magazines, reading latest books, browsing current issues of electronic journals and browsing websites in the field. Almost equal number (more than 50%) of users abreast current developments through interaction with colleagues and experts and attending conferences, workshops, etc. The findings of the study showed that the faculties were in need of information on print as well as in electronic form even in changing ICT environment. It is observed that 'too much information on internet' is the problem often faced by users. They required information search skills to use online resources effectively.

Most of the respondents felt that the library should start information literacy programme to make aware of the different forms and types of sources developed by library.

Prabakaran (2010) studied the information access patterns of faculty in Arts and Science colleges in Chidambaram. The study was based on data collected from the arts and science teaching community using a questionnaire. The study revealed that more than one-third of the respondents visited the library daily, and nearly one-fifth visited the library once in a week. About half of the respondents visited the library to prepare for class, while more than one-fifth did so to update their knowledge. Nearly half of the respondents used television as a source of information, and just over forty percent used the internet. Nearly half of the respondents used College Library, with smaller numbers using departmental, public, special, university, district central and personal libraries. Most of the respondents were not satisfied with the library catalogue as a means of information retrieval.

Rafiq Muhammad and Kanwal Ameen (2009) conducted a study on the information seeking behaviour and satisfaction level of teachers of National Textile University, Pakistan. The findings of the study showed that books, communication with colleagues and friends within NTU and in industry were the most preferred information sources for the teachers. Both electronic/digital and printed formats were equally preferred by the respondents. The use of Internet and email was widespread. A majority of respondents preferred to visit the library themselves to get the required information. Respondents were generally satisfied with the quality of NTU library services, but they recommended increasing the collection to meet subject specific as well as leisure needs.

Methodology

The data for this study was collected using questionnaire among the faculty members of the Avinashilingam University, Coimbatore. The researcher 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 three hundred and thirty four teachers. The Faculty members were requested to fill in the questionnaire given to them. The sample represented 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 Faculty members were requested to fill in the questionnaire given to them. The responses received from three hundred and thirty four faculty members were tabulated and subjected to further statistical analysis.

Statistical Analysis

Information Needs of Faculty members

This study is an endeavor to identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of the faculty members. The questionnaire designed to collect information regarding the users' approach to information, barriers encountered, information needs, purposes of seeking information, resources and services of the library. Ninety five percent of teachers used the main library and five percent used their department library. The University teachers expressed that the departments should have more number of computers with internet and intranet facility linking the library. Each item of the questionnaire was given a score and the percentage calculated for each item separately. The teachers were asked to record their responses for each item without fail. The major results of the study are discussed here below:

Findings and Discussion on Information Sources

The extent of satisfaction of the users regarding the available resources in the library is shown in Table 1:

Table 1 Library Resources Used by the faculty members

S. No.	Library resources	Satisfied %	Moderately Satisfied %	Not satisfied %
1.	Books	17	22	61
2.	Reference Resources	35	16	49
3.	Current Journals	59	04	37
4.	Back Volumes	33	26	41
5.	Research Reports	67	20	13
6.	Newspaper Clippings	54	11	35
7.	Internet/Online resources	69	26	10
8.	E-Journals/Databases	71	18	11

Majority of the teachers (61 percent) were not satisfied with the current stock of books related to their fields as they find them inadequate for meeting their educational and research needs. Forty nine percent of the teachers were not satisfied with the reference resources available in the library and 35 percent of them were satisfied with the reference resources. Fifty nine percent of faculty members think that the current periodicals give the required information to some extent and the others want more journals for supplementing their teaching and research programmes. Forty one percent of them considered that the back volumes available in their field were inadequate. A maximum of teachers (67 percent) were satisfied with the research reports. Most of the teachers (54 percent) were satisfied with the newspaper clippings. Majority of the staff members (71 percent) were satisfied with the e-journals and databases and 69 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 2:

Table 2 Purpose of Seeking Information

S. No.	Purpose	Responses %
1.	Teaching	86
2.	Research Work	79
3.	Writing and presenting papers	77
4.	Literature search/reference collection	71
5.	Renewing their knowledge	68
6.	General Awareness/updating knowledge	65
7.	Reading/Thinking process	54
8.	Discussion with Professional colleagues	47
9.	Recreational purposes	43
10.	Preparing/supplementing lectures	29

Eighty six percent of the respondents sought information for teaching purpose; 79 percent were seeking information for guiding M. Phil and Ph.D. scholars and 77 percent for writing and presenting papers. Seventy one percent of faculty members utilized the library resources for literature search, 68 percent of the sample were using the resources for updating their knowledge, 65 percent for general awareness, 54 percent were seeking information for reading/thinking process, 47 percent for discussion with professional colleagues, 43 percent used the resources for their recreational activities and 29 percent visited the library for preparing and supplementing lectures.

Barriers to Information

The barriers encountered by the staff members while seeking information are elaborated in Table 3:

Table 3 Barriers to Information

S. No.	Barriers	Responses %
1.	Documents scattered to various sections	86
2.	Poor internet connectivity	83
3.	Number of books issued	81
4.	Insufficiency of computers	81
5.	Shortage of latest journals	79
6.	Circulation Timing	75
7.	Information in unknown language	67
8.	Dusty cupboards	64
9.	Lack of knowledge in using the resources	44

Majority of the teachers (86 percent) faced problems in locating the documents scattered to various sections in the library. Eighty three percent were affected by poor internet connectivity and 81 percent thought that the number of books issued to them is less and it should be increased. Eighty one percent of the respondents were not satisfied with the

number of computers, 79 percent of them were facing problems in the shortage of latest journals and 75 percent were not satisfied with the circulation timing. Information in unknown language is the problem for 67 percent of the teachers, 64 percent of them complained about the dusty cupboards and 44 percent were facing difficulty in lack of knowledge in using the resources.

Library Services

The responses given by the sample on the library services are detailed below in Table 4:

Table 4 Existing Library Services

S. No.	Services	Responses in %
1.	Information display and notification service	71
2.	Reprographic Service	67
3.	Reference/Referral Service	56
4.	Inter Library Loan/Resource Sharing	49
5.	Newspaper Clipping Service	47
6.	Bibliographical Service	36
7.	Current Awareness Service	32
8.	User Orientation/Motivation Service	31
9.	Selective Dissemination of Information Service	22

Majority of the staff members (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 teachers 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 (81%) use library resources for teaching, research and other purposes and 17 percent of them use national and international library services.
- Professors (21.25 percent) of the university make great use of books, while associate professors, assistant professors use periodicals, indexes, abstracts, encyclopedias and other reference materials.
- Use of internet is soaring among all categories of faculty members.
- Eighty percent of the reading materials in the library are in English.
- Most of the respondents (71 percent) were satisfied with the e- journals and e- databases and 69 percent of them were satisfied with internet and online resources.

- Majority (63 percent) of the respondents complained about the lack of indexing and abstracting services.
- Majority of the respondents (67 percent) were satisfied with the reprographic service.
- Fifty six 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 teachers (63 percent) preferred library for doing their academic and research work.
- Use of the Internet is high, especially among younger faculty members.
- Most of the respondents (77 percent) use Google and yahoo, while others use msn.

Conclusion

Libraries are the reservoirs of knowledge. The success of each library depends on the resources and retrieval systems. The collection should meet the requirements of the user. The advent of computers and information technology has revolutionized the field of library and information services and has brought considerable changes in the information-seeking behaviour of users. Consequently, librarians must be aware of how faculty seeks information. The main role of the librarian is to be familiar with the information requirements of the users. Libraries must understand information-seeking behavior of users to re-engineer their services and provide information efficiently.

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