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Information Access Patterns of Faculty in Arts and Sciences Colleges in Chidambaram

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Introduction

Information is an essential raw material for all human endeavours in a complex modern society. It is recognized as a prerequisite for scientific, socioeconomic, and cultural development. Information may be stored in many different ways, including print and electronic. Information has been called one of the "eight M's" – men, material, machinery, money, method, market, movement and message, a term used for information. The second Law of Library Science reads: "Every Reader his/her books". It conveys the message to the librarian that readers coming to the library in search of information must have it. A user study is a systematic examination of characteristics and behaviours of users of an information system (Prasad, 1992). The term "user study" focuses on information use patterns, information needs, and information-seeking behaviour. Information- seeking behaviour and information access patterns are areas of active interest among librarians and information scientists.

Classification of User Studies

User studies have been classified in different ways as shown below:

- Cronin's classification
- Menzel's classification
- Prasad's classification
- Classification based on literature survey [i.e., direct and indirect studies]

User studies include Babu (1994), who writes on the use of information and libraries by university instructors. Sethi (1990) looks at the information-seeking behaviour of social scientists in India, while

Prasad and Tripathi consider both physical and social scientists. Satyanaranayan looks at the effect of information needs on library planning, and Sridhar (1999) considers the relationship of user visits and length of stay.

In this paper, the authors have studied the information requirements, usefulness of library resources and services, and problems encountered by faculty members of two arts and science colleges, Government Arts & Science College and Sri Raghavendra Arts & Science College, Chidambaram.

The Faculty of Arts comprises the departments of Tamil, English, Economics, Commerce and Business Administration. The Faculty of Science includes the Department of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Statistics, Biochemistry, Computer Science, Microbiology, Botany, and Zoology.

History of Colleges

Government Arts & Science College, Chidambaram, was established in 1982 in Old Hospital at Chidambaram, Cuddalore District. It moved to a newly-constructed building at C. Mutlur in August 1987. Initially the college was affiliated with University of Madras, and it is now affiliated with Thiruvalluvar University of Vellore. The mission of the college is to provide value-based higher education to rural and village students. The college has a well established library with good collection of 19,000 books on arts and science subjects supporting teaching and research activities.

Sri Raghavendra Arts & Science College, Chidambaram, was founded in 2000. The college is located on 15 acres at Keelamoongiladi and is affiliated with Thiruvalluvar Univrsity, Vellore. Its mission is also to provide value-based higher education to rural and village students. The college has well-established library with 45,000 books available in eight Arts & Science department to support teaching and research.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- Assess the information needs of faculty members.
- Study their mode of access to information sources
- Study how they solve professional problems
- Assess faculty information-seeking behaviour
- Discover the efficiency of faculty members in keeping up-to-date with professional literature.
- Identify the types of information sources required
- Discover the views of users on library catalogue and maintenance of reading material.

Methodology

The study was based on data collected from the arts and science teaching community using a questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted and then the questionnaire was distributed personally to each faculty member of the two arts and science colleges. When the completed questionnaires were collected, respondents were interview to get their opinions on the improvement of library services.

Limitations of the Study

The study was restricted to faculty members, includeing lecturers, senior scale secturers, selection grade lecturers, and readers.

Results

Table 1: College-wise faculty strength

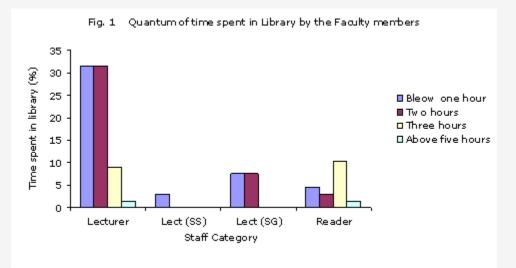| S. No	Colleges	Lecturer	Lecturers Senior Scale	Lecturers Selection Grade	Reader	Total
1	Government Arts & Science College	25 (37.00)	2 (3.00)	10 (15.00)	6 (9.00)	43 (64.00)
2	Sri Raghavendra Arts & Science College	24 (36.00)	---	---	---	24 (36.00)
	Total	49 (73.00)	2 (3.00)	10 (15.00)	6 (9.00)	67 (100)

Values in parentheses indicate percentage.

Government Arts & Science College has 25 lecturers, 2 senior scale lecturers, 10 selection grade lecturers, and 6 readers. Sri Raghavendra Arts & Science College, which is only 10 years old, has 24 lecturers.

Table 2: Frequency of library visits by faculty members

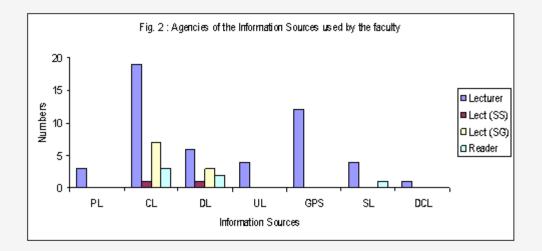| S. No	Faculty	Daily	Once a week	Twice a week	Three times a week	Occasionally	Total
1	Lecturer	20 (29.85)	10 (14.92)	7 (10.45)	7 (10.45)	5 (7.47)	49 (73.13)
2	Senior Scale Lecturer	---	---	---	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	2 (2.98)
3	Selection Grade Lecturer	4 (5.98)	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	3 (4.49)	10 (14.94)
4	Reader	---	2 (2.98)	---	2 (2.98)	2 (2.98)	6 (8.95)
	Total	24 (35.83)	13 (19.39)	8 (11.92)	11 (16.43)	11 (16.43)	67 (100)

Values in parentheses indicate percentage.

Table 2 reveals that more than one-third visit daily, and nearly one-fifth once a week.

Fig. 1   Quantum of time spent in Library by the Faculty members

Nearly half spend less than an hour, while another two-fifths spend two hours in the library when they visit.

Fig. 2 : Agencies of the Information Sources used by the faculty

Nearly half of respondents use the College Library, with smaller numbers using departmental, public, special, university, district central, and personal libraries.

Table 3: Types of documents used

S.No.	Faculty	Book	Reference Source	Periodicals	Thesis / Project work	Conference Proceedings	Total
1	Lecturer	29 (43.29)	8 (11.94)	6 (8.95)	5 (7.46)	1 (1.49)	49 (73.13)
2	Senior Scale Lecturer	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	---	---	---	2 (2.98)
3	Selection Grade Lecturer	5 (7.48)	3 (4.48)	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	---	10 (14.94)
4	Reader	3 (4.48)	2 (2.98)	1 (1.49)	---	---	6 (8.95)
	Total	38 (56.74)	14 (20.89)	8 (11.93)	6 (8.95)	1 (1.49)	67 (100)

Values in parentheses indicate percentage.

More than half of respondent use books, with another one-fifth using reference sources, and smaller numbers using periodicals, theses, projects, and conference proceedings.

Table 4: Purpose of visit to library

S. No.	Category	Class work	Update knowledge	Preparing article	Seminar/Conference preparation	Writing a book	Research	General Purpose	Total
1	Lecturer	23 (34.33)	11 (16.42)	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	1 (1.49)	2 (2.98)	10 (14.93)	49 (73.13)
2	Senior Scale Lecturer	2 (2.98)	---	---	---	--	---	---	2 (2.98)
3	Selection Grade Lecturer	4 (5.98)	2 (2.99)	---	1 (1.49)	---	1 (1.49)	2 (2.99)	10 (14.94)
4	Reader	4 (5.97)	2 (2.98)	---	---	---	---	---	6 (8.95)
	Total	33 (49.26)	15 (22.39)	1 (1.49)	2 (2.98)	1 (1.49)	3 (4.47)	12 (17.92)	67 (100)

Values in parentheses indicate percentage.

About half of respondents visit the library to prepare for class, while more than one-fifth do so to update knowledge.

Table 5: Mass media

S.No.	Category	Periodicals	Television	Internet	Total
1	Lecturer	24 (35.82)	4 (5.97)	21 (31.34)	49 (73.13)
2	Senior Scale Lecturer	1 (1.49)	---	1 (1.49)	2 (2.98)
3	Selection Grade Lecturer	7 (10.46)	---	3 (4.48)	10 (14.94)
4	Reader	2 (2.98)	1 (1.49)	3 (4.48)	6 (8.95)
	Total	34 (50.75)	5 (7.46)	28 (41.79)	67 (100)

Values in parentheses indicate percentage.

About half the respondents use television as a source of information, and just over 40 percent use the Internet.

Table 6: Use of library catalogue

S.No.	Category	Satisfy	percent	Dissatisfy	percent	Total
1	Lecturer	11	16.41	38	56.72	49 (73.13)
2	Senior Scale Lecturer	1	1.49	1	1.49	2 (2.93)
3	Selection Grade Lecturer	3	4.48	7	10.46	10 (14.94)
4	Reader	2	2.98	4	5.97	6 (8.95)
	Total	17	25.36	50	74.64	67 (100)

Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

Most respondents were not satisfied with the library catalogue as a means of information retrieval.

Conclusion

The findings of this study include that most faculty in both institutions are Lecturers. More than half visit the library daily or once a week and use books or reference works most often. They generally visit the library to prepare for classes or to update their knowledge. The mass media most often used are periodicals and the Internet. The library catalogue is not a satisfactory means of information retrieval for most respondents.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in view of the findings of this study. They are meant to help librarians and users of the college library maximize the use of its resources, and help users with their extensive reading and intensive research.

- Departmental libraries should be provided with proper computer infrastructure facility and Internet connectivity.
- The working hours (9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.) of the college library should be strictly followed.
- Information on conferences seminars, symposia, and workshops should be collected and provided to faculty members.

- Good and comfortable seating arrangements and a peaceful atmosphere should be created in the library.
- Information related to UGC (NET, CSIR, SLET) and other academic examinations should be collected and made available.

Acknowledgments

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