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Abstract

Information seeking is a form of human behavior that involves seeking for information by means of the active examination of information sources or information retrieval systems to satisfy the information need or to solve a problem. This study explores the information seeking behavior of visually impaired students in Maulana Azad Library, AMU. The purpose of the study is to examine the information seeking behavior of visually impaired students in Maulana Azad Library, AMU. A well structured schedule (Performa containing assets of questions) was designed and administered among the visually impaired students. The schedules were also supplemented by informal interviews. The study shows that most of the users (77.5%) seeking information for their career development. The highest percentage of the users uses audio books as information source and found them fairly accessible but face difficulties also because of lack of computers with screen reader software. More than half of the users (52.5%) are satisfied with the overall functioning of the library.

Key words - Information seeking behavior, Visually Impaired, Maulana Azad Library, AMU

1. Introduction

Information seeking behavior is a complex activity and refers to strategies for locating the information. Mainly it has three elements: People, information and systems. Mick (1980) stated that the information producing and information seeking behavior are closely linked and are the reasons why most information systems are not better accepted as they fail to provide linkage between the two activities.

In Any library or information system, the user study plays a vital role in planning, designing and introducing new information services to assess the quality of services and their utilities. In last 20 years most of the studies involved the information seeking behavior of researchers and scientists. Information seeking has only been studied in the general population and a crucial population was always left behind, i.e. visually impaired persons. Information seeking behavior differs among every user groups. Libraries must understand the information needs of its every user group in order to address those needs. The main reason for choosing this population is because these scholars have never been investigated before as a separate group of users. Visually impaired users required to more attention, more facilities and better services for getting information.

2. Profile of the Library

Maulana Azad Library is the Central Library of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) and one of the largest university library having about 18,00,000 documents including books, periodicals, newspapers, theses, dissertations, CDs, databases, talking books, etc. It comprises 110 sister libraries (college/departmental).The Library has different divisions like acquisition section, circulation division, reference division, oriental division, manuscript division, Braille section, etc and provide a number of services to its users such as circulation service, reference service, bibliographic services, inter library loan, reprographic service, press clipping, print and photography service, etc.

3. Review Literature

Sahib (n.d.) investigated the information seeking behavior of blind searchers on the web. The author carried out a comparative analysis of information seeking behavior between 15 blind and 15 sighted searchers while they completed complex search tasks online. For this a search interface was also designed and implemented that was accessible as well as usable for visually impaired users and identified significant differences at various stages of the information seeking process like query formulation, results exploration etc.

Williamson, Schauder and Bow (2000) conducted a study to know the information seeking behavior of blind and sighted impaired persons in using internet in their personal as well as in social lives. In their study they addressed the information sources, the issues of information needs and the role of the internet in meeting the information needs of blind and sighted persons and also the obstacles to using the internet.

Charles (2005) suggested disabilities training for library staff to serve the better library services to disabled users. Because there is a need for staff to know how to fulfill the information needs and requirements of disabled users who want different resources, services and most important assistive technologies.

Beverley. Bath and Barber (2007) analyzed which two existing models of information behavior could explain the information behavior of visually impaired people for seeking health and social

care information. For this the authors studied two established models i.e. Moore's model of social information need and Wilson's model of information behavior.

Kouroupetroglou, Salampasis and Manitsaris (2008) analyzed the navigation behavior of blind users by providing them Browsing Shortcuts (BSs) mechanism. The study showed that the mechanism significantly affected blind users' behavior when they used the BSs feature. Because in new BSs there were certain rudiments in every web page and every web page was different in purpose and content and offer shortcuts of list regularly.

Kwak and Bae (2009) carried out a case study to test the usability of information for develop the accessibility of information for the blind which was provided by LG Digital Talking Book (LG DTB) Library. The services are provided by LG DTB anytime, anywhere to blinds users using mobile phones with the automated library access process. The authors found that blind users faced many problems like late updates of new publications, unbalanced subject areas, and lack of educational contents.

Van Puffelen (2009) examined the ICT related skills and needs of blind and visually impaired people. The target groups of the study are young from 10-14 years and elderly 55 and above people. The study showed that young visually impaired users need ICT skills for communicate with others and also for their educational opportunities. For elderly visually disabled persons ICT skills are important to get and stay in touch with peer groups, government institutions, and with services related to their disabilities.

Power and Lebeau (2009) conducted a study to know how well academic libraries usually serve the visually impaired users through their websites, because the websites of libraries are the digital way to identify the library services. For this type of information available to visually impaired persons, how much information available and how it is represented on libraries websites were observed.

Bishop and Rhind (2011) discovered the factors which characterize the barriers and enablers for visually impaired users to participate in Higher Education Institutions in United Kingdom. The study was conducted on four main themes. First, the student's attitude (i.e. self identity, positive aspects of being visually impaired, engagement with support), second, institutional provision (i.e. campus navigability, central services support, school- level support), third, external support (i.e. travelling to and from campus, external financial support) and the fourth, others' attitude (i.e. parental attitudes, staff attitudes).

Solarin (2012) attempted a survey to know the library and information services available for physically challenged students in academic libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria. The author found that the physically challenged users are not adequately taken care of in the higher institutions of learning. Accessibilities to available information sources to students are provided.

Lucky and Achebe (2013) investigated the delivery of information services to the visually impaired users provided by the Hope for the Blind Foundation Wusasa, Zaria (Nigeria). This study showed that people of visual impairment have the lack of opportunities to access information specially which was in print form. Though, information and communication technology has been found very significant to solve this problem.

4. Objectives

1. To find out the frequency of visit to the library by visually impaired students.
2. To identify the purpose of visit the library by the users.
3. To know the purpose of seeking information by visually impaired students.
4. To ascertain the type of information resources frequently used by them.
5. To examine the strategies of visually impaired students for locating the materials.
6. To point out the students' awareness about information technology applications in the library.
7. To analyze the awareness training program for visually impaired students for using information sources.
8. To determine the accessibility of information sources.
9. To identify the hindrances faced by the users in obtaining the required information.
10. To evaluate the satisfaction level of visually impaired users with the overall functioning of the library.
11. To collect suggestions from the visually impaired students for further improvement of resources, facilities and services provided to them.

5. Methodology

The data collection is done through schedule (Performa containing assets of questions) method. This method of data collection is very much like the collection of data through questionnaire, with little difference which lies in the fact that schedules are being filled by the enumerators who are specially appointed for the purposes. The enumerators personally administered the schedules to the respondents under the study on the basis of stratified accidental random sample method, put the questions from the Performa in the order the questions are listed and record the replies in the space meant for the same in the Performa. Out of 50 schedules, 40 were completed and return back by respondents showing response rate of 80 percent. The schedules were also supplemented by informal interviews.

6. Data analysis and interpretation

The data collected through schedule were organized and tabulated by using statistical by using statistical methods and percentages.

6.1 Visit of the library

An attempt was made to find out the frequency of visit the library by the visually impaired students. The respondents were given five options. The analysis of responses is given in table 6.1.

Table: 6.1 Frequency of visit the library.

S.N.	Category	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Daily	19	47.5
2	Twice in a week	6	15
3	Weekly	7	17.5
4	Fortnightly	2	5
5	As and when needed	6	15
	Total	40	100%

It was analyzed that 19 (47.5%) users visit library almost daily, 6 (15%) of them visit twice in a week, 7 (17.5%) respondents visit weekly and only 2 (5%) fortnightly while 6 (15%) use as and when needed. So it can be concluded that a good number of users visit library daily.

6.2 Purpose of visiting the library

In order to know the purpose of seeking information by the visually impaired students, this has been classified into 4 categories as shown in table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Purpose of visiting the library

S.N.	Category	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	For the purpose of the study	35	87.5
2	To read newspaper and magazine	12	30
3	To know the latest arrivals in the library	26	65
4	To spend leisure time	5	12.5

(Multiple responses were permitted)

Table 6.2 indicates that 35 (87.5%) respondents out of 40 visits the library for study purpose, 12 (30%) users visit the library to read the news paper and magazines, 26 (65%) respondents visit the library to know the latest arrivals in the library and only 5 (12.5%) go to library to spend their leisure time. Hence, it is cleared that most of the users visit the library for study purpose.

6.3 Purpose of Seeking Information

In this part of schedule the respondents were asked to furnish the purpose of seeking information. The respondents have been given 4 categories as shown in table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Purpose of seeking information

S.N.	Purpose of seeking information	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	For career development	31	77.5
2	To solve practical problem	7	17.5
3	To keep up to date	19	47.5
4	Other	3	7.5

(Multiple answers were permitted)

It data reveals that 31 (77.5%) users gather information for their career development, 7 (17.5%) uses to solve their practical problems and 19 (47.5%) respondents seeking information to keep them up to date. Hence, it is shown from the analysis that most of the users seeking information for their career development.
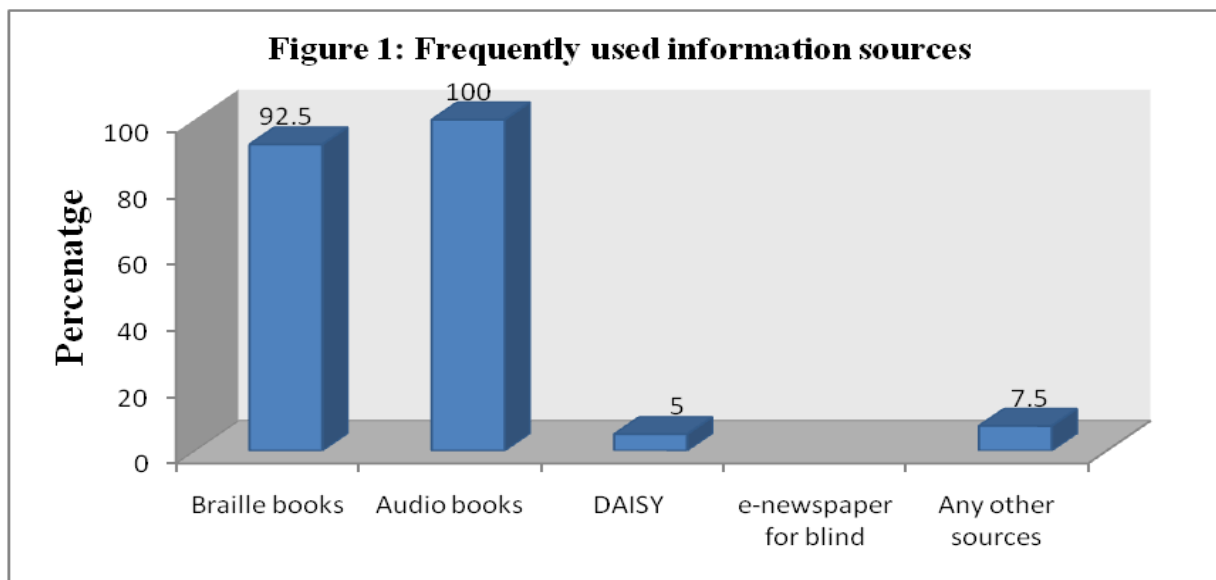
6.4 Frequently used Information Sources

In order to evaluate the information sources usually consulted by the visually impaired students some options were given to them. The result was presented in table 6.4.

Table 6.4: Frequently used information sources

S.N.	Category	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Braille books	37	92.5
2	Audio books	40	100
3	DAISY	2	5
4	e-newspaper for blind	-	-
5	Any other sources	3	7.5

(Multiple answers were permitted)

The data indicates the students' response regarding the most useful form of information source. It is clearly shows that 37(92.5%) students used Braille books while all respondents (100%) used audio books, only 2 (5%) users used DAISY while 3(7.5%) used other sources.

Figure 1: Frequently used information sources

So the figure 1 shows that audio books are frequently used as an information sources by the users.

6.5 Strategies for locating the materials

An attempt was made to find out the strategies for locating the materials by users, it has been classified into four categories as shown in table 6.5.

Table 6.5: Strategies for locating the materials

S.N.	Strategies	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Take the help of the library staff	27	67.5
2	Take the help of friends/classmates	17	42.5
3	Search yourself	22	55
4	Other	3	7.5

(Multiple responses were permitted)

On the analysis of the data it is observed that 27 (67.5%) respondents are take help of library staff for locating the materials, 17 (42.5%) users take the help of friends/classmates and 22 (55%) search yourself respectively. So it is depicts that most of the users (67.5%) take the help of library staff for searching the materials.

6.6 Awareness about the information technology applications

An attempt was made to know the awareness and utilization of information technology applications among the users. The analysis of responses is in table 6.6.

Table 6.6: Awareness about the information technology applications

S.N.	Applications	No. of responses(n=40)	Percentage
1	Web Braille	9	22.5
2	Recorded Cassettes	32	80
3	Radio Receiver	-	-
4	Talking books	40	100
5	Any other	-	-

(Multiple responses were permitted)

In response to the query about the awareness of information technology application, 32 (80%) respondents expressed that they are aware and used recorded cassettes mostly. 9 (22.5%) users are know about the web Braille while all (100%) respondents are use talking books. No user knows about the radio receiver. So sent percent respondents are aware about the talking books.

Figure 2: Awareness about the Information Technology Applications
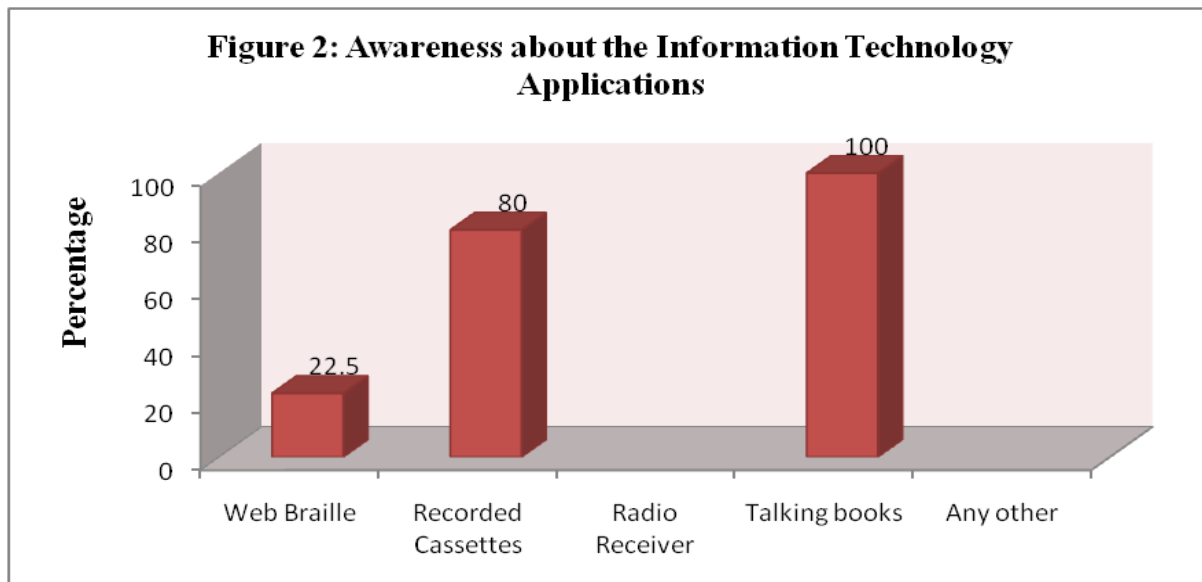
6.7 Awareness Training program for using information sources

Visually impaired students need special kind of sources and facilities unlike normal students and to use these sources special trainings are required by institute' experts on trainers. Hence, respondents were asked to state that whether they received any training program for using information sources or not. The responses are in table 6.7.

Table 6.7: Training program for using information sources

S.N.	Responses	No. of responses(n=40)	Percentage
1	Yes	13	32.5
2	No	27	67.5
	Total	40	100

The data of table 6.7 depicts that only 13(32.5%) respondents received awareness training program for using information sources while 27(67.5%) users have not received any awareness training program from the library. So it is further stated that majority of the users did not received any awareness training program.

6.8 Accessibility of information sources

The opinion of users is pooled regarding the accessibility of information sources. The data received from the users are presented in table 6.8.

Table 6.8: Accessibility of information sources

S.N.	Responses	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Easy to access	3	7.5
2	Fairly easy to access	21	52.5
3	Not easy to access	16	40
	Total	40	100

There are three different responses mentioned in the table 6.8 that indicates the respondent's opinion of accessibility of information sources. It is described that only 3(7.5%) respondents and 21(52.5%) respondents out of 40 respondents found easy and fairly easy to access of information respectively while 16 (40%) users expressed that it is not easy to access the information sources. It is clearly depicts that most of the users found information quite easy.

6.9 Hindrances faced by users in obtaining the required information

The respondents were asked about the hindrances faced by them encountered in accessing the information. There are many obstacles which can create problems in accessing the information such as less no. of documents in Braille/Audio, lack of computer with screen reader software, lack of training to use information technology, etc. The responses received from users have been tabulated in table 6.9.

Table 6.9: Hindrances faced by users in obtaining the required information

S.N.	Problems/difficulties	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Less no. of documents in Braille/audio	28	70
2	Lack of computer with screen reader software	30	75
3	Lack of training	27	67.5
4	Difficult to listen materials which were translated from print to audio form	23	57.5
5	Any other	2	5

(Multiple responses were permitted)

The above data in table 6.9 reveals that 28(70%) respondents and 30 (75%) respondents face problems in obtaining required information because of less no of documents in Braille/ audio form and computers with screen reader software respectively. It is further shows that 27(67.5%)

respondents face difficulties because of lack of training and 23(57.5%) users face hindrances while listen the materials which were translated from print to audio form.

Figure 3: Hindrances faced by users in obtaining the required information
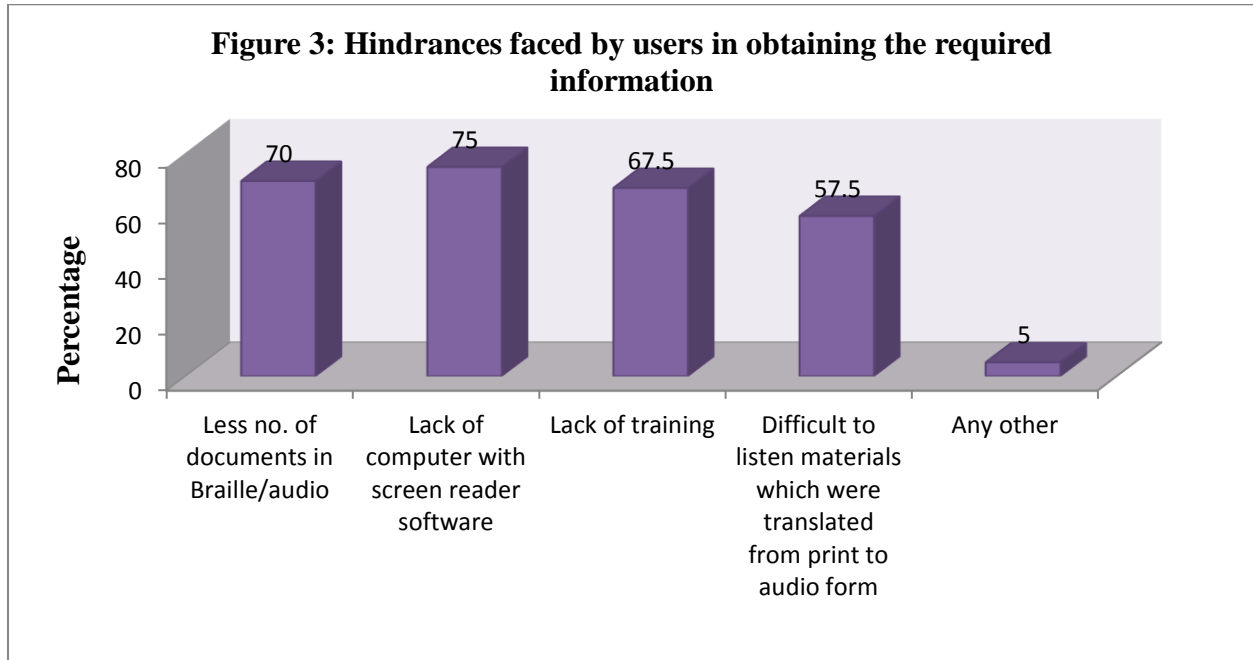
So figure 3 shows that most of the users face difficulties due to the lack of computers with screen reader software.

6.10 Satisfaction level with the overall functioning of Library

The libraries are trying to provide their best services to satisfy information needs of the users. In this part of schedule, respondents were asked about their satisfaction level with the overall functioning of library. The data received from users are given in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10: Satisfaction level with the overall functioning of library

S.N.	Satisfaction level	No. of responses (n=40)	Percentage
1	Very satisfied	-	-
2	Satisfied	21	52.5
3	Undecided	5	12.5
4	Not satisfied	11	27.5
5	Not very satisfied	3	7.5
	Total	40	100

Table 6.10 clearly depicts that none of the respondents is highly satisfied with the overall functioning of library, whereas 21(52.5%) users express that they are satisfied with the overall functioning of library. However, 5 (12.5%) respondents failed to decide that whether they are satisfied or not.

The responses show that 11 (27.5%) respondents are not satisfied with the overall function of library; however the remaining 3 (7.5%) respondents did not hesitate to state that they are not very satisfied with the overall functioning of library.

7. Major Findings

The major findings of the study conducted among the visually impaired students of Maulana Azad Library under study are given below:

➢ The study reveals that a fair number of respondents i.e. 47.5% visit the library daily (Table 6.1).

➢ The highest percentage of users prefers to visit library for study purpose (87.5%) only (Table 6.2).

➢ Most of the users' i.e.77.5% seeking information (Table 6.3) for their career development.

➢ All the respondents (100%) used audio books commonly as an information source (Table 6.4) and (Figure 1).

➢ Majority of users (67.5%) take the help of library staff for locating the materials (Table 6.5).

➢ All the visually impaired students (100%) are aware about the talking books (Table 6.6) and (Figure 2).

➢ Majority of the users (67.5%) did not receive any awareness training program (Table 6.7).

➢ The study reveals that most of the users (52.5%) found information fairly accessible (Table 6.8).

➢ The study illustrate that a large number of the users (75%) face difficulties due to the lack of computers with screen reader software (Table 6.9).

➢ The study describe that more than half of the respondents (52.5%) are satisfied with the overall functioning of the library (Table 6.10).

8. Suggestions

The primary objective of every library is to deliver a high level of eminence facilities and services to its every user whether its normal or special user like visually impaired. Here are some suggestions to improve the facilities:

➢ It is suggested that all the libraries should be provided with appropriate sources and collection of materials to meet information needs of visually impaired persons also.

➢ Libraries should be provided special awareness training programmes to visually impaired students so as to be capable of handling the complex information technology applications.

➢ New book, material or any kind of information should bring to the notice of the visually impaired students through appropriate tools.

➢ Library should have enough computer systems with advance technology for visually impaired users to enhance library services.

➢ In order to determine the impact of library interactions on visually impaired students, libraries can collect data on how they engage with library sources and services.

9. Conclusion

Information seeking is a highly subjective process, one which students approach with prior knowledge, strongly held opinions and differing levels of cognitive development. Visually impaired users have special needs because they are special people. But they must not to be set apart and always treated differently either. They also have the needs as sighted people and able-bodied do. Libraries must understand the information needs of its every user group in order to address those needs. They should ensure with the appropriate assets like information resources, space, services and ICT infrastructure. They also ensure that they employ staff with solid Braille literacy skills so that visually impaired users may be served effectively and efficiently. Libraries are less recognized as information is becoming more accessible via internet but visually impaired users are still depend on libraries and information centres for getting information. There is a need to shift from traditional service and user instruction roles to new roles to serve this special group of users.

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