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Information Seeking Behavior of Research Scholars of Vidyasagar University, West Bengal

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Abstract

The main objective of the study is to investigate the information seeking behavior of the research scholars of Vidyasagar University (VU), West Bengal. Besides, the study also intended to identify their information needs and awareness regarding the library services rendered by the central library of the university. Required data was collected from 100 researchers of the university through a structured questionnaire. Findings indicate that guidance in the use of library resources and services is necessary to help researchers to meet some of their information requirements. Most of the researchers avail library weekly (30%) and monthly(45%) and spend maximum of 0-2 hours with the main intention for preparing research, study journals , up-to-date knowledge etc. Most of the researchers depend on VU central library (27%) for information seeking and also collect information from other sources.

Keywords: *Information Seeking Behavior, Research Scholar, Vidyasagar University, Library*

Introduction

Information plays a vital role in our daily life. It affects our Personal, professional and social life. Thus library addresses information related behavior which includes the need for information and its utility. Information gathering is an integral part of today's cosmopolitan world. And the very process of acquiring, information and its implementation is known as information seeking behavior. Briefly, Information seeking behavior is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy the information needs.

To seek information, Library is an utmost place of interest. Thus Librarians must be in sync with the changes in information seeking behavior. With technological advancements and innovations Libraries are now a gateway of information. Traditional Libraries and their functioning are undergoing a sea change with the advent of ICT. Moreover, the library has the

duty to provide efficient services keeping in mind the increasing cost of purchasing and archiving print journals and electronic media output.

About the University:

Vidyasagar University was established in 1981 as proposed by Professor A.K. Gayen (HoD, Mathematics Department, IIT, Kharagpur) and Professor Bhupesh Chandra Mukherjee joined as the first vice chancellor of the University on 29th September 1981. Classes were started with six PG departments i.e., Anthropology, Applied Mathematics with Oceanology and Computer Programming, Commerce with Farm Management, Economics with Rural Development, Library and Information Science and Political Science with Rural Administration. The university presently houses twenty-seven postgraduate departments, including twelve humanities and social sciences and 15 science departments. There are forty-six undergraduate colleges affiliated under this University (Kar, Bhakta & Bhui 2018). Recently NAAC awarded the university with a 3 star status.

About the Central Library of the university

The Central Library of Vidyasagar University (Anil Kumar Gayen Bhabwan) began its existence in the year 1986 with the commencement of six Post Graduate departments. It is housed in a separate building having four floors on a plinth area near about 11000 sq. ft. The library has a collection of more than 1 lakh volumes which includes text books, reference books & bound volumes of journals, standards, non-book materials, etc.

With the developments of ICT, the behavioral characteristics of the library users have been changing rapidly and for this the library is trying to adapt the technological advancements. The Central Library has developed computer based information storage and retrieval system in the multi-user environment using koha software (LMS). The identity of all resources and the library users are fully bar-coded and all Library house-keeping operations like, acquisition, cataloguing, circulation and periodicals services have been automated. The bibliographic database is accessible through Web OPAC. Now it is a fully automated modern library is on its way to becoming an outstanding learning resource centre catering to the ever growing and uncompromising information and intellectual requirements of the students, faculty, researchers and other university community members.

The Central Library has now been catering to needs of about 3100 Post-Graduate students and

Research Scholars, nearly 220 faculty members of 32 departments, about 160 non-teaching and administrative staff of this institute. Besides, its services are extended to a number of other organizations also through institutional membership services. The central library being a member of UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium, the library provides online access to more than 7 thousand peer-reviewed full text journals and database services. The Central Library has also initiated a well-equipped Centre for Digital Resource Services (Digital Library) from where users can access e- resources and Institutional Repositories.

To ensure proper surveillance, Electronic Surveillance System has been adopted in some important service areas within the library. The Library has recently installed 802.11n based Wi-Fi service for all Student, Staff, Faculty and Other University Members. This service is available 24 X 7 in the entire library area free of cost. The library also has a well-equipped photo-copy centre and the users can avail this facility on payment of a nominal charge. Print Service is also available from the CDRS unit against a nominal charge. To cope with the ever increasing demand of the users the university library has become members of two renowned and enriched libraries, viz. IIT library, Kharagpur and British Council Library Kolkata.

Review of Related Literature

Fatimaa and Ahmad (2008) investigated the sources of information used by students studying Unani medicine at Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College for their academic work, the extent to which they are aware and use the library resources, the assistance they receive in using the library resources. Prasad (1998) studied the information-seeking behavior of physical scientists and social scientists. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the information-seeking behaviour of library users based on their subject interest, occupation, information environment, and geographical location. In another study, Gureshi, Zafar and Bashir khan (2008), discovered in their research of students' information seeking behavior in Universities of Pakistan that, lack of awareness of available resources and ability to use tools are big causes that highly affects information needs and seeking behavior of Pakistani students.

Wilson (1997) reported that information seeking behaviour is an area of active interest among librarians, information scientists, communication scientists, sociologists and psychologists. "Information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some need, perceived by the user, who as a consequence makes demands upon formal systems such as libraries, information centers, on- line services or some other person in order to satisfy the perceived

need. Information seeking behaviour refers to any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need. Kim (2006) in his study about student use of library databases found that convenient access was an important determinant of database use. Some students preferred open Internet searches to web-based subscription databases simply because of their convenience. Kim goes on to note that competing with Internet searching must be a priority for libraries in the future: To compete with open internet searches and facilitate use of Web-based subscription databases, it is crucial for libraries to increase the convenience of access and awareness of the existence of the databases.

Wang (2006) interviewed 65 researchers from China and the United States and compared their information seeking behavior. She found that Chinese scholars used slightly less digital resources than their U.S. counterparts, which was mainly because of the availability of the digital resources. She also asserted that the “digital divide” between hard sciences and humanities was more obvious than that between the two selected cultures of the same discipline. Still another group of researchers studied information seeking differences among institutions. Jarvelin and Ingwersen (2004) examined students and academic settings to explain competency theory admits application in analyzing information seeking behaviors in those who do not realize their own incompetence and therefore overestimate their abilities and other people's performance. Low-level information-seeking skills may then affect individuals' ability to recognize the need for information and the value of libraries and other information providers. Information professionals need to recognize low-level literacy skills and library anxiety in all service populations in order to provide outreach and systems to assist these students or patrons. Tiratel (2000) studied social scientists in Argentina, and Francis studied social scientists in India. Another group of researchers conducted inter-institution or intercultural studies on information-seeking behavior.

Brown (1999) studied the information- seeking behavior of astronomers, chemists, mathematicians, and physicists in the electronic information age, and he reported that all of the scientists surveyed greatly relied on the journal literature to support their research and creative activities. Dhyani (1974) conducted a survey of 100 readers at Rajasthan University Library, Jaipur. The study revealed that generally the readers showed interest in using the library at college level. As result, university libraries are functioning at a sub-optimal level or their effectiveness is not at the required level.

Objectives of the study

- ◆ To understand the information seeking behavior of the research scholars of VU.
- ◆ To examine the awareness of researchers about the library resources and services.
- ◆ To find out the type of information sources consulted by the research scholars.
- ◆ To know the purpose of seeking information.

Methodology and Data Collection

The target populations in the study were research scholars (Ph.D.) of the Vidyasagar University. To satisfy the above mentioned objectives, a structured questionnaire was designed to collect the required datasets. A total of 130 questionnaires were distributed randomly among the research scholars and only 106 filled the questionnaires. Among the 106, six questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete information. The tabulated data was compiled in excel file and analyzed accordingly. The collected data was analyzed to understand the research scholar's information-seeking behavior, information needs and the extent to which these needs have been fulfilled by the university library system and its services.

Data Analysis and Results

1. Frequency of Library Visit

Information was gathered from the survey regarding their visit in the library. The table -1 shows that around 45% of researchers visit the library monthly, 30% visits weekly, 2-3 times in a week is 15% and 10% visits daily. It indicates that library is being used by the research scholars not very frequently.

Table-1: Frequency of Library Visit

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage
Daily	10	10%
2-3 times in a week	15	15%
Weekly	30	30%
Monthly	45	45%

2. Time Spent on information seeking

Information gathered from the survey despondence indicates that majority of them use the library for a maximum period of 2 hours.

Table-2: Time Spent on information seeking

Hours	Response	Percentage (%)
0-2 hours	78	78%
3-5 hours	21	21%
6-8 hours	1	1%
More than 8 hours	NA	NA

3. Purpose of Library Visit

Table 3 shows that the library is used extensively for three purposes: for research work, for study, and reading journals. 9% researchers come to update their knowledge , 7% researchers come to using e-resources and 2% have other purposes like as reading news papers, to know new arrivals and internet surfing.

Table-3: Purpose of Library Visit

Purpose	Respondents	Percentage
Preparing research	37	37%
To study	25	25%
Borrowing materials	4	4%
Using e-resources	7	7%
Reading journals	16	16%
For updating knowledge	9	9%
Others	2	2%
Total	100	100%

4. Methods of Information Seeking

In response of method of information seeking table 4 indicates that research guides (subject experts), central library and internet are the most reliable sources for seeking information while friends/colleagues and other library are less used by the researchers for seeking information.

Table-4: Methods of Information Seeking

Source	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Research Guide	41	41%
VU Library	27	27%
Internet	29	29%
Friends/colleagues	0	0%
Other Library	3	3%
Total	100	100%

5. Use of the Library sources and services

Table 5 indicates that conventional methods like borrowing facility, reference books, journals, thesis/dissertations are being utilized marginally. The findings show that there is a necessity to create awareness regarding the use of e-resources and document delivery services among users.

Table-5: Use of the Library sources and services

Sources	Lot	Some	Never
Borrowing facility	32	55	13
Reference services (CAS/SDI)	18	52	30
Ref. books and journals	35	43	22
Thesis/Dissertations/Project reports	19	46	35

6. Purpose of Seeking Information

Table 6 indicates that to remain up-to-date and preparing researches are the two main purposes of seeking information by the researchers. Writing article, solving the problems and general awareness are other purposes of seeking information by the researchers respectively but these have less priority.

Table-6: Purpose of Seeking Information

Purpose	Respondents	In percentage (%)
To keep up-to-date	38	38%
Preparing research	52	52%
To write an article	16	16%
Solving the problem	26	26%
General awareness	16	16%

7. Document Searching

Table 7 shows that OPAC is an important tool and a preferable document searching method for researchers. The main reasons for using OPAC is that it is fast, efficient and prompt searching system with combination searching (AND, OR, NOT). Print catalogue card is less used and has a lower percentage.

Table-7: Document Searching

Document Searching	Respondents	In percentage (%)
OPAC	66	66%
Card Catalogue	11	11%
Others	23	23%

8. Use of e-resources

Table 8 indicates that e-resources are still being used marginally by the researchers. According to them language barrier is the main reason for lesser use of e-resources. Also there is no satisfactory use of digitized e-books and documentary delivery services by the researchers and less use of CD ROM. So there is a necessity to create awareness among the researchers to use e-resources at maximum.

Table-8: Use of e-resources

E-resources	Lot	Some	Never	No response
E-journals (UGC-INFONET)	29	53	02	16
E-journals(Institutional subscription)	23	45	13	19
Digital e-books	27	35	13	25
CD ROM	07	19	21	53

9. Rate Your Library

Table 9 shows that researchers are mostly satisfied with library OPAC facility, reference section, reading room facility, borrowing facility, staff behavior and reprography facility. Researchers are less satisfied with collection of books, e-resources lab, availability of print journals and e-resources. For providing better facilities proper shelving of the books in the library is mandatory.

Table-8: Rate Your Library

Sources and services	Very adequately	Adequately	Inadequately	No response
OPAC	40	33	13	14
Reference Section	28	41	19	12

Journals	31	43	14	12
Collection of Books	23	44	22	11
E-journals/database	24	44	20	12
Reading room	21	42	15	22
Behavior of library staff	30	37	14	19
Reprography facility	17	46	14	23
Borrowing facility	28	37	15	20

Findings and Conclusion

In this study 100 research scholars of Vidyasagar University were surveyed. This study indicates that IT based library services are being utilized less compared to print sources by the research scholars. Researchers use a variety of information sources for their research. Books and e-journals are considered mostly. Researchers perceived that Vidyasagar University Central Library plays an effective role in meeting their research needs. They also prefer to consult research guides who use the library. It was also noted that there was little awareness regarding e-resources available in library and document delivery services.

There is a need to make a plan for effective or better utilization of library sources and services. Some suggestions which have been received by the researchers for betterment of the library are noted below:

- i) Need for awareness creating programs regarding use of e-resources among researchers.
- ii) Optimum use of library sources should be included in research curriculum.
- iii) Need of orientation programs or periodic training program for library staffs.
- iv) Proper handling of technology, computers, and network should be developed in the library.
- v) ILL through document delivery services should be increased.
- vi) There is a need for marketing library services.

Although researchers accept that library provides them effective and useful services, the information seeking behavior differs from one discipline to another. After implementing some recommendations library system of the might be capable of handling the complex of information need and demands of the researchers.

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