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# Changes in information seeking behavior and reading patterns of Law students in digital environment: A Case Study

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*Changes in information seeking behavior and reading patterns of Law students in digital environment:*

*A Case Study*

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**Abstract:**

The present study analyzes the data collected from 65 students on their changing information seeking behavior. It is observed from the study that books and subscribed online legal databases are the main source of information to them and it is necessary to help and guide the students in using the library resources and services to meet their information requirement. Most of the students use Manupatra, WestLaw and LexisNexis online Legal databases to meet their information requirement.

**Key words:** Information, Information Seeking, Information seeking behavior, Internet, E-Resources

**INTRODUCTION**

The ways students seek information are shaped by growing number of media, both digital and analog, available to them. Within the past decade alone, we have seen the quick adoption – and, at times, the equally quick abandonment - of digital media that facilitate information exchange and information seeking among students: instant messaging, chat rooms, Live Journals, My Space, Blogger, Face Book, and Twitter etc. Now days the use of these applications have increased but not supersede past media like telephone and handwritten notes, sending of letters through postal, which is still continue in spite of difficulty or objection as a means of communication.

Since we live in “Information Age” Information Technology has become a part and parcel of our everyday lives. Information Technology has changed our daily personal lives radically over recent years .From smartphones to eBook readers to game consoles to personal computers ; from corporate datacenters to cloud services to scientific supercomputers; from digital photography and photo editing , to MP3 music player, to streaming media, to GPS navigation; from robot vacuum cleaners in the home, to adaptive cruise control in cars and the real- time control systems in hybrid vehicles, to robot vehicles on and above the battlefield; from the Internet and the World Wide Web to email; search engines, e Commerce, and social networks. So due to advancement in modern technology, the collection of information, its use, analysis and dissemination are going on an unparalleled range.

### **Definitions of Information**

Saying information is everywhere is like saying energy or gravitation is everywhere. Yet we have a feeling that information has something subtler than other fundamental entities or concepts like energy, matter or force.

Everyone talks of information and apparently understands it, but is not clear how information should be meaningfully defined. Indeed there is no workable general definition of information, which can be applied to all types of information processes and things such as multimedia, hypermedia, books and other documents, texts, messages, symbols, art objects, etc.

Belkin in 1978 described information as the `structure' of any text, which is capable of changing image structure of some recipient”.

Information seeking behavior refers to the way people search for and utilize information. The term was coined by Wilson in his 1981 paper.

In 1969 Mackay said “information does logical work on the organizational orientation of a system”.

### **Information Seeking**

In 2005 Ingwersen & Järvelin said “Information seeking is a form of human behavior that involves seeking for information by means of the energetic inspection of information sources or

information retrieval systems to satisfy the information need, or to solve a problem. In order to acquire information the user has to select information from a particular source, system, channel or service.”

According to Ellis in 2005 “the information-seeking process involves the activities of starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating and monitoring.”

The concept information-seeking also indicate to the Law student’s use of information services and systems, such as, libraries and computerized databases as well as personal and regular sources of information, such as, textbooks and law journals, law reviews, bare acts etc. The concept also refers to the law student’s use of unofficial information sources such as personal contacts through telephoning or sending emails to colleagues or suppliers to find information, seeking personal files, conferences attendance, searching the Internet, and visits to other putative libraries or similar installations to see what others have done.

### **Information Seeking Behavior**

Information seeking behavior refers to the track or path people probe for and make effective use of information. The term was coined by Wilson in 1981.

### **Legal Information**

Information in law is vital not solely within the advancement of a case however additionally necessary to forestall useless proceedings. Correct information helps to convince consumer in resisting associate action. Information support is of nice importance in each profession and community have to be dug out in some way according to legal research methods. Besides this, the interpretation of statutory provision may yield one or more rules, and one rule is based on more than one legal source. Therefore, lawyers have to identify the relevant legal sources. However, there is no comprehensive single window open access online legal information system existing in India. Some initiatives are taken by Government departments, however these resources don't seem to be easy and majority of those resources are incomplete. The high-quality open access legal data system will have extended significance for the community in this digital age. Basically, legal material consists of jurisprudence and reports of determined cases. Each form of legal materials relate to the “authority” and “precedent” respectively. The broader legal

fraternity might have different types of data like case laws, statutory provisions, rules framed underneath any act, object and reasons of any bill, modification of any act, notifications issued underneath any specific statute, debates in Parliament at the time of enactment of any particular act, or academic articles on a given topic in different situations. Open access legal information systems give us an opportunity to access the contents through World Wide Web, and creation of judicial websites and portal results in the development of a vendor neutral citation format served as an alternative to the traditional citation to printed material. In India, non-profit judicial research tools provide useful help to the legal fraternity to locate the relevant information on the internet. Various government departments in India have started posting information on the website. Some of the open access legal information resources which are useful and popular among the lawyers are as follows: Judgment Information System, Legal Information Institute of India, Supreme Court Judges Library, India Code Information System, National Portal of India, High Court of Delhi website, Indian Kanoon etc. Open access legal information resources are useful for the legal community as well as lawyers. They need integrated legal information system with federated search facility. Development of an open access legal information system in India could attempt to serve legal community as well as common mass. Commercial resources are systematically organized, and are very helpful for legal community to start legal research from scratch. However, open access legal resources are lagging behind in advance search techniques, particularly federated search techniques. It is need of the hour that Indian technologist and legal experts should collaborate to make these resources more user-friendly, properly organized, and up-to date as per the international standards for facilitate efficient and effective use.

### **SOA University: An Introduction**

Siksha 'O' Anusandhan has been declared as a deemed University, U/S 3 of the UGC Act, 1956. Nine constituent institutions offer specialized technical and professional programmes in different disciplines. This has been corroborated the accreditation by National Assessment & Accreditation Council (NAAC) which has awarded the University Grade 'A', for its visible performance. The University offers Undergraduate, post graduate, post graduate Diploma, dual degrees and doctoral programmes in engineering and technology, computer application, basic sciences, humanities & social sciences, medicine, dental, nursing, business administration, hotel management & catering technology, hospital administration, pharmacy, biotechnology and Law.

The University is proactive in its approach to understand and meet the changing requirements of students, employees and the community at large. The University aims at maintaining continuous learning, improvement and transformation in technical and professional education.

### **About SNIL Law Library System**

SOA National Institute of Law, a premier law institute under Siksha 'O' Anusandhan deemed to be University was set up in the year 2011 with the objective of being the center of excellence in legal education and research. Established in the year 2011, the SOA National Institute of Law (SNIL) offers Five Year Integrated Double Degree Course in Law i.e., BA.LLB, BBA.LLB, and B.Sc.LLB at the Graduate Level, and one year Course in Master of Laws i.e., LL.M with different specializations at the post Graduate Level and Ph. D Programmes in Law. A separate Library is setup for SNIL named as SNIL Law Library, consisting of around 10,000 thousand books, nearly 5000 as reference books, bound volumes, Law journals, Law Reports and reviews with the goal of helping the students to obtain all related information that can contribute to their knowledge and learning. Since then, by providing a good service and continuously upgrading their facilities, the library has also assisted the academic staffs in preparing their teaching materials, and academic research. Thus, the library should at par with the latest technology, provide convenient, sufficient and reliable materials, as well as offering the users with friendly and efficient humanly service. In the beginning, the library had emphasized more on the development of the print collections.

The library subscribes 5 no. of Newspapers, 20 general magazines, AIR journals, Civil Law reviews, Supreme Court Journals, etc. It also subscribes four online legal databases, i.e. Manupatra, West Law, Lexis Nexis and AIR to meet the legal information needs of faculties and students.

### **Literature Review**

Naushad and Nisha<sup>3</sup> undertake the study at Central Science Library, University of Delhi to determine the extent to which research scholars were aware and use e-journals. The result elicited from the study that (60 per cent) was using e-journals weekly and majority of users consult printed journals than e-journals for the purpose of research. Gupta<sup>4</sup> analyses to know the use of electronic journals by faculty and research scholars of physics and chemistry at

Kurukshetra University, India subscribed from the INFONET consortium. The results revealed from the study that the respondents are more captivated to use e-journals than print journals. But open-source materials are very much used than those procurable via INFONET. Most of the respondents argued for training arranging programmes on how to efficiently use e-resources and retrieving information from them from time-to-time.

While reviewing literature, it is observed that few studies were conducted on Law library users. Thus, the previous studies influence researchers to study seeking behavior and use-pattern of users of Law library, Siksha 'O' Anusandhan National Institute of Law which will help the library professional to provide services according to needs of users.

### **Objectives**

The study is carried out to find out

1. To know the awareness and use of library resources
2. how often they visit library and search the print as well as e- resources
3. for what purpose they use library resources
4. Which site they navigate mostly
5. the problems which they faced during the period of using the library resources

### **Scope**

The scope of the study is limited to extract and study the information seeking behavior of law students of SOA National Institute of Law (SNIL) only not the entire students of the University.

### **Methodology**

The following methodology are used to collect the primary, secondary data and information.

**Surveying:** questioning users and obtaining answers directly from users about their behavior, attributes, values, conditions and/or preferences. Also 100 no of questionnaires were distributed but 65 filled in questionnaires were received from the students with the response rate of 65%. The collected data were analyzed, classified and tabulated by employing statistical methods.

**Observation:** making direct observation on the communication behavior of users in a given situations, practices, time periods, etc.

**Record analysis:** obtaining written records or other artifacts of previous communications (such as papers, correspondence, statistics) and deriving observations about users from records.

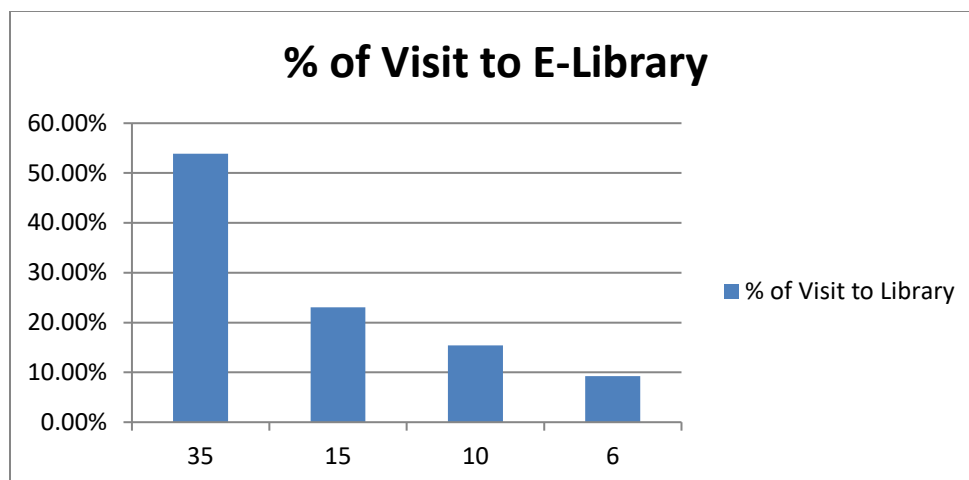
### **Analysis**

There are seven characteristics used to study the information seeking behavior of Law students. These are

**Table 1 Time analysis –how many times the students are using the e-library.**

Frequency of Visit	No. of respondent	% of Visit
Daily	35	53.85 %
Twice in a week	15	23.07 %
Once in a month	10	15.39 %
Not Visiting	6	9.24%
Total = 100	= 65	



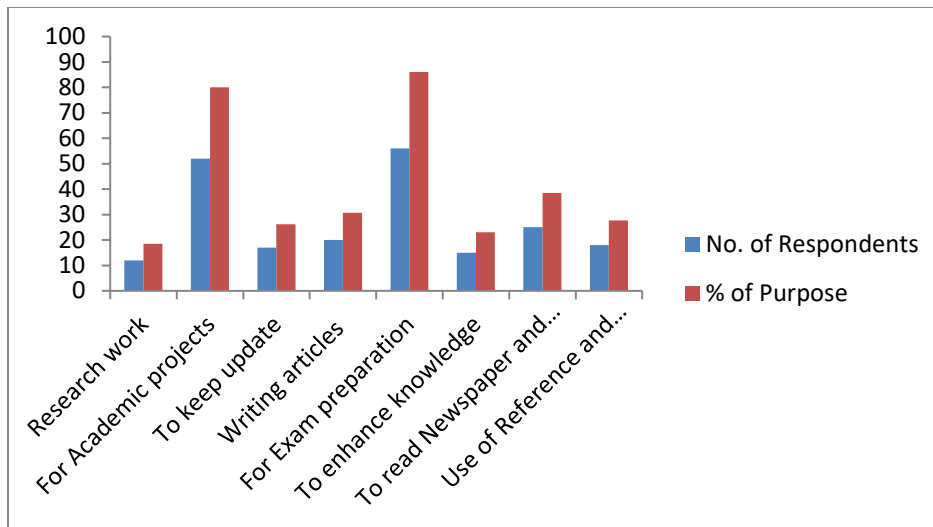


**Figure1. Time analysis –how many times the students are using the e-library.**

It is seen from the above table that most of the students i.e. 35(53.85%) are come to library in search of their information requirement daily followed by 15 (23.05%) of students come twice in a week, 10 (15.39%) of students come once in a month and only 6 (9.24%) students not visiting the library at all.

**Table 2 Purpose of information seeking**

Purpose	No. of Respondents	% of purpose
Research work	12	18.46%
For Academic projects	52	80%
To keep update	17	26.15 %
For writing articles	20	30.76%
For Examination preparation	56	86.15 %
To enhance knowledge	15	23.07 %
To read Newspaper and Magazines	25	38.46 %
Use of Reference and back volumes	18	27.69 %

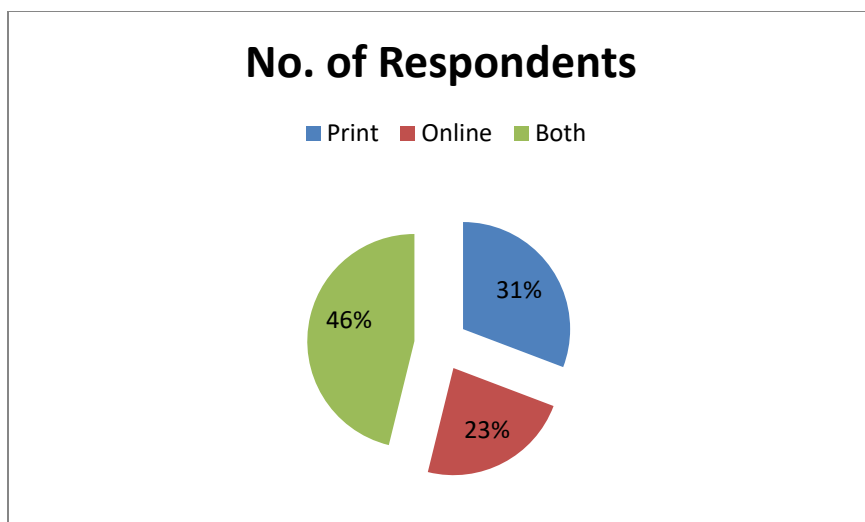


**Figure2. Purpose of information seeking**

It has observed from the figure that almost all the students are using library for examination purpose (86.15%) followed by preparing their academic projects (80%) as assigned to them by the teachers and so on. Few students are using the library for research purpose (18.46%). So it is observed that the purpose for which the e-library is established and e journals are subscribed are not fulfilled because lowest number of research scholars are using the e- library and e-resources.

**Table 3 Source of information format mostly used by the users**

Source	No. of Respondents	% of using the library resources
Print	20	30.76 %
Online	15	23.07 %
Both	30	46.15 %
Total = 100	65	



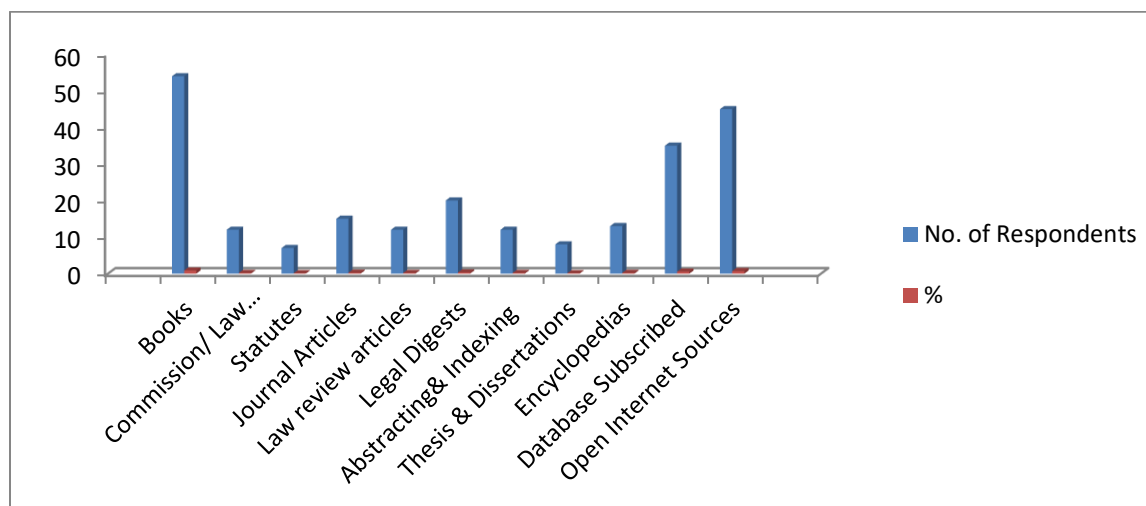
**Fig. 3 Source of information format mostly used by the users**

It is found from the above table and corresponding figure 3 that 30 (46.15%) no of students are using both online and print resources followed by 20 (30.76%) no of respondents are using print resources and 15 (23.07%) no of students are using online resources to fulfill their information requirements. Thus it is observed that print resources are also play important roles in fulfilling the demands of the users even in the e environment.

**Table 4. Significance of information sources for the students available in the Library**

Information Source	No. of Respondents	%
Books	54	83.07 %
Commission/ Law Reports	12	18.46 %
Statutes	7	10.76 %
Journal Articles	15	23.07 %
Law review articles	12	18.46 %
Legal Digests	20	30.76 %
Abstracting& Indexing	12	18.46 %
Thesis & Dissertations	8	12.31 %
Encyclopedias	13	20 %
Database Subscribed	35	53.84 %

Open Internet Sources	45	69.23 %
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**Fig. 4 Significance of information sources for the students available in the Library**

It is found that the importance of books is still in higher place among 54 (83.07%) students although we are in the digital age followed by browsing of Open Internet sources 45 (69.23%) students, Database subscribed 35 (53.84%) students, Legal digests 20 (30.76%) students, Journal articles 15 (23.07%) students, Encyclopedias 13 (20%), Commission reports 12, Abstracting & Indexing 12 and Law Review art 12 (18.46%), Students, Thesis and Dissertations are important for 8 (12.31%) students and Statutes are significant for 7 (10.76%) students.

**Table 5 Mode of Information collection from the Library**

Mode	No. of Respondents	%
By personal visit to Institute Library	25	38.46 %
By e-mail to friend / Librarian	7	10.76 %
Over telephone to friend / Librarian	13	20 %
Internet resources	12	18.46 %

Any other mode	3	4.61 %
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The table no 5 reveal that 25 (38.46%) users are personally come to the library to collect their relevant information,13 (20%) user collect information over telephone to friend and from contacting Librarian, 12 (18.46%) collect from Internet resource, 7 (10.76%) user collect by e-mailto a friend or to Librarianand 3(4.61%) collect following any other mode.

#### 6. Preference of Electronic sources of information by the users

Preference	No. of Respondent	%
E- Resources	12	18.46
E-Journals	06	9.23
E-Books	07	10.76
E-databases	12	18.46
Information gateways	07	10.76
Open Access Internet resources	18	27.69
Any other.	03	4.61

#### Preference of Electronic sources of information by the users

It is found from the above table that highest no of students given preference to Open access Internet resources i.e. 18 (27.69%) followed by e- resources and e- databases 12 (18.46%) e- books and information gateways in third place , e- journals in fourth place. So it is observed that most of the students are browsing Open Access Internet resources.

#### 7. Percentage of total information requirement fulfilled from library's own e-resources.

% of Information Requirement	No. of Respondent	%

Below 10%	08	12.31
10% - 30%	10	15.38
50%	35	53.84
50% - 80%	10	15.38
Almost 100%	02	3.07

It is obvious from the above table that 35 (53.84) respondents said 50% information requirement are fulfilled from the e-resources, 8 (12.31%) respondents said below 10% are fulfilled from e-resources, 10 (15.38%) respondents said 10% - 30% are fulfilled and only 2 (3.07%) respondents said 100% information requirements are fulfilled from e-resources.

### **8. Important bibliographic databases users prefer most to search**

<b>Databases</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Manupatra	20	30.76
AIR	5	7.69
Scopus	7	10.76
EBSCO Host	5	7.69
Proquest	4	6.15
West Law	14	21.53
LexisNexis	10	15.38

### **Important bibliographic databases users prefer most to search**

The table and corresponding graph shows that about 20 (30.76%) respondents are using Manupatra whereas 14 (21.53) respondents use Westlaw, 10 (15.38%) use LexisNexis, 5 (7.69%) are using AIR, 5 (7.69%) use EBSCO Host, 7 (10.76%) students are using Scopus and only 4 (6.15%) use Proquest database. So Manupatra is the first choice among the students of law for acquiring Knowledge on different areas of study followed by Westlaw and LexisNexis.

### **9. Searching Strategy Used to search the E resources**

<b>Searching options used</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>%</b>
Keyword search	15	23.07
Title search	35	53.84
Author search	08	12.31
Subject search	06	9.23
Boolean Operators	01	1.53

### **Problems faced during the browsing**

The analysis indicates that law students (or lawyers) do not fully utilize library information resources while seeking information, due to a lack of exposure to ICT equipment or the traditional teaching method used in law classes, which does not encourage them to harness legal information from the law library. Law students have a misconception of the roles and values of law libraries and the information professionals in their studies, which results in the adoption of other information seeking strategies that exclude the use of libraries and the library staff in the process of seeking information.

### **Conclusion and suggestions**

From the findings on information competency of the students, there is some specific behavior and skills the students need to employ effectively in order to achieve that competence. When the respondents were asked to write the topic of their present academic assignment and the keyword used it was found out majority of the students has the problems in selecting appropriate subject headings, keywords, and Boolean search strategies. One of the most common mistakes made by the students is to rely completely on free-text, natural language search strategies rather than controlled vocabulary descriptor. Furthermore, the students should know the tactics of narrowing and broadening to move a search in what is hoped to be the right direction. Maximizing the retrieval of relevant records and minimizing the retrieval of irrelevant ones is often described as maximizing both Recall and Precision. The library should organize orientation workshops and

seminars for students to up skill them in utilizing library resources so that maximization of library resources and services will be enhanced.

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