

## Library Use and Information Seeking Behavior of Students of Mysore University, Mysore.

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**Abstract:** A Library is said to be effective and to develop its collections, services and facilities to meet the information needs of its users only if there is vital role of users' information need and information seeking behavior. The purpose of the study is to identify the information channels, information sources and the users skill level in library use and computing I T based sources and facilities. 1500 questionnaires were distributed in the month of November and December 2013 to all students irrespective of disciplines and 1350 (90%) filled questionnaire were received in return. Though the library said to be effective, it was found that books were ranked 1st as information sources and personal collections were first consulted as first as information channel.

**KEYWORD-** Information Seeking Behavior, Information Needs, Information Use, Mysore University Library, Information search, Search Engines.

A Library is a reservoir of the intellectual resources. For the academic community, dissemination of knowledge, a basic objective of education is fostered by libraries. As libraries are bestowed with an objective of providing access to knowledge, proper management forms the backbone of day to day activities and its pertinent functioning. The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. Many electronic resources are available in the library. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information seeking of users. Innumerable information, in a large variety of containers and in many different location are, is all available in one place (Fidel et al., 1999)

Information seeking is a human process that requires adaptive and reflective control over the afferent and efferent actions of the information seeker. Information seeking is a dynamic and changeable process despite its formal problem solving attributes. In the study of information

seeking behavior, the discovery of people's strategies, expectations, attributes, and anxieties promote the relationship as they live and work with other information users. Information seekers should begin with finding out what is stopping progress, creating an information gap/vacuum. An important aspect of sense making as a process is the struggle of people to understand a problem that drives them to seek meaning for in many situations and many circumstances they are content to take such action.

Information seeking behavior involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought (Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain, 1996). Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed materials to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from various media available in libraries. E.g. encyclopedias, journals, and more currently, electronic media. Abels (2004) mentioned that the use of the internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. At the same time, expenditures on monographs showed steady increase.

Therefore, there is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. The librarian should be aware of what kind of information is being sought, and how it can be obtained. Due to the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving printed scholarly journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient service.

### **Related studies**

**Suriya, Sangeetha and Nambi** (2004), studies information seeking behavior of Faculty Members of Government Arts Colleges in Cuddalore District. The authors investigate how faculty members seek information from the library. The study shows that most of the respondents i.e. 61 (38.12 percent) visits the library several times a week to meet their information needs and the majority of the respondents i.e. 91 (56.87 percent) made their search by subject.

**Sethi** (1990) explores the information seeking behavior of 256 social science faculty members in Indian universities. The study found that respondents preferred journals, books, government documents and various reference sources for meeting their information needs. The author says

that the use of indexing and abstracting sources, book reviews, conference proceedings, dissertations and theses, newspaper clippings and other non-book sources.

**Shokeen and Kushik** (2002) demonstrate the information seeking behavior of social scientists working in the universities located in Haryana. They report that social scientist visit the library daily and they first prefer the method of searching the required information followed by searching through indexing and abstracting periodicals and citations in articles respectively. The social scientists use current journals followed by books.

**Lately, Al-Suqri** (2007) examined the information-seeking behavior of the social science faculty at the Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The author uses a mixed-method approach using questionnaire, interview, and focus group for data collection. The population consisted of 367 faculty members of which 218 (59.4 percent) participated in the study. The author finds that the most frequently used types of information resources were journals and books. The users still prefer print rather than electronic resources indicating that the availability of information resources in that format in the Arabic language was very limited. The respondents made fewer visits to the library to check out materials. Their personal library was the starting point of their research and they resorted to colleagues or experts for locating information resources. The use of online information resources was increasing and changing the way they seek information for their research and teaching purposes. The author finds that the participants faced a number of specific challenges and barriers in their information seeking which include: inadequate library resources; problems with the organization of library resources; information technology limitations; lack of adequate training; inadequate Internet connections; lack of time for research; and language/culture related barriers.

There is a lot of literature that most of the studies on information seeking behavior of academics have been undertaken in developed countries and these studies are more on faculty and some on Research scholars and less or fewer studies on students and thus reflect the information seeking environment there. Therefore it is felt that there is a need to concentrate on information seeking behavior of Mysore university library users particularly students behavior. It is expected that the findings of this study will be useful for the Mysore University Library in particular, and other

universities in general to properly understand the information needs of users. This knowledge can be used to review the library's collection development and information access policies.

## **Methodology**

The study used questionnaire-based survey method, as many similar studies conducted earlier, have also used this method for data collection. The total membership holder of student's category in Mysore University Library is 2608. The investigator distributed 1500 questionnaires in the month November-December 2013 and the filled questionnaire in return was 1350. The investigator used mixed method approach questionnaire also like interview, focus group whenever it felt necessary. The study population was of all disciplines.

In order to save time and ensure better response rate, the questionnaire were personally distributed to the users whenever they visited library, and in their departments in November ending and December starting 2013 (for 30 days).

## **Results and discussion**

Of the 1350 respondents 194 were M.phil students, 630 Final year students and 526 First year students.

The largest number of respondents, 630 (46.66%), studying the final year of master degree, 526 (38.96%) are of first year master and 194 (14.37%) of M.phil students. Out of 1350 total respondents 780(57.7%) of the respondents were males and 570(42.2%) were females.

## **Library Use Skills of Respondents**

Table-1 Library Use Skills of Respondents (N=1350)

<b>Skill Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Excelent	300	22.00
Very Good	380	28.14
Good	270	20
Fair	330	24.44
Poor	70	5.18

Respondents were asked to provide self assessment on their level of library use skills. It was assumed that library use skills might have a bearing on the ways respondents use the library to acquire the need information. Those respondents who have a better library use skills were expected to utilize library resources and facilities more effectively compared to those with poor library use skills. The analysis showed that 300 (22.00%) of the respondents assessed their library use skills as “Excellent” 380(28.14%) as “Very Good” and 270(20%) as “Good” 330(24.44) as Fair” and 70(5.18) as “Poor”.

Here the inference for the respondents who have assessed themselves as “Poor” in having library use skills are of first year student and they did not attend the orientation programme conducted by the University Library and they once again request to use the library for the level best like web OPAC or traditional catalogue and other sources and facilities.

### **Computing Skills of Respondents**

Table-2 Computing Skills of Respondents (N=1350)

<b>Skill Level</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Excelent	148	10.96
Very Good	296	21.92
Good	584	43.25
Fair	253	18.74
Poor	69	5.11

Respondents were also asked to provide self assessment on their level of computer use skills. It was assumed that level of computing skills might have an impact on their use of IT based library sources and facilities. Of the 1350 respondents, 148 (10.96%) perceived his/her computing skills as “excellent”, 296(21.92%) as Very Good, and 584(43.25%) as “Good” and 253(18.74%) as “Fair” and 69(5.11%) as “Poor”.

Here the inference for the respondents who have assessed themselves as “Poor” in having computing skills are of first year student and they need staff help to use the resources and facilities like web OPAC, IR, e-journals and so on for the level best

## Information Channels Used by Respondents

Table-4 use of information Channels by Respondents

Information Channel	Nos	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
College Library	1119	548(48.97%)	361(32.26%)	210(18.76%)	-
Personal Collection	918	462(50.32%)	326(35.51%)	130(14.16%)	-
Book Stores	308	54(17.53%)	122(39.61%)	114(37.01%)	18(5.84%)
Friends	280	112(40%)	85(30.35%)	73(26.07%)	10(3.57%)
Consult Knowledgeable Person In The Field	292	60(20.54%)	105(35.95%)	113(38.69%)	14(4.79%)

Respondents were asked to indicate information channel first consulted by them for getting the needed information. It can be observed from the table that 50.32% respondents 'always' consulted first their personal collections. Of the total 1350 respondents 48.97% says 'always' consult library. 39.61% of the total respondents say they consult book stores. 38.69% respondents say that occasionally consult knowledgeable person in the field. 3.57% of the respondents say that they never consult friends for information.

## Library Visits

Table -3. Frequency of Library Visits

Visit Frequency	Number	Percentage
Daily	260	19.25
Weekly 3 Times	518	38.37
Once In A Week	224	16.59
Once In A Month	267	19.77
Several Times A Year	81	6
Never	--	---

Respondents were asked how often they visited the library. Of the 1350 participants who responded to this question, 518(38.37%) visited the library at least three times in a week. Another 260(19.25%) respondents visited the library daily. 267(19.77%) respondents visited the library once in a month.

### **Purpose of Seeking Information**

Table- 4 Purpose of Seeking Information

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
For Preparing academic exams	510	37.77
For updating knowledge to attend competitive exam	345	25.55
For writing research articles	180	13.33
For doing M.phil dissertation reports	210	15.55
For entertainment	105	7.77

As shown in Table-4, respondents indicated the purpose of seeking information, 510(37.77%) students sought information for preparing academic exams, and 345(25.55%) of respondents for updating knowledge to attend competitive exams. 180 (13.33%) for writing research articles, 210 accounting 15.55% represents for doing M.phil dissertation reports. And the remaining respondents assign for entertainment 105(15.55%).

### **Importance of Information Sources to Teaching**

Table-5. Importance of Information Sources to Teaching

<b>Information Sources</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Books	440	32.59
Reports	280	20.74
Journals	194	14.37
Research Articles	145	10.74
Digest	92	6.81
Thesis and Research Reports	133	9.85
Encyclopedia	66	4.88

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of information source which they used to seek information. It can be seen from the table 7 that text books were the popular type of information source for all type students representing 440(32.59%). 20.745 students use reports. 14.37% accounting for 194 respondents use journals, 145(10.74%) and 133(9.85%) of respondents use research article and thesis and research reports as their source of information.

### Use of IT Based Library Sources and Facilities by Respondents

Table-6. Use of IT Based Library Sources and Facilities by Respondents

IT Based Sources and Facilities	Number	Percentage
Online Public Access Catalogue(OPAC)	580	42.96
CD-ROM databases and product	370	27.40
Online local and international databases	294	21.77
Audio-visual and multimedia collections	106	7.85

Among the IT based library sources and facilities offered by the Mysore University Library, respondents used the library OPAC more (42.96%). It was followed by CDROM database and access to local international online databases (21.77%). Audio visual and multimedia collections were used least.



## Internet Search Engine

Table-9 Search Engine

Search Engines	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Google	692	51.25
Yahoo	478	35.40
MSN	180	13.33

Off all the respondents, 51.25% use search engines, especially Google, followed by Yahoo with 35.40%, MSN with 13.33%.

## Library Effectiveness

Table-10 Overall Effectiveness of the Mysore University Library

Effectiveness Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Very effective	210	15.55
Effective	664	49.18
Somewhat effective	476	35.25
Ineffective	--	--

Respondents were asked to provide their overall assessment of Mysore University Library in meeting their information needs. Out the total 1350 participant, 15.55% considered library 'very effective' in meeting their information needs. 49.18 % of the respondents perceived the library as 'effective'. 35.25% of the respondents considered the library as 'somewhat effective'. None of the respondents assessed the library as 'ineffective'. It appeared that a majority of the Mysore University Library were satisfied with the collection, services and facilities provided by the Mysore University Library for meeting their information needs.

## Conclusion

It is recommended that the library staff should show a keen interest in focusing on assisting users for using right resources at right time. Reference Librarian should help users to improve their skills in information seeking activities and to find the different types of information they need.

Library staff should also assist users in learning the use of OPAC, search engine, e-mail, and CD-ROM techniques, and inform them of the websites available.

The Library must provide adequate ICT facilities such as Internet, laser printers, scanners, telephone, etc to offer various services in the library

A variety of information resources were found to be used by students but books were considered more important source of information. Although respondents perceived the Mysore University library as effective in meeting their information needs, it can be found that the 50.32% of the respondents prefer personal collections as information channel.

The study revealed that there are respondents use of library and IT based library sources and facilities is 'Poor'. It might be due to the lack of awareness about their availability, improper selection of materials or non-functionality with these products.

### **Suggestions**

With the findings in the study I would like to suggests that this is a manner of concern, as presently, electronic information sources and the internet are considered extremely important tools for academic activities whether it may be research, teaching, academic exams or any competitive exams. There should be excellent level of Use skill of these library source and facilities by academic community especially by students. So library staff should conduct regular and often orientation programme, user education, users and staff meeting. This would help for the users who have missed to attend the user education programme in the beginning of academic year.

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