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APMMDB Dayananda
Assistant Librarian, Wayamba
University of Sir Lanka, Sri
Lanka

Information Seeking Manners of the Undergraduate Students: with special reference to Wayamba University Library Network (WULN)

APMMDB Dayananda

Abstract

Information has become a living thing in 21st century. Information seeking patterns are consisted to be different among user groups. In the present study an effort is made to investigate the Information need and information seeking behavior of the undergraduate students of the Wayamba University Library Network (WULN). The survey was conducted of the undergraduate students to know the answer of questions such as collections of libraries, overall effectiveness of the library, organization of the materials, services of the library, library staff, use of internet, search engines, web browsers, information sources, need of information and purpose of information etc.

The survey was conducted by using self-structured questionnaires with close and open-ended questions. Final year students (100) were selected as the sample for the study from the WULN and the responded rate was 88%. Considering the reasons for information seeking 59% mentioned as education and research purpose. Most of them stated that text books are the best source for seeking information. Majority of the respondents revealed that browse the internet is best method for seeking information. The usage of internet was 100. Interestingly, 70% users agreed that e-journals are the best source of information but interestingly majority of the users 89% felt that electronic form is convenient. There are good percentages of users 59% who are satisfied with the services of the library but others wished for improvements. The study recommends orientation programmes for students to make awareness of e-resource and better utilization of the library services; it is also recommended that library should join some consortium for more resources and services.

Keywords: Information need, information seeking behavior, library resources, library services, Wayamba University Library Network, WULN

Introduction

From the day mankind came into the world, their rhetoric and written media have been used to preserve the memory of the world. Man has passed through the Stone Age, the Shepherd Age and the Agricultural Age and is now moving towards the Industrial Age. The central tool of the industrial age is information. In those different eras, man used various writing media to impart his knowledge, wisdom and experience to his unborn future generations. At the same time, parts of plants and animal bones were used to create some paintings in the caves. Along with that journey, their writing art also evolved. The turning point of the writing medium, which spread to stone, parchment, vellum, papyrus, Palmyra leaf, palm leaf, were Ceylon's paper. Gutenberg's printing presses opened the door to the era of polygamy. Indigenous peoples' knowledge of what they knew for future generations was deposited in certain written media, and those were documented in Sri Lanka, especially using palm leaves and Palmyra leaves. Here they wrote books, especially on religious and indigenous medicine. They survive to the present day because of the uniqueness of their creativity and technology. With the advent of these writing media and materials, discourse was created to preserve and houses were created for their burial, and the unique houses that were created became libraries.

The turning point in the local writing media was the palm-leaf books. These resources were used to preserve the unique information in the fields of religion, literature and indigenous medicine to be passed on to future generations.

Correspondence:

APMMDB Dayananda
Assistant Librarian, Wayamba
University of Sir Lanka, Sri
Lanka

Information is a main resource of today's information society. Some of them are interpret today society has information exploration so that any one can't gather every information of the society. Acquiring, using and implementing information is critical activities. This process is known as information seeking process. Information seeking is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express his/ her information need, seek, evaluate and select information and finally uses it to satisfy his/ her information needs. Various factors affect the information seeking behaviors of an individual or a group of individuals, i.e., purpose for information, channels and sources of information and barriers to information. Information seeking is a basic activity of an individual. (Wiberley, 1995).

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. Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms from reading printed materials to education and research. Student's activity seeks current information from the various media available in libraries, eg. Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Journals, CD, DVD, Data bases and more electronic medias.

An individual user has many paths for accessing his/ her desired information. There are many factors which decide his/ her information seeking behaviors. These factors include the time spent in search of information, knowledge about information sources, the way of expressing his/ her information need etc.

Review of related literature

Extensive, systematic and critical examination of scholarly publications related to the study was carried out. The most important and recent ones were quoted in this paper. Many studies in the past describe the Information need and information seeking behavior.

Manoj.P. (2011) has conducted a study to determine the information needs and seeking behavior of litigation lawyers. The purpose was to investigate the types of information sources and preferences of lawyers in selecting different information sources. It also inspects the different types of information required at various stages of a case and tries to understand the adequacy of information to lawyers.

Meho (2001) has conducted electronic interview of 60 researchers of 14 countries including U.S., Germany,

Australia, India, Russia etc. and found that scholars conducting research face many difficulties in accessing credible information for their research. The barriers include lack of academic structure, research support-based information sources and widely scattered information sources.

The study of Kaushik & Kanchi's (2007) revealed that 57.69% respondents read newspapers daily and 33.33% read occasionally. A majority of users 58.333% used general magazines, 14.73% read magazines on film and 16.67% has read magazines related to various competitions. More female undergraduates (UG) have been found reading religious and competitive books. The female undergraduate students have been found devoting more time for reading at home as compared to male UG students. The use of internet by rural UG students was very low. There only sixteen respondents out of one hundred fifty-six, which used the internet.

Mardis (2009) in their study about internet found that, overall; teachers had characterized their experiences with using the internet as frustrating because of poor quality and overwhelming result. In particular, science teachers through confident in their search skills, used few online resources specifically designed to support their teaching and learning activities.

Objectives

This study focused to examine the information seeking behavior of undergraduate students of WULN, Sri Lanka with the following objectives:

1. To identify the reasons of the information seeking
2. To find out the different information sources used by students
3. To recognize the purposes of the using internet
4. To categorize the methods for seeking information
5. To identify the problems in information usage

Methodology

The survey was conducted by using self-structured questionnaire with close and open-ended questions.

Population of the study

The population was the final year students of WULN and the sample was randomly selected 100 final year students from three faculties, the respondent rate was 88%.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Reasons for the information seeking by the undergraduate students.

Reasons	No. of users	%
For general study	8	9
For education and research	52	59
For preparing competition	14	16
For recreation	0	0
For employment information	8	9
For Current Awareness	6	7
Total	88	100

According to the table 01 there are various reasons for information seeking. Above analysis shows that 59% respondents seek information for their educational and their research work, 16% respondents seek information to preparing competition and 9% respondents seek

information for general study and employment information. It is clear obvious from the above data that the majority of respondents seek information for their Education and Research work.

Table 2: Information Sources used for seeking information by the undergraduate students.

Sources	No. of users	%
Text books	19	21
Discussion with colleagues	12	14
Research papers	4	4
News papers	5	6
Consult a knowledgeable person in the field	13	15
Consult superior	0	0
Discussion with librarian or reference staff of the library	6	7
Review articles	6	7
Abstracting journals	4	4
Indexing journals	1	1
Reference books	5	6
Other magazines	13	15
Total	88	100

According to the table 02, the students are indicating that more than 21% most popular source of information is text books. Secondly, consult a knowledgeable person in the field and other magazines are popular sources among under graduates for seeking information. Discussion with colleagues, discussion with librarian or reference staff of the library which are commonly used other sources of information by the respondents for looking out information. In order to assess the frequency of visit the library, the students indicated that 54% out of the 88 undergraduate students visit the library once a week, 23% visit the library twice a week, 14% visit the library daily and 9% visit the library once a month.

Table 3: Use of internet by the undergraduate students.

Use of Internet	No. of users	%
Yes	88	100
No	00	00
Total	88	100

On the basis of above data all undergraduate students strongly use internet in the library and they aware of internet and its significance.

Table 4: Purpose of using internet by the undergraduate students.

Frequency	No. of users	%
Research	25	28
Education	33	38
Entertainment	5	6
News	5	6
Health	17	19
Sports	3	3
Any other	0	0
Total	88	100

The students were asked to indicate the purpose for using internet; it is evident from above table that 38% of the respondent uses the internet primarily for their educational purpose, followed by 28% respondents for the research purpose, 19% for the health, 6% for entertainment and news. Hence it can be inferred that a majority of the students use the internet for educational purpose.

Table 5: Methods for Seeking Information by the undergraduate students.

Methods for seeking information	No. of users	%
Use Google and Google Scholar	17	19

Browse the internet	22	25
Search electronic databases	20	23
Inquire from fellow students	07	08
Use OPAC	06	07
Inquire from lecturers	08	09
Ask the reference librarian	05	06
Reading required textbooks	03	03
Total	88	100

Table 5 illustrated that the majority of students (25%) browse the internet as the best method for seeking information. Out of the respondents 23% designated that by the way of seeking information more effectively through searching electronic databases and 19% use google and google scholar as one of the best methods for seeking information.

Table 6: Use of e-journals by the undergraduate students.

e-journals is the best source	No. of users	Percentage
Yes	62	70
No	8	9
Don't know about e-journals	6	7
Not sure	12	14
Total	88	100

The table 06 describes that 70% students agreed with e-journals is the best source of information, 7% students don't know about e-journals due lack of IT knowledge and lack of awareness, 14% respondents are not sure about it and 9% says the e-journals is not the best source of information.

Table 7: Convenient format of information.

Is electronic format more convenient?	No. of users	Percentage
Yes	78	89
No	10	11
Total	88	100

n=88

The table 07 indicates that the majority of students (89%) of WULN mention strictly that e-format of information sources is convenient than printed books. The respondents those have good knowledge on IT and 11% respondents said e-format is not convenient as compared to books bountiful reasons such as; they don't have internet facility at home, electricity problems and technical problems etc.

Table 8: Problems in using information by the undergraduate students.

Problem	No. of usage	Percentage
Non-availability of needed information materials (e-resources)	28	32
Old collection	8	9
Lack of subject knowledge among library staff	8	9
Lack of knowledge on IT based services	8	9
Lack of well-trained staff	13	15
Lack of time	11	12
Lack of knowledge in using the library resources	8	9
Difficulties in understanding of English language (language barrier)	4	5
Total	88	100

n=88

According to the table 08 the majority (32%) of students faced the problem of non-availability of needed information materials (e-resources) in the library. The given highly influenced facts; age-old collection of libraries, language barriers, unavailability of trained library staff, lack of subject knowledge among library staff and time constraints etc. are significantly affected for the success of their researches.

Table 9: Satisfactory level with library resources / services.

Satisfaction with library resources / services	No. of users	Percentage
To great extent	32	36
To some extent	52	59
Not at all	4	5
Total	88	100

On the basis of data, the 36% students of the WULN are satisfied with library resources/ services to great extent, 59% respondents are satisfied to some extent and 5% respondents are not satisfied with the library resources/ services.

Summary of finding and suggestion

In the present study an attempt is made to investigate the Information Need and Information Seeking Behaviors of the undergraduate students of WULN. The obtained results have been mentioned in the paper.

1. It is observed from the above study that students use newspapers, thesis, abstracting journals, and reference sources for their educational purpose.
2. By the analysis of data, it is evident that in the formal sources, text books are most frequently used by all groups. Internet also very common to sought information.
3. Most of students are seeking information for education and research purposes.
4. All students use internet for their academic works.
5. Browse the internet is best method for seeking information.
6. The difficulties faced by students due to non-availability of needed information materials (e-resources).
7. Students also face difficulties as they are not aware of different information sources. It was also observed that in the libraries, information materials are very old in some aspects for fulfillment of education.

Conclusion and Suggestions

University and College libraries all over the world have their own place in learning. Libraries are not only repositories of knowledge but also dispensers of such

knowledge. It is a fact that where libraries are ignored or not given due recognition, the country, as a whole suffers. To reduce the difficulties faced by students, there are some suggestions: -

1. The library should organize more awareness programmes and seminars to educate the concerned seeking information to enhance the use of library resources and services.
2. Proper orientation should be given to users. First year orientation should be well planned with video documentary with demonstration to the students.
3. Library resources should be in more desirable format according to user need.
4. New computer-based services should be introduced and steps should be taken on make students aware about the services.
5. More computer system with fast internet connectivity should be provided to the university students.
6. For satisfying the student's need, library should join with other institutions for sharing resources.
7. Translation services should be introduced.
8. Number of staff should be increased and the library staff should be providing training of ICT in general and computer-based library operations in particularly.
9. Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) service should be started for undergraduate students.
10. Library should get feedback and also conduct user surveys time to time to be recognized the user needs.

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