

Information Seeking Behaviour of Researchers at Library of Centre for Historical Studies, School of Social Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi



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Abstract

The research paper is discussing the various attitudes and behaviour to seek information received through the internet from 85 students and research scholars studying at Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. In the technological modern era, this research is helpful to users to keep themselves updated and to provide detailed study and information regarding how many innovative services like library software, classification and cataloguing schemes, RFID systems and Barcode systems are used in libraries. It also indicates a detailed study on which types of information sources are available in the library, which information services are provided and with the access of the internet, users can get a variety of information as per their requirements. Further, it shows a detailed study of which policy (system) is adopted to attract more library users.

Introduction

This study has presented information on the users' satisfaction towards the libraries' services, infrastructure, place, space and collection and variety of information. The study found that library users were content regarding the services, infrastructure, place, and space as well as collection, dissemination of information in the library. Information seeking behaviour is one of the important areas in user studies for library and information science professionals. The motives and purposes of users give rise to information use and requirements to satisfy such needs and requirements, users adopt many ways and means of accessing and searching source of information. Library professionals should have a clear understanding of their users' needs and their information seeking behavior. Unless the needs are precisely determined, it is difficult to satisfy their requirements and develop an appropriate information system. Hence, identifying information needs and determining information seeking behavior of users is the crux of the problem for the development of libraries and information systems.

Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi

The University library is towering above all academic complexes in the university serene element, sitting on the confluence of the premises of the school building is our great and time-honored central library. Its ground floor has a geographical spread of approx.

50000 Sq. ft. and the column of the nine-storey building has a floor stretching itself in 6000 Sq. ft. The library is one of the largest repositories of books in the country shelving 5 lakh books and more than 50000 volumes.

It is adding 10000 books on an average per year through the agency of suggestions from faculties and students from different disciplines. It keeps on replicating the volumes of books as per requirements. The Library also subscribes to around 1000 journals, around 1000 serial the real Mc-coy, to quench the thirst of knowledge of its contemporary research scholars from international and national arena. Besides fertilizing the talents of the university through physical study materials, it provides the virtual study material in the form of floppy, CD-ROM of books and internet. The library is in the mailing list of nearly all leading Newspapers of the world, all publications of Government of India as well as International agencies like WHO, UNESCO etc. The library has an exchange relation with many Indian and International agencies and National Libraries throughout the world. The library has its own Local Network connected with a strong server with 48 terminals inside the library. Open Public Access Catalogue of the Library has databases of Books, Serials and other material. It is a member of Delhi Library Network and INFLIBNET. The Library is a part of JNU Wide Area Network and its

databases can be accessed from all nodes of the Network.

The Library acquires electronic collections mainly via consortia. Library subscribes to online journals related to computer science through INDEST Consortia like Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) and Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) digital library. The online digital library provides the complete collection of IEEE and ACM journals, conference proceedings and newsletter articles. JSTOR was founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. In 2009, JSTOR merged with and became a service of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization helping the academic community to use digital technologies to preserve the scholarly record and to advance scholarship and teaching in sustainable ways. The majority of content in the archive journal is literature, though inclusion of other materials such as conference proceedings, transactions, pamphlets, monographs, manuscripts, and other materials is growing. e-ShodhSindu Consortium provides access to more than 2000 titles, including previous titles, as well as other content available. Access is automatically available to new titles and other materials added regularly in JSTOR.

Centre for Historical Studies

The Centre for Historical Studies offers M.A. and M.Phil/Ph.D. programmes in three different period-specializations: Ancient, Medieval and Modern History. The centre also conducts teaching and research in Contemporary History. An innovation that has been introduced in recent years is to allow students to choose thematic specialization as well, by doing a minimum of four courses on the theme chosen. Themes offered at the moment are economic history, social and popular movements, state and power, and ideology, culture and society. While period specialization is compulsory, theme specialization is not. Within the broad spectrum of socio-economic history, the CHS shows a predilection toward the neglected areas of popular protest movements, or of life at the lower end of society comprising the mass of Indian society peasants, artisans, workers etc. If these aspects claimed a considerable share of the CHS faculty's and research scholars attention, explorations are also being made into several other themes: the history of

ideas, histories of technology, histories of art and literature. Now research and teaching has expanded into still wider areas: histories of law and power, histories of crime and punishment, histories of gender, histories of caste and communities, histories of mobility and migration, histories of identity and culture, histories of environment, histories of power and legitimacy.

One of the objectives of the J.N.U. has been that research should be inter-disciplinary in nature, drawing the best from many disciplines. The CHS has generally followed the principle that no historian can remain a true researcher without basic interest in other disciplines related to his/her concern e.g. either as an economic or social historian drawing from anthropology or ethnography to interpret data, or as a historian of culture drawing from literary and culture studies.

The expanding frontiers of history have made it imperative that the historian's efforts should be directed towards incorporating within historical practice the insights from other disciplines. A more explicit stimulus to interdisciplinary study of history is provided by the option, available to the students, of taking courses in other disciplines i.e. economics, political science in the other Centres of the Schools of Social Sciences – with relevance to the set of courses done by them in their own specializations in the CHS. Students with no background in history but with knowledge of other social and physical sciences have also been admitted to all the post-graduate programmes

Library of Centre for Historical Studies

The CHS Library initially started its functioning in a small room. Over the time it grew tremendously and by the year 2000 the library shifted its role from a storage house to a Library Resource Centre. At present the Library has a collection of over 20,000 volumes. The library has rare books and micro-fischs in its collection. The library caters to the needs of students, faculty and scholars within and outside university. As part of the ongoing modernisation exercise, the library has changed its face by procuring Computers, Laser Printers, Camera, Voice Recorder and installing Internet facilities through high speed Wi-Fi. A separate dedicated internet connection for the library and library management software (VIRTUA & NET-LIB) has been installed for

gearing up to meet the growing demands of modern day information requirements in this fast changing cyber age. The library has been connected to the DELNET (Developing Library Network) through the Internet. The library can access various databases like Union Catalogue of Books and Periodicals, etc. of various libraries and other online databases subscribed by the JNU library. The CHS library database can be accessed remotely and anywhere through the Website Link: <http://chslibrary.saraswatilib.com/>

The UGC provides funds for purchase of books/journals and other infrastructural development every 5 under UGC-CAS Programme of Centre. Even after extension of library building space is the main constraint of the CHS library. A lot of unwanted loose old journals and books need to be weeded out from the library to create extra space for the new books. Because of the shortage of space the library needed to procure CDs of multi volume books/online books & journals instead of print versions. Attempts are underway to have modular furniture in the Library. The library has 13 air conditioners in the reading area, stack area, rooms and open area to provide a congenial atmosphere to its users.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

- To show the gender and department wise distribution of the respondents
- To identify how frequently the respondents visiting the library
- To understand how do they access the information online
- To enlist the information sources used by the respondents
- To judge the level of satisfaction of the respondents on online resources

- To know the varieties of digital resources used by the respondents

Methodology

This study was based on a stratified random sampling method adopted for primary data collection. Accordingly a structured questionnaire was developed and distributed to students and research scholars to collect the relevant data. The questions were framed in such a manner that it could be easier for the students and research scholars to answer them in the quickest possible time. A total number of 95 questionnaires were distributed among the M.A., M.Phil. and PhD. Scholars, Centre for Historical Studies. Out of which, the author received 85 filled in questionnaires. The collected data was analyzed and presented in the tabular form. This well structured offline questionnaire was prepared manually and distributed personally and through e-mails. The scholars were expected to answer each and every question along with their opinion on the information seeking behaviour. The collected data are in the form of tables, figures and analyzed by using a simple method of calculation. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze and interpret the data collected on information seeking behaviour by scholars doing research on different aspects of historical studies.

Analysis of Data and Interpretation

Data analysis is described “as the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning” to the collected data. The data analysis aims to unearth patterns or regularities by observing, exploring, organizing, transforming, and modeling the collected data. It is a methodical approach to apply statistical techniques for describing, exhibiting, and evaluating the data. It helps in driving meaningful insights, form conclusions, and support the decision-making process. The data collected from respondent through a well-structured questionnaire is tabulated as below

: Table-1 Gender-wise distribution of Respondents

S.No.	Gender	MA students	Percent Age (%)	M.Phil Scholars	Percentage (%)	PhD Scholar	Percentage (%)
01	Male	29	58%	19	63.3%	9	60%
02	Female	21	42%	11	36.6%	6	40%
	Total	50	100%	30	100%	15	100%

Table 1 indicates the gender wise distribution of respondents. Majority of the Postgraduate

respondents were male. 29 (58%), and the remaining 21 (42%) are female. Majority of the M.Phil

respondents were male 19 (63.3%), and the remaining 11 (36.6%) were female. Majority of the

PhD Scholars were male 9 (60%), and the remaining 06 (40%) were female.

Table-2 Subject-wise Distribution of Respondents

S.No.	Subject	MA students	Percent Age (%)	M.Phil Scholars	Percent Age (%)	PhD Scholars	Percent Age (%)
01	Ancient	17	34%	10	33.3%	5	33.3%
03	Medieval	12	24%	09	30%	6	40%
02	Modern	21	42%	11	36.6%	4	26.6%
Total		50	100%	30	100%	15	100%

Table-2 indicates the subject wise distribution of respondents. The majority of the Postgraduate respondents studying Modern History, Ancient History, and Medieval History in their courses are 21 (42%), 17 (34%), 12 (24%) and respectively. The majority of the Master’s of Philosophy respondents

studying Modern History, Ancient History, and Medieval History in their courses are 10 (33.3%), 11 (36.6%), 09 (30%) respectively. The majority of the PhD scholars conducting research on Medieval History, Ancient History, and Modern History are 6 (40%), 5 (33.3%), 4 (26.6%) respectively.

Table-3 Frequency of visiting the department library

S.No.	Use of Internet	No. of respondents & Percentage	Percent Age (%)
1	Daily	40	47.0%
2	Once a Week	18	21.1%
3	Fortnightly	10	11.7%
4	Once a Month	9	10.5%
5	Occasionally	8	9.4%
Total		85	100%

To determine the frequency of library users visiting the department a survey was conducted. Out of 85 Scholars 47.0% were visiting the library on a daily basis 21.1% scholars were visiting once a week, 11.7% students were visiting library fortnightly, 10.5% were visiting once in a month. 9.4% scholars

were visiting occasionally. On a personal communication it was observed that they were also visiting other libraries such as the Nehru Memorial library and University’s Central Library for their urgent needs.

Table-5 Method of accessing information online

S.No.	Method of accessing information	No. of respondents & Percentage	Percentage (%)
1	Search Engine	20	23.5%
2	Typing URL	15	17.6%
3	OPAC	60	70.5%
Total		85	100%

To assess their information seeking attitude for online information it was found that out of 85 23.5% scholars were using Search Engine for their

information needs while 17.6% scholars were typing directly the URL for searching information.

Table-6 Information Sources used

S.No.	Information Sources used	No. of respondents & Percentage	Percentage (%)
1	Text Books	50	70.5%
2	Research Papers	13	15.2%
3	Journals	5	5.8%
4	Photocopy	10	11.7%
5	Thesis	3	3.5%
7	Dissertations	2	2.3%
8.	Others	2	2.3%
Total		85	100%

Information can come from virtually anywhere; it may be from social media, books, journal and magazine articles, expert opinions, newspapers, and websites etc. The type of information a scholar needs will change depending on the question they are trying to answer. Different assignments require information from a variety of sources; therefore, it is necessary to explore various sources of information.

It is found that 70.5% of students get information from textbooks, 15.2% from Research papers, 5.8% from journals, and 11.7% of information they get from photocopies kept for consultation. 3.5% from thesis while 2.3% from dissertation submitted by the student to the library at the time of M.Phil/PhD award

Table-7 Level of Satisfaction on Online Resources

S.No.	Level of Satisfaction on Online Resources	No. of respondents & Percentage	Percentage (%)
1	Highly Satisfied	65	76.4%
2	Satisfied	10	11.7%
3	Poorly Satisfied	5	5.8%
4	Dissatisfied	3	3.5%
5	None	2	2.3%
Total		85	100%

Table 7: Shows that majority 76.4% were highly satisfied with resources added to collection regularly and photocopy/scanning machine provided in the library; 10% are satisfied; 5.8% are poorly satisfied

where as 3.5% are dissatisfied with the services provide to the library users, whereas 2.3% not have given their views on personal reason.

Table-8 Use of Digital Sources

S.No.	Use of Digital Sources	No. of respondents & Percentage	Percentage (%)
1	E-Book/Journal	30	35.2%
2	Digital Repositories	10	11.7%
3	Virtual Libraries	9	10.5%

4	Research Database (Thesis / Dissertations)	15	17.6%
5.	Online Catalogue	26	30.5%
	DELNET Database	10	11.7%
	Total	85	100%

Discussion of Findings

Findings reveal that 58% of respondents are male while 42% are female. The study agreed with (Busselle et al., 1999; Teo, 2001; Chong, 2002; Barlla et al., 2003) that men are heavier users of the library and make most use of the more complicated services. The findings indicate that 47.0% of the respondents visited the libraries every day, while those who visited the library once a week were 21.1% while 11.7% visited the library twice a week and 10.5% visited the library once in a month whereas 9.4% visited the library occasionally. The study reveals that many of the respondents visit the library for more than one reason. The largest proportion 42% of the respondents goes to the library due to the availability of internet connectivity in the library. The result shows that 76.4% were highly satisfied with service rendered by the library while 11.7% were satisfied and 5.8% were poorly satisfied and 3.5% are not at all satisfied.

Suggestions

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are put forward to improve library services in order to increase the level of user's satisfactions:

- The department libraries should adopt appropriate techniques to provide the best information services
- The department libraries should enable the users to keep updated with innovations by providing them various information services
- Current awareness bulletins, newsletters, new edition lists, forthcoming events and conferences and list of translated materials should be compiled regularly and should be kept ready for the availability of the users
- Selective dissemination of information should be established according to the user's interest profiles.
- There should be a proper feedback mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the service. Regular surveys of users should

be conducted to know the continuity or discontinuity of existing services and book collection and initiation of new services.

Conclusion

All libraries are facing new challenges such as a changing client's base, multiple information formats, multiple information and communication technologies and changes in methods of teaching and learning. Most library surveys however, find that few users are aware of the existing library services. One of the problems lies in the fact that little emphasis has been placed upon the understanding the user needs and the service given. The study revealed that the sincere expectation, timelines, honesty and a caring approach. They want to have information access, and to read material both in print and online format. The gates of knowledge and wisdom are always open for new enhancement in the field of library.

From the respective study that was performed and analyzed, it was concluded that CHS library as a department library accommodates a number of tasks on a daily basis. On studying user's responses it was analyzed that the majority of the user's were students of Master's, M.Phil and PhD scholars using library services to fulfill their research work. Also there are users with multiple information needs to fulfill such as readings of recreational material as well as newspapers were also in demand. CHS library has also provided computer lab facilities to its users. Also OPAC service is provided at the library and 60% of the users of OPAC were highly satisfied with the facility. Many users were satisfied with the Internet facility, Issue/Return service, newspaper, and reference service. Overall, the rate of satisfaction of users was good but the factors of dissatisfaction were also present. On this observation it is suggested that libraries must pay attention towards skills and cooperativeness of employees while hiring. It is also suggested for the library to make a community survey at regular intervals to identify the changing needs of users and update their collection accordingly. The

suggestions are based on the study undertaken at CHS library to enhance the quality of services and make a user friendly atmosphere for the users of the library.

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