INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF STUDENTS IN KARPAGAM UNIVERSITY: A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to determine the information needs and information seeking behaviour of Karpagam University students. Study of data collected from 200 students by administering questionnaires on their information seeking behaviour at Karpagam University indicates that guidance in the use of library resources and services is necessary to help students meet their

INTRODUCTION

Information seeking behaviour 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 his / her information needs. Various factors may determine the information seeking behaviour of an individual or a group of individuals. It is, therefore, desirable to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates his/her skills in identifying the needed information, channels and sources preferred for acquiring information, and barriers to information. The purpose of this study is to determine information requirements of students, their awareness about resources, and their behaviour. Libraries play an important role in influencing students' information seeking behaviour (Guresh *et al* 2008).

Information seeking behaviour is an area of active interest among librarians, information scientists and psychologists. Information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some needs 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.

According to Wilson(1999) , "Information seeking behaviour may be defined as the more common field of investigation, particularly concerned with the variety of methods people employ to discover". However, different scholars give different philosophies regarding that concept but our research gives us an idea that the most important one is the education system, which has great effect, and captures almost 80% of the mental ability to absorb the things that lead towards students' behaviour.

INFORMATION NEEDS

Maurice B.Line(1974) has defined information need as, "what an individual ought to have for his work, his research, his edification, his recreation etc." According to Breonda Dervin [3] "an information need is an impediment preventing an individual from moving forward in cognitive time and space. The person is faced with a gap that must be bridged by asking questions, creating ideas, and / or obtaining resources. Such gaps do not occur in the abstract but arise out of particular critical events and situations." The Librarian's Thesaurus (Soper 1990) defines information need as, "that need which library services or materials are intended to satisfy."

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information seeking behaviour refers to the way people search for and utilize information (Fairer–Wessels, 1930).Most times students' Information seeking behaviour involves active or purposeful information seeking as a result of the need to

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With the advent of information need and seeking behaviour research different models were proposed for identifying different steps involved in this process. Kuhlthau (1991) studied as how students searched for information as part of their writing process. She proposed a model that was consist six stages. The stages of Kuhlthau's model are: (1) Initiation (2) Selection (3) Exploration (4) Formulation (5) Collection and (6) Presentation.

The examination of the literature on information needs and seeking behaviour began in the 1970s. Varlejs, also examined the behaviour of students regarding information in the mid 1980s. Kuhlthau (1991) focused on information search process, which emphasizes feelings, thoughts and understanding of a situation that needed to be resolved i.e. task, problem, or topic. This particular action led to the action of people as they seek the meaning of useful research in providing a frame work for improving information search.

According to Marchionini, Gary(1997) information seeking is a process in which humans engage to purposefully change their state of knowledge. The process is inherently interactive as information seekers direct their attention on adapt to stimuli, reflect on progress, and evaluate the efficacy of knowledge base of the information seeker. Information seeking is thus a cybernetic process in which knowledge state is changed through inputs, purposive outputs and feedback.

Information seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user, who in order to satisfy that need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information. If successful, the individual then makes use of the information found and may either fully or partially satisfy the perceived need If he fails to satisfy the need, he will have to start searching again(Wilson 1999).

According to Ching–Chih Chen and Hernon, information seeking patterns are the paths pursued by the individual in the attempt to resolve a need.[2]

When a need is felt for anything, more often than not, people take action in order to satisfy that need. Different strategies or models of action are resorted to. The same applies for the satisfaction of information needs. When an individual realizes the need for information, he knows that in all probability the information will not come to him on its own, therefore he has to go about seeking it. What strategies or processes he resorts to, in order to satisfy the need for information, is the focus of study here (Bikika Tariang Laloo).[1]

This study investigates the sources of information used by students at Karpagam University for their academic work, the extend to which they are aware

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Information is needed in every field of life. Everybody need information in everyday life like in education, research etc. The information need is different from one person to another which means that it will not be the same though it might be similar(Kumar 1990).

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to explore Information Seeking Behaviour of students studying in Karpagam University, Coimbatore. This study has the following objectives.

1. To find out the type of information sources used by the students.

2. To find out the awareness and use of library resources by the students,

3. To know the purpose of seeking information.

4. To identify the purpose of seeking information, nature and types of information required by the Students.

5. To identify the problems faced by the students while gathering information and to provide appropriate suggestions to overcome them.

METHODOLOGY

This study used questionnaire based survey method. Karpagam University comprises 26 departments and about 5800 students. From this, a random sample of 200 students was selected. The questionnaires were distributed to the students who were present in their library and class rooms. Hundred and twenty filled in questionnaires were returned by the users with the overall response rate being 60%. The questionnaire covered five basic areas namely; user's characteristics such as name, sex, educational qualifications, time spent in library, purpose of visit to the library, use of the libraries and suggestions for the improvement of the existing information systems.

ANALYSIS

Out of 120 respondents, 88 (73.33%) were male and 32 (26.66%) were female.

Frequency of visit to the library

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Purpose of visit to the library

The purpose of students visit to the library has been classified into eight types as shown in Table 2. Majority of users i.e., 94 users (78.33%) were visiting the library to study, and the minimum usage of 36 users (30%) use the reference materials only.

Table 2 – Purpose of visit to the library

S.No	Purpose	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	To Study	94	78.33
2	To Borrow Books	86	71.66
3	Use of the reference materials	36	30.00
4	To read journals	44	36.66
5	To collect course materials	58	48.33
6	To know the latest arrivals	10	8.33
7	To read news papers and magazines	102	85.00
8	Internet browsing	78	65.00
Multiple answers were permitted			

From Table 2, it is understood that 78.33% users visited the library to study, 71.66% users to borrow books, 65% for browsing the internet, 30% to use reference materials, 36.66% to read journals and 85% to read newspapers and magazines.

Table 3 – Use of library sources and services

S.No	Services	Yes	No	No Response
1	Issue/Return	66 (55%)	30 (25%)	24 (20%)
2	Reference service	18 (15%)	48 (40%)	54 (45%)
3	Books & journals	86 (71.66%)	16 (13.33%)	18 (15%)
4	Seminar/conference Proceedings	48 (40%)	40 (33.33%)	32 (26.66%)
5	Indexing service	8 (6.66%)	52 (43.33%)	60 (50%)
6	Abstracting service	8 (6.66%)	52 (43.33%)	60 (50%)
7	Bibliography	24 (20%)	46 (38.33%)	50 (41.66%)
8	Newspaper	90 (75%)	8 (6.66%)	20 (16.66%)
9	Inter library loan	6(5%)	50 (41.66%)	64 (53.33%)
10	Translation service	----	58 (48.33%)	62 (51.66%)

Table 4 – Purpose of seeking information

S.No	Purpose	Rank				
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**Total**
1	For Career Development	60 (50%)	30 (25%)	30 (25%)	----	120 (100%)
2	To Solve immediate practical problem	56 (46.66%)	24 (20%)	20 (16.66%)	20 (16.66%)	120 (100%)
3	To keep up to date	66 (55%)	34 (28.33%)	12 (10%)	12 (10%)	120 (100%)
4	To write an article/ Research paper	16 (13.33%)	64 (53.33%)	20 (16.66%)	20 (16.66%)	120 (100%)

Table 4 indicates the decreasing rank order of information seeking on a scale of four. Career development with 60 (50%) out of the 120 respondents was the most preferred response for seeking information. This was followed by reasons that include seeking information for problem solving, keeping up to date and the need to write an article or research paper.

Instruction on how to use library sources and services

Ninety three per cent of the respondents in this study agreed with the statement that for more effective and efficient use of the library, students need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas. The findings is similar to those of Lubans(1971)   and Powell (1995) which indicate that graduate students need instruction in the use of the library to enable them to make more effective and efficient use of information sources and services to which the library provides access.

CONCLUSION

According to the study, Students prefer verbal communication instead of the main information seeking strategy of using library. So it is strongly felt that, students' awareness is not good enough to use library searching facilities and neither about the importance of librarian's role. On the other hand, it is necessary to orient them with the information seeking educational courses and main information seeking strategies. The role of librarians should be made clear to them. The usage of Karpagam University library, its resources and services need to be increased.

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