Information Need and Information Seeking Behavior of the Undergraduate students of the Sabaragamuwa University Library network (SULN)

K.S.S.C. Sumanadewa

Abstract

Information has become a living thing in the 21st century. Information seeking patterns are considered to be different among the groups. In the present study an attempt is made to investigate the information need and iinformation sseeking behavior of the uundergraduate sstudents of the Sabaragamuwa University Library Network. The survey was conducted using the undergraduate students to find out the answers to questions such as collections of library, 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.

The survey was conducted by using questionnaires with Close and Open Ended questions. Final year students (100) were selected for the study and 88 responded and the rate was 88%. The library is the most preferred place for 54% users who visit the library once a week for their educational and research related need, whereas subject expert and librarian the most preferred informal information source. 100% students use internet. Interestingly, 70% of the users agreed that e-journals are the best source of information but majority of the users 89% feel that electronic is convenient. 59% are satisfied with the services of the library. The study recommends orientation programs 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.

Key words: Information, Information Seeking Behavior, Library Resources, Library Services, SULN.

Introduction

From the day mankind came into the world, 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 art of writing also evolved. The turning point of the writing medium, which spread to Stone, Parchment, Vellum, Papyrus, Palmyra Leaf, Palm Leaf.

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 preserve them, 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.

Information is a key resource of today's information society. Some of them interpret today that society has information exploration so that no one can gather all information of the society. Acquiring, using and implementing information are 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 needs, 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, 1989).

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. Students activity seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. 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.

Need of the Study

In user-oriented studies, users are viewed as active and self-controlling recipients of information and they are concerned with the internal cognitions and the attitudes of users, which are investigated by the qualitative methods. The cognitive approach of the students focuses their efforts to understand "how individuals process information and then illustrate this process through models". In the holistic approach, the students is not only interested in the cognitive needs of the users but also takes into account other factors which influence them to use the information sources, the methods followed in searching for information possible reasons for not using information sources, if any. Another category is the action research. This approach views users as active participants during their educational, research and tries to understand the language, the activities and the social inter-relationship of users.

The students of the SULN are expected to optimally utilize the library as their major sources of information. However, observing and conducting studies on the library use in the University environment in general, establishes the fact that students do not use most of the library information resources. It is assumed that students could be experiencing technical problems in accessing information resources; they are mostly in terms of their acquisition and retention.

Sabaragamuwa University Library Network

The Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka was started in 1996 as the 12th university of the country. The library of the university started in the same year as a university library. The Library system of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka consists of three Libraries; main library is at Belihuloya, mainly serves the needs of the faculties of Social Sciences & Languages,

Geometrics, Applied Sciences, and Technology. Agricultural Sciences, Management Studies, and Medicine faculties have their own libraries. The SULN of the Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka (SUSL) is considered as a Centre of knowledge in Sabaragamuwa Province. which treats to entire academic community of the area according to their requests.

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 the 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 Investigates 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 16.67% has read

magazines related to various competitions. More female undergraduates 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 U.G. students. The use of internet by rural U.G. 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 examines the information seeking behavior of undergraduate students of SULN, Sri Lanka with the following objectives:

01. To study the information needs and information seeking behavior of students of the students.

02. To identify the different information resources used by the students.

03. To investigate the availability of information resources that affects the information seeking patterns of the students.

04. To determine whether or not different kinds of information needs lead to different information seeking behavior and communication channels.

05. To identify the problems in information usage.

06. To analyze the possible reasons for not using information sources, if any; and to suggest measures for enhancing the use of information sources.

Methodology

The survey was conducted by using questionnaires with Close and Open Ended questions.

Population of the study

The final year students (100) were selected for the study and 88 responded and the rate was 88% from the Sabaragamuwa University.

Data Analysis

Reasons for information seeking.

Table 01

Purpose	No. of users	% of users
For General study	8	9
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% of the respondents said they seek information for their educational and their research work.16% of the respondents seek information to prepare for competition and 9% of the respondents said that they seek information for general study & employment information.

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

Information Sources used for seeking information

Table 02

Sources	No. of users	% 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 book	5	6
Other magazines	13	15
Total	**88**	**100%**

According to the table 02, most popular source of information of more than 21% of the is text book and equal percentage of 55 prefer to consult a knowledgeable person in the field and other magazines. There are other sources of information also used by respondents like discussion with colleagues, discussion with librarian or reference staff of the library etc.

Frequency of visit to library

Table 03

Frequency	No. of users	% of users
Daily	12	14
Once a week	48	54
Twice a week	20	23
Once a month	8	9
Occasionally	0	0
Total	**88**	**100%**

In order to access the frequency of visit the library, the students were asked to indicate any one out of 5 categories. It has been found that 54% of the students visit the library once a week, 23% visit twice a week, 14% daily and 9% visit the library once a month.

Time Spent in the library

Table 04

Time spent	No. of users	% of users
30 minute to one hours	52	59
One hours to two hours	20	23
More than two hours	16	18
Total	**88**	**100%**

According to the table 04, 59% respondents mentioned that they spend 30 minutes to one hour, 23% said one hour to two hours and 18% said that they spend more than 2 hours of their time in the library.

Use of online catalogue for finding books

Table 05

Use of catalogue	No. of users	% of users
Yes	60	68
No	28	32
Total	**88**	**100%**

It is clear from above analysis that 68% of these 88 users, use catalogue for finding books but 32% of the users said they don't know about the catalogue and how to use it.

Use of internet

Table 06

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

On the basis of above data it's clear that every student use internet in library. It's clear from above data that almost every student is aware of internet and its importance.

Purpose of using internet

Table 07

Frequency	No. of users	% of users
Research	25	28
Education	50	57
Entertainment	5	6
News	5	6
Health	0	0
Sports	3	3
Any other	0	0
Total	**88**	**100%**

The students were asked to indicate their purpose for using the internet, it is evident from above table that 57% of the respondent use the internet primarily for their educational purpose, followed by 28% respondents for the research purpose, 6% for the entertainment and news, 3% for the sports. Hence it can be inferred that a majority of the students use the internet for educational purpose.

Use of search engine

Table 08

Search engine	No. of users	% of users
Google	63	72
Yahoo	23	26
MSN	0	0
Alta Vista	2	2
Bing	0	0
Ask.com	0	0
Any other	0	0
Total	**88**	**100%**

According to the table 08, Google is the most preferred search engine 72% followed by Yahoo 26%, Alta Vista 2%, other search engines are gaining popularity slowly but Google is maintaining its position in providing the information on the internet.

Use of e-journals

Table 09

E-journals are best sources	No. of users	% of users
Yes	62	70
No	8	9
Don't know about e-journals	6	7
Not sure	12	14
Total	**88**	**100%**

Above analysis shows that 70% students of agreed that e- journals are best source of information, 7% students don't know about e-journals because of lack of IT knowledge and lack of awareness. 14% respondents are not sore about it and 9% say e-journals are not best source of information.

Convenient format of information

Table 10

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

Above analysis shows that majority of the students, 89% of SULN, say that e-formats are convenient as compared

to books. These respondents have good knowledge of IT. 11% respondents said e-format is not convenient as compared to books. They give some reasons like they don't have internet facility at home, electricity problems, technical problems etc.

Problems in information use

Table 11

Problem	No. of Users	% of Users
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 service	8	9
Not 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	4	5
Total	**88**	**100%**

From the above data analysis it is clear that majority, 32% of students, faced the problem of non-availability of needed information materials (e-resources) in the Library. It is

also clear from the above data that research scholar faced many other problems like old collection of library, language problem, untrained staff, lack of subject knowledge among library staff and lack of time etc. Satisfaction level with library resources / services

Table 12

Satisfaction with library resources / services	No. of users	% of users
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 SULN are satisfied with library collection to great extent, 59% respondents are satisfied to some extent and 5% respondents are not satisfied with the collection.

Use of e-mail for educational purpose

Table 13

Use of e-mail	No. of users	% of users
Yes	83	94
No	05	06
Total	**88**	**100%**

On the basis of the data, it is clear that majority, 94% of the SULN students, use e-mail for educational purpose, only 06 % respondents do not use e-mail because of they used other resources, lack of knowledge about internet and its importance.

Frequency of use of e-mail

Table 14

Use of e-mail	No. of users	% of users
Frequently	58	66
Some times	20	23
Rarely	10	11
Total	**88**	**100**

According to above analysis, 66% of the respondents send e-mail frequently, 23% send e-mail sometimes and 11% send e-mail very rarely.

Summary of finding and suggestion

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

1. It is observed from the above study that students use news papers, papers thesis, abstract 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 is also very common mode to sought information.

3. Consultation with the supervisor and expert in the field concerned is in the prime position in the informal sources of information. There are other sources of information used by respondents like, discussion with colleagues, discussion with reference librarian etc.

4. It is evident from Table no. 03 that majority of the students know the importance of library and also believe that it is the most convenient medium of acquiring information.

5. The difficulties faced by the students were, lack of time in searching information and inadequate library resources. There were also problems faced by students in accessing information due to library rules procedure.

6. Students also face difficulties as they are not aware of different information sources. It was also observed that in the libraries, information material is very old in some aspects for the 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:-

01. The library should organize more awareness programmes and seminars to educate the concerned no seeking information to enhance the use of library resources and services.

02. Proper orientation should be given to the users. First Year orientation should be well planned with video documentaries with demonstrations to the students.

03. Library resources should be in more desirable format according to user is need.

04. New computer based services should be introduced and steps should be taken on to make students aware about the services.

05. More computer system with fast internet connectivity should be provided to the university students.

06. To aster to the student's need, library should join other institutions for resources sharing.

07. Translation services should be introduced.

08. Number of staff should be increased, and the library staff should be provided with training of ICT in general and computers based library operations in particular.

09. Selective dissemination of information service should be started for students.

10. Library should also conduct feedback/users survey to know the need of users from time to time.

References

Kaushick, Sanjay K., and Jaswant Singh Khanchi. "Reading habits of rural under graduate students." Library Herald 45.1 (2007): 61-69.

Manoj, P. "Information needs and seeking behavior of lawyers" (2011).

Mardis, Maricia A. "Class room information needs, Search analysis from a digital library for educators" D-Lib magazine 15. 1-2 (2009): 7-7.

Meho,Lookman I., and temhanie W. Haas. "Information seeking behavior and use of social science faculty studying stateless nations: A case study." Library & Information Science Research 23.1 (2001): 5-25.

Wiberley, S.E. and Jones, W.G. 1995. "Patterns of information seeking in the humanities". College and Research libraries 50(6): 638-345.