

A Study of Information Access Pattern of Legal Professionals Practicing at Madurai City, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

The study on information access pattern was conducted among the legal professionals to find out the ways and means of accessing the information. The findings of the study revealed that books, internet sources and journals were the major sources of accessing the information and television, newspapers, colleagues and internet were the other major sources for acquiring latest information. The study also revealed that majority of the respondents used simple search and satisfied with the information available over the web. The study suggested that hand on training to be provided for accessing journals, CD-ROM databases and electronic resources.

Keywords: Information Access Pattern, Legal Professionals, Madurai

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings always search for information for various purposes like for reading, teaching and research activities, since it is vital component for taking any decision. Information produced by various people like researchers, academicians and others will have no values, unless and until if it has not communicated properly. Libraries play vital role in procuring and disseminating the information in the form of books, journals, magazines to increase the quality of education and research[1]. In the traditional libraries, access to public knowledge was restricted to the users who are capable of traveling all the way to the libraries. It was a challenging job for the library professionals to make it available of the information to the remote users. Technological advancements, have improved the library professionals job, and it is very simple to make it available of the information to the users' desktops [2].

Due to advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), most of the libraries have the collection of electronic resources such as e-

Journals, e-books, e-databases, e-magazines, e-theses and dissertations and so on. These collections are available in digital formats and can be accessed through the computers either locally or remotely [3]. ICT-enabled products and services and the availability of online information sources have changed the way the services of academic institutions[4]. In every stage, the face of the library is changed and used latest technology for providing better sources and services to the users. Digital information is very good medium, through which the information can be rapidly communicated and helps to connect the people across the globe by breaking the barriers and simplifies the accessing of information [5]. Today most of the information is available in the digital form and most of the publishers have started publishing the information in the digital form. Hence, the users must be aware of both printed and electronic information in order to pursue their course, teaching and research work. In this connection, this study is being taken to find out the users awareness level and perception on information sources.

2. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Exponential growth of information, emergence of information and communication technologies has compelled the libraries and librarians to procure more and more information sources and innovative services to the users. A user access pattern is dramatically changed in this digital environment, since their information needs and access pattern varies. In order to make the sources and services effectively, assessing the information needs of the users will help the researcher to find out the users needs and helps the library professionals to strengthen the collections and services.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To know more about the users visit to the library;
2. To find out the source through which the users are accessing the information;
3. To find out the satisfaction level on the available information in their respective field;
4. To find out the users access facilities and learning method of e-resources;
5. To find out the barriers faced by the users while accessing the Internet sources;
6. To provide suitable recommendations based on the present study.

4. METHODOLOGY

The study covers both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected by survey method using the questionnaire and secondary data has been collected from various sources like books, journals, and so on. For the purpose of the study, the data has been collected from Legal professionals practicing in Madurai city, Tamil Nadu irrespective of the courts, in which they are practicing. A total of 150 questionnaires have been distributed to legal professionals and 114 have responded, in which four of the questionnaires were not properly filled were rejected. Hence, the total respondents for the study are 110 with response rate of

73.3%. Convenient sampling method has been adopted to collect the data. The collected data from the respondents have been tabulated and analyzed using simple percentage.

5. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is confined to Legal professional practicing in courts of Madurai city, Tamil Nadu only. This study can be extended to regional, state and national level to find out their information needs and how effectively they are searching their information. Efforts have been taken to make the study as accurate as possible. However, some unavoidable limitations have been crept into the study.

The following are some of the limitations of the study.

1. The study is limited to the Legal professionals practicing in courts of Madurai city only.
2. The researcher found little difficult in collecting the data.

6. ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

Table 1 Gender-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents (%)	Total Respondents
Male	78 (70.9)	110
Female	32 (29.1)	

Gender is one of the important socio-demographic variables are listed in the Table 1. It is found that majority of the respondents 78 (70.9%) were male and only 32 (29.1%) were female respondents. It is found from the above table that male legal professionals dominating the female legal professionals.

In order to find out the frequency of visit to the library, data has been collected from the respondents and analyzed data are given in the Table 2.

Table 2 Respondents Visit to the Library

Library Visit	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Daily	56 (50.9)	110
Alternative Days	23 (20.9)	
Weekly	14 (12.7)	
Monthly	10 (9.1)	
Whenever Needed	7 (6.4)	

Majority of the respondents (50.9%) stated that they were visiting the library daily followed by 23 (20.9%) stated alternative days, 14 (12.7%) stated weekly, 10 (9.1%) stated monthly and only 7 (6.4%) stated whenever needed.

In this digital environment, both printed and electronic resources plays important role in satisfying the information needs of the users. To find out the sources, which are important were collected and analyzed. The analyzed data were given in the Table 3.

Table 3 Source Through which the Required Information Accessed by the Respondents

Source	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Books	78 (70.9)	110
Journals	45 (40.9)	
Magazines	38 (34.5)	
Reports	12 (10.9)	
Newspapers	34 (30.9)	
CD-ROM Databases	18 (16.4)	
Internet Sources	56 (50.9)	

It is clear from the Table 3 that books were the major source for accessing the information (70.9%), followed by Internet sources (50.9%) and Journals (40.9%) were the other major sources for accessing the information. CD-ROM databases (16.4%) and reports (10.9%) were the least preferred sources.

There are number of sources are available through which latest information were obtained. Respondents' response regarding latest information accessing sources was given in the Table 4.

Table 4 Source through which Latest Information Accessed by the Respondents

Source	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Newspapers	78 (70.9)	110
Television	97 (88.2)	
Internet	45 (40.9)	
Current Journals	19 (17.3)	
Through Senior Counsels	17 (15.5)	
Colleagues	76 (69.1)	

(Since the respondents' opted more than one option, the percentage exceeds 100)

It is found from the Table 4 that Television (88.2%) followed by Newspapers (70.9%) were the sources through which the respondents get latest information followed by colleagues (69.1%) and Internet (40.9%) were the other major sources through which the users used to get latest information and current journals (17.3%) and Counsels 17 (15.5%) were the least preferred sources for getting the latest information.

Table 5 Respondents rating on Information available on Internet

Rating of Information	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Very Much Satisfied	18(19.6)	92
Satisfied	45 (48.9)	
Somewhat Satisfied	25(27.2)	
Not at All Satisfied	4(4.3)	

It is clear from the Table 5 that 45 (48.9%) respondents were satisfied with the information available on the internet followed by 25 (27.2%) stated some what satisfied and also noted that only 4 (4.3%) were not at all satisfied.

Table 6 Learning Procedure to Access the Internet by the Respondents

Internet Learning procedure	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Self	82 (89.1)	92
Attending Short Term Course	7 (7.6)	
Through Friends	3 (3.3)	

It is found that majority of the respondents (89.1%) have stated that they have learned by attending short term course and through friends respectively. have mentioned that they have learned the access to internet by self and 7 (7.6%) and 3 (3.3%) respondents

Table 7 Access Facility to the E-Resources

E-Resources	Yes	No	Total Respondents
E-Books	31 (33.7)	61 (66.3)	92
E-Journals	56 (60.9)	36 (39.1)	
E-Databases	14 (15.2)	78 (84.8)	
E-Magazines/ Newspapers	67 (72.8)	25 (27.2)	

Regarding various electronic sources, 67 (72.8%) and 56 (60.9%) of the respondents opined that they have access facility facilities to e-journals and e-magazines and newspapers and only 31 (33.7%) and 14 (15.2%) respondents have stated that they have access facility to e-books and e-magazines/newspapers.

Table 8 Use of Search Engines by the Respondents

Use of search engines	No. of Respondents	Type of Search	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Yes	76	Simple search	59 (77.6)	76
No	16	Advanced search	17 (22.4)	

Regarding use of search engines, out of 92 respondents, 76 respondents have pointed out that they used to search the search engines, in which 59 (77.6%) of the respondents mentioned that they used simple search and only 17 (22.4%) respondents used advanced search.

Table 9 Problems Faced by the Respondents while Searching the Information

Source	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Information Overload	44 (57.9)	76
Redundant Information	13 (17.1)	
Slow Speed of Internet	12 (15.8)	
Lack of Computer Facility	7 (9.2)	

It is noted from the Table 9 that 44 (57.9%) of the respondents stated that information overload was the problem on Internet and 13 (17.1%) and 12 (15.8%) respondents stated that redundant information and slow speed of internet were the problem respectively. Only 7 (9.2%) respondents have stated that lack of computer facility was the problem of accessing internet.

Table 10 Satisfaction on Information Sources Available on Internet

Source	No. of Respondents	Total Respondents
Large extent	35 (38.0)	92
Some extent	40 (43.5)	
Less extent	10 (10.9)	
Not at all	7 (7.6)	

It is observed that 40 (52.6%) of the respondents stated that they were some extent satisfied with the information sources available on Internet and 35 (46.1%) stated large extent satisfied and only 3 (3.9%) were less extent satisfied and none of the respondents stated as not at all.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS

Following are the major findings identified from the analysis.

1. Majority of the respondents 79 (71.8%) visited the library either daily or alternative days, 24 (21.8%) stated weekly and monthly and only 7 (6.4%) stated whenever needed.
2. It is found that books, internet sources and journals were the major sources for accessing the information and CD-ROM databases and reports were the least preferred sources.
3. More than one third of the respondents stated that television and newspaper were the major sources through which the respondents got latest information followed by colleagues (69.1%) and Internet 45 (40.9%) were the other major sources through which the users used to get the latest information and current journals 19 (17.3%) and counsels 17 (15.5%) were the least preferred sources for getting the latest information.
4. It is found that 45 (48.9%) of the respondents were satisfied with the information available on the internet followed by 25 (27.2%) stated some what satisfied and also noted that only 4 (4.3%) were not at all satisfied.
5. It is found that more than three fourth of the respondents mentioned that they have learned the access to internet by self and 10 (10.9%) stated that they have learned by attending short term course and through friends.
6. Regarding various electronic sources, more than half of the respondents opined that they have access facility to e-journals and e-magazines and newspapers and only 31 (33.7%) and 14 (15.2%) stated that they have access facility to e-books and e-magazines/newspapers.
7. Regarding use of search engines, out of 92, 76 have pointed out that they used to search the search engines, in which 59 (77.6%) of the respondents mentioned that they used simple search and only 17 (22.4%) used advanced search.
8. It is noted that more than half of the respondents stated that information overload was the problem on Internet and redundant information, slow speed, and lack of computer facilities were the problems in accessing Internet.
9. More than half of the respondents were some extent satisfied with the information sources

available on Internet and 35 (46.1%) stated large extent satisfied and only 3 (3.9%) were less extent satisfied and none of the respondents stated as not at all.

8. SUGGESTIONS

Based on the findings, following are the few suggestions as per the study.

1. From the findings, it is noted that usage of main library is low when compared with Bar Association library. Hence, necessary steps should be taken to attract the users to main library.
2. Usage of journals, CD-ROM databases were very low among the legal professionals. Hence necessary steps should be taken to use of CD-ROM databases and journals.
3. Hands on training should be provided to access the e-resources effectively.
4. More number of computers, increasing the bandwidth of the Internet, making availability of more e-resources like e-books, e-journals, e-databases are some other suggestions.

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