

# **Information Seeking Behaviour of Social Science Researchers in Madurai Kamaraj University and its Affiliated Colleges in Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu: A Study**

**M. Rajavel**

Library, Devanga Arts College, Aruppukottai - 626 101, Tamil Nadu, India

E-mail: rajavelm@gmail.com

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## **Abstract**

*This paper attempts to study the information seeking behavior of Social science researchers in Madurai Kamaraj University and its affiliated colleges in Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu. Information has the power only when it is transferred and communicated. This study analyse the time spent by the users on accessing the resources, identify the types of information used by the users and to identify the users' opinion on collection of library resources in the institutions under study. The study showed that opinion about the library services are good and the introduction of ICT and maintenance of changes in the application of ICT in library management is quite required to get the information with high bandwidth.*

**Keywords:** *Information Sources, Information Structure, User Behaviour*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Information is described as the fifth need of man ranking after air, water, food and shelter. In one form or another, it remains a significant element in the development of human society and it has shaped over a long period of time into the way in which we think and act. The information 'explodes' into power only when it is transferred and communicated, in other words, information is activated by communication. More research into behavior and information gathering patterns of the user groups, will assist the library more effectively in developing programmes and using the resources and limited funds to achieve desired goals. Accurate and up-to-date knowledge about users and their information behavior emerges now as one of the essential ingredients for any library system design. The effectiveness of library and information system depends on the extent to which the system characteristics correspond with the user and on how much the potential user is willing and able to make use of it. The Librarian has to intimately and individually understand the requirements of his users and continuously update his knowledge about users through systematic studies and observations.

Information use pattern studies are one of the important areas in user studies. The motives and purposes of users give a new insight into information needs and requirements. To satisfy such needs and requirements, users adopt various means for accession to sources of information, and in the act of accession to information, the user relies or calls upon the sources predetermined which lead to satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

## **2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

This study examines information seeking behaviour of Social science researchers in Madurai Kamaraj University and its affiliated Colleges in Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu. The information needs can be assessed on the basis of duration and quantum of time utilization in search of information in libraries of their own institutions and also in other institutions; and so the time aspect had been brought within the purview of the present study.

## **3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Chern Li Liew and Siong Ngor investigated the information-seeking behaviour of fourteen ethnomusicologists in New Zealand via interviews.

The findings shed light on what information ethnomusicologists seek, the sources and services they use, and the barriers they face in information seeking and use. A number of ways in which libraries can create collections and design services that will meet the information needs of ethnomusicologists are proposed [1].

Angela Weiler conducted a research in information-seeking behavior, motivation, critical thinking, and learning theory was explored and compared in a search for possible motivating factors behind students' dependence on television and the Internet for their information needs. The research indicates that only a very small percentage of the general population prefers to learn by reading [2].

Andy Barrett summarized an exploratory research study on the information-seeking habits of graduate student researchers in the humanities. In-depth interviews with a small sample of humanities graduate students were used to explore to what extent humanities graduate students might constitute a user group distinct from faculty and undergraduate models [3]. Sharma and Pant in their study on information seeking patterns of Defense Research and Development Establishment (DRDE) Scientists revealed a few trends, which provide very valuable data for analysis. Field of research work in such establishment has been growing up very rapidly therefore, providing the correct and pin pointed information to the scientists is an incredible task for library personnel [4]. They study found that most of the scientists belong to 40-49 age group; 100% of scientists of this establishment are using library for referring the journals articles. One of significance change of communication media, internet is most popular among the scientists.

Shokeen and Kushik studied about information seeking behavior of social scientists working in the universities located in Haryana. They reported that most of the social scientists visit the library daily. The first preferred method of searching the required information by the social scientists followed by searching through indexing and abstracting periodicals, and citations in articles respectively [5].

#### **4. OBJECTIVES**

The researcher has framed the following objectives.

1. To analyse the time spent by the users on accessing the resources;
2. To identify the types of information used by the users;
3. To identify the users' opinion on collection of library resources in the institutions under study;
4. To find out the respondents' views on advantages of using the library of their own institutions.

#### **5. HYPOTHESES**

The following hypotheses are formulated on the basis of content and coverage of framed objectives and they are tested by employing appropriate statistical tools:

1. There is a significant difference between the different disciplines of users and types of materials used in the library;
2. There is a significant difference among the users and the services provided by the library;
3. There is a significant difference among the users in time spent for accessing the Internet facilities;

#### **6. SAMPLING**

In order to study the information seeking behaviour of Social science researchers in the departments of Madurai Kamaraj University and its affiliated colleges, researcher has chosen ten college libraries in Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu.

#### **7. DATA COLLECTION**

The researcher has used the questionnaire method for collecting the data from the respondents. The questionnaires were designed to get the background information of the user, duration and quantum of library use, nature and type of information required, motivation to seek and collect information, extent of utility of library services and facilities, and their opinion about the library services and facilities provided. The researcher carried out the data collection work during the period from January 2009 to June 2009.

## 8. DATA ANALYSIS

The collected data are classified and tabulated according to the objectives and hypotheses stated. First, the data are recorded on data sheets and then fed to the computer personally. In order to test the hypotheses, the chi-square statistical and ANOVA two-way model were applied. The general data interpretation was made with

the help of percentages and averages. The study covered the social science research programmers such as Commerce, Economics, Management and History offered in the departments of Madurai Kamaraj University and its ten affiliated colleges in Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu. The respondents are research scholars from M.Phil or Ph.D in the above disciplines.

**Table 1 Institution-Wise Distribution of the Respondents**

Institutions	Commerce (N=150)	Economics (N=100)	Management (N=80)	History (N=70)	Total (N=400)
Affiliated Colleges	122 (81.33)	89 (89)	73 (91.25)	52 (74.28)	336 (84)
University Departments	28 (18.67)	11 (11)	7 (8.75)	18 (25.72)	64 (16)

In the above Table 1, the institution-wise distribution of the respondents shows that 84% of the respondents belong to the affiliated colleges and remaining 16% of them are from university departments.

It is an accepted fact that the frequency of visit to the library by users depends upon the nature of library collection, organization, maintenance, and above all the services and helpfulness of the library staff in making use of library resources.

**Table 2 Frequency of Visits to the Library**

Frequency of Visits	Commerce (N=150)	Economics (N=100)	Management (N=80)	History (N=70)	Total (N=400)
Every Day	86 (57.33)	65 (65)	59 (23.75)	23 (32.85)	233 (58.3)
Once in Two Days	32 (21.33)	24 (24)	18 (22.5)	28 (40)	102 (25.5)
Weekly Once	16 (10.66)	8 (8)	2 (2.5)	17 (24.28)	43 (10.75)
Once in Two Weeks	13 (8.66)	3 (3)	1 (1.25)	2 (2.85)	19 (4.75)
Monthly	1 (0.66)	-	-	-	1 (0.25)
Occasionally	2 (1.33)	-	-	-	2 (0.5)
Total	150	100	80	70	400

The above Table 2 Indicates that the maximum of 233 (58.25%) respondents visit the library 'everyday' and 25.5% of respondents visit the library 'once in two days'. This shows the significance of the library in knowledge-centre as a source of information. Overall, a negligible portion of the researchers accounts for less than 1.50% who do visit the library occasionally. Majority of (58%)

the scholars from Commerce department are using he libraries everyday. While 65% of the scholars belong to the department of Economics have the visit to the library 'everyday' and only one or two percent of the Research students from commerce department are 'occasionally' visiting the library.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference between the users and types of materials used in the library.

**Table 3 Types of Materials Used in the Library**

<b>Library Materials</b>	<b>Commerce (N=150)</b>	<b>Economics (N=100)</b>	<b>Management (N=80)</b>	<b>History (N=70)</b>	<b>Total (N=400)</b>
Text Books	135 (90.0)	90 (90)	68 (85)	67 (95.2)	360 (90)
Reference Books	122 (81.33)	75 (75)	59 (73.25)	64 (91.4)	320 (80)
Subject Periodicals	38 (25.33)	38 (38)	23 (28.25)	22 (34)	121 (30.25)
Newspapers and Magazines	75 (50)	43 (43)	27 (33.7)	37 (52.9)	182 (48.5)
Government Documents	25 (16.6)	19 (19)	11 (13.7)	9 (12.8)	64 (16)
Computerized Information Service	29 (19.33)	20 (20)	11 (13.25)	17 (24.28)	77 (19.25)
Chi-Square Value: 8.2757 Df=9 Not Significant at 5%					

The Table 3 shows that among the total respondents, 90 % used 'textbooks' more often than any other library material, whereas 80% of the respondents use 'reference books' among the library material. However, 30.25% of the respondents use 'subject periodicals'. Documents such as 'government documents, computerized information service' were found to be of very little use.

From the summary and analysis of the data given in the Table 3 it may be seen that the calculated value of

chi-square are 8.2757 with 9 degree of freedom at 5% level which was not significant towards the frequent use of library materials by the users. It is inferred from the above table and analysis, the results shows that there is no significant difference is observed between users from various disciplines and types of library materials. Hence the hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive opinion about the library services among the users.

**Table 4 Opinion about the Library Services**

<b>Opinion</b>	<b>Commerce (N=150)</b>	<b>Economics (N=100)</b>	<b>Management (N=80)</b>	<b>History (N=70)</b>	<b>Total (N=400)</b>
Excellent	27 (18)	13 (13)	6 (7.5)	13 (18.5)	59 (17.5)
Good	62 (41.3)	55 (55)	38 (47.5)	31 (44.28)	186 (46.8)
Satisfactory	56 (37.3)	24 (24)	24 (30.0)	22 (31.42)	126 (36.5)
Unsatisfactory	5 (3.3)	5 (5)	7 (8.75)	4 (5.7)	21 (5.25)
Can't Say	-	3 (3)	5 (6.25)	-	8 (2.0)
SD	0.84	0.93	0.92	0.83	
CV	36.0	36.22	39.55	36.88	

The majority of the respondents (46.5%) indicate that the library services are 'Good'. This opinion is uniform in all college libraries in the district. 31.5% of respondents

grade the services as 'satisfactory'. Fewer (5.25) percentage of respondents expressed that the services are 'Unsatisfactory', and 2% of respondents said, 'Can't say' anything about the services.

It is also found that 44% of the researchers from the Department of Commerce said that the services in their opinion were 'Good'. 18.5% of the History scholars indicated that the serving was 'Excellent' and less (6.2%) percentage of researchers from the Department of Management did not give any opinion on this. According to the analysis of the study, the opinion about library service is good in all the colleges. Very fewer

percentages are of the researcher's shows their dissatisfaction. This may be due to lack of sub staff for assisting to the librarian. It is inferred from the table that the opinion about library services are good. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference among the users in time spent for using Internet facilities.

**Table 5 Times Spent for Using Internet by the Users**

<b>Duration of Using the Internet</b>	<b>Commerce (N=150)</b>	<b>Economics (N=100)</b>	<b>Management (N=80)</b>	<b>History (N=70)</b>	<b>Total (N=400)</b>
Less than One Hour	48 (32)	32 (32)	23 (28.75)	19 (27.1)	122 (30.5)
One to Two Hours	45 (30)	48 (48.0)	57 (52.5)	27 (38.5)	162 (40.5)
Two to Three Hours	24 (16)	16 (16.0)	10 (12.5)	12 (17.1)	62 (13.5)
Three to Four Hours	22 (14.66)	4 (4)	5 (6.25)	9 (12.85)	40 (10)
Four Hours & Above	1 (7.33)	-	-	3 (4.28)	14 (3.5)
CV	47.95	41.46	43.85	54.44	

The Table 5 shows the duration of using Internet by the respondents in the college libraries. Of the total, 40.5% of respondents are using Internet 'One to two hours per day, 30.5% are using 'less than one hour', and less percentage (3.5%) of the users are using 'four hours and above' per day.

Majority (52.5%) of the researchers from the Department of Management and 18(48%) of the researchers from the Department of Economics are using Internet in their library 'one to two hours' per day.

The above table shows that the average opinion by the respondents about the use of Internet facility indicates that the mean for all users is two, that is, duration for using Internet is one to two hours per day on an average.

Further, the co-efficient of variation of these opinions in among users from different disciplines indicates that the most consistent opinion is observed in Economics (CV=41.46%) and most variable opinion is observed in the case of History scholars (54.44%). It is inferred from the table that the scholars are using the internet consistently. Hence, the hypothesis is accepted.

## 9. FINDINGS

1. It is found from the study that 84% of the respondents belong to the affiliated colleges and remaining 16% of them are from university departments.
2. It is found from the study that the maximum of 233 ( 58.25% ) respondents visit the library every day. Majority of (58%) the scholars from Commerce department are using he libraries everyday. While 65% of the scholars belong to the department of Economics have the visit to the library 'everyday' and only one or two percent of the Research students from commerce department are 'occasionally' visiting the library.
3. There is no significant difference is observed between users from various disciplines and types of library materials. Maximum of 90 % of the users used 'textbooks' more often than any other library material, whereas 80% of the respondents use 'reference books' among the library material. However, 30.25% of the

respondents use 'subject periodicals'. Documents such as 'government documents, computerized information service' were found to be of very little use.

4. It is inferred from the analysis that the scholars are using the internet consistently.
5. It is also found that majority of the respondents have reported that saving time is the main benefit of using e-Resources.

## 10. CONCLUSION

The users' opinion about the purpose, usage of information channels, information sources, library services etc. were the yardstick to measure the quality of libraries. In this study, it is evident from the fact that the opinion about the library services are good and they are expecting that the introduction of ICT and maintenance of changes in the application of ICT in library management is quite required to get the information with high bandwidth. Working hours, infrastructure and attitude of library staff towards the user community are analyzed with the users' perception and it has to be improved. The present digital era is giving various information seeking avenues to the users and even though it is very much important to upkeep these and it should be incorporated in the library routines.

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