

User Study of College Libraries under University of North Bengal, West Bengal

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Abstract

Library is considered as an integral component of any efficient educational system. It plays an important role in the improvement of the organisation. This study examines the user survey of five college libraries under University of North Bengal, West Bengal. A well structured questionnaire was used for collecting opinions of the library users about uses of the collections and services. Out of 750 users, only 520 questionnaires were collected from the respondents and selected for analysis of data. The present study demonstrates and elaborates the various aspects of library collections uses within the available resources, frequency and purposes of visit, adequacy of library hours, use of library services & collections, ways of document searching and user's satisfaction with the overall performance of the library.

Keywords: User Study, College library, User satisfaction

0 INTRODUCTION

Library play a pivotal role in providing valuable services to the academic community by selecting and organizing information resources that support research, education and extension activities of the organization. Education is the process by which people not only acquire knowledge, information, and skills, but also values and the ability to live and interact within and with social groups. Higher education contributes to human resource development in many ways. Institutions of higher education have the main responsibility of training students who participate in the development of the country. Libraries have now metamorphosed into hybrid institutions with a blend of print and digital information resources. Today, libraries are surrounded by networked data that is connected to vast ocean of Internet-based services. Moreover, electronic resources relevant to the profession are developing at an unprecedented pace. Academic libraries are considered to be the nerve centres of academic institutions and supporting teaching, research, and other academic programmes. The success of a library in meeting the information needs of its users play an important role.

User surveys can be designed and administered in a number of ways. Self-administered surveys are often employed to reach a large number of potential

respondents with a minimum of direct contact and cost. Individuals are given or sent surveys to complete and return and the responses turned into data that can be analyzed. Surveys can range from broad and comprehensive to those narrowly focused on specific services or activities. When properly designed and administered, user surveys can provide both quantitative and qualitative data directly from the target population. Wilson states the place of user studies in Library and Information Science research that “Apart from information retrieval there is virtually no other area of information science that has occasioned as much research effort and writing as ‘user studies’.”¹⁰

1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The present study is aimed at and tried to achieve the following major objectives:

- i. To know the use of collections and services of the libraries;
- ii. To trace out the purpose of the information search;
- iii. To determine the way of documents location and search elements of the libraries;
- iv. To identify the infrastructure facilities are being provided by the library;
- v. To find out the overall user satisfaction with the resources and services facilities provided in the five college libraries users under University of North Bengal.

2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A number of literatures can be mentioned regarding user studies. Ammini¹ carried out a survey on information need of the students of ship technology using the questionnaire method. Babu² discussed information generation by university libraries and use of these libraries. Callinan³ described the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate biology students with a comparative analysis of first year and final year students in University College, Dublin. Fizardani⁴ illustrated information needs and information seeking behaviour of graduate students of an African University.

Lalitha⁵ presented a comparative study with reference to library use regarding information seeking behaviour of medical and engineering personnel. Lui and Redfern⁶ in their study on the information seeking behavior and needs of the Multi-cultural students at San Jose University (US) used a questionnaire method. Mallaiah and Badami⁷ studied the use of services and facilities of Mangalore University Library. The majority of the research scholars visited the library for borrowing books,

consulting periodicals, and more than half complained about the non-availability of current issues.

In another study conducted by Seamans ⁸, it was reported that first year undergraduate students reported that the entire participant felt that they had little need to look for information outside what faculty provided for them in their course and where information was needed. They felt they were able to acquire it using general search engines.

Siddiqui ⁹ conducted a study on the use of library collection of Jawaharlal Nehru University Library. A questionnaire was used to collect the data, which covered 99 scholars. The study found that 69 percent visit the library daily, and 31 percent found the library collection adequate to meet their information needs.

3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study is an attempt to ascertain the use of the resource and services of the libraries by students in the undergraduate colleges under North Bengal University in the Jalpaiguri district, West Bengal. The scope of study is confined to following five colleges, namely Alipurduar College, Maynaguri College, Parimal Mitra Mahavidyalaya, Vivekananda College and P.D.Womens College. The surveyed students were from Arts stream. Table1 (fig.1) indicates that a total 520 questionnaires responded out of 750 and consisted of 125 students from Alipurduar College, 115 from Maynaguri College, 92 from Parimal Mitra Smriti Mahavidyalaya, 98 from Vivekananda College and 90 from P D Women's College.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaire

<i>Name of the Colleges</i>	<i>Number of questionnaire distributed</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Alipurduar College	150	125	83.3
Maynaguri College	150	115	76.6
Parimal Mitra Smriti Mahavidyalaya	150	92	61.3
Vivekananda College	150	98	65.3

P D Women's College	150	90	60
Total	750	520	69.3

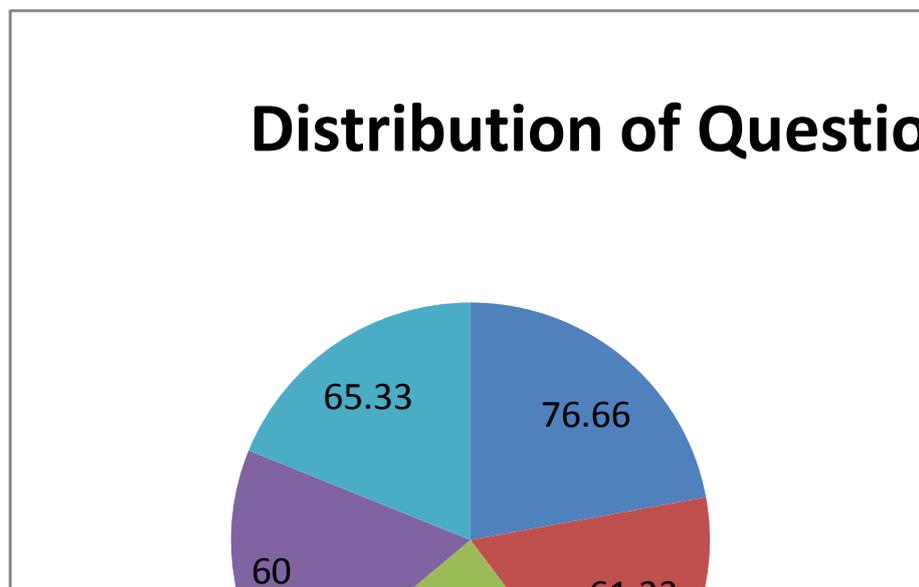


Fig. 1: Distribution of questionnaire

4 METHODOLOGY

The study uses the survey method. A well structured questionnaire was designed and used for collecting data. Therefore, suitable sampling method has been used. 750 questionnaires were disseminated to the users, selected suitably from the five college libraries under study. Therefore, a total of 520 questionnaires were returned. Then the collected data tabulated and analysed accordingly. The results of the findings were accessible in tables using percentage.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 Frequency of visits to the Library

The frequency of visits to the library by users depends upon the nature of library collections, organization, maintenance and above all, the services and cooperation of the library staffs in making use of library resources. Table 2 (fig. 2) indicates that, most of the students (30.57%) visit library 'once in a week' followed by 23.65% visit the library '2 day in a week' and 18.23% visit 'Once in two week'.

Table 2: Frequency of visits to the Library

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Everyday	55	10.57
2 day in a week	123	23.65
Once in a week	159	30.57
Once in two week	96	18.46
Monthly	73	14
Occasionally	14	2.69
Not at all visited	00	00

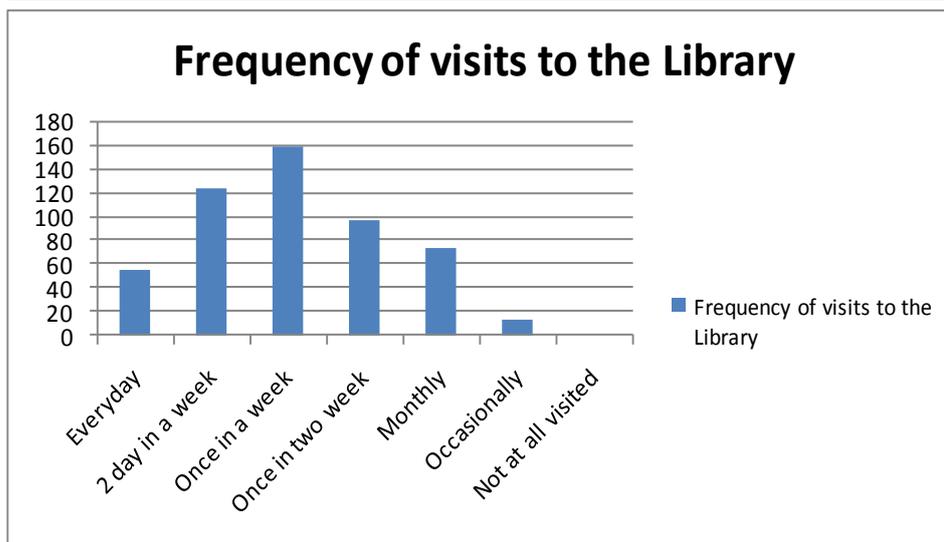


Fig.2: Frequency of Library visits

5.2 Average Time Spent in the Library

Table 3 (fig. 3) shows that the quantum of time spent by students in the library per week. It is observed that half of the total respondents(50%) spend less than one hour per week, while 37% spend '1-2hrs', 8% spend '2-3hrs' and 4% spend '3-4hrs'. However, only 1.5% students spend more than four hours in the library.

Table 3: Average Time Spent in the Library

<i>Average Time spent (in hours/week)</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
0-1	262	50.38
1-2	190	36.53
2-3	40	7.69
3-4	21	4
> 4	7	1.34

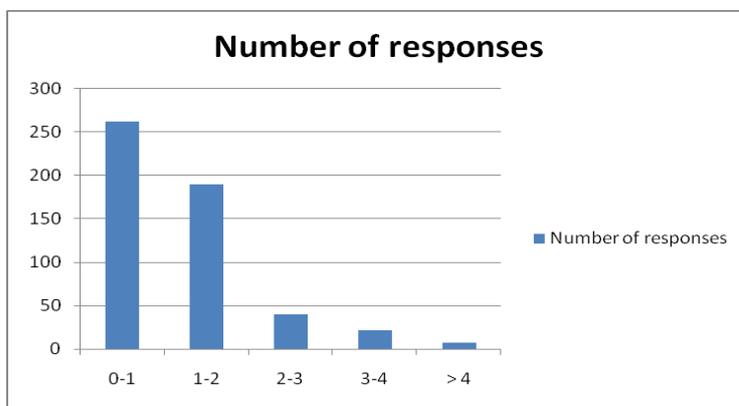


Fig. 3: Average time Spent in the Library

5.3 Purpose of using Library Resources

The use of library resources depends upon the forms and media of resources, nature of organization and timely cooperation of the library staff to users. Table 4 (fig. 4) indicates that 40% of the students use/visit the library for ‘borrowing and returning textbooks’, followed by 37% for ‘consulting old question paper’ and 8% for ‘reading newspaper, magazines, etc. for improving general awareness’.

Table 4: Purpose of using Library Resources

<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
For borrowing and returning textbooks	205	39.42
Consulting the reference sources	37	7.11

To consult journal articles	12	2.30
To consult old question papers	193	37.11
To read newspapers, magazines, etc. for improving general awareness	42	8.07
Internet Surfing	31	5.96

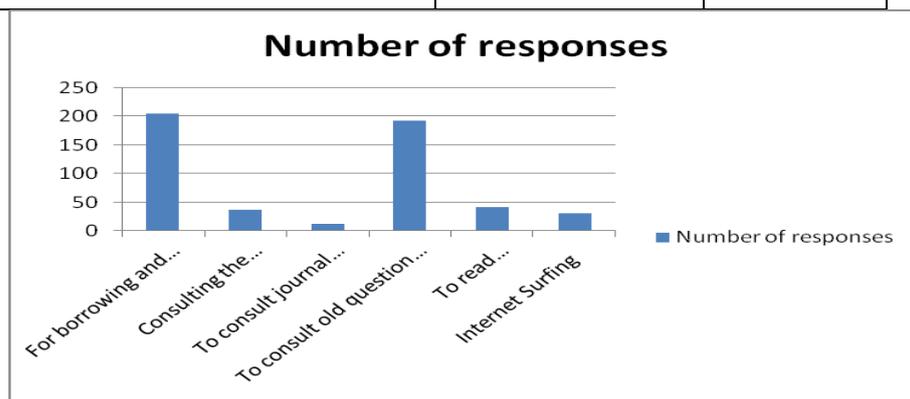


Fig.4: Purpose of Using Library Resources

5.4 Regarding locating the information resources within the library

Table 5 (fig. 5) exhibits that 57% students locate/get their information resources ‘with the help of the library staff’, followed by 20% and 17% of the respondents get their desired information resources through ‘browsing the card catalogue and OPAC’ and ‘with the help of subject teacher’ respectively.

Table 5: Opinion Regarding Location of the Library Resources

<i>Opinion</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Card catalogue/OPAC	106	20.38
With the help of library staff	294	56.53
With the help of friends	33	6.34
With the help of subject teacher	87	16.73

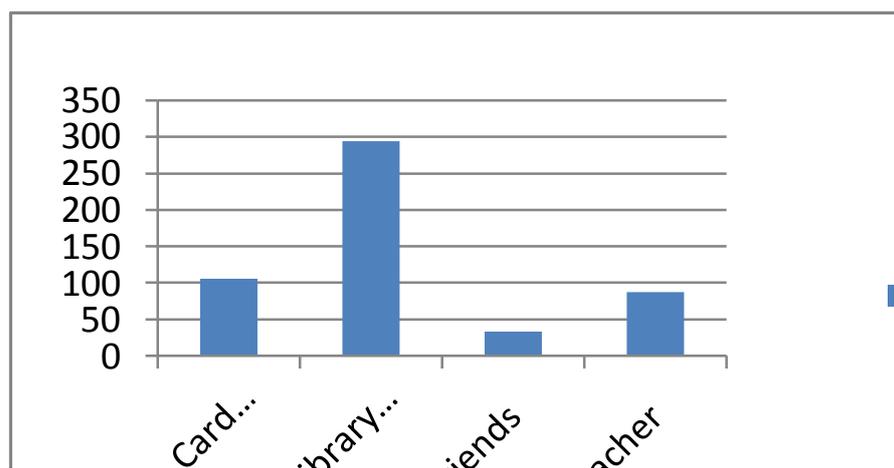


Fig.5: Opinion Regarding Location of the Library Resources

5.5 Dependence on different resources of information

Table 6 (fig. 6) elucidates that majority of the students i.e. 56% students rely on the textbooks to a great extent. About 24% of the respondents consult 'human sources' such as faculty, librarian, etc. as one of their resource of information. About 8% of the respondents rely on 'reference books' and 5% of the respondents indicate the use of newspaper, magazines. Besides, these sources about 7% of the respondents opted for the other sources of information such as internet and journals.

Table 6: Type of Information Resources used most frequently

<i>Type of information resources</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Textbooks	292	56.15
Reference Books	43	8.26
Journals	10	1.92
Newspapers, Magazines	24	4.61
Internet	25	4.80
Discussion with Faculty	86	16.53
Discussion with Library Staff	40	7.69

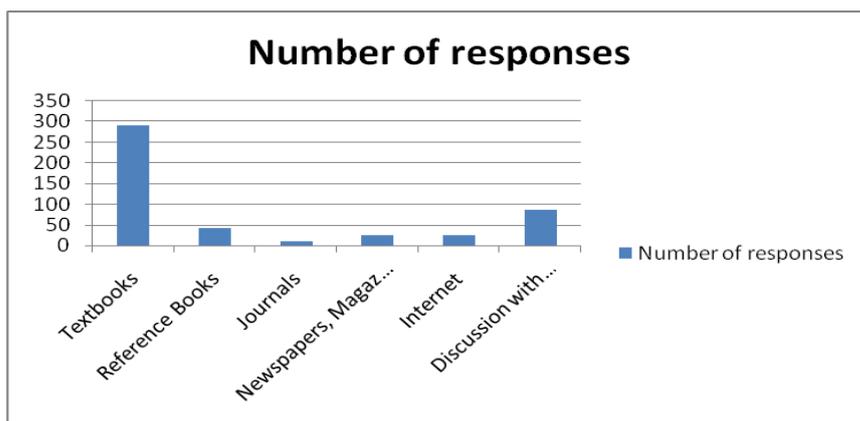


Fig. 6: Information Resources Used Most Frequently

5.6 Problems faced by students in finding required information resources

The students were requested to indicate the type of problems they come across in finding required information resources in the library. Table 7(fig. 7) reveals that 30% of the respondents indicate the barrier for collecting the required information is ‘all important books are kept exclusively for reference’, whereas 41% indicate that ‘books are listed in the catalogue but not available during borrowing or reading purpose’. About 16% of the respondent do not regularly use the library due to the library timings are not convenient to them and 10% indicate that they are not getting help from the library staff at all. Only 3% said that required chapters in the books are missing.

Table 7: Problems in Finding Required Information Resources

Opinions	Number of responses	Percentage
Books listed/display in the catalogue but not available during borrowing and/or reading.	213	40.96
All important books are kept exclusively for references	158	30.38
Library timings are not convenience	82	15.76
Non-cooperative attitude of the library staff	51	9.80
Required chapters in the books are missing	16	3

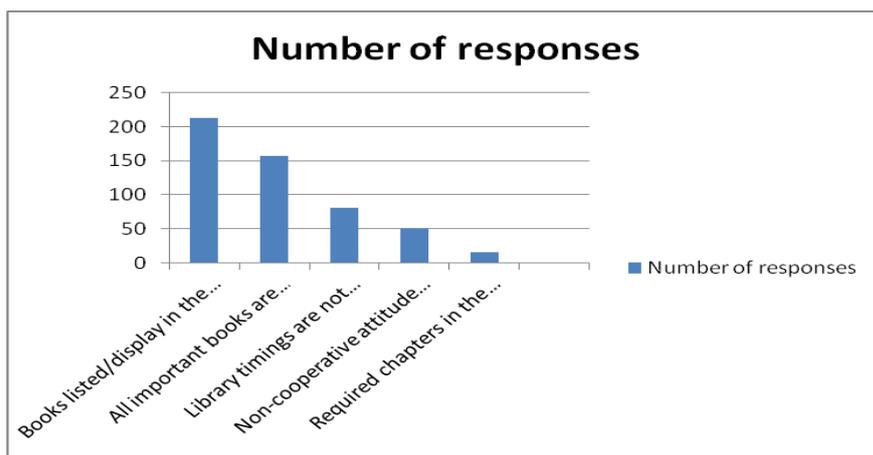


Fig. 7: Problems in Finding Required Information Resources

5.7 Satisfaction of Academic Needs

The respondents were requested to indicate their views regarding to what extent the information resources satisfied their academic needs. Table 8 (fig. 8) portrays that about more than half (55%) of the respondents were satisfied between '25-50%', followed by 28 % satisfied their needs in very good way and 12% satisfied in an excellent way respectively. Only 5% of the respondents are satisfied very poorly.

Table 8 Satisfaction with Overall Functions of the Library

<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Number of responses</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Excellent (80-100)%	62	11.92
Very Good (50-80)%	145	27.88
Good (25-50)%	287	55.19
Poor (<25)%	26	5

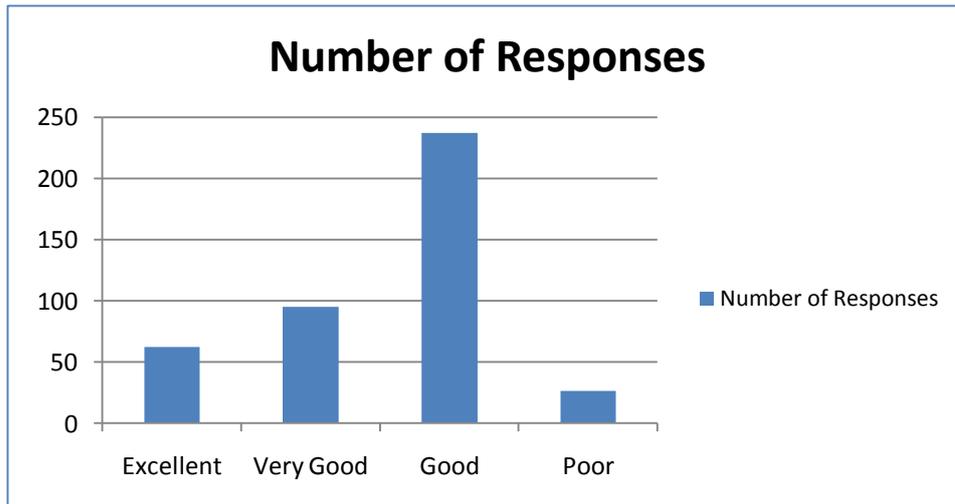


Fig. 8: Satisfaction with Overall Functions of the Library

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above findings, the following Recommendations/suggestions are made:

- i. The library collection should be increased.
- ii. Reading materials should be arranged in the proper sequences on the shelves.
- iii. The present libraries are lacking in user awareness programme. So, user education programme should be conducted from time to time.
- iv. Giving practical demonstration in searching of information sources through catalogue (Card/OPAC).
- v. Personal computers should be provided to seek the desired information from the library.
- vi. The timing of the library services should be extended to round the clock.
- vii. Most users suggested that the library should reduce reprography charges.

7 CONCLUSIONS

This study has given a clear picture of the use of college libraries in Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal. The utilisation of college libraries by their potential users can be enhanced by adopting the modern facilities. Automation of libraries according to new technologies is very essential to cope up with the present scenario.

There are a number of problems which create barriers in providing information services to users such as user education, lack of professional and non-professional staff, policy matters, lack of autonomy for the library professional etc. Hence the

urgent attention of the authority is invited in this regard. It is very difficult to make available all the desired documents to users but it can be managed to some extent, by keeping views of user's demand while purchasing new books, periodicals, and other print and non print information materials. Thus more books, periodicals, and other print and non print information resources should be added in the library to meet the requirements of the user community.

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