

# Information Need and Information Seeking Behavior of Information Science Students in Haramaya University, Ethiopia

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## Abstract

*Information need and information seeking behavior study is important to find out the sources and services used by the information seekers. The objective of this research was to examine the information need and information seeking behavior of Information Science students in Haramaya University. The study shows that more than half of the students visit the library every day. Students mainly use reference services from the library and for which they depend on reference sources. Main purpose of visiting library was for writing assignments/research and study. The students make use of the library resources like books and journals, internet etc to meet their information needs. Majority of students feel that there is a need for training for the efficient access and use of library materials. Information Science students also mentioned that the number of books and journals available in their field of study are not sufficient. According to the students the Haramaya university library should acquire more resources as well as the library should provide sufficient space for students to refer and study within the library. Based on the findings suggestions are provided. The Haramaya University library should organize the information sources and there is a need for completel automation of the library and also digitalization of information resources.*

Key words; Information need, Information seeking, Information seeking behaviour, Higher education and library, Information behavior.

## Introduction

The teaching and learning environment in higher education require information that support for knowledge development. Without information teaching and learning cannot flourish or survive. Teachers and students seek information for various purposes. They make use of printed documents or e-documents to gather information. Researches reveal that with the emergence of web resources the information seeking behavior of students are changing rapidly all over the world. This is also true in the case of information science students in Haramaya University. The concept of “information behaviour” was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its

roots to the concept of “information needs and uses” that arose in the 1960s<sup>1</sup>. When one think about Information seeking behaviour it includes the purpose for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, how it is sought and what are the sources used to find information. The primary purpose for seeking information is to find relevant information in relation to the fulfillment of a specific goal or information need<sup>2</sup>. Zhang, W (1998)<sup>3</sup> stresses that a thorough understanding of user information needs and information seeking behaviour is fundamental to the provision of successful information services.

Olsen, W. M and Diekema, A. R (2012)<sup>4</sup> mentioned that studying the way students find information is essential to understanding them as a user group, helping them find research more effectively and efficiently, and developing resources for their use. They also reported that most used sources of information by students are google, Wikipedia, news websites, friends and family members, class notes, and selected subscription databases. Few students made use of physical libraries, librarians and information professionals, experts, books, magazines etc.

Many studies are done in this area but most of them are conducted in other continents and only few researches have been reported from Africa. With regard to Ethiopia still there is a gap in this topic of research. This study hopes to find out the important sources used by the students and also the purpose of seeking information.

Haramaya University is one of the leading universities in Ethiopia established with an agreement between the Government of Ethiopia and the Technical Cooperation Administration of the Government of United States of America, signed on May 16, 1952. This gave the mandate to Oklahoma State University to establish and operate the College, conduct a nationwide system of Agricultural Extension and set up an agricultural research and experimental station. In 1968 the contract with Oklahoma State University was terminated and named as Alemaya College of Agriculture and later it was upgraded to university status on May 27, 1985. The institution was renamed Haramaya University in February 2006. Now the university has many colleges in different discipline functioning in three campus premises. The main campus is located at about 510 km East of Addis Ababa, between Dire Dawa and Harar towns. The second campus is located in Harar town where College of Health and Medical Sciences including Hiwot Fana Specialized University Teaching Hospital are situated. The third one is Chiro Campus located in Chiro Town, where the Institute of Agro-Industry and Land Resource is found. The Department of Information Science is started in 2007 under College of Computing and Informatics in Haramaya Univeristy. It runs undergraduate and post graduate programs.

Information need and information seeking behavior is one of the important topics where researchers in Ethiopia should work on. The present investigation is new to Haramaya Univerity, Ethiopia. This will initiate a wide study for Ethiopia also as there is no study recorded under this area.

In this knowledge era where the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) plays a key role in accessing and disseminating information. Due to this there is a need to find out the user behavior in libraries. This study is done to find out how the students of Information science in Haramaya University access information to fulfill their information need.

The fundamental purpose of higher learning institutions is to prepare the students for their better future. If the undergraduate and post graduate students are to be successful in their studies their information need and information seeking should be in line with the fast and dynamically changing information sources. This study will be useful for the libraries to improve their collection in the information science discipline and also to provide better services in accordance with user information need and information seeking behaviour. This research can be a base for other researchers who like to do similar studies.

## **Review of Literature**

Pareek, A. K and Rana, M. S (2013)<sup>5</sup> opines that information seeking behaviour as the process of information acquiring, using and implementing information. In the case of academicians, researchers and students it is even more important because they all need right and update information for their research need. Information seeking behavior is a broad term, it involves a set of actions that takes by individuals or groups to show their information need, seek information, check and select the information to fulfill their requirement or information needs. A study conducted by Basha, I and others (2013)<sup>6</sup> in India reveals that the primary purposes of seeking information by the engineering students are to keep abreast to current information in their subject field to obtain educational excellence. For this purpose the students refer latest periodicals. Kumar, K and Tholkappian, S (2013)<sup>7</sup> had made a research on information seeking behaviour of library users in women's educational institutions library users in Vellore district, Tamil Nadu mentioned that the successful operation of any library depends to a large extent on the choice of library collection. To acquire necessary materials the librarians should be aware of how the library users seek information. A research was conducted by Shakeel Ahmed, G. T and Vinayagamorthy, P (2013)<sup>8</sup> regarding information seeking behaviour of business school students in the universities and colleges located in Academic City, Dubai, UAE. It revealed that the major sources used by the students are for academic purposes and the main resources used are internet and electronic media. Padnzamma, S and others (2010)<sup>9</sup> examined the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students in the engineering college libraries and found that internet is the predominant information source utilized by the students.

## **Objective of the study**

The major objective of this study was to examine the information need and information seeking behavior of Information Science students in Haramaya University.

## **Methodology**

Qualitative and quantitative research design was used for the study. Survey method was used to collect the information. Structured Questionnaire was the tool which is used to gather data.

## **Population**

Total population of this study was 100 students from the Department of Information Science.

## **Sampling method**

Simple random sampling was used to select the sample. Only 50 students were included in the study i.e. 50% of the total population. Data collected were analyzed and results tabulated with the relevant headings using percentages and frequencies. It included only the Post graduate students, and under graduate students from third year and second year.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	80
Female	10	20
Total	50	100

Out of selected sample 40 (80%) were males and 10 (20%) females. This is because the numbers of female students are less in the Department of Information Science.

**Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Responses Acquired from each batches**

Information Science students	Frequency	Percentage
Under graduates 2nd Year	12	24
Under graduates 3rd Year	23	46
Post Graduate Summer	15	30
Total	50	100

From the above table it is clear that out of the total response 12 (24%) were from 2<sup>nd</sup> years and 23 (46%) from 3<sup>rd</sup> years and remaining 15 (30%) from the post graduate summer students.

**Table 3: Frequency of visit to library**

Visit to Library	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate Summer	Total	Percentage
Every day	6	13	10	29	58
2-3 times in a week	3	8	4	15	30
Weekly	2	0	1	3	6
Monthly	1	2	0	3	6
	12	23	15		

Above table depict that out of 50, 29 (58%) students visit the library every day and 15 (30%) 2-3 times in a week. Which reveals that most of the students make use of the library to meet their information needs.

**Table 4: Frequency of purpose for visiting library**

Purpose for visiting library	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate Summer	Total	Percentage
To study	11	16	12	39	78
To borrow books	1	2	0	3	6
Browsing the shelves	1	2	0	3	6
Use the reference material	3	9	3	15	30
To know the latest arrivals	0	1	1	2	4
To read newspaper and magazines	4	5	3	12	24
To use internet	2	0	12	14	28

Table 4 shows that 39 (78%) of the students visit the library for study and 15 (30%) to use reference materials. Next major purposes are to use internet (28%) and to read newspaper (24%). The information science students' main interest in visiting library is for study.

**Table 5: Frequency of Sources and Services used from the Library**

Sources and services	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate Summer	Total	Percentage
Issue/return	1	6	2	9	18
Reference service	10	13	6	29	58
Books and journals	5	13	9	27	54
Seminar/Conference proceedings	3	1	2	6	12
Indexing service	1	7	2	10	20
Abstracting service	0	7	3	10	20
Bibliography	2	9	3	14	28
Newspaper	9	7	7	23	46
Inter-Library Loan	0	3	0	3	6
Internet service	3	9	13	25	50

CAS	0	0	1	1	2
SDI	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5 clearly shows that reference service is the main service sought by information science students 29 (58%). Most used sources are books and journals (54%). 50% students make use of the internet service and newspaper is referred by 46% of students. Selective Dissemination Service and Current Awareness Service are the least used services.

**Table 6: Frequency of purpose for seeking information**

Purpose of seeking information	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate Summer	Total	Percentage
For career development	8	10	11	29	58
To solve immediate practical problem	9	17	14	40	80
To keep upto date	2	10	13	25	50
To write assignments/research paper	11	17	14	42	84

The above table reveals that main purpose of seeking information by the students are to write assignments/research paper (84%). 80% of the students mentioned that to solve immediate practical problem they seek information. Whereas for career development and to keep upto date needs are preferred by 58 and 50% students respectively.

**Table 7: Need training to use sources and services efficiently**

Need training	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate Summer	Total	Percentage
Yes	4	19	12	35	70
No	8	4	3	15	30
Total	12	23	15	50	100

It is evident from the above table that 70% students need training to use sources and services efficiently from the library.

**Table 7: Frequency of Library sufficiency in subjects books and journals**

Need training	Under graduates 2nd Year	Under graduates 3rd Year	Post Graduate	Total	Percentage
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			Summer		
Yes	4	7	11	22	44
No	8	16	4	28	56
Total	12	23	15	50	100

The table given above clearly shows that 56% of the students are not satisfied with the subject books and journals available in the library.

The students were also requested to give their suggestions to improve Haramaya University Library services effectively. Following points were mentioned by the students,

1. Need to provide more seating facilities in the library
2. Qualified staff in the field of information science should be employed in the library or the existing staff should be given training.
3. Improve document, journal and up to date newspaper collection in the Haramaya University library
4. Need to digitize information materials
5. It is very essential to provide uninterrupted internet service to the user in the library
6. Arrangement of documents should be done in an organized way
7. Proper guidance should be given to users about available resources in the library and also services
8. Haramaya university library should be fully automated to provide better service
9. There should be favourable conditions in the library to make use of library services by the users
10. Distribute user manuals so that users will know how to utilize the services from the library
11. Information literacy training will help to make use of the library effectively
12. Textbook in information science subject should be made available in the library
13. Acquire print and electronic documents and also subscribe information science journals current and also archive.
14. There should be uninterrupted power supply in the library

## Findings

- The study revealed that majority of the information science students visit the library every day.
- The students seek information for study purpose and also to prepare assignments/research. Reference service is the most sought after service from the library.
- The students seek information from books and journals. Newspapers are also used by the students to get information.
- Students need training to access information sources and services so that they can improve search.

- Students are not satisfied with the information materials available in their subject area. Books, journals which are available in the library are not sufficient to meet the user needs.
- Haramaya University library is not fully automated.
- The library also lacks enough space and seating facilities to accommodate its users in rush times.
- The power supply and internet connection is not satisfactory in the library.
- The library resources are not organized properly.

## Recommendations

Based on the above findings following recommendations are made:

1. The university library should purchase more volumes and titles of documents in information science discipline.
2. Journals in information science (print or electronic) should be subscribed in the library so that students can get current information to prepare for their assignment/research activities.
3. Organization of information documents in a proper way would help the users to access the material without wasting much time
4. Library staff should serve the user by providing right information at the right time.
5. There is a need to improve power supply and also internet connection in the library to provide uninterrupted access to information.
6. Space problem in the library should be taken care of to provide better service.
7. The library should be fully automated and also necessary information resources should be digitalized for preservation and easy access.
8. Training in information literacy should be given to the freshers and also user manuals should be issued to new users.

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