Information Seeking Behaviour of Library Users in Select PG Degree Colleges of Chhattisgarh State

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Abstract

A study of "Information Seeking Behaviour of Library Users in Select PG Degree Colleges of Chhattisgarh State" was conducted using Questionnaire method in order to assess their information needs, their information seeking and information searching behaviour and the resultant satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their library resources and services regarding the fulfilment of their information needs (Balaji et al.,2016). The findings of the study indicated that although printed form is still the preferred format of most of the users, online resources are also consulted by them, particularly for current researches (Nishat and Ahmad, 2008). The library users were generally satisfied with their existing library resources and services though some expressed the need for better library infrastructure – buildings, reading rooms, air-conditioning, photocopy, printing facility etc.. Most of the respondents felt the need for some sort of training in the use of e-resources to explore them in a better way (Kaur et al.,2016).

Keywords: Library Resources, E-Resources, Library Users, User Studies, Information Seeking Behaviour.

Introduction:

'Library Resources' refer to the holdings of the library – books, journals, project reports, periodicals, charts, maps etc., in short whatever materials the library has acquired for use of its readers for their study and research. Present technological environment and developments have added digital resources- e-books, e-journals, e-reports, e-dissertations etc. to the libraries' holdings. These are referred as 'E-Resources' (Kumar and Tholkappian, 2013). .

'Library users' may be termed the most important component of library and information system because the very existence of libraries is dependent on the users. No libraries are developed in isolation. A library is a service organization designed to provide information to its readers (Pareek and Rana, 2013).

'Library User Studies' (User Studies) is a field which has evoked lots of research efforts and writing in the field of information science. Though the origin of user studies may be traced as back as 1948 in the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference when several surveys of users' Information Seeking Behaviour were carried out, this field gained momentum with the publication of Wilson's research paper "On user studies and information Needs" published in Journal of Documentation in 1981.

'Information Seeking Behaviour' studies have become important in bridging the gap between the expectations of the users from the library and information system and the existing information services.

Various factors are responsible for determining the Information Seeking Behaviour of an individual or a group. The purpose for which the information is required and the environment in which it is going to be used are vital for understanding the Information Seeking Behaviour of the users. Also important are the users' skills in identifying the required information, various channels (whether formal or informal) of information, their preferred sources of information and the barriers in their pursuit of information.

Information seeking is a complex mechanism which involves a set of processes undertaken by the user to first identify his information need and then the series of actions taken to satisfy that need with the help of formal and informal information sources. Formal sources of information include library resources, internet, newspapers, periodicals and scholarly journals etc. whereas informal sources include interaction with teachers, communication media and social media etc.(Shokeen and Koushik, 2002).

The state of Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh in the year 2000. The state has witnessed unprecedented growth in the fields of education, infrastructure development, agricultural and industrial production. The state lies in the centre of India. It is fast developing as an educational and medical hub of Central India. New colleges and universities have been set up. Many of the existing colleges are being upgraded. Much emphasis is being laid on quality of higher education and research in the state. With enhancement in education level, the information demands of the library users have increased. A need has, therefore, been felt to study the users' Information Seeking Behaviour in the libraries of these institutes of higher education. With above background, this project "Information Seeking Behaviour of Library Users in Select PG Degree Colleges of Chhattisgarh State" was taken up.

Libraries have always been an important component of higher education set up. We are living in an age of information explosion. Digital information revolution has added to the information deluge. Philosophy of librarianship has also changed from being custodians and providers of information to being facilitators of information round the clock. The latter half of past century has witnessed many changes in the field of library and information studies. The focus of the libraries has shifted from being system- oriented to person- oriented service organizations.

Objectives:
The present study was taken up with following objectives:
- To have an idea of the information needs and expectations of the users from their library systems with special reference to Chhattisgarh.
- To study the various approaches that the library users of Chhattisgarh employ for satisfying their information needs.

- To observe the usefulness of the print vis-a-vis digital sources of information and know the preferred sources of our library users.
- To understand the problems faced by information seekers of our colleges.
- To provide the users a conducive and positive library environment for their study and research.

Methodology:

The present study was conducted using questionnaire survey method.

Six hundred (600) sets of questionnaires were distributed among the students and teachers (library users) of nine selected PG Colleges.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Sections A of the questionnaire consisted of questions regarding personal information of the readers – their name, institution, gender, designation, qualifications, class etc. Section B of the questionnaire, i.e. its main body consisted of questions regarding their reading habits, their present library environment and their expectations from their library systems.

Total three hundred and eighty five (385) filled- in questionnaires (64.16%) were received back. Data obtained in these questionnaires was compiled and tabulated. Simple percentage method has been followed in order to analyze, explain and interpret the data collected from library users.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:
Table 1: Time Spent in the Library Per Week

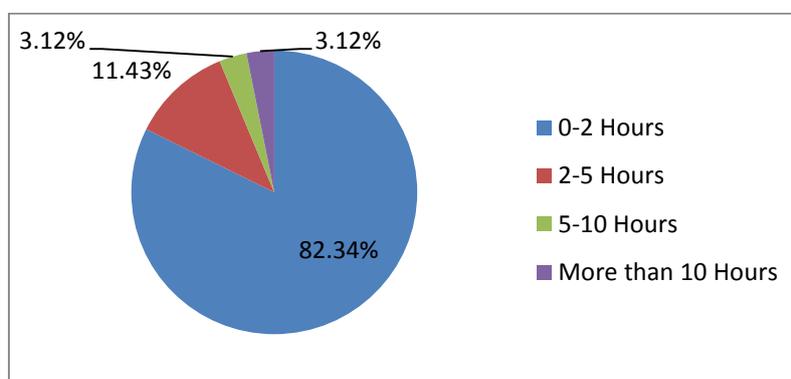| S.No.	Time Spent	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	0-2 Hours	317	82.34%
b)	2-5 Hours	44	11.43%
c)	5-10 Hours	12	3.12%
d)	More than 10 Hours	12	3.12%
	Total	385	100%

Figure 1 : Time spent in the library per week

It is observed from table 1, that a majority of the users, i.e., 82.34% spend between 0-2 hours in the library per week, followed by 11.43% who spend 2 – 5 hours. Only 3.12% respondents spend between 5 – 10 hours and there are another 3.12% users who spend more than 10 hours per week in the library.

Table 2: Purpose of Seeking Information

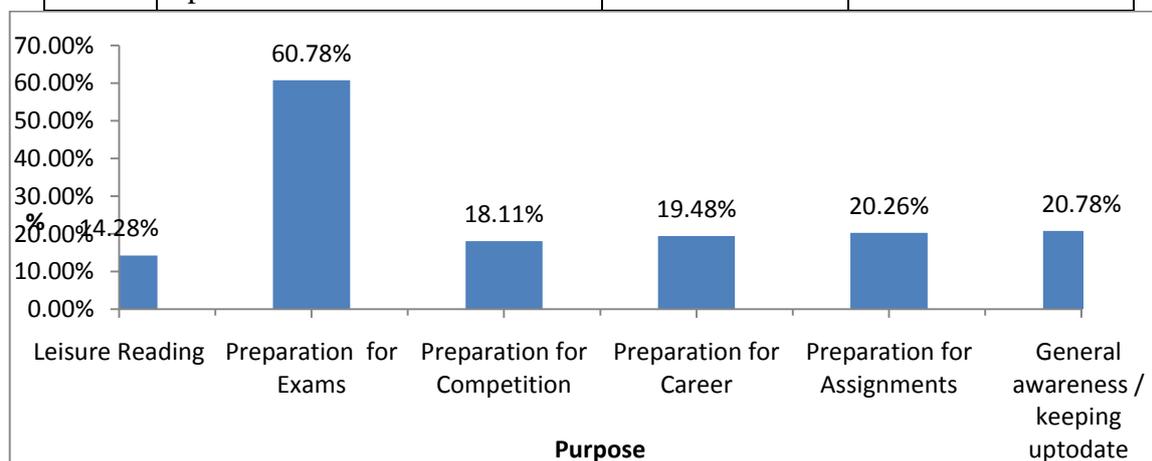| S.No.	Purpose	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Leisure Reading	55	14.28%
b)	Preparation for Exams	234	60.78%
c)	Preparation for Competitions	70	18.11%
d)	Preparation for Career	75	19.48%
e)	Preparation for Assignments	78	20.26%
f)	General awareness / keeping uptodate	80	20.78%

Figure 2 : Purpose of seeking information

It is observed that most of the respondents (60.78%) seek information for preparing for examinations. Around 20 % do it for preparation of assignments, another 20% for preparation for career, 21% for keeping their general awareness uptodate and 18% for appearing in competitive examinations. Only 14% seek information for leisure reading.

Table 3: Preferred Format of Sources of Information

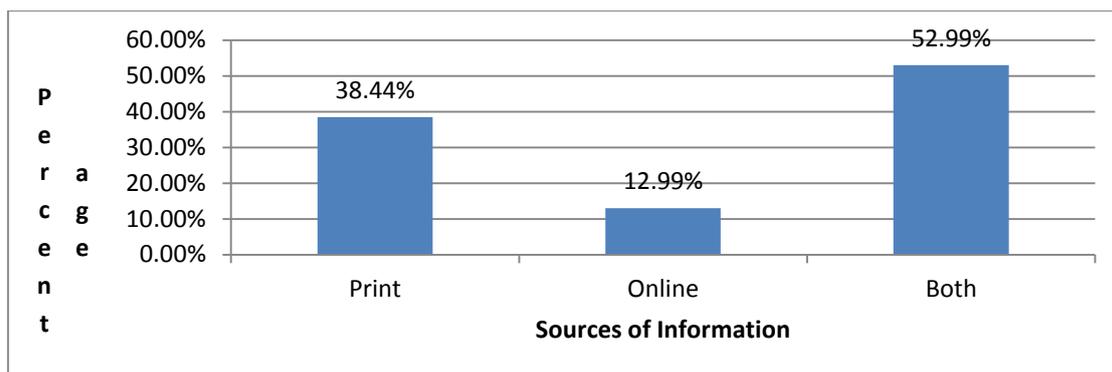| S.No.	Sources of Information	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Print	148	38.44%
b)	Online	50	12.99%
c)	Both	204	52.99%

Figure 3 : Preferred format of sources of information

It is observed that for sources of information, 38.44% respondents prefer print media, 13% prefer online media and majority (53%) use both print and online sources.

Table 4: Sources Consulted for Current Information

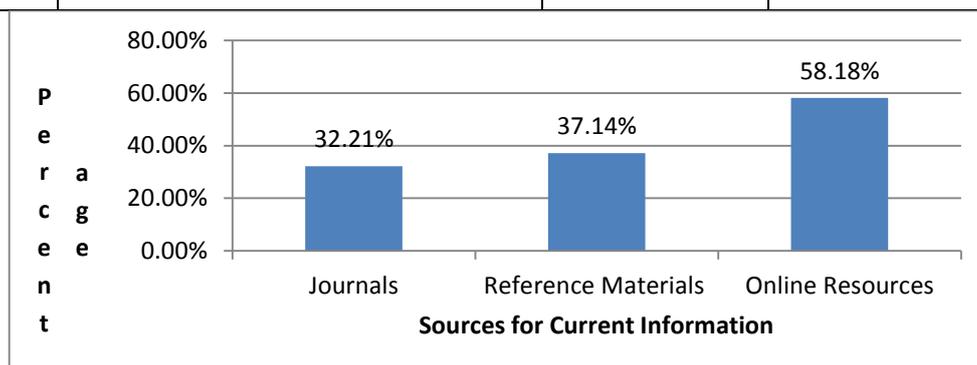| S.No.	Sources for Current Information	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Journals	124	32.21%
b)	Reference Materials	143	37.14%
c)	Online Resources	224	58.18%

Figure 4 : Sources for Current Information

It is observed that more than half (58.18%) of the respondents consult online sources for current information. Reference materials (37.14%) and Journals (32.21%) come next in the use. It is seen that online sources are the most used sources for current / latest information.

Table 5: Search Engines Used for Online Information Resources

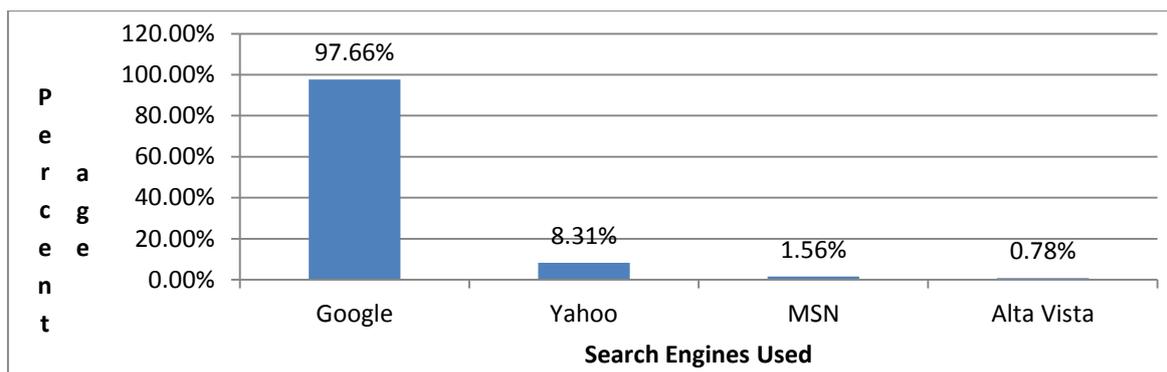| S.No.	Search Engines Used	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Google	376	97.66%
b)	Yahoo	32	8.31%
c)	MSN	6	1.56%
d)	Alta Vista	3	0.78%

Figure 5 : Search Engines used

Table 5 indicates that Google is the most used Search Engine for accessing online information (98% respondents use it), followed by Yahoo which is used by 8% of the respondents. Use of MSN and Alta Vista is negligible.

Table 6: Knowledge about Open Access Online Resources

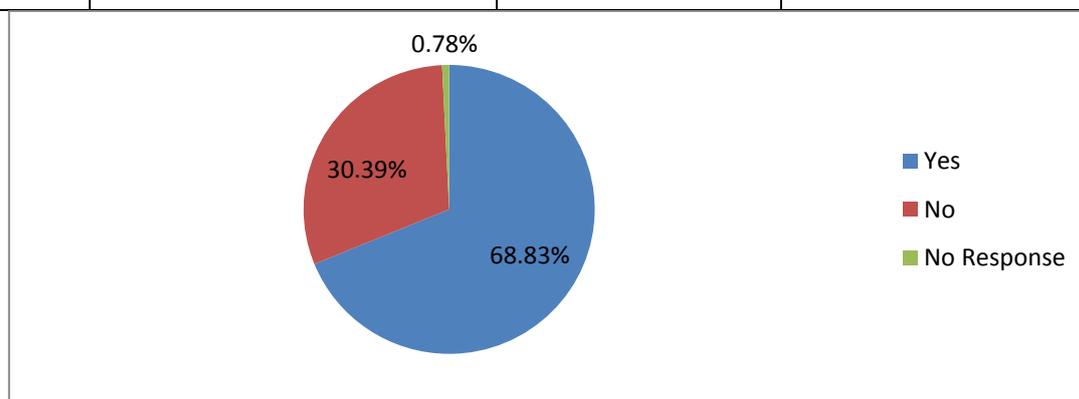| S.No.		Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Yes	265	68.83%
b)	No	117	30.39%
c)	No Response	3	0.78%
	Total	385	100%

Figure 6 : Knowledge about open access online resources

It is indicated that 69% respondents have knowledge about the open access online resources whereas about 31% do not have this knowledge.

Table 7: Problems Encountered in Getting Relevant Information

S.No.	Problem Encountered	Responses	Percentage(%)
a)	Lack of Time	171	44.41%
b)	Scattered Information	109	28.31%
c)	Outdated Information	82	21.29%
d)	Information Overload	71	18.44%
e)	Material is Not Available	82	21.29%

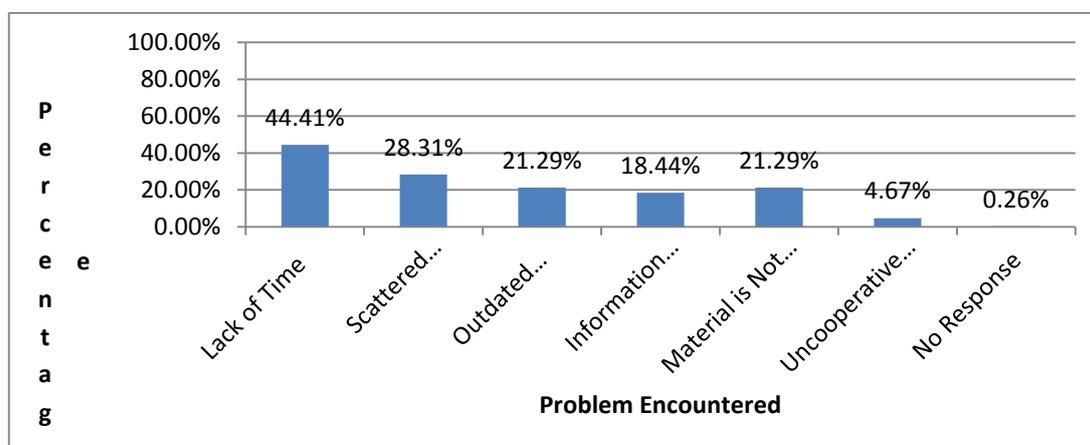|			
f)	Uncooperative Library Staff	18	4.67%
g)	No Response	1	0.26%

Figure 7 : Problems encountered in getting relevant information

It is observed that Lack of Time (44%) has been felt as the main reason for not getting relevant information by respondents. It is followed by other reasons like scattered information (28%), outdated information (21%), non availability of relevant material (21%), information overload (18%). A few respondents 5% feel uncooperative library staff is a hindrance in getting relevant information.

Q. 8. **Give Suggestions for Improvement in Library Sources and Services.**

In response to Question 8, one hundred and seventy nine (179) respondents (i.e. 46.50 % out of 385 responses received) gave suggestions. Since it was an open-ended question, it was quite difficult to tabulate and analyze the responses to this question. However, an attempt has been made to interpret and classify these responses into following four broad categories.

I. Improvement in Library Infrastructure

Most of the suggestions received fall into this category. Major suggestions given for improvement in library infrastructure are given below –

- Provision of photocopy facility – 31/179 (17.32%)
- Provision of Internet facility – 24/179 (13.41%)
- Provision of Air conditioning facility – 24/179 (13.41%)
- Provision of Close Circuit Camera- 10/179 (5.58%)

Other suggestions received under this category are –

- Provision of good reading room
- Provision of separate internet section
- Provision of departmental libraries

II. Improvement in Library sources –

- Availability of latest editions of Text Books – 34/179 (18.99%)
- Availability of Online sources/E-library – 22/179 (12.29%)

- Availability of more number of books on General knowledge, Current Affairs, Competitive Exams, Literature, Periodicals and Newspapers – 15/179 (8.37%)

Other suggestions include –
- Subscription to Programmes like N-LIST
- Availability of Research Papers/Journals
- Availability of Solved and Unsolved Question Papers.
- Availability of more number of course books and reference books.
- Availability of more books of foreign authors.
- Availability of more books in both English and Hindi medium.

III.   Improvement in Library Services –
- Proper arrangement of books subject wise.
- Library authorities should interact with students in order to know their demands.
- Maintenance of old books should be done.
- Provision of bibliographies on demand.
- There should be sufficient staff in every section to help and guide the users.
- Extension of library facility during exam time and vacation.
- Provision of peaceful environment.
- Open access should be provided in libraries.

IV.   General Suggestions
- Reference books/books by foreign authors should be issued to students – 17/179(9.5%)
- Issue of more books for longer period – 13/179 (7.26%)
- Training in the use of online resource – 5/179 (2.79%)

Other suggestions include –
- Publicity of Library resources and services – 5/179 (2.79%)
- Library period should be kept in time table.
- Notebooks and mobile phones should be allowed inside the library.

Conclusion:
From the findings of this study, following conclusions may be drawn:
Library building should be attractive with separate reading room and its ambience should be good, Air conditioning, photocopy and printing facilities need to be provided in all libraries. Library period should be kept in time table.

Library collection should be made up to date by getting new editions of existing books and getting books of new authors. Knowledge about free and open access (O.A.) resources should be given to library users so that they can make effective search strategies to satisfy their information needs. Automation of libraries should be done in order to manage the collections/services in a better way and avoid repetitive chores like circulation.

Separate internet sections/labs with multiple terminals should be set up in all colleges, so that students may access e-resources. High speed internet connectivity should be provided in these labs. Skilled staff should also be appointed to guide students. In fact, computer and library professionals should work in unison towards satisfaction of information requirements of users. E libraries should be set up in the colleges. A simple and cost effective way to do so is subscription to "National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content" (N-LIST), an initiative of INLIBNET and other such consortia. N-LIST alone provides access to more than 6,000 journals and 30,00,000+ e-books at a very nominal cost to more than 4,50,000 users of college libraries.

Suggestion boxes should be installed at the entrance of the libraries in order to receive constructive suggestions from the students and teachers. Suggestions of the users regarding their expectations from the library should be considered to know about their feedback and help them accordingly.Since internet facility is available to many of the users at home (60%), provision should be made for online and immediate transfer of required information.

Libraries should advertise and market their resources and services in a better way. In the beginning of each session user orientation programme should be organized for new students to familiarize them with various services offered by their library.

Our libraries should be more user- centric rather than being system and services- centric. Library users may be given importance which is due to them. Efforts must be made to perceive the information requirement of the users from their point of view. Continuous interaction with users is required to know their preferences and resources and facilities should be provided accordingly.

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