

INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF THE USER OF JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF WOMEN'S STUDIES : A SURVEY

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Abstract *This paper deals with information seeking behavior of women study women study, Jadavpur University. Many analysis shown in the paper . It is based on survey method.*

Keyword: *Library, Information, Seeking Behavior, Jadavpur University*

INTRODUCTION

The need and importance of information is manifold. It is a unique resource which has its special characteristics. It is essential to our existence and has a life of its own. The importance of information is manifested in research and development, in business and industry, in planning and policy making and in management and decision making. Information is communicated from an “origin” to a “recipient”. Access to information is an important factor, and especially so, in the light of Right to information.

INFORMATION : DEFINITIONS

Information is a term which is widely used in our daily life. It has been viewed differently by different people. To some it is knowledge, and for others it is commodity, power and for some it is a document. Information is a term which carries many meanings. Definitions of information often contradict one another and often fail to provide an adequate basis for its understanding. The term information is a very ambiguous term and used in different ways. There are three principal uses of the word information.

INFORMATION NEED

It is quite evident by now that information is vital to every individual – there is no aspect of person's life where information is not required. That there is such a thing as 'Information need' goes without saying. The problem (as

is the case with the term 'information') again lies in the difficulty of finding a proper definition. Crawford agrees that 'information need' is a difficult concept to define, to isolate and especially to measure. It involves a cognitive process, which may operate on different levels of consciousness, and hence may not be clear even to the inquirer himself. In order to understand the concept of 'information need,' one has to first define the term 'need'. But the use of terms like 'want', 'requirement,' 'demand' etc. to explain the term 'need' further complicates matters.

INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR

When a need felt for anything, more often than not, people take action in order to satisfy the need. Different strategies of modes of action are resorted to. The same applies for the satisfaction of information needs. An individual realizes that he needs information, he knows that in all probability the information will not come to him on its own, therefore he has to go about seeking it. What strategies or processes he resorts to, in order to satisfy the need for information, are the focus of study here.

Ching-Chih Chen has defined information seeking as follows, “Information seeking patterns are the paths pursued by the individual in the attempt to resolve a need.”

According to Girija Kumar, “Information seeking behaviour is mainly concerned with who needs what kind of information for what reasons; how information is found, evaluated and used.”

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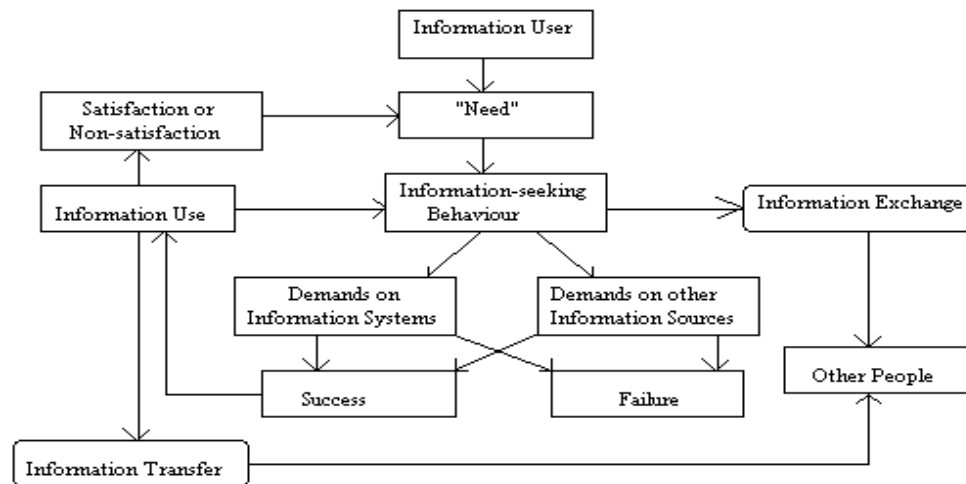


Figure 1: A model of information behaviour [Reproduced from Wilson, 1981]

T.D. Wilson defines what he calls ‘information behaviour’ as, “those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information.”

The phrase ‘Information seeking behaviour’ has been defined variously by different authors.

According to Krikels, information seeking behaviour refers to “any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need”.

Information Seeking Behaviour: How To Determine

Information seeking behaviour of the users is determined by the process called “user study”. A study which is focused to understand directly or indirectly their information need, use behaviour and use pattern is usually called user study.

User studies and surveys, that have been carried out so far are of various types. Menzel has grouped them all into a three main categories:

- a. **Behaviour studies**, which are conducted to find out the pattern of overall interaction of the users’ community with the communication system,
- b. **Use studies**, which are conducted to find out the use of any communication medium, such as primary periodicals, secondary periodicals etc., and
- c. **Information flow studies**, which are conducted to find out the pattern of flow of information in the communication system.

It is obvious that the ultimate objective of all such studies is to improve the effectiveness of information system. The present project work is basically a user study to know the information seeking behaviour of library users of School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University.

User

The user is the focal point of all information activities at all levels. The man, who come to the information centre or library for consultation and from it, by logical processes, determines the material he wants, is called user. In simple words, user as a person who uses one or more of the services provided by a library or information centre. It is a broad concept, which may include both producers as well as clients of information. In library and information science literature, a number of terms have been used to signify users. They are more or less synonyms, e.g. patron, client, member, customer.

Categories Of User

Users may be categorized from the point of view of their educational background, intellectual level, nature of work and need for information. Hence user may be grouped as the faculty members, in-house researchers, out-station researchers and students, students etc of School of Women’s Studies, Jadavpur University. Also user may be the ordinary citizen needing general information.

Another method of grouping users is on the basis of their approach to information. They can be classified as:

- i. the potential user – one who needs information which can be provided by specific services;
- ii. the expected user – one who is known to have the intention of using certain information services;
- iii. the actual user – one who has actually used and information service regardless of the fact whether he derived advantage from such a service or not; and
- iv. the beneficiary user – one who derives a measurable advantage from information services.

The present study deals with the users mainly faculty members, in-house researchers, out-station researchers and students of School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University.

Features of Information Seeking Process

Ellis, (1989) and Ellis, Cox and Hall (1993)- Ellis and Co. use the term 'features' rather than 'stages' in information seeking. The features according to them are:

- **Starting:** the means employed by the user to begin information seeking, for example, asking a knowledgeable colleague.
- **Chaining:** following footnotes and citation in known materials or forward chaining from known items through citation indexes.
- **Browsing:** semi-directed or semi-structured searching.
- **Differentiating:** using known differences in information sources as away of filtering the amount of information obtained.
- **Monitoring:** keeping up-to-date or current awareness searching.
- **Extracting:** selectively identifying relevant material in an information source.
- **Verifying:** checking the accuracy of the information.
- **Ending:** i.e. the tying up of loose ends through a final search.

JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY AND SCHOOL OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

Jadavpur University

Jadavpur University (JU) is an educational and research institution in India. It is located in Kolkata, West Bengal and comprises two campuses - the main campus at Jadavpur and the new campus at Salt Lake. Jadavpur University is also closely affiliated to leading research institutes like the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Indian Institute of Chemical Biology and the Central Glass and Ceramic Research Institute.

School of Women's Studies

School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University, established in January 1988, was one of the earliest in the country. It was included in the UGC women's studies programme in February 1989. It was designated a nodal centre in the Eastern Region during the ninth Plan period. The School remains the most widely known within the region and nationally. In the 1980s and 90s our chief concern was to integrate women's experiences, issues, problems and perspectives into other branches of knowledge. The attempt was not only to add a women's perspective but to transform traditional disciplines through considerations of gender. There are now teaching programmes in women's studies at the M.Phil and Ph.D levels, which require us to define the field, design curricula, devise new pedagogical strategies and develop teaching material. In these endeavors, the challenge is to retain both the critical edge and the interdisciplinary approach. In this School, the development of a feminist perspective goes hand in hand with attempts to empower women. A major objective of the school has been to promote dialogue between academics and activists. We seek linkages among research and extension work, we wish to enhance the visibility of women and gender issues within not only the academic community but also the wider society. We are working towards creating a platform for sensitizing government agencies, members of the academy and activists. Our focus is on Women's Studies both as a discipline and as a movement. The aim is a common one-to pursue a gender-just society.

M.Phil in Women's Studies

The M.Phil programme in Women's Studies has been the major academic/teaching activity carried out by the School since 2000. This was the first M.Phil in Women's Studies in the eastern region. A great deal of academic and administrative commitment and the cooperation of the city's entire Women's Studies community have gone into running the programme. The programme is run by the School of Women's Studies under the Faculty of Arts, Jadavpur University, with maximum of 15 students per year. It is a two-year programme (four semester), with on year teaching and a dissertation in the second year. It is a part-time programme and we try and accommodate those who wish to undertake it concurrently with full or part time employment. The course work involves two compulsory and two optional courses. The programme is interdisciplinary in nature. We accept students with a master's degree from any discipline, including medical sciences, physical sciences, technology and commerce. There is no age bar. The course is advertised along with other such courses of the university around April and admission tests are held in May-June. The semester cycles are August to December and January to May.

Ph.D in Women's Studies

The School of Women's Studies adopted a Ph.D programme in 2004. Students may register for a Ph.D in Women's Studies with any of the relevant faculty of the University. The student may choose a supervisor among the faculty of the University. The new regulations apply from June 2009. At present the School has 15 registered Ph.D students.

Women's Studies Research Forum

The forum has been in existence for more than five years now. The aim is to bring together researchers in women's studies for academic exchange and sharing of experiences. Formal lectures, seminar presentations and study groups are held intermittently under its banner. The School's own Ph.D students take the lead in organizing these meetings.

Refresher Course

The School conducts Refresher Courses under the aegis of the Academic Staff College, Jadavpur University, almost every year. These courses are usually oversubscribed, with participants from a wide variety of disciplines including humanities, social sciences, physical sciences and emerging interdisciplinary fields. Participants are drawn from all parts of the country. In 2010-2011, we propose to organize a refresher course on 'Women in Politics: Family, Community and the State'.

LIBRARY PROFILE

The School has a library and a reading room with audio-visual facilities extensively used by the students, scholars, faculty members from Kolkata and other places in the country. Our main aim is to collect materials relevant to the Indian situation and share these with other researchers, activists and NGOs in the field. We have already acquired a substantial collection of books and non-book materials, journals, pamphlets, reports, conference proceedings, occasional papers, posters, newspaper clippings etc. Along with the traditional card catalogue, a computerized on-line public access catalogue (OPAC) of the library is operational. This facility is available both on intranet and internet [<http://libtermsrv.jdvu.ac.in>].

Our book collection is divided into two parts and the main collection is housed at the Central Library of the University. We subscribe few journals which are not readily available in the vicinity, namely:

Facilities available for the reading room user:

- Lending service for faculty, research scholars, university staff and students of the School
- Reference service
- Bibliographic service
- Audio visual service
- Reprography
- Internet service and access to JU Digital Library Reprography
- The School now need a larger area of space to accommodate the increasing number of readers and documents and to provide better services.

On-line Public Access Catalogue

Along with the traditional card catalogue, a computerized On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) of the library is operational. This facility is available both on intranet [Libsys OPAC] and internet [<http://libtermsrv.jdvu.ac.in>].

Publications

The School has a vibrant publication programme, which includes the Women Writers Reprint Series, Newsletter, Occasional Papers, Memorial Lectures Print Series, Anthologies, Conference Volumes and Readers. One recent publication, *Ranjabati: A Dancer and Her World*, edited and introduced by Aishika Chakraborty. Kolkata; Thema, 2008, is the outcome of a short-term project by the School that sought to document the life and works of the famous dancer Ranjabati Sircar.

A few of the recent publications:

- Amar Khata (An autobiography). Indira Devi (2009)
- Nirbachito Rachana-samkalan (compilation of essays and stories)-Shantishudha Ghosh (2008)
- Ekal Jokhon Shuru Holo (A reminiscence)-Punyalata Chakraborty (2007)
- Scripting the Nation: Bengali Women's Writing, 1860s-1960s (Occasional Paper 9) - Anirban Das, Ritu Sen Chaudhuri, Jayeeta Bagchi (2009).

REPRESENTATION OF DATA

The survey/questionnaires were asked faculty members, In-house Researcher, Out-station Researcher, students of School of Women's Studies of Jadavpur University

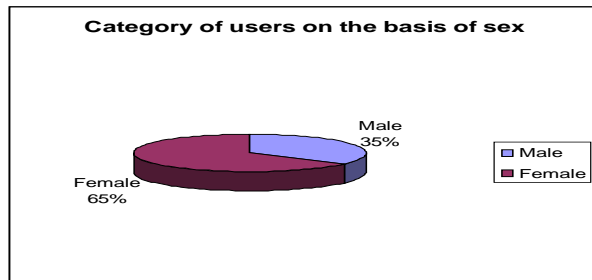


Figure 1: Category of users on the basis of sex

The Figure 1 show that more female user than male user. Number of Male user is 35% and Number of Female user is 65%.

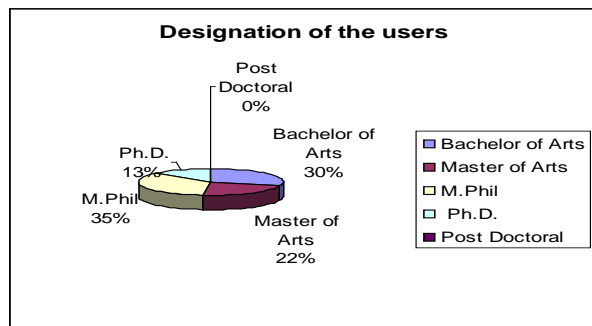


Figure 2: Designation of the users of the library

Figure 2 indicate that the total numbers of respondents are 100, among them 30% are studying Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), they are dominating percentage. Faculty are 8% in which 6% are Doctorate and In-house and Out-station researchers are 12% and 28% respectively.

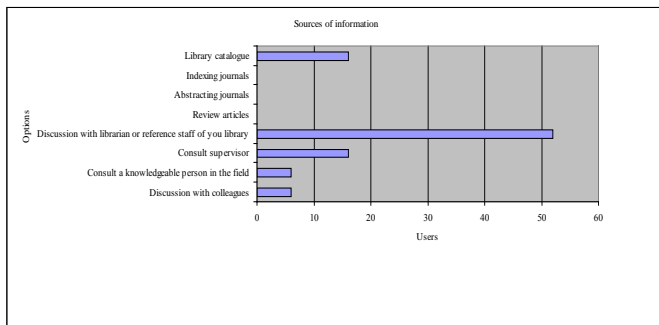


Figure 3: Sources of information

Figure 3 show that the method used by the users for sources of information. The total number of respondents is 100, among them 52% of the respondents discussed with librarian. 16% of the respondents consulted with their supervisor and another 16% of the respondents used library catalogue as their sources of information.

Figure 4 indicate the purpose of seeking information. The total number of respondents is 100, among them 59% respondents used information for writing and presenting papers and 20% respondents for doing research work, 13%

are for doing their thesis writing and 8% members sought information for preparing class lectures.

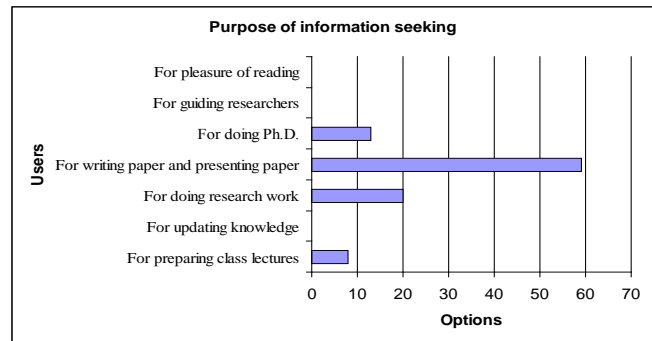


Figure 4: Purpose of information seeking

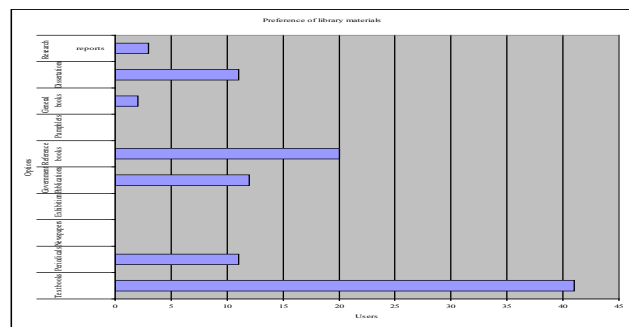


Figure 5: Preference of library materials

Figure 5 Bar Diagram represent the preference of library materials among users which they used to seek information. The total number of respondents is 100, among them, 41% respondents were preferred Text books i.e. the popular type of information source for all members. 20% respondents use Reference books, 12% respondents use Government Publications. Both Dissertation and Periodicals are used by 11% of respondents.

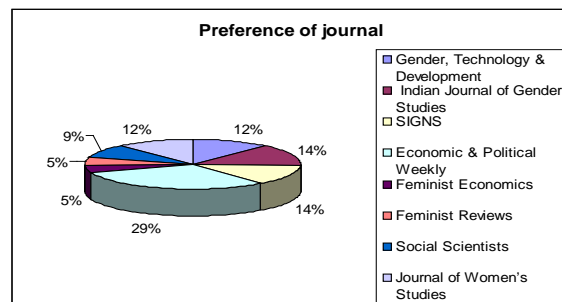


Figure 6: Preference of journal

Figure 6 Pie chart show the preference of journal of users. The total number of respondents is 100, among them 31% respondents prefer Economic & Political Weekly, 14% respondents prefer Indian Journal of Gender Studies and also SIGNS, 12% respondents prefer Gender, Technology & Development journal

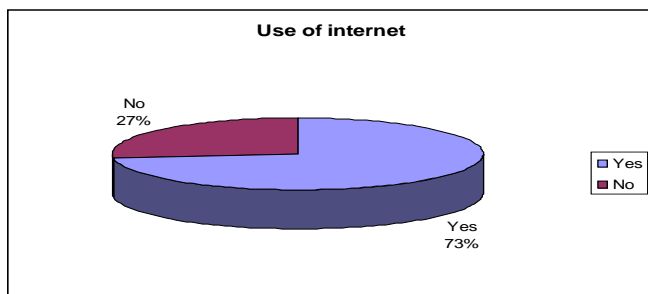


Figure 7: Use of internet by the user in the library

Figure 7 Pie chart indicate the use of internet by users. The total number of respondents is 100, among them 73% respondents use internet and 27% respondents are not use it.

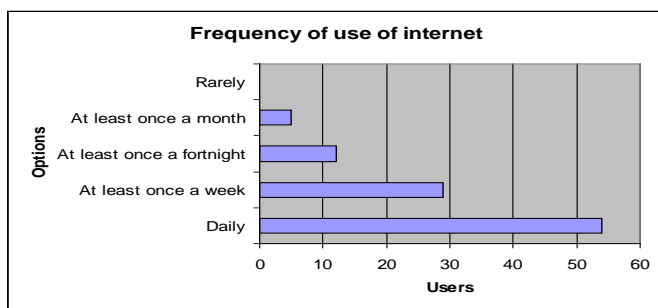


Figure 8 Frequency of use of internet by the user in the library

Figure 8 Bar diagram represent the frequency of use of internet by users. The total number of respondents is 100, among them majority of users i.e. 54% respondents use the internet daily and 5% of members use the internet at least once a week.

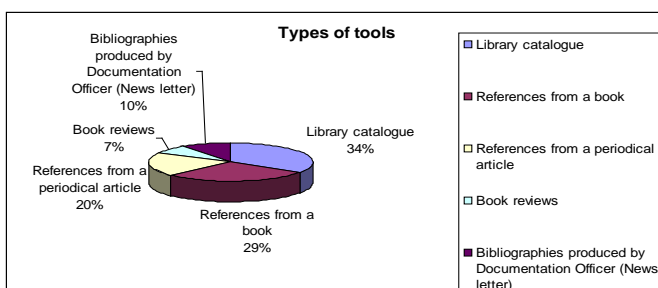


Figure 9 Types of tools

Figure 9 Pie chart indicate the types of tools used by the respondents. The total number of respondents is 100, among them 34% respondents use library catalogue as main information retrieval tool following reference from a book 29% as secondary information retrieval tool, 20% respondents use references from a periodical article and 10% use bibliographies produced by Documentation Officer.

CONCLUSIONS

The study reveals that consulting with experts in the subject field was the preferred method of getting information followed by the conversation with colleagues. Reference books were the most important resource for teaching. Consultation with knowledgeable persons or experts in the field was the most important source of information for the research. Most humanities teachers get information sources from their departmental library; they also maintain personal collections and/or personal libraries for this purpose. Most of the humanists prefer information in print, while they least prefer audiovisual material. Results of the study show that a majority of the humanists do their information-seeking activities at home. Meeting personally was the most-used channel of communication, followed by e-mail. Consulting with the subject experts was the most common method to keep abreast with current developments in their subject fields. Most search for information for their teaching preparation or lecturing, to guide researchers or students, and to support research. Unavailability of required material was the most common problem in Information-seeking.

In regard to information seeking behavior of users of School of Women’s Studies library of Jadavpur University in Kolkata, it is recommended that library staff or reference librarians could use their time in a better way by focusing on assisting users. Reference librarians should help users to improve their skills in information seeking activities and to find the different type of information they need. Librarians should also assist users in learning the use of OPAC, search engine, and e-mail and inform them of the web sites available through the various networks. Hence, the library must provide adequate ICT facilities for reference librarians, such as Internet, laser printers, scanners, fax machine, telephone, etc to offer various services in the library.

Although users have expressed sentiment concerning augmentation of periodicals available, it is also suggested to acquire printed journals and electronic journals. To know the available resources properly, orientation programs is necessary. Hence, it is suggested that advanced training for users at different levels should be started. Content of training programs should be (a) Basic introduction to library services and facilities; (b) Using OPAC; (c) Methods and tools for searching information resources; (d) Using the Internet; (e) Using online and CD-ROM databases; (t) Using electronic journals; (g) Introducing reference books; (h) Introducing audio/video materials; and (i) Introducing appropriate indexes and abstracts.

With regards to public relation, it is recommended that Jadavpur University Kolkata, should promote their activities through journal, bulletin board, and library web sites.

Library web sites can cover information about the library, its activities, collections, online databases and methods of access. It is also recommended to incorporate the news which is interesting to the users. Suggestions for future research are related to the limitation of this study. This study did not collect the data comprising the "home use". This study can be extended by directly observing students and teachers. Additionally, it would be interesting to investigate how people, who occasionally telecommute to work, make transitions in access to information between two different places. Another way to extend the studies finding would be to explore post-information seeking strategies and activities in a more detailed level by examining how people save, exchange, distribute, organize and provide web information after they find the information at home. Librarians should continue to monitor technology and lifestyle changes. Adoption of technology should be based on evidence that supports adoption; evidence that validates the information seeker's perspective.

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