Information-Seeking Behaviour and Library use Pattern of Research Scholars in Nagaland University, Lumami Campus

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to determine the information-seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars at Nagaland University Lumami Campus. The purpose of the study was to determine what their information requirement is and also determine their awareness of library services available to them. The study collected data on the information requirements of researchers. Data were collected from 49 researchers out of 70 through open and closed questionnaire. Findings indicate that guidance in the use of library resources and services is necessary to help researchers meet some of their information requirements.

Introduction

In library and Information science there is a substantial body of work addressing information-related behaviour. Today information plays a very important role in human kind's life and is considered as a resource. It also affects our personal and professional life needed by all for making decisions and required as other natural resources in our day to day activity.

Information is very important to every aspect of today's information society or human society. The process of information acquiring, using and implementing information are known as information-seeking behaviour. In the case of academicians, researchers and students it is even more important because they all need accurate and up-to-date information for their research need. Information-seeking behaviour is a broad term, it involves a set of actions taken by individuals or groups to show their information need, seeking information, check and select the information to fulfil their requirement or information needs. As Wilson describes- Information-seeking is a term describing the ways individuals seek, evaluate, select and use information. In the course of seeking new information, the individual may interact with different people, analogue tools and computer-based information systems.

The library is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. Librarians must be aware of the kind of information being sought and how it can be obtained. Because of the rapidly escalating cost of acquiring and archiving print journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services.

Technological advancements and innovations have changed today's libraries from store house to gateways of information. ICT has completely changed the scenario of traditional libraries and meaning of storage, preservation and dissemination.

Library System of Nagaland University Central Library, Lumami.

The central Library at Lumami was established in 1997 with the aim of serving the academic community in the best possible way. It covers a floor area of 1175 square metres. It is spacious, reader friendly and adequately furnished. The Library stocks printed books, journals, magazines, newspapers and provides access to electronic journals and databases. The Library system is fully automated with the use of integrated multi- user library management system and RFID technology.

Access to Online Resources:

The central Library is also a member of the e Shodh Sindhu Consortium and the DELCON Consortium through which a total of 2600+899 E-Journals' are being accessed. Access to these E-Journals is made available through the Campus Area Network.

ICT Facilities:

Computers: The Central Library Lumami provides computers with high speed internet access for users of the Library.

Library Automation:

The Library is automated using Software for Universities Libraries (SOUL 2.0) developed by INFLIBNET Centre, Gandhinagar. RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology has been introduced for enhanced security and library efficiency. Inventory control, check-in/check-out, stock reporting, access control, etc. are completely automated. Library users can issue/return books on their own, check due list and scan the Library OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue).

CCTV:

The Library is monitored through CCTV cameras installed at various locations.

Reprography and Digitization:

The Library provides reprography services and a digital scanning section is also maintained to digitize thesis and dissertations of the University.

Electronic Thesis:

Nagaland University is a contributing member of Shodhganga, the national portal for Electronic Thesis and Dissertation. As of date, 65 theses have been uploaded and are available online.

Institutional Repository:

A total of 40 Theses have been uploaded into the Institutional Repository using DSPACE. These are available on campus LAN.

Library Orientation Programme:

The Central Library conducts Library Orientation Programmes for PG students and Research Scholars. A week long user orientation programme is conducted on the first week of August every year.

User Orientation Programme:

User Orientation programme on the use of electronic resources provided under DELCON Consortium and UGC INFONET was conducted.

Significance of the Study

Although during the last decade references have been conducted in the area of information seeking behaviour and library use pattern in various disciplines, most notably psychology and Information Science, there are areas remaining in the literature that require further research. There is a need for more multi-disciplinary studies that links information behaviour and information literacy to achieve greater understanding of the factors influencing the information seeking behaviour of research scholars and not just the process itself. Kuhlthau (2008,p.66) emphasises the importance of this type of studies, innovative approaches to interaction between people and information are needed to bridge the divide between information behaviour, information literacy and impact of information in order to address the issues of the twenty-first century.

Electronic information resources are becoming the dominant environment within which information seeking takes place in the context of higher education. Consequently, the current relationship between the information seekers and digital resources is likely to continue (Wilson 2006,p.683). Research scholars engage in an intensive research oriented environment which requires keeping up-to-date with the latest developments in access to information resources. This study is the first in Nagaland which explores the factors influencing the information-seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars. This study triangulates both qualitative and quantitative approaches to overcome the short comings of each single technique and to obtain a more holistic picture of the information seeking behaviour of research scholars in various disciplines. There has been no recent holistic study on the information-seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars in Nagaland University.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

Aim:

To investigate the information-seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars within the context of Nagaland University, Lumami Campus and to explore, in particular, the factors influencing the pattern of such information seeking.

Objectives:

The objectives involved in achieving the aim were as follows;

i. To identify the information needs of research scholars necessary to fulfil their academic purposes (eg. course work, projects, thesis, and dissertations.)

ii. To explore research scholars' awareness and knowledge of the range of available information resources, particularly those online.

iii. To identify research scholars' perceptions of their information literacy skills.

iv. To explore research scholars' awareness of the library, and their comfort with using the library for their tasks.

v. To investigate the factors influencing the means by which research scholars seek information to satisfy their course work and research needs.

Methodology

The target populations in the study were research scholars (PhD) at Nagaland University Lumami campus. Survey method was used for data collection. A total of 70 questionnaires with open and close- ended questions on the information seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars were distributed randomly to respondents. Out of 70, 49 filled in questionnaires were returned by the users with the overall response rate 67%, 10 questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete information.

The data gained from the responses were analysed to understand research scholar's information seeking behaviour, information needs and the extent to which these needs have been fulfilled by the university library system and its services.

Disciplines (each encompass various programmes).	Total numbers of Research Scholars (for whom questionnaires were administrated).
Botany	10
Chemistry	10
Economics	10
Geography	10
Political science	10
Sociology	10
Zoology	10
Total	**70**
Response received	49 (Response Rate 67%)

Findings of the Study

This study produced a wealth of empirical data, which has been analysed in order to identify the factors that influence the information seeking behaviour and library use pattern of research scholars within an academic context. Logistic regression has revealed that a number of significant factors act as determinants of the patterns of research scholars' information seeking behaviour. These factors are related to the following intervening variables; library awareness, information literacy skills, cultural issues, and source characteristics. Conclusions in relation to these factors are explained below.

Library awareness:

- There is a general lack of awareness of what the library offers to research scholars, which leads to under-use of its resources.

- There is evidence of library anxiety symptoms displayed by research scholars, which hinders efficient utilisation of reliable information resources.

- There is a lack of communication between the academic library and research scholars.

Information Literacy Skills:

- There is a general lack of information literacy competence among research scholars.

- There is a general tendency among various disciplines to use information resources that require the least effort in using key words and search strategies.

- There is evidence of heavy reliance on personal contacts to find information as well as a dependency on search engines and web resources.

- There is evidence of limitations in research scholars' independent research skills.

Cultural Issues:

This study has revealed that possession of good English language skills was significantly and positively associated with the use of electronic journals when searching for information related to academic tasks. An implication of this is the need to ensure that research scholars in all disciplinary areas have sufficient levels of English Language Skills so that they Can properly utilise online information resources, most of which are printed in English. The study also highlighted censorship issues related to banning books and blocking web sites due to certain restrictions related to religion or politics. Such blocks according to participants, prevented research scholars from accessing materials they needed in their academic tasks.

Source Characteristics:

It emerged from the analyses that research scholars' search for information was hindered by technical problems with networks or computers, problems in accessing journal databases, and issues related to passwords. Other barriers are related to the lack of journal databases for specific subjects' areas. There is a general dissatisfaction with the current ICT resources and services.

The main conclusions from the findings relate to the following key issues;

- There is evidence of a lack of adequate personal computers and printers in the library as well as in academic departments.

- There is evidence of misuse of ICT in the library as was revealed by a majority of research scholars in the informal discussions.

- There is a lack of subject specific databases and of online resources concerning to their area of research. Researchers in general faced problems related to the lack of individual email accounts and the use of passwords for off-campus information retrieval.

Contributions of the study

This study comprehensively explores the information seeking behaviour of research scholars in Nagaland, which is a geographically remote state in the country.. In addition to exploring the patterns of their information-seeking behaviour, the study provides a wealth of data on factors that influence this behaviour. The study's conceptual framework could be the starting point for a deeper consideration and analysis of the key factors and barriers in the information-seeking behaviour of research scholars.

This study also provides a more comprehensive understanding of the information-seeking behaviour of research scholars in an academic context. Such an understanding would help educators and librarians establish information literacy strategies that correspond to the needs of students and the ways in which they seek information.

Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, further research is required in order to explore a number of related areas. These are presented below;

- Results presented are biased to information received from only the group of research scholars of Nagaland University under lumami campus.

- Only research scholars under Nagaland University lumami campus are used as samples for the study. Responses from this small set may not reflect entirely the current state of affairs of other campus.

- This study investigates only research scholars of Nagaland University under Lumami campus and the result arrived out of the study may fail to reflect the information seeking habits of other campus.

- Sample may be increased and refined to improve the results of the study.

- The conclusions arrived by this method are not final.

Concluding Remarks

By identifying the factors that influence the information-seeking behaviour of research scholars, this study has provided a wealth of information for stakeholders in higher education to utilise for developing strategies that would encourage research scholars to become more competent in their information-seeking patterns and that would enhance their information-searching skills. Eventually, this may contribute to helping research scholars become life-long independent critical thinkers. This, in turn, would promote research competency, improve the quality of Master's and Doctoral thesis, and increase the number of articles published by researchers at the Nagaland University, Lumami Campus. This would improve the quality of research at Nagaland University, an institution that, along with other universities in various parts of our country, still needs to strengthen its research foundations so that it can compete at the international level on a more equal footing.

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