

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Graduate Students at the Faculty of Applied Science

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0. Abstract

Information need and information seeking behavior are intertwined concepts. Information need is the motivation people think and feel to seek information, and information seeking behaviour is the process of information acquiring, using and implementing information. Libraries should ensure the educational and research needs of the students in order to address their needs. The overall objective was to determine information needs and information seeking behaviour of the graduate students and to identify the awareness of the library services available to them. The survey was conducted to collect data through questionnaire in this study. 125 graduates were selected by using stratified random sampling method from the faculty of Applied Science of the Vavuniya Campus. The response rate was 91%. The findings reveal that the majority of the students (85%) find the library adequately stocked in their areas of specialization and satisfied as those are more relevant to their academic programme. The awareness of e-resources availability and usage of graduate depict a considerable size (65%). The graduates mainly seek information for the purposes of exam (84%) and research (59%) from the library. They prefer to access e-resources (75%) than printed materials. The graduates satisfied with the library services (76%) in meeting their needs. It can be concluded that the most of the graduates are well versed in basic skills on how to use the library services and resources, and they are aware of the services the library can offer them. Library staff are expected to have periodical training programmes, computer networks should be developed to enhance e-resources usage and make access of e-resources available at students' hostels were recommended to implement for a successful library operation.

Keywords: *Information need, Information seeking behaviour, graduates, e-resources, Faculty of Applied Science.*

1. Introduction

Information needs is understood in information science as stemming from a vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contribute to understanding and meaning. Information seeking behaviour refers to the way people search for and utilize information. Information-seeking behavior includes "those activities a person may engage in when identifying their own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information" Wilson (2000). Information-seeking behavior as an individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating, and development Kakai, et al., (2004). Information-seeking behavior of students, researchers, and professionals has been the focus of enquiry for decades. Initially, however, user studies were conducted primarily to evaluate library collections. These were followed by studies of the research habits of individuals or groups that would lead to the design of appropriate information systems and services. In mid 1980s, the focus shifted to holistic approaches to information-seeking behavior. According to Line (2000), new studies of information users and their needs are even more necessary in the age of the Internet. Information-seeking behavior differs among user groups. Academic libraries must understand the information needs of faculty and students in order to address those needs. This study explores the information-seeking behavior of undergraduates at the Vavuniya Campus of the University of Jaffna.

2. Objectives of the Research

The general objective of the research is to study the information seeking behaviour of graduate students. The specific objectives are as follows:

- To determine information needs and information seeking behaviour of the graduate students.
- To identify the awareness of the library services available to the graduate students.

3. Problem Statement

In any educational or research institution, the library plays an important role. Academic libraries support the educational, teaching and research needs of the users. These libraries see their responsibility as

ensuring that the use of information sources, resources and services are maximized to benefit its users. Hence the need for assessment of user needs and information seeking behaviour of Faculty of Applied Science of the Vavuniya Campus graduates is necessitated.

4. Methodology

Survey research methodology used to determine the information needs and information seeking behaviour among graduates of the Faculty of Applied Science of the Vavuniya Campus. The total student population of the Campus is 527 graduates. Out of the 527, 125 graduates were selected from faculty of Applied Sciences by the adoption of stratified random sampling method. 114 graduates responded and their feedbacks were retrieved. The response rate was 91%. A structured questionnaire, personal interviews and participatory observation is designed for data collection. Materials and reports relevant in the library also used as secondary sources of information.

5. Discussion of findings

Information needs can be assessed by identifying the purpose of library visit and seeking of information, accessibility and usage of information, and satisfaction with the library services.

Table 1: Purpose of Library Visit (Adequacy and Relevancy)

Purpose	Respondent	%
Borrowing Text books	97	85%
Reading Magazines / Journal	59	52%
Reading Newspaper	58	51%
Digital Resources	74	65%
To study	58	51%

Table 1 shows the graduates visit Library for borrowing text books (85%), Reading Magazines / Journals (52%), Reading Newspapers and to study each (51%), and Digital Resources (65%).

Table 2 illustrate the considering the availability and usage of information to graduates, they show highly satisfied with text books. They give next priority for accessibility to newspapers then digital resources and magazine or journal respectively.

Table 2: Accessibility and usage of Information

Source	Satisfied	Satisfied %
Text books	98	86%
Magazines / Journal	59	52%
Newspaper	81	71%
Digital resources	72	63%

Table 3: Priority for Information Seeking

Purpose	Frequency	%
Exam Oriented	96	84%
Research oriented	67	59%
Knowledge Updating	34	30%
General reading	42	37%

Table 3 indicates that exam and research oriented information seeking seem the main purpose compared with other purpose of information seeking for knowledge updating and general reading.

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction of Library Services

Rating	Frequency	Satisfied %
Satisfied	87	76%
Less Satisfied	18	16%
Dissatisfied	09	08%
Total	114	100%

Table 4 shows the 76% of the respondents expressed total satisfaction, 16% saying that they are less satisfied and only 08% feeling dissatisfied.

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

Core responsibility of the graduates is studying and conducting research. The majority of the students (85%) use academic text books and they are satisfied (86%) with the available library books as those are more relevant to their academic programme. The awareness of e-resources availability and usage of graduate depict a considerable size (65%). The graduates mainly seek information for the purposes of exam (84%) and research (59%) from the library. Graduates stated that they have changed their information seeking behaviour. They prefer to access e-resources (75%) than printed materials. The graduates satisfied with the library services (76%) in meeting their needs. This study explains that short and long term strategies are needed in minimizing the shortcomings. Further, they feel insufficiency in relevant specific materials in their specialized subject areas (Technology related materials as this course was started recently) in the library. The most of the graduates are well versed in basic skills on how to use the library services and resources, and they are aware of the services the library can offer them. Therefore, the graduates perceive favourably with the available resources and services in the Vavuniya Campus Library.

It is recommended to hold awareness and continuous user education programmes, and training sessions to provide sufficient knowledge on modern library facilities especially there is a necessity to create awareness among graduates to use e-resources at maximum with the application of ICT in user services. Further, computer networks should be developed to enhance e-resources usage and make access of e-resources available at students' hostels too. To maximize the facilities and the library services, proper planning and management is imperative to increase the efficiency and to provide better services with the available resources. Extending the opening hours of libraries on weekdays and weekends were also suggested by the graduates to utilize the resources optimally. Actions have to be taken to purchase some materials of specialized areas as newly introduced in the curriculum.

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