Chapter 53
Information Seeking Behaviour in Changing ICT Environment:
A Study of Alagappa Chettiar College of Engineering and Technology, Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT

Information is all around us and is the staple diet of human beings. Information is variously perceived as facts, intelligence, data, news and knowledge. Information has been a common ingredient to all areas of human endeavor, be it the day-today affairs of business, matters of life and death or the most trivial of pursuits. In a modern industrial society there are negligibly few individuals, who do not, from time to time, occasionally or frequently have any requirement for information. It is an essential accompaniment of almost every social activity. Information is considered as important that contributes towards the development of a nation. It provides the core for the development of knowledge, the basis for innovations, the resources for informed citizenry, and as a result, becomes a key commodity for the progress of a society. This study carried out about the use of ICT services to search the information. It is clear that most of the respondents 84.9% use to browse the internet for study purpose, 76.9% of the respondents use ICT services to use e-mail facility, 59.3% respondents use for to search online database, 46.9% of the respondents use ICT services for to access e- journal, 30.1% of the respondents use ICT services for to search CD-ROM database and 29.2% of the respondents use to use OPAC services.. A few respondents use ICT for to scan/ print (29.2).

INTRODUCTION

Information is inevitable to almost all jobs and professions. The need to become informed and knowledgeable leads individuals to the process of "identifying information needs". However, this process alone cannot work without knowing the ways individuals articulate, seek, evaluate, select and finally use the required information, which is commonly known as "information-seeking behavior". According to Devadason and Lingam (1997), the understanding of information needs and information-seeking behavior of various professional groups is essential as it helps in the planning, implementation and operation of the information system and services in the given work settings. Therefore, the working environment and type of task performed by individuals shape their information needs and the ways they acquire, select and use this information. Several studies have shown a relationship between task complexity and information needs. Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) note that "work roles and tasks largely determine information needs, while a number of factors ultimately affect which sources and types of information are used in a given situation".

Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally use this information to satisfy his/her information needs. Various factors may determine the information seeking behaviour of an individual or a group of individuals. It is, therefore, desirable to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates, users' skills in identifying the needed information, channels and sources preferred for acquiring information, and barriers to information.

Adequate knowledge of the information needs of users is imperative for libraries in re-orienting their collections, services and activities to synchronise them with the information seeking behaviour of their patrons. Bandara (1993, p. 19) notes that "if the library is to provide any meaningful information service, the user [information seeking] habits should be taken into consideration". Since the 1940s, numerous studies have been conducted investigating different aspects of this topic. Earlier studies primarily focused on scientists and technologists to assist in building information resources and systems to effectively meet their information needs (Reneker, 1992). Hart (1993) has felt that earlier studies focused on scientists and engineers because of more interest in these libraries at that time and greater availability of funds. Later on, the scope of information seeking studies expanded to include scholars and academics from other disciplines.

According to T.D. Wilson (1999) the origin of the term information behaviour may be traced in 1948 in the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference when a number of papers on the information behaviour of scientists and technologists were presented. Over five decades thousands of papers and research reports have been published on user needs, information needs and information seeking behaviour.

The general adoption of quantitative methods from the early 1970's resulted in studies that have wider tradition of the investigation of human beahviour leading to the design of models of the study of information behaviour by Wilson, Dervin, Ellis, Kulthun and others.

Wilson's (1999) model is described as a macro model or a model of gross information seeking behaviour and it suggests how information needs arise and what may prevent the actual search for information. It also states that the information need in work roles will be different or that personal traits may inhibit or assist information seeking.

Ellis (1989 and 1993) has identified eight stages of information seeking behaviour. They are starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying and ending. Dervin (1983) has developed over a number of years a sense making theory on information

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