

INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour among Scientific Community in Digital Era: A Study of University Library Users at Assam state

The word “information” was apparently derived from the Latin stem of the nominative *informatio*, this noun is in its turn derived from the verb "informare". When the raw data is processed or value is added to it, data becomes information. Information is any kind of event that affects the state of a dynamic system. Conceptually, information is the message (utterance or expression) being conveyed. This concept has numerous other meanings in different contexts. Information may be further divided into two major types, such as informal information and formal information. Generally, information is a concept, an idea, a statement, a facts, news etc.

Assam consists of the most wide-ranging networks of higher educational institutions in the whole of North-Eastern region of India. Presence of institutions including the Indian Institute of Technology (Guwahati), National Institute of Technology (Silchar), Central Universities (Tezpur University, Tezpur and Assam University, Silchar), State Universities (Gauhati University, Guwahati and Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh), K.K. Handique State Open University (Guwahati), Hotel Management Institute, Law University and various affiliated/ provincialized or private colleges adds significant value to the educational system of Assam.

In the present era gathering of information has become more complex and expensive. The present century is treated as an era of information revolution and libraries are changing their face and migrating towards use of traditional and electronic information sources. The habits of library users are also changing as par their searching pattern for

making effective information searches. Academic library users, basically those who belong to scientific community plays an important role in developing a knowledge base and need recent information in the field continuously.

The purpose of this study is to examine the information needs and information seeking behaviour of university library user's especially scientific community of Assam in current environment and their use of information to support their process of inquiry and scholarly communication.

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the information needs of scientific community belong to university libraries of Assam;
- To understand the library visit and library usage pattern for gathering information by them;
- To examine the different factors which facilitate information searching pattern of the scientific community;
- To find out the Internet literacy and e-resource searching behaviour among scientific community belong to these universities;
- To identify the various channels through which information is accessed by them; and
- To examine the various problems faced by the scientific community for accessing information.

The present study has been designed for the scientific community university library users of Assam which comprises of post-graduate students, research scholars and faculty members. The area selected for the study is Assam state of Northeast India which consists of four (two central universities and two state universities) universities, viz. Assam University, Silchar; Tezpur University, Tezpur; Gauhati University, Guwahati and Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh.

Literature published during 1961- 2015 have been consulted from various sources such as journals, conference/seminar proceedings, e-journals, other articles from various academic websites, chapters in the edited volumes, etc. The present review has covered 217 (two hundred and seventeen) literature which are directly or indirectly related to the topic under study. A numbers of literature reviews were carried out to know the information seeking behavior and status of reader/ users. But due to the tremendous growth in the output of information, readers are unable to survey all the literature that is relevant to their field of expertise.

The present study has attempted to examine and understand the information needs and seeking behaviour of the scientific communities of Assam. The area of the study selected for the research is “Assam” state of Northeast India; which comprises of four universities (two central universities and state universities), These are:

- Assam University, Silchar (Central University);
- Gauhati University, Guwahati (State University);
- Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh (State University); and
- Tezpur University, Tezpur (Central University).

For this study, “Survey Method” of research was adopted to collect data from the scientific community library users of central and state universities of Assam; which consists of Assam University, Silchar; Gauhati University, Guwahati; Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh and Tezpur University, Tezpur. During the survey, respondents from various science departments were survey for the collection of data by using questionnaire from four universities under the study. The departments under the study consist of Computer Science, Geography, Engineering, Information Technology, Pharmaceutical Science, Earth Science, Botany, Zoology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Biotechnology and Petroleum Science.

While surveying the universities and collecting data from the individual scientists various techniques have been adopted. In this regards, “Stratified Random Sampling” technique was used in the case of data collection through questionnaire from the individual scientists in different stages. The following tools were used for collection of data pertaining to the present study: Questionnaire; which is followed by Interview-schedule; and Observation-method.

The finding of the study shows that the response rate of the returned questionnaire of this study has been recorded as 86.8 percent. The category wise responses show that majority of the respondents (36.7%) belong to “Students” category which is followed by “Research Scholars” category (32.2%) whereas rest of the respondents belong to “Faculty Members” category (31.1%). Gender-wise distribution shows that the percentage of male respondents (53.6%) is more than that of percentage of female respondents (46.4%).

Most of the respondents belong to younger age group which is due to large numbers of students and research scholar’s participation in this study. The finding of the study reveals that respondents belong to scientific community, generally think themselves as cold, creative and kind person. Further, they also feel themselves as slightly systematic and bold in nature. The study also shows that the respondents do not feel themselves as disorganized and complex in nature. But, the respondents are found to be confused while rating with philosophical characteristic.

It is also found that all the respondents visit their respective central or departmental library of their own university for accessing their required information. Further, most of the respondents (33.2%) visit library on daily basis whereas almost same numbers of respondents (23.6%) and (14.2%) does not visit library regularly and/or once in a month. It is also found that frequency of library visits by the faculty members is very less in comparison to students or research scholars. Further, frequency of library visit is much

higher among Tezpur University Library users in comparison to other university library users;

The study also shows that most of the respondents used library to consult reference/ printed books, printed journal or database, issue and return of the book and to get up-to-date information in general. Again, most of the respondents (44.9%) search information by using library OPAC which is followed by the respondents (23.8%) directly approaching to the book shelves for required material; whereas some respondents (21.5%) search information by taking help from LIS professional for accessing document;

While rating about the satisfaction level of library collection most of the respondents believe that documents such as “Text Book”, “Reference Book”, “Theses/ Dissertation”, “Journals”, “E-Resources”, “Online Resources”; are partially adequate to meet the requirements. Thus, they are not fully satisfied with the library collections;

Majority of the respondents (42.4%) preferred to search mostly over web/ Internet which is followed by some respondents (26.9%) who preferred to search by discussing the topics with friends/ peers/ colleagues/ teachers whereas few respondents (16.9%) start search from their library services. Further, sometime respondents (13.6%) also preferred to search by visiting from the local/ online book shop;

It is also observed from the study that most of the respondents generally use various documents such as “Online Resources”/ or “E-Resources” extremely. Further, majority of the respondents also use various documents such as “Text books”, “Reference books” and “Newspapers” very frequently. These leads to conclude that most of the respondents mainly either search by online/ e-resources and/ or they depend on text/ reference books to meet their required information. Moreover, it is observed that majority of the respondents generally use most of the time various channels such as “Internet/ Online Resource”, “Personal collection” and “Cable/ TV channels” very frequently for information search.

Further, majority of the respondents also use channel such as “Social Networking Site” most of the time for gather the required information.

Again, the scientific community university library users are well aware of Internet and extensively using Internet to access e-resource and others facilities. Again, most of the respondents (54.5 %) access Internet on daily basis, whereas only few respondents (12.8 %) access Internet very often.

E-resource searching pattern over web/ Internet has shown that majority of the respondents (48.0%), carried out search most of the time by “specific term/ Pin-point search” which is followed by (30.1%) respondents carried out search by “broad term” at most of the time whereas only few (18.2%) respondents carried out search by using “special characters”.

It is found from the study that most of the respondents faced extreme problem due to “lack of relevant document/ information over web”, “less no of subscribed journals in relevant field”, “non-availability of adequate material within library”, “inability to search document from library” and “lack of current awareness services”. These lead to conclude that most of the respondent mainly face problem due to improper collection development policy which leads to dissatisfaction toward library users. Again, since all the library users of this study belong to scientific community, so the needs of current trends/ information is highly essential for them. Moreover, searching the required document within library is also major problem face by them;

While suggesting for solutions of the problems, majority of the respondent (77.9%) suggests “to build adequate collection” as per their need which is followed by some (64.8%) of the respondents suggest to “introduce innovative practices in library services”, whereas almost equal (63.5%) numbers of respondents suggest to start “e-mail/ mobile alerts to provide information about new arrival” would leads to create awareness about a particular information;

Thus, to fill-up the gap between information with scientific community users; there is an urgent need for having an effective model to fulfill the needs of scientific community. In this regards, a new model is proposed keeping in view the changing scenarios of digital environment to fulfill the ultimate goal of the information needs, which would be known “Information Seeking Model for Scientific Community at Assam” (ISMSCA). It is further decided to the proposed a network; which would be known as “Library and Information System Network for Scientific Community of Assam” (LISNSCA). This LISNSCA and “Common Searchable Platform” (CSP) would work together to retrieved the required information of scientific community.

Thus, if implementation would be done on the proposed model, the Scientific Community under study would be in a position to get their desired information in the new environment. Therefore, fulfilling the needs of the user’s community would foster the academic and research pursuits which would be the contribution of the study towards the national development in general and Assam/North-East India in particularly.

Keywords: *Information Needs, Information Seeking Behaviour, Scientific Community, Digital Era, University Library, Library Users, Assam state.*

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