

Information Seeking Behavior of Faculty Members of Government College University, Lahore

Khurram Shahzad

GC University Lahore

Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to reveal the information seeking behavior of the faculty members of Government College University Lahore and to identify different attributes of information seeking behavior, (i.e., methods for keeping update, use of online databases and sources to seek information etc). An effort was also made to know the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) upon information seeking behavior.

The study was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, a comprehensive review of related literature was conducted to understand the theoretical and technical aspects of the study. In the second phase, instrument of questionnaire was developed for data collection with the help of reviewed literature. Response rate was found 72% due to personal relationships with faculty members. After the completion of data collection, the collected data were analyzed for interpretations by the researchers.

Findings of the study reveal that most of the respondents belong to the faculty of science and technology. Majority of the respondents used to converse with experts for seeking information. Respondents often used to seek information for teaching purposes. Respondents used electronic resources for seeking their specific pieces of information. They were pleased with the overall environment, staff and services of the Library although they mentioned some problems which they faced to seek their relevant information. The problems mentioned by the respondents indicate the need of formal training to use electronic resources for seeking information. Formal training will develop professional skills in respondents and satisfy their information needs. The faculty also showed interest in launching a special class of information literacy for the students of M.Phil/PhD to enhance their information searching skills.

Findings and recommendations of this study can be a helpful source in establishing a friendly environment between Information Seekers and Librarians which will promote the services of the academia of the University.

Introduction

The present age is called the 'age of information'. Information is very important element in the progress of human society. Life is very tough without information. Information makes a man able to accomplish his daily activities in an effective way.

The man who has to live in this modern era needs a variety of information. No matter how well versed he is in his field; information that is new to him is continually being recorded. He needs information to keep him aware of current developments in his field (Kumar, 2004). Information is the most crucial implement of human beings in this age. It is needed in the process of solving problems and making decisions. Information is not only the most important tool of man but it is also of his basic needs (Vickery, 1971). Information is considered to be a basic resource for national progress. It is available in traditional formats like books and journals and in modern packages like films, tapes, discs and computer files. Information plays a significant role in improving educational-standard and quality of research. It permits individuals, organizations and governments to take effective decisions. Information is regarded as a vital source indispensable to the progress of an individual and the society (Kawatra, 1994). Psacharopoulos (1982) has discussed that information is highly necessary in the

present age. The new society can reorganize the educational system and redefine scientific research only with the help of information. Bajpai (1999) has narrated that modern society has to depend on information for all of its activities. Every person has the requirement of information. Strong & Walker (1987) have discussed the value of information in an effective way. They have highlighted the need of information in a social context where several individuals have to converse with one-another through trade in securities. According to them, Information leaves a fruitful impact on the individuals and society. Information has become a commodity. Information has played a vital role in the lives of the people. It has upgraded their living style. Every one can get information about his business-matters while sitting at the home. Successful business depends on superior information. For a newly established firm, information is highly important. By accurate information, there remains minimum risk for getting failure in the market place. A business-man has to seek information to formulate goals of the enterprise. He has to seek information for achieving those goals. For every element of the enterprise, information plays a significant role (Neelameghan, 1992; Perry, 1999; Sweeney, 1928).

Nighat (1975) investigated the information needs of scientists working in the Oils, Fats and Waxes Division of the PCSIR Laboratories at Lahore using personal interview. Out of 38 scientists of the Division, 35 (92%) participated in the study. The findings of the study indicated that participants used both formal and informal sources of information, they scanned scientific literature especially current journals, they spent nine hours per week on reading and they maintained their own files of off-prints and other materials for their personal use. Bashir (1975) conducted an investigation of the information needs of veterinary surgeons working in the district veterinary hospitals of the Punjab. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 16 respondents. Findings of the study exposed that respondents had no access to their specific material and they were unable to keep themselves up to date in their profession. The study recommended that library should be facilitated with current material to fulfill the information needs of surgeons.

Parvez (1975) carried a study on the information needs of dental surgeons working in the Dental College and Hospitals of Lahore. The findings of the study indicated that respondents needed information for keeping themselves up to date (68%), they required information to learn about medicines and techniques (48%), sought information for solving problems faced in daily practice (28%) and consultation with colleagues was a major source of information (80%). Afza (1975) did work to know the information needs of scientists in Pakistan. Research was conducted to find out the ways by which scientists got information, efforts which they made in this regard, to know about the sources, they used and problems they did face. Survey method was used and data was collected by means of interviews. The research showed that the most frequently used of all the sources were journals. The scientists also maintained card file index for their personal use. The scientists also read scientific literature. The conversation with colleagues was a valuable source for getting information by scientists. They wished to fulfill their information needs by the library.

Gureja (1975) worked on the information needs of newspaper editors. An effort was made to find the information needs of editors in relation to their daily job and also in regard to keeping themselves up to date in their subject area and to know how did the editors obtain the required information, what different sources they used and which problems were faced by them. Survey method was used for this study. The study showed that majority of the respondents used reference tools specially dictionaries. For meeting their information needs, government reports were used 66.67%. News paper files were consulted 53.33%. Hand books were read 40 percent. Gazetteers and directories were used 36.67 percent. Abstracts were used 30 percent and indexes 23.33 percent.

Jonathan (1975) worked on the information needs of the senior population planning officers of the Punjab. The basic aim was to know the information requirements of the officers and problems which they did face to get them. Survey method was employed to get the required information and a questionnaire was designed for this aim. The study showed that the basic information needs of the

senior population planning officers were of reading material required in connection with their training and supervisory work. Majority had their own personal collection to meet their information needs. Films were found to be the most effective publicity material for propagation of the family planning programme. Most of the participants mentioned that they were not at all satisfied with the services of the library.

An investigation of the information needs of Pakistan Television news producers was conducted by Butt (1975) using a questionnaire. Major findings of the study exposed that a large majority of the respondents (95%) used radio, press releases, official notifications, news received from PPI, newspapers, foreign journals and professional books as sources of information. The study also revealed that respondents lacked qualified librarians. Bokhari (1976) worked to know the information needs of the engineers of heavy mechanical complex Taxila. The main purpose of this study was to provide relevant data to engineers about their work. The researcher made an effort to know, what were the information needs of the engineers and how they could be met. Survey method was used for this study and an interview schedule was made. The study showed that participants consulted both formal and informal sources to meet their information needs. Majority of them attended workshops to get current knowledge in their field. The main problem of them was about the poor services of the library. The study recommended that library facilities should be improved and number of journals should be increased.

Parveen (1976) has worked on the information needs of teachers and research staff working in the social sciences department of university of the Punjab, Lahore. The main aims of the study were to know the information needs of teachers and research staff, know the methods which they used to get information and problems which they faced while seeking information. The technique of questionnaire was used to know their information needs. The study showed that teachers required information mostly for teaching purposes and they used both formal and informal sources. To get their information needs, more than half of the respondents consulted current journals. 45% respondents consulted bibliographies. Other sources of fulfilling the needs were abstracts, books, reviews, books conferences, proceedings and library catalogues. Fazl (1976) carried a study to know the information needs of teachers. Following were the major aims of this study a) how they obtained the required information? b) what efforts were made by them in this regard? c) what different sources did they consult? and d) which problems were faced by them?. Survey method was used for this study and a questionnaire was distributed among the teachers. According to the results, for the preparation of class lectures teachers only consulted textbooks. The main sources of obtaining new ideas for information were current journals, latest books, news magazines, research reports and conference proceedings. Majority of the teachers were unable to find relevant material. The library-services were not effective. The study recommended that library services should be made better.

Siddique (1976) researched on the information needs of chemists. The main objectives of this study were to know about the kind of information which was helpful in their research, the sources of information which they did use and to what extent they faced the problems. Survey method was used for this study and technique of questionnaire was employed. The study showed that current periodicals were frequently used by the respondents. Abstracts were used by them for research work. Only 51% respondents were satisfied with library. Chaudhary (1977) worked on the information needs of science teachers. The eminent aims of this study were to know the information needs of science teachers of Punjab University, know about the amount of time which they spent on different activities, the methods which they did use for seeking information and to take the view of the services of the library. Survey method was chosen for this study and the techniques of questionnaires and interview were employed. The study did show that science teachers made the use of textbooks 94.2 percent and current journals 42.3 percent. To keep themselves up to date, they usually consulted journals. To satisfy the need for specific piece information, the respondents usually used general books of the

subject field. They used original published articles 62 percent and abstract 45 percent. Majority of the teachers spent five hours in a week on reading current literature. 63.33 respondents were not satisfied with the services of the library.

Mujahid (1977) investigated the information needs of the science faculty members of the University of the Punjab, Lahore. The study was conducted using both a questionnaire and an interview for gathering additional data. Out of 108 respondents, 104 respondents (96.29%) provided the data. The findings of the study exposed that respondents made the use of abstracts to search a specific pieces of information (74.15%), participants made heavy use of informal channels of information exchange such as conferences (69%) and a majority of the respondents (63.33%) was not satisfied with the services of the library. Anjum (1978) investigated the information needs of the humanities faculty members of the University of the Punjab using a questionnaire supplemented by selected interviews. Thirty-eight (88.37%) out of 43 respondents returned the questionnaire. Major findings of the study indicated that scholars of humanities were less interested in informal sources of information. Most of the respondents (68.42%) were actively engaged in research and used print and electronic resources. A large number of the respondents (80.9%) possessed reasonably good personal collections.

Significance of the Problem

Information seeking is a natural and crucial mechanism of human existence. Today, information technology has developed rapidly and has had a huge impact on access to information and information seeking behavior. Not a single survey or any kind of study has been conducted to reveal the information seeking behavior of faculty members of GCU, Lahore. So this problem is quite significant to be considered for research. The study will focus on information seeking behavior of teachers, their feelings about the procedure of searching information, impact of information technology on their information seeking behavior, the most frequently used sources of information and search engines, the use of electronic databases, preferred language for reading material and problems being faced during the information seeking process.

Goals of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To explore the information seeking behavior of faculty members of Government College University, Lahore.
2. To determine the frequently used information sources by the faculty members.
3. To study the problems faced by faculty members while seeking information.
4. To furnish some suggestions in this regard.

Research Method

It is a social research that is usually based on interviews, questionnaires and personal visits. The purpose of this study is to know about information seeking behavior of faculty members of GCU and methods used for seeking information, the most frequently used information sources, impact of information technology on their information seeking behavior and problems being faced by them in the information seeking process. The study was conducted in four phases. In the first phase, a comprehensive review of related literature was conducted to understand technical and theoretical aspects of this study. In the second phase, with the help of reviewed literature, a comprehensive questionnaire was developed and data were collected. In the third phase, collected data were then analyzed and interpreted to draw conclusions. In the final phase, conclusions were drawn and recommendations were made on the basis of acquired results.

Population and Sampling

All the faculty members of Science & Technology, Social Sciences, and Arts & Humanities were considered as population. The sample of the study was consisting on fulltime faculty members of GCU, which were 225 in total. For getting the clear picture of information seeking behavior of GCU faculty members, all 225 faculty members were selected as a sample of study. Their names and designation details were acquired from GCU website.

Survey Instrument

To answer the following research questions of the study i.e., a) Why information is sought by faculty members? b) What methods are used to seek information? c) What is the impact of information technology on information seeking behavior? d) Which are the most frequently used information sources? e) What are the problems faced by the faculty members to in information seeking process? a comprehensive questionnaire was designed. The questionnaire contained many close ended and one open ended questions. In constructing the questionnaire, help was taken from the website of Government College University for getting basic information about faculty members i.e., their names, designations and academic departments. A list of online data bases was also taken from the website. Four parts of the questionnaires were designed by the researcher with the help of experts. First part included personal information of respondents, second part was about the information seeking behavior, third part was about the impact of information & communication technologies on information seeking behavior and the fourth part was about problems encountered during information seeking process.

Data Analysis and Discussion

After the completion of data collection, the collected data were analyzed and tabulated for interpretations by the researcher. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Version 10.0.

Participants' Designation

A total of 163 teachers participated in this study. Acquired results show that majority of the participants were lecturers which were 82 (50.3%) in number. Twenty seven (16.6%) respondents were the assistant professors, 29 (17.8%) professors, while 25 (15.3%) were the associate professors.

Respondents' Publications

Respondents were asked to mention the numbers of books which they had got published in their subject fields. Acquired results show that majority of the respondents (Frequency=148, 90.8%) had not published any book, seven (4.3%) respondents had published two books, three (2%) had published three books and 2 (1.2%) had published four books.

Respondents' Research Papers

Respondents were also asked about the research papers which they had got published in their subject field. The acquired results highlight that majority of the respondents (Frequency=141, 86.5%) had not worked on research papers, eleven (6.7%) respondents had published research papers from one to five, three (1.8%) from six to ten, three (2%) had published more than 30 research papers while 2 (1.2%) respondents from 11 to 20 and 21 to 30.

Respondent were asked to mention such information seeking habits which were relevant to their study. Acquired results show that 156 (95.7%) respondents were using experts located outside the university, 140 (85.9%) were using conversation with co-workers in the university, 45 (90%) were using articles and books, 37 (74%) were attending conferences for this purpose, 34 (68%) were using

the titles of journals, 32 (64%) were using e-mail to communicate to their co-workers and experts and consulting electronic databases to locate their relevant information while 25 (50%) respondents were using discussion lists and e-mail alerts for this purpose.

Respondents' Methods to Access Information

Respondents were asked to choose such methods of getting information which they used to fulfill urgent need for some information. According to the acquired results, 136 (83.4%) respondents were using electronic resources, when they had urgent need of information, 54 (33.1%) were consulting reports, 52 (31.9%) were using their personal collection, 48 (29.4%) were using directories, 34 (20.9%) were using library and 27 (16.6%) were preferring discussions with experts to fulfill their information needs.

Respondents' Use of Electronic Journals

Respondents were provided a list of online databases and they were asked to choose the databases which they had used during the last six months. According to the results, 126 (77.3%) respondents used JSTORE, 51 (31.3%) Tylor & Francis, 38 (23.3%) APS Journals, 37 (22.7%), Cambridge University Press, 34 (20.9%) Elsevier, 32 (19.6%) Project Muse, 28 (17.2%) Science Online, 24 (14.7%) ACS Publications, 20 (12.3%) IOP, 18 (11%) American Association of Physics Teachers, 18 (11%) AIP, 16 (9.8%) American Mathematical Society, 13 (8%) IEEE Explore, 12 (7.4%) Edenburg University Press, five (3.1%) Nature publishing, three (1.8%) Emerald insight while one (0.6%) used Association of Computing Machinery.

Respondents' Opinion About Information Communication Technologies

Respondents were asked to mention different Information Communication Technologies, which they were using for seeking information. According to the acquired results, 134 (82.2%) respondents were using internet search engines for seeking information, 50 (30.7%) were using online chatting, 21 (12.9%) were using telephone, 11 (6.7%) atmospheric communication, five (3.1%) teleconferencing and 4 (2.5%) respondents were using e-mail for this purpose.

Findings

According to the acquired responses, the teachers were using a variety of sources in order to meet their information needs. Many teachers used to converse with experts for fulfilling their information needs. Majority of the respondents use electronic resources for seeking their specific information. JSTORE is the most frequently used online database. Respondents used to prefer English for reading material. They were agree that library provides access to information sources. Most respondents were visiting the library to use reference material. Respondents often used to seek information for preparation of class lectures and for improving personal competencies. Respondent were facing the problems of information overload and lack of technical support in using electronic resources.

Conclusions

Following conclusions are based on the literature and findings of the study:

- The teachers were using a variety of sources in order to meet their information needs.
- Many teachers used to converse with experts for fulfilling their information needs.
- Majority of the respondents were using electronic resources for seeking their specific information.
- JSTORE is the most frequently used online database.
- Respondents used to prefer English for reading material.

- Internet search engines were extensively used by the respondents such as Google.
- Most Respondents have received formal training in use of online resources.
- Respondents were agreed that library provides access to information sources and library staff is knowledgeable and competent in ICT skills.
- Most respondents used to visit the library for reference material. They often used to seek information for preparation of class lectures and for improving personal competencies.
- Most of the time, the respondents used to get information sources from HEC online databases.
- Respondents were using both formal and informal sources to meet their information needs. They used to spend more time in internet searching and give preference to electronic format and original research papers.
- Respondent were facing the problems of information overload and lack of technical support in using electronic resources.
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Recommendations

Following recommendations are made for the improvement of information services on the basis of conclusions of the study:

- Adequate training should be provided to the teachers in the use online resources.
- Librarians should assist them in their information seeking process.
- User friendly services should be designed by keeping the users' information seeking behavior and pattern in view.
- The University should start information literacy programs for the teachers.
- In order to make sure the availability of urgently needed reading material ILL arrangements should be made with other libraries.
- Respondents' demands for information sources must be recorded in order to improve existing services of the library.
- Attentions must be given to acquire more current print references sources to fulfill the information needs of the teachers.
- More seminars/ workshops must be conducted to find out the teachers' experiences and views about procedure of information seeking.
- Respondent must be provided the list of different search engines and other online sources in order to meet their information needs.
- Respondents must be taught current methods for searching information.
- Internet facility and its training must be provided to every teacher.
- Faculty Members must be taught the use of British Library Document Delivery Service.
- The teachers should be taught as how to be benefited by DELNET and World Digital Library (WDL).
- The subject of LIS should be introduced at Hons. Level to promote information literacy instruction in the University.

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