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Sk. Mamun Mostofa
sk_mostofa@yahoo.com

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Sk. Mamun Mostofa
Lecturer
Deparment of Information Science and Library Management
University of Dhaka.

A Study of Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Faculty Members of Darul Ihsan University in Bangladesh.

Abstract

This article focuses on how electronic information resources influence the information-seeking process in the different faculty members of Darul Ihsan University. The study was conducted at Darul Ihsan University (DIU), the first private university in Bangladesh. Teachers of various faculty members were interviewed about their use of electronic information resources for research purposes, their perception of electronic and print materials and the problems faced by the faculty members during information search. The statistical population is all members of faculty of Darul Ihsan University, Dhanmondi Dhaka. In order to make samples, given to the limitation of the statistical population, based on the tools for gathering data some questionnaires including 26 open and closed questions set in accordance with the survey's critical queries.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behavior, Members of Faculty, Darul Ihsan University, Information Needs

Objectives

The main goals of the present research are to discover, investigate and determine the information seeking behavior of the members of faculty of the Darul Ihsan University. Also the other aims of this study are as follows:

1. To specify the Purposes of information searching by the faculty members of Darul Ihsan University.

2. To find out the preferred information sources for finding general information.

3. To identify the roles that electronic information resources play in the faculty members of Darul Ihsan University for information seeking behavior.

4. The Channels that the faculty members of Darul Ihsan University used for information needs and seeking behavior.

5. Places are preferred by the faculty members of Darul Ihsan University.

6. To find the obstacles and problems in information seeking process to which the members of faculty encounter.

Introduction

We are living in the information age. The term “Information Age” has been used to represent the impacts of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) on every aspect of life. Baby, et al (2000) has mentioned that twentieth century witnessed an “information explosion” owing to the exponential growth of printed material every minute at the global level. The growth rate of publication is greater in science and technology than that of social sciences. The term Information explosion describes the rapidly increasing amount of published information and the effects of this abundance of data. As the amount of available data grows, the problem of managing the information becomes more difficult, which can lead to information overload. Information overload refers to the state of having too much information to make a decision or remain informed about a topic.

This information explosion and information overload gave the birth to the concept of studying the information needs and seeking behaviors of different groups of users. Information need is an individual or group's desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious or unconscious need . As Sharma (1992) and Vickery (n.d.) has stated that understanding the user is the half battle in providing information-services. The key operation is to select from the store the information needed by a particular user at a particular time. The concept of “information behavior” was coined in the late 1990s, but it traces its roots to the concept of “information needs and uses” that arose in the 1960s. There has been a gradual shift in the focus of information behavior research from a system orientation to a user orientation. At the end of 1970's and in the beginning of 1980's researchers began to realize that questions in information needs, seeking and use couldn't been seen only from he systems point of view. The user of the information and his/her needs came into focus and research in cognitive science was applied in the studies.

The new view was called the new paradigm or the cognitive view. The origins of human information seeking behavior are found in the work on the users of libraries and in readership studies in general. The post-war increase in the amount of scientific literature which was either newly published or recently released from war-time restrictions led, in 1948, to the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference, which marks the beginning of the modern study of human information seeking behavior. However, the subject goes rather further back in time. [1]

History of Darul Ihsan University

Darul Ihsan University (DIU) is the first private university in Bangladesh established in 1989 by Darul Ihsan Trust (DIT). It obtained formal approval from the Government of Bangladesh in 1993 under the Private University Act 1992. The University, a brainchild of Late Professor Syed Ali Ashraf (Who was also its founder Vice-Chancellor), is a Unique Academic establishment, the only one of its kind in the country, modern in outlook but faith-based in philosophy. [2]

Research Design and Data Collection

The study is based on the questionnaire survey, prepared after reviewing the related literature. The questionnaire was containing both open and close ended questions. Respondents included only the faculty members of Darul Ihsan University. A questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed questions was prepared and sent the 23 faculty members of Darul Ihsan University.

Faculty members were requested to take part in the survey from the seven departments selected randomly for the purpose of collecting the data. The list of the departments is as follows: Computer Science and Engineering, English Language and Literature, Islamic Studies and Dawah, Institute of Business Studies, Law, Education and Library & Information Science. These were selected from three faculties: Faculty of Arts,Faculty of Natural Sciences and Faculty of Human Sciences.

The responses received from twenty three faculty members. The responses received from sixteen Lecturers, four Assistant Professors, one Associate Professors and two Professors. The questionnaires were distributed by the faculty members through the researcher himself to ensure the reliability of the research.

Back ground and concept of information needs and seeking behavior

Information is needed because it affects people's lives. People need information toobtain answers to specific questions.Information needs arise when a person recognizes a gap in his/her state of knowledge and wishes to resolve that anomaly- an anomalous state of knowledge, as one commentator puts it .Information represents an ordered reality about the nature of the world people live in. It is a cognitive experience that represents gaps in the current knowledge of information users. An information need is inherently subjective and occurs only in the mind ofseeker, making all the approaches problematic. A need is a psychological construct,closely related to other constructs such as motivations, beliefs and values. Needs cannot be observed by a researcher or librarian much less by an automated "intelligent agent".Only indicators or signs of needs are observable.[3]The term information seeking behavior has been used in the research literature since the 1950's . Thereafter it took several decades for the subject to be presented as a major field of study. Some of the most important studies of information behavior include: Ellis' behavioral model of information searching strategies, Kuhlthau's information search process, and Wilson's problem-solving model.[4]

Information seeking behavior refers to those activities a person engages in when identifying his or her own need for information, searching for such information in any way and using or transferring of information. Information behavior is the totality of human behavior in relation to the sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use. Thus it includes face to face and online communication with others as well as the passive reception of information. Information seeking behavior involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, for example encyclopedias, journals and more currently, electronic media. Abels (2004) mentioned that the frequency of use of the 'internet' in 1998 to 2000 had greatly increased. At the same time, expenditures on monographs showed steady increase. The library, therefore, is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. The librarian should be aware of what kind of information is being sought and how it can be obtained. Due to the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving printed scholarly journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services.[5]

Literature Review

A study of Brazilian social sciences researchers found that, although print resources are still the most frequently used, electronic resources are becoming increasingly popular. Access to networked computers is the main obstacle to the use of databases and other electronic resources. [6]

Hannah Francis focused on a study that described the information seeking behavior of social sciences faculty at the University of the West Indies (UWI). One of this 2005 study's findings was that social scientists prefer journal articles in electronic format over print. [7]

David Ellis and Hanna Oldman's study explored the information-seeking behavior of researchers in the field of English literature at British universities. The article concluded with recommendations for further study of the use of electronic resources in relation to information literacy and browsing. [8]

Stephen E. Wiberley, Jr. and William G. Jones revealed that temporal factors have a significant impact on humanists' adoption of electronic information technology and identified and described four types of time intervals that influence humanists' behavior. Three are types of time spent: anticipated start-up time, actual start-up time, and use time; the fourth is time of life: that is, the stage or trajectory of a scholar's project or career. [9]

Susana Romanos de Tiratel investigated the information seeking behavior of Argentine humanities and social sciences scholars in 2000, and found no substantial differences between them, concluding they share similar information-seeking behaviors. [10]

Suriya, Sangeetha and Nambi (2004) carried out a research on information seeking behavior of faculty members from Government Arts Colleges in Cuddalore District. The purpose of their study was to investigate, how faculty members seek information from the library. It was concluded that most of the respondents 61 (38.12 percent) used to visit the library several times a week to meet their information needs. Regarding the type of search made by the respondents, majority of the respondents (57%) made their search by subject. [11]

Shahzad (2007) conducted a survey to find out the information-seeking behavior of faculty members from all three faculties, i.e., science and technology, social sciences, and humanities of Government College University, Lahore. The information needs of humanities teachers at the University of the Punjab were studied by Anjum in 1978. [12]

Shokeen and Kushik (2002) report on a study about information seeking behaviour of social scientists in the universities of Haryana. The study showed that most of the social scientists visit the library daily. The preferred search tools were indexing and abstracting periodicals and citations in articles. Current journals and books were preferred sources of information. [13]

The information-seeking activities of 31 faculties at Stanford University were studied by Reneker (1992). Using a naturalistic approach and qualitative techniques for the data collection, mainly personal

interviews, the study found a close relationship between knowledge of the information environment and the sources used. [14]

Data Analysis

Figure-1: Respondents' profile

In total 23 respondents responded against the questionnaire, of which 14 (60.9 %) were male and 09 (39.1%) were female (Figure-1).

Frequency Distribution of Respondent's Gender

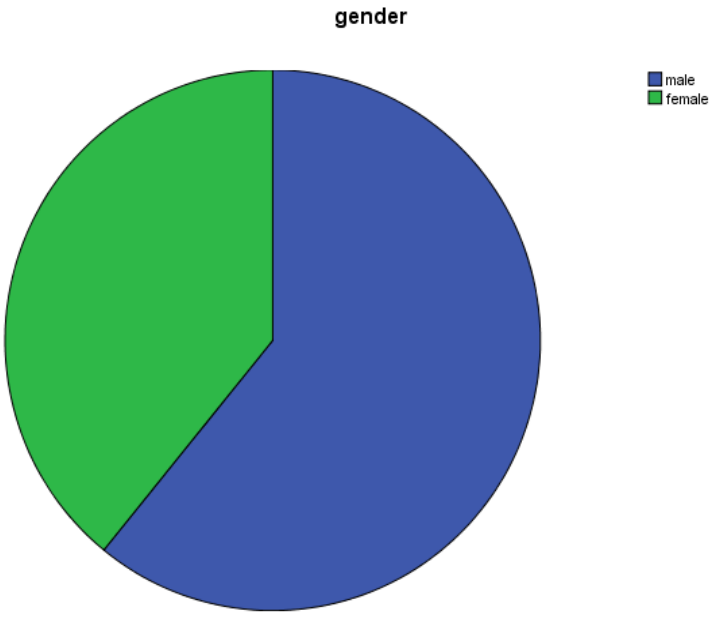

Figure-2: Age of the faculty members

From the figure-2, it shows that the maximum faculty member's age range is thirty to thirty-nine years (52.2%) and 21.2% respondent's age range is 20years to 29 years, 40-49 years and rest 4.3% age range is above 49 years.

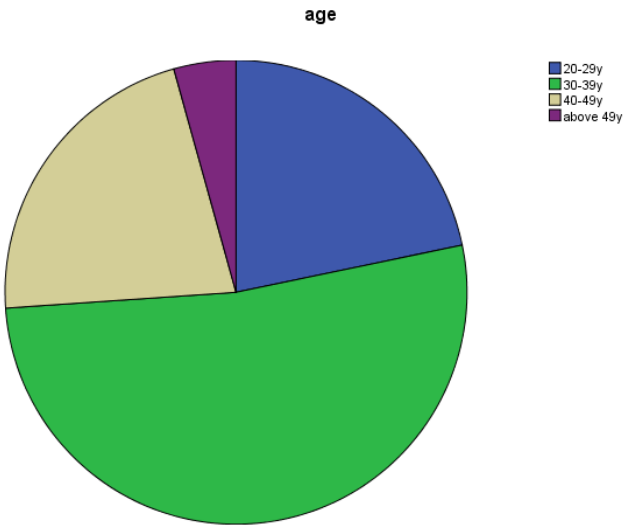

Figure-3: Teaching experience of the faculty members

From the figure it clearly indicates that most of the faculty members 43.5% have the teaching experiences of 2-4 years, while 39.1% have 5-7 years of teaching experience, and rest 8.7% have 8-10years and 4.3% have less than one year and above 10 years of teaching experience..

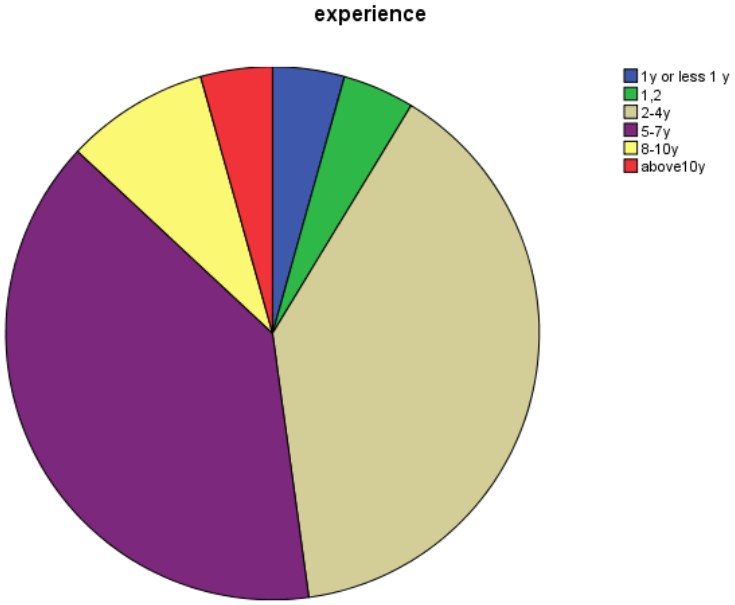

Table -1: Places of study

From the table 1 it clearly indicates that 47.8% of the faculty members prefer home as a place of study, while 39.1% and 8.7% prefer departmental library and office staff room and rest 4.3% prefer public library as their place of study.

	Frequency	Percentage
Home	11	47.8
Departmental library	09	39.1
Public library	1	4.3
Office staff room or other place	02	8.7
Total	23	100

Table-2: Frequency of usages of formal information sources

In order to assess the respondent's opinion about frequency of usages of formal information sources, the respondents were asked to indicate any one out of five categories of time lag. More than forty three percent of the respondents replied that that they usage formal information sources frequently, followed more than thirty four percent use the sources sometimes, while 21.7% very frequently . (see table 2)

	Frequency	Percentage
Very frequently	5	21.7
Frequently	10	43.5
Some times	8	34.8
Rarely	00	00
Never	00	00
Total	23	100.0

Table- 3: Reading material for research and academic needs

From the table 3, it clearly indicates that 47.8% of the faculty members fulfil their research and academic needs by book, while 30.4% fulfils by periodical and rest 21.7% fulfils their demands through on line. (see table 3)

	Frequency	Percentage

Books	11	47.8
periodical	07	30.4
Online	05	21.7
Total	23	100

Table-4: Purposes of information needs.

Table 4 showing the purpose of seeking information of the faculty members. 56.5 percent sought information for teaching purposes i.e.preparing class lectures, 30.4 percent for research and rest 13% for searching journal purposes.

	Frequency	Percent
Teaching	13	56.5
Research	7	30.4
Journal	3	13.0
Total	23	100.0

Table-5: Sources prefer for finding general information

From the table it clearly indicates that21.7% prefer bookshop and colleagues for finding general information, while maximum number of faculty members i.e. 47.8% prefer internet for finding general information and lowest numbers are using their experiences.

	Frequency	Percentage
Bookshop	5	21.7
Internet	11	47.8
Colleagues	5	21.7

My experience	2	8.7
Total	23	100.0

Table-6: Communication Channels

From the table it clearly reveals that 47.8 percent of the faculty members consulted with expert person in the respective field by telephone. 21.7% share his views by e-mail and visiting people. Rest 8.7% faculty members consider instant message as communication channel when they have a question to ask.

Communication channel

	Frequency	Percent
visiting people	7	30.4
telephone	9	39.1
email	7	30.4
Total	23	100.0

Table -7: Problems encountered during information needs.

The study looked at problems faced by faculty members while seeking needed information. The following table reveals the difficulties in detail. Most of them pointed out that they sometimes face the following problems such as they cannot located the targeted sources (13.3%) as information scattered in too many sources,47.8% lack of time for searching information , and rest 8.7% use a wrong key word.

Difficulties

	Frequency	Percentage
Cannot locate the targeted sources	3	13.3
Doesn't have enough time	11	47.8
Use a wrong key word	2	8.7

Doesn't have enough time to search	3	13.0
Total	23	100.0

Table-8: Chi-square tests for gender

Results of chi-square tests for gender revealed that there was significant difference between male and female faculty members regarding difficulties for searching information.

Chi-Square Tests for gender

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.691[a]	4	.030
Likelihood Ratio	13.399	4	.009
N of Valid Cases	23		

Table -9: Chi-square tests for age groups

Results of chi-square tests for age groups in table 09 revealed that there was no significant difference among the age groups regarding the problems in searching general information.

Chi-Square Tests for age groups

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	15.510[a]	12	.215
Likelihood Ratio	15.608	12	.210
N of Valid Cases	23		

Table 10: Chi-square tests for research needs

Results of chi-square tests for research needs of the faculty members revealed that there was no significant difference between research needs and sources of information.

Chi-Square Tests research needs

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.328[a]	6	.156
Likelihood Ratio	12.932	6	.044
N of Valid Cases	23		

Summary of Findings

- A majority of the faculty members i.e. 47.8% prefer home as a place of study, while 39.1% and 8.7% prefer departmental library and office staff room and rest 4.3% prefer public library as their place of study.
- More than forty three percent of the respondents replied that that they usage formal information sources frequently, followed more than thirty four percent use the sources sometimes, while 21.7% very frequently .
- 47.8% of the faculty members fulfil their research and academic needs by book, while 30.4% fulfils by periodical and rest 21.7% fulfils their demands through on line.
- Nearly all faculty members use library resources for teaching56.4%, more than30% for research, and rest 13% for journal purposes.
- More than 39% of respondents contact with expert person as their primary informal information channel. Rest 30.4% use email and telephone for meet up up-to-date information.
- 47.8 percent of the faculty members consulted with expert person as communication channel when they have a question to ask.
- Maximum number of the faculty member's i.e.47.8 percent doesn't have enough time for searching.

Conclusions

Today is an information age and tremendous flow of information is emerging in all fields throughout the world. As such, it has very difficult to manage the information manually due to exponential growth of literature and publication programme.The problem of providing timely information is not due to lack of information, but the way in which it is handled to enable the user to fulfil his needs. So,this study is examined the acquaintance of the faculty members with

the information seeking process. The findings showed that main information needs of faculty members are related to their teaching and research purposes.The telephone and email are the main channels for obtaining the latest information. However, the faculty members use the library infrequently as their place of study. The problems identified by faculy members that they cannot located the targeted sources as information scattered in too many sources. The knowledge of the faculty members for their own information needs and the searching process was found to be sufficient to meet their actual needs. We have, in conclusion, two suggestions to fix the gap in information need and information seeking behavior: first, faculty members of each department can cooperatively work with each other; second librarians should provide specific information seeking skill instruction for each department related to their careers and professional activities.Finally the study hopes that faculty and university authority will take note of the findings, and endeavor towards meeting the information needs for more development of academic function.The upshot of meeting the information needs of can be mutually beneficial to both the faculty and to the students.

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