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Information seeking behaviour of journalists in north India

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ABSTRACT

The study presents a survey of the information seeking behavior of the journalists in north India. It highlights that the journalists mostly use the newspaper libraries once a week Majority of them visit the library to consult the reference books. Most of the respondents are satisfied with the behavior of the library staff and they opine that the newspapers should be digitised.

Keywords: Information seeking behaviour, Journalist, India, newspaper libraries

1. Introduction

Journalists, by nature of their profession, are information gatherers. They need information for scrutinizing the facts, raise their awareness of current news, research, obtain a framework, and to stimulate their thoughts [1]. News analysts, reporters, and correspondents gather information, prepare stories, and make broadcasts that inform the public about local, State, national, and international events. They also present their points of view on current issues as they believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. In order to do their day-to-day work, they require information from various formal as well as informal sources including their colleagues and libraries. Even in the current IT scenario, newspaper/ media libraries still serve a unique function of providing information to journalists through trained and educated professionals.

2. Review of Literature

Joseph (1993) [2] in his study entitled "How Indian Journalists Use Libraries" revealed that the journalists in Kerala use the library mainly for checking the background material and for specific items of information on stories, while editors use the libraries to assist them in editing the stories. 86% of the respondents use the library more than once a week, with most respondents spending an hour or less in the library. He concluded that the respondents prefer informal sources, personal collections and consultation with other journalists rather than using the libraries. Vreekamp (1995) [3] in his study entitled "The Information Seeking Attitude of Non-metropolitan journalists- A Qualitative Study of two Communities and Their Primary and Secondary Sources" found that the journalists prefer human sources to documentation sources. Although, journalists have access to clippings, online files and reference books, yet these sources were mostly consulted for historical facts rather than for analytical information. He noted that the journalists tend to use online databases mostly for text and images. Nicholas and Martin

(1997) [4] in their study "Assessing Information Needs: A Case Study of Journalists" revealed that the reporters in the United Kingdom preferred to use online services for fact finding information and they rely more on human or oral sources for descriptive and historical information. They suggested that the library and librarians can play an important role in meeting the information needs of journalists as in the case of 'The Guardian Newspaper Library' which has extended the global information to the news staff through the Intranet. Mahapatra and Panda (2000) [5] in their study entitled "State of Reading Interest and Utilization of Information Resources by the Working Journalists in Orissa: A Study" revealed that the journalists gave top priority to borrowing, photocopying and newspaper clippings services, reference service was given a middle priority and the referral and bibliographic services were given a low priority. Vital services like latest addition list, current content services, SDI and online services were not being used by more than one third of the total respondents. They observed that the journalists were not in the habit of using information services, cultivating current approach to information except borrowing books and photocopying material of their interest for home reading. Mahapatra and Panda (2001) [6] in their study entitled "State of Information Seeking and Searching Behavior of Working Journalists in Orissa: A Study" revealed that the journalists prefer to visit the library personally and use current periodicals, seminar/conference proceedings, and newspaper clippings as their primary source of information. They observed that the major constraints of the journalists in seeking the information include lack of library, lack of library automation, inadequate reference and referral service, poor organization of reading material, inadequate resources of the parent library, non availability of library services, etc. Mahapatra and Panda (2001) [7] in their study entitled "Information Needs of the Working Journalists in Orissa: A Study" described that 57.08% respondents personally visit the libraries daily to obtain the required information, 50.44% prefer personal collection and only 46.46% preferred to use the library attached to their parent organization. Regarding the mode of library services, 46.9% respondents preferred to avail library services free of cost; 18.14% preferred fee based services; and 34.95% respondents preferred both (free as well as fee based) services. Anwar et. al. (2004) [8] in their study entitled "Information Seeking Behavior of Kuwaiti Journalists" revealed that the availability and use of in-house electronic library of stories/reports generated by their colleagues' was not only limited but also not satisfied. They suggested an improvement in the current organizational library services with a focus on information and human resources as well as creating awareness of such resources amongst the users.

3. Statement of the problem

The present study was undertaken to find out what type of information sources do the journalists use, how satisfied are they with these sources, for what purpose do they use the information and the usage of newspaper libraries in Northern India comprising Chandigarh, Delhi and Punjab. An attempt has been made to find out the level of satisfaction of users and to highlight various problems faced by them in accessing the information from the libraries of their respective organizations. The questionnaire was distributed to the journalists from twelve newspaper organizations located in Chandigarh, Punjab and Delhi including Dainik Bhaskar, Desh Sewak, The Indian Express, The Tribune, Daily Pioneer, Hindustan Times, The Statesman, The Times of India, Ajj Di Awaz, Ajit, Amar Ujala and Dainik Jagaran. Since the users of these newspaper libraries comprise a large number of staff, it was not feasible to collect information from all of them. Hence, the stratified random sampling technique was used for collecting the

data and 10% of the users from the total population of these organisations were surveyed. The data so obtained from 232 users has been analyzed and interpreted below.

4. Analysis of the data

4.1 Distribution of Respondents in Newspaper Libraries

Table 1 below gives the distribution of respondents from Chandigarh, Delhi and Punjab:

Categories of users	Respondents from Chandigarh		Respondents from Delhi		Respondents from Punjab	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	**%**
Editorial Staff	15	20.27	20	23.25	15	20.83
Journalists/ Reporters	20	27.02	13	15.11	18	25
Administrative Staff	16	21.62	19	22.09	21	29.17
Press Staff	11	14.86	17	19.76	8	11.11
Other Staff	12	16.22	17	19.76	10	13.89

Table1: Distribution of Respondents

Table 1 above shows that maximum number of the respondents were from Delhi (i.e., 37.07%), followed by Chandigarh (i.e., 31.90%) and Punjab (i.e., 31.03%).

4.2 Gender of the Respondents

Table 2 shows the gender wise distribution of the respondents:

Gender	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	*Total*
Male	53 (71.62%)	47 (54.65%)	44 (61.11%)	144 (62.07%)
Female	21 (28.38%)	39 (45.36%)	28 (38.89%)	88 (37.93%)

Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Table 2 above depicts that maximum number of the respondents were male (i.e., 62.07%), whereas 37.93% of the respondents were female. The table clearly indicates a higher number of male journalists from all the three states.

4.3 Frequency of Visit to the Library

Table 3 below gives the frequency of library visits by the respondents:

Frequency of visit	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Daily	13 (17.57%)	19 (22.09%)	15 (20.83%)	47 (20.26%)
Thrice a week	2 (2.70%)	6 (6.98%)	5 (6.94%)	13 (5.60%)
Once a week	19 (25.68%)	15 (17.44%)	19 (26.39%)	53 (22.84%)
Once in fortnight	11(14.86%)	28(32.56%)	12(16.67%)	51 (21.98%)
Once in month	13(17.57%)	6(6.98%)	7(9.72%)	26(11.21%)
Rarely	16(21.62%)	12(13.95%)	14(19.44%)	42(18.10%)

Table 3: Frequency of Visit to the Library

Table 3 above depicts that the maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 22.84%) visit the library once a week, followed by 21.98% who visit the library once in a fortnight, 20.26% visit daily, 18.10% visit rarely, 11.21% visit once a month and 5.60% visit thrice a week. The table also depicts that more number of journalists from Chandigarh (i.e., 25.68%) visit their libraries once a week, more number of journalists from Delhi (i.e., 32.56%) visit their libraries once in a fortnight and more number of journalists from Punjab (i.e., 26.39%) visit their libraries once a week.

4.4 **Purpose of the Library Visit**
Table 5 below shows the purpose of library visit by the respondents:

Purpose	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
To borrow and return books	10 (13.51%)	19 (22.09%)	16 (22.22%)	45 (19.40%)
To borrow/ refer to magazines	19 (25.68%)	14 (16.28%)	10 (13.89%)	43 (18.53%)
To consult reference sources	27 (36.49%)	33 (38.37%)	18 (25%)	78 (33.62%)
To avail reference services	7 (9.46%)	7 (8.14%)	9 (12.5%)	23 (9.91%)
To read newspapers	11 (14.86%)	13 (15.12%)	19 (26.39%)	43 18.53%)

Table 5: Purpose of the Library Visit

Table 5 indicates that 33.62% of the respondents visit the library to consult reference sources, followed by 19.40% journalists who visit the library to borrow and return books, 18.53% each visit the library to borrow or refer to the magazines and to read newspapers, and 9.91% visit their libraries to avail the reference service.

4.5 Library Material Used
Table 6 analysis the kind of documents used by the respondents:

Material used	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Books	27 (36.49%)	37 (43.02%)	19 (26.39%)	83 (35.78%)
Newspaper clippings	20 (27.03%)	13 (15.12%)	18 (25%)	51 (21.98%)
Reference books	17 (22.97%)	39 (45.35%)	13 (18.06%)	72(31.03%)
Old newspapers	20 (27.03%)	13 (15.12%)	18 (25%)	51 (21.98%)
Government	7 (9.45%)	8 (9.30%)	4 (5.56%)	19 (8.19%)

publications				
Microfilms	-	-	-	-
Magazines	33 (44.59%)	48 (55.81%)	26 (36.11%)	107 (46.12%)
Photographs, blocks and negatives	20 (27.03%)	13 (15.12%)	18 (25%)	51 (21.98%)
Biographies	17 (22.97%)	14 (16.28%)	9 (12.5%)	40 (17.24%)
Media reports	15 (20.70%)	27 (31.40%)	6 (8.33%)	48 (20.69%)

Table 6: Library Material Used

Table 6 depicts that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 46.12%) use the magazines, followed by 35.78% who use books, 31.03% use reference books, 21.98% each use newspaper clippings, old newspapers and photographs, 20.69% use the media reports and 17.24% journalists use biographies available in the libraries of their respective organizations. It was interesting to note that no journalist use the microfilms available in their libraries. It may be that either their libraries do not have microfilms or the users are not aware of them.

4.6 Use of Other Libraries

Table 7 provides the data regarding the use of other libraries by the researchers:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Yes	27 (36.49%)	33 (38.37%)	6 (8.33%)	66 (28.45%)
No	47 (63.51%)	53 (61.63%)	66 (91.67%)	166 (71.55%)

Table 7: Use of Other Libraries

Table 7 indicates that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 71.55%) does not use any other library, whereas 28.45% of the journalists surveyed did indicate that they use the libraries other than their own organization.

4.7 Library Services used

Table 8 below analyses the data regarding the library services used by the respondents:

Services used	Respondents from Chandigarh		Respondents from Delhi		Respondents from Punjab		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Borrowing	27 (36.49%)	47 (63.51%)	31 (36.05%)	55 (63.95%)	14 (19.44%)	58 (80.56%)	72 (31.03%)	160 (68.96%)
Referral	16 (21.62%)	58 (78.38%)	13 (15.12%)	73 (84.88%)	12 (16.67%)	60 (83.33%)	41 (17.67%)	191 (82.33%)
SDI	11 (14.86%)	63 (85.14%)	15 (17.44%)	71 (82.56%)	7 (9.72%)	65 (90.28%)	33 (14.22%)	199 (85.78%)
CAS	16 (21.62%)	58 (78.38%)	13 (15.12%0	73 (84.88%)	12 (16.67)%	60 (83.33%)	41 (17.67%)	191 (82.33%)
Latest	9	65	12	74	10	62	31	201

Addition List	(12.16%)	(87.84%)	(13.95%)	(86.05%)	(13.89%)	(86.11%)	(13.36%)	(86.64%)
Reference service	15 (20.27%)	59 (79.73%)	19 (22.09%)	67 (77.91%)	20 (27.78%)	52 (72.22%)	54 (23.28%)	178 (76.72%)
Photocopy	17 (22.97%)	57 (77.03%)	21 (24.42%)	65 (75.58%)	20 (27.78%)	52 (72.22%)	58 (25%)	174 (75%)
Internet	6 (8.11%)	68 (91.89%)	25 (29.07%)	61 (70.93%)	8 (11.11%)	64 (88.89%)	39 (16.81%)	193 (83.19%)

Table 8: Library Services used

Table 8 reveals that overall 31.03% journalists use the borrowing service as provided by their libraries, 25% use the photocopying service, 23.28% journalists use the reference service, 17.67% journalists each use the referral and Current Awareness Service, 16.81% journalists use their libraries for the Internet access, 14.22% journalists use the SDI services and 13.36% journalists also use the latest addition list as supplied by the librarians of their respective organizations.

4.8 Availability of required Documents

Table 9 shows the satisfaction of the respondents in terms of availability of required documents in the library collection:

Availablility	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Always	13 (17.57%)	21 (24.41%)	12 (16.67%)	46 (19.83%)
Sometimes	51 (68.92%)	53 (61.63%)	47 (65.28%)	151(65.09%)
Never	10 (13.51%)	12 (13.95%)	13 (18.05%)	35 (15.08%)

Table 9: Availability of required Documents

Table 9 depicts that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 65.09%) sometimes found a particular document in the library collection, whereas 19.83% journalists always found their required documents. However, 15.08% journalists are never able to find the documents from their libraries.

4.9 Use of library catalogue

Table 10 shows the use of library catalogue by the respondents:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Yes	11(14.86%)	23(26.74%)	8(11.11%)	42(18.10%)
No	60(81.08%)	56(65.12%)	51(70.83%)	167(71.98%)
Didn't answer	3(4.06%)	7(8.14%)	13(18.06%)	23(9.92%)

Table 10: Use of library catalogue

Table 10 depicts that a majority of the respondents (i.e., 71.98%) do not use the library catalogue, whereas 18.10% of the respondents do use the library catalogues of their respective organizations. However, 9.92% of the respondents did not indicate whether they use the library catalogue or not.

4.10 Use of access points
Table 11 analyses the data regarding the use of access points by the respondents when they search the material from the library catalogue:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Author	-	12(13.95%)	1(1.39%)	13(5.60%)
Title	11(14.86%)	15(17.44%)	6(8.33%)	32(13.79%)
Subject	-	-	-	-
Did not Answer	63(85.14%)	59(68.60%)	65(90.28%)	187(80.60%)

Table 11: Use of access points

Table 11 reveals that a majority of the respondents (i.e., 80.60%) did not indicate any preference for author's name, title or the subject while consulting the library catalogue. However, 13.79% of the journalist indicated that they prefer to search the documents by title.

4.11 Satisfaction with the behaviour of the Library Staff
Table 12 analyses the data regarding the satisfaction of users with the behavior of library staff:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Helpful	65(87.84%)	69(80.23%)	54(75%)	188(81.03%)
Not Helpful	1(1.35%)	7(8.14%)	3(4.17%)	11(4.74%)
Did not Answer	8(10.81%)	10(11.63%)	15(6.47%	33(14.22%)

Table 12: Satisfaction with the behaviour of the Library Staff

Table12 indicates that an overwhelming majority of the respondents (i.e., 81.03%) are satisfied with the helpful behavior of the library staff, whereas 4.74% journalists are not happy with the behavior of the library staff.

4.12 Need for Digitization of Newspapers
Table 13 analyses the data regarding the desire of the respondents for digitizing the newspapers:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Yes	52 (70.27%)	73(84.88%)	55(76.39%)	180(77.59%)

No	9(12.16%)	2(2.33%)	7(9.72%)	18(7.76%)
Did not answered	13(17.57%)	11(12.79%)	10(13.89%)	34(14.65%)

Table 13: Need for Digitization of Newspapers

Table 13 depicts that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 77.59%) feel that newspapers should be digitized, whereas 7.76% journalists are not in favour of digitization of newspapers.

4.13 Satisfaction with the Library Timings

Table 14 analyses the data regarding the satisfaction of the respondents regarding the timings of the library:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Yes	69(93.24%)	81(94.19%)	63(87.5%)	213(91.81%)
No	-	3(3.49%)	-	3(1.29%)
Don't answer	5(6.76%)	2(2.32%)	9(12.5%)	16(6.90%)

Table 14: Satisfaction with the Library Timings

Table 14 depicts that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 91.81%) are satisfied with the timings of the library, whereas 3.49% journalists from Delhi are not happy with it.

4.14 Awareness of Rules and Regulation of the Library

Table 15 analyses the data regarding the awareness of the respondents regarding the rules and regulations of the library:

Response	Respondents from Chandigarh	Respondents from Delhi	Respondents from Punjab	Total
Yes	53 (71.62%)	69 (80.23%)	49 (68.06%)	171(73.70%)
No	3 (4.05%)	2 (2.33%)	10 (13.89%)	15 (6.47%)
Don't answer	18 (24.32%)	15 (17.44%)	13 (18.05%)	46 (19.83%)

Table 15: Awareness of Rules and Regulation of the Library

Table 15 depicts that maximum number of the respondents (i.e., 73.70%) are aware of the rules and regulations of the library, whereas 6.47% denied of its awareness.

5. Conclusion

Newspaper libraries are invaluable for the press and the effectiveness of the press largely depends on the effective and well organized libraries in their organizations. This study was undertaken to provide descriptive data about the information-seeking behavior of different types of journalists and how they search and use information available to them from the newspaper libraries. The above analysis indicates that the utilization of the newspaper libraries by such users in Northern India is far from satisfactory. It indicates that most of the users visit their libraries once a week and prefer to read magazines. A number of them did not indicate their

knowledge about the library rules or how to search the library catalogue. The reason behind may be that the libraries attached to their organizations are neither well maintained nor provide sufficient services so that the users can know of their importance. This is all the more important in the current scenario as the information requirements of the journalists and other staff of the newspaper organizations have witnessed a spectacular change with the introduction and use of information technology in the newspaper industry.

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