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Abstract

The present study has been undertaken to assess the online information seeking behaviour of the faculty members of Arts and Science colleges in Madurai district. A sample of 50 faculties was selected by random sampling method. The well structured questionnaire was distributed among the faculty members to collect data on the availability of online information services, the major information services used, the purpose of online information seeking and the level of satisfaction. The findings of the study reveal that: Most of the respondents (56%) are male faculty members. Majority of the respondents (32%) visit the library once a week. The majority of the respondents (37%) access information at the college library. Majority of the respondents (43%) need/use online information for their career development. (42%) of the respondents are satisfied with the online sources available in the library. Most of the respondents (33%) use Wikipedia. Majority of the respondents (63%) use search engines to look for information. Majority of the respondents (30%) complained about Lack of time as their major problem in accessing online resources.

Key word: Information seeking behaviour, Frequency of library visits, Information access, Use of Online Sources, problem in access.

Introduction

Information is a dynamic and unending resource that affects all discipline in all walks of life whether it is for information support, research and development. Recent advances in technologies and electronics have cast great impact upon Modern society. These advances have provided a capability previously not known and resulted in the improvement of efficiency.

The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information seeking behaviour. Innumerable types

of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place. In the modern society, the types of information and the media which present them have become manifold and multifarious, offering men and women a vast selection. Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems or with computer-based systems. The kind of information required by the user, methods adopted in searching information, environment affected, time spent, problems faced and solutions made, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction arising from the information gathered and the relationship of the user with the system all come under purview of a user study.

"Knowledge is power". Libraries are the reservoirs of Knowledge and this knowledge should not be kept unused rather it should be used optimally. The main purpose of any information System be it an academic library or any other is to develop a comprehensive need based and updated collection and keep it active by disseminating them. Technologies, especially computer and telecommunication technology have revolutionized the field of library and information services. They facilitate collection, storage, organization, processing, analysis, presentation, communication and dissemination of data. With the introduction of new technology, libraries are expected to use various types of technology to provide information, more quickly and in greater volume than before.

Information-seeking

Information-seeking is a form of human behaviour that involves seeking for information by means of the active examination of information sources or information retrieval systems to satisfy the information need, or to solve a problem. In order to acquire information the user has to select information from a particular source, system, channel or service. According to Ellis (1987) his information-seeking process involves the activities.

- ➢ Starting
- ➢ Chaining
- ➢ Browsing
- ➢ Differentiating and
- ➢ Monitoring

Information Seeking Behaviour (ISB)

With the growth of information deluge, each one needs information of increasing variety, diversity, level, frequency, volume and use. This complex situation appears to be ambiguous and heterogeneous in character as that, information needs of a particular group of users and information flow from a specific/organization are difficult to determine. Again, the use of information is so complex that there cannot be a simple system to cope up with the task of effective retrieval without assessing their specific needs. This situation has given rise to the growing concept of information searching and the manner of determining the pattern of searching is said to be considered information seeking behaviour.

Review of Literature

Meho and Hass (2001) studied on information seeking behaviour of social sciences faculty studying stateless nations. It is a study of government information use by social sciences faculty, in which they interviewed faculty conducting research on stateless nations, in this case the Kurds. The findings were consistent with many earlier social science faculty studies, with some important exceptions. The study is significant because it reveals a frequent use of information technology, with 83% of participants responding they use electronic resources. It is also interesting that access problems are a major issue for selected materials, with 83% of faculty reporting they travel to special collections or archives to locate historical documents.

Majid and Tan (2002) carried out a study among computer engineering students of Nan Yang Technological University, Singapore. A questionnaire was distributed among 200 randomly selected students and 102 students responded. The purpose of the study was to investigate the types of information sources used by the students. The study found that printed materials were the most preferred format among the students. The order of preference of information seeking materials was books, lectures, internet, friends and manuals. The use of databases and electronic journals was low among the computer students.

Balasubramanian and Baladhandayutham (2008) discussed the results of a study on the information use pattern of faculty members of Madurai Kamaraj University in Madurai. Data were collected from seven schools in Madurai Kamaraj University. Results show that one hundred and thirty five respondents (45%) seek information for preparing lectures. Forty four percent of faculty members access more information from Internet. Seventy six percent of

respondents read information materials in English and twenty percent read materials in Tamil. Most of the respondents used Google.com for searching information. They use frequently e-mail for communication. It is found that (25%) of respondents use the Biotech database. Majority of respondents faced the common problem while seeking information i.e. lack of time and unavailability of information.

Ibrahim (2008) reported findings from a survey conducted to measure the use and perception of the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) faculty members on electronic resources. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of 140 faculty members. Responses were received from 125 (89%) faculty members. Analysis confirmed that frequency of use of electronic resources was low. Reasons cited were lack of time because of the time needed to focus on teaching; lack of awareness to electronic resources provided by the library; ineffective communication channels and language barrier.

Ozoemelem (2009) carried out a study on the use of electronic resources by post graduate students of the Department of Library and Information Science, Delta State University, Abraka A total of 78 questionnaires were distributed to respondents and were successfully retrieved giving a 100% rate of return. There is a low level of skillfulness in the use of ICT among Postgraduate Students. There is a low level of electronic resource experience amongst Postgraduate Students. The internet via Cybercafé is the major facility used to access electronic resources by them. There is a high frequency of usage of electronic resources by both male and female Postgraduate Students. In other words gender gap in electronic resource usage is quite negligible. Issues like large mass of irrelevant information, the need to filter the results from search, download delay, failure to find information, inadequate/lack of search skills, high cost of access, power outages, inaccessibility of some electronic resources, difficulties in navigating through electronic resources and so on are problems encountered when using electronic resources by Postgraduate Students.

Chetan Sharma (2009) highlighted the preferences and importance of online resources among the teachers and research scholars. The main objective of this study is to analyze dependency of the teachers and research scholars on e-resources, the perceived impact of the e-resources on their academic efficiency and problems faced by them while using the e-resources. 67.64% of research scholars of faculty of science and 69.23% of research scholars of engineering

use e-journals for research work whereas 35.29% of science streams and 23.70% of engineering streams use e-journals to update knowledge. Speed of availability and the ease of accessibility of information cause the users to use electronic resources more frequently 49% of respondents are marginally satisfied with online services provided by the library.

Thanuskodi (2010) conducted a study to identify the information channels used by the faculty members of Central Law College, Salem, information sources preferred by them, methods employed for getting the needed information and their library use pattern. Questionnaires were distributed to 64 law faculty members and 56 filled in questionnaires were returned, giving an overall response rate of 87.5 percent. It was found that respondents used various sources for acquiring the needed information. Books were ranked as the most important source for teaching and research purposes, followed by law reports and statutes. Respondents preferred to first consult their personal collection before resorting to other information providing sources and agencies. On the whole, respondents perceived the Central Law College library collections, services and facilities as adequate to meet their information needs effectively.

Sarada (2010) highlighted the various problems and issues involved in handling digital library and have given suggestions to improve the library services to meet the demands of the users. The majority of the respondents (69.4%) use Internet mainly for educational purposes. Comparatively less number of respondents (34.7%) use Internet for entertainment or personal purposes. The majority of the respondents used Internet for consulting technical reports 54.3(%), e-books 42.3 (%) and e-journals 38.5 (%). The most common problems faced by the majority of the respondents while surfing Internet were slow Internet connection delaying in retrieving relevant information 69.4 (%) and difficulty in finding the relevant information 21.3 (%) The majority 70 (%) of respondents felt that the Internet is more useful, preferred, informative, easy-to-use, and less expensive information source that help them in saving their time.

Akhtar (2010) examined the use of electronic information resources and service (EIRS) among the teachers and students of Sir Chhotu Ram Institute of Engineering and Technology, Meerut (UP) India. 120 questionnaires were randomly distributed to the users (50 teachers and 70 students). A total of 100 questionnaires were returned (40 teachers and 60 students) and used for this study. Majority of users, that is, 20(50%) teachers and 30(50%) students use EIRS for

study. More than 60% of users in the Engineering and Technology library are using e-journals as well as e-articles. The majority of users (45%) link through publisher websites, popular search engines and subject web pages. The information display on the computer screen and printed form of document is found to be the most preferred forms for reading articles.

Thanuskodi (2012) aimed at finding the use of e-resources by the post graduate students and research scholars of Faculty of Arts in the Annamalai University. Questionnaires were distributed among the Research scholars and Post-Graduate Students to collect desired data. A total of 200 questionnaires were distributed to the selected sample of Faculty of Arts; 180 valid samples were collected. The study found that the majority of users are aware about the availability of e-resources. The result reveals that 47.78 % of respondents want to access only electronic version whereas only 32.78% users want to read the printed journals but 19.44% respondents want to use both electronic and printed version. Majority of the respondents (76.66%) use e-resources for writing papers.

Ramasamy,Padma& Helan Ranjitham (2018) The present study is undertaken to investigate the use of legal information sources and services by the undergraduate students of Government Law College, Coimbatore, Tamilnadu State, India. It is a descriptive research study which employed questionnaires to collect data from 200 students who are pursing III, IV and V year of undergraduate law courses. The findings of the study reveal that: A majority of 83 students need human rights information and 78 students need academic information. A majority of 62 (93.94%) students know and use textbooks, 50 (75.76%) know and use law books and 49 (74.24%) know and make use of Bye-Laws. Updates of court rules 33 (41.25%) and Statutes 25 (30.12%) are the sources which are not known to most number of IV year students. A majority of them are aware of Internet and legal databases and they make use of such resources. The website of Supreme Court of India is widely known and used among them. A majority of them browse internet, read books/journals, ask faculty members and use mass media to access legal information. Reading books / journals, cyber café, trial and error method and instruction from library staff are the methods used by most of the students to learn to use legal information resources. More than 80% of them know and use JUDIS. Inadequate number of journals, non-availability of latest journals, difficulty in finding relevant information and erratic power supply are the major problems faced by the male students in accessing library resources. A majority of

the students want the library to conduct demos of online legal sources by external experts, expect the library to provide more electronic resources and online legal databases and want the library to provide index to law reports and more current legal materials.

Objectives of the study

The present study was undertaken to examine the online information seeking behaviour of the faculty members working in arts and science college of Madurai district. The objectives of the study are:

- ❖ To show the gender-wise distribution of the respondents
- ❖ To identify how frequently the respondents are visiting the college library.
- ❖ To enlist the Information Access Point by the respondents.
- ❖ To identify the purpose of information by the faculty members the respondents.
- ❖ To judge the level of satisfaction of the respondents on online resources.
- ❖ To know the varieties of online sources used by the respondents.
- ❖ To examine the preferred method of reading information online by the faculty respondents.
- ❖ To study the problem faced by faculty members in accessing online sources.

Methodology

Research Type

The study undertaken by the researcher belongs to descriptive research study. The researcher has used survey method in his study.

Selection of Samples

The study was carried out Total in 31 Arts and Science colleges affiliated to Madurai Kamaraj University. It was decided to get data from 50 Respondents each from 6 colleges. The respondents are the faculties of these colleges. Accidental sampling method is used for selecting the samples.

Significance of the study

A user study is the means for systematic examination of the characteristics of information behaviour of the users. Progress in information technology has offered today's information seekers different opportunities to access the information resources in variety of formats,

including commonly-available electronic information sources, such as CDROMs, databases, Web-OPACs, and the Internet. In some instances these are replacing the print based information sources as the primary media for the storage and communication of recorded information. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information-seeking behaviour. In the present technology and digital era, information seeking / search studies are necessary to refine our knowledge of information space in web and research database, their design and maintenance, and awareness related issues. In the emerging electronic environment, knowledge about the information seeking behaviour of faculty is crucial for those wishing to help them effectively meet their information needs.

Statements of the problem

The problem under the present study is "Online Information seeking behaviour of Faculty Members working in Arts and Science colleges in Madurai District: a study"

Limitation of study

➢ The study concentrates on the library online research databases and Internet to measure the information seeking behaviour.

➢ Only arts and science colleges of Madurai district were included in the study.

Tool for Data Collection

Questionnaire is the tool selected by the research for collecting data from the chosen sample. No open ended question was included. The information required for the study is collected from the faculty of arts and Science College with the help of a structured questionnaire.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed to the faculty members in arts and science colleges by the researcher personally. The queries put forward by the respondents were clarified by the researcher now and then. The duly filled-in questionnaires were collected back from them immediately after they were filled. Out of 300 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, the research was able to get back only 295 duly filed-in questionnaires.

The secondary data required for the study was collected from various sources of information like books, national and international journals, projects, magazines, theses and dissertations etc.

Analysis of Data

1. GENDER-WISE DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Gender-wise distribution of respondents

S.No	Sex	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Male	165	56
2	Female	130	44
Total		**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

Table 1 and Fig. 1 show the gender –wise distribution of the respondents.165 respondents (56%) are male respondents and (130) 44% are female respondents. Thus, male respondents are more than the female respondents under the study.
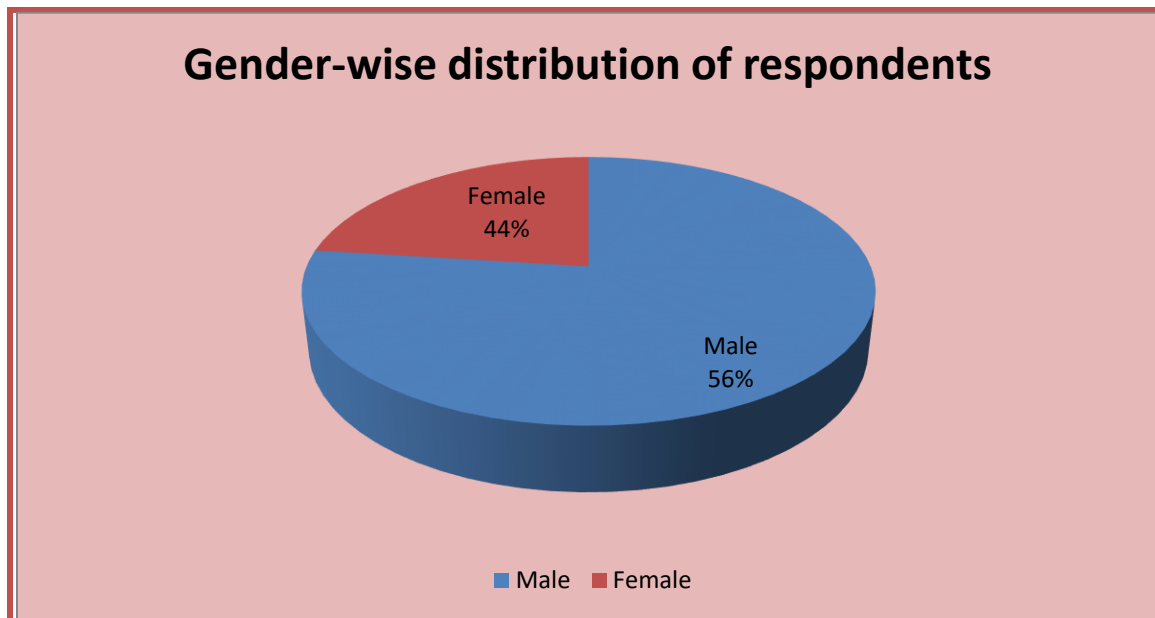

Figure 1: Gender-wise distribution of respondents

2. FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY VISITS

Table 2: Frequency of visiting the College Library

S.No	Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Every day	77	26
2	Alternative day	88	29
3	Once a week	93	32
4	Occasionally	37	13
Total		**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

Table 2 and Fig.2 show the frequency of library visits by the respondents. 77(26%) respondents visit the library everyday followed by 88(29%) respondents who visit the library every alternative day. While 93(32%) respondents visit the library once a week, just 37(13%) respondents visit the library occasionally.
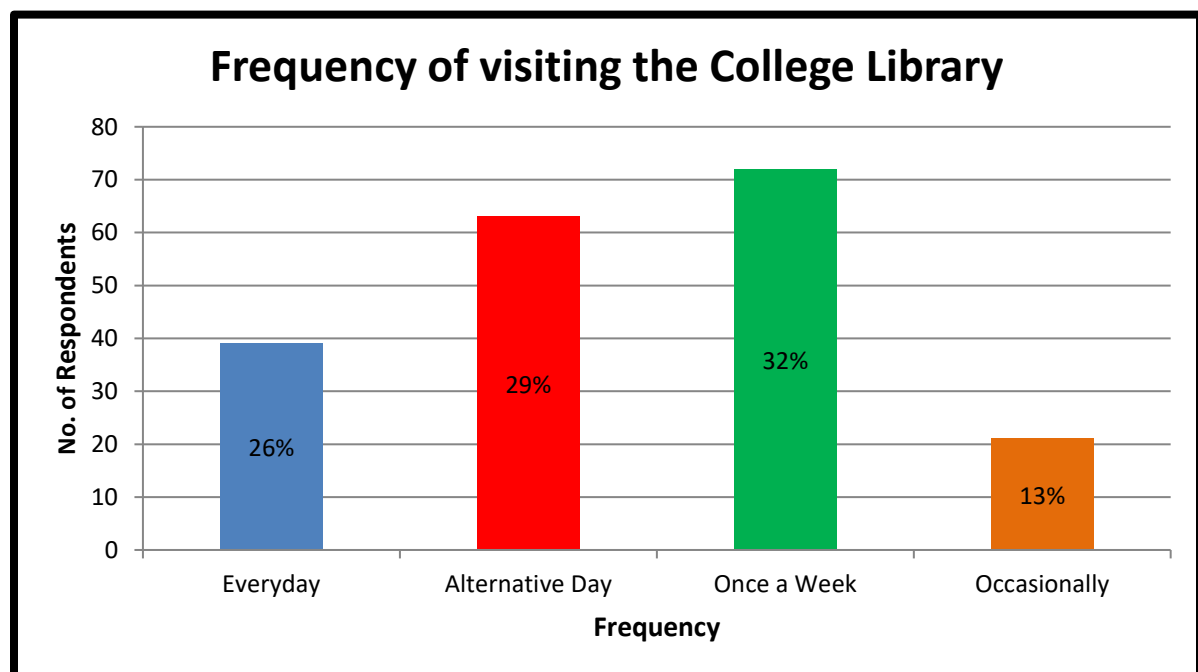

Figure 2 : Frequency of visiting the College Library

3. INFORMATION ACCESS POINTS

Table 3: Information Access Points

S.No	Access Points	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	College Library	110	37
2	Computer Center	80	27
3	Own Collection	60	20
4	Other Library Collections	45	16
Total		**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

Table 3 and Fig. 3 make it clear that 110(37%) respondents access information at the college library and 80(27%) respondents access information at the computer centres. While own collection is the source for 60(20%) respondents, other library collection is the access point for just 45(16%) respondents.
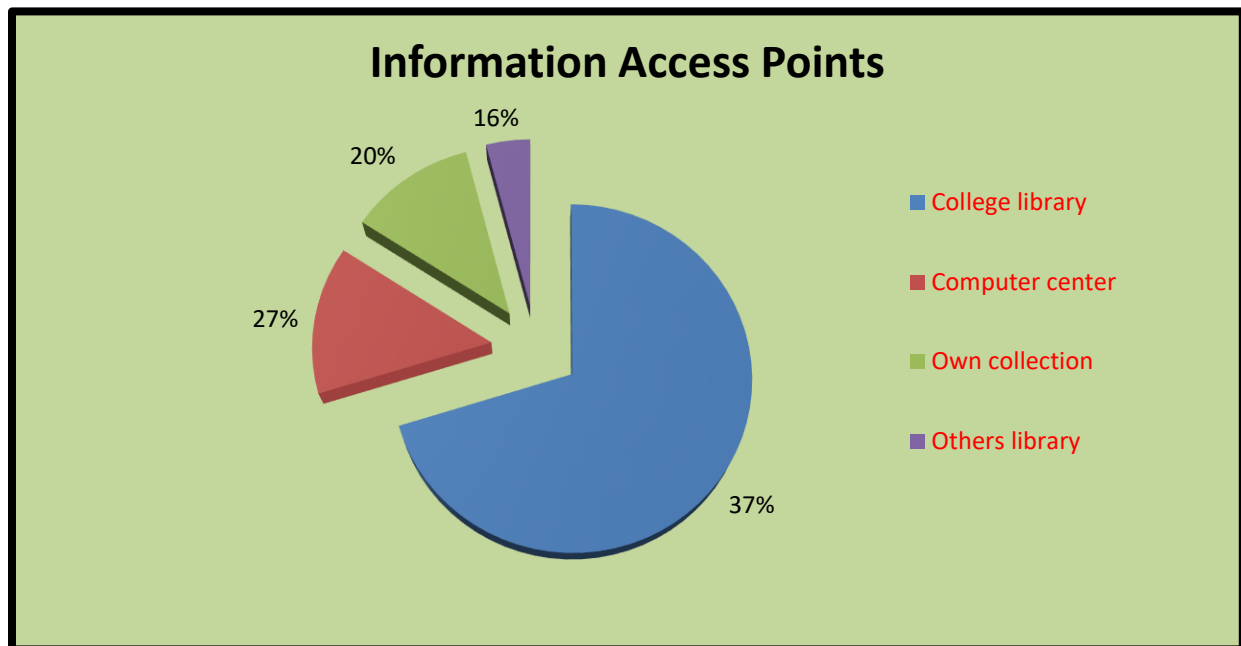

Figure 3: Information Access Points

4. PURPOSES OF SEEKING INFORMATION

Table 4: Purposes of seeking information

S.No	Purposes of seeking information	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Career development	127	43
2	Solving of immediate practical problem	55	19
3	Keeping up-to-date	83	28
4	Writing articles/research papers	30	10
Total		**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

Table 4 and Fig. 4 reveal that 127(43%) respondents seek information for their career development followed by 83(28%) respondents who seek information to keep themselves up-to-date. While 55(19%) respondents look for information to solve their practical problems, just 30(10%) respondents seek for information to write articles or research papers.
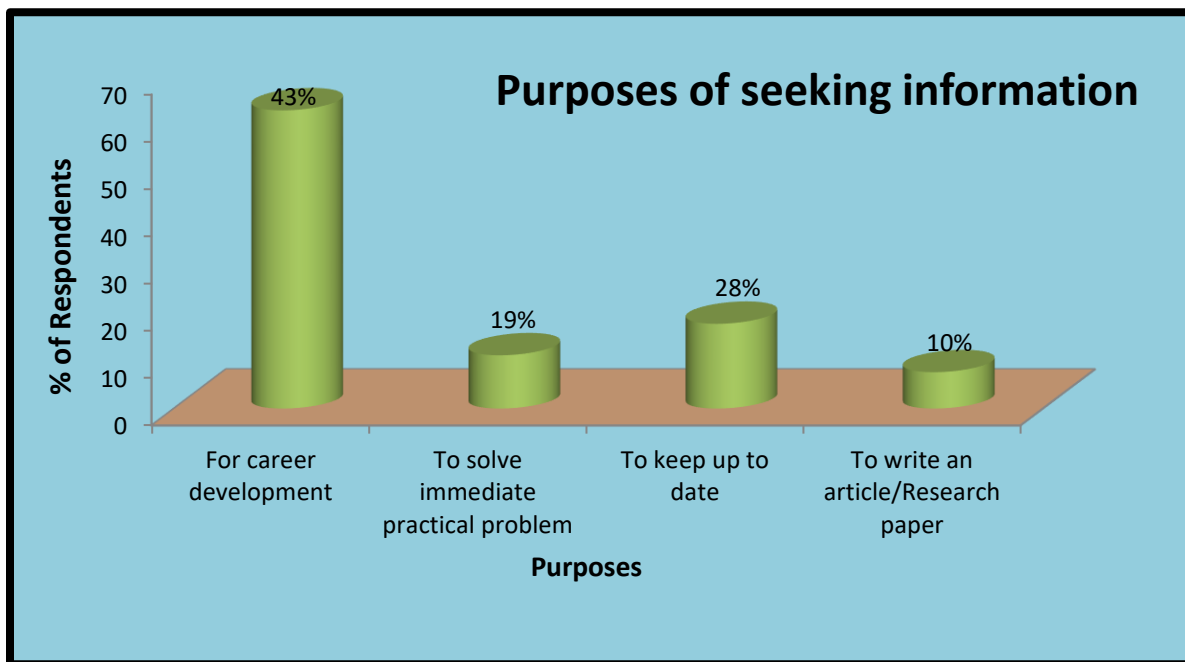

Figure 4: Purposes of seeking information

5. LEVEL OF SATISFACTION ON ONLINE RESOURCES

Table 5: Level of satisfaction on online Resources

S.No.	Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Good	65	22
2	Very good	48	16
3	Satisfied	123	42
4	Poor	32	11
5	Very poor	27	09
Total		50	100

b

Interpretation:

It is understood from Table 5 and Fig. 5 that 123(42%) respondents are satisfied with the kind of online resources available in the library. While 65(22%) respondents feel 'Good' with the available online resources, 48(16%) respondents rate the online resource collections of the library as Very Good,32 (11%) respondents the online resource collections of the library as poor, 27(09%) respondents the online resources available in the library as very poor.

Figure 5: Level of satisfaction on online Resources

5. USE OF ONLINE SOURCES

Table 6: Use of Online Sources

S.No.	Online Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	E-journals	63	21
2	Database of scholarly articles	42	14
3	Virtual libraries	36	12
4	Wikipedia	97	33
5	Database of thesis/ dissertations	25	09
6	Database of abstracts	32	11
	Total	**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

It is inferred from Table 6 and Fig. 6 that 33% (97) respondents use Wikipedia followed by 21 % (63) respondents who use various e-journals. While databases of scholarly articles are used by 14% (42) respondents, virtual libraries are accessed by 12% (36) respondents. The least used online sources are abstract databases 11 %(32) and theses databases 09 %(25).
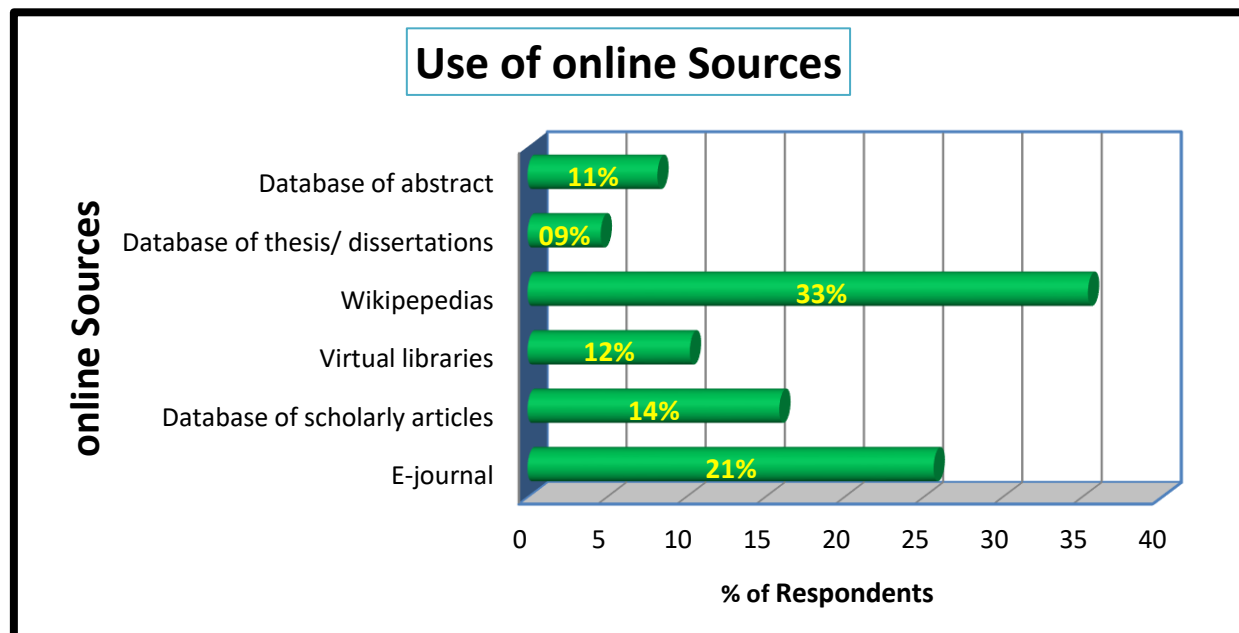

Figure 6:   Use of Online Sources

7. METHODS OF ACCESSING INFORMATION ONLINE

Table 7: Methods of accessing information online

S.No.	Methods of accessing information online	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Search Engines	185	**63**
2	Typing URL in the Browser	110	**37**
	Total	**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

It is deciphered from Table 7 and Fig. 7 that 63% (185) of the respondents use search engines to get information in Internet and 37% (110) of the respondents access information in the net by typing the concerned URL in the browser directly.
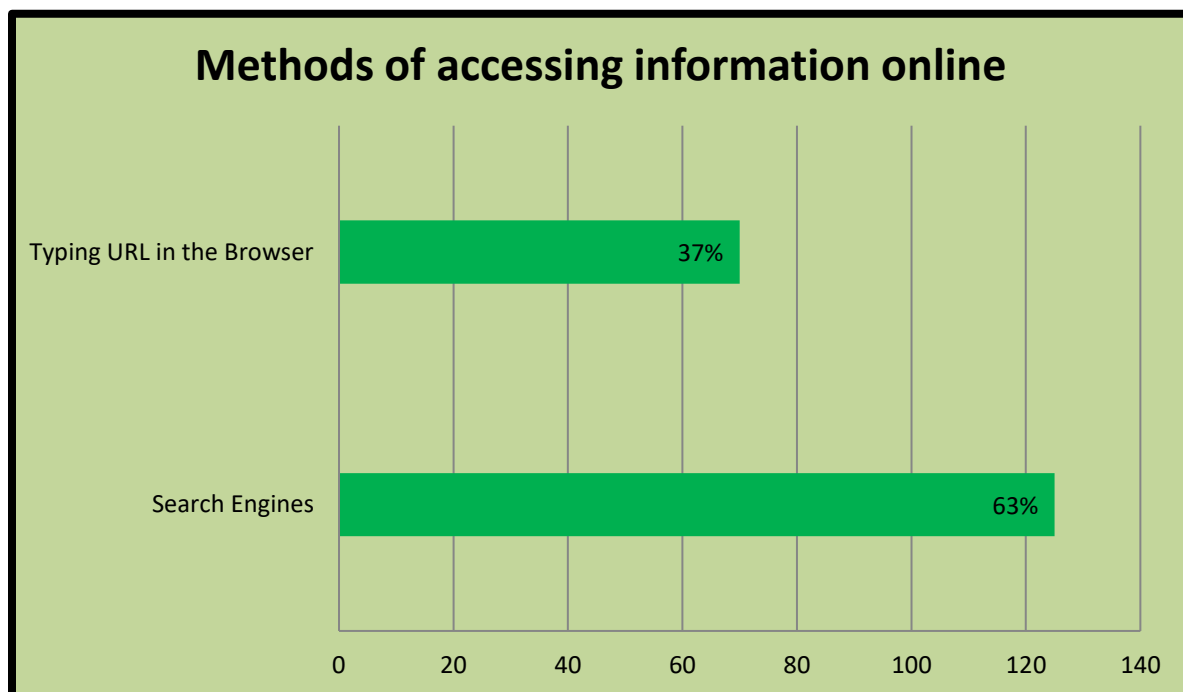

Figure 7: Methods of accessing information online

8. PROBLMES IN ACCESING AND USING ONLINE RESOURCES

Table 8: Problems in accessing and using the online resources

S.No.	Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
01	Inadequate ICT infrastructure	63	21
02	Lack of time	87	30
03	Scattered Information	52	17
06	Lack of knowledge in using the Library	41	14
10	Less number of required databases	29	10
11	Difficulties in understanding English	23	08
	Total	**295**	**100**

Interpretation:

Table 8 and Fig.8 show the problems faced by the respondents in accessing and using the online resources available in the college library. While Inadequate ICT infrastructure is the problem for 21 % (63) respondents, Lack of time is the problem for 30% (87) respondents.17% (52) of the respondents opined that scattered information is their problem and 14% (41) of the respondents gauged lack of knowledge in using the library is their problem. Non-availability of required databases is the problem for 10 % (29) respondents while English language is a problem for 08 % (23) of the respondents.
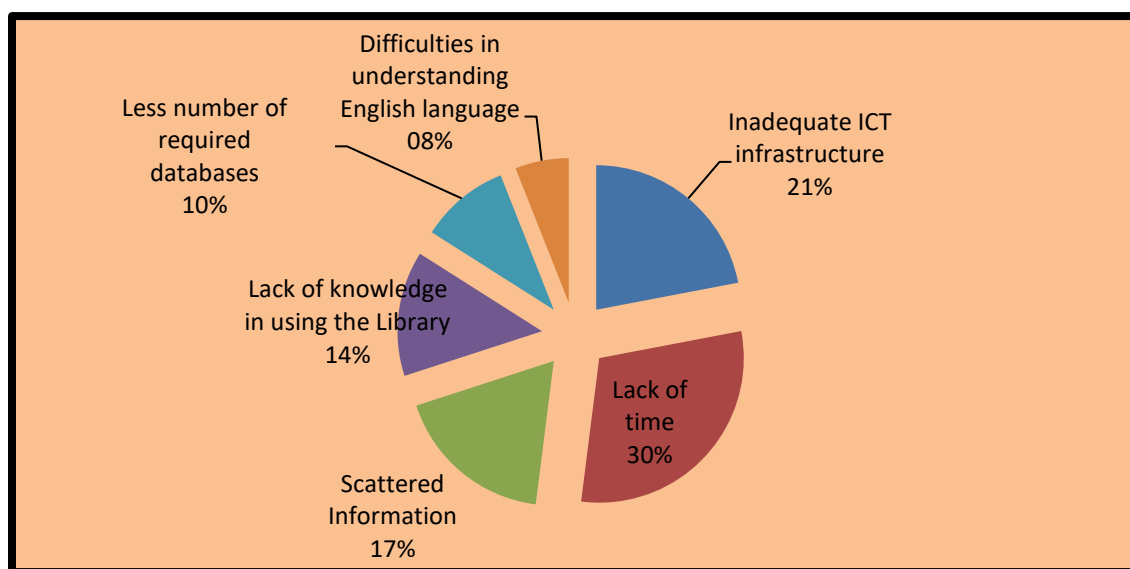

Figure 8: Problems in accessing and using the online resources

Findings

- ❖ Most of the respondents (56%) are male faculty members.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (32%) visit the library once a week.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (37%) access information at the college library.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (43%) need/use online information for their career development.
- ❖ (42%) of the respondents are satisfied with the online sources available in the library.
- ❖ Most of the respondents (33%) use Wikipedia.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (63%) use search engines to look for information.
- ❖ Majority of the respondents (30%) complained about Lack of time as their major problem in accessing online resources.

Suggestions

- ❖ Since all the respondents use Internet irrespective of many demographic factors like gender, discipline and designation, enough computers should be available in the college library.
- ❖ An exclusive fast broadband internet connection should be bought for the library.
- ❖ If possible, Wi-Fi access may be enabled in the college / library campus.
- ❖ Since most of the respondents use search engines to search for information in the Internet, they should be taught on the availability and use of various search engines.
- ❖ More educational databases may be procured for the library.
- ❖ Free and open source courseware and websites hosting scholarly videos may be put forward to the faculty' community.
- ❖ Experts may be invited from other libraries to introduce the goodness of e-journals among the Faculty members.
- ❖ The library should have the modern, latest and up-to-date ICT infrastructure.
- ❖ The Faculty members should be taught on the information searching and information evaluation skills so that they will be able to get right information at the right time for right use.

Directions for Further research

The researcher recommends that further research can be undertaken by comparing information seeking behaviour between faculty disciplines - Arts, Science and Professional

Colleges and between students, researcher and faculty members. The study mainly concentrated on the general information seeking behaviour of faculty members towards online resources. Further study can be made using the dimensions like characteristics of individual faculty, information literacy skills, IT Skills, Support and Training, Pedagogy, Psychological factors, Cultural aspects, Discipline and curriculum, Information learning technology, Policies and funding, Organization knowledge and culture and Academic influence.

Conclusion

A research on the analysis of digital information seeking behavior of faculty members of arts and science colleges was a challenging and charming task. The systematic conduct of an opinion-survey revealed many interesting facts to the researcher. The researcher has gained a meaningful guided enquiry of performing a task through this project. The findings of this project will definitely give an insight to the college administrators / college library staff about various aspects of the information seeking behavior of the faculty members. This may help them to devise suitable plans in the direction of renovating the library to meet the demands of the present day mobile generation. This kind of understanding will help the library professionals to devise befitting programmers and make corrective decisions in time to assist the faculty members sail smoothly in the mighty and stormy ocean of overflowing information.

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