



A STUDY ON INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS IN THANJAVUR DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

Public libraries are the standing testimonies of democracies. They are the social transformers and cultural saviours. They are the storehouses of intellectual heredity of our forefathers. They are the lighthouses fostering creative leisure activities. This study was conducted with the help of structured questionnaires to analyze the information seeking behavior of different types of the users and randomly selected 50 users of Public Libraries in Thanjavure. The data was entered and analyzed using simple average and percentage methods.

KEY WORD: Information Seeking Behaviour, Public Library, Library Users, User Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Information has become the most important element for progress in society. To thrive in this modern era, one needs a variety of information, no matter how well versed one is in a field or profession. We can reorganize the educational system and redefine scientific research only with the help of information. Information plays a significant role in our professional and personal lives. People need information to work properly in their fields. Knowledge of the information needs and information-seeking behavior of users is vital for developing library collections, upgrading facilities, and improving services to effectively meet the information needs of users.

A person who utilizes the information resources of a library, the services and products of an information system and derives benefit from them are called User. Users are also known as patrons or clientele. User is the focal point of all information activities at all levels. User is a broad concept which may include both producers as well as clients of information.

According to Professor J.D. Bernal (1948), His grouping is combining Engineers, Architects, Medical Practitioners and Agriculturists into the category of Technologists. Also managers (both business and industry) could be conceived as a distinct group of users of information. According to Dr.S.R.Ranganathan has grouped users on the basis of types of services enunciated by him into: the freshman, ordinary inquirer, specialist Inquirer and general reader.



STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Information need surveys or user studies are potentially useful in bridging the gap between the kinds of information services needed and the kind of services in existence. Any information system would definitely require identification of user requirements. However there had been certain doubts regarding the point whether information needs could really be established through user studies or survey. The need for conducting user studies is necessary requirement for the design and

operation of effective and efficient information systems, services and products. What constitutes the information needs of the library users, what services and resources are available in public libraries for meeting these needs, how do the users meet such needs and what constraints are they faced with? These are the questions to which this study intends to answer.

OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY

- To study the characteristics of the users district library
- To identify the information needs of the users of district library
- To analyse how the library meet the information needs of their users and their preferred sources of information.

SAMPLING DESIGN

This study was conducted with the help of structured questionnaires to analyze the information seeking behavior of different types of the users and randomly selected 50 users from Public Library in Thanjavure. The data was entered and analyzed using simple average and percentage methods.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The public library system in Thanjavure comprises of state library, district libraries, and libraries under municipalities, panchayats and certain registered social or rural youth clubs. The present study has its scope of investigation limited to the district libraries of Thanjavure.

Data analysis and interpretation

| Particulars | Frequency (n=50) | Percentage (100%) |
|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Age | | |
| Below 20yrs | 06 | 12 |
| 21 to 30yrs | 18 | 36 |
| 31 to 40yrs | 11 | 22 |
| 41 to 50yrs | 09 | 18 |
| 51yrs & above | 06 | 12 |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 37 | 74 |
| Female | 13 | 26 |
| Nativity | | |
| Urban | 41 | 82 |
| Rural | 09 | 18 |
| Educational Qualification | | |
| Below Hsc | 08 | 16 |
| Graduate | 27 | 54 |
| Technical | 04 | 08 |
| Professional | 11 | 22 |
| Information needs | | |
| General | 01 | 02 |
| Academic | 05 | 10 |
| Sports | 04 | 08 |
| Personal development | 01 | 02 |
| Health | 02 | 04 |
| Politics | 03 | 06 |

| | | |
|--------------------------------|----|----|
| Security | 01 | 02 |
| Agriculture | 03 | 06 |
| Government policies/programmes | 27 | 54 |
| International politics | 01 | 02 |
| Provision of social amenities | 02 | 04 |

Source: Primary data

The above percentage analysis indicates that more than one third (36 per cent) of the respondents age group belongs to 21 to 30yrs, 22 per cent were 31 to 40yrs, 18 per cent were 41 to 50yrs and remaining each 12 per cent were below 20yrs and above 51yrs. Vast majority (74 per cent) of the respondents were male and remaining 26 per cent were female. Vast majority (82 per cent) of the respondents were in urban area and remaining 26 per cent were in rural area. More than half (54 per cent) of the respondents were graduates, 22 per cent were professional, 16 per cent were below Hsc and remaining 08 per cent were technical qualification. More than half (54 per cent) of the respondents were government policies and programmes, 10 per cent were academic, 8 per cent were sports related information and remaining below 5 per cent were others.

SUGGESTION AND CONCLUSION

The library must as a matter of policy periodically re-assess the information needs of their community. This is even more imperative now that the users have developed sophisticated needs which are constantly changing. The State and Local Governments must be committed towards public library development. Adequate and timely release of funds is essential and necessary for the libraries to be comfortable in discharging their responsibilities to the society. Adequate budgetary allocation is needed to stock library building with current and relevant materials and for staff capacity building. The Library Management should develop a good public relation and advocacy programmes in order to boost positive image of the library and to attract funds from sources other than government. The Library Management should see lobbying and pressurizing as vital tools of attracting more funds into the library. Public libraries are expected to provide people-oriented services, aiming at satisfying the general public through the provision of appropriate information resources and services, such as advisory services, strategic leadership and information on local content that incorporates indigenous knowledge system into it. However, the current state of district libraries of Tamil Nadu far from what it should be. Having highlighted the situation of the library, there is need for both the state government to provide all the necessary funds required for the smooth operation and provision of necessary services to the users.

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