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AN INVESTIGATION INTO INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF LAW STUDENTS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Information Seeking Behavior has gained significance, especially after the radical change in the types of information formats and the way access to them is provided through internet. Information Needs and Seeking Behavior is expressed in various forms from reading of printed and electronic documents to research and communications. The law students prefer the online searches for information needs in current digital environment. In this connection, the researcher discussed Information Seeking Behaviour method, purpose and usages of library by the law students. The study also explores the use pattern of print and electronic legal information desired by the library users engaged in study and research, which is backbone of the education system. The



law Libraries must be aware of information needs of their users to accomplish a well set objective and function of the task at hand. The information needs and seeking behaviour is concerned with establishing relationship with the user, information and system. The study is an attempt to investigate the information needs by the law students.

KEYWORDS: Information Needs, Seeking Behaviour, Law libraries, Legal Research.

INTRODUCTION: Digital Law Libraries have been a growing topic and the legal institutions are establishing digital

libraries and repositories and also using online applications that would enable the users to access up-to-date information on the topics and legal subjects. An example can be found in the legal and judicial system in India including legal institutions ILLI, and Supreme Court and Indian High Courts, where wide range of legal information and orders and judgements are available for the public. The legal database contains the laws, cases, indexes and materials that a legal professional or student can ever imagine and information is accessed at a very high speed and without stress. The users are developing their

research skills and knowledge of materials that are in print format as part of their degree and professional studies and eventually employ when in legal practice. It is relevant to note that legal education and research are in two stages: an initial or academic stage focused on developing the students with knowledge based and the professional stage, in which the students are instructed on how to 'do things like a lawyer'. Information is an amorphous, less susceptible to a precise definition. Yet, everyone has to deal with it in many ways throughout his life. However information is considered the basic need after air, water, food and shelter. Knowledge in general and information in particular become more meaningful when they are transferred and communicated. The purpose of transfer and communication of

information is 'use'. Without the intention on the part of the ultimate receiver or beneficiary of information to use it, the whole exercise of transfer and communication becomes futile and information transferred becomes redundant. Information seeking and communication are two sides of the same coin from the viewpoint of individuals concerned. Both have the same purpose i.e. use.

Information and Communication Technology has dynamically affected the information seeking behavior of the users in Law community. Basically the emergence of Internet technology has made it possible for the remote access of web resources and legal databases. Now- a- days, access is considered more important than ownership. In the changing scenario, law library and legal information centers have to focus towards the user community in understanding their changing information needs and information seeking behavior. The Library and Information Centers have access to a large number of web resources and legal databases. Due to the addition of new resources to the library collection, it is important to assess the problems faced by the end users.

The increased volume of information on the internet has affected information needs and seeking behaviour of user's remarkably, which involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. The kind of information required by the user, methods adopted in searching information, environment affected, time spent, problems faced and solutions made, the satisfaction or dissatisfaction arising from the information gathered and the relationship of the user with the system-all come under the purview of a user study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review is concerned with the survey of a particular work or a work published in a particular field or topic. It demonstrates one's knowledge in a particular field. Justifying the reason for one's research it allows a researcher to establish his theoretical framework. The need for literature review has become inevitable as it provides a handy guide to the particular topic being taken up. It provides the latest information for the relevant work and a comprehensive knowledge to a researcher.

The user's information needs has an influential factor in the process of their information seeking. As a universal assumption "man should actively seek knowledge" has been shown in the study on information seeking in electronic environment conducted by Marchionini (1995). The need for skill mediation and intervention and digital library as dynamic systems have been revealed by Jacobson and Ignacio (1997) while studying the influence of electronic information system on teaching methods and its curricula. Using electronic questionnaire, Brown (1999) studied information seeking behaviour in electronic information age at the University of Oklahoma about its scientists which cover astronomers, chemists, mathematicians and physicists. The findings of the study observed that majority of the scientists:- (a) accessed to print journals rather than electronic journal, (b) accessed to electronic bibliographic databases and (c) felt importance of printed peer-reviewed journal article. Taking into account the training package of the ICT for Library and Information Professionals (ICTLIP) developed by UNESCO South and Pacific Region, for developing countries, David (2002) studied on information seeking in electronic environment concerning Module 3 of the package. Odusanya and Amusa (2003) "identify four aspects of education related information needs of law students including Current information on research findings, Information related to pursuance of innovative ideas, Current affairs and knowledge and for legal administration."

Beautieu (2003) studied on approaches to users based studies information seeking and Retrieval. Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2004) indicates that "the term information has been defined, understood and differently interpreted across various disciplines and professions. The decision makers viz. Politicians, managers, legal professionals etc. Perceive information as the process by which event of external world are conceived and thus provides opportunity to form decisions on economic, education, moral and legal issues." According to Folorunsho and Ibrahim (2005), "information is a fact, an opinion or an idea from any source, which can give support to making adequate decisions." Smith and Mostert (2004) also defined "information as a property of matter, any message, documents or information resource or any data." Therefore it can be stated that information is an important instrument used in the realisation of any goal set by an individual, society or institution.

Reddy (2010) stated that “information can be acquired, processed and disseminated through the university law libraries, where library resources users and information managers interact together for the transmission of information of knowledge. He agreed that it is imperative for library managers to understand how library resources are searched and utilized by library users.” Thanuskodi (2010), observed that majority of respondents were not aware of e-resources. The study also shows that the respondents used IT based library sources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources. Kadli and Hanchinal (2015), in a comparative study of Law Students in two law colleges of Mumbai find that the law students use IT based library sources and facilities ore frequently along with printed sources. From the literature it is found that awareness about legal information resources among legal professionals was not less.

3. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the present study are as follows -

- (a) To identify the frequency and purpose of using information by the law students.
- (b) To identify the awareness of e-resources among the law students.
- (c) To find out the frequency of usages of internet and digital resources.
- (e) To identify the purpose for using the legal resources.
- (f) To identify the time spent for accessing online information by the law students.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Many studies on information seeking behaviour of users have been carried out in various fields but the review of the past studies reveals that few studies have been earlier carried out for the users of legal professionals. In this reason it was thought proper to carry out a study in the field of law covering law students. Because of the information growth, complexity of legal information services, the complexities of the profession, the difficulty in the interpretation of information in legal field has made the information more intricate complex which has direct impact on the information seeking pattern of the users, who are originator as well as consumer of the legal information.

The findings of the study are mainly applicable to the users of law library of Lucknow University. Only selected users were included for this study as sample since study of all the users were not possible owing to constraints of time, energy and efforts.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study attempted to explore the information need and information seeking behaviour of the law students of Law colleges of Lucknow city and also the areas viz. Information needs, information sources used by them, legal e-resources and computing skills of the users and the use of IT based library services.

The questionnaire is adopted to collect the data which covers qualitative and quantitative in nature. The quantitative method respond to the questions 'what, when' how many', the qualitative methods respond to the questions 'how and why'. We have selected various categories of respondents. The questionnaires were distributed randomly among the law students of Lucknow University using their library regularly.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

We have collected 191 questionnaires out of 200 users among whom the questionnaire were distributed. This constitutes 95.5 percent of the total response. From the data it is observed that out of total 191 respondents, 112 are male and 89 are female. It shows that the responses received from male are higher than the female.

6.1 Respondents by Gender

It is clear from the above figure that amongst 191 respondents 56% were male and 44.5% were female. The number of female users is comparatively less than male respondents. It indicates that the ratio of the female students in the subject of law is less.

6.2 Frequency of visit to Library

	Frequency	No. of Users	Percentage
1	Daily	154	80.63
2	Alternate day	21	11.00
3	Occasionally	16	8.37
		191	100

It shows that 80.63 percent of the respondents visit the library daily followed by 11 percent alternate day, 8.37 percent occasionally as and when required. The study shows that most of the students refer the library regularly to fulfill their information needs.

6.3 Time Spent for information gathering in a day

	Time Spent	No. of Users	Percentage
1	More than One hour	23	12.04
2	More than Two hours	85	44.51
3	More than Three hours	44	23.03
4	More than four hours	39	20.42
		191	100

It is found that a large number of 44.51 percent respondents spent more than two hours daily for information need as well as 23.03 percent more than three hours, 20.42 percent approximate four hours and 12.04 about one hour spent for getting their information. It shows that there is a special need of the information services in the subject of law.

6.4 Purpose for seeking Information from the library

	Purpose	No. of Users	Percentage
1	Study for exams	34	17.81
2	Prepare notes	91	47.64
3	Research Work	32	16.75
4	Updating knowledge	34	17.80
		191	100

The study indicates that 47.64 percent respondents used information system for preparation of notes as well as 16.75 percent for research work whereas 17.81 percent for study and 17.80 percent for updating knowledge. It is clear that the purpose for seeking information for prepares notes is very high and maximum respondents refer library regularly for seeking information.

6.5 Frequency of using Internet

	Duration	No. of Users	Percentage
1	One hour	21	11.00
2	Two hours	82	42.92
3	Three hours	52	27.23
4	more than three hours	36	18.85
		191	100

It indicate that frequency of using internet is higher 42.92% for two hours followed by 27.23% for three hours, 18.85% for more than three hours and 11% for one hours. It is clear that due to huge number of online resources a large number of users spent more time to access information through internet.

6.6 Purpose for using Internet (multiple choice)

	Purpose	No. of User	Percentage
1	Social networking sites	166	86.91
2	For study Material	85	44.50
3	For research work	69	36.13
4	Access legal information	108	56.54

The respondents were asked to indicate the purpose for using Internet. The ratio of respondents for using internet for social networking sites are very high followed by access legal information. It indicates that internet is necessity for the study and research in all the fields including law as the legal information is too vast.

6.7 Awareness of legal Databases (multiple choice)

	Databases	No. of User	Percentage
1	Courtnic & Judis	93	48.69
2	Indian Kanoon	116	60.73
3	Lawmin & Legalpandit	56	29.32

The responses received from the students shows that maximum respondents are accessing online legal databases. The study shows that 60.73% accessing Indiankanoon, 48.69 accessing Courtnic & Judis and 29.32% accessing Lawmin & Legalpandit for legal information needs. It is observed from the results that a large number of students are accessing free legal databases, whether it may be at home or at the institute.

6.8 Problem Faced while seeking digital Information (multiple choice)

	Nature of Problem	No. of User	Percentage
1	Incomplete information	77	40.31
2	Information scattered in too many sources	115	60.21
3	Do not know the use of digital resources	39	20.41
4	Information overload on Internet	89	46.6

The respondents were asked to provide reason as problem faced while seeking digital information. The large number of respondents 60.21 percent considered Information scattered in too many sources' towards their information needs. Another 46.60 percent of the respondents perceived as 'Information overload on Internet', 40.31 percent of the respondents assessed as incomplete information' and remaining 20.41 percent of the respondents said 'Do not know the use of digital resources'. Majority of the respondents were faced problems due to very vast information scattered in too many sources.

7. FINDING

- Most of the students regularly visit the library for preparing notes and study which indicates that the students depend on the library services. It is clear from the study that the libraries play a vital role for study and research in legal institution.
- A large number of the students of legal institutions are using Internet thereby indicates that they depend on the digital information.
- It is observed that highest number of students spend two to three hours in a day on internet.
- It is significant to note that the large number of students are using internet for social networking purposes and for gathering legal information also.
- It is observed from the results that there are many students who know online legal databases. The users rated high for Indiankanoon and followed Courtnic, Judis and Legalpandit. Most of them are aware about legal resources and using them frequently.
- Most of the students appreciated the digital resources with regards to search facilities, time saving and links to the other sources to keep themselves up-to-date and to assist study and research etc.
- It is find that majority of the students were faced problems due to very vast information scattered in too many

sources on the internet.

8. CONCLUSION

The print media is slowly replaced by digital media and the form of information storage and communication is also becoming digital. ICT has benefited the libraries and helps in automating libraries, developing networking of libraries, development of IR, use of internet and intranet for information collection and dissemination, generation of digital information resources in the form of ebooks and e-journals, creation of digital libraries etc. The users of these law libraries are the major beneficiaries of the collection hence the libraries attached to the law institutes are academic as well as special. This type of nature requires more skills on the part of librarians to perform the task well for fulfilling the needs of users. The legal education is proliferating and growing along with the expectations of the users. Law libraries are also changing their practices and using ICT to fulfill demands of the users. The importance of libraries in legal field is increasing as these libraries are acting as information centres to share the legal resources.

The Information needs of the students are also changing and the major shift is in terms of how to search information in the digital era and hence they need orientation for making effective information searches. For academic users information plays an important role in developing a knowledge base and need recent information in the field continuously. The use of new technology provides direct access to information but while searching information proper skills is required to collect and present the acquired information. The major role of libraries is to widen the use of library resources, which helps academic users to improve their learning, teaching and research capabilities.

The study revealed that the law students use online resources and facilities more frequently along with printed sources. Similarly, it is also observed that online searches are the most popular internet application used by the users, whereas other internet based services and applications are used moderately. This is a matter of concern, as presently, digital information sources and the Internet are considered extremely important tools for effective learning and research. Therefore all the libraries need to review its policy on digital information resources. It is suggested that the law libraries shall adopt the practice of taking users feedback which will certainly help strength of the library services and legal resources.

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