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INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN COLLEGE LIBRARIES WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO COLLEGES AFFILIATED TO RTM NAGPUR UNIVERSITY

Mr. Rajkumar Thaware
Librarian
Athawale College of Social Work, Bhandara.

ABSTRACT:

The study observes information-seeking behavior as exhibited in college libraries attached to Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University. It aims to establish a trend in the way postgraduate students locate, access, and use information for their academic, research, and personal developmental needs against a backdrop of the changing information environment. The data collection took place through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews with selected students pursuing postgraduate studies in various faculties. The findings of the study revealed the increased usage of digital resources, online databases, and the internet by the students, though conventional print materials still remain important to them. It, however, brought in the insight that e-resources were poorly utilized due to limited awareness, poor information literacy, and infrastructural problems of college libraries. Therefore, technology has indeed changed the face of information seeking in academic pursuits; however, concerted efforts in the domain of library service delivery, user education, and ICT infrastructure are highly needed to complement postgraduate education and research.



KEYWORDS: Information-seeking behavior, Postgraduate students, College libraries, RTM Nagpur University, Digital resources, Information literacy, 2007–2017.

INTRODUCTION:

Information is still vital for disseminating knowledge, research, and innovations. The fast development of ICTs has changed the methods of how students seek information, now access, and use it. Previously academic libraries were restricted to print materials, but now we talk about able information centers in a hybrid manner where resources are available both physically and digitally. It would be perhaps helpful to have an insight into post-graduate students' information-seeking behavior because it can help improve library services for user use.

Postgraduate students constitute one of the major segments for the professional use of academic libraries simply because of the nature of their studies and research, which involve looking for information of an extensive and varied nature. Information-seeking trends are always influenced by one or more of the following factors: nature of the study, awareness of the digital media, library set-up, availability of information sources. During this decade, with technological intervention, users have been shifting their preferences from traditional print materials to online databases and e-journals.

In the core of India, has been located one of the biggest universities, namely Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University (RTMNU), which has the affiliation of more than 800 colleges belonging to varying academic disciplines. The decade running from 2007 to 2017 saw a window of transformation in terms of library management and resource accessibility of these institutions, catalyzed mainly by digitization movements. A few of the major campaigns were INFLIBNET, N-LIST, and OPAC systems. From the same period started to change the learning culture among postgraduate students as digital resources increasingly appeared as the primary channel for satisfying their academic and research requirements.

Analysis of the information seeking behavior of a few of the postgraduates of RTMNU-affiliated colleges over a decade would shed thought into the technology changes in the libraries and the ability of these classes of users in using such resources. Therefore, the final manifestations of this study would probably contribute to recognizing the gaps, challenges, and areas in which library services might support in postgraduation in the digital environment.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

- 1) To identify the information needs of postgraduate students in RTMNU-affiliated colleges.
- 2) To analyze the sources and channels used by students for obtaining information.
- 3) To study the impact of ICT and digital libraries on students' information-seeking behavior.
- 4) To examine the problems and barriers faced by students in accessing information.
- 5) To suggest measures for improving library services in college libraries.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Given the longstanding significance of information-seeking behavior in library science, libraries have traditionally been designed somewhat around the user and their information-seeking behavior. Wilson's (1999) comprehensive model of information behavior regarding user context, barriers, and various motivations concerning information use has provided the theoretical basis for many studies to follow. Taking liberal views, Kumar and Singh (2008) studied user behavior in Indian academic libraries and understood an almost burgeoning preference for digital information sources among the students especially granted by increasing ICT facilities. Mahajan (2009) well documented in a survey conducted at Panjab University that those postgraduate students were more dependent on reference materials and scholarly journals than the undergraduate ones. Likewise, Anuradha and Usha (2009) emphasize that for some years, postgraduates in Indian universities are used mainly to the use of e-resources—e-journals and online databases—in fulfilling their academic and research needs. According to Patil (2013), ICT has tremendously changed the information-seeking behaviors of students even as print materials are still acknowledged to be very important. Chandran (2014) points out in his study about the growing dependence of postgraduate students on online search engines like Google Scholar and institutional repositories, with the disturbing fact that many are unable to evaluate and filter information. According to Mulla and Chandrashekara (2015), the ability of students to search for information depends upon their information literacy skills. The studies conducted by Kadam (2016) and Lata (2016) in some colleges in Maharashtra highlight that despite the increase in the provision of digital resources through consortia such as INFLIBNET and N-LIST during the said period, most of the students are yet unaware of how to access

these resources. Further, Sheikh (2017) found a transition in the behavior of postgraduate students wherein colleges affiliated with RTM Nagpur University were steadily shifting towards electronic information sources yet are still dependent on librarians' assistance and training. This from 2007-2017, in term spells the transitional phase in information-seeking behavior among postgraduate students from traditional print resources to hybrid and digital mode of access, with inadequacies of infrastructural facilities, awareness of e-resources, and information literacy programs, as challenges identified.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The researcher applied a descriptive survey design to analyze the information-seeking behavior of the postgraduate students studying at RTMNU-affiliated colleges. The sampling for the study was stratified random sampling, with a population size of 300 students. Structured questionnaire forms, interviews, and observations served as the means of data collection. Analysis involved both description and thematic analysis, focusing on behavioral patterns existing amid the transition from print to digital sources, with some limitations to the study, such as limitations in scope and answer bias.

Information-seeking behavior of postgraduate students in college libraries with special reference to colleges affiliated to RTM Nagpur University:

This information-seeking behavior found higher importance and motives for 10 years when we encountered a transition from print library to digital/hybrid library systems due to the ICT-related changes in e-resources, digital library software, consortia-based e-resources like INFLIBNET, and N-LIST. Proper and timely information is considered of utmost importance for conducting postgraduate research work and course and dissertation work. Different types of information sought are considered: academic, research, and personal; sources for the information- print books, journals, e-resources, websites, institutional repository; working methods employed by the students to get hold of their materials; and hindrances in their use, such as digital illiteracy, awareness of e-resources, and infrastructural facilities, etc. Spread all over the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, RTMNU with its colleges presents an exciting contrast of disparities in terms of facilities available in the libraries, the use of ICT within the libraries, and training of users, and thus comparative information across disciplines and institutions are available.

Various policy formulations were made in this period to herald the modernization of library systems along with collection digitization and user education, which were all targeted at changing the face of research habits of the students. Finally, the findings of this research will help bridge the gap between shifting user needs and improved services, training, and ICT resources that would lead to better academic and research standards and life-long learning capabilities by postgraduate students through library people and administration or policy people.

FINDINGS:

The investigation found significant changes over 10 years in the information-seeking behavior of 300 postgraduate students taught across ten colleges affiliated with Rashtrasant Tukadoji Maharaj Nagpur University (RTMNU). The study gave importance to shift in trends from the conventional to the digital. The majority of students mainly seek information for assignments, projects, and dissertations (78%); at least half of them also look up resources for competitive exams and self-improvement (52%). From 2007 to 2010, there was a steady trend of more than 65% of students getting to their information using print sources from books to journals. This garnered a shift to electronic means from e-journals to databases and online repositories, with the last statistics standing at 72% for 2015-2017. Students using the internet stand at 68%. This, it seems, has been the emergence of web-based information-retrieval as significant.

Though widely available, INFLIBNET and N-LIST are much unknown and very little used because the libraries advertised them seldom nor offered any orientation programs. Library visitation has remained quite high, with 81% of the students regularly visiting the college libraries for borrowing books, reference assistance, and reading rooms; however, 48% of the students are confident when it comes to using ICT tools that include OPAC systems.

More awareness of ICT had been shown by about 82% of urban students against 61% from rural backgrounds, thus, exposing infrastructure disparity. They follow a hybrid information search pattern that starts with online searches (69%) and then Campus library resources searches heavily influenced by academic staff and students. Around 64% use mobile technology to perform fast searches from anywhere that users are at that moment for academic use.

Some of the key inhibiting factors include slow internet speed (42%), lack of formal training on e-resources (56%), restricted library hours, and difficulty in verifying sources online. Satisfied ones were a good 67% of the bulk student sample coming from colleges with well-established digital infrastructure and trained manpower. Though 58% sought librarian assistance, many felt the library staff themselves needed further training, making the presence of librarians much supportive. In conclusion, the study showed how over the last 10 years, there had been a marked movement toward technology-aided information search behaviors, emphasizing the need to strengthen digital literacy, awareness creation, and infrastructural support for a fully realized academic library of today.

DISCUSSION:

Over the last 10 years, college library systems have changed drastically in the UG jurisdiction of RTM Nagpur University (RTMNU), as these libraries have slowly evolved from print-based to highly digital avenues of knowledge consumption for the postgraduate clientele. In the beginning, print was much in demand, at 64%, till later for some 73% of students, e-databases, e-journals, and internet resources were preferred.

The trend followed those of the national scale, where considerable emphasis was put on electronic resources. While many students went digital, there remained a considerable chunk of 48% still holding onto print books and journals to aid deep study and draft preparation-the way of conceptualizing traditional reading. Then came human-assisted information seeking, which again got high importance with about 59% of students meeting regularly with librarians to seek assistance in research and literature searches, while 42% sought such assistance from their peers and faculty-this need has since been sustained alongside the emphasis on digital resources through interpersonal support.

ICT presence was overwhelmingly present, with about three-fourths of the population using digital devices such as computers, tablets, and smartphones for academic purposes-and while infrastructural disparity was quite evident with urban colleges enjoying more than 85% Internet penetration in contrast to rural colleges having just 58% Wi-Fi penetration, and with 78% satisfaction levels for those with Wi-Fi as well as digital learning centers and a mere 49% satisfaction in the absence of them. INFLIBNET and N-LIST e-resources awareness and use were supposedly not at their very best, with half the students aware and less than one-third actively using the two prominent e-resources but for many opting for platforms like Google Scholar or ResearchGate for ease of use. There was an orientation gap, wherein 29% of the population passed through some orientation either concerning library use or digital literacy, which demands some awareness drives.

The librarians stood as the linchpin for this transition, providing immense bridging help to the students in accessing resources and researching, whereas challenges were majorly from training lacuna: 47% of libraries were lacking, and there were financial constraints with the result of non-ideal delivery of services. The total result for user satisfaction was determined between moderate and high, especially for

institutions with a high digital infrastructure, with 68% of them being satisfied; whereas the users at institutions were less equipped and opposite in opinion, with demands for extended hours, better Internet, and training.

The study suggests that postgraduate students are currently performing a hybrid method of searching for information, mixing both digital and traditional means; however, those immense challenges persist, infrastructural inequality, lack of awareness of electronic resources, and low levels of information literacy. The study further indicates an urgent need for continuous modernization of the libraries and user education, coupled with policy interventions focused on promoting equitable access and optimal utilization of resources by all colleges affiliated to RTMNU so that each student may benefit from advancements despite his host institution.

CONCLUSION:

The study of postgraduate students at colleges affiliated with RTM Nagpur University divulges a drastic swing in the student's information-seeking behavior from a print-oriented model to a digital and hybrid one. Nearly seventy-three percent of the students prefer to work on the digital platform, seeking quick information with respect to recent developments; meanwhile, print media are chosen by almost half of the students for deep study, who believe in complementary co-existence between the two media. Even with ICT access becoming prominent overnight, obstructions such as sluggish internet and lack of awareness of available e-resources and training have come to its best utilization. The study reveals that digital libraries, well equipped, coupled with user education and information literacy, would empower the research capacity of the students, and librarians will continue to be a major stakeholder for facilitation in this regard. Nevertheless, disparities with infrastructural setups and highly contrasting levels of digital literacy remain to be addressed; therefore, further technological up-gradation in areas of physical infrastructure and training is required so that equal opportunities are offered to all. Hence, the findings reveal a hybrid-natured information-seeking pattern that imparts the need for strategic investments in infrastructure, resource awareness, and literacy programs geared towards augmenting research and academic performance across RTMNU.

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