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Information Seeking Behaviour of Faculty Members of Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok

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Abstract

This article reports the results of a study of the information seeking behaviour of faculty members of Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok, Thailand. Data were collected by using a questionnaire from seven faculties in Rajabhat Universities. Results show that most of respondents (forty one percent) stated their method of seeking information by consulting a knowledgeable person in the field. Two hundred and thirteen respondents (82 percent) seek information for preparing lectures. Fifty-four percent of faculty members access more documents was references from a book. It is revealed that most of the faculty members (57 percent) used textbooks. Seventy four percent of respondents read information materials in Thai and twenty four percent read materials in English. The Internet had been almost universally adopted; they trace materials from the library via the Internet. Google.com was used for searching information by respondents. They use frequently e-mail for communication. It is found that 42 percent of respondents use the ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre) database. The majority of respondents faced the common problem while seeking information i.e. unavailability of information.

Keywords

Introduction

The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. Many electronic resources are available in the library. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information seeking behavior. Innumerable types of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place (Fidel et al., 1999). 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.

Regardless of which group in a human society is discussed, each one bases its actions upon current information and discards the earlier data. Philosophies emphasize the direct,

experiential acquisition of knowledge in the material, physical plane of existence as the most proper form of information. So, no one can deny that knowledge and information are vital.

There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent or ignorant and should actively seek knowledge. "Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence" (Marchionini, 1995). Information seeking behavior 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 (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the Web) (Wilson, 2000).

Information seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought (Leckie, Pettigrew & Sylvain, 1996). Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopedias, journals and, more currently, electronic media. Abels (2004) mentioned that the frequency of use of the Internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. At the same time, expenditures on monographs showed steady increase.

The library, therefore, is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. The librarian should be aware of what kind of information is being sought, and how it can be obtained. Due to the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving printed scholarly journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services.

Related Studies

The literature of information seeking behaviour of faculty members available is greatly broad ranging. An attempt has been made to cover number of works that go beyond discussions of the information seeking behavior itself and its direct applications to closely related topics such as information seeking. This broad review also includes topics like information seeking of faculty.

Suriya, Sangeetha and Nambi (2004) carried out a research work on "Information seeking behaviour of Faculty Members from Government Arts Colleges in Cuddalore District." The purpose of their study was to investigate, how faculty members seek information from the library. It mentions that most of the respondents 61 (38.12 percent) visited the library several times a week to meet their information needs. Regarding the type of search made by the respondents the majority of the respondents 91 (56.87 percent) made their search by subject.

Shokeen and Kushik (2002) studied about information seeking behaviour of social scientists working in the universities located in Haryana. They reported most of the social scientists visit the library daily. The first preferred method of searching the required information by the social scientists followed by searching through indexing and abstracting periodicals, and citations in articles respectively. The social scientists use current journals followed by books.

Challener (1999) investigated artists and art historians teaching in five liberal arts colleges and three universities. Results found that they need information for teaching. The participants almost all subscribe to art journals, and many read newspapers. They visit libraries frequently, usually more than one library, and unlike previous reports, the

majority are willing to ask the librarian for help. A large percentage of both art historians and artists are using computers for teaching. All 27 participants use slides extensively in the classroom, supplemented in most cases by textbooks.

Reneker (1992) investigated the information seeking activities of 31 members of the Stanford University academic community were examined over a two-week period during the 1990-91 academic year. She adopted the naturalistic approach and employed qualitative techniques for the data collection using mainly personal interviews. Informants' perception of their information environment is expressed in positive terms, and there is a close relationship between knowledge of the information environment and the sources used. Information seeking is embedded in the day-to-day activities and relationships of the participants and is triggered both by the articulation of need and availability of information. A large number of needs are satisfied by sources the informants created or organized themselves and by interpersonal information sources. The findings of the study indicated that the action of information seeking originated from a wide variety of needs like personal, professional, entertainment, etc.

Goals of the Study

There are 41 Rajabhat Universities in all Thailand, but the researchers studied only Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok. As Bangkok is the capital and is the centre of education having variety of information resources. Information seeking is a fluid and situation dependent activity where a seeker's actions are influenced by access to information, perceived quality and trust in the information source (Boyd, 2004). This reminds the necessity of regular study and development of information system and management information services in Rajabhat universities. This work intends to study followings in RU libraries as a prototype of Rajabhat universities:

1. To examine information seeking behaviour of faculty members in Rajabhat Universities (RUs) in Bangkok;
2. To determine the kind of information are used by faculty members for seeking information;
3. To study the purpose of information seeking by faculty members;
4. To explore the use of information technology;
5. To reveal the use of language of reading material; and
6. To study the problems faced by users of RUs while seeking and use information.

Need of the study

The nature of information is not easy to describe. Perhaps the most explicit definition in the literature defines information as recorded experience that is used in decision-making. Today, information technology has developed rapidly and has had a huge impact on access to information and on information seeking behavior. Librarian and library-staff have to know and examine the criteria of information seeking and information used by users for providing information services, designing new information systems, intervening in the operation of existing systems, or planning in service programs.

The researchers tried to get the answers from the following questions:

1. What kind of information is sought by faculty members?
2. What methods are used for seeking information?
3. How is information technology used by faculty members?
4. What languages are used by faculty members?
5. What are the problems of seeking information and how it can be solved?

Methodology and Scope

This survey includes six Rajabhat universities in Bangkok i.e. Suan Dusit Rajabhat University, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University, Dhonburi Rajabhat University, Chandrakasem Rajabhat University, and Phranakhon Rajabhat University. The questionnaires were distributed to 303 respondents by post (see Appendix I). Two hundred sixty faculty members responded to the questionnaire i.e. 86%. The respondents are faculty members of Education Faculty, Humanities and Social Sciences Faculty, Management Faculty, Sciences and Technology Faculty, Industrial Technology Faculty, Agriculture Technology Faculty and Arts Faculty (see Table 1).

Table 1. Response from Faculty Members

Faculty	Questionnaire Distributed		Response Received	
	No.	%	No.	%
Education	61	20	51	20
Humanities and Social Sciences	84	28	73	28
Management	51	17	45	17
Sciences and Technology	80	26	69	26
Arts	8	3	7	3
Industrial Technology	15	5	12	5
Agriculture Technology	4	1	3	1
Total	303	100	260	86

Analysis

The data obtained were analyzed using Statistics Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), as this was useful for creating frequency tables for each of the variables. The open-ended questions were analyzed using content analysis.

Findings

Method of information seeking

The question was asked about the method used by the faculty member for seeking information. Table 2 shows that fifty-three percent of the faculty members consulted a knowledgeable person in the field. Forty-one percent discussed with colleagues, 39 percent discussed with librarian or reference staff of the library, and 35 percent used Library catalogue for seeking the information.

Table 2. Method of information seeking

Method	No. of respondents	%
Consult a knowledgeable person in the field	137	53
Discussion with colleagues	106	41
Discussion with librarian or reference staff of the library	102	39
Library catalogue	92	35
Indexing journals	59	23
Review articles	49	19

Discussion with librarian/reference staff of other libraries	47	18
Abstracting journals	28	11
Consult supervisor	24	9

Purpose of seeking information

As shown in Table 3, respondents indicated the purpose of seeking information. 213 (82 percent) faculty members sought information for preparing class lectures, 79 percent for keeping up-date knowledge, and 54 percent for writing and presenting papers.

Table 3. Purpose of information seeking

Purpose	No. of respondents	%
For preparing class lectures	213	82
For updating knowledge	206	79
For writing and presenting paper	141	54
For doing research work	125	48
For guiding researchers	39	15
For doing Ph.D.	29	11
For entertainment	21	8

Type of information

Faculty members were asked to indicate the type of information source which they used to seek information (Table 4). For seeking information, textbooks were the popular type of information source for all faculty members (57 percent). Fifteen percent of faculty members use periodicals. Brown (1999) found that all of the scientists used textbooks, journals and monographs to support teaching activities.

**Table 4. Types of information**

Types of materials	No.	%
Textbooks	148	57
Periodicals	40	15
Newspapers	19	7
Exhibition	12	5
Government publications	11	4
Reference books	9	4
Pamphlets	7	3
Patents	6	2
General books	5	2
Thesis/Research reports	2	1

Language use

A question was asked to find out the language of reading materials preferred by the faculty members. It is cleared from the analysis that 193 (74 percent) faculty members use Thai language, 62 (24 percent) use English, and only 5 (2 percent) use French and Japanese (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Language use
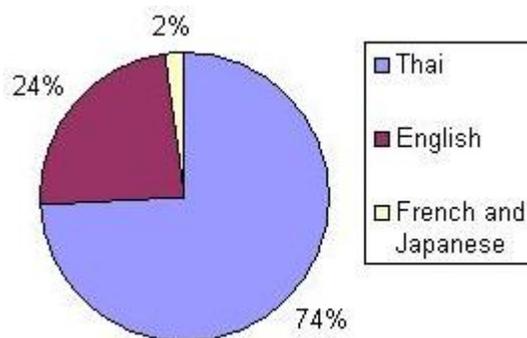
Problems with seeking information

The respondents were asked to mention the problems they faced while seeking information.

Table 5. Problems Faced by Faculty Members

Problems	No. of respondents	%
Material is not available	95	37
Lack of time	73	28
Incomplete information materials	23	9
Understanding of English language	22	9
Information sources are so far located	11	4
Information scattered in too many sources	9	3
Some of information materials are old	9	3
Lack of knowledge in using the library	6	2
Information is too vast	5	2
Library staff are unwilling for service	4	1
Do not know how to use catalogue	3	1

Table 5 shows that the majority of faculty members (37 percent) faced the same common problem i.e. unavailability of information. Twenty-eight percent faced with a lack of time for searching. Nine percent of them faced incomplete information materials and language problem.

Internet use

The faculty members were asked to indicate the use of the Internet. Thirty-seven percent of faculty members use the Internet daily. Fifty-two percent use the Internet for education purposes. Seventy-six percent use the Internet at home. They also mentioned that they use e-mail frequently for communication. Thus, it can be argued that using the Internet eases access to a large amount of data, saves time and money, and obtains an opportunity to consult several experts with a single request (via discussion groups), and greater independence from specific times and places for information seeking (Savolainen, 1999).

Internet search engines

All respondents (56 percent) use search engines, especially Google, followed by Yahoo 35 percent, Sanook 6 percent and Excite 2 percent (see Table 6).

Table 6. Search Engines

Search Engines	No. of respondents	%
Google	147	56
Yahoo	52	35
Sanook	9	6
Excite	3	2
Hunsa	3	2
Kapok	3	2
MSN	1	1
AltaVista	1	1
Lycos	-	-

The Google search engine is mostly used because it is fast in access, regularly updated and links are provided to web sites in the world (Asemi, 2005).

Use of CD-ROM

A question was asked about the use of CD-ROM. Thirty-four respondents (42%) mentioned that they use the ERIC database, whereas 23 percent use DAO (Dissertation Abstract Online), 9 percent use Science Citation Index, whereas 7 percent use LISA (Library and Information Science Abstracts).

Figure 2. Use of CD-ROM
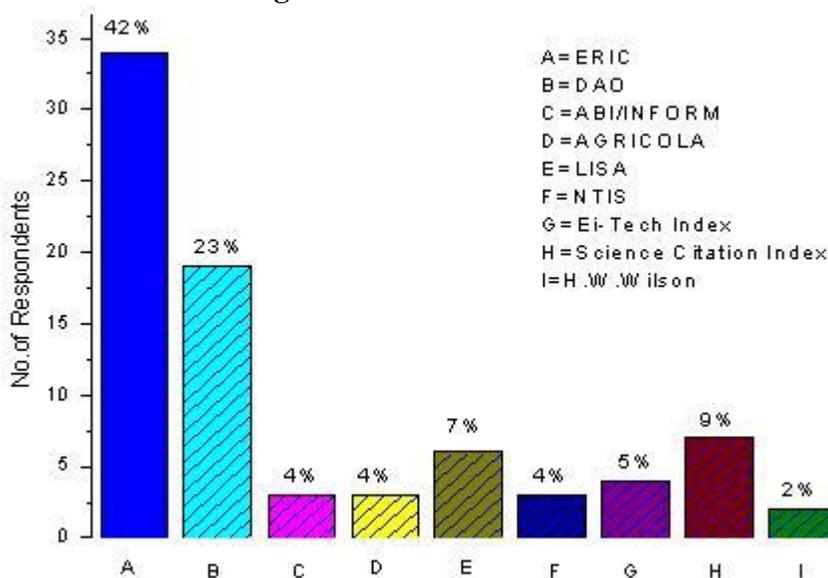
The ERIC database is popular in academic libraries and easy to use. It is a database on education from 1966 to present. ERIC is updated quarterly, and contains more than 975,000 abstracts from over 770 professional journals and related document such as research reports, papers, etc. Budd and Williams (1993) stated that it is the second indexing and abstracting database which is mostly subscribed in academic libraries.

Conclusions and Discussion

The successful operation of any library depends to a large extent on the choice of library collections. The choice of the collection should meet the need and requirements of the end

users. Consequently, librarians must be aware of how the faculty members seek information. The first three preferences given by the faculty for seeking information are textbooks, periodicals and newspapers. It is also observed that the majority of faculty members sought information for preparing lectures, keeping up-to-date knowledge and research work. Wales (2000) reveals that journals appear to be the most popular source for current awareness purpose. Faculty members used several methods to seek information, but they prefer to consult a knowledgeable person in the field. Thai Language is used by them for reading materials. In reality, it was found that they use the Internet strongly at home for education. E-mail is specifically used for communication because it saves time and money. ERIC is used by faculty members, as it is an education database which is popular and easy to use. The problems they faced while seeking information are incomplete information, lack of information and time, etc. Raw (1987) stated the lack of time, and it is still as prominent as ever.

In regard to information seeking behaviour of users in RUs in Bangkok, it is recommended that library staff or reference librarians could use their time in a better way by focusing on assisting users. Reference librarians should help users to improve their skills in information seeking activities and to find the different type of information they need. Librarians should also assist users in learning the use of OPAC, search engine, e-mail, and CD-ROM techniques, and inform them of the web sites available through the various networks. Hence, the library must provide adequate ICT facilities for reference librarians, such as Internet, laser printers, scanners, fax machine, telephone, etc to offer various services in the library.

Although users have expressed sentiment concerning augmentation of periodicals available, it is also suggested to acquire printed journals and electronic journals in both English and Thai languages. To know the available resources properly, orientation programs is necessary. Hence, it is suggested that advanced training for users at different levels should be started. Content of training programs should be (a) Basic introduction to library services and facilities; (b) Using OPAC; (c) Methods and tools for searching information resources; (d) Using the Internet; (e) Using online and CD-ROM databases; (f) Using electronic journals; (g) Introducing reference books; (h) Introducing audio/video materials; and (i) Introducing appropriate indexes and abstracts.

With regards to public relation, it is recommended that RU libraries should promote their activities through journal, bulletin board, and library web sites. Library web sites can cover information about the library, its activities, collections, online databases and methods of access. It is also recommended to incorporate the news which is interesting to the users. Suggestions for future research are related to the limitation of this study. This study did not collect the data comprising the "home use". This study can be extended by directly observing students and teachers. Additionally, it would be interesting to investigate how people, who occasionally telecommute to work, make transitions in access to information between two different places. Another way to extend the study's finding would be to explore post-information seeking strategies and activities in a more detailed level by examining how people save, exchange, distribute, organize and provide web information after they find the information at home. Librarians should continue to monitor technology and lifestyle changes. Adoption of technology should be based on evidence that supports adoption; evidence that validates the information seeker's perspective.

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Appendix I. Questionnaire
Information Seeking Behaviour of Faculty Members of Rajabhat Universities in Bangkok

Please tick mark into ☐ and give your views where applicable.

1. Sex : 1) Male   2) Female
2. Age . . . . . .
3. Designation
   1) Lecturer   2) Reader
   3) Professor   4) Any other (Please mention) . . . . . .

4. Qualification (highest: degree)
    1) Bachelor
    2) Master
    3) Ph.D.
    4) Post Doctoral

5. University . . . .
    1) Chandrakasem Rajabhat University
    2) Phranakhon Rajabhat University
    3) Suandusit Rajabhat University
    4) Suansunandha Rajabhat University
    5) Bansomdejchaopraya Rajabhat University
    6) Dhonburi Rajabhat University

6. Faculty
    1) Faculty of Education
    2) Faculty of Humanity and Social Science
    3) Faculty of Management Science
    4) Faculty of Science and Technology
    5) Faculty of Agricultural Technology
    6) Faculty of Industrial Technology
    7) Faculty of Arts

7. When you are seeking information, which sources of information do you generally try? (selected more than one choice)
    1) Discussion with colleagues
    2) Consult a knowledgeable person in the field
    3) Consult supervisor
    4) Discussion with librarian or reference staff of you library
    5) Discussion with librarian or reference staff of other library
    6) Review articles
    7) Abstracting journals
    8) Indexing journals
    9) Library catalogue
    10) Any other (Please mention) . . . .

8. What is the purpose of information seeking? (select more than one choice)
    1) For preparing class lectures
    2) For updating knowledge
    3) For doing research work
    4) For writing paper and presenting paper
    5) For doing Ph.D.
    6) For guiding researchers
    8) For entertainment

9. What type of materials you seek in your University library?
    1) Text books
    2) Periodicals
    3) Newspapers
    4) Exhibition
    5) Government Publications
    6) Reference books
    7) Pamphlets
    8) General books
    9) Patents

　　10) Thesis/Research reports
　　11) Any other (please mention) . . . .

10. Which tools do you use to get access to the documents you need?
　　1) Library catalogue
　　2) Indexing journals
　　3) Abstracting journals
　　4) References from a book
　　5) References from a periodical article
　　6) Book reviews
　　7) Bibliographies produced by library staff
　　8) Any other (please mention) . . . .

11. Which language of reading materials you prefer?
　　1) Thai
　　2) English
　　3) Any other . . . .

12. Which problems do you meet while seeking information?
　　1) Material is not available
　　2) Library staff are unwilling for service
　　3) Incomplete information materials
　　4) Information sources are so far located
　　5) Lack of time
　　6) Do not know how to use the catalogue
　　7) Lack of knowledge in using the library
　　8) Understanding of English language
　　9) Information scattered in too many sources
　　10) Information is too vast
　　11) Some of information materials are old
　　12) Any other (please mention) . . . .

13. Do you use the Internet?
　　a) Yes　　　b) No

14. How often you use the Internet?
　　1) Daily
　　2) At least once a week
　　3) At least once a fortnight
　　4) At least once a month
　　5) Rarely

15. For what purpose do you use the Internet?
　　1) Education
　　2) Entertainment
　　3) News
　　4) Health
　　5) Sports
　　6) Any other (please specify) . . . .

16. Where do you avail the facility of Internet?
　　1) University Library
　　2) Computer Center
　　3) Home

    4) Internet cafe
    5) Any other (please mention) . . . .

17. Which search engine do you use frequently?
    1) Google.com
    2) Yahoo.com
    3) Sanook.com
    4) Excite.com
    5) Hunsa.com
    6) Kapook.com
    7) MSN.com
    8) Alta vista.com
    9) Lycos.com
    10) Any other (please specify) . . . .

18. Do you use e-mail for communication?
    a) Yes   b) No
    If yes, how often you use it.
    1) Frequently
    2) Some times
    3) Rarely

19. Which CD-ROMs you use?
    1) ERIC
    2) DAO
    3) ABI/ INFORM
    4) AGRICOLA
    5) LISA
    6) NTIS
    7) Ei-Tech Index
    8) Science Citation Index
    9) H.W. Wilson
    10) Any other (please mention) . . . .

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