

Information Needs and Use Pattern of District Court Lawyers of Salem and Erode in Tamilnadu

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes ongoing work which involves examining the information use pattern of the legal professionals of District Court. The findings indicate that practicing lawyers were using a variety of information sources to satisfy their information needs. Respondents preferred to first consult their personal library before resorting to other information providing sources and agencies. This group of district court lawyers often found it difficult to find the information they were looking for when using digital law libraries. The present study observed that majority of respondents were not aware of e-resources. On the whole, respondents perceived district Bar library collections, services and facilities as adequate to meet their information needs effectively.

Keywords: Information use pattern, information needs, bar library, law reports, e-resources

1. INTRODUCTION

India became an independent democratic republic in 1947 and its constitution, which came into force on 26th November 1949, is the supreme law. India has a common legal system whose infrastructure bears the influence of British colonial rule. The constitution is based on the Government of India Act 1935 passed by British Parliament. The Indian Constitution lays out a federal Union of 28 States, 6 union territories and 1 national capital territory. The Union and States have separate executive and legislative branches, whereas the union territories are ruled by national government. Law generated by the Union is superior to that of the States. The judiciary, however, is independent and not federal in structure. The nominal head of the Union executive is an elected President but the Prime Minister, leader of the majority party and head of the Union Council of Ministers, is more politically powerful. India has a bicameral Parliament whose upper house is the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and whose lower house is the House of People (Lok Sabha). The State executive is headed by a Governor and most have a unicameral legislative body called the Legislative Assembly, but some are bicameral with a Legislative Council as well. The highest appellate court of the judiciary is the Supreme Court of India, which often decides the

legislative powers demarcated by the Constitution for Union and States. Prior to independence, the highest appellate court was the Privy Council in London and its decisions can still be binding unless overruled by the Supreme Court. High Courts are situated in each State, with subordinate criminal and civil courts. Apart from the English influence, personal laws are frequently based on Hindu and Muslim laws. Hindu law has been codified and the Muslim law is based on authoritative commentaries and precedents. The kind of information required by the user, the ways and means used for searching for the required information, the use of the information obtained, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction arising from the use of information obtained, the flow of the information and the relationship of the user with the system (information provider)—all come under the purview of user studies. User study is the means for systematic examination of the characteristics and behaviour of the users of the systems and services. It is directly linked with the effectiveness (performance) of library and information services as these aim at satisfaction of user needs.

1.1 Information Needs

Maurice B. Line has defined information need as, "what an individual ought to have for his work, his

research, his edification, his recreation, etc". Ching-Chih Chen and Peter Herson stress that an information need is more than a question asked of an information provider. It occurs whenever people find themselves in situations that require some form of knowledge for resolution. The Librarian's Thesaurus defines information need as "that need which library services or materials are intended to satisfy".

1.2 Methods of Determining Information Needs

According to Soper, community analysis is one method used by librarians to identify characteristics of a target population and to decide what library services and information would be most appropriate for them. The techniques that are used in community analysis include observing environmental characteristics, studying demographics, observing patterns of library use and interviewing key informants.

Roger Greer and Martha Hale too support community analysis as the basis for determining a library's role. Their method involves data collection and analysis from four perspectives; demographics, community organisations, service-and-product-providing agencies, and lifestyles.

Brenda Dervin's sense-making methodology is one of the most widely adopted techniques for conducting needs assessments. The researcher tries to find out, with the help of timeline interviews, about the efforts put in by an individual to acquire information to bridge a gap in a particular critical incident.

Robert Grover has presented a conceptual model for diagnosing information needs in the context of a school library media programme. He proposed a two-stage process; systematic analysis of both the school and the community followed by one-on-one interaction with a user at the point when he or she has decided to seek information, i.e., the reference interview. He asserted that the reference interview can become a vehicle for diagnosing information needs by applying knowledge of information psychology—how individuals seek, acquire, organise, process, utilise, and store information.

1.3 Types of Information Needs

Tague has presented the following types of information needs:

- ✘ Social or pragmatic information needs-required for coping with day-to-day life.
- ✘ Recreation information needs.
- ✘ Professional information needs.
- ✘ Educational information needs.

1.4 Factors Affecting Information Needs

As found by Lin and Garve by far, the most important factor that affects the information needs of an individual is the type of work in which he is involved. Another factor (relating to type of work), is whether the work is basic or applied. The discipline within which an individual is working also affects his information needs. For example, the information needs of researchers in the pure sciences is probably more urgent than that of researchers in the social sciences, because science is ever growing. The scientist will need to constantly update his knowledge, i.e., he has to catch up with the latest developments. Other factors include social, political, economic and legal.

1.5 Information-seeking Behaviour

When a need is felt for anything, more often than not, people take action to satisfy that need. Different strategies or modes of action are resorted to. The same applied for the satisfaction of information needs. An individual realises that he needs information, he knows that in all probability the information will not come to him on its own, therefore he has go to about seeking it. What strategies or processes he resorts to, to satisfy the need for information, is the focus of study here.

According to Girija Kumar, "Information seeking behaviour is mainly concerned with who needs what kind of information for what reasons; how information is found, evaluated and used". T.D. Wilson defines what he calls 'information behaviour' as, "those activities a person may engage in when identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information".

1.6 The Information-seeking Process

Girija Kumar's presentation of the information seeking process is as follows:

- (i) Identifying objective.
- (ii) Defining need.
- (iii) Assessing information systems.
- (iv) Establishing sources of information.
- (v) Information acquisition.
- (vi) Use of information.
- (vii) Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction.

According to Mayrice B. Line, all people are individuals and they will seek and use information in different ways. Much of our daily time is spent in information gathering and sifting of one kind or another; merely looking at people involves an information

process, since we notice things about them and do a rapid assessment. Most of this information gathering is carried out automatically, and is not perceived as such; it is an integral part of our personalities and we all do it differently. There is no such thing as a homogeneous body of information users. A group of people with the same level of education may be working on the same subject at the same time; but they will use information in different ways. Some to only one or two. Some of the group will scan and absorb vast quantities of material, others will read much less. Some will be content with abstracts or many articles, some will not. Some will prefer oral channels, some will prefer to see information in print so that they can pore over it; some always prefer to ask other people; some prefer to avoid people whenever they can. Some like browsing, some find it a waste of time and energy. Some enjoy computer searching, some have technophobia; and when people do search they use the Internet in very different ways.

1.7 Factors Affecting the Information Seeking Behaviour

Social factors: A desire for information on such topics as sex education, fashion, music, (openly available in other societies), may not be looked upon kindly in certain societies (read 'closed' societies) as a result of which an individual may have to resort to stealthy means for acquiring the information.

Political factors: The political system (particular those under dictatorship) may define certain types of information (defence, freedom of speech, of expression, rights, etc.) as forbidden to particular groups or to the public as a whole, consequently, the non availability of such information may motivate a person to resort to 'underground' (in the government's opinion) means.

Geographical factors: The geographical location of an individual also decides how he goes about seeking information. Geographical isolation may lead a person to resort to uncommon means of seeking information.

Educational factors: The educated and uneducated people may have differing methods of seeking information; the educated person resorting to more formal means (information systems) while the uneducated one depending more on informal methods (i.e. other people).

2. LEGAL PROFESSION IN INDIA

India's legal fraternity was at one time the admiration of the world. The best minds gravitated towards it, and both the Bench and the Bar dazzled with an incandescence that was out of this world. India's struggle for Independence was waged and won by stalwarts of the profession. All the freedom heroes—Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai

Patel, C.Rajagopalachari, Rajendra Prasad, S. Satyamurti, C. Subramaniam and others who sacrificed their all for the country—were lawyers.

That was not all. Many of the luminaries of that profession were also members of India's Constituent Assembly, taking a leading part in framing what undoubtedly is one of the best written Constitutions of the world. Dr B.R. Ambedkar, whose monumental contribution to constitution-making has justifiably made him one of the venerated immortals of India's history, was ably assisted by the likes of Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer, Tej Bahadur Sapru, and K. M. Munshi who were themselves the resplendent stars of the legal firmament.

India has the world's second largest legal profession with around 1,020,000 lawyers. The predominant service providers are individual lawyers, small or family-based firms. Most of the firms are involved in the issues of domestic law and majority work under country's adversarial litigation system. The conception of legal services as a 'noble profession' rather than services resulted in formulation of stringent and restrictive regulatory machinery. These regulations have been justified on the grounds of public policy and 'dignity of profession'. The judiciary has reinforced these principles which can be reflected in words of Justice Krishna Iyer, when he noted "Law is not a trade, not briefs, not merchandise, and so the heaven of commercial competition should not vulgarise the legal profession". However, over the years courts have recognised 'legal service' as a 'service' rendered to the consumers and have held that lawyers are accountable to the clients in the cases of deficiency of services. In the case of *Srimathi vs. Union of India*, Madras High Court held that in view of Section 3 of Consumer Protection Act, 1986 consumer redressal forums have jurisdiction to deal with claims against advocates. Section 2 (u) of Competition Act, 2002 defines the term 'service' along the lines of Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Thus, it may be concluded that legal services are becoming subject of trade related laws where consumerism and market forces should be given adequate space.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many existing design, focused studies of lawyers' information behaviour, have focused on the design of systems and tools for information use and re-use rather than information-seeking. For example, Blomberg, *et al.* designed an electronic filing cabinet prototype for a Silicon Valley law firm¹. The authors collaborated with a business division within the company that was involved in developing products that bridged paper and electronic documents and incorporated new approaches for searching, using and re-using electronic documents. Hence, the design work focused on the retrieval of previous documents and was based on scanned

versions of documents from the frequently accessed folders in a particular lawyer's actual filing cabinet. Similarly, Marshall, *et al.* designed an e-book prototype to act as a wireless access device to information resources as well as support a wide range of reading-related activities such as annotation². This device was designed by observing law students prepare for Moot Court (a mock legal trial).

Komlodi and Soergel also focused on information use and reuse, specifically legal information-seekers' use of own memory and electronic search histories to inform their later searches³. They developed a set of interface tools to support the recording, categorisation, and annotation of search results (along with other aspects of legal work such as note-taking, document drafting and knowledge-modelling).

Bane and Melheim investigated the use of Internet by academics⁴. A questionnaire was sent through the Internet to 231 randomly selected discussion groups. A total of 15,361 questionnaires were returned through e-mail. Results of the survey disclosed that personal e-mail was utilised extremely often, more than once a week by nearly 90 per cent of the respondents. Discussion groups were accessed more than once a week by 75 per cent of the respondents. Electronic journals were accessed far less frequently more than once a week by 23 per cent of the respondents. The survey also disclosed that many academics were still not fully aware of available Internet resources and their applications. Many studies in developing countries have also confirmed these findings (Al-Shanbari and Meadows⁵; Reid⁶). Abdullah⁷ noted that most of the libraries in Malaysia have yet to utilise the full potential of the Internet, although it has been available for the last several years.

Sethi used a questionnaire to study the information-seeking behaviour of 256 social science faculty members in Indian universities⁸. It was found that respondents preferred journals, books, government documents, and reference sources for meeting their information needs. The study also revealed lesser use of indexing and abstracting sources, book reviews, conference proceedings, dissertations and theses, newspaper clippings and other non-book sources.

However, Prasad noted that in addition to journal articles, non-traditional literature such as unpublished conference and symposia papers, research proposals, policy guidelines, and project reports were equally popular among the scholars⁹.

Ormes, Sarha and Dempsey, Lorcan identified that 93 per cent of all authorities using the Internet use the common internet information access tools like www, and Gopher (91 per cent) use e-mail¹⁰. Reference staff are

the most users of Internet services, followed by IT staff, and senior management. And the actual network behaviour most heavily reported was exploration and experimentation, followed by reference work.

Osorio, N.L. showed that in general the current design of home pages for science-engineering libraries contain many of the elements found in home pages of academic libraries¹¹. Among the characteristics found are images, screen lengths, colours, number and types of links, and link headings. The content of these websites was also analysed and summarised.

Perry, William H reports results of a survey of 675 CD-ROM users, at state University of Newyork at Albany Libraries, obtaining data from both questionnaires and actual search strategies¹². The Primary aim was to investigate the effect of prior user training or assistance on CD-ROM search Strategy. A statistically significant but weak relationship was found between prior training and level of search skill. Other measures such as user status, department affiliation or major, age, sex, and number of previous CD-ROM uses were compared to search skill. Only user status and department affiliation or major were significantly correlated to search skill. The study concluded that additional research is needed on the effectiveness of various types of CD-ROM training.

Rehman and Ramzy conducted a study on the Internet use by health professionals at the health sciences centre (HSC) of Kuwait University¹³. The study showed that 92.1 per cent of the respondents accessed Internet from their office, while 73.2 per cent also accessed it from home. Another 28.3 per cent also used the HSC Library for accessing the Internet. The study indicated that 80.3 per cent of the respondents used Internet daily, 15 per cent used it once a week and 2.5 per cent used it once a month. While 88.2 per cent of the respondents felt that the Internet provided better access to health sciences information, 77.2 per cent indicated that through the Internet they had better professional contacts, and 57.5 per cent stated that with the use of Internet they were able to use different channels of communication for their patient care and research.

Al-Shanbari and Meadows reported that 36 per cent of the academicians in Saudi universities were spending four hours per week on reading, whereas, almost three-quarters of the respondents were spending the same amount of time on communicating with their colleagues¹⁴. The study concluded that scholars in developing countries prefer informal channels for acquiring the needed information because of inadequate and irrelevant library collections, lack of information infrastructures, ineffective library services, lack of money to use fee-based information services, inadequately trained and less co-operative library staff.

4. OBJECTIVES

The present study has the following objectives:

- (i) To identify the frequency of use of Bar library and personal library.
- (ii) To find out the frequency of area of information need and frequency of consultation of various legal documents.
- (iii) To identify awareness of the e-resources among legal professionals of District Courts.
- (iv) To find out the frequency of usage of resources by the lawyers.
- (v) To determine the amount of the time spent on e-resources.
- (vi) To identify the purposes for using the e-resources.
- (vii) To suggest suitable recommendations to improve the e-resources for the benefit of legal professionals.

5. METHODOLOGY

This study attempted to examine the information needs and information use pattern of District Court lawyers in Tamil Nadu and also the following areas: information needs, information sources used by the respondents, use of Bar library, adequacy of library collection, library use and computing skills of respondents, and the use of IT-based library sources and services.

The researcher selected various categories of respondents covering Junior and Senior lawyers, Notary Public, Independent, Government Advocates of District Courts. Totally 1,000 advocates were selected as random sampling basis. Respondents who used different libraries and different e-resources were selected on a sample. The researcher employed a well structured questionnaire for collecting the data from the advocates of Salem, Namakkal, and Erode Districts Courts.

The questionnaire was prepared in such a way that the respondents could easily understand them. The respondents were personally requested to fill up the questionnaire at their earliest convenience to help the investigator to collect the same during his next visit. The investigator had to make a second, third and fourth visit to the bars for collecting the filled-in-questionnaires from the practicing advocates.

During these visits, the investigator could collect questionnaires from 720 out of 1000 advocates among whom the questionnaires were distributed. This constitutes 72 per cent of the total response. The researcher carried out the data collection work from December 2008 to April 2009.

6. LIMITATIONS

The findings of this study are mainly applicable to practicing lawyers of Salem, Namakkal, and Erode District Courts and not applicable to other District Courts in Tamil Nadu. Only Salem, Namakkal, and Erode District Courts Bar associations were selected for this study since studying of all other courts was not possible for an individual researcher, owing to constraints of money, time, energy, and efforts.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.1 Distribution of Respondents by Age and Sex

It is clear from Table 1 that District Court advocates (26.8 per cent) of respondents belonged to 31-35 age group, 21.5 per cent to below 30 age group, 17.9 per cent to 36-40 age group, 14.0 per cent to 41-45 age group, 9.2 per cent to 46-50 age group, 3.9 per cent to 51-55 age group and only 2.2 per cent, 1.0 per cent, 0.1 per cent to 61-65, 66-70 and above 70 age group, respectively. Table 2 describes the distribution of respondents by sex. As shown in Table 2, 537 (74.6 per cent) of respondents were male and 183 (25.4 per cent) were female. The number of practicing female lawyers is comparatively much less than male lawyers in District Courts.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Below 30	155	21.5	21.5	21.5
31 to 35	193	26.8	26.8	48.3
36 to 40	129	17.9	17.9	66.3
41 to 45	101	14.0	14.0	80.3
46 to 50	66	9.2	9.2	89.4
51 to 55	24	3.3	3.3	92.8
56 to 60	28	3.9	3.9	96.7
61 to 65	16	2.2	2.2	98.9
66 to 70	7	1.0	1.0	99.9
70 above	1	.1	.1	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Table 2. Distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Male	537	74.6	74.6	74.6
Female	183	25.4	25.4	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

7.2 Distribution of Respondents with Membership and Status

Most of the legal professionals 54.58 per cent were life members of the District Court Bars. Only 45.42 per cent of legal professionals were annual members of the Bars (Table 3).

Most of the legal professionals 46.7 per cent lead cases independently, while 28.3 per cent of the legal professionals lead cases under the guidance of seniors. The 9.4 per cent of the legal professionals were Senior Advocates, 8.6 per cent of the legal professionals were Notary Public, 3.8 per cent Panel Advocates, and remaining 3.2 per cent of the legal professionals were Government Advocates (Table 4).

It is evident from Table 5 that 20.7 per cent of the respondents were specialised in both Civil and Criminal

Table 3. Distribution of respondents with membership

Type of membership	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Life	393	54.58	54.58	50.4
Annual	327	45.42	45.42	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Table 4. Distribution of respondents with status

Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Junior	204	28.3	28.3	28.3
Senior	68	9.4	9.4	37.8
Notary Public	62	8.6	8.6	46.4
Independent	336	46.7	46.7	93.1
Govt. Advocate	23	3.2	3.2	96.3
Panel Advocate	27	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Table 5. Respondents with area of specialisation

Area	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Civil	128	17.8	17.8	17.8
Criminal	133	18.5	18.5	36.3
Civil/Criminal	149	20.7	20.7	56.9
Family Law	65	9.0	9.0	66.0
Labour	115	16.0	16.0	81.9
Banking	130	18.1	18.1	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Law followed by 18.5 per cent in purely Criminal Law, 18.1 per cent in Banking Law, 17.8 in Civil Law, 16.0 per cent in Labour Law and only 9.0 per cent in Family Law.

7.3 Frequency of Information Need

Table 6 contains detailed statistics describing frequency of information need. While 74.7 per cent of the district court advocates needed civil law information frequently, 14.2 per cent occasionally, 7.8 per cent rarely, and 3.3 per cent moderately. Most of the district court advocates, i.e., 61.0 per cent needed criminal law information frequently, 25.8 per cent occasionally, 6.8 rarely and 6.4 per cent moderately. In the area of Labour Law, 25.4 per cent of respondents needed information frequently, 53.5 per cent occasionally, 13.8 per cent rarely, and 7.4 per cent moderately. In the area Banking law they need information 27.6 per cent frequently, 50.4 per cent occasionally, 18.9 per cent rarely and 3.1 per cent moderately. The above statistics clearly shows that the district courts advocates most frequently used Civil and Criminal Law information.

7.4 Frequency of Using Bar and Personal Library

Table 7 shows that only 42.6 per cent of the respondents used Bar library daily, 50.4 per cent

Table 6. Frequency of information need

Area	Frequently	Moderately	Occasionally	Rarely	Total
Civil	538 (74.7%)	24 (3.3 %)	102 (14.2 %)	56 (7.8 %)	720 (100.0 %)
Criminal	439 (61.0%)	46 (6.4 %)	186 (25.8%)	49 (6.8%)	720 (100.0%)
Family Law	143 (19.9%)	123 (17.1%)	203 (28.2 %)	251 (34.9%)	720 (100.0%)
Labour Law	183 (25.4 %)	53 (7.4%)	385 (53.5)	99 (13.8%)	720 (100.0%)
Banking Law	199 (27.6 %)	22 (3.1 %)	363 (50.4 %)	136 (18.9 %)	720 (100.0%)

Table 7. Use of bar library

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Daily	307	42.6	42.6	42.6
Weekly	363	50.4	50.4	93.1
Monthly	12	1.7	1.7	94.7
As and when required	38	5.3	5.3	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

weekly, and remaining 5.3 per cent as and when required. Only 1.7 per cent of the respondents used Bar library monthly.

As shown in Table 8, while 89 per cent of the respondents used personal library daily, 10.3 per cent used personal library weekly, and only (0.7 per cent)

Table 8. Use of personal library

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Daily	641	89.0	89.0	89.0
Weekly	74	10.3	10.3	99.3
Monthly	5	.7	.7	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

used personal library monthly. The Table 8 clearly shows that most of the district court lawyers used their personal library for day-to-day arguments.

7.5 Frequency of Use of Law Reports

Table 9 contains detailed statistics describing frequency of use of law reports. All India Reporter is frequently used by 74.9 per cent advocates, moderately by 5.8 per cent, occasionally by 17.1 per cent, and

Table 9. Frequency of use of law reports

Name of the Law reports	Frequently	Moderately	Occasionally	Rarely	Total
All India Reporter (AIR)	539 (74.9 %)	42 (5.8%)	123 (17.1%)	16 (2.2%)	720 (100.0%)
Supreme Court Cases	523 (72.6)	46 (6.4%)	84 (11.7%)	67 (9.3%)	720 (100.0%)
Supreme Court Cases (Criminal)	384 (53.3%)	63 (8.8%)	194 (26.9%)	79 (11.0%)	720 (100.0%)
Labour Law Journal	179 (24.9 %)	119 (16.5 %)	262 (36.4%)	160 (22.2%)	720 (100.0%)
Current Tamil Nadu Cases	286 (39.7 %)	118 (16.4 %)	217 (30.1 %)	99 (13.8 %)	720 (100.0%)
Madras Law Journal	437 (60.7%)	60 (8.3%)	119 (16.5%)	104 (14.4%)	720 (100.0%)

rarely by 2.2 per cent. Supreme Court Cases is consulted frequently by 72.6 per cent, moderately by 6.4 per cent, occasionally by 11.7 per cent, and rarely by 9.3 per cent. Labour Law Journal is frequently used by 24.9 per cent, moderately by 16.5 per cent, occasionally by 36.4 per cent, and rarely by 22.2 per cent. Madras Law Journal is the next important legal documents which was consulted frequently by 60.7 per cent, moderately by 8.3 per cent, occasionally by 16.5 per cent, and rarely by 14.4 per cent. Current Tamil Nadu Cases as a legal document, were consulted frequently by 39.7 per cent, moderately by 16.4 per cent, occasionally by 30.1 per cent, and rarely by 13.8 per cent. The above statistics clearly shows that the district court lawyers are mostly depending on the legal documents like AIR, SCC and MLJ.

7.6 Time Spent at Bar and Personal Library

Table 10 describes the time spent at Bar library. The largest number of the respondents (79.2 per cent) spent 1-2 hours daily for getting legal information, 11.5 per cent spent less than 1 hour, 9.3 per cent spent 2-4 hours for getting information.

Table 11 shows that the time spent at Personal library. Nearly 58.6 per cent of the respondents spent 2-4 hours daily for getting legal information, 26.1 per cent spent 1-2 hours, 10.7 per cent spent less than 1 hour, and 4.6 per cent spent more than 4 hours for getting information.

Table 10. Time spent at bar library

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Less than 1 hr	83	11.5	11.5	11.5
1-2 hrs	570	79.2	79.2	90.7
2-4 hrs	67	9.3	9.3	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Table 11. Time spent at personal library

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Less than 1 hr	77	10.7	10.7	10.7
1-2 hrs	188	26.1	26.1	36.8
2-4 hrs	422	58.6	58.6	95.4
More than 4 hrs	33	4.6	4.6	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

7.7 Computer Literacy

The respondents were asked to indicate their level of Internet and computer literacy. It is evident from Table 12 that 38.2 per cent of the respondents had an average level of Internet and computer literacy, 27.1 per cent an expert level of Internet and computer literacy, and 17.9 per cent were well expert in Internet and computer literacy. Only 16.8 per cent of the respondents reported that they had below average level of Internet and computer literacy.

Table 12. Respondents with frequency of Internet and computer literacy

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Well expert	63	8.8	17.9	17.9
Expert	95	13.2	27.1	45.0
Average	134	18.6	38.2	83.2
Below average	59	8.2	16.8	100.0
Total	351	48.8	100.0	

7.8 Use of E-resources

Table 13 shows that only 47.1 per cent of the respondents were aware of the e-resources. Table 14 shows that the most popular method of acquiring the necessary skills to use e-resources was self study. A majority of the respondents, 39.2 per cent used this method to learn the e-resources, followed by external courses with 20.1 per cent, 15.6 per cent through training courses offered by Bar, 13.3 per cent of the through colleagues and friends and only 11.8 per cent through guidance from library staff.

Table 13. Awareness of e-resources

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Yes	339	47.1	47.1	47.1
No	381	52.9	52.9	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

Table 14. Methods of learning of e-resources

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Self Study/ Instruction	133	18.4	39.2	39.2
Training Courses offered by Bar	53	7.4	15.6	54.8
Guidance from Colleagues and Friends	45	6.3	13.3	68.1
Guidance from the Library Staff	40	5.6	11.8	79.9
External Courses	68	9.4	20.1	100.0
Total	339	47.1	100.0	

7.9 Purpose for Using E-resources

The respondents were asked to indicate the main purpose for using the e-resources. Table 15 shows that 74.9 per cent and 72.6 per cent of the respondents frequently used the e-resources for accessing the current decisions of Supreme Court of India and High Courts of India, respectively, followed by 60.7 per cent for entertainment, 53.3 per cent for accessing National Acts, 39.7 per cent for e-journals, and 24.9 per cent for accessing State Statutes and amendments.

7.10 Extent of Satisfaction on Legal Information Networks

Information on the web is increasingly becoming popular day-by-day. Various types of data and opportunities to explore are made available. Discussion groups, relay chatting, software packages, biographical notes, daily news, various High Court judgments, research communication, institutional publications, government programmers, and policies are accessible through web. The fact is that the amount of information/ services hosted on the web is very vast but, consumes considerable amount of time in browsing and getting relevant information in a precise form.

Table 16 indicates the gender-wise respondents' satisfaction on legal information networks. The male respondents occupy the first position with respect to their overall satisfaction on all legal information networks as their secured mean score 4.11 shows on a 5 point rating scale. The female respondents take the second position in their overall satisfaction on all legal information networks as their secured mean score 2.61 shows on a 5 point rating scale. The t test applied for further discussion shows that the computed t value 6 is greater than its tabulated value at 5 per cent level of significance. Hence, there is significant difference between male and female with respect to their satisfaction on utilisation of legal information networks.

Table15. Purpose of using e-resources

Variables	Frequently	Moderately	Occasionally	Rarely	Total
Access the Current Decisions of Supreme Court of India	539 (74.9 %)	42 (5.8%)	123 (17.1%)	16 (2.2%)	720 (100.0%)
Access the Current Decisions of High Courts of India	523 (72.6)	46 (6.4%)	84 (11.7%)	67 (9.3%)	720 (100.0%)
Access National Acts	384 (53.3%)	63 (8.8%)	194 (26.9%)	79 (11.0%)	720 (100.0%)
Access State Statutes and amendments	179 (24.9 %)	119 (16.5 %)	262 (36.4%)	160 (22.2%)	720 (100.0%)
E-journals	286 (39.7 %)	118 (16.4 %)	217 (30.1 %)	99 (13.8 %)	720 (100.0%)
Entertainment	437 (60.7%)	60 (8.3%)	119 (16.5%)	104 (14.4%)	720 (100.0%)

Table 16. Gender-wise respondents' satisfaction on legal information networks

Legal websites	Male	Female	Total
www.supremecourtindia.nic.in	4.22	2.52	4.02
www.hcmadras.tn.nic	4.1	2.66	3.75
www.judis.nic.in	3.44	2.78	3.56
www.legalserviceindia.com	4.36	2.85	4.10
www.scjudgments.com	4.56	2.66	4.23
www.lawadiv.com	2.52	3.21	2.99
www.allindiareporter.com	4.65	3.1	2.90
www.judgments-online.com	4.15	2.44	3.81
www.commonlii.org/in/cases/INSC	4.56	2.58	3.04
www.courtnic.nic.in	4.21	3.39	3.77
www.indialawsite.com	4.46	2.78	4.15
http://lawmin.nic.in/	4.12	2.96	2.40
Total	4.11	2.61	3.56

Note: *t* calculated value = 6; *df*=11; *t* critical value=2.20

7.11 CD-ROM Database on Legal Information

Courts in India are moving from the typographical age to the electronic era. CD-ROM collection is growing in the High Court libraries. Indexing and abstracting CDs and directories on CDs are increasing on one hand, and the legal information CDs on Supreme Court and various High Courts are growing on the other. Libraries find it economical when compared to hard copies. These also occupy very less space. The advocates were asked to indicate the preference on Legal CD-ROM Database used for their present study. Different legal CD-ROM Database, viz, Supreme Court Cases, AIR, Manupatra Case Locator, etc. were listed in the questionnaire.

Table 17 indicates the gender-wise respondents' preference for legal CD-ROM databases. The male respondents occupy the first position with respect to

their overall preference on legal CD-ROM databases as their secured mean score 3.55 shows on a 5 point rating scale. The female respondents took the second position in their overall preference on legal CD-ROM databases as their secured mean score 2.74 shows on a 5 point rating scale.

The *t* test applied for further discussion, shows that the computed *t* value 2.66 is greater than its tabulated value at 5 per cent level of significance. Hence, there is significant difference between male and female with respect to their overall preference for Legal CD-ROM databases. Also, majority of the respondents 73.75 per cent felt that the e-resources cannot replace the print resources, but only supplement the print resources.

Only 26.25 per cent of the respondents felt that e-resources can replace print resources (Table 18).

Table 17. Gender-wise respondents' preference on legal CD-ROM database

CD-ROM	Male	Female	Total
Supreme Court Cases	4.46	2.99	4.15
AIR	3.52	2.26	3.37
Manupatra Case Locator	3.37	3.87	4.10
Patent & Trade marks Cases	2.52	2.42	2.56
National Acts	3.15	3.05	3.96
consumer cases Judgments	2.15	3.49	2.75
Arbitration Judgments	4.42	2.40	3.90
Rent Judgments	3.52	2.18	2.80
Company Cases	4.22	2.69	4.00
State acts	2.79	2.12	2.45
Total	3.55	2.74	3.46

Note: *t* calculated value = 2.66; *df* =9; *t* critical value=2.62

Table 18. Users' view about replacing the print resources with e-resources

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Yes	189	26.25	26.25	26.25
No	531	73.75	73.75	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

7.12 General Assessment

Respondents were asked to provide their overall general assessment of the Bar library in meeting their information needs. Out of the 720 respondents, 447 (62.1 per cent) considered the Bar library 'good' in meeting their information needs. Another 5.1 per cent of the respondents perceived the Bar library as 'Excellent', 13.6 per cent of the respondents assessed the Bar library as 'Poor'. Remaining 19.2 per cent of the respondents said 'I have no opinion'. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with the collections, services and facilities provided by the Bar Association Library for meeting their information needs (Table 19).

8. SUGGESTIONS

- ✘ The Bar Association should create programmes and infrastructures to train its advocates on ICT with particular reference to the use of e-resources.
- ✘ Efforts should be made to increase the speed of the Internet access and shorten the time it takes to view and download web pages.

Table 19. General assessment about the bar library

Variables	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cum. percent
Excellent	37	5.1	5.1	5.1
Good	447	62.1	62.1	67.2
Poor	98	13.6	13.6	80.8
I have no opinion	138	19.2	19.2	100.0
Total	720	100.0	100.0	

- ✘ The Bar Association of District Courts should cooperate in providing facilities to procure and giving access to electronic information resources.
- ✘ Legal professionals should acquire basic skills including soft skills for acquiring right information from the right source at the right time in appropriate format.
- ✘ Whenever necessary, library professionals should give user education programmes to legal professionals to help them acquire and practice the skills.
- ✘ The qualified IT staff should be appointed to provide the expert guidance to users about e-resources.
- ✘ Bar libraries of District Courts should subscribe more e-journals and e-databases.
- ✘ Some orientation training programmes should be organised by the Bar Association at regular intervals so that the maximum users can improve their excellence or proficiency in the use of the e-resources.

8. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the information needs and use pattern of District Court Lawyers in Tamil Nadu. It was found that respondents used a variety of information sources for legal practicing. Books, law reports and statues were considered more important. It is interesting to note that, although respondents perceived the Bar library as effective in meeting their information needs, they preferred to first consult their personal library. Electronic resources have become the vital part of human life in the present day. It has rapidly changed the way of seeking and disseminating information. It is clear from the study that electronic resources are useful to legal professionals in District Court Bar libraries. The study revealed that the respondents used IT-based library sources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources. It might be due to the lack of awareness about their availability, improper selection of materials or unfamiliarity with these products. Therefore,

still there is a vast scope of future research in different types of users' behaviour and comparison of users' behaviour towards the e-resources.

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