

Users' Information Literacy Competencies: A Study with Reference to Scholarly Community of Kashmir University

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ABSTRACT

Information literacy refers to the abilities of an individual in identifying, retrieving and utilising appropriate and required information. It is the process of implementing a accurate information behaviour through proper medium or channel to obtain the requisite information judiciously. The present study has been carried out to assess the information literacy skills of the scholarly community of University of Kashmir. For this study, a well structured questionnaire was administered among 100 research scholars of the University comprising of 55 male and 45 female respondents. Out of 100 questionnaires, 99 were received back from 55 male and 44 female respondents respectively. These 99 questionnaires were used for the present study. The result of the study reveals that information literacy skills form an important role in the retrieval of relevant, timely and up-to-date information. After the analysis of data some suggestions have also been given on the basis of results for the effective and proper information literacy among users.

Keyword: Information literacy, information literacy skills, users information literacy competencies, users information literacy attitudes, importance of information literacy

1. INTRODUCTION

For the last so many years, internet has become an essential tool for communication, storage and retrieval of information. With the rapid growth of knowledge and easy access to information, internet has found prominent place world over in the institutions of research and higher learning.

Information literacy competency is an ability to seek pertinent information from various sources in order to meet the desired needs and evaluate, analyse, communicate and synthesise the resultant knowledge. It is a kind of pedagogy based on certain set of instructions in the institutions of higher learning. In context of library and information centers, the role of information literacy is to facilitate and inspire the learners in the process of learning throughout life. To enable the learners in the pursuit of information and knowledge, the aim of the library staff is to aware users about various skills of evaluating, identifying and locating information. In addition to this, the information literate learners remain confident and competent in the pursuit knowledge. They are well aware of their information requirements and are competent enough to deal with the ocean of information in the contemporary era of information explosion. They remain capable and barrier free in the solution of various problems related to acquisition of knowledge.

In the present day world, information is exiting in various formats, from various sources. It is therefore, important for the learner to be information literate in order to remain competent about the things like when,

why and how to utilise various tools in the acquisition of information in a proper way. It is not possible to become information literate overnight. Hence, it is only by adopting certain writing and speaking behaviour that will improve one's capability and expertise in the topics of his interest chosen by himself/herself. The users' quest for pertinent information can be satisfied by way of certain information acquiring talents and abilities and the possession of such skills is known as information literacy. The present study is an attempt to analyse various types of information skills of users in the process of retrieval of Information in Libraries and Information Centers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Kumar & Kumar¹ in their study addresses the main issues relating to information technology skills for research scholars, professionals. The findings show that 80% of researchers are aware about the legal aspects of information and cite the sources of information. Mulla² has highlighted the role of information literacy for students and teachers in Indian context. He thoroughly discussed about users orientation, teaching and learning, education system & curriculum and library resources. Singh & Bhakar³ have analysed the knowledge and awareness of information literacy, the study indicates that information literacy plays an important role among the engineering students. Naik & Padmini⁴ highlighted the importance of the information literacy programmes in academic libraries and suggests the benefits that can be achieved by implementing the information literacy

programme. The study also highlights the role librarian's and libraries in information literacy.

Cowan⁵ in his study discussed about the information literacy and highlights the way information literacy is still written about, presented and practiced within libraries and higher education institutions, as if it still naturally falls within the purview of libraries and as if librarians are still, somehow, best positioned to create and implement it.

Rafique⁶ has summed up the level of information literacy skills of faculty members of the University of Lahore. The study indicates that majority of faculty members are deficient in searching catalog and its use, choice of information sources, selection of relevant sources and formulation of search strategies. Likewise, many faculty members are not successful users of the university libraries. Parmar & Gohel⁷ have discussed at length about the information literacy competencies for higher learning and research. The paper further expresses about the important components, and benefits of information literacy and research literacy.

Venkataramana⁸ has dealt with the concept of information literacy and discussed its need and importance and highlights the information literacy competencies standards of higher education. It also discusses the information literacy initiatives at global level and emphasises the urgent need for the development of information literacy programmes in Indian higher education system. Rani⁹ has studied the role of college libraries in the information literacy concept and development of skills related to information literacy. The goal of this study is to verify and know if students of First-year have got the ability to collect, evaluate and use information. Ramesh¹⁰ has presented the information literacy concept and presented indicators based on standards and performances which are formulated by UNESCO and IFLA related to libraries of schools and higher education. The significance of information literacy for public and school libraries has been underscored. It also examines the information literacy concept for national and international level and highlights on the declaration of UNESCO about the Society of information literates.

Lastly, it emphasises on policy of information literacy in educational system of India. Eisenberg¹¹ has provided an overview and highlighted on importance of information literacy in three contexts:

- (a) Process of information
- (b) Context of technology
- (c) Adoption through actual needs in real situations.

Study presents an overview based on conceptual understanding of information literacy, the range of technology, models and standards within the framework of information literacy and strategies based on practice for efficient and effective techniques of learning. It also offers directives based on certain instructions for learning in relation to the series of situations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is confined to the scholarly community of University of Kashmir in the faculty of Science, Social Science, Management and Education and the periodicity for carrying out this study during October, 2014 to January, 2015.

The study is a descriptive survey. It has been carried out to know the information literacy competencies of the scholarly of the University of Kashmir. The scholarly community is the sole users of current, up-to-date, and relevant information with regard to their research programmes. There are about 1000 scholars enrolled in the University and the author has selected a sample of 10% of the population for collection of data. It is in this context that a well structured questionnaire was administered among 100 research scholars of the University comprising of 55 male and 45 female respondents. Out of 100 questionnaires only 99 were received back from 55 male and 44 female respondents respectively. These 99 questionnaires were used for the present study. In addition to questionnaire, interview method was also adopted to fill the gaps. The data was then tabulated and analysed. After the analysis of data some suggestions have also been given on the basis of results for the effective and proper information literacy among users.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Frequency of Visiting the Library

Table 1 indicates that 45.4% of the respondents visit the library daily, 27.2% weekly, 9.4% more than once in a week. While as 18% users visit the library occasionally.

Table 1. Frequency of visiting the library

S. No.	Purpose	Research Scholar (%)
1.	Daily	45 (45.4)
2.	Weekly	27 (27.2)
3.	More than once in a week	09 (9.4)
4.	Monthly	-
5.	Occasionally	18 (18)
Total		99

4.2. Methods in Searching the Documents in the Library

As per Table 2 majority of the users (42.4%) search the documents by using OPAC, 41.4% of the users take assistance from the library staff and 8.1% either search bookshelves directly or take assistance from the friends in the search of documents in the library.

4.3. Frequently Used Search Engines

As mentioned in the Table 3 below, majority of the users (73.8%) make use of Google search engine, 9.1% use yahoo and the rest of the users, i.e., 17.1% make use of other search engines.

Table 2. Methods in searching the documents in the library

S. No.	Methods	Responses (%)
1.	Search book shelves directly	08 (8.1)
2.	Taking assistance from the library staff	41 (41.4)
3.	Taking assistance from the friends	08 (8.1)
4.	Use OPAC	42 (42.4)
Total		99

Table 3. Frequently used search engines

S. No.	Search engines	Responses (%)
1.	Google	73 (73.8)
2.	Yahoo	09 (9.1)
3.	Alta vista	-
4.	Others	17 (17.1)
Total		99

4.4. Preferred Media of Information

As per the data given in the Table 4, majority of the users (60.6%) like documents both print and electronic formats. 25.3% prefer documents in electronic and 14.1% prefer documents in print formats.

4.5. Search Strategy for Searching Information

Table 5 reflects that 45.4% of the users type the search statement in searching box, 42.4% type the keyword in the search box and only 12.2% of the users type the keyword using Boolean operators.

Table 4. Information media preference

S. No.	Media format	Responses (%)
1.	Print	14 (14.1)
2.	Electronic	25 (25.3)
3.	Both	60 (60.6)
Total		99

Table 5. Search strategy for searching information

S. No.	Search strategy	Responses (%)
1.	Type the search statement in searching box	45 (45.4)
2.	Type the keyword in the search box	42 (42.4)
3.	Type the keyword using Boolean operators	12 (12.2)
4.	Don't know	-
Total		99

4.6. Disposal of Information Accessed and Used Once

Table 6 reveals that majority of the users (63.7%) save the accessed information in computer in the form of files and folders, 19.2% save it in the pen drive and 17.1% of the users are unaware about how to save the accessed information.

4.7. Awareness Regarding the Legal Aspects while using Information

Table 7 depicts that majority of users (63.6%) are aware about the legal aspects of using information while as (36.4%) of the users do not have awareness about the legal aspects of using information.

4.8. Awareness About the Intellectual Property Rights

Table 8 shows that (45.4%) users make fair use of information, (28.2%) seek permission from the copyright holder, (12.1%) of the users copy the whole text without informing the copyright holder and (14.3%) are not aware about IPR.

Table 6. Disposal of information once accessed and used

S. No.	Frequency	Responses (%)
1.	Dispose it of	0
2.	Save it in computer in the form of files and folders	63 (63.7)
3.	Save it in a pen drive	19 (19.2)
4.	Don't know	17 (17.1)
Total		99

Table 7. Awareness regarding the legal aspects while using information

S. No.	Awareness	Responses (%)
1.	Yes	63 (63.6)
2.	No	36 (36.4)
Total		99

Table 8. Awareness about the intellectual property rights

S. No.	Cite the author/source	Responses (%)
1.	Seek permission from the copyright holder	28 (28.2)
2.	Make fair use of information	45 (45.4)
3.	Copy the whole text without informing the copyright holder	12 (12.1)
4.	Don't know	14 (14.3)
Total		99

Table 9. Awareness of identification of citations

S. No.	Identification of citation	Responses (%)
1.	Yes	79 (79.7)
2.	No	20 (20.3)
Total		99

Table 10. Cite the sources of information

S. No.	Cite the source	Responses (%)
1.	Always	53 (53.5)
2.	Mostly	27 (27.2)
3.	Sometimes	16 (16.2)
4.	Never	03 (3.1)
Total		99

4.9. Awareness of Identification of Citations

As we observe from Table 9 majority of the users (79.7%) have knowledge about identification of citations while as (20.3%) do not have knowledge about the same.

4.10. Cite the Sources of Information

Table 10 reveals that (53.5%) users cite the sources always in the use information, (27.2%) cite the sources mostly, (16.2%) cite the sources sometimes and just (3.1%) of the users not at all cite the sources in the use of information.

5. FINDINGS

- 45.4% of the respondents visit the library daily, 27.2% weekly, 9.4% more than once in a week. While as 18% users visit the library occasionally.
- Majority of the users (42.4%) search the documents by using OPAC, 41.4% of the users take assistance from the library staff and 8.1% either search bookshelves directly or take assistance from the friends in the search of documents in the library.
- 73.8% make use of Google search engine, 9.1% use yahoo and the rest of the users, i.e. 17.1% make use of other search engines.
- Most of the users (60.6%) like documents both print and electronic formats 25.3% prefer documents in electronic and 14.1% prefer documents in print formats.
- 45.4% of the users type the search statement in searching box, 42.4% types the keyword in the search box and only 12.2% of the users type the keyword using Boolean operators.
- 63.7% save the accessed information in computer in the form of files and folders, 19.2% save it in the pen drive and 17.1% of the users are unaware about how to save the accessed information.

- Majority of users (63.6%) are aware about the legal aspects of using information while as 36.4% of the users do not have awareness about the legal aspects of using information.
- 45.4% users make fair use of information, 28.2% seek permission from the copyright holder, 12.1% of the users copy the whole text without informing the copyright holder and 14.3% are not aware about IPR.
- Most of the users 79.7% have knowledge about identification of citations while as 20.3% do not have knowledge about the same.
- 53.5% users cite the sources always in the use information, 27.2% cite the sources mostly, 16.2% cite the sources sometimes and just 3.1% of the users not at all cite the sources in the use of information.

6. SUGGESTIONS

- The library users need awareness regarding the use of OPAC in the search and retrieval of information as only 42.4% use it till now as per the results.
- The users need to be oriented with the different features of electronic resources like easy and remote access, perpetual access and the availability of latest and up to date information in them.
- The users need awareness about different search strategies, in refining the search and in the use of Boolean operators.
- Awareness about the legal aspects is also needed in order to avoid the issues like plagiarism and piracy, etc.
- Users also need to have orientation about the IPR and citations in the use of information.

7. CONCLUSIONS

Information is the life blood of every individual in a society and the only way to use information in a proper way is to have proper information literacy among all the citizens. In the contemporary global world, the development of a society is solely dependent upon the use of right, latest, up-to-date and timely information. It is therefore, in this context that information literacy has great significance in libraries. Since libraries are the store houses of knowledge/information and have always come to play an important role in all types of societies, it is as such important for them to ensure that the users have sufficient awareness regarding the availability of resources.

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