

Chapter 69

Information Needs and Assessment of Bioinformatics Students at the University of Swaziland: Librarian View

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ABSTRACT

A survey was carried out of the information landscape within the students of Computer Science, Biology and Mathematics in the University of Swaziland which examined the research problems, important sources of information, the methods of access, information needs and seeking behavior of the users their assessment and the role of the Libraries since Librarian have to identify the information needs, uses and problems faced to meet the needs and requirement of the user. A total of 200 questionnaire were distributed. The survey indicated that majority of the students believe that the online resources play a very important role for their research and show positive attitude toward future bioinformatics usage and training. The study concluded that the training preferences of students need to be further explored.

INTRODUCTION

Information plays a vital role to achieve the existing information technologies. As bioinformatics has become an important discipline in biological sciences several developing countries have been making progress in this field lately. The librarians have to identify the needs of the user and the problems encounter to meet the requirement of the user in the present age of information. Information needs and uses should be the focus of attention of the librarian to meet the specific needs of the individual or a specific group.

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For a proper and systematic planning and development of information resources and services user studies are quite important to know the basic needs of the users and it is also important for the librarian to keep track in all the emerging discipline. The present study is focuses on the information needs and assessment of bioinformatics users of the University of Swaziland to design an information system and also in building up need based information for the students.

The study follows questionnaire methods which consist of 15 questionnaires with their personal details and focus mainly on needs, uses and identification of various problems arising out of it.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the methods and sources used by students to acquire required information
- To find out the importance of various information resources for their academic and research activities.
- To study their information gathering activities.
- To what extend does the students used the current range of online database resources that is available to them.
- To find out their familiarity with the attributes of Printed and Electronic Information Sources.
- To ascertain what problems are encountered by the students in seeking information.

SCOPE

The scope of the study is limited to the students of Computer science, Engineering, Biology and Mathematics. A total of 200 questionnaires are distributed to the students randomly. Out of which 152 (76%) are received and used for the analysis.

METHODS

This study was exploratory in nature therefore both quantitative and qualitative methodological tools were employed. A questionnaire survey was conducted which was followed by interview in spite of the users heavy and tight schedule. The questionnaire was intended to elicit the nature and type of information that bioinformatics users' need and uses in order to carry out their research and based on the objectives of the study. It also sought to ascertain what information resources and services they would find useful to accomplish their information needs. The collected data is arranged, analyzed and interpreted by employing statistical methods to draw inferences that were formulated and also to fulfill the stated objectives of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The demographic profile of the respondents includes 90 (45%) were male and 62(31%) were female. For the question about the awareness of the electronic resources, most of the student were aware of the term (Table 1).

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