

Chapter 24

Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of Physically Challenged Students and Faculty of the University of Delhi: A Study

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ABSTRACT

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. The situation is more intense if the information seeker is a physically disabled person. This demands a call for a regular study and development of information system and management of information services for persons with disability. The University of Delhi has more than 1200 students and teachers with disabilities in its various colleges and departments. Very little is known about the techniques employed by them when looking for information, what kinds of source formats they prefer to use and how these sources are used, what barriers they confront, how they feel about the process, and how they can be helped to better exploit the information resources available to them. This chapter investigates and finds the answers to the above questions by using survey methods of research. It also incorporates the use of information and assistive technology for information sought by the physically challenged students and teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

The current ambit of information atmosphere is rich, characterized by an explosion of information sources and providers, a multiplicity of methods for accessing information, and a redundancy of content from multiple sources. The information seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information, which are sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is sought. The Information Seeking Behaviour is an important part of the user studies, which study the casual relationship between the user of information and the information system. The study of information needs and the information seeking behaviour of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) has been a significant and eventful issue since the last few decades. The purpose of this study is to determine information requirements of the physically challenged students and the faculty members, their awareness about resources, and their behavior while seeking information.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To establish the information needs of disabled students and teachers.
2. To examine information seeking behaviour of the disabled faculty members and students of various colleges and departments of the University of Delhi.
3. To determine what kind of information sources are used by the disabled faculty members and students to seek information.
4. To study the purposes of information seeking.
5. To explore the use of information technology for seeking and using information.
6. To demonstrate the use of specific devices and aids to seek and use the information, as per specific disability.

7. To study the problems faced by the disabled users while seeking and using information/ library resources and services.
8. To suggest the strategies of improving library/ information center services for the disabled users.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study comes under the category of user study and the most effective method of doing user studies is to congregate and analyze views and opinions of the target users. The study is conducted from the students' and teachers' perspective and reflects their point of view. The survey method of research has been selected to conduct the study. The population unit for data collection includes all the physically challenged faculty members teaching at various colleges/departments and the disabled students of the undergraduate and the postgraduate courses of the University of Delhi. The study incorporates all the 3 broad categories of disability, i.e., visual, locomotive, and hearing disability. About 350 questionnaires were distributed among the physically challenged students and teachers of the selected colleges and departments under the University of Delhi. The selection of colleges/departments was based on the strength of Persons with Disability in the institution. The response rate has been shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Response rate of questionnaires

User Category	No. of Questionnaires Distributed	No. of Responses Received	% of Responses
Under Graduate Students	192	140	72.91
Post Graduate Students	104	60	57.69
Faculty Members	54	45	83.33
Total	350	245	70

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