Chapter 22

Information Seeking Behavior of Users and Strategies to Overcome the Challenges in the Current Era

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ABSTRACT

Due to the continuous research and development activities taking place in almost all the disciplines, information overload and information explosion has occurred, which in turn poses a challenge to the user community to keep up with the knowledge in their discipline. The dynamic nature of information has forced the users to change the way of seeking information. Hence, there is an immediate need for the information professionals to update the services and facilities of the library. He/she should act as a ultimate search engine and satisfy the information needs of the users. This chapter highlights the changing approach to information by the user community in the present scenario and also provides the solutions to information professionals to tackle the information expectations of the users. This chapter has been written based on the observation of library users and the way they seek information for their business requirements and research and development activities.

INTRODUCTION

There is a paradigm shift in the way of information seeking behavior of users due to the technological innovation. The role of the information system is to provide the efficient library and information services to the users, based on their needs. The basic role of the information professionals is to match the information seekers with the information resources and get the desired information for the users. They should act as a bridge to the past and gateway to the future. To provide a customer-

focused service, library professionals have to face many challenges. However, there is a need to provide the accurate and complete information services to fulfill the needs of the users. Information professionals should develop professional competencies to adapt changing technologies in order to deliver timely, value-added quality content, and world-class services to the users.

Information Seeking

Information seeking can be defined as the "Process in which humans purposefully engage in order to change their state of knowledge" (Marchionini, 1995). Another definition states that information seeking is comprised of

Those activities a person may engage in which identifying his or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information (Wilson, 1999).

Another author defines it as "A conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in your knowledge" (Case, 2002).

KEY BEHAVIORS

The key behaviors identified below are based on the observation of the way the library users seek information for their research and development purpose and for their business requirements.

- Need for precise information
- Desire for nascent information
- Desire for balanced collection (print and e-resources)
- Self-searching

Need for Precise Information

Globalization of knowledge requires immediate access to information by users regardless of place and time. In the dynamic world of ICT (Information and Communication Technology), users are very much interested in pinpointed and precise information rather than exhaustive information. Users in the current era often seek answers to immediate problems and need instant information. Due to the multitasking nature of today's library clientele, they expect the same level of expertise from today's information professionals. They anticipate immediate response to their information queries in right format and right time, which can be applied directly to their business requirements.

Desire for Nascent Information

Users in current era are very much curious to update the knowledge in their discipline. Due to continuous research and development, information explosion, and Information scatter has happened. Users are in a challenge to get updated in their subject area. Users expect the information professionals to proactively deliver the nascent, updated, and analyzed information in their subject area in a capsule form.

Desire for a Balanced Collection (Print and e-Resources)

E-resources have become popular and it has been welcomed by the user group in recent years due to its compactness and other advantages.

Due to the convenience in reading and passion to visit Library, users in current era are still fascinated by traditional libraries. Users are very much interested in books and other physical materials of library. Even though they feel convenient in using the electronic resources, printed materials also play a significant role in libraries.

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