

## A Study on the Information Seeking Behavior of Readers of selected Agricultural University Libraries of North India

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### *Abstract*

*Libraries are the soul of any organization and no one is supposed to assume a good education without a good library in the campus. Agricultural universities are the instrumental to provide quality education and emphasis are being given to boost the research and communication. The present study is conducted for assessing information seeking behavior of seven agriculture universities exist in northern part of the country. The present study was done on user based evaluation and problems faced by the readers in different agricultural university libraries. It is noted that most of the readers in CCSHAU, IVRI, IARI, GBPUAT and PAU have graded their libraries very good and excellent. However, they have also floated a few suggestions to further improve the library facilities towards further strengthen the library services.*

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**Keywords:** Library Automation, Digitization, Information Seeking Behaviour, Agriculture University Library.

### **1. Introduction**

The history of agriculture is as old as the civilization itself. There are the evidences where the men selected those plants and animals which met their requirements. However, the formal aspects of agriculture and agricultural education can be said started with the establishment of the Department of Agriculture and Commerce by the Lord Mayo, the then Governor General that was approved in 1871 as the Department of Revenue, Agriculture and Commerce (Randhawa, 1979). Today, Indian Agricultural Education System has developed into one of the largest and comprehensive systems in the world. At present, there are more than 230 colleges in 47 Agricultural Universities (AUs), 05 Deemed-to-be-Universities (DUs) and one Central Agricultural University (CAU). Besides, about 100 private colleges are there which have affiliation with general and agricultural universities and also provide agricultural education (Tamboli and Nene, 2011).

Of the 47 Agricultural Universities and 03 Central Agricultural Universities, three are exclusively devoted to horticulture and forestry and seven are for veterinary, fisheries and animal

sciences. Agricultural Universities offer undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG) and PhD degree programmes. These universities with constituent and affiliated colleges/faculties offer 11 UG and more than 95 PG programmes apart from PhD programmes in 80 disciplines. Of the total number of students admitted to undergraduate programmes, about 50 percent of them come from rural background and the remaining are from urban and semi-urban areas.

Agricultural Universities follow the model with ICAR prescribed norms and standards, academic regulations, curricula and syllabi with minor variations as per their regional needs. But most of the private colleges ignore them. However, the opportunities for specialization in Biotechnology, Information Technology, Bio-informatics, Environmental Sciences, Agribusiness Management and Products Technology and value addition are limited at present. But these are bound to attain greater employment potential in future.

If we talk about the introduction of information and communication technology in library service, it is seen that the present time that has witnessed the advances in information and communication technology (ICT) (Dhiman, 2003; Dhiman and Rani, 2012) which has opened new ways to access essential content and provide new services and scholarly information. But this is changing the way the users access the library services. Thus, the present study is conducted using questionnaire method to assess information seeking behaviour of users in agricultural university libraries.

## **2. Review of Literature**

Jain and Gorla (2001) have attempted to know the status of agricultural libraries in India based on the staff, users, collection, budget and computerization and mechanized information services existing therein. It is concluded that the libraries are at the initial stage of development and modern technologies have been started to satisfy the user's needs. But the staff working in these libraries needs training and exposure to new techniques available at national and international levels.

Bansode and Pujar (2008) have conducted a study to ascertain the use of the Internet by research scholar in science, social sciences and humanities under title "Use of Internet by Research Scholars at Shivaji University, Kohlapur." It was concluded that users were using the Internet mainly for communication purpose – the e-mail as compared to information retrieval in the library.

Singh and Satija (2008) have conducted a survey to find out the information seeking behavior of agricultural scientists working in ICAR institutions in India. It is concluded in their study that the working culture of those who need information, facilities available for seeking information and knowledge about them, chances of getting the required information etc. affect the information seeking behavior of the users.

Chhatwal, Kanwal and Lal (2009) have conducted a case study on the initiative of Panjab University Library in digitizing the manuscripts with an objective to preserve, conserve and upgrade the manuscripts through digitization and digital preservation. Authors mention that both national and international users make use of the manuscripts for the research purpose. This use increased manifold with the onset of digitization. Although the digitized collection of

manuscripts is presently not available on Panjab University website, still efforts are being made to put them on web using D-space software.

Selvam and Subramanian (2013) have conducted a study to assess the users' satisfaction of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University Library, Coimbatore. It is noted in the study that the respondents are satisfied with the main library services. But the results reveals that the research oriented resources and the customized services like self arrangement, computers, printers, photocopy facilities have to be taken care of in the library.

The present study attempts to assess the information seeking behavior of readers of agricultural universities of north India. It is based on the readers' views about the facilities being provided by the respective university libraries and problems face by them.

### **3. Objectives of the study**

The objectives of present study are:

- Evaluation of library services by their readers in seven different agricultural university/ Institute libraries.
- Information seeking behavior of readers of different agricultural university/ Institute libraries.
- Problems faced by the readers to seek information of different agricultural university/ Institute libraries.

### **4. Methodology**

The present study is based on the suggestions of the users for the facilities provided by the seven agriculture university libraries to them. GBPUAT (Pantnagar), IARI (New Delhi), CCSHAU (Hisar), SVPUAT (Meerut), IVRI (Bareilly), CSA (Kanpur) and PAU (Ludhiana) are the universities covered in the present study. Questionnaire method was used for the data collection. Information was collected from the users of the library comprising of the faculty members, research scholars and the students. However, efforts were also made to collect the feedbacks from users of each library using random method of sampling.

The data were collected on different aspects of each library, such as various facilities being provided by the libraries to their readers. Further, the information were gathered on different aspects such as material used by readers in the library, use of IT tools, CD-ROM services and availability of reading materials, incomplete information materials for their teaching and research purposes. In addition to this assistance of library staff, availability of time to readers to seek information and availability of reading materials was also surveyed including problems faced by the readers and level of satisfaction recorded on the basis of readers feedback.

Suggestions were also obtained from the users to improve the library services. The data collected personally on this questionnaire are also tabulated and analyzed using SPSS software; however, some data presented in terms of percentage on the basis of events being done or not as a whole. On the basis of average, percentage and mean values of data are represented graphically to draw the conclusion for the present study.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The evaluation of library services based on its readers and the problem faced by them in seeking the information from the respective libraries is done in the present study. It is noted that the readers/users were instrumental to assess the different services provided by their libraries. In order to ameliorate these constraints, most of the respondents suggested that the library should acquire more current and relevant materials, to improve Internet access to the readers by their respective libraries. 90 percent readers of CCSHAU and 70 percent readers of IVRI assessed their libraries in the excellent category. 52 percent readers of GBPUAT library and 60 percent readers of IARI library assessed their libraries in a very good category (Table 1). However, the readers from rest of the libraries put their libraries either very good or good category.

It was noted that readers demanded for latest journals, books, more copies of books, extension of the library hours, full automation and digitization services. But readers/users of IVRI and PAU did not float any suggestions for further strengthening or improving the library services.

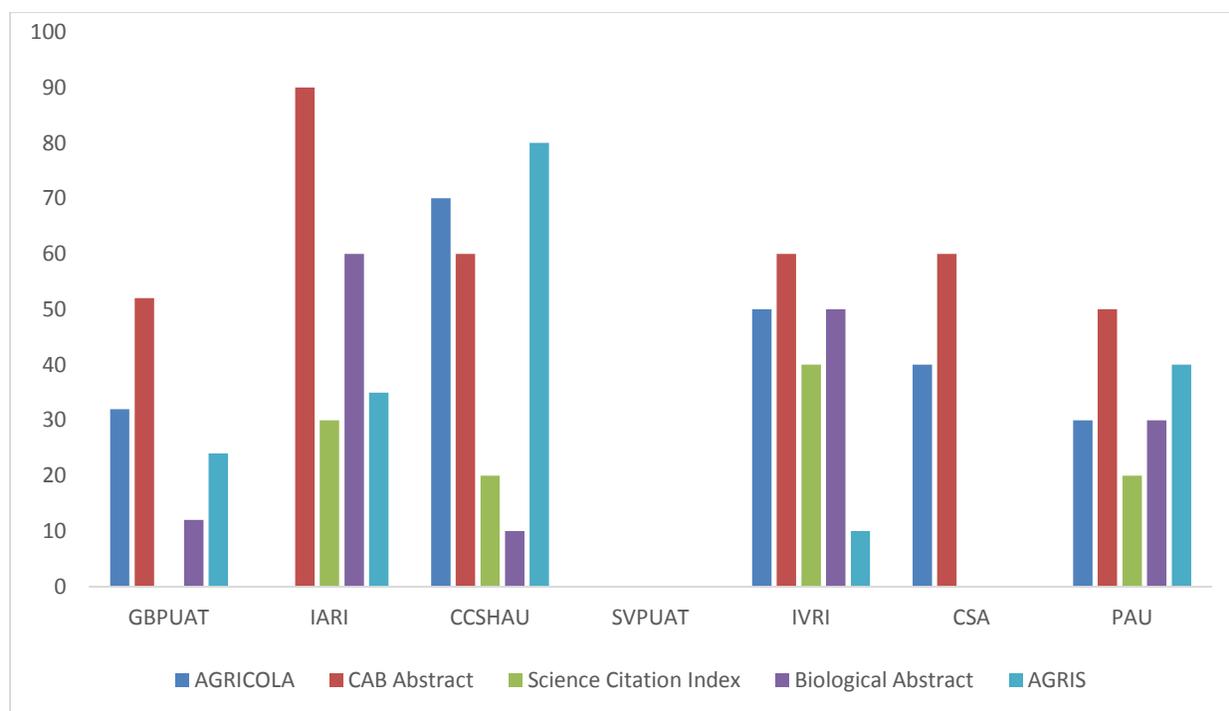
**Table 1: User Based Evaluation of Library Services to Seeking Information from Different Agricultural University Libraries**

S. N.	Rating for library services	Universities/ Institutions						
		GBPUAT (25)	IARI (20)	CCSHAU (20)	SVPUAT (20)	IVRI (20)	CSA (20)	PAU (20)
1.	Excellent	01 (4%)	05 (25%)	18 (90%)	00 (0.0%)	14 (70%)	02 (10%)	06 (30%)
2.	Very good	13 (52%)	12 (60%)	02 (10%)	06 (30%)	06 (30%)	07 (35%)	06 (30%)
3.	Good	11 (44%)	03 (15%)	00 (0.0%)	10 (50%)	00 (0.0%)	07 (35%)	04 (20%)
4.	Poor	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	00 (0.0%)	04 (20%)	00 (0.0%)	04 (20%)	04 (20%)

Table 2 explains about the CD-ROM service facilities used by readers in different libraries. It is observed that AGRICOLA was used maximum by the readers of CCSHAU (70%). CAB Abstract is used by the readers of all the libraries that varied from 52 percent (GBPUAT) to 90 percent (IARI) readers. Science Citation Index is used by 20-40 percent readers of three universities, CCSHAU, IARI and IVRI. Biological Abstract is used by readers of 05 universities in the range of 12-60 percent readers with maximum 60 percent by the readers of IARI. AGRIS is used by readers of 05 universities in the range of 10 to 80 percent with maximum 80 percent of CCS HAU readers. 52 percent users of GBPUAT used CAB abstract but no one used Science Citation Index in this university. It is very clear from the table 2 and figure 1. As the data received from the SVPUAT none of the CR-ROM databases were subscribed covered under the study.

**Table 2: CD-ROM Search Service used by the Readers in Different Agricultural University Libraries**

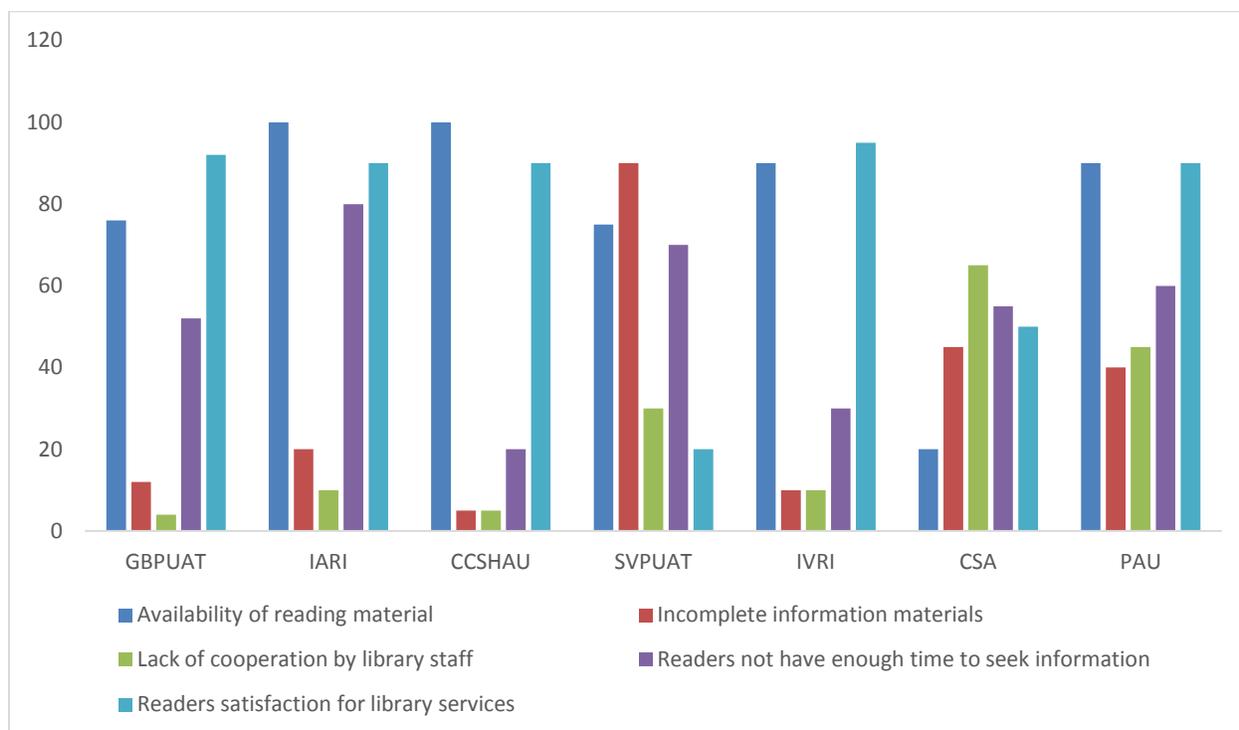
S. N.	CD-ROM service facilities used by readers	Universities/ Institutions						
		GBPUAT (25)	IARI (20)	CCSHAU (20)	SVPUAT (20)	IVRI (20)	CSA (20)	PAU (20)
1.	AGRICOLA	08 (32%)	00 (0.0%)	14 (70%)	00 (0.0%)	10 (50%)	08 (40%)	06 (30%)
2.	CAB Abstract	13 (52%)	18 (90%)	12 (60%)	00 (0.0%)	12 (60%)	12 (60%)	10 (50%)
3.	Science Citation Index	00 (0.0%)	06 (30%)	04 (20%)	00 (0.0%)	08 (40%)	00 (0.0%)	04 (20%)
4.	Biological Abstract	03 (12%)	12 (60%)	02 (10%)	00 (0.0%)	10 (50%)	00 (0.0%)	06 (30%)
5.	AGRIS	06 (24%)	07 (35%)	16 (80%)	00 (0.0%)	02 (10%)	00 (0.0%)	08 (40%)



**Fig 1: CD-ROM Service Facilities used by the Staff and Users of Different Agricultural University Libraries (data are shown in percentage)**

Thus, it is observed in the present study that different libraries provide different database from their CD-ROM network / collection and readers obtain useful information from different sources. Therefore, the behavior to seek information from the CD-ROM databases is different by the readers of different libraries.

However, the major constraints that hindered meeting users' information needs include inadequate relevant reading materials and lack of cooperation by library staff in different libraries. Whereas the former response may be explained against the backdrop of the general state of neglect of academic agricultural libraries in India, the latter response may be connected with lack of knowledge of available retrieval tools in the library by respondents. Other constraints indicated are: inadequate time to seek needed information, readers' satisfaction for library services problem. Some more specified constraints include the erratic power supply, lack of good seats and inadequate toilet facilities etc.



**Fig 2: Problems faced by the Users to seek Information from their Libraries in Different Agricultural University Libraries (data are shown in percentage)**

Table 3 states the problems faced by the readers / users in seeking the information from their libraries. It is seen that hundred percent readers of IARI & CCSHAU are satisfied with the availability of reading materials in their libraries. But minimum satisfaction is recorded by the readers of CSA in this regard. 90 percent readers of SVPUAT said that there are incomplete information materials in their library, while only 5 percent CCSHAU readers said that their library had incomplete reading material. Further, 65 percent readers of CSA said that their library staff did not cooperate, while maximum cooperation was noted for the library staff of GBPUAT and CCSHAU. Most of the readers/ users in all the libraries except CCSHAU and IVRI admitted that they did not have much time to seek information from their respective libraries (Fig 2).

The present study also indicates that most of the libraries are good and provide best possible reading materials and services to their readers to satisfy the readers need, still libraries are required to add more in terms of reading materials and services to their readers. But the readers are found satisfied despite of all the problems they encounter with their libraries.

**Table 3: Problems faced by the Readers in seeking Information in Different Agricultural University Libraries**

S. N.	Source of information get by readers to	Universities/ Institutions						
		GBPUAT (25)	IARI (20)	CCSHAU (20)	SVPUAT (20)	IVRI (20)	CSA (20)	PAU (20)
1.	Availability of reading material	19 (76%)	20 (100%)	20 (100%)	15 (75%)	18 (90%)	04 (20%)	18 (90%)
2.	Incomplete information materials	03 (12%)	04 (20%)	01 (5%)	18 (90%)	02 (10%)	09 (45%)	08 (40%)
3.	Lack of cooperation by library staff	01 (4%)	02 (10%)	01 (5%)	06 (30%)	02 (10%)	13 (65%)	01 (5%)
4.	Readers not have enough time to seek information	13 (52%)	16 (80%)	04 (20%)	14 (70%)	06 (30%)	11 (55%)	12 (60%)
5.	Readers satisfaction for library services	23 (92%)	18 (90%)	18 (90%)	04 (20%)	19 (95%)	10 (50%)	18 (90%)

**Table 4: Suggestions received by the Readers for the Improvement of Library Services**

S.N.	University/ Institutions	Suggestions
1	GBPUAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Latest journals required</li> <li>➤ More copies of books required</li> <li>➤ More time for girl students needed</li> <li>➤ Needs staff cooperation</li> <li>➤ Increase the opening length</li> </ul>
2	IARI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Library should open on public holidays also</li> <li>➤ Library opening time extended</li> <li>➤ Periodicals should be delivered regularly</li> </ul>
3	CCSHAU	No reader gave suggestions to improve library services
4	SVPUAT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ To increase collection of good books</li> <li>➤ Magazine collection is not proper</li> <li>➤ Required digital library</li> <li>➤ Library automation</li> </ul>
5	IVRI	No suggestions floated by any respondent
6	CSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Availability of good books</li> <li>➤ Availability of good journals</li> <li>➤ Library physical facilities needs improvement</li> </ul>
7	PAU	No suggestions floated by any respondent

## 6. Conclusion

The present study gives an insight about the level of automation and digitization and satisfaction of readers of seven agricultural university libraries of northern India. It is concluded that all the libraries are giving good services as evaluated the library services by their respective libraries. CCSHAU, Hisar and IVRI, Bareilly are categorized excellent as rated by the readers for providing different services. However, most of the libraries included in the study are providing CD-ROM facilities to their readers. AGRICOLA, CAB Abstract, Biological Abstracts and AGRIS are the main CD-ROM services provided by the respective libraries to their readers but different services varied as per availability and use of services. Further, the most of the readers in agricultural university libraries were satisfied by the services provided by their libraries except CSA and SVPUAT.

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