

User Studies in the Context of Library Services in Present Scenario: a Research based Study

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Abstract

As we know library users are very important asset of any library and users study is most important activity in present world of Information and communication technology. In real sense libraries are established to cater information requirement of library users. Users study means to study user's information seeking behaviour. On the basis of users study the deficiencies in library system can be removed and library services can be improved. In the ICT era user study helps us to design and develop library services in modern way. In this paper, I have conducted users study in the University libraries and tried to find out users behaviour in seeking information.

Keywords: Users needs; Information requirements; Library services; Information Resources.

1. Introduction

Basically users study includes the study of information need, user behavior, and user pattern. User study is the means of systematic examination of the characteristics and behaviour of the user of the library and information systems and service at s. The users study is directly linked with the effectiveness i.e. performance of library and information services as they aims at satisfaction of user needs. User studies are vitally or significantly important for library development since they are determining user needs, the extent to which they are met, user response to library services and effectiveness of the system. Libraries are established with the objective of providing services to their users. While planning library services, users have to be always kept in view so that the services being proposed and introduced are valued and used to the maximum extent.

Most of the patrons are infrequent users who make a few demands for the service. If the library focuses on the heavy users and their known demands and needs, it can achieve outstanding performance... (Evans, et al.1972). However, the philosophy of librarianship is not only to serve heavy and regular users but is also supposed to look after the interests of casual and infrequent users. Everyone whosoever visits library or ask for information should find his/her information conveniently. Everybody in academics; a student or a teacher comes across some or the other problem in finding and accessing information. You as students of Library & Information and also as users of library and its services might be fully familiar with such day-to-day common problems faced in finding relevant information. To know as to what problems users face in locating and accessing information, paper on „User and User Studies’ has been introduced in the LIS curriculum so that the students of today and information professionals of tomorrow are able to understand and conceptualize users’ problems.

Taking a simple example of a shopkeeper, who thinks of his consumers before opening of a shop and goes on adding items which have possibility of their use. We notice shopping mall culture in all big cities, and small shops in small cities and villages with different commodities to sell according to the requirements of the consumers. The same principle holds good in librarianship also with the difference that one earns profit and another provides services without aiming at any profit. The profit is earned and measured in the form of user satisfaction with the services being provided. The primary concern of the library profession has been to assess the information needs of the users and assist them in finding their information resources to solve their day-to-day problems relating to information access and use.

2. Literature Review

In the Library and information science literature, the earliest reference we come across is to the study conducted by L.R. Wilson in the late 1930. It has been recorded that by 1977, more than 1000 important studies were conducted on the subject of user studies.

Moving towards the 1970s, user studies flourished and introduced a diversity of target user groups like magistrates, urban citizens, personnel working in local authorities, university students, etc. The 1970s also mark the point that user studies examined the use of particular information Systems, their efficiency and effectiveness and how this can be maximized. More scientists began to realise deficiencies in the use of methodological techniques and conceptualization although no theoretical framework had been developed. The trends of user studies during this period were well documented in the three chapters of ARIST on information needs and uses (Crane 1971; Martyn 1974; Crawford 1978). It has been recorded that by 1977, more than 1000 important studies were conducted on the subject of 'user studies'. It must be mentioned that the growth of science and technology and, the importance accorded to the use of scientific information proliferated such attempts of user studies. An event of great significance in the history of user studies was the establishment of the centre for Research on User Studies (CRUS) in 1975 by The British Library at University of Sheffield. The main objective of this centre was to create a national centre to act as a focus for research in user studies. Let us hope that researchers on different facets of 'user studies' will receive encouragement from the centre in future and a theory of user studies would be developed. The establishment of a centre for research on user studies indicates the importance of the subject 'user studies'. Martin (1976) in his article "User Studies and Library Planning" discussed the user studies and appraised their role in library planning. Author provided various guidelines for conducting user studies and concluded that user data strengthens the planning and decision-making processes at several levels, so the responses of users should be an integral part of the ongoing practice of librarians, providing constant feedback.

The 1980s were a decade that was characterized by an increasing awareness surrounding the conceptual Frame work and methodological issues of user studies. One of the first attempts at articulating this awareness was the publication, in the journal Social Science Information Studies of the papers Presented in a symposium of qualitative approaches to the study of information problems.

In the 1990's Internet becomes information provider to information community. The 1990's witnessed the implementation of conceptual theories that was developed during 1980's and number of researchers adopted conceptual theories and framework in designing to their research design with qualitative research methods. Number of studies has been conducted to

know impact of Internet on the user and information community. In the year 1993 Tillman et.al conducted a study on the use of internet as a reference tool by special librarians In the year 1996 another small case study was conducted by Eager and Oppenheim, to examine the information needs of academics. The major objectives of this study was to know and test an alternative observation technique (shadowing).In this technique participant’s would be observed whole day. Another study was conducted and published by Abel’s et.al 1996; Liebscher et al, 1997) to explore the factors that influence the use and option of electronic networks by engineering and science faculties at small industries.

Wildemuth (2003) in article titled “Why Conduct User Studies? The Role of Empirical Evidence in Improving the Practice of Librarianship” emphasized that by gathering evidences about library users, their interactions with library services and materials and context in which those materials and services are used, librarians can make sound decisions for the future. Carr (2006) “What Users Want: An Academic ‘Hybrid’ Library Perspective”. Author described the development of user centered approach in academic libraries over the recent decades. Varghese (2008) “User Studies in the Electronic Environment: Review and Brief Analysis”. The article summarized the results of 101 user studies conducted in the electronic environment.

3. Objective of the Study

There are various objectives of the Study as described below:

- To provide better services.
- To find out various importance of information resources.
- To find out the problems being faced by library users in accessing information.
- To find out bottlenecks in Library services.
- To improve the Library services.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Approximately 120 questionnaires were distributed to the students of different streams in the University of Jammu. Out of these 120 questionnaires 100 questionnaires were received back. On the basis of these questionnaires, the process of data analysis was done.

Table1: Visit to the your Library

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	yes	100	100%
2	No	0	0%

It has been revealed from the table 1 that hundred percent students visited the Library so that they are interested in demand of different kinds of Library services.

Table 2: The frequency of visit to the Library

S.N.	variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Daily	80	80%
2	Weekly	20	20%
3	Fortnightly	0	0%
4	Monthly	0	0%
5	Occasionally	0	0%

It has been revealed from the table 2 that eighty percent students visited the Library daily while 20% students visited the Library weekly. In this connection all the students should be motivated to visit the library on daily basis. Moreover the library services should be strengthens so that students take the benefits of these services.

Table 3: Knowledge about Library services being provided to the users

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	yes	100	100%
2	No	0	0%

It has been revealed from the table 3 that hundred percent students know about the Library services being provided to them. So it is the responsibility of the Library staff to provide them library services in more accurate and efficient manner.

Table4: Usage of Library services

S.N.	variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Issuance of Books	60	60%
2	To get Xerox copies of library resources	20	20%
3	To capture information in Smart phone	20	20%
4	To prepare notes by consulting information resources	60	60%
5	To read newspapers/Magazines	60	60%
6	To consult journals	20	20%

It has been revealed from the table 4 that sixty percent students uses the library services like issuance of books, to prepare notes by consulting information resources and to read newspaper/magazines while twenty percent students uses the library services like get Xerox copies of library resources, capture information in smart phone and consult the journals. In this connection, all the students should be motivated to use all the services in the library.

Table 5: Satisfaction regarding the Library services being providing to Library users

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	yes	100	100%
2	No	0	0%

It has been revealed from the table 5 that hundred percent students are satisfied with the library services being providing to them.

Table 6: Information resources available in the Library are sufficient to meet requirements

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	yes	100	100%
2	No	0	0%

It has been revealed from the table 6 that hundred percent students having same opinion regarding information resources available in the library are sufficient to meet requirements.

Table 7: Usage of Library tool to search information

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Library Catalogue	20	20%
2	OPAC i.e. Online public access catalogue	60	60%
3	List of current books	60	60%
4	web-OPAC	20	20%

It has been revealed from the table 7 that sixty percent students used OPAC and list of current books while searching information in the library and on the other hand twenty percent students used library Catalogue and web-OPAC while searching information in the library. In this connection, all the students should be motivated to search the information by all the means.

Table 8: The problems being faced in accessing information in the Library

S.N.	Variables	No. of respondents	Percentage
1	Insufficient information resources regarding to meet the requirement	20	20%
2	Lack of current information resources	0	0%
3	Timing of the Library does not suit	20	20%
4	Lack of training in searching of information resources in computerized environment.	0	0%
5	Required infrastructure is not available like computers, Xerox facility, Air-conditioning, etc.	20	20%
6	None of the above	60	60%

It has been revealed from the table 8 that sixty percent students having no problem in accessing information in libraries while twenty percent students feel that timing does not suit, insufficient information resources and required infrastructure is not available. In this connection, all the problems in accessing information in libraries should be removed.

5. Findings and Suggestions

There are various findings and suggestions regarding the study are as follows:

Major Findings:

1. All the students visited the Library on daily basis.
2. All the students are aware about library services being provided to them.
3. All the students are satisfied with the library services being provided to them.
4. All the students have same opinion regarding information resources available in the library are sufficient to meet the requirements.
5. Majority of students have no problem in accessing information.

Suggestions:

1. The students should be motivated to use all the kinds of library services.
2. There should be motivated to use all the kinds of searching techniques to find information.
3. The problems in accessing information should be removed.
4. There should be the proper setup of CCTV cameras.
5. The reading hall should be extended in order to accommodate more students.

6. Conclusion

It is hereby concluded that majority of students are aware about the library services being provided to them and they are also satisfied with the library services being provided to them. This study will further strengthen library services in various aspects. Further the deficiencies in library services should be removed if any which is possible.

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