

# Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour: A Case Study on Students in Private University Library

Mohd Razilan Abdul Kadir, Nurul Iylia Sabeela Johari and  
Norhayati Hussin

Faculty of Information Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Perdana Campus,  
40150 Shah Alam, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: mrazilan@salam.uitm.edu.my, iylia\_sabeela@yahoo.com

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4361>

DOI:10.6007/IJARPED/v7-i3/4361

*Published Online:* 20 July 2018

## Abstract

The rapid proliferation of information in the present era has significant implications for the education and library usage of university students. It brings library effectiveness to the next level that is potentially envisioned as customization of information to meet individual needs. The purpose of this study is to investigate the students' information needs and their information seeking behaviour in Private University Library. This study aims to evaluate the students' seeking behaviour by measuring user's information needs with (a) information sources used, (b) types of information, (c) user awareness and (d) user education provided by the SEGi University Library. Questionnaire for survey was used to measure the respondents' opinion on their information needs level. Adopting a survey research methodology involving 274 students, the findings suggest that SEGi University library needs to provide a better awareness and training programs for the use of library resources, e-resources and services that should be conducted from time to time. It is also recommended that the library should provide adequate, sufficient size and scope of library resources and develop library performance evaluation for the library users. The significance of the study could be assessed from theoretical perspective.

**Keywords:** Information Needs, Information Seeking Behaviour, Library services, Library Science

## Introduction

The rapid proliferation of information in the present era has significant implications for the education and library usage of university students. Information is an important tool used in the realization of any objective or goal set by an individual or group. It is valuable resources required in any society, therefore acquiring and using information are critical and important activities. Academic libraries as centre of information sources play vital role to develop lifelong learning skills among the university students. Students need to develop their skills in information management and in the use of information tools and databases that will lead them in searching the accurate information sources that related to their studies and courses.

Moreover, it will also contribute to the self-development of oneself. Thus library effectiveness can be potentially envisioned as customization of information to meet individual needs. Several studies mentioned that libraries need to emphasis on the planning user-oriented program in order to provide more responsive and accountable service (Osiobe, 1998; Owolabi, Jimoh & Okpeh, 2010, as cited in Akuma & Iqbal, 2012). Based on these previous studies, it is necessary for libraries to have a knowledge and need to understand the user group to be served. Basically, information needs depends on the discipline of study and level for example, undergraduate and post-graduate students. There is a barrier to access information when users are unaware or lack of awareness of resources and services provided by the library. The users also need to have knowledge on using the library resources and services so that they are able to use information access tools efficiently.

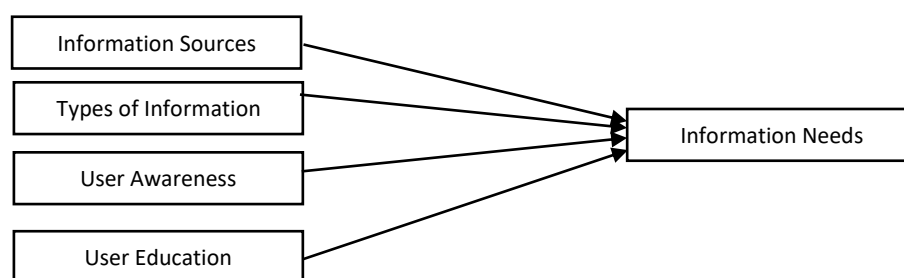


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on Wilson's model (1981) as cited in Robson and Robinson (2013), information seeking behavior is defined as the need for information by the user. The demands of users on the library sources such as physical collection and online database are needed to be fulfilled and provided by the library. With the latest technology nowadays, university students can access to information off-campus. This has developed a distance between library and academic community to communicate and interact regarding to information resources. This can be seen that the academic communities are not fully aware of the library resources and services physically. Due to this, librarians need to play a pivotal role in creating awareness on information resources and services and clearly understand the needs of academic community especially students for their education enhancement. According to Uwa and Ossai-onah (2013), information needs are varied and continually changing in every field such as social, economy, politics, culture and education. Nevertheless, information is categorized mostly by the information seeking behavior of the individual in need of information. It involves a set of actions in expressing information needs, information seeking, evaluating and selecting information and finally using this information to satisfy that individual's needs.

The study is conducted with the aim to investigate the students' information needs and their information seeking behaviour in SEGi University.

In specific, the study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine the relationship between the information sources used and information needs.
2. To examine the relationship between types of information and information needs.
3. To examine the relationship between students' awareness of library services and information needs.
4. To examine the relationship between user education and information needs.

The study was designed to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. Is there any significant relationship between information sources used and information needs?
2. Is there any significant relationship between types of information and information needs?
3. Is there any significant relationship between students' awareness of library services and information needs?
4. Is there any significant relationship between user education and information needs?

### **Methodology**

The quantitative study approach was used for this study. Figure 1 below depicts the research framework of the study. The independent variables of the study are the information sources used, types of information, user awareness and user education. The dependent variable is the information needs. Based on the context of the study which is the SEGi University Library, the library resources would be the internet, newspaper, online database, text book, OPAC, library websites, dictionaries, handbook, full text journal, encyclopedia, thesis and printed journal. Meanwhile, the library services includes Inter-library loan (ILL) and current awareness services (CAS).

The instrument and survey used for the data collection was a questionnaire. The population of the study was SEGi University students and the number of respondents were 274. All of the respective questionnaires had been distributed randomly through simple random sampling. Simple random sampling method was chosen due to reasons of it is among the most efficient technique in probability sampling design, easily understood and as well as convenient in practical situation. This study employed a structured questionnaire to obtain the respondent's feedback on their information needs and information seeking behaviour. The research is a quantitative research where it is represented by term "number validators" which is aimed at testing the hypothesis with numerical value rather explaining complex phenomena through verbal communication. The analytical part of the research was accomplished using a software known as Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) version 22.

### **Analysis and Findings**

There are 274 questionnaires were distributed to the students at the SEGi University Library. Out of the 274 questionnaire, 250 were returned and completed, making the rate of return of 91.2%. Based on the results obtained, 50% (125 students) of the respondents are male and the other half is female respondents.

### **Demographic Profiles**

The majority of the respondents is between age 18 – 26 years old (74.4% or 186 respondents), followed by 23.6% (59 respondents) that are aged between 27 – 35 years old. Only 2.0% respondents are aged between 36 – 45 years old. In terms of education level, 48.4% respondents are Bachelor Degree students, followed by 26.4% of Diploma holders. In addition, the majority of the respondents are in Semester 2 with 24.4%, followed by 20% of Semester 4. The complete results on the students' demographic profiling can be referred to Table 1, as shown next.

Table 1

*Demographic profile*

Profiles	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean
Gender			1.50
<i>Male</i>	125	50.0	
<i>Female</i>	125	50.0	
Age			1.28
<i>18 – 26 years old</i>	186	74.4	
<i>27 – 35 years old</i>	59	23.6	
<i>36 – 45 years old</i>	5	2.0	
Education Level			2.82
<i>Foundation</i>	19	7.6	
<i>Diploma</i>	66	26.4	
<i>Bachelor</i>	121	48.4	
<i>Master</i>	29	11.6	
<i>Ph.D</i>	15	6.0	
Semester			3.16
<i>Semester 1</i>	42	16.8	
<i>Semester 2</i>	61	24.4	
<i>Semester 3</i>	38	15.2	
<i>Semester 4</i>	50	20.0	
<i>Semester 5</i>	42	16.8	
<i>Others</i>	17	6.8	

**Information Used**

The questionnaire consists of questions on information sources used among students in SEGi University. In this section, questions were asked pertaining the usage of information sources as illustrated in Table 2. The finding shows the highest frequency is 157 with 62.8%, followed by moderate with a frequency of 89 with 35.6%. The low frequency is 4 with 1.6%.

Table 2

*Information Sources Used*

Level	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	4	1.6	2.61	.520
Moderate	89	35.6		
High	157	62.8		
Total	250	100		

**Types of Information**

Students' information usage patterns are basically based on the types of the information itself. Therefore, libraries must have adequate information sources that will meet the genuine and information needs as per required by students. Table 3 presents the level of Types of Information extracted from the survey findings. Based on the data analyzed, the **high** level of information gained shows with the highest figure i.e. 167 (66.8%), followed by moderate level, 77 (30.8%) and low level, 6 (2.4%).

Table 3

*Types of Information*

Level	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	6	2.4	2.64	.527
Moderate	77	30.8		
High	167	66.8		
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>		

**User Awareness**

Library plays an important role in promoting awareness of its services and activities in order to help exposing and educating the students with services and facility. Table 4 presents the level of User Awareness. Based on the data analyzed, the highest frequency is again the high level (55.6%), followed by moderate (43.2%) and low level of user awareness (1.2%).

Table 4

*User Awareness*

Level	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	3	1.2	2.54	.522
Moderate	108	43.2		
High	139	55.6		
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>		

**User Education**

User education programs for students are essential in developing more effective, efficient and independent information sources used and services that accessible within the library. Table exhibits the level of User Education which showing the high level dominating with 67.2%.

Table 5

*User Education*

Level	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	3	1.2	2.66	.499
Moderate	79	31.6		
High	168	67.2		
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>		

### Information Needs

Promoting and serving library users with effective information needs is essential for the librarians to gain knowledge on how great is the student knowledge in finding information, ability to find the information and use them for study purposes. Table 6 displays the findings where high level of Information Needs shows with the highest portion i.e. 66.0%.

Table 6  
*Information needs*

Level	Frequency (n=250)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low	8	3.2	2.62	.546
Moderate	77	30.8		
High	165	66.0		
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>		

In order to answer the research questions, these hypotheses are tested via correlation analysis. The correlation coefficient was used to measure the strength of linear relationships between two variables. Questionnaire was used to measure the user perceptions on library collections to test the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between information sources used and information needs.*

*Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between types of information and information needs.*

*Hypothesis 3: There is a relationship between students' awareness of library services and information needs.*

*Hypothesis 4: There is a relationship between user education and information needs.*

### Correlation Analysis between Independent Variables and Dependent Variable

Table 7

*Correlation coefficient of Bivariate relationship between posited variables and Information Needs*

Variables	Correlation coefficient
Information Sources Used	0.578
Types of Information	0.681
User Awareness	0.360
User Education	0.623

*Note: All are statistically significant at 1% level*

In Table 7, the correlation coefficient value between Information Sources Used towards Information Needs is  $r=0.578$ . This value shows a moderate positive relation between these two factors. Furthermore, the correlation test was significant at 0.01 level of significance and the hypothesis  $H_1$  generated was accepted. Thus there is a moderate positive significant relationship between information sources used (ISU) and information needs (IN) at SEGi University Library. The correlation coefficient between Types of Information towards Information Needs shows moderate value with  $r=0.681$ . Hence  $H_2$  was accepted where there exists a moderate positive relationships between types of information (TI) and information

needs (IN) at SEGi University Library. The similar result is achieved between User Awareness towards Information Needs, with significant correlation but with weak strength ( $r=0.360$ ) thus  $H_3$  is accepted. Bivariate relationships between User Education towards Information Needs is shown to be moderate with  $r=0.623$ . With this evidence, it can be concluded that there exists a positive moderate relationships between user education (UE) and information needs (IN) at SEGi University Library.

### Conclusion

This study aimed to explore the possible relationship between student's information needs and their information seeking behavior. When students seek or receive information, the important factors in their assessment of it and whether to use it are its utility and credibility of the source from which it comes. The researcher's case study has strongly connected with the discovery of relationships between information seeking behavior patterns and value on the information needs outcome. Findings indicate that all of the posited variables (Types of information, Information Sources Used, User Awareness, User Education) have positive bivariate linear relationship with dependent variable (Information Needs). In order to provide the best possible information needs for the SEGi University students, the librarians will have to change and adapt to new demands and technology in providing better resources and services to the students. The library should always be directed toward the empowerment of the users. As an academic library, they should think of new techniques which will attract students more towards library services. From the theoretical viewpoint, the study has developed an empirical based framework which can be emulated by other researcher who are interested in investigating similar topic but in other library settings. It is clear that information needs must meet the library users' desired need in order to provide better library resources and services. By identifying the strengths and weaknesses with regard to the dimensions of library resources and services, the library can better allocate library resources and activities in order to provide better library resources, services and facilities to the library users. Therefore, efforts should be continued to understand the users need in order to meet the users' expectations and demands.

### References

- Al-Muomen, N., Morris, A. & Maynard, S. (2012). Modelling information-seeking behaviour of graduate students at Kuwait University. *Journal of Documentation*, 68 (4), 430 – 459. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezaccess.library.uitm.edu.my/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/00220411211239057>
- Akuma, S. & Iqbal, R. (2012). Investigation of students' information seeking behaviour. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering Research Paper*, 2 (12), 28-35. Retrieved from [http://www.ijarcse.com/docs/papers/12\\_December2012/Volume\\_2\\_issue\\_12\\_December2012/V2I11-0169.pdf](http://www.ijarcse.com/docs/papers/12_December2012/Volume_2_issue_12_December2012/V2I11-0169.pdf)
- Chowdhury, S., Gibb, F. & Landoni, M. (2014). A model of uncertainty and its relation to information seeking and retrieval (IS&R). *Journal of Documentation*, 70 (4), 575 – 604. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezaccess.library.uitm.edu.my/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/JD-05-2013-0060>

- Foster, A. & Urquhart, C. (2012). Modelling nonlinear information behaviour: Transferability and progression. *Journal of Documentation*, 68 (6), 784 – 805. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezaccess.library.uitm.edu.my/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/00220411211277046>
- Kuhlthau, C. (1993). A principle of uncertainty for information seeking. *Journal of Documentation*, 49 (4), 339-355. Retrieved from <http://elib.segi.edu.my:2057/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/eb026918>
- Lopatovska, I. & Sessions, D. (2016). Understanding academic reading in the context of information-seeking. *Library Review*, 65 (8/9), 1-15. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezaccess.library.uitm.edu.my/doi/pdfplus/10.1108/LR-03-2016-0026>
- Marchionini, G. (1995). *Information-seeking in electronic environments*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- McQuail, D. and Windahl, S. (1993). *Communication models for the study of mass communication* (2nd ed.). Harlow: Longman Group.
- Osiobe, S.A. (1998). Information-seeking behaviors. *International Library*, 20 (3) 337-346.
- Owolabi, K., Jimoh, M. & Okpeh, S. (2010). Information seeking behaviour of polytechnic students: The case of Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2010, 1-5. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1325&context=libphilprac>
- Robson, A. & Robinson, L. (2013). Building on models of information behaviour: Linking information seeking and communication. *Journal of Documentation*, 69 (2), 169 – 193. Retrieved from <http://www.emeraldinsight.com.ezaccess.library.uitm.edu.my/doi/full/10.1108/00220411311300039>
- Rogers, E.M. (2003), *Diffusion of innovations* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Free Press.
- Urquhart, C. & Rowley, J. (2007). Understanding student information behaviour in relation to electronic information services: lessons from longitudinal monitoring and evaluation, part 2. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58 (8), 1188-97. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41125150\\_Understanding\\_student\\_information\\_behavior\\_in\\_relation\\_to\\_electronic\\_information\\_services\\_Lessons\\_from\\_longitudinal\\_monitoring\\_and\\_evaluation\\_Part\\_2](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/41125150_Understanding_student_information_behavior_in_relation_to_electronic_information_services_Lessons_from_longitudinal_monitoring_and_evaluation_Part_2)
- Uwa, E. O. & Ossai-onah, O. V. (2013). Information needs and seeking behaviour of students in two universities in Imo state, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice*. Retrieved from <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2348&context=libphilprac>
- Wilson, T. D. (1981). On user studies and information needs. *Journal of Documentation*, 37 (1), 3 – 15. Retrieved from <http://elib.segi.edu.my:2067/10.1108/eb026702>
- Wilson, T.D., Ellis, D., Ford, N. & Foster, A. (2000). Uncertainty in information seeking: A research project in the Department of Information Studies. Retrieved from <http://informationr.net/tdw/publ/unis/uncerty.html>