Information seeking behaviour of the students at Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College, Aligarh Muslim University: a survey

Nishat Fatimaa and Naved Ahmadb

aSenior Lecturer, Department of Library & Information Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh - 202002
bCorresponding author: Research Scholar, Department of Library & Information Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh - 202002, E-mail: navedlis@yahoo.co.in

Study of data collected from 60 students by administering questionnaires on their information seeking behaviour at Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College, AMU, indicates that guidance in the use of library resources and services is necessary to help students meet their information requirements. Finds that textbooks and journals are the most popular sources of information for the students’ course work.

Introduction

Unani system of medicine owes its origin to Greece. It was the Greek philosopher - Physician Hippocrates (460-377 BC) who freed medicine from the realm of superstition and magic and gave it the status of science. The theoretical framework of unani medicine is based on the teachings of Hippocrates1.

Unani medicine (Tibb) is a field of sciences in which information is enormous. It traditionally makes use of a variety of techniques including diet, herbal treatments, manipulative therapies, and surgery. Unani-tibbi is a complete system, encompassing all aspects and all fields of medical care, from nutrition and hygiene to psychiatric treatment2.

Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which involves a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs. Various factors may determine the information seeking behaviour of an individual or a group of individuals. It is, therefore, desirable to understand the purpose for which information is required, the environment in which the user operates users’ skills in identifying the needed information, channels and sources preferred for acquiring information, and barriers to information.

Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College was founded in 1927. In 1940, the Aligarh Tibbiya College was recognized by Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh. In 1985, two more departments viz., Department of Kulliyat and Moalijat were started and in 1986 the Faculty of Unani Medicine was established. Now Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College is functioning as first rate college of Unani Medicine in India and runs Under Graduate and Post Graduate courses i.e., Bachelor of Unani Medicine and Surgery (BUMS) and Doctor of Medicine/ Doctor of Surgery (MD/MS) under the Faculty of Unani Medicine, AMU, Aligarh. National and international seminars, reorientation training programmes and workshops are frequently organized by the AKTC. The present strength of the students at AKTC is about 560.

Review of literature

Information seeking is a term describing the ways individuals seek, evaluate, select, and use information. In the course of seeking new information, the individual may interact with different people, analog tools, and computer-based information systems3.

Information seeking is a process in which humans engage in order to advance and potentially alter their state of knowledge. It is also an important cognitive function related to learning and problem solving, sometimes thought of as a “higher cognitive process”4.
Information seeking behavior is different from the actual information need. The information need is a subjective, relative concept in the mind of the experiencing individual and is defined as the recognition of the existence of uncertainty.

Information seeking behaviour is an area of active interest among librarians, information scientists, communication scientists, sociologists and psychologists. “Information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some need, perceived by the user, who as a consequence makes demands upon formal systems such as libraries, information centers, on-line services or some other person in order to satisfy the perceived need”. Information seeking behaviour refers to any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need.

With information deluge, everyone needs information of increasing variety and diversity of level, frequency, volume and ease. This complex situation appears to be ambiguous and heterogeneous as that information need of particular groups of users and information flow from specific situations in organization are difficult to determine. This situation has given rise to the growth concept of information searching and the manner of determining the pattern of searching is said to be information seeking behaviour.

The literature on surveys about the information-seeking behavior of the students is extensive. Many studies have been conducted to investigate the information-seeking behaviour of library users based on their subject interest, occupation, information environment, and geographical location.

This study investigates the sources of information used by students studying unani medicine at Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College for their academic work, the extent to which they are aware and use the library resources, the assistance they receive in using the library resources, etc.

Objectives of the study

This study has the following objectives:

1. To find out the awareness and use of library resources by the students,
2. To find out the type of information sources used by the students,
3. To ascertain users’ opinion regarding usefulness and adequacy of information sources and services, and
4. To know the purpose of seeking information.

Methodology

This study used questionnaire-based survey method. The questionnaires were personally distributed to the students of AKTC at their library and class rooms in the month of November 2007.

AKTC falls under the Faculty of Unani Medicine in Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, which comprises seven departments and about 560 students. From such a number, a random sample of 100 students was selected. The questionnaires were distributed to the students who were present in their library and class rooms. Sixty filled-in questionnaires were returned by the users with the overall response rate being 60%. The collected data were analyzed, classified and tabulated by employing statistical methods.

Analysis

Questions like name, gender and educational qualification were asked. Out of 60 respondents, 44 (73.33 %) were male and 16 (26.66 %) were female.

Frequency of visit to the library

The frequency of students visit to the library, has been classified into four time gaps as shown in Table 1. Majority of users i.e., 31 users (51.67%) were visiting the library daily, followed by 2-3 times in a week by 19 users (31.67%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. no.</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>51.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>2-3 times in a week</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>31.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
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Purpose of visit to the library
From Table 2, it is seen that 78.33% users visited the library to study, 71.66% users to borrow books, 65% for browsing the shelves, 30% to use reference materials, 36.66% to read journals and 85% to read newspapers and magazines.

**Use of library sources and services**

Table 3 shows the use of library sources and services. It was found that majority of the students used newspapers followed by the use of books and journals. It was found that information services such as CAS, SDI, and abstracting services were marginally used and translation service was unavailable.

**Library collection**

Most students found the library collection satisfactory with 57.5 per cent stating that it was adequately stocked,
while 31.3 per cent stating it was moderately stocked. Only 7 per cent said it was inadequately stocked and 0.7 per cent said it was very inadequately stocked in their field of specialization.

**Purpose of seeking information**

Table 4 indicates the decreasing rank order of information seeking on a scale of four. Career development with 30 (50%) out of the 60 respondents was the most preferred response for seeking information. This was followed by the reasons that include seeking information for problem solving, keeping up-to-date and the need to write an article or research paper.

**Instruction on how to use library sources and services**

Ninety three per cent of the respondents in this study agreed with the statement that for more effective and efficient use of the library, students need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas. The finding is similar to those of Lubans and Holland & Powell which indicated that graduate students need instruction in the use of the library to enable them to make more effective and efficient use of information sources and services to which the library provides access.

**Conclusion**

The usage of the AKTC library, its resources and services needs to be increased. Student oriented information resources such as text books, reference material, journals, internet facility, database etc., should be facilitated. Importantly, the library should provide initial orientation workshops and ongoing seminars for students to train them in using resources so that utilization of resources and services is maximized.

**References**

8. Op Cit. Krikelas