CHAPTER -1

INTRODUCTION
Chapter – 1

Introduction

This chapter attempts to clarify the conceptual understanding of information seeking behaviour. Further, it discusses nature, scope and limitations, objectives and hypotheses. It also summarizes the findings and implications of the study.
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INTRODUCTION

0 PREAMBLE:

Today information is considered as an essential phenomena for all round development of the society. Information brings people and thoughts together. It is the exchange of ideas, news and data that makes a society what it is. As a matter of fact, economists treat it Fetterman (1977) "as critical a resource to man as food, Water, light and heat". He further states that "Especially in a welfare state the success of its benefit system largely depends upon the flow of information." In the post industrial society, it has been said that what counts is not raw muscle power or energy but information. Advanced economies of the world have already become information intensive. In recent times, developing countries like India have realized the importance of information and are investing in the design and development of information
infrastructure. In the planning of information centers and services one of the first steps to be undertaken is the assessing of information needs of the users. The needs assessment should be carefully planned, based on what the librarians want to know and how, that information will be used, what the users need, what sources they already used, how often and how quickly they need material and whether they would use particular services and sources if they are available.

Such types of needs assessment studies have been named as 'User studies', 'Information Need Studies', 'Information seeking behaviour studies' or 'Information seeking and communication behaviour studies', etc. whatever may be nomenclature, the purpose(s) of user studies may be one or more of the following:

- To identify the levels and kinds of user needs.
- To enhance the quality of resources and services
- To judge the limitations of the information system and its services
• To predict future information demands and requirements
• To design and develop need based and user-oriented information system and services

It is well known fact that, the social phenomena vary from one region to another region. Saraf and others (1990) observed that "Information requirements differ among the different groups of social scientist working in different environment".

Kuffalikar and Mahakulkar (2003) also found that "the information needs of different categories of readers are not the same in nature, they differ qualitatively, quantitatively and geographically. It results from the recognition of some perceived need by the user who, in turn, place demand on the information center of some person in order to satisfy the perceived needs".

Thus the area of information seeking behaviour of user assumes special significance. This is an area of active
interest among the librarians and researchers in library and information science.

1.1 PROPOSED RESEARCH:

Marathwada is the cradle of ancient traditions and culture of Maharashtra. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University and Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University and their affiliated colleges in Marathwada symbolise higher education in modern times in this region. Presently, these Universities are marching ahead with a progress of higher education and research.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University was founded in 1958 and continues to be the famous seat of learning and academic pursuits. It is the nerve centre of education and research in the entire Marathwada region. Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University was established in 1994 has recently been declared as the postgraduate and research centre of excellence. There are other institutions which are actively engaged in social
science studies and research. Some of them are directly involved in research while others lend indirect support to research in social sciences.

University Grants Commission and Maharashtra Government is continuously supporting these two universities and their affiliated colleges financially and otherwise. Consequently libraries attached to these institutions have grown and are housing large collections and are involved in generation of information services. In recent times, some of these libraries are trying to adapt and adopt information technology for their operations. While some progress is seen, these are being affected by a number of external forces as social, economic, political, technological and internal variable for a change. Thus the challenge of change and the pressure of accountability and enterprise culture demand that library and information services need to be proactive rather than passive. In such a situation it was felt that a study of information seeking behaviour of social scientists attached
to academic institutions in Marathwada would help to predict the demand for various product and services to be provided and once it is understood the information systems and academic libraries in Marathwada can be designed to fit the user in accordance with their needs rather than forcing them to adopt the system. The considerable number of such studies are undertaken in other states of India but paucity of such work exists in Maharashtra and particularly in Marathwada. Thus present study shall enable in planning of social science information system at regional level.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

Present study entitled, "Information seeking behaviour of social scientists in Marathwada". It is acknowledged fact that effectiveness of a professional depends upon dissemination and use of right information at right time. Here social scientists are not an exception to it.
Most of the studies in the past have described the aggregated use of libraries, materials and tell us very little about the nature of enquiry, procedures and methods of seeking required information. There has been little investigation on any large scale and in any depth of the methodology of information on seeking employed by the social scientists. Therefore an effort in this direction on the process of information seeking of the social scientists has been undertaken. In order to serve the social scientists in the region better, the attention has been focused here more closely on their actual information seeking behaviour.

1.3 INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR: CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND:

In order to carry out research, it is essential to understand the concept of information seeking behaviour and discuss various theories on information seeking developed recently.
1.3.1 Information:

Shera (1972) defines "information is that, which is transmitted by the act or process of communication, it may be a message, a signal, a stimulus. It assumes a response in the receiving organism and therefore, possesses response-potential". In this sense, Evans (1972) described information as "a sensible statement, opinion, fact, concept or idea or an association of statements, opinions, or ideas," Information could be considered as means to an end but not the end itself. Krishan Kumar (1990) states "after information has been assimilated, correlated and understood, then it is identified as knowledge. Thus information gets transferred into knowledge. Information appears to be an ambiguous term that is fluid and has several denotations. Mahapatra and Panda (2004) states, "Information has connotative differences with several disciplines that use the concept information in their concerned area of studies differently". Over the years, a variety of more specific definitions have been found.
However in the context of user studies Wilson (1981) defines Information as "a physical entity or phenomena, the channel of communication through which messages are transferred or the factual data are empirically determined and presented in a document or transmitted orally."

In the present study the term information is used as resources use, systems and services.

1.3.2 **Information seeking:**

According to Marchionini (1989) "Information seeking includes recognizing and interpreting the information problem, establishing a plan of search, conducting the search, evaluating the results and if necessary iterating through the process again."

Summers (1983) adds "this process is dynamic in nature and constitutes the following five stages."
• Perceiving
• Responding
• Valuing
• Organization and
• Characterization of a value"

Information seeking is not a mechanical process. It is directly related to the psyche, attitude and behaviour of information seeker. In order to understand the dynamic but complex nature of the information seeking process it would be helpful to look at the theories that seek to explain this.

1.3.3 Theories:

The three important theories, those need a brief mention are:

1. Constructive theory
2. Grounded theory and
3. Optimal foraging theory.
Constructive theory. Constructive theory describes information seeking as a constructive process. The exponents of this theory are Dewey (1933), Kelly (1963) Bruner (1986) Kuhlthau (1993). Two basic themes of this theory are: first, we construct our unique personal worlds; second, construction involves the total person incorporating thinking, feeling and acting in a dynamic process of learning. Kuhlthau (1994) States that "the constructive process of learning is uncomfortable, smooth transition but rather an odyssey of unsettling and sometimes threatening experiences". Kuhlthau (1993) identifies six stages of information seeking process as initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection and presentation. "Each stage represents the task considered most appropriate to move the process on to the subsequent stage: Further she points that "a constructive perspective, however reveals that the early stages of information seeking commonly are fraught with uncertainty and confusion".

This approach focuses on qualitative and subjective dimensions rather than quantitative and empirical aspects of research. It attempts to move away from traditional macro approach-to a micro approach involving more intensive study of small groups through observation and unstructured interview techniques. Ellis (1993) pointed that grounded theory rejects the primitive and unrealistic approach and provides different perspectives with regard to choice of sample, method, data collection, analysis of transcripts, coding process etc.

**Optimal foraging theory.** This theory assumes that scholars make strategic decisions in exploiting their information environments and these decisions can be modeled mathematically. This theory originated in ethnological studies of searching behaviour and prey
selection among animals. Important studies in this regard were undertaken by Winterhalder and Smith (1981) specific parallels between the worlds of subsistence foragers and scholarly information seekers are drawn in the areas of prey choice and diet breadth, time allocation and patch choice and group formation and settlement, this theory Sandstrom (1994) "is a collection of methodologies or neuristic tools to clarify how and why individuals make the strategic choices they do".

Despite the fact that these theories are primarily grounded in Psychology and anthropology, their contribution to the discipline of information science is noteworthy. They provide the methodologies to understand the complex and intricate nature of information seeking.

1.3.4 Information seeking behaviour:

The phrase 'information seeking behaviour' has been defined variously by different authors. The following definitions of information seeking behaviour will make the
concept more clear. According to Krikelas (1983), information seeking behaviour refers to "any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need". Manda (1991) defines information seeking behaviour as "a manner in which a user conducts himself in relation to a given information environment. It is therefore regarded as essentially a process of interaction between the user and the rest of the information system". The act of searching or finding information can be ascribed to information seeking, such an activity begins when the user perceives that the existing knowledge is less than that needed to deal with some problem(s). With the end of perception, the process of seeking ends. Developing an instinct for information is a sort of behaviour and the process of searching the same is considered as information seeking behaviour.

The concept 'information seeking behaviour' is often confused with 'information needs' and 'information gathering' the fact that these concepts differ from a
structural point of view. Wilson (1976) identified the difference between 'information seeking behaviour' and 'information needs' and he states "Information needs' involves asking: Does he need information? Does he know he needs information? What kind of information does he need? What factors likely to influence needs?" While 'information seeking behaviour' involves asking: what does he do about his need? How does he select information sources? How does he carry out a search for information? What factors likely to affect his behaviour?"

Information seeking behaviour is an activity which is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need.

Information needs do not always follow a standard pattern. In contrast information seeking behaviour may indicate a common pattern. Kulhthau(1994) pointed "the user's information behaviour is reflected in his relationship to the information unit and their various products and
services. How much does the user already know? How does he select his sources? How does he formulate his queries? How does he choose his information? And so on”.

Besides 'information needs' another term which is frequently used interchangeably with 'information seeking' in the literature is 'information gathering'. Sridhar (1995) pointed, "information seeking preceedes gathering and information gathering most of the times implies seeking."

Thus information seeking behaviour is a broad concept. Sridhar (1995) "It involves attitude and character traits of individuals as well as environmental determinates. Behaviour is considered to be a compromise and a result of multiple forces to which individuals are subjected to".

1.3.4.1 INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT.

With the advent of information and communication technology in libraries and their massive use the pattern of
information seeking behaviour is totally changed. The users of traditional libraries and their patterns of searching information are different from that of digital libraries.

When a user comes to library, his ideas of information sources are very limited. His behavioral approaches also are marginal. While he establishes an interaction with the information intermediary, he gets the knowledge of several pertinent sources and he is able to develop a very good pattern of seeking behaviour. Similar is the situation in the web-based information seeking.

Today Internet has given ample opportunity to the users to browse a large number of sources. While surfing the net, users find several digital information objects of their choice on the web site. These may or may not useful to them directly or indirectly, this is the act of scanning and seeking on web page.

The availability of web based information resources and successful operation of search engines guides the
behavioral pattern of information seeking. Users find it quite interesting and useful to browse the web than to search the library documents. Hence it can be concluded that the web based information search has influenced the users in a digital environment and the pattern of information seeking.

In the present study the term 'information seeking behaviour' has been used to include all activities comprising:

- **Finding** (accidental discovery of information, delegation of information gathering work);

- **accessing** (documents/information sources)

- **acquiring** (field trips, foreign trips, conferences and invisible college)

There are many ways of looking at user behaviour in libraries and in relation to seeking, gathering and using information.
Present study attempts to study purpose of seeking information, nature and type of information required, ways and means of acquiring information, sources of information used, delegation of information gathering work, dependence on sources of information, interpersonal information sharing, use of library and user interactions with the library etc.

1.3.5 Social Science:

'Social science' is a term for all branches of study that deals with humans in their social relations. The Encyclopaedia of social sciences (1937) defines, "Social sciences as 'mental and cultural activities of the individual as a member of a group" Webster (2001) defines social science as, "The branches of science that deal with the institutions and functioning of human society and with the interpersonal relationships of individuals as member of society".
Social sciences may be defined as all the disciplines which deal with men in their social contacts. There is no common consensus regarding the scope of social sciences. As elucidated in International Encyclopaedia of social sciences, it is a question. "To which no final answer can be given since the social sciences differ in their scope from one generation to another" and also that "what is required is only whoever uses the term 'social sciences' makes clear what he includes under this heading. Taking recourse of this postulation and also to the fact that most of the reference work e.g. Duverger (1964) Friedes (1973) Hoselits (1959) Mackenzie (1966) and White (1973) include History, Political Science, Economics and Sociology as the core subjects in social sciences have been selected for the present study. In addition law, Library and Information Science, Education, Public Administration and Psychology, as these are the subjects taught and researched in the Universities have also been included.
1.3.6 Social Scientist:

Beardslee David (1968) called "Social Scientists may also engage in teaching social science in institutions of higher education. Finally a social scientists may be defined as a person who has received a college degree in a social science field". University and College academicians are not only the teachers but also scientists.

In the present study the term 'social scientists' includes the academics as well as the research scholars working in the respective fields of social sciences. Professors, Readers, Research associates, Lecturers constitute the academics. They are engaged in teaching besides research activities. The research scholars include those who are pursuing M.Phil. and Ph.D. Programmes.

1.3.7 Marathwada:

Marathwada is known as a region of great cultural and historical importance. Marathwada holds the pride of
place in the whole Maharashtra for its religious, philosophical and poetical literature.

At present Marathwada consists of eight districts, namely Aurangabad, Jalna, Nanded, Beed, Osmanabad, Latur and Hingoli. There are two non agricultural Universities namely Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University and Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University and these universities have near about 124 and 86 affiliated colleges respectively. These universities and their affiliated colleges where social science teaching and research activities are undertaken are included in the study.

1.4 OBJECTIVES:

The main objective of the study is, to identify and study the information seeking behaviour of social scientists in Marathwada. The specific objectives related to the above mentioned broad objective are:
1] To examine the methods of seeking information adopted by the social scientists.

2] To ascertain types of information sources used by them, their preference, frequency, purpose etc.

3] To determine the degree of dependence on formal and informal information sources.

4] To find out whether the existing library sources and services are adequate enough to meet their needs which will help to assess the libraries their collection and services.

5] To identify the different factors which hinder information seeking behaviour of social scientists.

6] To examine the awareness of electronic or computer based sources.

1.5 HYPOTHESES:

The following hypotheses are formulated and tested.

1] The social scientists use both formal and informal methods of information seeking. However informal
methods like 'field trips' and 'conferences' are gaining importance among the social scientists.

2] Social Science study and research in Marathwada is mainly based on the information sources in book form.

3] A social scientist does not depend on one library alone and use a number of libraries to fulfill his information requirements.

4] Study and research output in Marathwada has adopted a interdisciplinary approach but there is still considerable reliance on traditional topics.

1.6 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The scope of the study is to ascertain the information seeking behaviour of the social scientists (social science academicians) working in universities of Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University and Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University and their affiliated colleges in marathwada region only. Social scientists are Professors, Readers, Lecturers, Research Students who are the
academicians, and who continue to work. The retired academicians are, however, excluded from the scope.

The subject coverage of the study is limited to the discipline of History, Political Science, Economics, Sociology, Law, Library and information science, Education, Public Administration and Psychology.

1.7 LIMITATIONS:

Assessing information seeking behaviour is a complex phenomenon which differs in different environment from individual to individual, group to group and community to community. Its assessment is not easy as it appears. Patrick Wilson (1980) believes that “perfect knowledge of an enquirer's predictions and perfect knowledge of all the texts which could possibly be used by an enquirer would be necessary before ideal set could be identified. The problem becomes more complicated when the user cannot identify the information he wants”. Inspite of the complexity of the problems and limitation of the problems
there is no solution except investigating into information seeking behaviour of the users.

In the context of the limitation of the study not all aspects of information seeking behaviour are covered in this study. The urgency with which information is needed and sought by the users, the success or failure in seeking information are not dealt with. Stimulus value of information, user assimilation capacity, problems of information overload, redundancy of information system and influence of information on behaviour and psychological dimension of behaviour has been left out.

The study is limited in the sense that the respondents are conditioned by what is known to them and what is available to them in the present system used by them, hence psychological variables and performance measure etc. these certain characteristics are excluded from the study.
Further, the aim of the investigation is not to find out the correlation among the characteristics of the users with their information seeking behaviour. One of the difficulties in carrying out above type of analysis is that the information behaviour data is a mixture of both Quantitative and Qualitative types. However at places, the inter-correlation has been partially done in this study.

1.8 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS :

Some of the major findings in relation to the objectives of the study are summarized below.

1.8.1 User Characteristics:

1] Majority of the social scientists in Marathwada fall in the age group 41-50 years, middle aged persons between 31-50 years are more than that younger and older people.

2] The male respondents out number the female respondents.
3] Largest number of social scientists in Marathwada are from History, Political Science, Economics and Sociology, from major social science disciplines.

4] Social scientists are from all strata of the academic community, but majority is of the lecturers who are the emerging group in the academic field.

5] The highest known languages are English, Hindi and Marathi.

6] Besides Marathi as a regional language, English still dominates the field of information seeking behaviour of social scientists.

7] Percentage of the respondents who know the foreign language other than English is less.

8] Language barrier does not create any problem in their information seeking process.
9] Majority of the respondents highly use information for keeping abreast with the development in their respective subjects.

1.8.2 Methods of Seeking Information:

1] Social Scientists use variety of formal and informal methods for seeking information.

In the informal category discussion with experts, supervisors are ranked first and second respectively while under the formal category consulting bibliography, library catalogue get first and second rank.

2] Accidental discovery of the information quite often occurs. Obviously, it forms an important part of the information seeking procedure.

3] Delegation of information gathering is not normally adopted.
4] Library collection emerges as the most important channel for accessing sources of information.

5] Field trips, Conferences/Seminars are the favorite methods of acquiring information.

6] It is surprising to note that the concept of invisible college is not familiar to most of them.

7] Inadequate library resources and information scattered in many resources are found to be major hurdle in keeping up-to-date with the advance knowledge of their subjects.

1.8.3 Use of Information Sources:

1] Study of use of information sources reveals that social scientists are print oriented. Non-print information sources are rarely and never used by majority of them.

2] Digital media has only limited impact on the social science community.
3] The study reveals that the varied information needs can not be satisfied with one type of source only and their use is associated with the purpose and need of individual.

4] 'Economic barrier' as shortage of resources is the most important barrier in information search as pointed by majority of the respondents.

1.8.4 Use of Libraries:

1] Social scientists in Marathwada use number of libraries as no single library can satisfy their varied information needs.

Library collection and services of the respective institutional libraries as well as university libraries in Marathwada are inadequate. Therefore, social scientists have to use other university libraries out of Marathwada.

2] In general study revels that location, proximity of the distance, availability and accessibility of information
resources, awareness of services generated and attitude of library staff are important criteria associated with the use of library.

3] The high awareness of the library services goes to loan of books, Reprography and Reference service and other services are least used or never used.

4] Study establishes that, usage of services are closely linked with awareness and availability of services rendered.

5] Majority of the respondents have expressed their willingness to pay for services rendered.

1.9 IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS:

Based on the findings, the implications are presented in brief in the succeeding pages.

1] For their information search social scientists depend more on secondary than on primary and territory sources of information.
The libraries can and must play their role as interpreters of these tools. Once the users get to know the purpose and usefulness of these sources and familiar with their layout they will be able to use them often.

2] Social scientists in Marathwada are still print oriented. Digital media has only a limited impact on the social science community.

The first and foremost need of today is to modernize the libraries and provide to user access to computerized database.

3] An average social scientist consults the periodicals between 2 to 5 and seldom 7 journals in his discipline.

Subscription list should be restricted to the core journals, if additional or more funds are not available in library budget.

4] Lack of awareness of the users about existing library services is determined.
A well planned user education programme must be carried out to create awareness of library services.

5] Almost all social scientists in Marathwada face one or other constraint while seeking information.

For research purpose economic consideration is paramount.

Considering the importance of social scientists in the society the library management has to exert pressure on the funding agencies to adopt a policy of equitable distribution of funds in natural sciences and social sciences.

6] Majority of the respondents have expressed their willingness to pay for services rendered.

Management may consider formulating a policy for resource (financial) generation in libraries by charging for services rendered. It can supplement their funds for the libraries.

7] Respondents feel that collection in their own institutional libraries as well as university library is inadequate.
If the university and its affiliated college libraries themselves are unable to procure more and more reading material, they need to enter into resource-sharing arrangements with other libraries locally, regionally or nationally.

8] Readers are by and large indifferent to book selection in their libraries.

Readers participation in book selection may be achieved by soliciting their suggestions for new books.

9] Inspite of the advance services to have been made by university libraries majority of the readers continue to depend on traditional services.

A wide communication gap between library staff and the reader. There is immiment need to bridge this gap.

10] Professors and Head of the Departments have expressed lack of time in using the libraries.

The libraries and librarians should put additional efforts to provide the library and
information services at work spots or wherever the users desires.

1.10 CHAPTER SCHEME:

Chapter - 1
Introduction

This chapter attempts to clarify the conceptual understanding of information seeking behaviour. Further, it discusses nature, scope and limitations, the objectives and hypotheses. It also summarizes the findings and implications of the study.

Chapter - 2
Review of Related Literature

This chapter highlights a brief review of related Literature and similar study conducted in the field.

Chapter - 3
Methodology:

This chapter seeks to explain the methods which have been adopted to conduct the investigation. The data
collection tools and techniques for data analysis are also presented in this chapter.

**Chapter – 4**

*User Characteristics*

This chapter analyses the background of the user with regard to demographic, institutional and professional, characteristics.

**Chapter – 5**

*Methods of Seeking Information*

This chapter tries to highlight the methods which the social scientists adopt to find, access and acquire information.

**Chapter – 6**

*Use of Information Sources*

This chapter deals with the use of various sources of information by social scientists covering both documentary and non-documentary once.
Chapter – 7
Use of Libraries

This chapter seeks to focus on the libraries which are used by the social scientists, while discussing use of libraries various aspects like adequacy of collection, awareness and use of library services have also been analysed.

Chapter – 8
Conclusions, Implications and Areas of further Study

The last chapter presents a summary of the findings, a generalized profile of information seeking behaviour of social scientists in Marathwada. It also discusses recommendations and implications and the area of further research.

The thesis ends with a list of bibliographical references and Appendixes.