CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sea changes are taking place in the modern times with the advent of computers. This is an era of cyber space. The written word has undergone a quantum metamorphosis from printed page into cyber space, affecting technical writing significantly. Written communication in the form of letters, memos, newsletters, corporate brochures, leaflets, manuals, reports, monographs, text books, reference books etc were paper bound. Now these are online. Not only these but resumes research and other forms of technical writings are online. Everything has gone electronic way. To keep pace with the revolutionary changes. We should go online and should learn how to write successful E-mail and create an effective website. E-mail and websites are transmitted through Internet. Internet is a network that connects computers internationally. The use of Internet is growing daily. Internet is a decentralized medium and can be had through service provider. Internet allows us to travel from our computer to information site worldwide.

Information is considered as a useful commodity for routine life. For any thing and every thing information is required. This information is available in various sources. Libraries serve as a center for providing right information to the right people at all times. The New information technology has enabled the library and information centers to change their
mode of service from traditional to Internet based services. Accordingly, this information seeking behaviour of the clientele has also changed.

Information Seeking Behaviour essentially refers to the strategies and actions undertaken to locate discrete knowledge of elements. It is concerned with the integrated utilization of the three basic resources: people, Information and System. It can be said that the behaviour, which yields the highest information satisfaction, is the best. In the past, there was no agreement about the scope of information seeking behavior as well as user studies. Seeking is used interchangeably with gathering and using information. The terms communication behaviour and information transfer/flow are used almost synonymously with information seeking behaviour. However, a thin line of demarcation can be drawn.

1.1 Information

According to Shera\(^1\), information is transmitted by the act or process of communication. It may be a message, a signal and a stimulus. It assumes a response in the receiving organism and therefore, possesses response potential... its motivation is inherently utilization... it is instrumental and it is usually communicated in an organized or formalized pattern, mainly because such formalisation increases potential utility.

"Information is the product of the human brain in action. It may be abstract or concrete. When an individual begins to think, a variety of
images and sensations flash in his mind and his memory retains some pieces of knowledge", says Viswanathan².

The question of what information is has been frequently raised in literature. The American Library Association, quoted in List (1998), defines information as “all ideas, facts and imaginative works of the mind that have been published, repeated and/or distributed formally or informally".

According to ALA World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Service, information is a property of data resulting from or produced by a process that produced the data.

1.2 The use of Information

The use of Information is a behaviour that helps an individual to meet his/her information needs. Meho and Hass³ are of the opinion that "Information use is an indicator of information needs, but they are not identical". As Line⁴ points out, individuals do not use all the information they need (Partly because they are not always able to obtain what they need, partly because the materials may not be relevant when they obtain them, and partly because individuals sometimes do not know what they need) In addition, sometimes, individuals do not need all the information they intend to use.
1.3 Information Behaviour

The term Information behaviour denotes all activities comprising of information seeking, Information gathering and Information accessing and communicating. Information seeking precedes Information gathering. Information seeking behaviour is a complex activity, requiring access to diverse information resources to deal with work-related, personal, and social information problems. Information-seeking behaviour refers to strategies for locating information, and has three elements: people, information, and systems. The study of individual information-seeking behaviour requires understanding of the psychological state of the user that may lead to have insight into their expectations that make it possible to predict information-seeking activity (Ocholla\textsuperscript{5}).

Wilson\textsuperscript{5} defines the Information Behaviour as "those activities a person may engage in which identifying his/her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and using or transferring that information".

Taylor\textsuperscript{6} defines information behaviour as product of certain elements of the environment of information user. The elements are:

1. The assumption formally learned or not, made by a defined set of people concerning the nature of their work.
2. The kinds and structure of the problems deemed important and typical by this set of people.

3. The constraints and opportunities of typical environments within which any group or subgroup of this set of people operates and works.

4. The conscious, and perhaps unconscious, assumptions made as to what constitutes a solution, or, better said, a resolution of problems, and what makes information useful and valuable in their contexts.

1.4 Information Seeking Behaviour

There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent or ignorant and he should actively seek knowledge. "Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence". Seeking means when human beings search for something which they want to get, it means they don’t have it but they need it. Information seeking is the process of searching for the information from the information resources. Information seeking differs from person to person, that is, the ways and means they are using in seeking the information they need are different.

According to Krikelas\(^7\) (1983), information-seeking behaviour refers to "any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need."

Mick\(^8\) (1980) observed that "information-producing and information-seeking behaviour are closely linked and are the reasons why most
information systems are not better accepted as they fail to provide linkage between the two activities”.

In order to satisfy the information needs, the user actively undergoes the information seeking process. The attempt of the user in obtaining the needed information is described as the information seeking behaviour.

Girija kumar⁹ has emphasized that the information seeking behaviour is mainly concerned with those who need information and how information is found, evaluated and used and how their needs can be identified and satisfied. According to him the following process takes place in the information seeking behaviour:

- Identifying objective
- Defining need
- Accessing information system
- Establishing sources of information
- Information acquisition
- Use of Information
- Satisfaction/dissatisfaction

The Information seeking behaviour essentially refers to the strategies and actions undertaken to locate discrete knowledge elements. It is concerned with the integrated utilization of the three basic sources: People, Information and System. It can be said that the behaviour, which yields the highest information satisfaction is the best.
Studies related to Information use over the years have attempted to explain the information use phenomenon, to understand information use behaviour and improve information use by manipulating essential condition. Information seeking behaviour results from the recognition of some need experienced by the users. This information seeking behaviour may take forms, e.g. user makes demands upon formal system which may perform information function in addition to a change in the understanding of the behaviour.

Information seeking is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving. Nature has evolved tools and methods to support information seeking, resulting in physiological and psychological abilities that are well-suited to information seeking. Our perceptual organs gather massive streams of environmental data. Our muscles aim at these organs and carry us closer to the objects of search, and our cognitive and emotive engines direct muscles and organs and process the incoming data. Our cognitive processors adopt various organizational structures and systematic strategies for filtering, comparing, and storing information in a variety of media. Our emotive selves derive stimulation and pleasure from seeking and integrating information. Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence.

The information seeking processes needed to survive and prosper have become increasingly complex as social organizations have developed. The ability to locate and apply information is an important
component of what it means to be literate. Just as nature has evolved physiological and psychological tools and methods to support information seeking, culture has evolved tools and methods to support information seeking.

As social and economic organizations have become more complex, the information is necessary to work in these organizations, and this has led to new, more powerful technologies for managing information. Today, generation, storage, and communication of information are inextricably linked with technology--it is virtually impossible to conduct business in many markets today without technology to assist us in managing the generation, storage and flow of information. Likewise, vast amount of information is necessary to select from entertainment options or practice good consumer decision making. Thus, one of the key changes in the information society is that information seeking has become a fundamental skill for larger portions of the population--more people must regularly manage more information to survive and prosper and they must use an expanding array of technologies to do so.

Information seeking, like learning, is a fundamental and high level cognitive process. Information seeking is often part of learning or problem solving, but it is also distinct. Information acquired during learning is purposefully stored so that it can be recalled and used at a later time. However, information acquired as a result of information seeking may be useful for a specific task and then discarded. Intermediate or temporally-
relevant information often should be discarded so that it does not take up storage space or complicate the organization of stored information and subsequently interfere with retrieval functions.

Learning takes place in directed and incidental ways but information seeking as defined here is a directed (purposeful) activity. There are, however, two ways, that is, information can be acquired incidentally. First, our physical survival depends on our senses constantly gathering information about the environment to alert us to dangers and possible gratifications. This kind of automatic search for information is important to survival but is beyond the scope of our definition of information seeking. Second, as we purposefully seek information, we encounter many prospective units of information that are filtered and compared. Much of this irrelevant information is remembered automatically in spite of our efforts to ignore it and we are concerned with ways to minimize and label such information.

Regarding learning or problem solving, we develop strategies to guide our progress. We use a variety of gross strategies in information seeking, including: consulting our own long-term memory; asking friends, colleagues or experts; consulting personal collections of books, journals and files; conducting empirical studies; and applying formal systems. Formal systems include: libraries, research firms, government agencies, electronic networks, and the growing collection of information services that make up the information industry.
Researchers have been interested in studying the information behaviour for over 40 years, although in the beginning the concept was mostly connected with information centers. In the late sixties, Paisley (1968) and Allen (1969) introduced models which dealt with elements that influence information-seeking behaviour. Wilson was possibly the first researcher to present the concept of information-seeking behaviour. However, today Wilson considers the concept information behaviour more suitable because it also includes other behaviours along with seeking behaviour. Wilson\textsuperscript{10} is of the opinion that a general information behaviour model should at least include the three following elements:

- information need and its drivers, i.e., the factors that give rise to an individual's perception of need;
- the factors that affect the individual's response to the perception of need; and
- the processes or actions involved in that response.

Information needs, information-seeking and formation behaviour are intertwined concepts which make the concept information behaviour very complex.

1.5 Information Seeking Strategy

Each of the steps that one uses while going through the Information Seeking Behaviour process, may be referred to as strategies,
Kuhlthau (1992) defines a strategy as “a tactic used to seek information or to work through a stage of the search process”. That is, the entire search process is composed of strategies. A strategy may be asking friend, Colleague and teacher for information (human resources), visiting various libraries and Information centres (Information systems), or using one’s personal Library (other resources). Some Information Seeking Behaviour requires only one strategy such as using the University Library. When all the needed information is found, it results in satisfaction of the user’s information need. Which results in satisfaction of the user’s information and the search process is ended. Some Information Seeking Behaviour requires many strategies that is, users should call upon a variety of information sources because the information need is not thoroughly satisfied.

1.6 Information Search Process Model

Kuhlthau\textsuperscript{\textsuperscript{11}} developed a model of the information search process from common patterns which emerged from her longitudinal investigation of high school students’ information seeking behaviours. The model goes beyond the more mechanics of information seeking; it incorporates three realms: the effective (feeling), the cognitive (Thoughts), and the physical (actions and strategies). These realms are common to each stage of the search process, as described below.
i. Task Initiation: When a person first becomes aware of a lack of knowledge or understanding, feeling of uncertainty and apprehension are common. In this point of view the task is merely to know the need for information.

ii. Topic Selection: In this stage the problem or topic is identified and readiness to begin the research.

iii. Prefocus Exploration: During this time confusion, Uncertainty and doubt which would frequently increase. This task is to find any information and problem in order to extend personal understanding.

iv. Focus Formulation: This stage is the turning point of the information seeking process when feeling of uncertainty diminishes and confidence increases. This task is to form a focus on the information encountered.

v. Information Collection: collection is the stage in the process of interaction between the user and the information system function most effectively and efficiently. In this stage the task is to collect related information to the focused topic.

vi. Presentation: in this stage the task is after completing the search to prepare to present or otherwise to use.
Kuhlthau’s model is important as it suggests that the user is an active participant in the information search process. The students knowledge processes are involved in information seeking. Throughout the process, the student engage in cognitive strategies such as brainstorming, contemplating, predicting, consulting, reading, choosing, identifying, defining and confirming.

1.7 Online Information Seeking Behaviour

Information seeking behaviour means individual's way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use, knowledge updating and development. Online Information seeking behaviour means the individuals’ way of getting information through Internet.

Today the Internet has become one of the most important technological advancements in the history of humanity. Everyone wants to get online with experiencing the wealth of information of the Internet.

The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. Many electronic resources are available in the library. The increase in information available on the Web has affected information seeking behavior. Innumerable types of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place. In the modern society, the types of information and the media which present them have become manifold and multifarious, offering men and women a vast selection.
The Online Information Seeking Behaviour among the Faculty members, Research scholars and Post graduate students are varied in nature. It varies according to their age, departments, type of research, etc. In the present changing environment the libraries and the librarians have to adopt various techniques for satisfying their clientele. Traditional libraries provide books and other reading materials for research. But the present situation warrants the librarians to acquire skills to provide information to the scholars online. Hence they need to equip themselves with necessary knowledge about the information available on the Internet and skills to cull out the information. Hence it is right time to identify how the scholars seek information from the Internet so that the Librarians can enable the scholars to get their right information at the right time.

The Libraries are in a state of transition from traditional document oriented towards modern information. There is a change in the attitude of the information seeking behaviour of faculty members, Research scholars and students. Now the scholars prefer to get information instantaneously at any time from any part of the world. Online or digital information plays a vital role in assisting the scholars in pursuing their research.

Usually people are collecting information by using various sources such as textbooks, Reference Books, Journals, Newspapers, online sources etc. For this study, the only source that is online resource was
taken into account. Other above mentioned sources were not used for this present study.

1.8 Internet as a Source of Online Information

Internet has been viewed as a valuable source of information that can assist scholars in the pursuance of knowledge, learning, research and increasing their capacity for social interaction. Internet is seen to promote inquiry and creativity through interaction of various forms of knowledge such as text, multimedia, graphics, photos, music, video, sound, animation etc. In this context, it is rightly said that the sun can only shine on half of the globe at a time, while Internet delivered education can cover entire globe and around the clock with knowledge.

The Internet today gives access to an overwhelming amount of information, data and electronic information services provided by its ordinary users. At one end of the spectrum there are personal ‘home pages’ published by people the world over. The Internet is virtually limitless source of information about both professional and personal interests. To give a few examples, the internet can be used to:

- Exchange personal messages with colleagues, friends or relatives at other networked sites.
- Engage in group discussions, exchange information and ideas with people who share a common interest, and seek information from them.
• Look up information in reference works, databases and libraries worldwide.

• Retrieve journal articles, books, computer programs and graphic images, and transfer them to a personal computer.

• Automatically receive information on world events, leisure interests, and technical, business, and professional matters by subscribing to electronic journals, conferences, newsletters and alerting services.

• Publish information for access by other Internet users.

• Download new software or updates for existing applications.

• Participate in distance learning and academic conferencing.

• Retrieve journal articles, books, computer programs and graphic images, and transfer them to a personal computer.

• Looking for job

1.9 Use of Internet for Library and Information Science

Modern Libraries serve as information providers and are changing from traditional document oriented to information oriented. Nowadays internet has become a main source for information and hence library and information centres have to depend on the online information. That is internet has become integral part and parcel of Library and Information service. It has become obligatory on the part of Library and Information Science professionals to carryout extensive research on Internet user study
for promoting better use of Internet as an information source. Internet has become the single most powerful library tool that has ever existed. With the electronic information storage mechanisms and the new access and dissemination methods made possible by the Internet, traditional library and dissemination methods, traditional library techniques are losing their importance. Most of the libraries of educational and research institutions are now connected to the Internet. There are systems that connect user to all sites or digital libraries having information on the area of interest. The internet facilities speed up document retrieval services from libraries around the world. Information in any form located anywhere in the world can be accessed by any user. With the emergence of digital libraries and E-journals, internet has become as inseparable part of the library.

1.10 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

• To study the demographic characteristics of Scholars of Madurai Kamaraj University.

• To evaluate the factors determining the accessibility of online information by scholars in Madurai Kamaraj University.

• To study the availability, accessibility and utilization of online Information by Scholars of Madurai Kamaraj University.

• To study the attitude and behaviour of the respondents regarding the online information seeking.
To study the Perception about the online Information by Scholars of Madurai Kamaraj University with reference to comparison of conventional documents and Internet, level of Satisfaction of using University Internet Services.

1.11 Plan of Chapters

Chapter I provides an introduction to the study, definition of concepts and objectives of the study

Chapter II deals with the Review of Related Literature on Information seeking behaviour, use of E-resources, use of Electronic Library and Internet use.

Chapter III presents the research methodology highlighting the research design, Significance of the study, scope of the study, hypotheses, tool used for collecting data, sampling technique, data collection, tools for analysis, period of study, limitations of the study, Bibliography rendering style and Profile of Madurai Kamaraj University.

Chapter IV deals with the interpretation along with suitable statistical applications and geographical representations.

Chapter V presents the summary of findings, suggestions and conclusion.