Chapter - I

INTRODUCTION
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## CHAPTER - I INTRODUCTION

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1.1 Introduction

The present era is an era of information and knowledge revolution. Many electronic resources have been made most available in the libraries. The increase in availability of information on the Web has affected Information-seeking behaviour. Innumerable types of information, in a large variety of formats and from many different locations, are all available at one place (Fidel et al., 1999). In the modern society, the types of information and the media which present them have become manifold and multifarious, offering men and women a choice from a wide spectrum of vast selection. Regardless of the group in a human society that is discussed, each one bases its actions upon current information and discards the earlier data. Philosophers emphasize the direct, experiential acquisition of knowledge in the material, physical plane of existence as the most proper form of information. So, no one can deny that knowledge and information are vital.

In the academic setup, information is of utmost importance to the student and research community. But ‘information’ alone is not the only concern; rather how best can one gather this information; as much pertinent information as needed. In the early stages, the student needs information to help make sense of the project and help develop the project’s theme. The student must do this if he/she is to be able to come up with an original argument for his topic. Unfortunately, many students do not possess the necessary skills to best accomplish this task and do not know how or where to look for the information needed.
Information-seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular way of behaviour. It is also an aspect of scholarly work most interesting to academic librarians who strive to develop collections, services, and organizational structures that facilitate seeking of information (Wiberley, 1989). There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent and should actively seek knowledge. 'Information-seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence' (Marchionini, 1995). Information-seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking of information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems such as a newspaper or a library, or with computer-based systems such as the Web (Wilson, 2000).

Information-seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought, and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought (Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain, 1996). Information-seeking behaviour is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation. Scholars, students and faculty actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopaedias, journals and more currently, electronic media. Abels (2004) mentioned that the frequency of use of the internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. At the same time, expenditure on monographs showed steady increase.

The library, therefore, is the most widely used source of information available to literate societies. The librarian should be aware of what kind of
information is being sought, and how it can be obtained. Due to the rapidly escalating cost of purchasing and archiving printed scholarly journals and electronic media, the library has the duty to provide and maintain efficient services.

1.2 Need of the study

The nature of information is not easy to describe. Perhaps the most explicit definition in the literature defines information as recorded experience that is used in decision-making. Today, information technology has developed rapidly and has had a huge impact on access to information and on Information-seeking behaviour. The librarian and library-staff have to know and examine the criteria of Information-seeking and information utility by users for providing information services, designing new information systems, intervening in the operation of existing systems, or planning service programmes.

It is almost universal in studies investigating human information behaviour that people choose other people as their preferred source of information. Studies of academic researchers in both the sciences and the humanities have revealed the importance of consulting with colleagues at different stages of their research (Ellis, 1993).

The present human society is living in an information age and as a consequence, man has become more and more information conscious. More and more people deliberately and consciously seek information and it has become an integral part of human activity especially in the area of education, research and development, production and marketing of goods, all of which
have contributed to the improvement of the quality of life. World War I and II accelerated research and development activities resulting in information explosion. The information so produced, is recorded and reported in a variety of documents-printed and non-printed documents. The information explosion coupled with multiplicity of documents has created problems to the generators, users, and the organizers of information.

The users of information are finding difficulty in identifying and physically locating the relevant information at the time when it is required. In this context, the libraries, being the reservoirs of knowledge and the centres of learning, have a greater responsibility in providing the right information to the right user at the right time, in the right form so that the information will be put to maximum use, thereby promoting the use of information. To achieve this, the Libraries/Information Centres need to be planned and designed based on the needs and requirements of the users of libraries.

User studies are one of the interdisciplinary areas of research in library and information science and form a large body of literature in the discipline. However it is an area, which combines some of the most used and the least precisely defined concepts of Library and Information Science and Sociology. These concepts, such as information use or need, Information-seeking behaviour, channels of communication, exist in a system of complicated and interdependent relations from recognition of some need perceived by the user. A user may follow formal and/or informal channels of communication in order to acquire the desired information.
Users have been viewed as passive recipients of information and the study investigates their external behaviour, generally by means of qualitative methods. Although these surveys have yielded much quantitative data, which gives an overall picture of information needs and seeking behaviour, they fail to convey a real picture regarding the factors which trigger the information search and a more in-depth insight into the individuals' concepts and thoughts. On the other hand, in user-oriented studies, users are viewed as active and self-controlling recipients of information and they are concerned with the internal cognitions and attitudes of users, which are investigated by qualitative methods. The cognitive approach of the researchers focuses their efforts to understand 'how individuals process information and then illustrate this process through models'. In the holistic approach, the researcher is not only interested in the cognitive needs of the users but also takes into account other social and psychological factors which influence them to use the information sources, the methods followed in searching for information and possible reasons for not using information sources, if any. Another category is the action research. This approach views users as active participants during their research and tries to understand the language, the activities and the social inter-relationships of users. A more recent one is the theory of usability techniques, which was with the use of computers and new technology in conjunction with Information-seeking behaviour. They focus on the use of a system; but from the user's point of view. They take as a base user's needs in order to create an environment, which will be friendly, effective and easy for a user to handle.
The hierarchical nature of the social structure lies at the heart of the network theory of social capital. People who occupy the same level of the hierarchy tend to be more like each other and possess similar resources than people who occupy different levels. It is in the nature of human beings that they prefer to interact with people who are similar to themselves in terms of lifestyles and socio-economic status, a predisposition called the Principle of Homophily. That is, people with whom one interacts more frequently tend to have the same interests, be from the same social class, and have resources similar to one’s own. Because of the proclivity of people to interact with others who are similar to themselves, strong ties tend to develop between these individuals rather than between individuals who are dissimilar. Consequently, strong ties tend to link people who are similar, have access to the same resources, and are part of the same social strata (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001).

The Post Graduate Students of Sri Venkateswara University (S.V.U.), Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University (M.S.U.), Tamilnadu are expected to optimally utilize the university library as one of their major sources of information. However observing and conducting studies on library use in the university environment in general establishes the fact that students do not use most of the library information resources. It is assumed that students could be experiencing technical problems in accessing information resources. This coupled with lack of knowledge and awareness of the resources resulting in the students’ poor Information-seeking behaviour was singled out as the biggest cause that needed investigation. Library information resources are expensive. They are costly in
terms of their acquisition and retention. The librarians need to manage these resources and make them accessible. To attain cost effectiveness in the university library services and to promote the use of library information resources and services, this study sought to establish ways of improving the Information-seeking behaviour of Post Graduate students in the two universities of Tamilnadu and Andhra Pradesh.

It is here that the social situation in which the user makes his attempts to seek information gains importance. Sociological analysis of the behaviour of the user which the present study attempts has been a neglected aspect so far. The present study tries to fill the gap. Despite the large number of user studies, information scientists are still left with an unsettling feeling of an elementary level of knowledge as far as it concerns user needs and Information-seeking behaviour. Taking into account the constant development in the provision of recent electronic systems, the lack of understanding the Information-seeking behaviour poses an obstacle in the process of interpreting the way in which the electronic information services are being delivered. Knowledge generated by user studies helps to develop information systems and information services. Hence, there is a need for alternative research methods and conceptual frameworks, which will provide the information to the science community, the evidence to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the users of information services.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The present study is entitled, “Information-seeking Behaviour of Post Graduate Students of Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu : A Study”.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The study examined the Information-seeking behaviour of Post Graduate students in the Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu. Precisely, the focus was on obtaining information on the nature of academic information needed by the students, the sources consulted and the general pattern of information gathering system by the students. Furthermore, the study examined the influence of students’ gender, socio-economic status and discipline of study on the pattern of Information-seeking. More specifically, the objectives of the study were:

1. To study the information needs and seeking behaviour of Post Graduate Students of Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamil Nadu

2. To identify the types and range of information resources used currently by Post Graduate Students and determine the level of their use

3. To investigate the availability of information resources that affects the Information-seeking patterns and communication process of Post Graduate Students

4. To determine whether or not different kinds of information need leads to different Information-seeking behaviour and communication channels

5. To identify the information searching methods adopted while searching for information in the library
6. To know the relationship and association between Socio-economic status of the students and their Information-seeking behaviour

7. To analyze the possible reasons for not using information sources, if any and

8. To suggest measures for enhancing the use of information sources, and seeking a synthesis of theoretical elements from Information science.

1.5 Hypotheses of the Study

The Null hypotheses framed to test the results of the study are:

- There is no association between the discipline of the Post Graduate students and frequency of using library, purpose of collecting information, type of information centres consulted, information searching, purpose of using internet, information resources browsed on internet, availability of sufficient books on the subjects, referring other information centres and information services.

- There is no association between the university of the Post Graduate students and frequency of using library, purpose of collecting information, type of information centres consulted, information searching, purpose of using internet, information resources browsed on internet, availability of sufficient books on the subject, referring to other information centres and information services.

- There is no association between the gender of the students and frequency of using library, purpose of collecting information, type of
information centres consulted, information searching, purpose of using internet, information resources browsed on internet, availability of sufficient books on the subject, referring to other information centres and information services.

- There is no association between the socio-economic status (domicile, annual income and occupation of parents) of the Post Graduate students and frequency of using library, purpose of collecting information, type of information centres consulted, information searching, purpose of using internet, information resources browsed on internet, availability of sufficient books on the subject, referring to other information centres and information services.

1.6 Research Methodology and Design

1.6.1 Study Population and Sampling Tool

The population of this inter-disciplinary study consists of Post Graduate Students of Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh (3210 students) and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamilnadu (2760 students). As it is not possible to study the entire population in view of time and cost, a sample has been selected by stratified random sampling method. The Post-Graduate students covered in the study are from Humanities, Social Sciences and Science subjects.

A total of 831 Post Graduate students from the above disciplines, 410 from Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh and 421 from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamilnadu were selected on the basis of a stratified random sampling method. The Post Graduate students
were stratified on the basis of the disciplines of their study: Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences. Out of the 831 Post Graduate students thus selected, 630 students returned the questionnaire, with an overall response rate of 75.81%. Out of 410 students from Sri Venkateswara University, 325 returned the questionnaire, with a response rate of 79.26% and out of 421 students from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, 305 returned the questionnaire with a response rate of 72.44%.

The sample for the present study is composed of 630 students, 325 from Sri Venkateswara University and 305 from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University.

Table 1 depicts the sample distribution from Sri Venkateswara University and Manonmaniam Sundaranar Universities. From an initial sample of 831 students, 630 students, 325 from Sri Venkateswara University and 305 from Manonmaniam Sundaranar University were finally selected based on the fact that they were willing to be included in the sample and returned the questionnaire.

<table>
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<th>University</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.V.University</td>
<td>410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.S.University</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>831</td>
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Further, 19% of the students of both the universities are from Humanities, 39.4% from Social Sciences and 41.6% from Pure Sciences.
### Table 2: Sample Distribution by Disciplines

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<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>19.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>39.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>630</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
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1.6.2 Tool for Data Collection

Questionnaires and interview methods were used in this study, with self-administered and hand delivered questionnaires distributed to the student respondents. Semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews were used to collect data from their Information-seeking endeavors. The tools designed to elicit research information in order to identify the factors including socio-economic factors which are liable to affect the Information-seeking behaviour such as nature of the information need, the purpose it would serve or the existence of external barriers posed by the environment of Post Graduate students in the two selected universities. Prior to test the research instrument, a pilot study had been conducted at Osmania University, Hyderabad and based on the queries and suggestions received from the sample population about the questionnaire as final questionnaire had been finalized and applied in the study. As the study population was scattered and a large population was involved, the questionnaire method was adopted for collecting research data keeping in view of the objectives of the study. It was also felt necessary to adopt interview method to overcome the limitation of the questionnaire especially among some students, who could not the respond to questionnaire owing to shortage of time. Under
such circumstances, interview schedule was employed in obtaining research data from the Post Graduate students of universities in Andhra Pradesh and Tamilnadu, as a supplement to questionnaire method.

1.6.3 Statistical Inference

The data collected from the respondents of the study was coded and decoded by feeding the independent and dependent variable of Information-seeking Behaviour in the SPSS-Statistical Package in Social Sciences (11.0 version). To test the hypotheses of the study, the Chi-Square Test was employed for statistical inference of acceptance or rejection of null hypotheses. The Chi-Square test indicates the association between the independent variables and dependent variables, but does not indicate the level of association between them. To reveal the extent of association between independent variables and dependent variables, Pearson test was computed and applied for the research data.

1.6.4 Operational Definitions

Information refers to facts, data or instructions in any medium or form such as books, journals, encyclopaedias, internet, people etc... and search refers to the process of locating specific information in a relatively large body of information, such as looking up facts in an encyclopedia or research article in a journal. The bigger the body of information from which the specific information is searched, the more the effort that is required for the search process.

User and Use – The term user in this study refers to the defined population of Post Graduate students of Sri Venkateswara University,
Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamilnadu. The concept of use is often defined as the extraction of content from a message to meet a need.

**Information behaviour** can be defined by the general model of information behaviour developed by Wilson. According to Wilson (1981) a general model of information behaviour needs to include at least the three elements i.e. an 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-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 systems (Wilson, 2000). 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' (Marchionini, 1995). Behaviour is one of the most important research areas in library user studies and is affected by different factors.

**Information-seeking behaviour** is different from the actual 'information need'. 'Information need' is a subjective, relative concept in the mind of the individual experiencing it. Information-seeking behaviour which results from the recognition of some need (Wilson, 1981) is defined as 'any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need' (Krikelas, 1983).
1.7 **Scope and Limitations of the study**

The study is confined to Post Graduate students of Sri Venkateswara University, Andhra Pradesh and Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tamilnadu to understand their Information-seeking behaviour. The university environment is of a heterogeneous group comprising Students, Research Scholars and Teaching Faculty in the purview of Information-seeking channel and instead of covering all the groups of users, only Post Graduate students have been taken for the research study. This is the limitation of the study. This is to cover mainly a fair proportion of students representing all the departments instead of becoming a sample representation of a few departments.

1.8 **Chapterisation**

The dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter one deals with Introduction, Need for the study, Statement of the problem, Objectives of the study, Hypotheses of the Study, Research Methodology and Design, Scope and Limitations of the study.


Chapter three examines the Review of Literature using appropriate headings and sub-headings i.e. Use of Information Sources, Information-seeking Methods/ Behaviour and Problems in Information Searching.
Chapter four deals with Data Analysis and Interpretations using appropriate statistical tools and techniques and

Chapter five provides Summary of the Findings and Suggestions and future areas of research and followed by Bibliography and Appendix.