CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

Communication has become a basic necessity with which life becomes complete and blissful and also it is a process of social interaction through which people are influenced not only by ideas but also attitudes, knowledge and specifically behaviour. Only then can societies grow and develop. As the societies change fast, its masses need communication. This helps them to gain new information to progress with the changing society. The world at present is experiencing communication explosion. Good communication starts with creating ideas and understanding. It leads to greater effectiveness by enabling people to overcome problems such as ignorance, poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy and attain the goals of economic and social wellbeing. People should adopt new techniques and methods so that there is progress in the quality of life. In this regard communication is very helpful. The development of civilization thus is directly dependent upon refinement of growth of forms, mechanisms and quality of the contents of communication. The essential component of communication is knowledge. Knowledge invokes an active involvement and understanding to meet life’s contingencies. Thirst for knowledge provokes creation of new ideas and leads to invention. The thought process of the invention can be decoded for the replication and design new paths for the use of future generation in the form of writing. This unique feature of human communication differentiates man from animal and becomes the foundation for civilization.

Storage of information is the stepping stone towards excellence. It prevents ‘reinvention of wheels’ and churns the key for further development. Human energy, cognition and time are utilized towards the goal of betterment with the help of stored
information. The information has to be properly stored in such a way that it shall be retrieved easily. Improvement of educational standards and enhancement of quality of research relies upon such storage and retrieval systems. Information exists in many forms such as data, facts, colors, gestures, facial expressions and body movements and this has to be passed on to the succeeding generations as the legacy of the present society, and then to be a heritage, from the past generations to the future generations.

Raval (2013) clearly spelled out all the challenges that we face while we acquire, organize, retrieve and preserve the data. The greater sources of information are the libraries, its main objective is to acquire, store, retrieve, and disseminate information. The challenges faced by the library are information explosion and the ever changing format of resources.

Scientific and technological information produced in the world is multiplying every year. The rate of growth of information and knowledge is faster than ever before and is still accelerating. Tidline (2005) pointed out that the total volume of information generated worldwide annually is approximately 2 exabyte (2,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes).

It is also heartening to know that the amazing growth of data and fresh gadgets in information and communication technology helps the clientele to receive more information fast. The development of digital technology and its applications in library bring changes in the information management. The credit goes to Bullis and Smith (2011) for coming out with the positive vision of library collections in future by moving resolutely into the digital age.

The information flow on all sides brought changes in the users’ information needs and information seeking behaviour. Information needs are diverse and constantly changing (Haruna and Mabawonku, 2001) and this changing information need of the user
exert pressure in information dissemination process. To provide high quality library services and to avoid misallocating resources, it is necessary to have an understanding of the information needs of the user. Therefore, to keep pace with the changing information need, information centres have to use the modern technologies and introduce newer information systems for retrieval and dissemination process.

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF INFORMATION

Information is recognized as a vital source indispensable for the development of an individual and the society. The future of each nation as well as that of mankind is based now more than ever before on information and knowledge gained rather than on any other material or resources (Biradan, 2003). In this information age all this is felt more by the user.

In our professional and personal lives we are forever challenged to take stock of the information needed for all our activities. This is stated by Bruce (2005). Information facilitates the process of knowing and increases the level of understanding. It increases the cognitive process and intellectual capabilities. This in turn, increases imaginative power and honing the thinking and understanding process. It perfects one’s abilities to use the new knowledge and apply one’s knowledge creatively.

Information is power and is the key to organized human life. It regulates creative thoughts and sharpens the outlook, making man fit for survival in the world. It establishes a vital link between a living system and its environment and communication is the process which transforms information. Cawkell (2003) rightly said that information is the substance of cultural enrichment and amusement. Again Scammell, (2000) envisages information future, format and the access.

Researchers are in need of information to complete their investigation successfully. Creativity of the researcher is kindled by getting up-to-date and appropriate
information. Information is equated today with a treasure trove (Sengupta, 1990). Information overflow and its availability in various channels and formats leads to the problem of retrieving for both the users and the library professionals.

1.2 DIFFERENT WAYS OF SEEKING INFORMATION

Man is in need of information. Seeking information is a conscious effort to acquire information in response to a need or gap in knowledge. Yet it is very difficult to determine the needs, situations and organisations of information needs of a particular group of users (Mahapatra and Panda, 2001).

Information seeking is related to library users, getting it in a variety of circumstances and from a variety of sources. One basic activity indulged in by everyone and manifested through specific actions is information seeking. Wilson (1997) stated that information seeking behaviour includes activities such as: identifying, searching, using and transferring information.

David Ellis (1993) designed a behavioural model with six activities:

- Starting – begin the information search,
- Chaining – backwards or forwards - following references in initial information sources,
- Browsing - semi-directed search,
- Differentiating – filtering and selecting sources based on judgments of quality and relevance,
- Monitoring – maintaining awareness of developments
- Extracting – systematic extraction of information from sources.

Apart from the above, two more activities have been added by Ellis in his later studies, verifying – checking accuracy and ending - a final search, checking all materials covered.
1.3 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN SEEKING INFORMATION

James and Pearce (2005) identified the barriers of information seeking as time, cost, skills and format of resources. Lack of skills and experience in using various kinds of information systems, receipts of too much or repetitious information were the barriers recognized by Tidline (2002).

Harris and Dewdney (1994) acknowledged the barriers of information access as the users do not know their own need, availability of required information, lack of awareness of the sources of information, lack of communication skills, lack of self-confidence, ability to retrieve, delays encountered in information seeking, inaccurate or inappropriate information received and information scatter – all these make finding the required information rather complex.

Dervin (2005) predicted five barriers of information seeking behaviour. They are as follows:

- Societal - those which impede the availability of resources necessary to satisfy needs in the social system;
- Institutional - those which arise from an incapacity or unwillingness of an Institutional provider to deliver needed information to a certain type of information-seeker;
- Psychological - when an individual is unable to perceive his or her needs as informational in nature, unable to obtain needed information from appropriate providers or accept (for psychological reasons) the possibility that an information gap can be overcome;
- Physical - such as the absence of physical accessibility for a disabled person;
• Intellectual - when an individual lacks the necessary training or expertise to obtain necessary information.

The information sources may not be readily available or easily accessible to the user due to poor shelving and lack of adequate guides in library arrangements. As sources are unavailable, frustration results among seekers (Ajayi and Akinniyi, 2004). The users encounter conceptual, linguistic, critical, bibliographic, and physical inaccessibility. There are both natural and artificial barriers that stalk free access to information (Olowu, 2004). This leads to the poor reputation of the library. At the University of Ibadan, Nigeria by undergoing training educational excellence could be achieved by serial publication (Iyoro, 2004). The indexing and cataloguing systems followed in the library bewilder the user instead of helping them to locate the documents. Disorganized circulation system and insufficient number of books issued are the major problems faced by the user in the library. The services provided in the library are not user friendly and not reachable. There is a lack of adequate hardware to access the information sources. Pool of information found in the e-resources, too many search engines, lack of awareness in using e-resources, reliability of information found in the e-resources are some of the problems faced by the researcher while using e-resources.

1.4 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Technology driven world brings changes in the learning process of the users in the academic Institutions. Due to the transformation in the learning process, the information needs and seeking pattern of the users are also modified. The users encounter numerous problems when searching for information to meet academic needs (e.g. an assigned research paper). The libraries and information centers are user-oriented, ready to fulfill the needs of the user in a modified way. Understanding the user is winning half the battle in the provision of Information services (Sridhar, 1988). Kellar, Watters and Shepherd
(2006) are of the opinion that though electronic and non-electronic environments exist, information seeking on the web is a ‘newer’ branch of research that differs from library-based information seeking due to the complexity of resources and tools used.

Information is referring discrete knowledge elements. It is concerned with the three basic resources namely: people; information; system (Zayapragassarazan, 2012). Information seeking behaviour means the technique or the process of searching for the information. This depends on the types of information and the need of the clientele. It comprises of three elements when the person is able to recognise what type of information is needed, what are the goals or objectives and what kind of information resources to be used. Information searching and information gathering make information seeking behaviour (Jiarlimon Khongtim-2006). The modern societies and individuals depend upon the right kind of information for their progress. It is the Individual’s way and manner that determine information seeking behaviour. Hence, the emphasis is more on information-seeking behaviour of individuals or groups than user studies. This will result in design of the suitable systems and services (Kakai & et al., 2004).

Carr (2006) stated that the emergence of information resources in electronic format, serves to accelerate emphasis and prominence to the needs of users. Kebede (2002) agreed, arguing that as the electronic information environment continues to rapidly expand, the need to investigate and uncover the information needs of users in the new environment, should also receive due priority. Fourie (2006) believed that research on user needs and user requirements is vital in order to increase the acceptance of web information services. Friedlander (2002) used structured telephone interviews to survey faculty members and students from more than 200 colleges and universities on how the Internet affects their scholarly work and the consequences on campus libraries. Prior research has been abundant enough to provide insight into the overall field of
information-seeking behavior. Some limitations of previous studies were either small sample sizes, or narrow topics of study covering only a few departments or disciplines. This potentially limits the ability to make comparisons among fields or Institutions.

The focus of this study consists of the demographic group of researchers and faculty members in the fields of Home Science, Science, Humanities, Business Administration, Education, Engineering, Community Education and Entrepreneurship Development. These seven fields were chosen because this work is a part of a larger effort, studying the changing scholarly communications of Researchers and Faculty members. The sample size is about 499 consisting of academic researchers from approximately 41 different departments of Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women, Coimbatore. The extensive question set, including current practices and technology use, provides an in-depth examination of current information-seeking behaviour of Researchers and Faculty Members, thus paving way to strengthen the existing library services to accommodate the needs of the users and serve as a model to the nation.

1.5 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The emergence of information and communication technology has brought new divergent and alternative ways in seeking and retrieving information. Internet has paved the way of easy access to information but it has also accentuated the problem of information quality. Information published in a specific subject is multiplied every five years. Due to the information deluge, the seekers of information face difficulty in locating the resources and making use of the information. Retrieval, processing and management of information have to be practised as a skill and mastered.

Today’s library users are tech-savvy, ambitious, creative, collaborative, quick, multitasking and hyperaware. The users need information with a single touch from the
library. Hence adaptation of technology should support the needs of the user. Time is another major constraint for the users. The users expect services to be available 24×7 in a variety of modes. To handle all these challenges, the librarians should serve as facilitators in acquiring and providing quality information. The librarians should re-evaluate their roles and offer innovative services with the emerging needs of the user with all available technologies and resources.

The focal point of the study is to re-engineer the existing services and build new efficient retrieval systems to satisfy the needs of the user. This realization of the significance of information seeking behaviour in the Library Science Scenario has made the investigator to take up the present investigation entitled “Information Seeking Behaviour of Researchers and Faculty Members of Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women, Coimbatore: A Survey”. This investigation is an attempt to assess the needs and the retrieval behaviour of the users regarding information and match it with the existing techniques, dissemination processes, find out the gaps and bridge them up.

To remove the mystification among the Researchers and Faculty Members, it is necessary to conduct a user study in Educational Institutions. This study attempts to improve the library resources and services of Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women, Coimbatore to help various types of information seekers including Faculty Members and Researchers.
1.6 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To study the:

1. purpose of visit to the library by the users
2. extent of use of library by the sample
3. information needs of the sample
4. purpose of seeking information by the sample
5. various sources and channels of information used by the sample
6. use of library by the users for their professional growth
7. extent of use of library services by the Faculty Members and the research scholars
8. opinion of the users of the library about the information sources available
9. extent of use of information technology by the library users
10. problems faced by the sample while seeking and using information
11. opinion of the users of the library about the library services/innovative services required

1.7 HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were formulated in relation to the problem:

1. There is no significant relationship among the scores of academic performance obtained by the teachers of various faculties
2. There is no significant relationship among the scores of academic performance obtained by research scholars of various faculties
3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of academic performance obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties
4. There is no significant relationship among the scores of approach to information obtained by the teachers of various faculties
5. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the researchers of various faculties and the approach to information

6. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of approach to information obtained by the teachers and researchers of various faculties

7. There is no significant relationship among the barriers to information scores obtained by the teachers belonging to various faculties

8. There is no significant relationship among the scores of barriers to information obtained by the researchers of various faculties

9. There is no significant difference between the mean scores obtained by the teachers and researchers of various faculties in barriers to information

10. There is no significant relationship among the scores of information needs and information seeking behaviour obtained by the teachers of various faculties

11. There is no significant relationship among the scores of information needs and information seeking behaviour obtained by the researchers of various faculties

12. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information needs and information seeking behaviour obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties

13. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the teachers of various faculties and the opinion about the library service

14. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the researchers of various faculties and the opinion about the library services

15. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of opinion about library services obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties

16. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the teachers of various faculties and the purpose of seeking information
17. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the researchers of various faculties and the purpose of seeking information

18. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of purpose of seeking obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties

19. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the teachers of various faculties and the purpose of visit

20. There is no significant relationship among the researchers of various faculties and their approach to information

21. There is no significant differences between the mean scores of purpose of visit obtained by the teachers and researchers of various faculties

22. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the teachers of various faculties and the information sources used

23. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the researchers of various faculties and the information sources used

24. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of information sources used obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties

25. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the teachers of various faculties and the opinion about information sources

26. There is no significant relationship among the scores obtained by the researchers of various faculties and the opinion about information sources

27. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of opinion about information sources obtained by teachers and researchers of various faculties
1.8 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The key terms used in the title of the study are explained below:

1.8.1 Information

According to Cawkell (2003), information is defined as an assemblage of data in a comprehensible form capable of communication and use. Contents of information are only words and the recipients give meaning to these words depending upon their mental capability, existing knowledge and understanding of communication. Information is an essential ingredient in doing personal as well as academic activity.

1.8.2 Information Needs

According to Grover (1993) “information is that of diagnosing needs, prescribing a service that meets those needs, implementing that service and evaluating the outcome of this interactions”.

1.8.3 Information Seeking

Information seeking is both active and passive. It is the totality of human behaviour (Wilson, 2000). Wiberley (1989) reaffirms the statements of many researchers that information seeking is a basic activity of all people shown through particular behaviour. For academic librarians who aspire to excel in information seeking, it is a scholarly work of maximum interest. It is a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence (Marchionini, 1995).

1.8.4 Information Seeking Behaviour

As information seeking behaviour is a complex activity, it requires access to diverse information sources that deal with work-related, personal and social information. This stands for locating information. The study of individual information seeking behaviour requires understanding of the psychological state of the user that leads to insight into their expectations and makes it possible to predict information seeking
activity (Ocholla, 1999). It is expressed in various forms, from reading to research. It is mainly concerned with who needs what kind of information for what reasons and how it is found, evaluated and used (Kumar, 1990). It is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need of an individual (Krikelas, 1985). The search includes recognizing and interpreting information problem, establishing a plan of search, conducting the search, evaluating the results and if needed iterating through the process again.

In this investigation the Information seeking Behaviour refers to seeking information for preparation for teaching, for doing research, to renew knowledge and to study further. The information required for the above purposes include retrospective information, current information, statistical information, bibliographical information, social information, professional and career information and government/non-government organizations’ information.

1.8.5 Researcher

A researcher is a learned or erudite person, especially has profound knowledge in a particular subject.

1.8.6 Faculty Member

An individual primarily involved in teaching, lecturing, observing, consulting a particular subject in a college or university is a faculty member. The Faculty Members devote their time and talent to teach, train, mentor and motivate the students while guiding them to achieve their goals.
1.9 NEED FOR THE STUDY

The development of a nation depends upon the quality of education imparted to its citizen. The motivation to acquire knowledge through open reading is highly anticipated through university students because academic performances of the students depend not only on the teaching methods but also on the knowledge gained by them through extra reading. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) states that the library will be the hub and the centre of the intellectual and literary life of the recognized educational Institution. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan as the Chairman of the University Education Commission (1948-1949) said, “Library is the heart of all the university’s work”. Research is the major focus of the Universities. University library has to evolve from global knowledge warehouse to service oriented Institutions to fulfill the users’ requirements.

The users of the university library system constitute faculty, students, research scholars and educational administrators. The libraries help their users for ‘self development’, ‘fulfillment of curriculum requirements’ and ‘promotion of study and research’. Users’ satisfaction is the prime motto of the library and information centre. In spite of giving much importance to collection, development and provision of enhanced library services, the number of turnout to the library is decreasing. A user study is conducted to identify the information needs of researchers and Faculty Members. This is done by identifying the strengths and weaknesses of library resources and the retrieval techniques.

India’s higher education system is the third largest in the world after China and United States. Higher education in India has witnessed a phenomenal development both qualitatively and quantitatively since independence. The number of universities have increased from 20 to 740 during the period 1947-2015; the number of colleges have
multiplied from 500 to 37,204 (among them 2,565 are women colleges); the strength of teachers have increased from 15,000 to 8 lakhs and the enrollment of students has gone up from one lakh to 176.12 lakhs; women enrolled in higher education has risen from 10 percent to 41.40 percent (56.49 lakhs); the gross enrollment index in India is only 13 percent compared to a world average of 22 percent. Around 79,000 students are enrolled in research and nearly 12,600 are awarded Ph. D every year, of which 50 percent are from Science and Technology disciplines (Gupta, 2010).

The core missions of the university are teaching, research, knowledge transfer and international outlook. Among the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) with multifarious indicators (alumni/staff winning Nobel Prizes and Field Medals, highly cited researchers in 21 broad subject categories, articles published in Nature and Science, the Science Citation Index, Social Science Citation Index, Arts and Humanities Citation Index and size of the Institution), the names of Indian universities did not appear within the top 200. Indian universities are lagging behind in quality research, productivity, lacks inter-disciplinary approach, team spirit and future orientation. National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of India is stressing the universities to maintain the standards and preserve the quality of research. Hence a study is planned to quantify the needs of the user in accessing the library. In this background this study would be of great help because libraries are the backbones of knowledge and wisdom, which should provide information for all types of information seekers especially in the age of information explosion. This study would ultimately increase the research status of the university, which is one of the important criteria for NAAC accreditation of university. It is hoped that this study would help in developing a model for the conduct of user study in the libraries and upgrade the library services in the educational Institutions.
1.10 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study answers the various aspects and challenges met in Information Seeking. The positive areas of achievement of the study are:

- The gaps between the information storage, retrieval strategies and the needs of the users shall be objectively elicited
- The differences in the behaviour of the information seekers—be it faculty, or research scholars shall be compiled and classified
- This study may also reveal newest systems/sources of information and help in the collection building and document delivery service
- Efficient and effective services shall be designed to fulfill the needs of the user without consuming much of the users’ time
- The real need for cataloguing and indexing in view of the users of the library may be elicited
- The association between the information providers and seekers be strengthened
- Practical lacunae of the library in the study may be objectively assessed, felt and rectified
- Awareness of the user about the e-resources and its accessibility be ensured as an outcome of this study
- Enabling the physically challenged users to utilize the resources and services of the library optimally

1.11 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Research studies in general have limitations due to many factors. It is the responsibility of the researcher to see that the study is conducted with maximum care in
order to be reliable. However, the following limitations were unavoidable while conducting the present study:

1. The present study is confined to the information seeking behaviour of research scholars and Faculty Members of a particular Institution i.e. Avinashilingam Deemed University for Women, Coimbatore.

2. The assessment of information seeking behaviour is totally based on the self-report data of the sample only.

In spite of the above cited limitations, sufficient care has been taken in selecting the sample, constructing tools, gathering reliable data and applying appropriate analysis and procedures.

1.12 ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS

Chapter I – deals with scenario of information explosion age, significance of information in daily life, different ways of seeking information, problems encountered in seeking information, justifies the selection of the topic, mentions the objectives, hypotheses and limitations of the study.

Chapter II – gives an account of the theoretical overview of information seeking behaviour and studies connected with the problem.

Chapter III – deals with the development of the Information Seeking Behaviour Scale and explains in detail the method that has been adopted for carrying out the study.

Chapter IV – gives all the details regarding the analysis of data, the results and their interpretations.

Chapter V – reports the findings in a consolidated form, gives recommendations and implications of the present study and guidelines for future research.