CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
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1.1 Introduction

The need for information is characteristic of all people, whether that need can be articulated or not. Everyone from the highly educated to the illiterate - athlete, the physically handicapped, the business leader, the aged, the housewife, the career woman, the black, the professor, the imprisoned, the teenager - all ages, all walks of life, all ethnic minorities - all make decisions in their lives and all need information upon which to base their decisions.

Information is something we need when we face a choice. Whatever its content the amount of information required depends upon the complexity of choice. If we face a wide range of equally likely alternatives, if anything can happen, we need information more than if we face a simple choice between alternatives.

Therefore 'to live effectively is to live with information'. Effective fulfilment of information needs can make the difference between life and death (McGarry, 1993).

For this reason the world have been influenced by information and knowledge. Developments in information technology are transforming an industrial age into an information-centred age and like man, material and money, information is also treated as a resource.

The main cause of studying information needs and information seeking behaviour is to be aware about the information needs and information seeking behaviour patterns of a particular community and to make necessary arrangements to fulfil their information needs for their satisfaction and development.

Information needs are manifested as the nature of information requirement and information seeking behaviour is the pattern of use of information sources or information providers to fulfil the information requirement.

People talk about information need without ever bothering to define it. Sometimes there are very good reasons for not doing so; for when definitions are provided they are often vague or highly complex in nature. As part and parcel of any definition you need to set about distinguishing information need from some closely associated, but distinct, information concepts, like use, which are
frequently confused with information to the general detriment of information system design.

The study of information needs and uses is a rational activity when viewed as a means to an end. Ben-Ami Lipetz (1970) describes the objectives of studying information needs and uses as "a) the explanation of observed phenomena of information use or expressed need; or better yet, b) the prediction of instances of information use or still better; c) the control, and thereby improvement, of the utilization of information through manipulation of essential conditions. The achievement of such objectives must be preceded by certain creative activities, d) the description of observed information use, e) the definition of convenient and appropriate concepts for describing and dealing with information use, and f) the theorizing of casual and quantitative relationship between information use and associated factors."

The above six activities are essence of rational science. Elements of these activities have been evident at different times in studies of information needs and uses.

Questionnaire-cum-interview method (i.e., face-to-face questions and getting answers) is very helpful than mail questionnaire. Poor responses in mail questionnaire caused the doubtful validity of the data as well as the poor conceptualization of information needs.

Poor conceptualization implies the following shortcomings:

1. The full array of information sources that are available.
2. The uses to which information will be put.
3. The background, motivation, professional orientation, and other individual characteristics of the user.
4. The social, political, economic, and other systems that powerfully affect the user and his work.
5. The consequences of information use – e.g., productivity.

No study can treat all five features at once, although the best (Pelz and Andrews, 1966). Poor conceptualization leaves the investigator without validity checks,
without qualifying variables, and without the ability to reject alternative interpretations of his findings.

In actuality the methodology used for most studies was inadequate for uncovering users' real needs, which have been difficult to discover, measure and classify. Thus most investigations have been descriptive and of users' action and expressed demands, and most have been done from the perspective of the information provider (Rohde, 1986).

In the present study the researcher tries to identify the nature of information needs and information seeking behaviour through expressed information needs, frequency of needs for particular information, ranking of various information needs, expressed information seeking behaviour (i.e., use of information source(s) to fulfil a particular type of information need), frequency of information service requirement, ranking of information service requirement and library awareness test through having and requiring information regarding library.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Specifically for the reasons furnished above the research problem of this study has been formulated as the following descriptive statement:

'Information Needs and Patterns of Information Seeking Behaviour of the Santal Community of Jamboni Block in West Midnapore District, West Bengal'.

The statement of the research problem as furnished above is readily amenable to be convened into a set of following interlinked questions, which warranted to be answered for the purpose of this research study:

i) Is it possible to identify the information needs and information seeking behaviour of an underdeveloped Santal community? What should be the methodology for it?

ii) To what extent the identification of information needs and information seeking behaviour will facilitate to formulate the Santal community's information needs and information seeking behaviour? How to formulate the Santal Community's information needs and information seeking behaviour? What should be the methodology for its formulation? How to demonstrate the use of the methodology with illustrative examples?
In view of the statement of the research problem and of the interlinked questions formulated above, it would be necessary to formulate the hypotheses which are warranted to be tested for the purpose of this research study. The following is an attempt in this direction.

1.3 Objectives

Low level of life style, illiteracy, poverty and cultural background influenced the nature of information needs of Santal community. However, the general objective of this research study as a whole is:

1. To identify the detailed information needs and the information seeking behaviour of six mouzas of Jamboni block through questionnaire-cum-interview to the respondents.

2. To propose a popular source/centre from where all types of community information services can be provided and some suggestions for the government to make necessary arrangement for this.

1.4 Hypotheses

i) It is possible to identify the nature of the information needs and information seeking behaviour. Questionnaire-cum-interview method is one of the best methods for it. The researcher uses this method.

ii) The identification of information needs and information seeking behaviour facilitates to determine information needs and information seeking behaviour, indicative of the state of uncertainty in knowledge, and resolving of the situation by filling the gap in knowledge. After collecting the data through questionnaire-cum-interview the researcher formulates the Santal community's information needs and information seeking behaviour. Methodology for formulation is stated below.

It is possible to collect the information regarding nature of information needs (group and sex wise), nature of information needs (age group and sex wise), frequency of distinct information requirement (group and sex wise), preferential ranking of information requirement (group and sex wise), nature of information seeking behaviour (group and sex wise), prioritization of information seeking behaviour of male respondents of Group A mouzas (age group wise) (Kapgari,
Gidhni, Kherejora and Chilkigarh, four developed mouzas on the basis of the availability of civic amenities and Government offices, prioritization of information seeking behaviour of female respondents of Group A mouzas (age group wise), prioritization of information seeking behaviour of male respondents of Group B mouzas (age group wise) [Kadopindra and Chiapara, two less developed mouzas because civic amenities are less available and Government offices are situated in the distant villages], prioritization of information seeking behaviour of female respondents of Group B mouzas (age group wise), distribution of persons having information on library (group and sex wise), distribution of persons having information on library (age group and sex wise), distribution of persons requiring information on library (group and sex wise) and distribution of persons requiring information on library (age group or sex wise). Researcher demonstrates the use of the methodology through percentage to total adult population.

1.5 Choice of Community

Santal community has been chosen for this study for the following reasons:

i) Most of the people (60% of the Santal population of Jamboni block) of this community are illiterate and in an abject poverty (most of them are daily wage earner). They are truly underdeveloped. To be aware about the information needs and information seeking behaviour of this deprived and primitive community the researcher has selected the community.

ii) Jamboni block is the native block of this researcher. It is also called 'Jungle Mahal' and has been the researcher's labour of love. As the large amount of Santal population leave in the nearer villages of the researcher so it is very easy to survey this community.

1.6 Research Methodology

The researcher uses three types of research methods for the entire research work. These are the following:

1.6.1 Literature Search

For the research work the researcher has gone through several foreign and Indian literatures. The foreign literatures are Advances in Librarianship, Annual Review of Information Science and Technology (ARIST), Current Research in

1.6.2 Visit and Tour Programmes

To be aware about the representation of Santal community in various offices and institutions the researcher visited Libraries, Tribal Development Office, Block Development Office, Sub-Divisional Office, Agricultural Development Office, Block Land and Land Reform Office, Sub-Divisional Land and Land Reform Office, Panchayat Office, Village Development Office, Schools and Colleges, Post and Telegraph Offices, Forest Offices, Employment Exchange, District Industrial Corporation, Banks, Rationing Offices, etc.

1.6.3 Community Survey

For the data collection regarding Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of the Santal community, sample survey of 450 respondents of six mouzas (Kapgari, Gidhni, Kherejora, Chilkigarh, Kadopindra, and Chiapara) of this block was done by the researcher using Stratified Random Sampling Method taking 75 respondents (males and females) from each mouza. Data were collected through Questionnaire-cum-Interview Protocol because it is very helpful to receive the maximum responses from the respondents. Respondents are divided into five strata (i.e., age groups) viz., 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60+ to collect the trends of information needs and information seeking behaviour in various age groups.
1.7 Importance of the Research Study

To be aware about the nature of information needs and information seeking behaviour of the Santal community.

i) To propose suitable community information services to fulfil the information needs.

ii) To identify the appropriate infrastructural facilities e.g., location, funding, service agency, procedures, etc. to provide the community information service.

iii) To bridge the information gap between Santal community and developed community.

1.8 Definitional Analysis

1.8.1 Information Needs

The concept of information need is embedded in the studies of users, use and uses which form one of the most extensive and amorphous areas of research in library and information science over the last six decades. There are no generally acceptable definitions of "information needs".

The concept of information need has proved to be an elusive one difficult to define, isolate and measure. Needs, demands and wants have been used interchangeably although they may not be identical. It involves a cognitive process which may operate on different level of consciousness and hence may not be clear even to the inquirer himself. If a user could specify what is needed under defined conditions, his problem might be well on its way towards solution. As such, the defining of a "need" is an important part of the creative process. Under some conditions an information need may not be specifiable (Crawford, 1978).

Information needs were seen as the information [that] would further this job or this research, and would be recognized as so doing by recipients (Line, 1969).

Information needs arise when a person recognizes a gap in his/her state of knowledge, as one commentator put it (Belkin and Vickery, 1989).
1.8.2 Community

'Any geographical community or neighbourhood will be made up of a number of committees, definable by race, social class or income group, employment, leisure, interests, religion, and so on, each with its own informal networks that have grown up without the help of librarians or another information/advice workers' (Allen, 1982).

According to Shirley Giggey (1988) 'a community is a group of people who have something in common. This can be the place where they live, their age, education, religion, interests, political affiliations, activities, work, problems or combination of two or more of these'.

David Clark (quoted in Martin, 1984) views the concept of community variously as locality, social activity, social structure and sentiment.

The accepted consolidated definition of community for the purpose of this study is that the people who reside in a particular area, they should have a common language, culture and beliefs, these people are socio-economically poor, they are inarticulate, they possess poor technological knowledge, they always face problem of daily needs of housing, food, clothing, occupation, family matters etc., the activities and interest of the people are less advanced and finally they are non-users of the formal library and information system.

1.8.3 Community Information

Community information is information in the community for the community.

In essence, community information is survival information, the kind of information necessary for participation as a full and equal member of society. There is more to it than this however, because while everybody needs information at some time in their life will not necessarily be community information even where it has a local element.

Donohue (1976) who first attempted a definition of 'community information' and it is still one of the best. He termed it as information needed to cope with 'crises in the lives of individuals and communities'.

1.8.4 Information Seeking Behaviour

Information seeking behaviour is concerned with the integrative utilization of three basic sources: 1) People, 2) Information and 3) System. While the first two
categories have to do with content, the last category has to do with the means of
delivery of information. The category ‘people’ is concerned with relationship
between the originator (author/writer), intermediary (librarian/information
scientists) and user/seeker of information. ‘Information’ has to do with all forms of
data, documents and literature etc. In other words, it is the message. Lastly,
‘system’ is concerned with the creation, storage, repackaging, disposal and
interpretation. It is in this context that a tentative definition of information seeking
behaviour may be attempted, “The field composed of studies that are concerned
with who needs what kind of information and for what reason: how information is
found, evaluated and used, how these needs can be identified and satisfied”
(Auster, 1982). In other words, information behaviour (or information seeking
behaviour) is meant “those activities a person may engage in when identifying his
or her own needs for information, searching for such information in any way, and
using or transferring that information” (Wilson, 1999). The information seeking
behaviour is thus concerned with establishing relationship with the people,
information and system of an order so as to obtain the results. The maximization
of utility, to employ the jargon from the Marshallian economics, is the ultimate
objective. That behaviour is the best that yields the highest information
satisfaction to users. The reverse of information satisfaction is information
dissatisfaction which is indicative of dissonance with the information system. The
information system is best which yields maximum information satisfaction at
minimal cost through modulated information behaviour.

1.9 Identification of Community Information Needs

It has been established that user studies is a different area of knowledge to
define, and included in the definition may be such diverse areas as the use of
library or other information system, library materials, and catalogues or other
access tools; information seeking and gathering habits of various groups of
people, and the uses made of documents or information. Implicit in most of these
studies has been the identification of information needs of users in order to
design information delivery systems which better serve those needs.

The White House conference identified six categories of needs:
1. Need for saving day-to-day problems; 2. Need assistance in coping with trauma and crisis; 3. Need information on news and current events; 4. Need information to support their interests in cultural heritage, religion and family life; 5. Need information to satisfy their interest in entertainment, recreation and leisure activities; and 6. Need for special constituencies, e.g. a) physically handicapped b) blind and deaf c) emotionally disturbed and mental disadvantaged d) residents of institutions e) home bound citizens f) geographically isolated areas g) non-English citizens (Goggin, 1979).

Menzel (1966) identified the following information needs: 1. promptness of acquisition of certain information; 2. selective direction of communications; 3. screening and evaluation of communications; 4. indication of implications; 5. relation of unscholarly but subtly important details in digest; and 6. rapid feedback.

Need is further complicated by the necessity to distinguish among expressed, unexpressed and unfelt needs, the later being the most difficult to identify. Based on information seeking behaviour, needs have been categorized as immediate or deferred.

Herner and Herner (1967) identified two types of needs which are continually confused - substance or kinds of message and the means or channels of delivery. Because needs are internal and vary with individual and the situation, the object of most frequent study is user behaviour and/or expressed demands, the assumption being that needs are implied by demands and information seeking activities.

Another way of handling this difficult concept asserted by Lin and Garvey (1972) to identify the factors which affect information needs identified the type of work (applied or basic) as the most important factor influencing need.

The identification of information needs may best be expressed as input-process-output model (Figure 1.1). The basic components of the system are: a) problem (existing situation), b) problem-solving process and c) solution. The problem is analysed to determine information needs. It is indicative of the state of uncertainty in knowledge. Solution results in resolving of the situation by filling the gap in knowledge (Girja Kumar, 1986). Conceptually speaking, input-output
model gets translated into five steps whether it concerns a research project, thesis, monographs, essay or newspaper/periodical article.

![Input-Process-Output Model](image)

The essential steps from the stage of identifying problem, establishing or selecting search strategies, carrying out actual searches, to determining outcome effectiveness, methodology in all cases happens to be basically uniform, whether it is a kid requiring natural story in his or her nursery school or it is the Nobel-Prize winner in his search for basic truths in his particular field of knowledge, they are subjected to the same principles. There are many parameters of community information needs. Some of them are:

1. Careers  
2. Children and Young People  
3. Community  
4. Consumer  
5. Disability  
6. Education  
7. Elderly People  
8. Employment  
9. Environment  
10. Family and Personal  
11. Fuel  
12. Government  
13. Health  
14. Housing  
15. Law  
16. Money  
17. Race Relations  
18. Welfare
For this research work, the parameters of Santal community information needs are:

1. Housing
2. Food and Nutrition
3. Clothing
4. Health and Child Care
5. Education and Schooling
6. Employment
7. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry
8. Politics
9. Personal Relation
10. Recreation
11. Consumer Goods
12. Culture
13. Law and Order

These community information are again subdivided into some relevant variables. These variables are as follows:

1. Housing – mud house materials, pucca (i.e., concrete) building materials and jhopri materials.
2. Food and Nutrition – food habits, modern cooking and traditional cooking.
3. Clothing – modern clothing, traditional clothing and partially-traditional clothing.
5. Education and Schooling – location of educational institutions, financial aid, subjects learning and higher studies.
7. Agriculture and Animal Husbandry – technical information, commercial information and social information.
8. Politics – voters list, election, political parties, political situation and traditional political system.

10. Recreation – festivals; games & sports; radio/TV programmes and availability of story books, novels.


12. Culture – dance, music & drama (Santali), worship (Santali Deities), hunting, modern culture.

13. Law and Order – agriculture land disputes, house property disputes, robbery/other crimes, community disputes.

14. Government Welfare Projects – Tribal Area Development Programme (TADP), The Rural Youth Self-Employment Programme (TRYSEM), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA), Tribal Development Agency (TDA), Drought Prone area Programme (DPAP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Level Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Food for Work Programme (FWP) etc.

On the basis of these needs of the Santals, the roles of the community information service are as follows:

1. Existing information service system e.g. Public Library as a catalytic agent for providing information. Public libraries have to develop to cater various types of information services for the fulfilment of different types of information needs of the peoples.

2. Active functioning of various agencies like the Primary schools/High schools, Agricultural Extension Offices, Block Development Offices, Sub-Divisional Offices, Block Land and Land Reform Offices, Sub-Divisional Land and Land Reform Offices, Banks, Post Offices, Health Centres, Political Party Offices, Panchayats, Courts, Police Stations, Club or Non-Government Organizations, Sports Authorities etc. and interrelation between Public Libraries and Service Agencies is essential for better community information services.
Direct interaction between Santals and other underdeveloped communities with government staff is necessary to understand their problems and to make a constructive solution by fulfilling their information needs as well as to save their lifestyle and traditional culture.

1.10 Origin and Development of Community Information Services

Some 15 years after its introduction in United States, the concept of ‘Community Information’ has entered into the mainstream of library practice. The term ‘Community Information’ derives from the United States where it was used to describe the kind of services developed during the 1960s as part of war against poverty and urban decay. Since these services were neighbourhood-based and attempted to link the enquirer with appropriate sources of help in the community, they were called ‘community information services’. The first community information services in a public library, the Public Information Center at Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore, was set up in 1970 after a study conducted by a team led by Joseph C. Donohue of Maryland library school (Donohue, 1972). Further experiments followed in other libraries in the United States and by the mid-70s reports of these began to filter through to Britain via the American professional press and as a result of a report by E.D. Whalley, a Research Fellow of the Department of Library and Information Studies at Leeds Polytechnic, who visited several of these services in 1975 (Whalley and Davinson, 1976). By the end of the decade a number of libraries in Britain had set up services which, though differing from each other in some respects could all be subsumed under the banner of ‘community information’.

1.11 Community Information Needs Assessment and Its Problems

When planning information needs survey, it is necessary to be clear about the nature of the information needs which are being surveyed. It is possible to survey information needs in different ways by asking people about different types on information needs.

Perceived needs

It is possible to learn a lot by simply asking people what information needs they think they have. The best way to do this is to allow people to say what they
consider to be their main needs and then to prompt them by asking about the information they need in particular subject areas such as health or education.

The problem with perceived needs is that people are frequently unaware that they need information. This may be because they do not see that information can be used to solve a problem which they face — they may simply not appreciate that there is a solution to the problem.

**Actual needs**

Another way to explore information needs is to ask people about the information which they have actually needed over the last month or year. Here it is worth noting that for many people 'information' is a rather vague concept and it is often more helpful to ask them what they need to find an answer to a question, solve a problem or to make a difficult decision.

It is important to use a timescale which is relevant to the experience of the people being surveyed. One month is quite a short time, and might exclude many information needs. Equally a year may be a long time for some people unless the timescale can be related to something like a harvest or wet season.

**Hypothetical needs**

Here information needs are expected by asking people what they would do if they needed information about a particular problem or situation. This may give a good picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing services.

The problem with asking about hypothetical information needs is that it is necessary to select problems and situation with which people can identify. Even then, many people find it difficult to respond to a hypothetical situation.

**Existing information services**

Much can be learned about information needs by asking people about the use they make of the existing information services and about their views of the services.

**Preferred ways of meeting needs**

Finally it is possible to ask people how they would most like to satisfy a perceived or an actual need. This approach has the advantage that the responses are not
restricted to the services which are already provided. The limitation is that people often find it difficult to think of or to describe services which are outside their experience.

The main benefit of this approach is that it is the one which is most likely to identify ways of building upon existing informal methods of acquiring and exchanging information.

The following problems are encountered regarding assessing and meeting community information needs:

Firstly, the rural backward communities have been living in the darkness of ignorance. They do not know what are their actual needs, naturally there is a discrepancy between the information provided and the real needs of the communities.

Secondly, the information may not reach the people who need it most.

Thirdly, it is said that the fault may be with the individual; that is the person’s perception of what information is needed may be wrong.

Fourthly, it has been pointed out that the needed information may be cut off by psychological or cultural barriers.

Fifthly, updating of community information needs is not done on regular basis.

Sixthly, due to laziness of librarians and lack of staff, financial resources and time, few library and information workers and their respective resources centres conduct information needs assessment.

Seventhly, there is lack of knowledge of information needs assessment techniques and difficulties encountered in developing simple but reliable methodologies for collecting data on community information needs (Kaniki, 1995; Lohmann, 1969; Sarada, 1986).

However, these problems must be solved to provide better information services to the backward communities of rural areas.

1.12 Process of Information Seeking Behaviour

To talk of information society is the prevalent culture. Information processing is the major industry in the developed societies. In the United States, for instance,
60 percent of workforce is engaged in the production of information goods, compared to 13 percent in manufacturing relating efforts (Landau, 1986). The Indian situation is a developing one and inexorably moving in the same direction. In the words of Eugene Garfield (1971), developing information society is a system “characterized by the fact that the rapid and convenient delivery of needed information is the ordinary state of affairs”.

The key concepts to be examined in the context of social sciences are data, information, knowledge, information gathering habits, information communication and information system. The key factor is the user seeking information satisfaction on the basis of convenient and direct access to the information system. It logically leads to the examination of information seeking behaviour in terms of: 1) Identifying objectives, 2) Defining need, 3) Accessing information system, 4) Establishing sources of information, 5) Information acquisition, 6) Use of information and 7) Satisfaction/dissatisfaction. The information seeking process is of cyclical nature. Various steps in the process are interrelated, acting and re-acting upon each other in the sequential order, as well as interacting with the information seeking behaviour in general simultaneously.

First of all, there is some objectives behind the information seeking and user has some information need.

After acquiring the information, the information can be used. To fulfil the information, user has to search the different relevant sources or access the related information system. After using the information from relevant sources/information system, user may be satisfied or dissatisfied. Satisfaction and dissatisfaction depends on the availability of required information. If the user got all or maximum amount of information then he must be satisfied otherwise he will be dissatisfied.

The dynamic situation is best represented in the figure given:
Various models of Information Behaviour, Information Seeking Behaviour and Information Searching by Wilson, Dervin, Ellis, Kuhlthau, etc. are available for understanding the process of information seeking behaviour.

Information seeking behaviour arises as a consequence of a need perceived by an information user, who in order to satisfy that need, makes demands upon formal or informal information sources or services, which result in success or failure to find relevant information. If successful, the individual then makes use of the information found and may either fully or partially satisfy the perceived need — or, indeed, fail to satisfy the need and have to reiterate the process.

Part of the information seeking behaviour may involve other people through information exchange and that information perceived as useful may be passed to other people, as well as being used (or instead of being used) by the person himself or herself.

Information sources renamed as 'channels of communication', links the basic model to the communicator as the originator of messages over the channels of communication and shows a feedback loop through which the communicator learns of the recipient's response to the communication.

The researcher proposes a favourable model for a Santal community information seeking behaviour which is as follows:
The figure 1.3 depicts that the community information starts with Individual. An Individual has Information Needs and to fulfil the information needs, Individual seeks the information from information providers/sources/channels i.e., Information Seeking Behaviour. The sources/channels may be formal (official) or informal (unofficial i.e., particular person, shop etc.). After collecting the information Individual uses this information and he/she may be satisfied/dissatisfied i.e., feedback to information providers regarding the information use.
REFERENCES


