

## Information Seeking Behavior of Information Science Students, Faculty of Engineering and Technology in Assosa University

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### Abstract:

*Information Seeking Behavior is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy educational objective. But there are factors that influence the information seeking behavior of students like: shortage reference books in the library, limited ICT infrastructure, lack of awareness in selecting accessible sources to seek information. The objective of the study was to determine information seeking behavior identify information seeking methods and to identify the factors that influence information seeking behavior of students. This study was conducted to investigate the information seeking behavior of information science students in Assosa University. Through questionnaires quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 90 selected respondents by using convincing sampling from the whole undergraduate information science department students. The findings of this research revealed that the major respondents seek information to update their knowledge, to prepare project work, to answer questions, to discuss with each other, for enjoyment and to prepare notes. And the most common information seeking methods or sources are browsing from the internet, lecture notes, reference books, electronic sources and others. And also the factors that influence information seeking behavior of respondents were poor internet connections, shortage of text or reference books in*

*the library, lack of enough computer hardware and software and lack of awareness in selecting sources. This study suggests that departments should give orientation for new coming students to create awareness about the usage of information sources from the library, internet and others and Universities should fulfill educational sources and get-up-and-go with technology for the easier usage and delivery of sources.*

**Key words:** Information seeking behavior, undergraduate students, Information science, Engineering and Technology faculty, Assosa University.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Information is a collection of meaningful data which is an important source for development and survival in the real world. Information has become a vital source for world economies and is certainly the basic component of education. Information is a vital element to technological and scientific change and it poses several challenges to individuals of all walks of life: students, workers, and citizens of all types. The progress of modern societies as well as individuals depends upon the provision of the right kind of information, in the right form and at the right time. Information is needed to be able to take a right decision and also reduce uncertainty. Students need information to get knowledge or understanding and need information to be up-to-date and well informed in their area of specialization. In this knowledge era one cannot live without information specifically in the case of teaching and learning process, teachers need information in their subject field to teach, to update their knowledge and to do research or project and students need information to upgrade their knowhow.

## **BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Information Seeking Behavior is the purposive seeking for 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 with computer-based systems such as the World Wide Web (Wilson, 2000). Information seeking behavior is a the term that comprises a set of activities that an individual sets to express information needs, seek information, evaluate and select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs.

Information Science is an interdisciplinary field primarily concerned with the analysis, collection, classification, manipulation, storage, retrieval, movement, dissemination and protection of information.it is also concerned with recordable information and knowledge, and the technologies and related services that facilitate their management and use. Information science professionals are able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. Therefore, Information seeking behavior of Information science students is the basic one for their day to day activity as well as for their future to serve the people. Department of Information science which is in the faculty of Engineering and Technology, Assosa University is committed in teaching-learning, research and community service. Hence, the major load of staffs is on teaching-learning process to create qualified professionals who able to perceive theoretical and practical session and then apply it on the work area.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Information is essential in the modern world and identifying the vital information sources is the key point for students to be

competent in their day to day learning performance. But there are various factors that affecting the information seeking behavior of students among these, limited ICT infrastructure to seek information, lack of awareness in selecting accessible sources and resources.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- ✓ To determine information seeking behavior of students
- ✓ To identify information seeking methods of students
- ✓ To identify the factors that affect information seeking behavior of students

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Information need is one of the intellectual needs of human kind for day to day life. Information need causes information-seeking behavior and these concepts complement one another. Information seeking behavior is the comprehensive term which encompasses a set of actions that an individual takes to express information needs, seek information, evaluate information, select information, and finally uses this information to satisfy his/her information needs. Information seeking is a process in which humans engage in order to advance and potentially alter their stage of knowledge. It is also an important cognitive function related to learning and problem solving sometimes thought of as a higher cognitive process. (Nishat F. and Naved A., 2008)

Information science students might use various information seeking methods to get or obtain academic information to improve their academic performance. Finding methods of intercepting the barriers to information seeking is one of the solutions to improving the students' information seeking behavior. Bearing in mind that contact with students in

information institutions is either through reference interviews or bibliographic instruction sessions.

Martin and Metcalfe (2001) acknowledged that modes of informing are specific to each person's concern, as are the topics they want to be informed about. Both note that libraries in the past sought to accommodate this need by promoting current awareness services and selective dissemination of information, either through print or electronic means. These are user outreach possibilities that can still be optimally utilized in addition to customizing access points in accordance with user interests using Internet or the university intranet.

Lau (2001) observed that although librarians had assumed the role of user information educators, their work tended to occur in isolation. Teamwork was needed to make library instruction part of the learning process. The publicity services provided in an information institution play a big role in influencing how its resources are utilized and how the users seek for information.

According to Wilson (2000) information seeking is situation dependent activity where a seeker's action are influenced by access to information perceived quality and trust in the information sources. Information seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed or electronic materials, to ask friends or colleagues.

Experts have identified different challenges that affect information seeking behavior of individuals; for example, Uhegbu (2002) identifies five challenges viz; economic, social, environmental occupational and infrastructure. Ugah and Okpara (2007) lays emphasis on the following areas such as; Lack of Awareness: Information seekers and users may not know about the resources available and the libraries did not made it clear to the information seekers about the traditional resources and services which serve as impediments to information accessibility and utilization but effective access and use of information can flourish a society. Inaccessibility: The

availability of information resources makes it easy for the information users to access it and utilize it efficiently, if there is no information resource to satisfy to their needs in other to make the information resources to be useful. Environment: The environmental factors include the polluted air in urban and industrialized cities. Noise is also environmental factor that hinder communication processes within a particular environment. Poor Infrastructure: Infrastructure is the basic framework of any information organization, effective information access and utilization depends on communication facilities such as telephone, internet, radio, television etc... as well as an adequate supply of electricity. Costs: The costs of information sources also affect the accessibility and utilization of information because some information sources are expensive and not only that but scarce.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For this study, descriptive survey research design was used through quantitative and qualitative research method. This was done in order to determine information seeking behavior of students, to identify information seeking methods and the factors or challenges of information seeking behavior of students.

The study populations of this study were undergraduate 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of Information science department in faculty of Engineering and Technology in Assosa University.

To investigate the information seeking behavior of Information Science students, Department of Information Science was purposely selected among the other departments which exist in Assosa University. For this study, respondents from the department was identified and selected from three batches by using convincing sampling method. The sample size was 90 students from 155 students.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic characteristics of the respondents include sex, age and class year. Ninety (90) questionnaires were prepared and distributed all questionnaires were filled by the respondents and returned. Therefore, the analysis and interpretation were made on the basis of the frequency of responses given by those 90 respondents. The general personal information of the respondents is shown below.

**Table 1: Personal information of the respondents**

No.	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender (Sex)		
	Male	50	55.6
	Female	40	44.4
	Total	90	100
2	Age		
	<20	17	18.9
	20-25	71	78.9
	26-30	2	2.2
	>30	-	-
Total	90	100	
3	Year (Batch)		
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	30	33.33
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	30	33.33
	1 <sup>st</sup>	30	33.33
	Total	90	100

Based on the above table 1 the personal information of the respondents shows that 50 (55.6%) were male and the rest 40 (44.4%) were female. With regard to the age of the respondents, 17 (18.9%) of respondents is below 20, 71 (78.9%) respondents were in the age group 20-25 and also the remaining 2 (2.2%) belonged to 26-30. This indicates that most of the respondents were grouped belonged to the age 20-25. Then 30 (33.33%) of respondents were 1<sup>st</sup> year students, 30 (33.33%) of respondents 2<sup>nd</sup> year students and also 30 (33.33%) of the respondents were 3<sup>rd</sup> year students.

## **INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF IS STUDENTS**

### **Purpose of Information Seeking for Students**

The selected students' or the respondents were asked the purpose of Information seeking and they answered in the following way.

**Table 2: Purpose of Information Seeking for Students**

<b>Purpose of Information seeking</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
For preparing answers to questions	68	75.5
For updating knowledge	79	87.8
For discussion	65	72.2
For preparing notes	58	64.4
For preparing project work	73	81.1
For enjoyment	59	65.5
Others	8	8.9

The given table 2 above showed that selected information Science department students or respondents response about the purpose of information seeking and they have been the right to choose more than one. Therefore 79 (87.8%) of respondents have been seek information to update their knowledge, 73 (81.1%) of the respondents for preparing project work, 68 (75.5%) for preparing answers to questions, 65 (72.2%) for discussion, 59 (65.5%) for enjoyment, 58 (64.4%) for preparing notes and 8 (8.9%) of the respondents have been used for others purposes like to create new ideas, to write different scripts. This indicates that most of the respondents seek information for the purpose updating their knowledge and to prepare project work.

### **Place of Information seeking for Students**

The respondents were asked from where they seek information for their day to day learning process and they have been the right to choose more than one location what they seek from. The responses of the respondents are shown in the table 3 given below.



**Table 3: Place of Information seeking for Students**

<b>From where you seek Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
From the library	76	84.4
From Internet	89	98.9
From Class mate	63	70
From Handout	74	82.2
From storage media (CD, DVD, Flash disc)	54	60
Others	24	26.7

The table 3 above indicated that 89 (98.9%) of the respondents seek information from the internet, 76 (84.4%) of the respondents get from the library, 74 (82.2%) from seek information from their handout, 63 (70%) of the respondents seek information from their classmates and 54 (60%) of the respondents from storage media (CD, DVD, flash disc) whereas 24 (26.7%) of the respondents seek information from other locations. This revealed that most of the respondents or selected information Science department students seek information from the internet and the university library.

### **Information Seeking Methods**

Information seeking methods of information science department students is the way how students search information for their academic purpose and to utilize information.

### **Information seeking methods or sources of students**

Not only Information science department undergraduate students but also other departments' undergraduate students might use different information seeking methods to obtain academic related information. There may be variations of the course they follow, the method of study and the impact on academic success (Vidanage and Hettiarachchi, 2013). Hence, the respondents were asked about the methods or sources of

information seeking what they used to achieve their educational goals in the university.

**Table 4: Common information seeking methods or sources of students**

<b>Common Information seeking methods or sources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Text or reference books	59	65.5
Lecture notes	64	71.1
Browsing from Internet	81	90
Electronic sources (Soft copy sources)	56	62.2
Medias (Radio, Television, Newspapers etc...)	44	48.9

Table 4 above revealed that 81 (90%) of the respondents information seeking method or source is browsing from the internet, 64 (71.1%) of the respondents method is lecture notes, 59 (65.5%) of the respondents method is reference or text books, 56 (62.2%) of the respondents method or source is electronic materials and 44 (48.9%) of the respondents information seeking method or sources are media like; radio, television, newspapers and others. This indicates that at the current knowledge era most of the respondents or undergraduate students especially technology students are familiar with technology and their source or method to seek information is just browsing from the internet what they need.

As an information Science department student they can assist other department students how they can seek information effectively and efficiently, evaluate information critically and competently, use information creatively. Therefore, they were asked whether they are helped or not other department students to show the way how they seek information and their response looks like the following.

**Fig 1: Response with regard to assisting other department students**

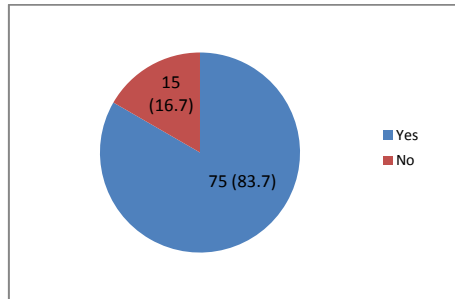
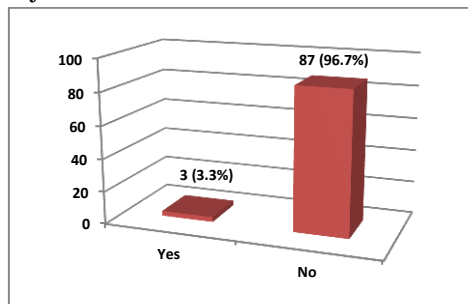


Figure 1 revealed that most of the respondents (83.7%) were assisted other department students the way how they access and use the required information. On the other hand some of the respondents (16.7%) respondents couldn't assist; because they were 1<sup>st</sup> year students and they didn't have taken the courses to be able to do that.

### **Factors of Information Seeking behavior of students**

There might be factors that influence the information seeking behavior of undergraduate students to seek the information for the success of their academic performance. Besides, the respondents were asked about the accessibility of reference or text books in the library and ICT service in the university.

**Fig 2: Accessibility of sources and services**



As displayed on fig 2, most of the respondents answered that there is no enough accessibility of reference books in the library

and ICT service in the university. Since the university is new, every one didn't expect full these sources and infrastructures; though the university was tried to fulfill the primary requirements to graduate creative professional.

Therefore, the respondents were asked about the factors that affect information seeking behavior of the students; they have been the right to choose more than one and their response is summarized in the following table.

**Table 5: Factors of Information Seeking behavior of students**

<b>Information seeking factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Lack of enough Computer hardware and software	57	63.3
Lack of awareness in selecting sources	43	47.8
Poor Internet Connection	77	85.5
Shortage of text or reference books in the library	71	78.9
Poor Information Medias	63	70
Others	8	8.9

According to the above table 5 the factors that influence information seeking behaviors of the respondents or selected Information Science students are the drawbacks to become success on their academic status. Therefore, according to the respondents answer 77 (85.5%) of the respondents have been selected Poor internet connections, 71 (78.9%) of the respondents factor was shortage of text or reference books in the library, 63 (70%) of the respondents selected poor information medias, 57 (63.3%) of the respondents factor was lack of enough computer hardware and software for students, 43 (47.8%) of the respondents have been lack of awareness in selecting information sources from where information materials located, and 8 (8.9%) of the respondents factors were others. From this the researcher understood that the most factors that influence the information seeking behavior of selected information science students or respondents were poor internet connection and shortage of text or reference books in the

library. And mostly first year students or fresh students to the university have lack of awareness in selecting information sources but information science students have awareness or the ability to select and arranging information sources. Therefore, each department, faculty or the library as a general should give overview about the usage of the sources.

General open ended questions were asked to the respondents to improve information seeking behavior of students for the success of students' academic status. The key suggestions raised by the respondents' which should be fulfilled for their achievement are:

- The university or departments should fulfill personal computers for each student especially for technology students and there should be uninterrupted internet connection.
- The librarians should give orientation for new or fresh students how they can identify and select text or reference books and the reference or text books kept in the library should be arranged well with the library classification system to have an easy access at the right time to the right users.
- There should digital Medias or audiovisual centers in the university library and the Library should try to digitalize information sources for the easier access to users.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings discussed above students seek information to update their knowhow, to prepare answers to questions, to do project, for preparing notes, for enjoyment and others. The most common information seeking methods of students are reference or text books browsing different sources from the internet, lecture notes, electronic sources, Medias and others. And lack of awareness to select information sources,

shortage of reference books in the library, shortage of enough personal computers, poor internet connection and others are the factors that influence information seeking behavior of students.

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