

Information Needs & Information Seeking in Internet Era: A Case Study of Geographers in Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

The article deals with information needs and information seeking behavior of Geographers or Geography teacher in Maharashtra state in internet era. The nature and type of information requirements of geographer and geography teacher/ lecturers and also to discuss the methods and approaches used by geographer and geography teacher/ lecturers in seeking information from various sources such as print, electronic and Internet this paper,

Keywords: Information, Information Needs, Information Seeking, Internet Era, Geographers in Maharashtra

1. INTRODUCTION

The information technology revolution is really in full swing in every field of education in the world. The library plays pivotal role in any educational or research institution. It supports in providing proper, basic and requisite information to the users, using various information resources. Libraries are in transition phase; the recent use of ICT has forced libraries and information systems to shift their traditional practices and methods of information searching and information transfer.

Geography is, generally, the study and understanding of various physical locations all across the planet. A geographer are historically known as people who make maps, map making is actually the field study of cartography, a subset of geography. Geographers study not only the physical details of the environment but also its effects on human and wildlife, ecologies, weather and climate patterns, economics, and culture. They are often especially focused on the spatial relationships between these elements. (Wikipedia, 2013)

Definitions: -

According to Fliahu Hoffman- "Information is an aggregate that means collection or accumulation of statements or facts or figures which are conceptually (by way of reasoning, logic, ideas or any other mental mode of operation interrelated or connected)"

Information Seeking: - Information seeking is a process in which a person engages himself in order to advance and potentially alter their state of knowledge. It is an important function of learning and solving the problems, sometimes thought of as a higher cognitive process. Therefore the behavior is one of the most important research areas in library user studies, which can be affected by various factors. (Marchionini, 1995)

Information Seeking Behaviour: - Information seeking is one of the basic behaviour of a human. If it is considered a simple activity, it is a mental process which occurs in the mind of the users. It is the purposive seeking for information as a result of a

need to satisfy desired goals. It also means seeking information to fulfill the need for some purpose or to accomplish a task. Thus it is called the information seeking behaviour. Or one can even say that it is the behaviour in response to satisfy the need of information. It is the complex pattern of actions and interactions in which person engage when seeking information of whatever kind and for whatever purpose.(David, 1989)

2. RESEARCH PROBLEM:

This study is an attempt to understand the “Information Needs & Information seeking in Internet era: a case study of Geographers in Maharashtra.” The project attempts to know the nature and type of information requirements of geographer and geography teacher/ lecturers and also to discuss the methods and approaches used by geographer and geography teacher/ lecturers in seeking information from various sources such as print, electronic and Internet.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aims at finding out facts and answers to the following questions -

1. To study about information needs and information seeking behavior of Geographers in Maharashtra
2. To identify the nature and type of information need of Geographers in Maharashtra
3. To identify the various sources of information used by Geographers in Maharashtra
4. To study the different approaches and methods used by Geographers in Maharashtra in retrieving information and references from print, electronic and Internet information sources;
5. To assess the present status of library services.
6. To examine the impact of these systems, i.e., Internet, E-mail, etc., on communication and exchange of professional knowledge among Geographers in Maharashtra; and
7. To know about the awareness level of library tools and techniques by Geographers in Maharashtra.

4. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is limited to the following aspects:-

1. All the arts colleges in Maharashtra state has been selected for the study.
2. Selected geography teachers including Research Scholars, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, Professor, are considered as the population of the study.
3. This analytical study strictly depends on the responses received from the respondents without checking the actual proof records of their college libraries.
4. Data was collected from geographers / geography teachers in the period from 2012 to 2014.
5. The effort has been made to present the collected data by analyzing the same by using simple tabulation and graphical techniques to make understand the interpretation, with proper reasons wherever possible to the researcher.

5. LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study is based on the data collected by the researcher. While collecting the data, it is observed that some data relevant for the research is not available.

As some questionnaires were not returned within the time limit, telephonic follow up and personal contacts were made for receiving the details. Some identified population of the study did not shown interest, as they were afraid and even not ready to talk about their setups but most of the population responded actively.

6. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The researcher has used the descriptive method of research to collect the data. The collection of data is made by using questionnaire method for survey of all the arts colleges in Maharashtra.

As a part of research work with a view to collect data, first questionnaire for geographers was designed and pilot survey was conducted then final a questionnaire for geographers have been designed. The questionnaire used in the present

survey was divided into 21 main questions with sub-questions wherever necessary. Questionnaire also prepared in google forms.

Data has been collected from the users among Geography lecturers working at different colleges, and universities of Maharashtra. To collect the information from users, researcher sent the total 225 questionnaires for Geography lecturers working at different colleges, and universities of Maharashtra. Out of 225 questionnaires distributed 168(75%) questionnaires were received duly filled from geographers.

7. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Question was asked to know the status of user and general information of users because the users are the focal point of the study.

Table: 1 Age Group of Respondents

(n=168)

Age group	Responses	Percentage
below 25	0	0%
26- 35	63	38%
36-45	70	42%
46-55	35	21%
above 55	0	0%

the above table of age group shows that out of 168 respondents maximum 70 (42%) are in the age range from 36 to 45 years, whereas 63 (38%) respondents are in the range from 26 to 35 years, 35 i.e. 21% respondents are in the age range from 46 to 55 years. The 42% of the geographers surveyed belong to the age group of 36 to 45 followed by 38% belonging to the age group of 26 to 34, who dominate the group of geographers belong to other age groups.

Question was asked with reference to, how they obtain the information through different informal channels? or how they obtain the information.

Table: 2 Informal Channels

Informal Channels	Responses	Percentage
Consult a subject specialist & expert in the field	119	71%
Discussion with seniors & colleagues	147	88%
Discussion with librarian or reference staff of library	105	63%
Attending seminars, Conference & workshop	154	92%
Searching E resources	140	83%

It is observed from the data collected that out of 168 respondents. 154 (92%) respondents are obtaining information from attending seminars, Conference & workshop, 147 (88%) obtain through Discussion with seniors & colleagues, 140(83%) respondents are obtaining through Searching E Resources, 119(71%) respondents are obtain the information consult with a subject specialist & expert in the field. Whereas 105(63%) respondents are discuss with librarian or reference staff of library.

The majority of the respondents are considering Attending seminars, Conference & workshop important sources of information they need this type events for gathering current information.

Question was asked regarding; what is the purpose & source of information collection?

The teachers/ faculty members are the prime motivators to students in learning, process. Yet the library is the most strategic position to contribute to such motivation. The use of information could be measured by several ways. One of such a ways is by knowing the purpose of user for information collection.

Table: 3 Purpose & source of information collection

Purpose & source of information	Responses	percentage
To update knowledge	154	92%
For Academic assignments	63	38%
For career development & growth	105	63%
For teaching	161	96%
For research	154	92%
For writing & presenting papers	140	83%
For guiding students & researchers	105	63%
For M.Phil, & Ph.D. research	77	46%
For recreational purpose	49	29%
For social purpose	105	63%

The above table indicated the purpose & source of information collection. Out of 168 respondents 161 (96%) respondents sought the information for teaching purpose. 154(92%) respondents purpose to update knowledge & for research. 140 (83%) respondents purpose of information for writing & presenting papers. 105(63%) respondents purpose of information for career development & growth, for guiding students & researchers and for social purpose. 77(46%) respondents purpose for M.Phil. & Ph.D. Research. 63(38%) respondents are for academic assignments, and 49 (29%) for recreational purpose.

Question was asked regarding; which are the sources of reading material; you depend on for academic & research needs?

Table: 4 Types of reading material for academic & research needs

Types of reading material	Adequately	%	To some extent	%	Inadequately	%
Periodicals	161	96%	14	8%	0	0%
Conference Papers	70	42%	98	58%	0	0%
Books	133	79%	28	17%	0	0%
Reference Books	105	63%	63	38%	7	4%
Encyclopedia	56	33%	98	58%	7	4%
Abstracting & Indexing Journals	28	17%	98	58%	28	17%
Bibliographies	14	8%	119	71%	21	13%
Year Books	35	21%	105	63%	14	8%
Statistical economic & social data	112	67%	49	29%	0	0%

Thesis	84	50%	84	50%	0	0%
Non book materials	35	21%	105	63%	14	8%
Internet	84	50%	91	54%	0	0%

While determining geographers’ needs of reading material for academic & research purpose, the study revealed that according to majority of the geographers’ i.e. 161 (96%) periodicals are adequate reading materials. 133(79%) think that the books are adequate, 112(67%) geographers think that statistical economic & social data are adequate, this highlights the importance of statistical data, in conducting empirical research in the field of geography. 105(63%) think that reference books are adequate source. While 105 (63%) geographers use the year books to some extent. Demand for more internet is also increasing as 50% of geographers find the current information.

Question was asked regarding; where do you avail the facility of Internet from?

Table: 5 Place of Internet use

Question	Responses	%
College Library	154	92%
Computer centre	63	38%
Home	160	95%
Other	21	13%

The above table shows that out of 168 geographers 160(95%) geographers are using internet facility from their home, 154(92%) are using internet facility at college library, 63(38%) geographers using this facility in computer centre

The majority of the geographers are using internet facility at home & then college library.

Question was asked regarding; do you have operational knowledge of Information Technology?

Table: 6 Operational knowledge of Information Technology

Question	Responses	%
Very Good	84	50%
Good	91	54%
Average	0	0%

The above table it shows the status on the operational knowledge of information technology of geographers’. It has been observed that out of 168 geographers 91(54%) geographers are having good knowledge of information technology while 84(50%) geographers are having very good knowledge of information technology.

With reference to age having any bearing on effective use of approaches such as Internet, Emails etc. The study has found that middle aged geographers are making more use of information technology compared to their younger counterparts

Question was asked regarding E Resources available in the Libraries. The respondents were asked to mention whether they are aware with E Resources facilities available in the college libraries.

Table: 7 Awareness about e-resources available in the library

Question	Responses	%
Very Good	77	46%
Good	91	54%
Average	0	0%

The geographers were asked are they aware about E resource available in the library. The above table shows that 91(54%) geographers are aware of e resource available in library in good category, while 77(46%) are aware about e resources in very good category. With reference to awareness of e-resources available in the library, majority of the geographers' are aware of the facility.

Question was asked regarding format of journals do you preferred for teaching & research. The respondents were asked their preference.

Table: 8 Preferred format of Journals

Preferred format of Journals	Responses	
Printed format	35	21%
Electronic Format	21	13%
Both Format	119	71%

The above table shows that majority of the geographers i.e. 119(71%) are preferred both format means printed & electronic. Printed format of journals were preferred by 35(21%) only 21(13%) geographers preferred electronic format for study and research purpose.

Question was asked regarding, how frequently geographers in Maharashtra use E Resources for their information need.

Table: 9 Frequency of use of E-Resources

Types of E Resources	Frequently	%	Some times	%	Never	%
Electronic Journals	161	96%	14	8%	0	0%
Electronic Databases	49	29%	105	63%	7	4%
Electronic Books	77	46%	70	42%	14	8%
CD –Rom Databases	21	13%	77	46%	56	33%
From resource networks	42	25%	91	54%	28	17%

The survey reveals that majority of the 161(96%) geographers are frequently using Electronic Journals; followed by 14(8%) geographers are sometime using Electronic Journals.

49(29%) geographers are frequently using Electronic Databases; followed by 105(63%) geographers are sometime using Electronic Databases, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use Electronic Databases.

77(46%) geographers are frequently using Electronic Books; followed by 70(42%) geographers are sometime using Electronic Books, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use Electronic Books.

21(13%) geographers are frequently using CD –Rom Databases; followed by 77(46%) geographers are sometime using CD –Rom Databases, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use CD –Rom Databases.

42 (25%) geographers are frequently using resource networks; followed by 91(54%) geographers are sometime using resource networks; less number of geographers are responded that they Never use resource networks.

Question was asked regarding E Resources accessed by the respondents. The respondents were asked to mention which type of E Resources they access for their information needs.

Table: 10 Types of E Resources accessed

Types of E Resources accessed	Yes	%	No	%
Electronic Journals	168	100%	0	0%
Electronic Databases	133	79%	21	13%

Electronic Books	147	88%	7	4%
CD –Rom Databases	70	42%	84	50%
From resource networks	84	50%	63	38%

From the above table shows that Electronic Journals were access by majority of the geographers; followed by Electronic Books which was accessed by 147(88%) geographers,less number of geographers are responded that they never use Electronic Books; Whereas the Electronic Databases access by 133(79%) geographers,lessnumberi.e. 21(13%) of geographers are responded that they Never use Electronic Databases; The otherresource networks access by 84(50%) geographers,less numberi.e.63(38%) of geographers are responded that they Never access resource networks; CD-ROM databases was access by 70(42%) geographers,majority of the geographers i.e.84(50%) of geographers are responded that they Never use CD-ROM databases.

Question was asked regarding, dothey find any difficulties & Problems in finding information?

Table: 11Difficulties and problems encountered while using resources

Difficulties and problems	Yes	%	No	%
Materials is not available on the shelf	105	63%	56	33%
Outdated reading materials	119	71%	42	25%
Lack of awareness of the availability of material	105	63%	49	29%
Shortage of latest journals	112	67%	49	29%
Lack of time	49	29%	105	63%
Non –cooperative behaviour of library staff	28	17%	133	79%
Unavailability of internet facility in the departments	77	46%	77	46%
Shortage of computers	84	50%	77	46%
Digital library services are limited to the library	84	50%	70	42%

The above table reveals the problems faced by geographers while seeking information. As above105 geographers out of 168 that means 63% geographers says that material is not available, is a problem while seeking information.

119 geographers out of 168 that mean71% geographers say that outdated reading material is available, is a problem while seeking information.

105 geographers out of 168 that mean63% geographers say that Lack of awareness of the availability of the material, is a problem while seeking information.

112 geographers out of 168 that mean 67% geographers say that shortage of latest journals is available, is a problem while seeking information.

49 geographers out of 168 that mean 29% geographers say that lack of time for searching material, is a problem.

Very few 28 geographers out of 168 that mean 17% geographers say thatNon –cooperative behaviour of library staff is a problem while seeking information.

77 geographers out of 168 that mean 46% geographers indicated that Unavailability of internet facility in the departments is a problem while seeking information

84 geographers out of 168 that mean 50% geographers inform that Shortage of computers is a problem while seeking information.

84 geographers out of 168 that mean 50% geographers say that Digital library services are limited to the libraryis a problem while seeking information.

The majority of the geographers say that material is not available, outdated reading materials, lack of awareness of the availability of material, shortage of latest journals are various problem in seeking information.

Question was asked regarding, how much time they spend in a week to seek information?

Table: 12 Time Spend per week to seek information

Time spent (per week)	Sources in library	%	Electronic Resources	%
6-8 hours	35	21%	133	79%
8-10 hours	91	54%	35	21%
Above 10hours	21	13%	28	17%

The study indicates that time spent in seeking information, it is observed from the above table that 35(21%) geographers spend 6to 8 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 133(79%) spend 6 to 8 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources.

91(54%) geographers spend 8 to 10 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 35(21%) spend 8 to 10 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources.

Only 21(13%) geographers spend above 10 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 28(17%) spend above 10 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources.

Question was asked regarding, indicate the problems they encountered while using E Resources?

Table: 13 Problems encountered using E-Resources

Problems encountered using E-Resources	Responses	%
Not sufficient familiarity with E Resources	105	63%
Too much information retrieved	98	58%
Library website does not provides enough links to E Resources	14	8%
Lack of IT knowledge and skills to effective utilize services	63	38%

The geographers were asked to indicate the problems they encountered while using E-Resources. As shown in above table majority of the geographers 105(63%) were not familiar with E-Resources; followed by 98(58%) geographers agreed that too much information retrieved while assessing the E-Resources and 63(38%) geographers felt that lack of IT knowledge and skills to effective utilize services was the problem faced to access the E-Resources. According to very few14 (8%) geographers' library website does not provides enough links to E-Resource.

Question was asked regarding, do you require any training for wide use of E Resources?

Table: 14 Training for wide use of E-Resources

Training for wide use of E-Resources	Responses	%
Learning more about E Resources	77	46%
Information retrieval skills	126	75%
Individual training	35	21%

The above table shows the training required by geographers to access the E-Resources.As above 126(75%) the majority of the geographers indicated that they required training in Information retrieval skills to get the proper information. 77(46%)

geographers required training for Learning more about E-Resources in order to wide access and make use of E-Resources.35 (21%) geographers wanted to get Individual training.

The majority of the geographers indicated that they required training in Information retrieval skills to get the proper information

8. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- It was found that out of 168 respondents maximum 70 (42%) are in the age range from 36 to 45 years, observed that young respondents' response was encouraging because of their technical knowledge and are well verse with ICT applications.
- The majority of the respondents are considering Attending seminars, Conference & workshop important sources of information they need this type events for gathering current information. Whereas only 105(63%) respondents are discuss with librarian or reference staff of library and this is wakeup call for library professionals.
- It has been observed that reasons for sourcing the information, 96% respondents sought the information for teaching purpose. 92% respondents purpose to update knowledge & for research.
- Regarding source of material they depend, it was found majority of the 96% periodicals are adequate reading materials. 79% think that the books are adequate, 67% geographers think that statistical economic & social data are adequate, this highlights the importance of statistical data, in conducting empirical research in the field of geography. 63% think that reference books are adequate source. While 63% geographer's use the year books to some extent. Demand for more internet is also increasing as 50% of geographers finds the current information.
- It has been found that awareness about E resource available in the library, 54% geographers are aware of e resource available in library in good category, while 46% are aware about e resources in very good category. Libraries need to promote their subscribed resources for getting better ROI.
- It has been found that that majority of the geographers 71% are preferred both format means printed & electronic. only 13% geographers preferred electronic format for study and research purpose and this is very much surprising as electronic format is more easy to use.
- It has been found that frequency of using e resources study reveals that majority of the 96% geographers are frequently using Electronic Journals; followed by 8%, geographers 29% geographers are frequently using Electronic Databases; followed by 63% geographers are sometime using Electronic Databases, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use Electronic Databases. 46% geographers are frequently using Electronic Books; followed by 42% geographers are sometime using Electronic Books, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use Electronic Books. 13% geographers are frequently using CD –Rom Databases; followed by 46% geographers are sometime using CD –Rom Databases, less number of geographers are responded that they Never use CD –Rom Databases.
- Regarding difficulties in accessing e resources it has been found that 63% geographers says that material is not available, is a problem while seeking information. 29% geographers say that lack of time for searching material, is a problem. 46% geographers indicated that unavailability of internet facility in the departments is a problem while seeking information
- 84 geographers out of 168 that mean 50% geographers inform that Shortage of computers is a problem while seeking information. 50% geographers say that Digital library services are limited to the library is a problem while seeking information.
- It has been found that 21% geographers spend 6 to 8 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 79% spend 6 to 8 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources. 54% geographers spend 8 to 10 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 21% spend 8 to 10 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources. Only 13% geographers spend above 10 hours per week seeking information from all types of sources in the library and 17% spend above 10 hours per week seeking information only in electronic resources.
- Regarding problems encountered while using e resources, it has been found that 63% were not familiar with E-Resources; followed by 58% geographers agreed that too much information retrieved while assessing the E-Resources and 38% geographers felt that lack of IT knowledge and skills to effective utilize services was the

problem faced to access the E-Resources. According to very few 8% geographers library website does not provides enough links to E-Resource.

- Regarding training requirement on E resources 75% the majority of the geographers indicated that they required training in Information retrieval skills to get the proper information. 46% geographers required training for learning more about E-Resources in order to wide access and make use of E-Resources.21% geographers wanted to get Individual training.

9. CONCLUSION:

To conclude that Library professionals should play vital role in providing information literacy program among Geography faculties. In this 21st e-resources or databases are need of the hour. Need for the library professionals to acquire required skills & ICT knowledge to train their users on how to make use of available resources effectively for their information need. Awareness to the subscribed e resources to users is essential to get better ROI on investment and to justify to higher authorities at the time of renewals.

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