

INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ARABIC STUDIES STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY OF JOS, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

An adequate understanding of the information needs of Arabic studies students is crucial in providing library resources that will meet these needs. This study investigated the information needs and information seeking behaviour of Arabic studies students at University of Jos, Nigeria. It is a descriptive survey research which used the questionnaire and interview methods as instruments for data collection. The population of the study consisted of 29 Arabic studies students in three different years of study. Result of the study revealed Arabic studies students need information on their class assignments, followed by information on their next lecture topics. The students use their personal collections first when seeking information, followed by library textbooks and Arabic scholars' collections off campus. The library has inadequate Arabic studies reading materials and seating capacity. It is recommended, among other things, that adequate and relevant Arabic studies reading materials and enough seats be provided to meet the information needs of the Arabic studies students.

Keywords: Arabic studies students; Information needs; information seeking behaviour; University libraries, Nigeria; University of Jos, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Buchanan, (2002) defined information as processed data. This implies that the generation of raw form (data) of answered questionnaires, when analyzed gives the result (information) of a research. For instance, an electricity bill is a processed data from meter readings, etc. To thrive in the information era we are in today, one needs a variety of information. Information plays an important role in our personal, educational and professional lives. People need information in all their endeavours.

Reitz (2004) described information need as a gap in a person's knowledge that, when experienced at the conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer. If the need is urgent, the search may be pursued with diligence until the desire is fulfilled. Kakai,

Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004) defined information seeking behaviour as an individual's way and manner of gathering information for personal use and updating knowledge. Information seeking behaviour of students in higher institutions of learning have been the focus of research for many years. However, information seeking behaviour differs according to disciplines. Mahajan (2009) observed that information seeking behaviours differ among user groups. The information needs and information seeking behaviour of Arabic studies students at the University of Jos have not been studied going by searches carried out on the literature by the researcher. Having in depth information on the needs and information seeking behaviour of library users from their areas of studies aids librarians in developing systems and services to meet the users' information needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The human mind remains unchanged both physiologically and psychologically yet it needs to retrieve the desired information from the trend in the growth of knowledge to ensure its proper utilization for the benefit of the society as there exists unrestrained development of the human mind for increasing knowledge, (Chakrabarti, 2001).

Adeniji (2007) wrote that information need arises when there is lack of information needed to execute a task. This task could be for class assignment or business decision making. Information need is an urge for increase in knowledge about an unsolved problem. Information is an essential part of modern advancement because it "is a vital ingredient in decision making, problem solving and increase in productivity" (Abdullahi and Haruna, 2006: 41)

The first age out of Lamdin and Fugate's four ages of life span are for those people who seek for information for education, socialization and job preparation proposes, (Williamson and Asla, 2009). The Arabic studies students fall into this first group whose purpose of seeking information is for academic pursuit.

Information seeking behaviour of library users have been investigated several studies (Anwar, Al-Ansari and Abdullah, 2004), (Thorsteinsdottir, 2001), (Liu and Redfern 1997), (Williams and Rowlands, 2007), (Bhatti, 2009) all relating to subject interests, occupation, information environment and geographical location (Tahir, Mahmood and Shafique, 2008). Eskola (1998) attested that there is increase interest in students' library use and information behaviour during the last decades. This, he stressed, is as a result of increase in the number of students resulting in libraries having to satisfy their patrons' demands in the best possible way. To provide satisfactory and accessible information to the Arabic studies

students their information needs and information seeking behaviour need to be understood.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are:

- To determine the information needs of the Arabic studies students of the University of Jos;
- To identify the extent of library use by the respondents;
- To determine information seeking pattern of the respondents;
- To find out problems faced by the respondents in seeking information;
- To suggest ways of meeting the information needs of the respondents.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey method was adopted for this study. The population of this study consisted of 29 Arabic studies students in three levels; 100, 200, 400 levels. 300 level students were not included in this study because they were in the Nigeria Arabic Language Village, Ngala, Borno State for their 300 level studies.

A questionnaire and interview method were the instruments used to collect data for this study. The interview complemented the questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section "A" sought for information on personal data of the respondents, section "B" sought for information on the respondents' extent of use of the library, their information needs, information seeking pattern and information seeking problems. 29 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents in their lecture halls and were collected three days later, before the commencement of lectures. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**TABLE I:
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS BY LEVEL OF STUDY**

Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage
100 level (1 st year)	8	27.6%
200 level (2 nd year)	9	31%
400 level (4 th year)	12	41.4%
Total	29	100%

Table I shows the distribution of respondents by their year of study. Majority of the respondents were in 400 level with 41.4% followed by 200 level respondents with 31% while 100 level respondents came last with

27.6%. 300 level (3rd year) of the Arabic studies students were not included in this study because they were in the Nigerian Arabic Language Village, Ngala, Borno State for their 3rd year studies.

**TABLE II:
USE OF LIBRARY BY RESPONDENTS**

Use of Library	Frequency	Percentage
Regularly	24	82.8%
Not more than twice in a week	3	10.3%
About once in a week	2	6.9%
Very rarely	-	-
Total	29	100%

Table II indicates the use of library by the respondents. Majority of them (82.8%) made use of the library regularly. 10.3% of the respondents made use of the library not more than twice in a week while 6.9% of them used the library about once in a week. This result revealed that all the respondents use the library.

INFORMATION NEEDS OF ARABIC STUDIES STUDENTS

Respondents were asked to rank their information needs in order of importance with one (1) being the highest and five (5) the lowest (Table III).

**TABLE III:
INFORMATION NEEDS OF RESPONDENTS**

S/N	Items	Reponses (In Ranking Order)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Information on class assignment	20 69%	5 17.2%	2 6.9%	2 6.9%	-	29 100%
2.	Information on project work	-	4 13.8%	2 6.9%	23 79.3%	-	29 100%
3.	Information on next lecture topic	5 17.2%	18 62.1%	2 6.9%	4 13.8%	-	29 100%
4.	Information on general knowledge	4 13.8%	2 6.9%	23 79.3%	-	-	29 100%
5.	Information on campus affairs	-	-	-	-	29	29 100%

Table III indicates that information on class assignments was ranked first as most needed by 69% of the respondents, 17.2% of the respondents

ranked it as the second most needed, 6.9% of them ranked it third while another 6.9% ranked it fourth in their scale of preference. Information on project work was ranked as the second most needed by 13.8 % of the respondents while it was ranked third by 6.9% and fourth by 79.3% of the respondents.

Information on the next lecture topic was ranked as the first most needed by 17.2% of the respondents, second by 62.1%, third by 6.9% and fourth by 13.8%. Information on general knowledge was as ranked first most needed by 13.8%, second by 6.9% and third by 79.3% of the respondents. Information on campus affairs was ranked as the fifth most needed by 100% of the respondents.

This result revealed that Arabic studies students in University of Jos need information on their class assignments followed by information on their next lecture topic and information on general knowledge. This result corroborates Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya's (2004) findings that the main information needs of undergraduate students are information on class assignments.

PATTERN OF INFORMATION SEEKING BY ARABIC STUDIES STUDENTS

Respondents were asked to rank in order of preference, method through which they seek needed information (Table IV).

**TABLE IV:
PATTERN OF INFORMATION SEEKING OF RESPONDENTS**

S/N	Items	Reponses (In ranking order)					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
1.	Personal collections	29 100%	-	-	-	-	29 100%
2.	Library Internet	-	-	(6) 20.7%	(5) 17.2%	(18) 62.1%	29 100%
3.	Library Journals	-	-	-	(22) 75.9%	(7) 24.1%	29 100%
4.	Arabic Scholars' Collections in town	-	-	(24) 82.8%	-	(5) 17.2%	29 100%
5.	Library Textbooks	-	(29) 100%	-	-	-	(29) 100%

Table IV shows all the respondents (100%) use personal collections first when seeking information. Library internet service is the third channel as revealed by 20.7% of the respondents, followed by Arabic scholars'

collection which is ranked as the fourth channel by 17.2% and finally the library textbooks ranked as the fifth channel by 62.1% of the respondents.

Library journals were ranked as the third channel as shown by 75.9 % of the respondents. Arabic scholars' collection in town is the third channel as indicated by 82.8% of the respondents. All the respondents (100%) used textbooks in the University Library as their second channel when seeking for information. In all, the results revealed that the respondents prefer consulting their personal collections first when seeking for information, then the library textbooks followed by using Arabic scholars' collections, off campus.

**TABLE V:
INFORMATION SEEKING PROBLEMS OF RESPONDENTS**

Problem	Frequency	Percentage
Inadequate reading materials	18	62.1%
Lack of support from library staff	2	6.9%
Inadequate seating capacity	4	13.8%
Arabic studies materials in reserved section unknown	3	10.3%
Textbooks not available on the shelves	2	6.9%

Table V indicates that the major problem faced by the respondents when seeking information is inadequate reading materials (62.1%), followed by inadequate seating capacity in the library (13.8%).

The result of interviews conducted with the students revealed that Arabic studies books most times disappear from the shelves without trace. It also revealed that on-line databases in the library did not satisfy the information needs of the Arabic studies students. However, the librarians attributed the disappearance of Arabic studies materials from the shelves to the physical materials being used for retrospective conversion of library materials, adding that the materials would be returned to the shelves as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Arabic studies students have information needs to be satisfied. They appreciate the importance of the library to their academic pursuits but they complained that inadequate reading materials and low seating capacity of the library are some of the problems they face while seeking information to satisfy these needs.

In view of the above, it is recommended that enough seats as well as adequate and relevant reading materials be provided in the institution's library to meet the information needs of the Arabic studies students. Also books on Arabic studies should be shelved and shelf-read regularly, after use. A list of books on the reserved books shelves should be compiled and brought to the attention of all students of Arabic studies. Finally, the library should make strenuous efforts to ensure that more e-resources on Arabic studies are provided in the library.

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