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Full Length Research

Information Needs and Seeking Behavior of Faculty Members of Atal Bihari Vajpayee University Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh

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This article explores the impact of electronic information resources on the information-seeking behavior of faculty members at Atal Bihari Vajpayee University Bilaspur (AU), the Government university in Bilaspur District. The study involved interviewing faculty members from various departments to understand their use of electronic resources for research, their views on electronic versus print materials, and the challenges they encounter during the information search process. The research targeted all faculty members of AU's campus. Due to the limited size of the target population, data was collected using questionnaires designed with 26 open and closed-ended questions tailored to address key aspects of the study.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behavior, Information Needs, faculty members, Library Resources, Atal Bihari Vajpayee University,

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INTRODUCTION

The exploration of human information-seeking behavior traces back to studies on library usage and readership. A significant milestone in this field was the Royal Society Scientific Information Conference in 1948, which was initiated in response to the rapid growth of scientific literature following World War II. This event is widely regarded as the formal inception of modern research on how individuals search for and utilize information, though its roots extend even further into history.

Today, society operates within what is commonly called the Information era where Information and Communication Technology (ICT) profoundly shapes nearly all aspects of life. According to Baby et al. (2000), the 20th century witnessed an information explosion, driven by the rapid global production of printed materials. This surge was particularly notable in scientific and technological fields, surpassing the expansion observed in social sciences. The term information explosion describes the overwhelming increase in available data, which has led to difficulties in managing vast amounts of information, a challenge known as information overload.

Sharma (1992) and Vickery stressed the importance of understanding users in order to provide effective information services, emphasizing the need to deliver relevant information to the right individual at the appropriate time. The concept of "information behavior," which emerged in the late 1990s, evolved from earlier discussions in the 1960s about "information needs and uses." Over time, research focus has shifted from a system-oriented approach to a user-centered perspective. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, scholars recognized that studying how people seek and use information required moving beyond a purely system-driven model. This transition placed greater emphasis on user experiences, incorporating insights from cognitive science and leading to the development of the "cognitive view" or "new paradigm."

Information overload arises when the sheer volume of data hinders an individual's ability to make informed decisions or stay updated on specific topics. These challenges have sparked growing interest in studying the information-seeking behaviours and needs of different user groups. The concept of "information need" refers to the conscious or unconscious desire of individuals or groups to obtain information that fulfils specific requirements.

History of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (AU) University

Atal Bihari Vajpayee Vishwavidyalaya is a state university established through a Gazette notification on February 3, 2012, under the Chhattisgarh Act No. 07 of 2012 located at Bilaspur (C.G.) It came into existence in June 2012, following the Chhattisgarh Vishwavidyalaya (Amendment) Act of 2011.The University’s jurisdiction covers four districts of Chhattisgarh: Bilaspur, Mungeli, Korba, and Gaurela-Pendra-Marwahi. Approximately 95 government and private colleges within these districts are affiliated with the university. These institutions offer undergraduate and postgraduate programs in diverse fields such as Science, Arts, Commerce, Law, and Education, along with research opportunities.

Research Design and Data Collection

This study was conducted using a questionnaire survey developed after reviewing relevant literature. The survey included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The participants were exclusively faculty members from Atal Bihari Vajpayee University. A total of 23 faculty members were invited to participate, representing seven departments that were randomly selected for data collection.

The selected departments were: Computer Science and Application, Food Processing and Technology, Commerce and Financial studies, Microbiology & Bioinformatics, Hotel Management & Hospitality and Department of Yoga.

Thirty-five responses were collected from all 39 faculty members, which included 20 Regular faculties and 15 Guest faculties. To ensure the research's reliability, the researcher to the faculty members distributed the questionnaires personally.

Review of Literature

Information plays a crucial role in shaping people’s lives. Individuals seek information to find solutions to specific questions or problems. The need for information arises when someone identifies a gap in their knowledge and desires to address that gap what some describe as an "anomalous state of knowledge." Information provides an organized understanding of the world and serves as a cognitive tool to bridge the gaps in users' knowledge.The need for information is subjective, existing solely in the mind of the seeker, which makes defining and addressing it a complex challenge. This need is closely linked to psychological constructs like motivations, beliefs, and values, all of which influence how individuals recognize and respond to informational gaps.

Recent studies highlight the growing importance of library automation, digital archives, and user training programs in enhancing the efficiency of information retrieval processes (Patel & Joshi, 2019). Collaboration between faculty and librarians is essential to ensure that the resources provided align with the evolving academic and research requirements.

Singh and Sharma (2018) observed that digital resources have become the primary mode of information access for most faculty members due to their convenience and timeliness. Resources such as e-journals, online databases, and institutional repositories are particularly popular among faculty engaged in research. However, traditional resources like print books and journals are still valued, especially in disciplines such as literature and history, where archival materials are significant. Faculty members frequently combine digital and traditional methods to meet their comprehensive information needs.

Despite the availability of advanced technologies and digital tools, faculty members in Indian universities face several challenges in information seeking. Limited access to subscription-based journals and databases is a common issue,

particularly in institutions with budget constraints (Kumar & Verma, 2017). Additionally, lack of training in using advanced information retrieval tools and techniques hampers effective utilization of digital resources.

The nature of information needs varies based on disciplines. For instance, science faculty tend to rely heavily on up-to-date research articles and experimental data, while those in the humanities focus more on theoretical and interpretive materials by Ramesh & Gupta, (2015). This divergence underscores the need for libraries and information centres to cater to domain-specific requirements.

According to a study by Sharma and Pandey (2013), faculty members across disciplines prioritize scholarly journals, books, and conference proceedings as their primary sources of information. This preference is linked to the credibility and relevance of these resources in academia.

In a separate study, Shahzad (2007) investigated the information-seeking behavior of faculty members across three disciplines science and technology, social sciences, and humanities at Government College University, Lahore. Additionally, Anjum's 1978 research examined the information requirements of humanities faculty at the University of the Punjab.

Suriya, Sangeetha, and Nambi (2004) conducted a study focusing on how faculty members from Government Arts Colleges in Cuddalore District seek information. The research aimed to explore their library usage patterns. The findings revealed that a significant portion of respondents, 61 individuals (38.12%), visited the library multiple times a week to fulfil their information needs. It was observed that a majority (57%) conducted their searches based on specific subjects.

Shokeen and Kushik (2002) studied the information-seeking habits of social scientists in universities across Haryana. Their findings indicated that most social scientists visited the library daily. Indexing and abstracting periodicals, along with article citations, were identified as the most commonly used search tools. Current journals and books were the preferred sources of information.

Data Analysis

Table: 1. Library Use Skills of the Respondents

S.N.	Skill Level	Number of respondent	Percentage
1	Excellent	3	8.57
2	Very Good	7	20
3	Good	13	37.14
4	Fair	10	28.57
5	Poor	2	5.71

Respondents were also asked to provide self-assessment on their level of computer use skills. It was assumed that level of computing skills might have an impact on their use of IT-based library sources and facilities. Out of the 35 respondents, 3 (8.57 %) perceived his/her computing skills as ‘excellent’, 7 (20%) ‘very good’ and 13 (37.14%) as ‘good’, and 10 (28.57%) of the respondents considered their computing skills as ‘fair’.

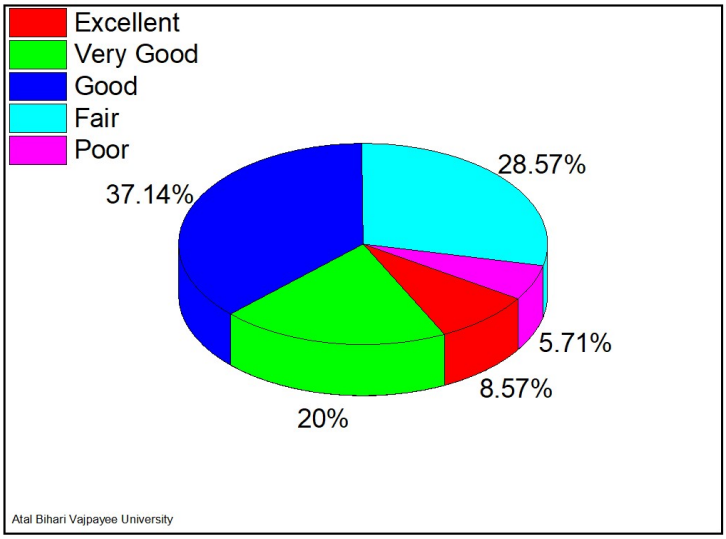
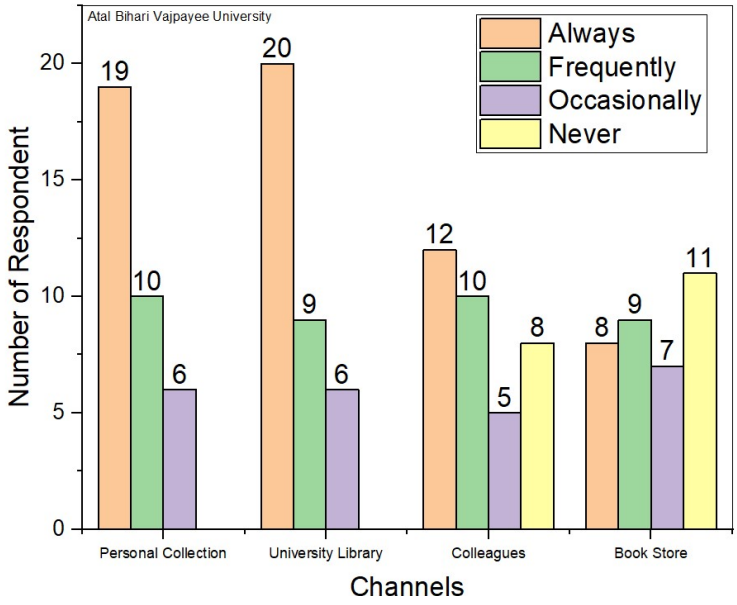


Table: 2. Information Channels Used by Respondents

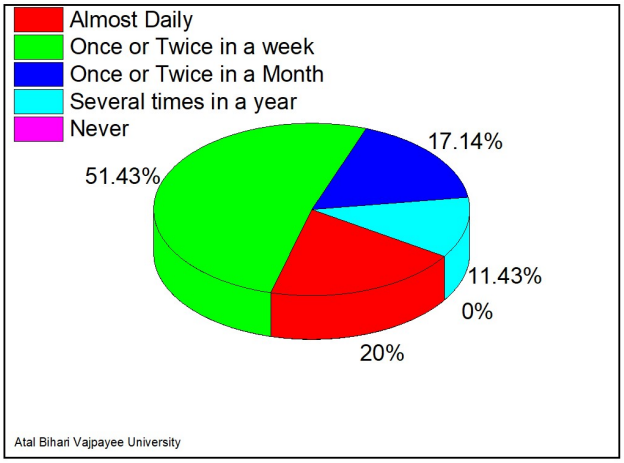
S.N.	Channels	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Never
1	Personal Collection	19	10	6	-
2	University Library	20	9	6	-
3	Colleagues	12	10	5	8
4	Book Store	8	9	7	11



Respondents were asked to indicate information channels first consulted by them for getting the needed information. It was found that 54.28% of the respondents 'always' first consulted their personal collections. Of the 35 respondents, 20 (57.14%) reported 'always' and 9(25.71%) 'frequently' visiting the University library for meeting their information needs. The percentages of respondents 'always' and 'frequently' approaching their colleagues were 34.28.67% and 28.57% respectively. Data analysis suggested that faculty members preferred to first consult their personal collection for meeting their information needs followed by library and colleagues.

Table: 3. Library Visits

S.N.	Visit Frequency	Number of Respondent	Percentage
1	Almost Daily	7	20
2	Once or Twice in a week	18	51.42
3	Once or Twice in a Month	6	17.14
4	Several times in a year	4	11.42
5	Never	-	-

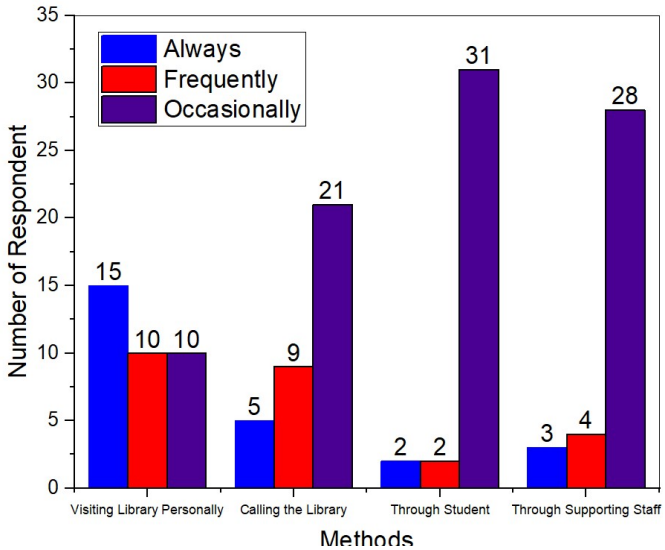


Respondents were asked how often they visited the library. Of the 35 participants who responded to this question, 18 (51.42%) visited the library at least one or twice a week. Another 6 (17.147%) respondents visited the library at least once or twice a month. It was also found that 43.23% of the male and 57.77% of the female respondents visited the library at least one or twice a week. A cross-tabulation between the number of library visits and library use skills of respondents was made to find out if any trend existed between these two variables. It was found that 71.3% of the respondents with 'very good' and 'good' category, library use skills visited their library once or twice a week. On the contrary, only low percentage of the respondents with 'fair' library use skills made the same number of library visits. It appears that user with better library use skills are likely to visit library more frequently compared to those with low library use skills.

Table: 4. Methods of Getting Information from the Library

S.N.	Methods	Always	Frequently	Occasionally
1	Visiting Library Personally	15	10	10
2	Calling the Library	5	9	21
3	Through Student	2	2	31
4	Through Supporting Staff	3	4	28

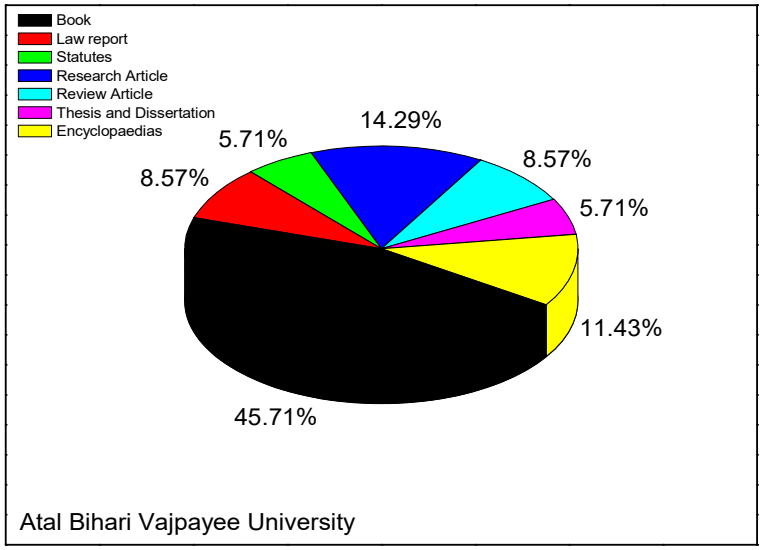
Respondents were asked to indicate methods employed by them for getting information from the University library. All respondents, with varied frequencies, personally visited their library for getting the needed information.



Five respondents reported calling the library for this purpose. Two faculty members asked their students and three sent support staff to get information from the library. It appeared that in addition to visiting the library, faculty members also used certain other methods for getting information from the library.

Importance of Information Sources to Teaching

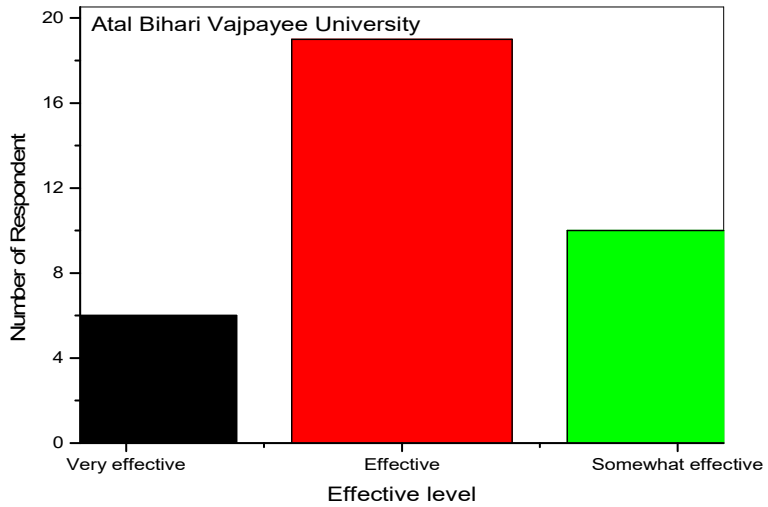
S.N.	Information Resource	Respondent	Percentage
1	Book	16	45.71
2	Law report	3	8.57
3	Statutes	2	5.71
4	Research Article	5	14.28
5	Review Article	3	8.57
6	Thesis and Dissertation	2	5.71
7	Encyclopaedias	4	11.42



The analysis indicates that while books are the predominant information source for teaching, other resources such as research articles and encyclopaedias serve as significant supplementary tools. The specialized use of law reports, review articles, statutes, and theses highlights their niche application in teaching specific subjects. This diversity in resource utilization underscores the multifaceted approach educators take to enrich their teaching material.

Library Effectiveness of the University Library

S.N.	Effectiveness level	Respondent	Percentage
1	Very effective	6	17.14
2	Effective	19	54.28
3	Somewhat effective	10	28.57
4	Ineffective	-	-
5	Very ineffective	-	-



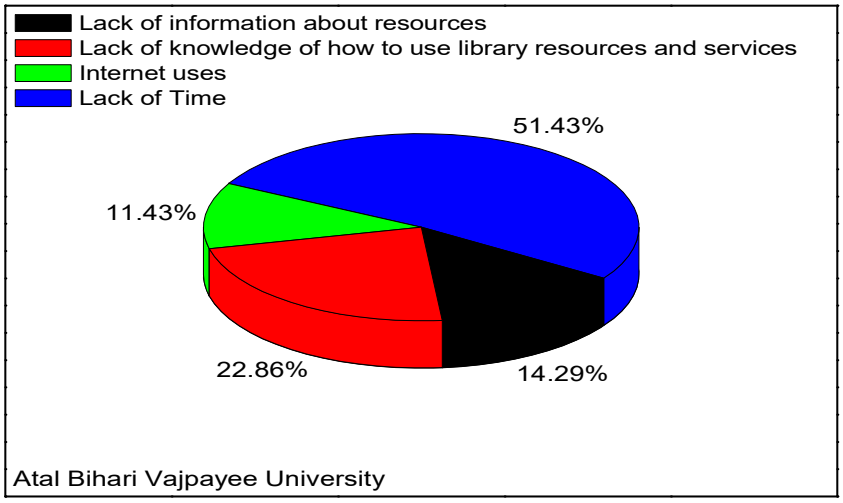
Participants were surveyed to evaluate how well the Atal Bihari Vajpayee University library met their information needs. Among the 35 respondents, 6 rated the library as ‘very effective,’ while 19 described it as effective. Another 10 participants, accounting for 28.57% of the total, considered the library‘somewhat effective.’ Notably, no respondents rated the library as ‘ineffective.’ Overall, the findings suggest that most faculty members were content with the library's resources, services, and facilities in fulfilling their information requirements.

Problems Faced while Using Library Resources and Services

S.N.	Problem	Respondent	Percentage
1	Lack of information about resources	5	14.28
2	Lack of knowledge of how to use library resources and services	8	22.85
3	Internet uses	4	11.42
4	Lack of Time	18	51.42

The data highlights the key challenges respondents face when using library resources and services. Here's a detailed analysis of each issue:

A relatively smaller proportion of respondents (5 individuals) indicated that they struggled with a lack of awareness regarding available library resources. This suggests that while the issue is present, it is not the most significant challenge. Eight respondents mentioned difficulty in utilizing library resources and services effectively. This reflects a need for more user education or training programs to help patrons maximize the library's offerings. With 4 respondents citing issues related to internet use, this is the least frequently reported problem.



However, this could imply potential gaps in the library's internet facilities or patrons' ability to leverage online resources.

CONCLUSION

The most significant barrier, reported by 18 respondents, was a lack of time to use library resources. This indicates that while the library may be well-equipped, the primary challenge is external to the library itself likely due to the users' busy schedules or competing priorities. The most pressing issue is time management, suggesting the need for flexible library services, such as extended hours or remote access to resources. Addressing the lack of knowledge about resources and their usage could enhance user satisfaction. Workshops, guides, or personalized assistance might help mitigate this problem. Improving awareness of existing resources and streamlining internet usage could further optimize the user experience.

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