Study on information needs of the undergraduates in Visual & Performing Arts.

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ABSTRACT: This research attempts to study information needs of the undergraduates in Visual & Performing Arts. The study was done based on the University of Visual & Performing Arts, Sri Lanka. According to the study, information need in preparation of examinations is the most important subjective information need of the undergraduates. They needed more practical oriented subject related information for their creations. Information in existing creative works of national and international were found as important need. The study reveals that undergraduates are facing different challenges such as language barriers, lack of relevant information sources, and lack of time to seek information while they fulfil their information needs.

Keywords: Information needs, undergraduates, user needs, visual & performing arts

1. Introduction

Information is a crucial need in the current world which assist in decision making. The people in the information age are having real needs of different types of information. It can be mentioned as one of the major need of human being. The term ‘Information’ has been defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary as knowledge that people get about someone or something [1]. According to the Faibisoff and Ely information is a symbol or a set of symbols which has the potentials for meaning [2]. Concept of information proposed over the last fifty years reviewed by McCreadie and Rice and they considered concepts of information as a representation of knowledge, as data in the environment, as part of the communication process, as a resource or commodity [3]. Information literacy skill directly effect to success of the educational, professional as well as personal life too. Usage, origin and creation of the information has increased tremendously and rapidly changed in the current information society with the impact of different factors such as changes of information technology and complexity of user needs. Different categories of people are having dissimilar information needs. Social, economic, cultural factors as well as educational background, profession, gender, age group also affected to variations of the information needs of human beings. Complication of the information sources, diversity of the user information needs, information overload are huge challenges for the information providers. With this situation better identification of information needs of the different user categories are essential for the information providers, librarians and staff members in information centers to provide better service. This identification will be support to them to provide relevant information for the relevant user. Identification of information needs of the different user groups is essential factor for planning and implementation of information systems and services [4].

Number of research in information needs of different user categories such as environmental, pure, applied scientists, undergraduates in humanities, SMS managers, etc. can be found among the existing research literature. In Sri Lankan context also few research can be found in information
needs of the scientists, postgraduate students, management faculties, etc. This study examine the information needs of the undergraduates in visual & performing arts. The subject areas such as dance, drama, music, painting, sculpture, percussion music, etc. coming under the visual & performing arts. The study was done based on the University of Visual & Performing Arts, Sri Lanka. This university consist with three faculties of Dance and Drama, Music, Visual Arts.

2. Objectives of the Study
This study was done based on the main objectives; identify the subjective information needs of the undergraduates in visual & performing Arts, to find out their information needs in practical based creative works, determine the other information needs of the undergraduates and investigate the challenges faced by them while they access to the information.

3. Methodology
Survey methodology was used for this study and data collected by using questionnaire. 180 sample were selected out of the population of 1505. Sample consist with second, third and fourth year undergraduates in three faculties named faculty of Dance & Drama, Music and Visual Arts of the University of Visual & Performing Arts. 180 Questionnaires were distributed among the sample of the study and response rate was 100 percent. Collected data were analyzed by using SPSS.

4. Literature Review
Investigation of information needs of the different user categories has long history and many studies can be found in different aspects. Information need is desire of seek information in order to fulfill the requirement for information as individually or team [5] According to the Allen, correct identification of user information need is very important because the origin of any information seeking is based on the concept of information need in various categories such as needs for new information, needs to clarify the information obtained and needs to validate the information know [6]. Wilson intended the model of information seeking and he revealed that information-seeking behavior is results from the recognition of some need, perceived by the user [7].

Dissatisfaction of required information for day to day life is effect to arise an information need of the users. According to the Cronin there are three types of information needs: information needs which are expressed by users, information needs which are aware by users but they do not like to convey and information needs which are not aware by users [8].

Identification of undergraduates information needs is essential for librarians and other policy makers in the universities. It will be help to achieve the expected goals in education. Undergraduates are needed information for course works and assignments, to preparation for exams, to expand the lecture notes, classroom discussion, to ready for the workshops [9]' According to the study on information needs of the undergraduates in humanities, they having subjective and research information needs [10].
5. Findings and discussion

A total number of 180 questionnaires were distributed among the second, third and fourth year undergraduates of three faculties in University of Visual & Performing Arts. Response rate is 100 percent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Year 2nd Year</th>
<th>Year 3rd Year</th>
<th>Year 4th Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Dance &amp; Drama</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Music</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty of Visual Arts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>90</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>180</td>
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</table>

According to the table 1 out of 180 sample 72 respondents are representing the faculty of dance & drama. Second year undergraduates were the majority among the three batches.

Visual & performing arts subjects are more responsive to practical subjects rather than theoretical part. Respondents mentioned that 61%– 80% practical based subjects are included to their curriculums. It reveals that they have to follow more practical oriented subjects for their degree.

Identifying the Subjective information needs of the undergraduates was one of the objective of this study. The result show that information need in preparation of examinations was ranked as the most important subjective information need of undergraduates in visual & performing arts.

![Figure 1: Subjective information need in preparation for examinations](image)

It is seen from the figure 1 most of the undergraduates are believe that the information in preparation for examinations is most important (81%) and 18% mentioned it as important need. They should have better preparation for the examinations to achieve the honors passes. In additional they needed subjective information regarding lectures, international creations, new trends in the subject, concerts & exhibitions, rituals, etc. Information need regarding the stage performance is shows the differences according to the respective faculties. It has proved by the chi square test also. The data revealed that the majority of the respondents in faculty of music were considered it as most important subjective need.
As mentioned earlier, undergraduates in visual & performing arts are seeking information for their practical based creative works. They are engaging in new creative works such as stage drama, new dance items, create melody for new songs, painting, design works etc. by using their knowledge, experience, talents and skills. It is compulsory to do the creations as a requirement of their degree. The study reveals that the majority of the respondents believed that they need information regarding the existing latest, quality and relevant creative works in national and international level as information needs in the practical based creative works. 72 percent respondents believe that it is a most important need and 22 percent mentioned it as important need. Existing creations are guiding them to do a better creative works. Apart from that they needed information regarding new trends of the practical subject areas, the ways to improve their skills, traditional knowledge in their subject areas and new technology.

Table 2: Other information needs of the undergraduates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information need</th>
<th>Total of multiple responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entertainment information</td>
<td>372</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current information</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information regarding job opportunities</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workshop related information</td>
<td>335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information regarding vocational training</td>
<td>293</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table 2 Information regarding job opportunities were marked by the majority of the respondents as most important other information need of their. Reverse order were followed in the questionnaire to rank the information needs. Therefore lowest total of the multiple responses were considered as highest rank. Undergraduates in visual & performing arts are believing that the working experience is beneficial for them according to the nature of their subject areas. Work experience is supporting to them to increase their talents and skills. It may be the reason for indicate the information needs in job opportunities as most important need. Information regarding vocational training, current information, workshops related information and entertainment information can be identified as other needs of the respondents.

Respondents were asked to indicate the challenges faced by them while they access to information. According to the responses lack of related information sources is the biggest challenge faced by them while they trying to fulfil their information needs. According to this study language barrier, lack of time with busy lecture schedules, lack of updated and latest information sources, lack of knowledge in using the libraries, lack of training in electronic resources also identified as major challenges faced by undergraduates.

Table 3: Preferred languages to access information according to faculty
The data in table 3 reveals that majority of the undergraduates preferred to seek information by using Sinhala language (170). It was observed that most of information sources in visual arts as well as other subjects are in other languages such as English, Hindi, and Sanskrit. Therefore undergraduates have to face the language barrier while they seek information.

6. Conclusion

The responses of respondents indicated that information need in preparation of examinations was the most important subjective information need of the undergraduates in visual & performing arts. Information regarding lectures, international creations, new trends in the subject, concerts & exhibitions, rituals were identified as other subjective information needs. Most of the subject areas followed by them are practical based and it is compulsory to do new creative practical for their degree. In this case they seek information for their practical based creative works. Information regarding the existing creative works in national and international level was the highest ranked information need in above category. Existing creative works are directing them to do better creations. Most important other information need is the information in job opportunities. As a practical oriented subject working experience is very important for these undergraduates to refresh and improve their skills. Respondents were faced different challenges such as lack of related information sources, language barrier, lack of time for information seeking, lack of updated and latest information sources, lack of knowledge in using the libraries, lack of training in electronic resources, insufficient of multimedia facilities in the library while they access to the information. It is required to acquire more relevant, latest information sources to the library to fulfil the information needs of the users. And also recommended to develop the digital collection as well as provide multimedia facilities by the library. Non printed materials such as video, audio clips will be more useful them because they needed more practical oriented information. There should be some arrangement to translate the books in to Sinhala language which are in other languages. It is suggested to conduct library orientation programmes, organize workshops conducting by subject experts which will be supports to the undergraduates in visual & performing arts to fulfil their information needs.

References


