



**INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOR OF UNDER-GRADUATE STUDENTS IN  
RATNAGIRI DISTRICT COLLEGES, AFFILIATED TO UNIVERSITY OF MUMBAI,  
MAHARASHTRA**

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**Abstract**

*The present research paper depicts realistic picture of actual behavior of the under college students during their process of seeking information in the information centre, i.e. Library. The specific objectives are-To know the purpose of information seeking, To study the information seeking behavior of undergraduate students, To measure the library services rendered by the colleges to its students,, To suggest strategies of improving undergraduate students information seeking behavior. A survey method and Random sampling technique was used in this study. Accordingly well structured, opened, as well as closed ended questions were asked in the questionnaire. It is found from the study that students in the colleges are the assets of the nation. They are interested in finding information and knowledge. Proper guidelines and provision of enough resources are the major responsibilities of the libraries.*

**Keywords:** *Information seeking behaviour, under graduate students, information resources, college library.*



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**Introduction**

**Preface:** User studies are becoming the most important area of information research. Knowledge resource centers, like libraries needs to be aware of their users' information requirements as well

as their information seeking behavior, and also the information retrieving methods in order to be able to provide better service to them.

It is quite realistic that information plays a vital role in each individual's life. There may not be any single field of research or activity, where information is not needed. We get the information from variety of sources throughout the day. Radio, newspapers, television, internet, mobiles, books, etc. are the major media which provides different types of information. Information is a power. Those were the days, when a country with rich resources was known as powerful country. Now the country which is having most reliable, and abreast powerful information resources (information as product), are called as super power country. Now this is the information explosion age, where information is generated, and distributed with high speed.

The present research paper depict realistic picture of actual behavior of the under college students in Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra during their process of seeking information in the information centre, i.e. library.

### **Objectives:**

The main objective of the present study is to identify and know the information needs and information seeking behavior of under-graduate college students. The specific objectives related to the above mentioned subject are-

1. To know the purpose of information seeking,
2. To study the information seeking behavior of undergraduate students,
3. To measure the library services rendered by the colleges to its students,
4. To identify the various resources adopted for information seeking;
5. To establish the problems that encountered by the college students during information seeking,
6. To give suggestions to improve library services and facilities,
7. To suggest strategies of improving undergraduate students information seeking behavior.

### **Geographical Area of Research:**

#### **Ratnagiri District:**

Ratnagiri is a coastal district of Maharashtra state, situated in the western coast of India. It has north-south length of about 180 km and average east-west extension of about 64 km. Sahyadri hills surround it in the east beyond which there are Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur districts, Raigad district in the north, the Arabian Sea in the west and Sindhudurg district in the

south. Ratnagiri district has an area of 8208 sq.km. and the population is 16,96,482 (Census, 2001).

### **Scope and Limitations of the Research Study:**

In Ratnagiri district, nearby 23 senior and 7 polytechnic colleges, one University Sub-Centre, affiliated to Mumbai University are extending the educational facilities to the patronage. The scope of the present study is to ascertain the information seeking behavior of under-graduate students of Ratnagiri District of Maharashtra. Therefore, 15 senior colleges from Ratnagiri district, which are affiliated to University of Mumbai have been chosen for the study. The information needs of Arts, Commerce and Science students have been studied in this research work.

### **Research Methodology**

A survey method and Random sampling technique was used in this study. Accordingly well structured, opened, as well as closed ended questions were asked in the questionnaire. 700 questionnaires were distributed among 15 Arts, Commerce and Science senior college students, out of which 527 filled questionnaires were received. The response rate is 75.28. Some other questionnaires were rejected due to incomplete information.

The collected questionnaires are analyzed and put in the form of tables and graphs with help of statistical analysis software viz. SPSS (version 17.0). By analyzing various questions in tabulation forms, following collective information is generated.

#### Analysis and Interpretation of Data

##### User characteristics:

**Gender:** Nearby 700 questionnaires were distributed to the girls and boys students randomly. A total of 527 filled questions are received. The responded students are as follows-

**Table 1.1: Gender**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>No. of Respondent</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Male	246	46.7
2	Female	281	53.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above data shows that, a total of 246 male students and 281 female students have responded the questionnaires, and the response rate of the female students is more (53.3%) than the male students (46.7%)

**Class-wise Respondents:**

The study is limited to under-graduate students, so the researcher has considered the respondent students of Arts, Science and Commerce students of under-graduate, i.e. degree students. A few questionnaires were filled by other faculty students. The researcher has analyzed these all questionnaires as follows-

The below given table and graph shows the number of Respondents and their respective class. The data shows that, mainly three academic streams are considered for this study purpose. It includes, Arts, Commerce and Science faculties. The analysis shows that, Commerce faculty (41.90%) students are more responded than Arts (30.10%) and Science faculty (26.10%) students are least responded to this study. The highest respondents are from FYBCOM faculty (18%), whereas, the lowest respondents are from other faculty (1.7%), such as IT, Computer science etc.

**Table 1.2: Class**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Class</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	FYBA	45	8.5
2	SYBA	39	7.4
3	TYBA	75	14.2
4	FYBCOM	95	18.0
5	SYBCOM	50	9.5
6	TYBCOM	76	14.4
7	FYBSC	54	10.2
8	SYBSC	39	7.4
9	TYBSC	45	8.5
10	Others	09	1.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Residential status:**

Konkan is a land of rural area. Many of students are from the rural and hilly area. It affects the information seeking behavior of the respondent in various ways. So it is very necessary to know about their residential factor of the respondents. Following figures shows some factual data about their residence.

**Table 1.3: Residential status**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1	Rural	418	79.3
2	Urban	107	20.3
3	Tribal	02	.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The above analysis shows that most of the students comes to the Library are from rural area (79.3%) and very moderate rate is from urban area, i.e. 20.3 %. The Tribal students are very less, which are only .4 %. The residential factor is most important for knowing their information seeking behavior.

**Library usage:**

**Purpose of Library visit:** To find out the information seeking behavior through the usage of library, the Researcher asked the students six questions. One of the questions was about the purpose of visit to the library. They were given eight options, and asked to rank the options. The Respondents have given the following answers, which are given in table and graph format.

**Table 2.1: Purpose of visit**

Sr. No.	Purpose of visit	No. of Respondents	Percentage*
1	For study purpose	445	84.4
2	For textbooks	342	64.9
3	For home lending	292	55.4
4	To read newspapers	290	55
5	To read periodicals	240	45.5
6	To see new arrivals	229	43.5
7	For reference books	224	42.5
8	To refer shelves	111	21.1

Note: Multiple choices were permitted.\*n=527

Table 2.1 shows that most of the students (84.4%) are visiting the library to seat in the library for their study. It shows that they prefer the library for their study than home. Many students are using the library services for their academic textbooks (64.9%). After that, half of the students are using the library to read newspapers and periodicals (55%), and very few students are visiting the library to refer the book shelves (21.1%).

This means, students are more interesting in getting their textbook rather than reference books. Students are become more dependent on textbooks.

**Frequency of visit:** The frequency of students visit to the library has been classified in three parts, i.e. daily, 2-3 times a week, once a week and once a month. The study reveals that most of the students are visiting the library regularly, i.e. daily (46.3%), and many of the students visiting the library 2-3 times in a week (39.3%). It means, students are visiting the library regularly for their study purpose. This data is structured in tabular form as follows-

**Table 2.2: Frequency of visit**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1	Once a week	51	9.7
2	Once a month	08	1.5
3	No Response	17	3.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Frequently used Library Services:

Table No. 2.3 explains the regularly used library services by the college students. The study revealed that, students are coming to library regularly to read a newspaper (56.9%). Again, they are also using the Reading room facility (43.3%) frequently for their regular studies. 45.4% students have chosen the option ‘sometime’ for the use of Old question papers and Reference Services consecutively. The study also shows that computerized catalogue (OPAC) (63.2%) and Conference Proceedings (61.7%) are never used library services. It is because of non-availability of these services in these libraries.

**Table 2.3: Frequently used services**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Always</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Never</b>	
		<b>Resp.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Resp.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Resp.</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Newspaper Reading	300	56.9	116	22	90	17.1
2	Reading Room	228	43.3	160	30.4	119	22.6
3	Circulation	200	38	174	33	134	25.4
4	Textbooks and Periodicals	147	27.9	204	38.7	156	29.6
5	Serials and Journals	91	17.3	161	30.6	252	47.8
6	Old Question Papers	41	7.8	239	45.4	227	43.1
7	Reference Service	38	7.2	239	45.4	230	43.6
8	OPAC	37	7	137	26	333	63.2
9	Conference Proceedings	25	4.7	157	29.8	325	61.7

Note: Multiple choices were permitted. . \*n=527

**Use of E-Services:**

Table No. 2.4 shows the use of e-resources provided by the library. The study says that, the use of e-resources is very rarely used. Very few student respondents always uses Library website (8.2%) for their information, where NLIST consortia (0.8) is very less used e-service provided by the library. 91.1 % students never use this facility. 66.4 % students are also not using the Library OPAC, as it is the only tool of the library to see its collection. The reason behind this unused

library services may be non-availability and unawareness about these services.

**Table 2.4: Use of E-Services**

Sr. No.	Services	Always		Sometimes		Never	
		Respondents	Percent	Respondents	Percent	Respondents	Percent
1	Library website	43	8.2	103	19.5	362	68.7
2	E-Journals	42	8	80	15.2	386	73.2
3	OPAC	31	5.9	127	24.1	350	66.4
4	Internet Lab.	25	4.7	128	24.3	355	67.4
5	CD's	08	1.5	84	15.9	416	78.9
6	NLIST consortia	04	0.8	24	4.6	480	91.1

Note: Multiple choices were permitted. \*n=527

**Reasons for non-use of Library facilities:**

In the previous question, it is found that students are very rarely using the library resources. To the reason behind this, a question was asked about non-use of library resources. Seven options were given, and students were free to choice more than one reason. The analysis is as follows-

**Table 2.5: Reasons for Non-use**

Sr. No.	Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage*
1	Limited time to visit library	428	81.2
2	No need of library services	64	12.1
3	Scarcity of resources	46	8.7
4	Unsuitable Library timings	24	4.6
5	Unknown about library use	15	2.8
6	Non-availability of Library card	08	1.5
7	Behavior of library staff	01	0.2

Note: Multiple choices were permitted. \*n=527

Table No. 2.5 clears the fact about the non-use of the library services of the library. It is found that 428 students (81.2 %) do not get enough time to visit the library and use its resources due to their hectic academic schedule. Only 64 students (12.1%) are having no needs of library resources due to their well economic condition. 46 students (8.7%) says that there is not enough reading material in the library, and only 1 student (0.2%) complaint about the non-cooperativeness of the library staff.

This analysis shows that, only the academic time-table is the main reason behind the non-use of library resources by the students. There must be a library hour reserved for the students in their time-table every day.

### 3. Information Seeking Behavior

#### 3.1. Purpose of Information Seeking:

One of the basic questions was about their purpose of seeking information in the library. Five optional purposes were put in front of them, and they were free to tick mark more than one options. The table no. 3.1 shows the figures that, 357 students (67.7%) are said that their prime purpose behind their information seeking process is to prepare for their academic study. 290 (55%) students stated that they seek information to update their knowledge. 182(34.5%) students are marked the option for their career development. **Table 3.1** able number of students choices the option “to write an article” (23%) is found very significant reason behind the information seeking behavior. It shows that students are becoming more practical oriented than syllabus.

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent*</b>
1	To prepare for study	357	67.7
2	To update knowledge	290	55
3	For career development	182	34.5
4	To write an article	121	23
5	To solve practical problem	110	20.9

Note: Multiple choices were permitted. . \*n=527

#### **Reading material preference:**

The analysis in Table No. 3.2 depicts that 461 (87.5%) students marked textbooks as their prime preference. It helps them to improve their performance in their curricular examinations. Second preference of the student is found to be a Novel (62.4%), as it is a most famous literature form in their academic life.

The reading preference for Scientific material is 4 (40.79 %), which is very moderate percentage seen in the study. Biographies preferred at number 6 (37.6%), and Sports is preferred at last number, i.e. 11(28.3%), which is may be very severe problem. It shows that the young generation is not enough interesting in the sport related materials.



**Table 3.2**

Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage*	Preference
Textbooks	461	87.5	1
Novels	329	62.4	2
Entertainment	223	42.3	3
Scientific	215	40.79	4
Dramas	208	39.5	5
Biographies	198	37.6	6
Poems	179	34	7
Historical	178	33.8	8
Influential	168	31.9	9
Religious	154	29.2	10

**Information tools used:**

The information about newly published books are found in various sources, like bibliographies, book indices, publishers’ catalogue, reference books etc. Students were asked about the reference they used. Table 3.6 says that, most of the respondents used only textbooks (71.7%), Reference books (31.7%), and the latest periodicals 24.5%). Except these three information resources, bibliographies, publishers’ catalogues and library catalogues are the least used information tools by the respondents.

**Table 3.6**

S. No.	Information Tools	Respondents	Percent*
1	Textbooks	378	71.7
2	Reference Books	167	31.7
3	Latest periodicals	129	24.5
4	Bibliography	81	15.4
5	Lib catalogue	77	14.6
6	Publishers Catalogue	31	5.9

**Search Techniques used:**

In library, students search the reading documents using various criterions, such as author, title, subject, and any of the keywords. The question regarding the search technique was asked to the student to know the very effective and current search criterion in them.

As per the analysis shown in the Table No. 3.10, 225(48.4%) students search the data by using ‘Subject’ as a field. 120(22.8%) students search the document with the title, and 87(16.5%) student use ‘Author’ search technique. ‘Keyword’ search is used by 82(15.6%) students, and only 3(0.6%) students search the database using Boolean search technique. It means, subject is the basic criterion, which is mostly used as a search technique by the students. And Boolean search

is a less used search technique, because it is very hardly known to the students, though it is very powerful technique to search the database.

**Table 3.10**

<b>Sr. No.</b>	<b>Search Technique</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percent*</b>
1	Subject	225	48.4
2	Title	120	22.8
3	Author	87	16.5
4	Keywords	82	15.6
5	Boolean Search	03	0.6

**Note:** Multiple choices were permitted. \*n=527

**Barriers in Information Seeking Behavior:**

The problems faced by the students in the college libraries can be taken seriously to provide them better services, and to upgrade the quality of the library. In addition, the administrative and rigid functioning of the library sometimes makes the negative attitude in the minds of students. To overcome these problems, the researcher thought essential to know the basic hurdles in the students and the library.

Respondents were asked some questions regarding their source of information, their behavior in asking information, timely availability of information, suggestion and procurement of documents, adequacy of reading materials, and actual problems they faced during information search.

**Problems faced during information search:**

In the process of information seeking students may face many of the problems. There can be non-availability books on proper place. Sometimes, a power failure can be a problem. So, to know about the problems occurred during the information search, respondents are asked a question about the problems they faced, and options were given.

The graphical and tabular form no. 4.7 gives an idea, that 140(26.5%) students faced a technical problem like, power failure, system get out of work, etc. 82(15.5%) students encounters the problems of misplacements of reading documents in the library. They are not getting the information on time due to misplacements. It means, documents are not properly shelved or classified. A time-to time shelving of document is very necessary.

46(8.7%) students are faced the problem of unknown search strategy. They are unaware about the search strategy to be applied while searching information. 123(23.3%) students do not faced any kind of problems during searching for a document or information.

### **Suggestion/Demands**

At the end of the questionnaire, few suggestions were asked by the students to upgrade the quality of library service. The question was open ended. Respondents were allowed to write in their own words the services and suggestions about their library.

According to the table 4.8, most of the students (119), i.e. 22.6% students have complained that here are no enough copies of books in the library, or scarcity of new books in the library. 82(15.6%) students feel that there is not enough space for reading or insufficient reading room facility in the library. 98(18.5%) students demanded the facility of computer and internets in the library with good configurations. 26(4.9%) students have suggested that the books should be kept in its proper place with systematic classification. 25(4.7%) students have demanded that new periodicals and daily newspapers should be available in the library for their use.

### **Findings:**

1. The present study shows that, the number of students residing in rural area is bigger than the urban area. It means, many students come from rural area, with different types of physical and economic problems.
2. Most o the students come to the library for their study purpose and to avail the study book facilities. The reference books and book shelves are rarely referred by the students.
3. The frequency study reveals that, many students visit the library twice-thrice a week. It shows that the need for their study brings the student to the library regularly.
4. Frequently used library services shows that, newspaper reading, reading room facility, circulation facility are the most frequently used services.
5. Use of e-resources shows that, library OPAC and internet facility are mostly used e-services by the library. Due to unawareness about the various resources, students are unable to used e-books, e-journals and other e-resources.
6. The main reason behind less use of library resources is the time schedule of the study and classes. The students are having such hectic time table schedule that they cannot give more time on their library visit.

7. Due to growing price hikes in reading materials, and average income sources, most of the students are depends upon the book bank schemes of the library.
8. Textbooks and novels are the most used library material by the students. Books on religious subjects and sports are less demanded in the library.
9. Above the average, the students feels that the total resources available in the library is quite enough and reliable.
10. Students like to participate in the programs like, readers club, book talk shows organized by the library.
11. Students like to read the reading material in the Marathi language or their mother tongue.
12. Subject is the most searchable tool in the students, while seeking for information. Title , author and keywords are less preferred tools than subject.
13. Students take the guidelines of their respective teachers and library staff in searching the information.
14. While searching for information, students do not feel hesitation. They ask information in the library with free minded.
15. Students are eager to suggest the document in the library and library also purchase the same. It shows that, students get the document they needed in the library.
16. Misplacement of library books, technical problems, inadequacy of latest materials are the few threats or challenges before the library. It should be regularize to attain the most qualitative services.

**Conclusion:**

After going through various studies on information theories, information use patterns, information needs, information browsing, and information seeking behavior of college students, important inferences can be drawn. It is found from the study that students in the colleges are the assets of the nation. They are interested in finding information and knowledge. Proper guidelines and provision of enough resources are the major responsibilities of the libraries.

The present review study, which covers significant studies on information seeking behavior of under graduate college students conducted in the Ratnagiri district of Maharashtra, certainly helped to narrow and to more clearly delineate the research plan, in conducting research on information seeking behavior of students studying in colleges.

Similarly, these reviews also helped in determining the degree of information needs and

information seeking behavior of students that have already been undertaken all over India. The present study certainly will go a long way to serve as a base for future research studies in the education sector on information seeking behavior and also help in designing and developing the need based educational information systems for meeting the information requirement of the college students.

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