

User Information Seeking Behaviour of Select Universities in Andhra Pradesh: A Study

Dr. Dasari Narayana

Assistant Librarian

Kerala University of Digital Sciences, Innovation and Technology (Digital University Kerala)

M.Harihararao

Library Assistant

MVGR College of Engineering(A), Vizianagaram, AP

Abstract

Information seeking behaviour is a fundamental aspect of academic library usage that reflects how users identify, access, and utilise information resources to fulfil their educational and research needs. This study investigates the user information seeking behaviour of library users across five select universities in Andhra Pradesh, India, namely Sri Venkateswara University (Tirupati), Sri Krishnadevaraya University (Anantapur), Acharya Nagarjuna University (Guntur), Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTU Kakinada), and Andhra University (Visakhapatnam). A descriptive survey method was adopted, and a structured questionnaire was administered to 220 respondents, of whom 150 (68.18%) responded, comprising 90 male and 60 female users drawn from the categories of faculty members, research scholars, postgraduate students, and undergraduate students. The study examines the purpose of library visits, preferred sources of information, frequency of visits, preferred formats, and perceived barriers in information seeking. Findings reveal that books and internet resources are the most preferred sources, that the majority of users visit the library two to three times per week, and that lack of time and slow internet connectivity are the most significant barriers. The study recommends the strengthening of digital infrastructure, extended library hours, user awareness programmes, and enriched e-resource collections to enhance information access in university libraries of Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Information seeking behaviour; University libraries; Andhra Pradesh; Academic users; Information resources

I. INTRODUCTION

Libraries in the modern era serve as the intellectual nerve centres of universities. The ever-increasing volume of information in print and electronic forms has fundamentally altered the ways in which academic users seek, access, and use information. Understanding the information seeking behaviour of library users is therefore central to improving library services, collection development, and information literacy programmes. In the context of Andhra Pradesh, where higher education has witnessed significant expansion following the bifurcation of the state in 2014, university libraries face unique challenges in meeting diverse user needs. This study attempts to map the information seeking behaviour of users in five prominent universities of Andhra Pradesh to provide empirical evidence for library policy and practice.

1.1 Users

In the context of library and information science, the term 'user' refers to any individual who seeks, accesses, or uses information from a library or information system to satisfy a particular information need. Users of university libraries may be broadly categorised as faculty members, research scholars, postgraduate students, and undergraduate students. Each category possesses distinct information needs, preferences, and seeking strategies depending upon their level of academic engagement and research orientation. Wilson (1981) described the user as the starting point of any information system design, emphasising that user needs should drive the structure and services of libraries. The present study covers users from all four categories across five state universities in Andhra Pradesh.

1.2 Information Seeking

Information seeking is defined as the purposive process by which individuals actively search for information in order to resolve an identified information need. It is a dynamic and iterative process that involves the recognition of a need, the formulation of a search query, selection of appropriate sources, retrieval of relevant information, and evaluation of the information obtained. According to Wilson (1999), information seeking is a sub-set of the broader concept of information behaviour, which encompasses all human behaviour in relation to information sources and channels. Ellis (1989) identified eight characteristic features of the information seeking process, namely starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending. In academic settings, information seeking behaviour is shaped by curricular demands, research requirements, time availability, and the user's awareness of available resources.

1.3 User Information Seeking Behaviour

User information seeking behaviour (UISB) refers to the patterns, strategies, preferences, and practices that individuals adopt when searching for information to satisfy a need. UISB is influenced by a variety of factors including the nature of the information need, the user's familiarity with available sources, technological competence, cognitive style, and socio-demographic characteristics. Kuhlthau (1991) proposed the Information Search Process (ISP) model, which describes user behaviour across six stages: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection, and presentation. The model highlights that information seeking involves both cognitive and affective dimensions, with users experiencing uncertainty, optimism, and clarity at different stages of the process. In university libraries, UISB encompasses the use of catalogues, databases, e-journals, internet resources, and interactions with library staff. Understanding UISB enables library professionals to tailor services that are user-centred, relevant, and efficient.

1.4 Need and Scope of the Study

Andhra Pradesh is home to several prominent state universities that collectively serve tens of thousands of students, researchers, and faculty members. Despite the importance of library resources in supporting academic excellence, there exists a notable gap in the empirical literature concerning the information seeking behaviour of users in these institutions. Most existing studies on information seeking behaviour in the Indian context are either institution-specific or focused on metropolitan or northern Indian universities, leaving southern India, and Andhra Pradesh in particular, relatively understudied. The present study fills this gap by undertaking a comprehensive survey across five state universities. The scope of the study is limited to registered library users of the five selected universities and covers aspects including purpose of library visits, sources used, frequency of visits, preferred formats, and barriers encountered during information seeking. The study is expected to provide useful insights for library administrators, policy makers, and library professionals in Andhra Pradesh.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following three objectives:

1. To examine the purpose of library visits and identify the preferred sources of information used by users of select university libraries in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To analyse the frequency of library use, preferred information formats (print/electronic), and information seeking strategies adopted by the respondents.
3. To identify the major barriers faced by university library users in seeking information and to suggest measures for improving library services.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of related literature reveals a growing body of research on information seeking behaviour across different types of libraries and user groups. The following eight studies provide significant theoretical and empirical context for the present investigation.

1. Wilson (1999)

Wilson (1999) presented a comprehensive review of models of information behaviour, synthesising and revising earlier theoretical frameworks. He distinguished between the concepts of information behaviour, information seeking behaviour, and information search behaviour, positioning them in a hierarchical relationship. Wilson's revised model incorporated the concept of activating mechanisms that prompt information seeking, including cognitive, affective, and role-related factors. He also highlighted the influence of intervening variables such as psychological, demographic, role-related, interpersonal, and environmental barriers. This seminal work remains foundational in the field and provides the theoretical framework widely applied in subsequent empirical studies including the present one.

2. Kuhlthau (1991)

Kuhlthau (1991) developed the Information Search Process (ISP) model based on longitudinal research involving high school students and later extended to academic and professional contexts. The ISP model described information seeking as a sequential process comprising six stages: initiation, selection, exploration, formulation, collection, and presentation. Each stage was associated with specific feelings, thoughts, and actions. The model emphasised that users experience uncertainty and anxiety particularly at the early stages of searching, and that clarity increases as the search progresses. Kuhlthau's model has been widely applied in the design of library reference services and is particularly relevant to understanding how academic users in university libraries navigate complex information environments.

3. Ellis (1989)

Ellis (1989) proposed a behavioural model of information retrieval based on observations of social scientists. He identified eight features of information seeking behaviour: starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending. Unlike stage-based models, Ellis's framework described a pattern of activities that may occur in any order and that may be repeated cyclically throughout the search process. His model acknowledged the non-linear and iterative nature of information seeking and provided a nuanced understanding of how researchers use different sources at different points of a project. This model has been applied extensively in studies involving academic researchers, including postgraduate and doctoral students, making it directly relevant to the university library context.

4. Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996)

Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain (1996) proposed a model of the information seeking behaviour of professionals derived from research on engineers, health professionals, and lawyers. The model identified work roles and associated tasks as the primary triggers of information needs. It described the sources and channels through which professionals seek information and outlined the outcomes of information seeking in professional decision-making. The model highlighted the importance of awareness, prior knowledge, and serendipitous encounters with information. Although focused on professionals, this model has been applied to academic contexts where faculty members and researchers similarly exhibit role-driven information behaviour. The present study draws on this framework to contextualise the information seeking patterns of faculty respondents.

5. Bawden (2001)

Bawden (2001) conducted an extensive review of the concepts of information literacy and digital literacy, tracing their origins and examining their operational definitions in library and educational contexts. The study argued that information literacy encompasses the ability to recognise information needs, locate, evaluate, and effectively use information. Bawden noted that digital literacy extends information literacy by incorporating competencies specific to electronic environments, such as the ability to navigate databases, evaluate online sources, and use digital communication tools. The review has significant implications for academic libraries,

suggesting that user education programmes must evolve to address both print and digital competencies. The findings are relevant to the present study's investigation of preferred information formats and electronic resource usage among university users.

6. Majid and Tan (2002)

Majid and Tan (2002) investigated the information resource usage patterns of computer engineering students at Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. Using a survey-based approach, the study examined the types of sources consulted, frequency of library use, preferred databases, and barriers experienced. The findings indicated that students predominantly relied on textbooks and internet resources, while electronic databases were underused due to limited awareness and navigational skills. The study also found that a significant proportion of students experienced difficulty in identifying relevant information from the volume retrieved. These findings are consistent with observations in developing Asian university library contexts and provide a comparative reference point for interpreting results from the present Andhra Pradesh study.

7. Kannappanavar and Swamy (2006)

Kannappanavar and Swamy (2006) examined the information seeking behaviour of medical library users in Karnataka, India. The study used a structured questionnaire distributed to doctors, nurses, and para-medical staff across selected medical colleges and hospitals. The researchers found that print journals and textbooks remained the dominant sources, though internet usage was growing rapidly among younger professionals. The study identified lack of time, inadequate library hours, and insufficient access to electronic resources as the major barriers to information seeking. The findings underscored the need for library orientation programmes and resource upgradation. The relevance of this study to the current work lies in its South Indian institutional context and its identification of barriers that parallel those observed in Andhra Pradesh university libraries.

8. Thanuskodi (2011)

Thanuskodi (2011) investigated the information seeking behaviour of teachers and students of law college libraries affiliated to ManonmaniamSundaranar University, Tamil Nadu. The descriptive survey covered 200 respondents and analysed information needs, sources of information, frequency of use, and challenges encountered. The study found that the majority of users preferred print books and journals and that internet usage for academic purposes was on the rise. The findings also revealed that lack of awareness of available databases and absence of user training programmes were significant barriers. The study recommended the implementation of user education programmes and the enhancement of digital resource procurement. Being geographically proximate and methodologically similar to the present study, Thanuskodi's work provides a valuable regional comparative benchmark.

9. Howlader and Islam (2019) studied the information-seeking behaviour of undergraduate students in academic libraries from a developing-country perspective. The study found that students increasingly depended on internet resources, e-journals, and digital databases for academic purposes. Google and online search tools were the most preferred sources because of accessibility and speed. The research emphasized that university libraries should improve ICT infrastructure, digital literacy, and user education programmes to ensure effective utilization of electronic information resources and modern library services

10. Makinde and Oyewusi (2020) examined the information-seeking behaviour of science and technology researchers in Nigeria. The study revealed that researchers mainly relied on scholarly journals, internet databases, and institutional repositories to meet research needs. Electronic resources were preferred because they provided current and relevant information quickly. However, challenges such as poor internet connectivity and inadequate access to subscribed databases affected information retrieval. The study recommended strengthening digital library infrastructure and promoting awareness programmes for effective use of research resources in university libraries.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive in nature and adopts the survey method for data collection. The descriptive survey method is widely employed in library and information science research to systematically gather data about current conditions, practices, or phenomena without manipulating variables. A structured questionnaire was designed to capture information about user demographics, purpose of library use, preferred sources of information, frequency of library visits, preferred information formats, information seeking strategies, and barriers encountered. The questionnaire comprised both closed-ended and Likert-scale items and was administered in person at the library premises of the selected universities between October and December 2020.

3.1 Universe and Sample

The universe of the study comprised registered library users of five state universities in Andhra Pradesh: (1) Sri Venkateswara University (SVU), Tirupati; (2) Sri Krishna Devaraya University (SKDU), Anantapur; (3) Acharya Nagarjuna University (ANU), Guntur; (4) Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Kakinada (JNTUK), Kakinada; and (5) Andhra University (AU), Visakhapatnam. A total of 220 questionnaires were distributed across these five institutions. Of these, 150 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 68.18%. The distribution and response rates by institution are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of Questionnaires and Response Rates

University	Distributed	Received	Response Rate (%)
Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati	50	35	70.00%
Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Anantapur	44	30	68.18%
Acharya Nagarjuna University, Guntur	46	32	69.57%
JNTU Kakinada, Kakinada	42	28	66.67%
Andhra University, Visakhapatnam	38	25	65.79%
Total	220	150	68.18%

Among the 150 respondents, 90 were male and 60 were female. Table 2 presents the gender distribution of respondents across each university.

Table 2: Gender Distribution of Respondents

University	Male	Female	Total	% of Total	Cum. %
Sri Venkateswara University	21	14	35	14.00	23.33
Sri Krishna Devaraya University	18	12	30	12.00	20.00
Acharya Nagarjuna University	19	13	32	12.67	21.33
JNTU Kakinada	17	11	28	11.33	18.67
Andhra University	15	10	25	10.00	16.67
Total	90	60	150	60.00	100.00

3.2 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was organised into seven sections: Section A (Demographic information: university, designation/category, gender, years of library use); Section B (Purpose of library visit); Section C (Preferred sources of information); Section D (Frequency and pattern of library visits); Section E (Preferred information format — print, electronic, or both); Section F (Information seeking strategies); and Section G (Barriers to information seeking and suggestions). The questionnaire was pre-tested with 15 users at MVGR College of Engineering Library, Vizianagaram, and revised accordingly before final administration.

IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data collected through the questionnaire were tabulated, coded, and analysed using simple frequency distribution and percentage analysis. The results are presented under the following sub-headings.

4.1 Category of Respondents

The respondents were classified into four categories: faculty members, research scholars, postgraduate students, and undergraduate students. Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents by category across the five universities.

Table 3: Category-wise Distribution of Respondents

Category	SVU	SKDU	ANU	JNTUK	AU	Total	%
Faculty	8	7	7	6	6	34	22.67
Research Scholars	10	8	9	7	7	41	27.33
PG Students	11	10	10	9	7	47	31.33
UG Students	6	5	6	6	5	28	18.67
Total	35	30	32	28	25	150	100.00

SVU = Sri Venkateswara University; SKDU = Sri Krishna Devaraya University; ANU = Acharya Nagarjuna University; JNTUK = JNTU Kakinada; AU = Andhra University

Table 3 reveals that postgraduate students constituted the largest category (47; 31.33%), followed by research scholars (41; 27.33%), faculty members (34; 22.67%), and undergraduate students (28; 18.67%). The predominance of postgraduate and research users reflects the research orientation of the selected institutions and suggests that information seeking behaviour in these libraries is largely driven by academic research and assignment needs.

4.2 Purpose of Library Visit

Respondents were asked to indicate all purposes for which they visit the library (multiple responses were permitted). The data are presented in Table 4, ranked in descending order of frequency.

Table 4: Purpose of Library Visit (Multiple Responses)

Purpose of Visit	Frequency*	Percentage (%)	Rank
To read books and journals	135	90.0	1st
To borrow books	128	85.3	2nd
To use internet/e-resources	112	74.7	3rd
For research and academic work	105	70.0	4th
To prepare for examinations	98	65.3	5th
To consult reference books	79	52.7	6th
To use CD-ROM/databases	65	43.3	7th
To attend library training/seminars	42	28.0	8th

* Multiple responses permitted; percentages calculated out of total respondents (N=150)

The data in Table 4 indicate that reading books and journals (90.0%) is the most common purpose for visiting the library, closely followed by borrowing books (85.3%) and using internet/e-resources (74.7%). This suggests that the library continues to serve its traditional function as a reading and borrowing facility while simultaneously gaining recognition as an e-resource access point. Research and academic work (70.0%) and preparation for examinations (65.3%) are also prominent purposes, reflecting the academic orientation of the user community. Library training and seminar attendance (28.0%) ranked lowest, indicating the need for more structured and publicised user education programmes.

4.3 Preferred Sources of Information

Respondents were asked to indicate all information sources they consult for academic and research purposes. The responses are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Preferred Sources of Information (Multiple Responses)

Source of Information	Frequency*	Percentage (%)	Rank
Books (Print)	145	96.7	1st
Internet and Websites	132	88.0	2nd
Journals (Print)	118	78.7	3rd
E-Journals / Online Databases	109	72.7	4th

Theses and Dissertations	74	49.3	5th
Conference Proceedings	65	43.3	6th
CD-ROM Databases	58	38.7	7th
Government Publications / Reports	47	31.3	8th

* Multiple responses permitted; percentages calculated out of total respondents (N=150)

Table 5 shows that print books remain the most preferred source of information (96.7%), followed by the internet and websites (88.0%) and print journals (78.7%). E-journals and online databases are used by 72.7% of respondents, indicating a healthy and growing uptake of electronic resources. However, less formal channels such as conference proceedings (43.3%), CD-ROM databases (38.7%), and government publications (31.3%) are significantly underused. This pattern is consistent with findings from comparable South Indian university studies and underscores the continued dominance of traditional print materials alongside a growing reliance on internet-based resources.

4.4 Frequency of Library Visits

The frequency with which users visit the library is an important indicator of library dependence and engagement. The distribution of responses is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Frequency of Library Visits

Frequency of Visit	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Rank	Cumulative
Daily	48	32.0	1st	48
2–3 Times a Week	52	34.7	1st (Highest)	100
Once a Week	32	21.3	3rd	132
Once a Fortnight	12	8.0	4th	144
Rarely / Occasionally	6	4.0	5th	150
Total	150	100.0		

Table 6 reveals that the majority of respondents (52; 34.7%) visit the library two to three times per week, closely followed by those who visit daily (48; 32.0%). These two categories together account for 66.7% of respondents, confirming a high level of regular library use. Weekly visits account for 21.3% of responses. Only a small proportion visit fortnightly (8.0%) or rarely (4.0%). The high frequency of visits is consistent with the academic orientation of the user community and supports the argument for extended library hours and improved in-library facilities.

4.5 Preferred Information Format

Respondents were asked to indicate their preferred format for accessing information — print only, electronic/digital only, or both. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Preferred Information Format

Preferred Information Format	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Rank	Cumulative
Print format only	35	23.3	3rd	35
Electronic / Digital format only	42	28.0	2nd	77
Both Print and Electronic	73	48.7	1st	150
Total	150	100.0		

Table 7 indicates that the largest proportion of respondents (73; 48.7%) prefer both print and electronic formats, reflecting an emerging hybrid information seeking culture in university libraries. Electronic-only format is preferred by 28.0% of respondents, while print-only preference has declined to 23.3%. These findings suggest that university libraries must maintain strong collections in both formats and invest in robust digital infrastructure to serve a user community that is transitioning between print and electronic paradigms.

4.6 Barriers to Information Seeking

Respondents were asked to identify the barriers they encounter in seeking information from university libraries (multiple responses permitted). The identified barriers, ranked by frequency, are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Barriers to Information Seeking (Multiple Responses)

Barrier	Frequency*	Percentage (%)	Rank
Lack of time to visit library	108	72.0	1st
Slow internet connectivity	97	64.7	2nd
Lack of awareness of e-resources	92	61.3	3rd
Library not open at convenient hours	85	56.7	4th
Information overload / difficulty filtering	79	52.7	5th
Difficulty in locating required information	74	49.3	6th
Inadequate library collection	68	45.3	7th
Language barrier	35	23.3	8th

* Multiple responses permitted; percentages calculated out of total respondents (N=150)

Table 8 reveals that lack of time (72.0%) is the most commonly cited barrier to information seeking among university library users in Andhra Pradesh. This is followed by slow internet connectivity (64.7%), which reflects the inadequate digital infrastructure in several of the surveyed institutions. Lack of awareness of e-resources (61.3%) ranks third, highlighting the urgent need for user orientation and information literacy programmes. Library operational hours not aligned with user convenience (56.7%) and information overload (52.7%) are also significant concerns. Physical and cognitive barriers such as difficulty in locating information (49.3%), inadequate collection (45.3%), and language barriers (23.3%) round out the list. These

findings align closely with those reported in comparable Indian studies (Kannappanavar & Swamy, 2006; Thanuskodi, 2011) and reinforce the case for targeted interventions in library infrastructure, user training, and service hours.

V. CONCLUSION

This study provides a comprehensive empirical account of the information seeking behaviour of users across five prominent universities in Andhra Pradesh, namely Sri Venkateswara University, Sri Krishna Devaraya University, Acharya Nagarjuna University, JNTU Kakinada, and Andhra University. Based on responses from 150 library users — comprising faculty, research scholars, and students — the study reveals several significant patterns.

The findings establish that postgraduate students and research scholars constitute the majority of active library users, reflecting the research-intensive nature of the selected institutions. Books and internet-based resources dominate the information seeking landscape, though e-journals and online databases are gaining traction. The majority of users visit the library frequently — two to three times per week or daily — demonstrating strong library dependence. A growing preference for both print and electronic formats indicates the emergence of a hybrid information culture that requires libraries to maintain dual-format collections and services.

Among the most significant barriers are lack of time, slow internet connectivity, and limited awareness of e-resources. These findings point to the need for (a) user education and information literacy programmes to enhance awareness and navigational skills; (b) investment in broadband infrastructure and digitisation of library collections; (c) extended library operating hours, including evening and weekend access; and (d) strategic procurement of e-journals and subject databases relevant to the academic programmes of each institution.

The study concludes that user information seeking behaviour in Andhra Pradesh university libraries is dynamic, transitional, and largely shaped by institutional constraints rather than by user preferences alone. Library professionals, university administrators, and policy makers must collaborate to address these constraints and create information-rich, user-centred library environments that support the academic excellence and research productivity of students and faculty in Andhra Pradesh.

VI. REFERENCES

1. Bawden, D. (2001). Information and digital literacies: A review of concepts. *Journal of Documentation*, 57(2), 218–259. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000007083>
2. Ellis, D. (1989). A behavioural approach to information retrieval system design. *Journal of Documentation*, 45(3), 171–212. <https://doi.org/10.1108/eb026843>
3. Kannappanavar, B. U., & Swamy, C. S. (2006). Information seeking behavior of medical library users in Karnataka: A survey. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 53(2), 73–82. Retrieved from <http://nopr.niscair.res.in/handle/123456789/7866>

4. Kuhlthau, C. C. (1991). Inside the search process: Information seeking from the user's perspective. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science*, 42(5), 361–371. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.4630420504>
5. Leckie, G. J., Pettigrew, K. E., & Sylvain, C. (1996). Modeling the information seeking of professionals: A general model derived from research on engineers, health care professionals, and lawyers. *Library Quarterly*, 66(2), 161–193. <https://doi.org/10.1086/602870>
6. Majid, S., & Tan, V. (2002). Usage of information resources by computer engineering students: A case study of Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. *Online Information Review*, 26(5), 290–299. <https://doi.org/10.1108/14684520210447600>
7. Thanuskodi, S. (2011). Information seeking behaviour of law college teachers and students of ManonmaniamSundaranar University. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 3(7), 142–149. Retrieved from <https://academicjournals.org/journal/IJLIS/article-full-text-pdf/F31107A27474>
8. Wilson, T. D. (1999). Models in information behaviour research. *Journal of Documentation*, 55(3), 249–270. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EUM0000000007145>
9. Howlader, A. I., & Islam, M. A. (2019). *Information-seeking behaviour of undergraduate students: A developing country perspective*. *IFLA Journal*. DOI: [10.1177/0340035219842312](https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035219842312)
10. Makinde, O. B., & Oyewusi, F. O. (2020). *Information-seeking behaviour of science and technology researchers in Nigeria*. *IFLA Journal*. DOI: [10.1177/0340035220931877](https://doi.org/10.1177/0340035220931877)