

## NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF USER STUDIES IN LIBRARY

Muneshwar G. D.,  
Librarian, V. N. College, Murud Janjira,  
Dist. Raigad - 402401.

### Introduction

The Concept in simple term, 'user study' means a study of the users of information. It deals with the kind of information required by the user, the ways and means used for searching for the required information, the use of the information, the use of the information obtained, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction arising from the use of information obtained, the flow of the information and the relationship of studies. 'User study' is the means for systematic examination of the characteristics and behavior of the users of the systems and services. The 'user study' is directly linked with the effectiveness (performance).

### Definition

**Line (1967) defines** one type of user study - the survey as, "a systematic collection of data concerning a library, its activities, operations, staff, use and users, at a given time." A survey gives an overview, a map rather than a detailed plan and it may be motivated by the need to improve, to provide information, to bring complex situations under control, or to satisfy curiosity. Put more simply, it is a type of research study which involves collection of information by the researcher from a sample of individuals using questionnaires or interviews. He considers the survey method to be motivated by the need to improve, to provide information, to bring complex situations under control or to satisfy curiosity

### User Studies

It presents a way of thinking of the field, 'user studies'; its aim is not to 'model' information-seeking behavior but to draw attention to the interrelationships among concepts used in the field. The figure suggests that information-seeking behavior results from the recognition of some need, perceived by the user. That behavior may take several forms: for example, the user may make demands upon formal systems that are customarily defined as information systems (such as libraries, on-line services, Prestel or information centers), or upon systems which may perform information functions in addition to a primary, non-information function (such as estate agents' offices or car sales agencies, both of which are concerned with selling, but which may be used to obtain information on current prices, areas of 'suitable' housing, or details of cars that hold their secondhand value).

### User Studies in India

An in-depth review of literature on the subject clearly shows that a considerable number of user studies have been conducted concerning to the use of individual libraries by the various scientists and the general public alike. The outcome of few such studies which have set examples for the future scholars and the LIS professionals, testing the gravity of the individual library environment, provided a sufficient scope for the library concerned to revamp the whole system and to rebuild the library collection so as to make it more purposive, need-based and meaningful for those it is intended.

### **Varieties of User Studies**

User studies addressed themselves initially, and in increasingly large numbers, to the "who, what, when and where" of library use. A smaller number of studies have probed the way libraries are used, and with what success. Only a few have sought to penetrate why users turn to libraries, and what effects library use has. First-level investigations of who, what, when and where are beneficial, as long as the limitations of such data are understood. If a library wanted to know the hourly and daily volume and flow of use in order to allocate staff time, it would keep a simple door count (an elementary form of user study). If a library wants to check the balance and spread of its acquisitions with the balance and spread of materials utilization, it will analyze and classify recent purchase lists against a parallel classification of titles actually used (as shown by circulation records) and a sample of items left on reading tables; some thought-provoking matches and mismatches may emerge (another form of use study). If a proposal for a new branch has been made, analysis of registration and circulation records will show the present coverage of the affected area (still another form of use study, even though no questionnaires are involved). Or, if a public library, noting declining adult circulation figures, wants to find out whether the decline is caused by an increasing number of students using their school and college libraries, a short-form questionnaire, administered on a sample basis at six-month intervals, will provide the answer. Note that in each example what the agency wants to find out is determined before any study was undertaken. These are not scatter-shot investigations. If one sets a close and limited target, one can get clear and valid data. Note also that the data obtained apply to

### **Value of User Studies**

Planned investigations of use and users can be a productive part of a comprehensive community study—the part that goes to the heart of community/library relations. User data strengthens the planning and decision-making processes at several levels. Investigations should begin with mundane, day-to-day applications. An example is scrutiny of the reserve file, which is one reflection of demand and of adequacy or inadequacy of collections in

meeting demand. A few of the most-wanted titles can be selected and calculations made of average reader waiting time. If this time is several weeks or even months, one does not have to talk to individuals to predict what their reactions would be. This simple example of the reserve file also illustrates limitations of user data. Any librarian who adopts a policy of adding copies as soon as three, five or ten reserves accumulate has no clear sense of purpose or standards, treating all titles as having equal weight.

### Needs of User Studies

Information needs - information needs are - usually - unclear and “messed”, while a part of them may remain unexpressed and unfulfilled. - Information needs can be clarified or can be generated during information seeking. - Work needs - work needs are clearer and their satisfaction is imperative and often takes place in pressing conditions. - Obviously, information needs are included in work needs.

### User behavior studies

Information behavior refers to the environment in one user is acting and his/her “primary” needs one attempts to cover. - Various contributing areas: - psychology, with emphasis in cognitive psychology and behavioral psychology - anthropology and linguistics - communication-related sciences - computer science, with emphasis in human-computer interaction

### Conclusion

If we choose to investigate any of these categories of search strategies we are clearly investigating 'information-seeking behavior' rather than the user's *need* for information. Equally clearly, our motives for investigating search processes may be to make inferences about need, or it may be to uncover facts relating to *other* variables related to the design, development or adaptation of information system.

### Reference

- [inlibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/38822/8/08](http://inlibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/38822/8/08)
- [www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream](http://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream)
- <http://dlib.ionio.gr>