



INFORMATION NEED AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF USERS WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF CHENNAI: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the information need and seeking behaviour of visually impaired users of public libraries in Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The researcher interviewed 50 visually impaired users and analysis is made on the same. The findings shows the necessity of improving resource collection such as Braille books, updated digital accessible resources and latest assistive and information communication technology. The study also suggest to conduct various promotional activates, conferences, training and coaching programs in a regular basis to invite more number of regular users with visual impairment and enable them to meet their information need and seeking in a satisfactory way.

KEYWORDS: Public library, Information needs, information seeking behaviour, visuallyimpaired.

1.INTRODUCTION :

Right to information is considered as the fundamental human right which decide the role of a human being in the society The people with in the deprived community have always suffered to be on the main stream of the society due to lack of information. It is estimated that in India the percentage of disabled people has raised up by 22.4 % in

2001-2011 and the population among this of visually impaired is 18.8%.It has been estimated that human beings absorb as much as 80 per cent of information about their immediate environment by means of sight (Willetts, 1997). Statistics shows that availability of accessible resources is less than 7% in developed countries and it is about less than 5% in developing countries.Visually impaired people(VIPs), therefore, are at greatest risk of being socially excluded as a result of poor access to information. IFLA/UNESCO Public Library manifesto and The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (ONU, 1993) describe the necessity of libraries in providing the inclusive services to the disabled. IFLA (2005) Professional Reports: 86 issued a guideline titled "Libraries for the Blind in the Information Age – Guidelines for development" provides a guideline for the developing effective library and information service for the people with print disabilities



and Blind.

1.1. PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN CHENNAI: AN OVERVIEW

There are 4042 public libraries in Tamil Nadu and Chennai, the capital city of Tamil Nadu occupied with State Central Library, District Central Library and Anna Centenary (ACL). In addition to special services available in other public libraries in Chennai, these three libraries are actively involved in servicing people with visual impairment. The present study based on users visiting the special section for people with visual impairment called "Braille section" of Anna Centenary Library. The Braille section has rich collection of Braille books to digital documents with latest assistive technologies to access these resources. The section providing special services such as digital resource sharing, reference service, assistive technology facility, current awareness service & SDI, reprography (printing, scanning), reading and writing assistance, coaching, accessible format conversion such as accessible newspaper production, video to MP3 conversion, audio recording, online application service and recreation and leisure programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Smith, Raina & Vanaja (2015) in their article discussed about the importance of inclusive libraries and focuses on the facilities and services provided to the people with visual impairment in the Braille Section of Anna Centenary Library (ACL) Chennai. This article also provide with a framework for developing an inclusive public library. Thamaraiselvi and Manthiramoorthi (2015) examined the visually impaired user's satisfaction of library service and products in Chennai public libraries. The study of Priya Pillai (2012) titled 'Library and information services for the visually impaired in India', identified and examined the institutions providing library and information services to visually impaired people in India with reference to their infrastructure, library materials, IT facilities and services.

3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

3.1. Visual impairment

The government of India, the broad definition of categories of disability is given in Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. The act categorized visual impairment as blindness and low-vision. (a) "blindness" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, after best correction—(i) total absence of sight; or (ii) visual acuity less than 3/60 or less than 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible correction; or (iii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 10 degree. (b) "low-vision" means a condition where a person has any of the following conditions, namely:—(i) visual acuity not exceeding 6/18 or less than 20/60 up to 3/60 or up to 10/200 (Snellen) in the better eye with best possible corrections; or (ii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of less than 40 degree up to 10 degree.

3.2. Information Need and Seeking Behaviour

Wilson (1981) suggested that "information need" was not a fundamental need such as the need for shelter or the need for sustenance, but, rather a secondary order need which arose out of the desire to satisfy the primary needs. Information seeking behaviour is a broad term, which involves information need, information seeking, information preference, availability and accessibility of the information, information use/usability and evaluation of the information and finally the satisfaction of his or her needs.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 1) To identify the information need of VIPs in public libraries of Chennai.
- 2) To study about the frequency of visit to meet the information need
- 3) To identify the source of information used
- 4) To identify the information seeking method used by VIPs
- 5) To study about the use of resource and services available for them.
- 6) To identify the problem faced in meeting information needs

7) To evaluate overall satisfaction in information seeking

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study is to analyse the information need and seeking behaviour of visually impaired users of public libraries in Chennai with special reference to Anna Centenary Library, Chennai. A pilot study was conducted with randomly selected 5 visually impaired users to identify the major information need and way the people with visual impairment accessing information. Based on the pilot study a structured questionnaire in the form of a schedule was prepared and interviewed randomly selected 50 visually impaired users of public libraries in Chennai. The data analysis is done with various statistical tools. Rating scale is used with percentage

6. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1 - Gender wise Library visit

Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Male	34	68
Female	16	32
Total	50	100

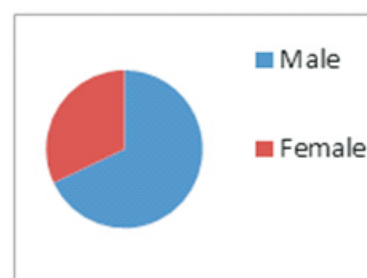


Table one and graph shows that the researcher interviewed 68% male users and 32 % female users.

Table 2- Education qualification of respondents

S. No	Qualification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	HSE & Below	8	16
2	UG	26	52
3	PG	12	24
4	Ph. D	4	8
Total		50	100

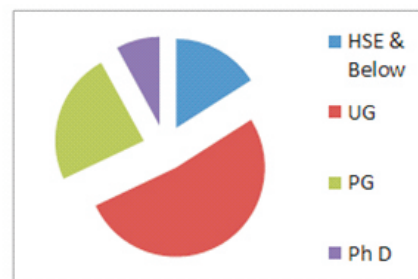


Table (2) show that 52% of the visually impaired users are of with graduation qualification and 24% with post-graduation .Only 16% of users are HSC below qualified whereas 8%are of Ph. D qualified.

Table 3- Age wise distribution of visually impaired Respondents

S. No	Age	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Below 20	12	24
2	20-30	21	42
3	30-40	11	22
4	40-50	4	8
5	50 & above	2	4
Total		50	100

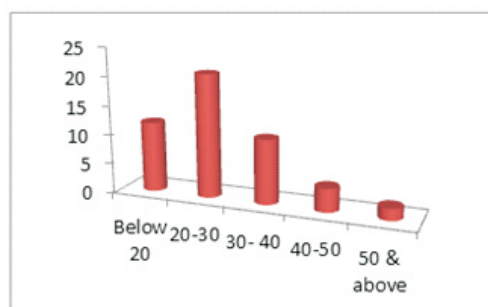


Table 3 shows that, age group within 20-30 years form the major part of the respondents (42%) followed by age below 20 (24%). Users within the age group of 30-40 visits the library is 22%. Only 8% of user are of age

group of 40-50 visiting the public library followed by the users within the age group of 50 & above (4%).

Table 4 - Frequency of visit of users with visual impairment

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	6	12
Twice a week	9	18
Weekly once	12	24
Occasionally	23	46
Total	50	100

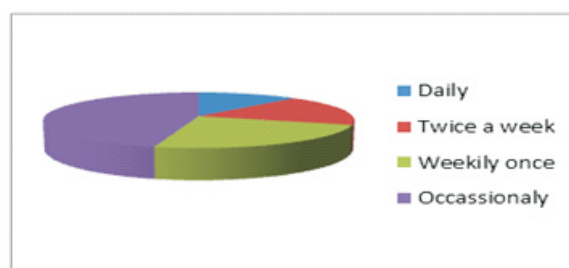


Table 4 show that, 46% of visually impaired users are visiting the library occasionally followed by weekly once visiting users(24%), whereas 18% visiting twice in a week and 12% of visually impaired users visiting the library on a daily basis.

Table 5 -Information need

S.No	Type of Need	Frequency	Percentage
1	Education	44	88
2	Employment	47	94
3	Assistive Technology	35	70
4	Service and Facility	40	80
5	Mobility & Travel	28	56
6	Housing and Accommodation	15	30
7	Benefit and money	31	62
8	Health	16	32
9	Recreational Activities	15	30

Table number 5 shows that, employment needs (94%) ranked as the most rated information need followed by education needs (88%). Service and facility (80%) is the third category of need followed by assistive technology (70%) needs. 62% of the visually impaired users are need information about benefit and money followed by Mobility & travel (56%). Information need about health is 32% and 30 % of users are in need of both housing & accommodation and recreational activities.

Table 6 - Source format preference

S. No	Source	Frequency	Percentage
1	Braille Books	21	42
2	Audio Books	48	96
3	DAISY Books	3	6
4	E-Text	22	44

Table 6 show that 94% visually impaired users prefer audio book format. E –text other than DAISY (44%) ranked as second preference, whereas 42% of visually impaired users prefer Braille books and only 6% use DAISY (Digital Talking Book).

Table 7 – Information seeking method

S. No	Seeking Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
1	Visiting Public Library	45	90
2	Visiting other Resource centres	43	86
3	Browsing Internet	22	44
4	Discussing with family, Friends , colleague	49	98
5	Listening to Radio/TV	48	96

Table 7- show the method used to seek the information. The study shows that 98% of users seeking information by discussing with family, friends and colleagues, whereas 96% listening to radio/TV. 90% of users visiting public library and 86 % of users visiting resource centre other than public library and only 44% browsing internet to meet their information needs.

Table -8 Resources and Service used

S.No	Resources and Service used	Always	Often	Sometime	Rarely	Never
1	Digital Resource Sharing	43(90 %)	4(8%)	1(2%)	2(4%)	0
2	Reference Service	4(8%)	12(24%)	10(20%)	20(40%)	4(8%)
2	Assistive Technology facility	10(20%)	22(44%)	10(20%)	6(12%)	2(4%)
3	Current Awareness service & SDI	15(30%)	11(22%)	5(10%)	11(22%)	8(16%)
4	Reprography (Printing, scanning)	9(18%)	12(24%)	16(32%)	9(18%)	4(8%)
5	Reading , writing, coaching	16(32%)	4(8%)	11(22%)	11(22%)	8(16%)
6	Accessible format conversion	12(36%)	15(30%)	9(18%)	8(16%)	6(12)
7	Online application service	38(76%)	6(12%)	2(4%)	3(6%)	1(2%)
8	Recreation and leisure	9(18%)	6(12%)	16(32%)	10(20%)	9(18%)

Table 8 shows the level of resources and service used. 90% of the users always coming to the library for collecting digital resources followed by 8% often visiting users. 40% of users are rarely using reference service followed by 24% often visiting users. 22% of users visiting the library to use assistive technologies including internet. 15% visually impaired users using various current awareness service and SDI service through Email and other SNS. 16% of users are not using any time this service. 9% users always using reprography service and 8% users are not using the same. The study shows that 32% of users always visiting to avail reading, writing and coaching service and the accessible format conversion including audio and newspaper service are availed by 36% of users. Online application assistance service is used by 76% of users and 32% users are sometimes only make use of recreation and leisure service.

Table 9 – Problem faced

S.No	Problem Faced	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Lack of Braille Books	14(28%)	21(42%)	10(20%)	4(8%)	1(2%)
2	Lack of accessible digital resource	9(18%)	14(28%)	15(30%)	10(20%)	2(4%)
3	Insufficient assistive technology	12(22%)	22(44%)	9(18%)	5(10%)	2(4%)
4	Lack of infrastructure facilities	1(2%)	6(12%)	11(22%)	15(30%)	17(34%)
5	Lack of proper organisation	5(10%)	8(16%)	9(18%)	16(32%)	12(24%)
6	Attitude of staff	2(4%)	3(6%)	5(10%)	38(76%)	2(4%)

Table 9 Show the problem faced by the visually impaired users in public libraries. 28% of visually impaired users strongly agree that availability of Braille books is one of the problem and 42% agree with the same. 18% strongly agreed that lack of accessible digital resource is a problem and 28% agree with the same. Users with visual impairment of 44% agree that insufficient assistive technology is a problem faced and 22% of them strongly agree with the same. Only 2% of users strongly agree that lack of infrastructure facilities is a

problem and 34% strongly disagree with the same. Only 10% of users are strongly agreed with lack of proper organisation as a problem and 24% of the users are strongly disagree with them. Most of visually impaired users are satisfied with the attitude of staff only 4% strongly disagree with the statement of attitude of staff as a problem and 76%disagree with the statement.

Tabled 10- Overall satisfaction

S.No	Overall Satisfaction	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
1	Availability of information	5(10%)	25(50%)	17(34%)	2(4%)	1(2%)
2	Accessibility of Information	8(16%)	23(46%)	15(30%)	3(6%)	1(2%)
3	Usability of information	5(10%)	16(32%)	20(40%)	9(18%)	2(4%)

Table 10 shows the overall satisfaction in meeting information need and seeking. 10% users are very satisfied with available information and 50% satisfied with the same. Only 4% users are dissatisfied with the availability of information and 1% very dissatisfied. 16% visually impaired users are very satisfied with the accessibility of information and 46% satisfied with the same.40% of users are neither satisfied or dissatisfied with usability of available information and only 5% is very satisfied.

7. MAJOR FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION

- The study shows that only 32% of female users are visiting the library frequently, the qualification wise report shows that HSC Below qualified users is only 16% and only 4% of users are from age above 50 visiting the library. All these show that library should develop strategies to invite all categories of visually impaired users with necessary service and facilities.
- It is very clear that Information need for employment is very high (94%) and the library can setup periodical training and coaching to meet their employment needs.
- The alternative digital accessible format DAISY books (6%) is very less and usage of internet (44%) also indicate the need for training in using assistive information and communication technology to make the VIPs technological independent.
- The use of reference service is very less compare to other services. The researcher identified the need for more reference martial which will increase the usage of reference service.
- The findings shows that usage of recreation and leisure can be increased by including more inclusive programme to convert the public library as VIPs second home.
- The users of people with visual impairments are almost satisfied with the infrastructure facilities, organisation of resources and staff attitude.
- The scarcity of accessible resource problem can be resolved by adding latest Braille book editions, more updated accessible resources with latest assistive and information communication technology to ensure maximum utilisation of resources, services and facilities.

8. CONCLUSION

Public library has the responsibility to provide people oriented services to satisfy every citizen's information needs and it is the common place where everyone gets equal access and consideration. It is the obligation of public libraries to ensure people with visual impairment are enjoying their freedom of availability, accessibility and usability of information. The policies can be amended or modified to accommodate more facilities to VIPs and public library should act as a research and development centre to promote innovative developments in finding solution to meet the need and information seeking of people with visual impairments.

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