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Profiling Information Seeking Behavior of Distance Learning Students in Wawasan Open University

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Farzanah Ali Hassan, Norhasni Abd Aziz & Ooi Siew Lee
Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu Library
Wawasan Open University (WOU) is one of the three full-fledged distance learning institutions ➔ a heavier focus on online learning

Active Collaboration between Library & SELC ➔ A lot of concerns were raised to the Library & SELC on lack on materials for literature review – PGDE & MEd

5. You are strongly advised to refer to journal articles to support the literature review. You may refer to full text articles from the Wawasan Open University Library.

WOU Library ➔ List of e-resources ➔ E-journals ➔ ProQuest and/or Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
Intro: Guidelines for Library Services

Based on this philosophy on the Bill of Rights for the Distance Learning Community, the Standard for Access for Achievement of Superior Academic Skills requires the Library of distance learning institutions to provide services and resources equivalent to conventional institutions (American Library Association, 2008)

This is a standard of practice for Library Services that is often undervalued in some distance learning institutions, which ultimately leads to the common perception that the Library is no more than an avenue for a collection of books and resources; which is certainly not the case!
What Happens in an Internet Minute?

My Gosh!!

And Future Growth is Staggering

Research Objectives

Recognizing this key importance, the mandate falls onto the Library to cultivate effective information seeking behavior among students

1. Identify the problems faced in information search

2. Identify the problems faced in effective utilization of information

3. Examine the relationship between problems faced in information search and effective utilization of information
Theoretical Model

The process of seeking and utilizing information in a meaningful manner (Bystrom & Hansen, 2005)

Wilson’s (1999) information seeking model
Methodology: Sampling

- Consists of 435 undergraduate & postgraduate students
Findings: Demographic Information

550 questionnaires → 435 returned (79% response rate)

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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>56.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>21-29 years</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39 years</td>
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<td>29.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>40-49 years</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 50 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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<td><strong>Student Status</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>76.8%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>101</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year of Study</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>One year</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above one year</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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RO 1: Problems faced in Information Search

- Unable to determine the appropriateness of the information: 22%
- Unable to locate information: 19%
- Outdate information: 14%
- Lack of time to verify information: 14%
- Not aware the information is available in the Library (Physical/MyDigital Library): 12%
- Low quality information: 10%
- Non-relevant information: 9%
Appropriateness of info (22%)

- Locate info (19%)
- Dated info (14%)
- Availability in Library (12%)

- Internet Search Engines (65%)
- MyDigital Library (72%)

Needs Guidance

Independent sample t-test

- Sig Dif 1st Year & Post-1st Year (t=2.097, p<0.05)
- Sig Dif PG & UG ~ Digital Lib (t=3.415, p<0.01)
- Sig Dif PG & UG ~ Physical Lib (t=3.234, p<0.01)
RO 2: Problems faced in Utilization of Information

- Not sure how to integrate the information into assignments and research work
- Not sure how to cite the information
- Information lacks the local content
- Poor use of information leads to high Turnitin similarity index
- Not sure of the quality of the information
- I do not understand the information content
- Language used in the information is too difficult
Effective Utilization of Information:

- Undergraduate students faced more problems in understanding the content of the information they obtained compared to PG students.

- 1st year students faced more problems in understanding the language used.

- 1st year students were not clear on how to cite the information obtained.
RO 3: Relationship between Info Search & Utilization of Info

Simple linear regression analysis ➔
Positive Correlation was found

The results indicate that problems faced in information search process significantly predicts effective utilization of information with 32% prediction of the variance \[ F(1,433)=202.619, \ p<0.01 \].
Implications and Future Studies

1. Distance learners are not familiar with information seeking processes and the subsequent process of effective utilization of information
   ➔ They need to be made aware & seek guidance

5. You are strongly advised to refer to journal articles to support the literature review. You may refer to full text articles from the Wawasan Open University Library.

WOU Library ➔ List of e-resources ➔ E-journals ➔ ProQuest and/or Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ)
Implications and Future Studies

2. Poor information search behavior can lead to distance learners to develop a sense of isolation in the scholarship of learning and research.

⇒ developing the perceptions of incompetency of learning and the encumbrance of returning to learning, more so of engaging in distance learning.
Implications and Future Studies

Next step: Look at the relationship between information search & student isolation

“80% - eight in ten of the students PIL surveyed in 2010 reported having over-whelming difficulties with getting started on research assignments and determining the nature and scope of what their instructors required of them.”

(Head, 2013, p.474)

Project Information Literacy (PIL) - more than 11,000 students from 57 colleges and universities across the US.
Acknowledgments

The researchers would like to acknowledge and express gratitude to the Institute for Research and Innovations (IRI), Wawasan Open University for funding this research. The researchers are also deeply grateful to Tan Sri Professor Emeritus Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Prof Dato’ Dr Ho Sinn Chye and the Director of Library Services, Pn KamsiahMohd Ali, who have given valuable feedback and have continued to provide leadership.