INFORMATION LITERACY AMONG PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE T. S. CENTRAL STATE LIBRARY, CHANDIGARH

Suman Lata[1] & Sanjeev Sharma[2]

[1]Ph.D. Scholar, DLIS, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India.
Email: sumansh_lata1@yahoo.com
[2]Assistant Professor, DLIS, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra, Haryana, India.
Email:sanju_sharma2004@rediffmail.com

ABSTRACT

Explores the information literacy competency of the users of the T. S. Central State Library Chandigarh. All the users were able to identify and specify their information need. Out of 88 users, 68 (77.27%) were aware that dictionary is the best source to find the meaning of a word. 55 (62.50%) users were aware that a directory is the accurate source to locate the addresses and telephone numbers. Only 36 (40.90%) users were aware that an encyclopedia is the best source for locating basic background information on a topic. Only 16 (18.18%) and 12 (13.64%) users were very confident in accessing and evaluating information in print & electronic format Boolean operators were used by only 8 (9.09%) users. A majority of the respondents lackd the awareness about the shelf arrangement, bibliography and information search method. Thus their information retrieval skills were very low for searching required information from the sources. Only 18 (20.45%) users were very satisfied and 26 (29.54%) were satisfied with the present library orientation.

KEYWORDS: Information Literacy, Information Literacy Skills, Public Library, Information Literacy Competency.

Introduction

Information is a resource that is naturally needed in all human endeavors which is very crucial to the development of a nation, without which there would be no society. Thus, it is now commonly observed that the material prosperity of a nation is linked almost directly to its information wealth. Information availability and its free flow through an effective dissemination network represent a necessary pre-condition for the emergence of a crop of well-informed citizenry (Issa, Abdulkareem, Isah, & Kupolati, 2011). With the recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies and globalization of information, it is easier for individuals to access information from anywhere and at anytime (Karisiddappa & Kavita, 2004). Proliferation of information in varying forms, formats, and amount has made the contemporary era 'information intensive' with manifold choices to access and retrieve information. However, this requires the skills to exploit the best choice among the myriad. Furthermore, the current scenarios mystify users evaluating the quality and authenticity before they consume information. All these intricacies pose challenges to individuals in accessing and retrieving information efficiently, sifting and evaluating its authenticity, validity, and reliability for its effective use. Here arises the need for Information Literacy (IL), which nurtures critical thinking and discernment about the whole gamut of information and its varying formats, prior to its consumption (Koneru, 2010).

Information Literacy

Information literacy is currently understood as embracing the ability to define a problem, find information to solve the problem, evaluate information and use it effectively. Information literacy is a way to move towards efficient access.
Evaluation and use of information should be taken into account and used for improving information of end-users. It is a set of information and knowledge of skill that enable individuals to recognize when information is needed and when it is not, how to locate, evaluate, integrate, use and effectively communicate information. In short information literacy means knowing information about information (Devi & Devi, 2006). Information literacy is the competency that empowers one with the required "knowledge about information, its nature and available formats; skills to fetch the relevant information by shifting the irrelevant, and attitude for consuming and sharing information by ethical means and practices (Koneru, 2010)". The National Forum on Information Literacy defines information literacy as "the ability

to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively use that information for the issue or problem at hand (NFIL, 2012)."

The American Library Association's (ALA) Presidential Committee on Information Literacy, Final Report states, "To be information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and has the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information (Association of College and Research Libraries, 1989)". Information literacy can play a vital role in educating the users of libraries on various information and documentary resources, where to start searching of information, what where and how to access them, how to assess and compare retrieved information, how to communicate their information or findings to the general masses and experts, and so on. In addition to borrow books for entertainment and leisure, public libraries can also disseminate information on community development, best practices, literature, culture, trade, education, etc. which may be further elaborated when needs arise. Information seekers may want consolidated or exhaustive information. To provide right information to the users, public librarians should be trained to develop information literacy competency and should able to educate the user that will make user information literate (Das & Banwari, n.d.).

T. S. Central State Library, Chandigarh: An Overview

The Central State Library is a well known public library of the beautiful city and it is named as 'Tirlok Singh Central State Library'. The library was established in 1955, under the scheme of Govt. of India, promotion of art and culture. After reorganization of the state of Punjab, it came under the control of Chandigarh Administration. The liberal grants by the Chandigarh Administration have helped the library grow rapidly to fulfill the divergent demands of the readers. The Central State Library is a beehive of intellectual activities. Since its very inception it has carved a niche for itself in academic, literary and social circles of city beautiful. The library has a regular flow of visitors representing a cross-section of the populace of this region. Students, Bureaucrats, Doctors, Engineers, and Children flock to the library as it affords a wide spectrum of books covering a large range of topics. Bibliophiles have a special affinity for it, as the latest books are the earliest to reach this library.

The library has given a positive thrust to book-culture and related activities. Central State Library caters to the demand of northern sectors and villages of the

Chandigarh with a network of two branches, and a mobile van. This library network development has given a new impetus to book culture. People have free access to the quintessential reading material virtually at their doorstep. It has a State Library Planning Committee under the Chairmanship of Home and Education Secretary, and Special Secretary Finance cum Director Higher Education is the Vice-Chairman. Eminent educationists and nominee of Raja Ram Mohan Roy Library Foundation are the members. The Committee meets at regular intervals to discuss and suggest policies for the development of library systems (http://cslchd.gov.in/abt.htm).

The library is organized in various sections: these are Acquisition Section, Reference Section, Circulation Section, Children Section, Periodical Section, Newspaper Section, Binding Section, Administrative Section and Rare Book Section. The library has a rich collection of 223800 books, 1550 CD-ROMs, 40 newspapers are received daily and 160 periodicals are annually received. At present, the membership of the library is 42,800. The aim of the library is to enable the users to make the effective use of its resources and services. To achieve this objective library is offering bibliographic, documentation, Issue/Return, reference service and Internet browsing services to its users. The functioning of the library is fully computerized using LIBSYS software. The Library remains open to public from 10.00 AM to 5.30 PM on all working days. It is closed on Sundays, Gazette holidays and last Saturdays of the month.

Review of Related Literature

Biradar and Swapna (2011) carried out a study on Bioscience Students of Kuvempu University and found that 87.75% of the students could know the need of information on a topic and consulted library staff for locating the information. It was reported that 59.86% of the students could select suitable search terms and construct effective searches such as author search, key word search, title, subject, etc. using Boolean logic and truncation. A majority of respondents, i.e. 89.79% could identify the citation elements for books and journals (Biradar & Swapna, 2011). Ali, Abu-Hassan, Daud, and Jusoff (2010) conducted a study on Engineering Students and found that only 16.30% of the respondents chose the correct Boolean operator OR to get more search results. While 81.8% were not aware of the use of a thesaurus in search for preferred terms for a particular database. Further 26.5% of the respondents were familiar with the usefulness of encyclopedia in providing an overview summary of a topic

Hadimani and Rajgoli (2010) carried out a study on Undergraduate Students of College of Agriculture, Raichur and found that all the respondents were able to identify the source of the needed information. 91.11 % of the respondents used to evaluate the gathered information by consulting other resources of information and by discussing it with teachers and friends. 47.77% of the respondents used the copy/paste function. 83.33 % of the respondents were aware of copyright and privacy laws (Hadimani & Rajgoli, 2010).

Baro and Fyneman (2009) conducted a study on undergraduate Students in Niger Delta University and found that 75% of the students were aware and consulted journals as source of information, 56% of the students were using references at the back of consulted books to obtain needed information while 64% of the students consulted colleagues to obtain needed information. Internet was used by 75% of the students as the main source of information to retrieve relevant material, 74% of the students were familiar with different search engines and used them as a sources of information.

Joshi and Sharma (2009) conducted a study on *Students' use of various information sources and need for information literacy in Kurukshetra University and found that* 46.8% of students needed information most frequently for general subject. More than 95% needed information every week. Students needed assistance for document search (75.5%); document use (79.6%) and Internet use (70.2%). Their self-searching efforts yielded very low success rate for both printed and Internet resources. 75.3% of the respondents cited the documents they used for assignment preparation and 77.8% of the respondents were able to use MS-Word (Joshi & Sharma, 2009). Singh and Joshi (2006) conducted a study on Undergraduate Students of Sri Venkateswara College (University of Delhi) and found that 34% students agreed that call number reflects the subject of a document, 40% students were aware that web page mention its creator, 34%, 98%, and 96% students were aware that a bibliography is a list of books, a dictionary contains meaning of words, and an atlas contains maps respectively (Singh & Joshi, 2006).

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to identify the competency level of information literacy among the users of the T. S. Central State Library. The specific objectives of the study were:

- To understand the respondents' ability to identify and specify their information needs and the level of awareness of the respondents about different sources of information;
- To determine the respondents' ability to access and evaluate the printed & electronic resources;
- To know how satisfactorily the respondents are able to make use of the retrieved information;
- To ascertain the part played by LIS professionals in making the respondents information literate;
- To know the opinion of the respondents regarding the present Information Literacy Programmes (ILP) of the library.

Research Methodology

To achieve the objectives of the study, survey method of research was adopted. A structured questionnaire was designed and used for collecting the data from the users of the T. S. Central State Library. In all 100 questionnaires were personally distributed to the users of the library, out of which 88 users responded to the questionnaire.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The questionnaire was analyzed using simple percentage method. Major findings of the survey are analyzed and summarized in the following sections:
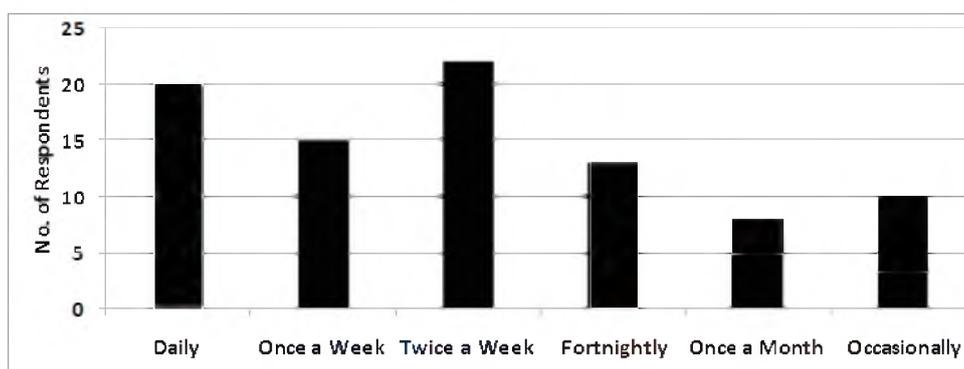
Frequency of Library Visit

Figure 1 : Frequency of Library Visit

Figure 1 reveals that a majority of the users i.e. 22 (25%) visited the library twice a week. 20 (22.72 %) users visited the library daily, 15 (17.04 %) once a week, 13 (14.77%) while fortnightly. Only 8 (9.09%) and 10 (11.36%) of the users visit the library once a month and occasionally, respectively.

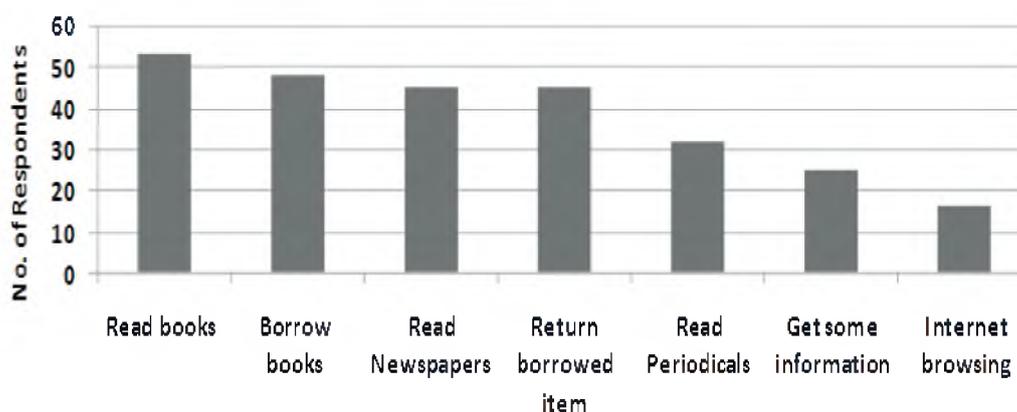## Purpose of Visiting the Library

Figure 2 : Purpose of Library Visit

Figure 2 shows that most of the users i.e. 53 (60.22%) visit the library for reading library books as well as their personal books, 48 (54.54%) to borrow books, 45 (51.13%) to read newspapers and return the borrowed items whereas 32 (36.36%) users visit the library to read periodicals. 25 (28.40%) users visit the library to get some information and 16 (18.18%) to use the internet facility of the library.

Information Needs of Users

Figure 3 depicts the information needs of the users. Out of 88 users 43 (48.86%) need information for course/profession. 35 (39.77%) users need information relating to general information/current affairs, 33 (37.5%) for personal development, 32 (36.36%) for government activities/politics and 22 (25%) for entertainment/recreation. Whereas 17 (19.31%) users need information on health/social welfare,15 (17.04%) on sports and only 10 (11.36%) on business & economic affairs.
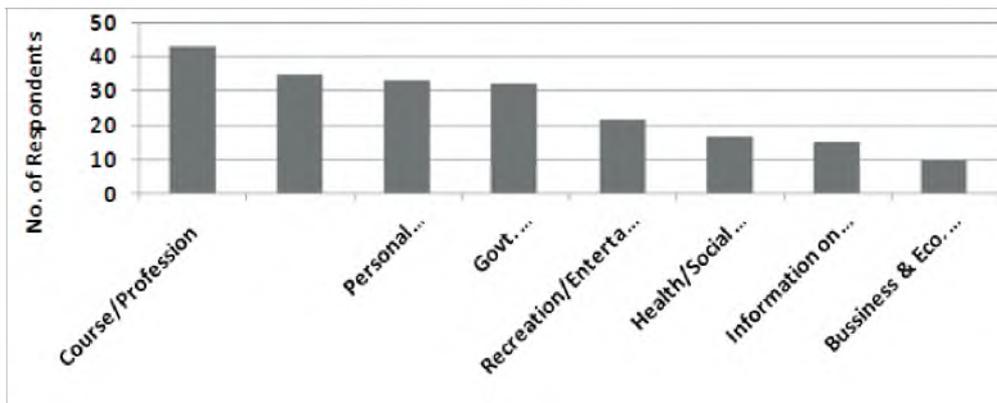
Figure 3: Users' Information Need

Frequently Used Information Sources

Figure 4 illustrates the frequently used information sources by the users. Out of 88 users, 59 (67.04%) users frequently used the non-fiction, 52 (59.09%) newspaper, 45 (51.13%) Internet, 33 (37.50%) periodicals, 30 (34.09%) fiction and 24 (27.27%) audio visual material like CDs and DVDs. Whereas 22 (25%) and 12 (13.63%) users frequently used the reference sources and government publications respectively to satisfy their information need.
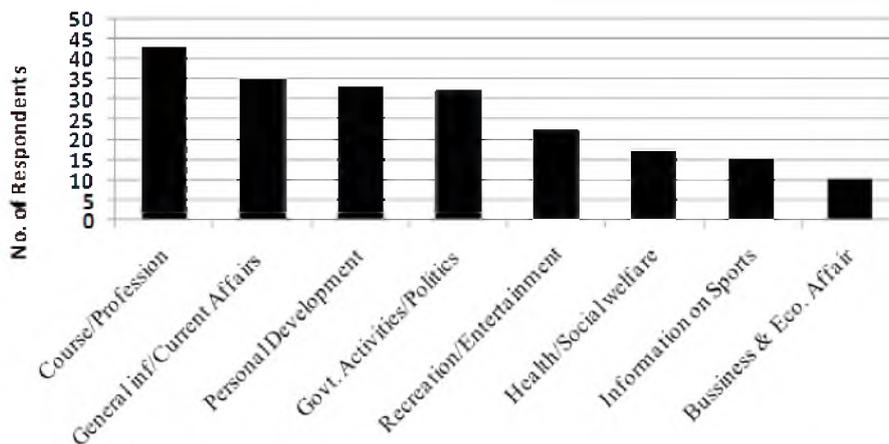

Figure 4: Frequently Used Information Sources

Awareness with Different Sources of Information

Figure 5 shows the number of users who correctly answered the questions relating to different types of sources of information. It reveled that 68 (77.27%) users were aware that the dictionary is the best source to find the meaning of a word. 55 (62.50%) users were aware that a directory is the accurate source to locate the addresses and telephone numbers. 49 (55.68%) users were aware that an atlas contains maps. Only 36 (40.90%) users were aware that an encyclopedia was the best source for locating basic background information on a topic.
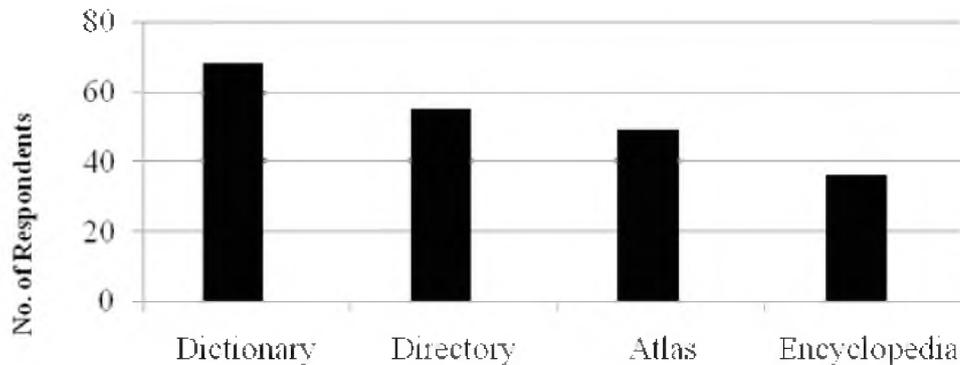

Figure 5 : Awareness with Different Sources of Information

Search Strategies Used

Figure 6 shows the search strategies used by the users for searching and retrieving information from a database. Simple keyword search strategy was used by most of the respondents i.e. 52(59.09%) while 28 (31.82%) users use the field search technique (title and URL etc). Boolean operators were used by only 8 (9.09%) users.
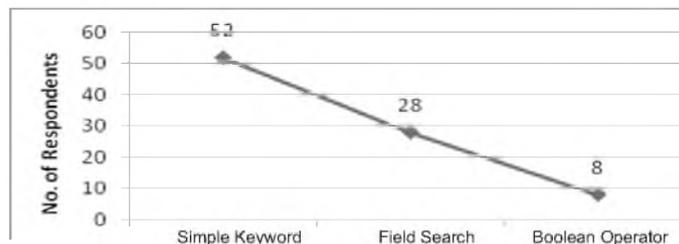

Figure 6 : Search Strategies Used

Awareness about the Method Followed for Shelving Books

Figure 7 exposes the level of awareness among the users regarding the shelf arrangement. 37 (42.04%) users stated that books on the shelves are arranged according to the title of the book, 25 (28.40%) according to author while 8 (9.09%) indicated that books are arranged according to accession number on the shelves. Only 18 (20.45%) users choose the correct answer that the books on the shelves are arranged according to call number. It shows that a majority of the respondents lack the knowledge about the shelf arrangement.
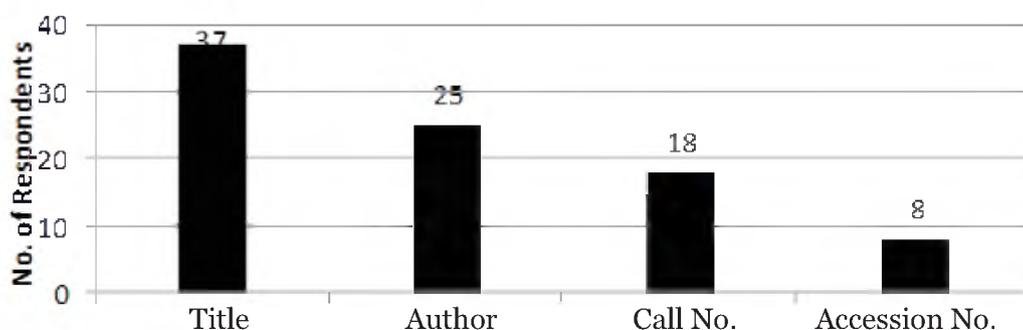

Figure 7 : Awareness about the Shelf Arrangement

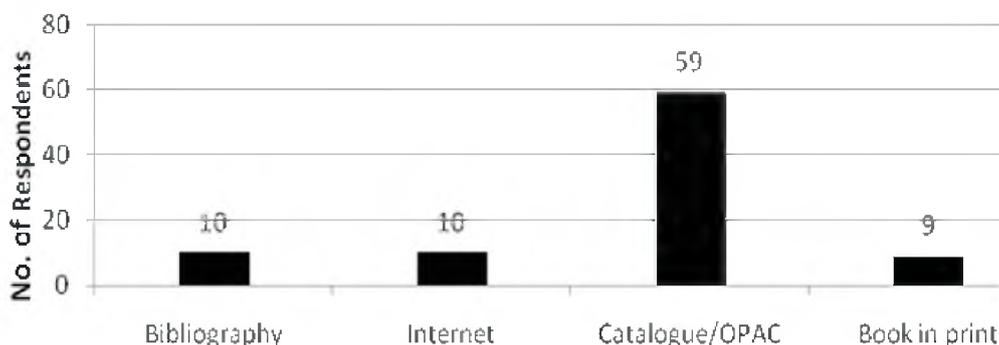## Awareness about the Purpose of Library Catalogue

Figure 8 : Awareness about the Purpose of Library Catalogue

Figure 8 shows that 59 (67.04%) users stated that they would consult the library catalogue/OPAC to identify the availability of a required book in the library. Thus, majority of the users were aware with the purpose and use of library catalogue.

Knowledge about the Use of Bibliography

It is evident from Figure 9 that amongst 88 users only 19 (21.59%) were familiar with the use of bibliography and thus they were able to use it to find other related documents on a topic. Most of the users i.e. 69 (78.41%) chose the wrong answers. Among them, 31 (35.22%) users chose index, 25 (28.41%) glossary and 13(14.77%) table of content to find other related documents on a topic. It was found that the majority of the users did not know what a bibliography is, and thus were not able to make use of the retrieved information.
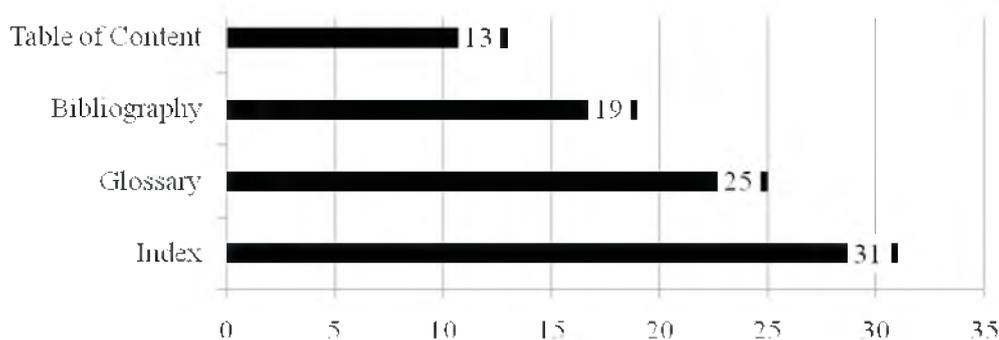

Figure 9 : Knowledge about the Use of Bibliography

Ability to Access and Evaluate Information in different Formats

Figure 10 illustrates the confidence level of users in accessing & evaluating information in print and electronic format. 16 (18.18%) users rated themselves very confident, 26 (29.54%) confident, 18 (20.45%) not very confident, 24 (27.27%) neutral and 4 (4.54%) have no confidence in accessing and evaluating information in the print format. Whereas only 12 (13.64%) users were very confident in accessing and evaluating information in electronic format, 27 (30.68%) confident, 22 (25%) not very confident, 20 (22.73%) neutral and 7 (7.95%) had no confidence. Thus, about 30% of the users were equally confident in both the formats.
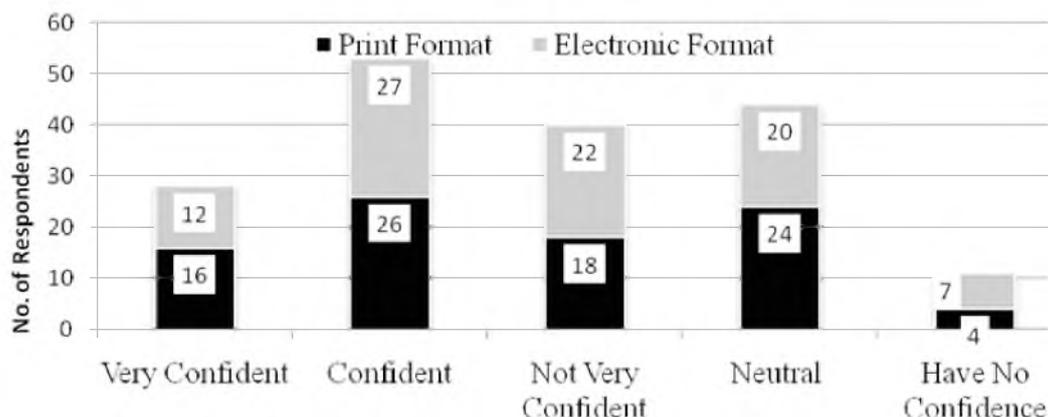
Figure 10 : Access and Evaluate Information in Different Formats

Users Satisfaction and Library Orientation

Figure 11 depicts the satisfaction level of users with the present library orientation and training or instruction provided by the library professionals. Only 18 (20.45%) users were very satisfied, 26 (29.54%) were satisfied, 30 (34.09%) were neutral, 9 (10.23%) were dissatisfied and 5 (5.68%) were very dissatisfied with the present library orientation and instructions provided by the library professionals in the use of library information resources and services.
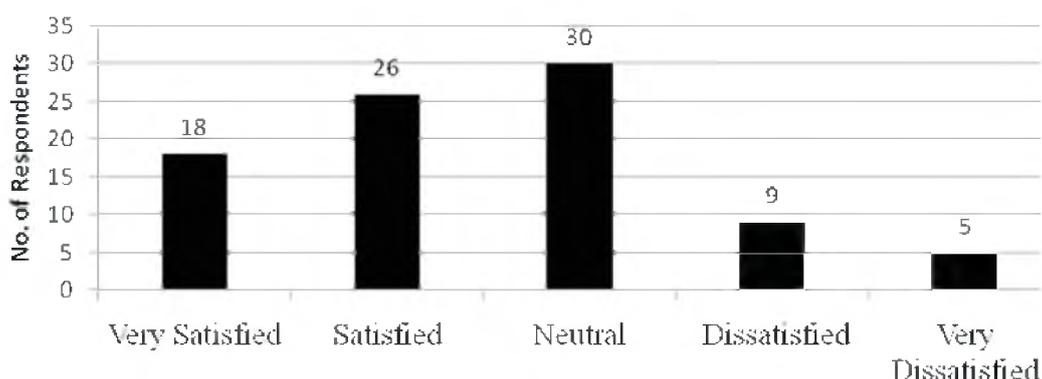

Figure 11 : Users Satisfaction & Library Orientation

Areas where ILPs are Required

Figure 12 shows that out of 88 users, a majority of the users i.e. 55 (62.50%) required training in Internet 45 (51.14%) users required instruction/training in computers, 44 (50%) in e-resources, 41 (46.59%) in print resources, 33 (37.50%) in search strategy, 28 (31.82%) in Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), 20 (22.73%) in how to locate books using library catalogue and classification number.
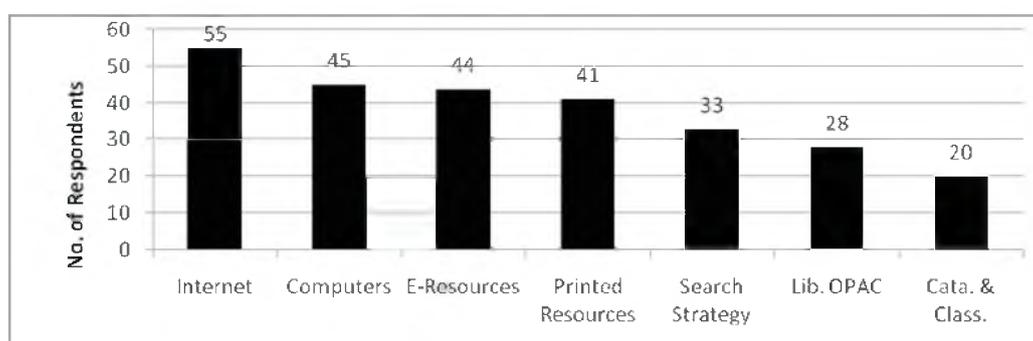

Figure 12 : Needed Areas for IL Program

Findings of the Study

The present study was conducted to know the information literacy competency of the users in the T. S. Central State Library. The major findings of the study were:

? All the users were able to identify and specify their information need.

? Out of 88 users, 59 (67.04%) users were frequently using the non-fiction, 52 (59.09%) newspaper, 45 (51.13%) Internet, 33 (37.50%) periodicals, 30 (34.09%) fiction and 24 (27.27%) audio visual material whereas only 22 (25%) and 12 (13.63%) users were frequently using the reference sources and government publications, respectively.

? A majority of the users i.e. 68 (77.27%) were aware that dictionary is the best source to find the meaning of a word. 55 (62.50%) users were aware that a directory is the accurate source to locate the addresses and telephone numbers. 49 (55.68%) users were aware that an atlas contains maps. Whereas only 36 (40.90%) users were aware that an encyclopedia is the best source for locating basic background information on a topic.

? Only 16 (18.18%) and 12 (13.64%) users were very confident in accessing and evaluating information in print & electronic format while about 30% of the

users were equally confident in both the formats.

? Boolean operators was used by only 8 (9.09%) users. 59 (67.04%) users were familiar with the purpose and use of library catalogue whereas only 18 (20.45%) users were aware that the books on the shelves are arranged according to call number. A majority of the users were not aware of the use and importance of various search mechanism for searching information from a database.

? A majority of the respondents lacked the knowledge about the shelf arrangement. Thus their information retrieval skills were very low for searching required information from the sources.

? Only 19 (21.59%) were familiar with the use of bibliography to find other related documents on a topic. Thus, majority of the users were not able to make use of the retrieved information.

? Only 18 (20.45%) users were very satisfied and 26 (29.54%) were satisfied with the present library orientation and instructions provided by the library professionals.

Conclusion

The aim of a public library is to make the citizens literate; therefore, it has to act as an information centre without any distinction of age, sex, colour, caste and status. Public library usually fulfills the informational, educational and recreational needs of the people. Currently, we are living in an information age where information is growing rapidly in various forms and formats. It is very difficult for an individual to find and select the required and accurate information from the ocean of information. Thus, in such an environment, it is necessary for an individual to be equipped with IL competencies that can help them to effectively search, locate, evaluate, and use the required information. It was found that the majority of the users need instruction/ training in the various areas, such as internet, use of computers & e-resources and information search strategies etc. Therefore, keeping in view the information needs of the users, their information seeking behaviour and the areas in which training/instructions are required, it is necessary to plan and organize user oriented Information Literacy Programs (ILPs) regularly. The issues like how to retrieve information from the printed and electronic sources, various search strategies, use and advantage of keywords and Boolean operators while searching a databases and instruction about how to use various reference sources may be included in the Information Literacy Programs (ILP) of the library.

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