

Information seeking behavior of Undergraduate students of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine of Jimma University

Mrs Enanu Tilahun

Head, Librarian
College of Agriculture & Veterinary Medicine
Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia

Dr M Natarajan

Associate Professor
Dept of Information Science
Jimma University, Jimma, Ethiopia
drnatarajanm@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is an outcome of the research study conducted by the authors on information seeking behavior of undergraduate students of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine of Jimma University, Jimma. Data has been collected through a structured questionnaire that was distributed to randomly select 300 students, wherein 289 of them have responded. The collected data has been analyzed with the latest version of MS-Excel for appropriate statistical procedures. The study revealed that the awareness of the services provided by the library, the purpose and type of information the students were seeking, the accessing of internet facility and use of catalogue card with the satisfaction of the services provided. They are not satisfied with the reading hall and reference service. They also suggested to have more e-resources and more photocopiers for the serving the student community. LIS professionals should take initiative to introduce e-discovery tools for better searching the e-resources together.

Keywords: Information needs, information seeking behavior, Undergraduate students, Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, Information resources, Jimma University.

Introduction

Globally, there is a rapid growth of research literature in agriculture and veterinary medicine which makes it imperative for the students to develop their information seeking and using behavior. However, searching, accessing and using information is a complex issue for them without any support or guidance from the library and teaching staff. Understanding the trends, strengths and weaknesses of the information seeking behavior (ISB) of the agriculture and veterinary medicine students is vital for the library staff in order to provide them with a quality and relevant service. Information seeking behaviour is a complex activity, requiring access to diverse information resources to deal with work-related, personal, and social information problems. ISB refers to strategies for locating information, and has three elements: people, information and systems. The study of individual ISB requires

understanding of the psychological state of the user that may lead to insight into their expectations make it possible to predict information-seeking activity (Ocholla 1999).

This paper deals with “Information seeking behavior of undergraduate students of Agriculture and Veterinary sciences in Jimma University (AVM-JU)” and carried out at Jimma University (JU) during December 2015 to April 2016. The objectives of the study were to 1) to study the information seeking practices of undergraduates in the digital age, 2) to study the strategies of undergraduates in the digital age for finding required information and 3) to make recommendations for the future developments of the information seeking and research practices of the undergraduates.

Concept of Information Seeking Behaviour

With the deluge of available information, each person needs information of increasing variety. The information needs of a particular group of users and for a specific situation or organization are difficult to determine. There is not one simple system to cope up with all information needs (Mahapatra and Panda 2001). According to Krikelas (1983), information-seeking behaviour refers to “any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need.” Mick (1980) observed that “information-producing and information-seeking behaviour are closely linked and are the reasons why most information systems are not better accepted as they fail to provide linkage between the two activities.”

Spink and Cole (2006) are of the opinion that human beings have been seeking and using information for survival in various contexts for millennia. According to Johnstone *et al.* (2004), the rapid diffusion of ICT has created a gap between the production of information via information systems and the processing and use of information by end-users. They further stated that the indentified gap is filled by human behaviour in closing the space between the information generated and information processed. Wilson (2000) stated that ‘information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use’.

Information seeking behaviour is a purposeful attempt to seek for information and to satisfy the needs that arise out of a necessity to achieve an objective. Here, the information system is consulted either manually or through human computer interaction. In this process, the user consults books or journals or newspapers or any other manual resource or internet by applying information seeking attitudes in a broader sense, that is to say, macro level of application of behaviour.

Objectives of the Study

1. To find out the awareness of researchers regarding services provided by the students of Agriculture and veterinary medicine (AVM) of JU.
2. To identify the purpose and type of information sought by the students.
3. To determine the extent of use of internet facility and awareness of catalogue usage.

4. To find out the satisfaction regarding the services provided by AVM - JU library.
5. To determine the places of accessing internet and assistance requested for information.
6. To identify the satisfaction of the services provided by AVM – JU library.

Scope

The scope of the study is limited to the students of Agriculture and veterinary medicine (second and third year students 2015/16 batch) of JU.

Methodology

This study has been conducted by means of a structured questionnaire. It has been circulated among 300 students of B.Sc degree 2nd and 3rd year (2015/16 batch Table 1 below -Total 591) in of Agriculture and veterinary medicine seven branches of Jimma University. A stratified random sample method was used for the selection of respondents and interaction with those who were available in the university during the survey period. The questions were designed to solicit information about the purpose for which they [students] seek information, how they meet their information needs, their frequency of use and the purpose for which they use the Internet, where they can access the Internet, the qualities they look for in the information they find, the satisfaction of the services provided by the library and the assistance taken for the finding / searching information. Out of 300 distributed questionnaires, 289 students (both male and female) have completed and returned back, which constitute a representation of 96.33% of the sample. The collected data was analyzed, classified and tabulated by implying statistical methods.

Table 1 Number of Students in different UG courses in AVM

S.No.	Department	2 nd Year			3 rd Year			Combined Total	
		F	M	Tot	F	M	Tot	TotF	TotM
1	BSc in Agricultural Economics	7	47	54	16	48	64	23	95
2	BSc in Agribusiness and Value chain management	10	27	37	14	43	57	24	70
3	BSc in Rural Dev & Agricultural Extension	12	26	38	27	21	48	39	47
4	Bachelor (BSc) in Horticulture	3	27	30	23	16	39	26	43
5	Bachelor (BSc) in Plant Sciences	11	30	41	13	36	49	24	66
6	Bachelor (BSc) in Sugarcane Agronomy	8	22	30	13	28	41	21	50

7	BSc in Animal Sciences	3	29	32	14	17	31	17	46
	Total = 591	54	208	262	120	209	329	174	417

F=Female, M=Male, Tot=Total

Review of Related Literature

There are several studies conducted on the topic of information needs and information seeking behaviour. Some of the studies focused only on the students and some executively on the faculty. Some selected such literature are being reviewed in this section.

Das and Achary (2015) in their study on Information needs, Information seeking Behaviour and use of Electronic resources by Research scholars and Faculties in the University and Research libraries of Odisha have revealed that maximum number of respondents uses University libraries, followed by research libraries. They prefer the current information and research articles. Most of the users prefer electronic resources, there after text books and reference books because these are informative, time saving and easy to use. It is also revealed from the data analysis that majority 360(39.14%) have said they are ' Locating or identifying information' with the help of library staff.

Kumar and Kasirao (2015) conducted Information seeking behavior of faculty members in the Business management educational Institutions Knowledge Resource Centre in Chennai City-An analytical study. The study observed that, faculty members prefer the information sources for teaching and research purpose also many of them prefer of printed material, electronic and digital material.

Ngozi, Uche and Ejiro (2015) studied that Information seeking behaviour of faculty members in a Nigerian University. Result show that the faculty members use books (print & online) as their preferred source of information, while the major information need of faculty members is academic and research need, the research also showed that faculties demand for information via google and other online sources. Poor internet facilities, irregular power supply, poor searching skills, lack of time, while some faculty members said they are not satisfied with the materials in the library were found as factors affecting the information seeking behaviour of faculty members.

Sarkhel and Milan Khan (2014) studied on the Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of Faculty members of Agricultural Universities in Bangladesh: A Study. It was to determine what their information requirements and also determine their purpose of library services available for them in the library. The results of this study reveal users are satisfied with library collections and services, but who want training in the use of online information. Although document delivery service is being provided on demand, the researchers pointed out that it would be worthwhile if the library could provide them with indexing, abstracting and interlibrary loan service as well. It is recommended that library staff or reference librarians focus on assisting users to develop a better image for the library. Reference librarians should help teachers improve their information-seeking and find the types of

information they need. User education about library using should be carried out as a seminar or workshop

Sahu and Singh (2013) examined the different aspects of information seeking behavior and specifically the information seeking behavior and information needs of Indian astronomy/astrophysics academics. The findings show differences in information seeking behavior and needs for various academic sub-fields of Indian astronomy/astrophysics, and highlights the value of information seeking behavior to scientists working in astronomy/astrophysics.

The study by **Sonia Kumari, Sushila Kumari and Saroj Devi. (2013)** on the Information Needs and Information Seeking Behaviour of Teachers of NIT, Kurukshetra analyzed the ISB wherein maximum teachers visited the library to issue books, used periodicals, journals and reference material for different purposes but their frequency of visit vastly varies while maximum of them (53.5%) never used audio-visual material as a source of information. The study also shows that teachers are least concerned with Government documents, dissertation/thesis and proceeding of conferences as source of information. Maximum Teachers (97.4%) are aware about the back volume of the journals. It is also found in the study that maximum teachers were satisfied with the Library collections.

Thanuskodi (2012) attempted to study the Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of The Tamil Nadu Dr. Ambedkar Law University Faculty Members. The study was found that, they used various sources for acquiring the needed information and they preferred to first consult their personal collection before resorting to other information providing sources and agencies. The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and CD-ROM were the most frequently used IT-based sources and facilities. E-mail was the most popular among the Internet-based services and applications.

Adio and Arinola (2012) studied 180 senior students in the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences in LAUTECH1, established that Internet was used by 74% followed by textbooks (66%), theses and dissertations (63%), and CD-ROM databases (39%) and most of the students lack basic knowledge and skills in using available resources and services in the library. Lack of facilities and inadequacy of computers in the library were identified as barriers. Aggressive information awareness for all students, an orientation in information searching tools and improving computer and Internet facilities are recommended.

Cheunwattana and others (2012) surveyed 2,435 respondents in six public universities in Thailand selected using stratified random sample with the objective studying the information literacy practices of college students in course-related and everyday-life research. The study established that the students heavily rely on search engines while their abilities in evaluating information resources were only moderate. The majority of students did not give enough importance to evaluation. Defining a topic for the assignment, narrowing down the topic, getting started on the assignment and evaluating the sources were recorded as the most difficult research-related tasks.

Hadimani and Rajgoli (2010) carried out a survey in a College of Agriculture in Rainchur, India using a questionnaire distributed to 90 randomly selected undergraduates. The study

established that 94.44% know when they are in need of information, 100% know where to find information, 66.66% search Internet for information and 100% search in the college library. Of the respondents, 95.55% are able to search exact information, 94.44% contact library staff to access information, 91.11% has the ability to evaluate information in terms of currency, authority and appropriateness. The authors have concluded that the college should have separate funding and other support for an information literacy agenda, technological infrastructure needs to be improved and that the librarians and faculty should collaborate to develop discipline-specific research skills.

Sheeja (2010) in her study examined the information seeking behavior of science and social science research scholars, including service effectiveness, satisfaction level on different type of sources and various method adopted by the scholars for keeping up to date.

Rhoades and others (2008) surveyed 255 second and third year students enrolled in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences of University of Florida, and established that search engines and WebCT were utilized by most. The Internet was seen to be moderately good, easy to understand, important, easy to find, beneficial, believable and credible.

Steinerova and Susol (2007) conducted a study on user information behaviour from a gender perspective in Slovakia. Differences in orientation to information, collaboration style, and use of information were discovered, with the conclusion that gender as a variable can be productive for understanding information processing.

Asemi (2005) surveyed the search habits of Internet users at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences (MUI) in Iran, and found that training would help them obtain useful and relevant information.

Francis' (2005) studied about the social scientists' information seeking behavior at University of West Indies revealed that a preference for journal articles in electronic format over print articles, which demonstrated that social scientists "have embraced electronic resources.

Oduwole (1999) conducted a study to examine the impact of an institution's medical library on the clinical decision-making of medical officers in two Nigerian university teaching hospitals and to examine the medical information sources. The major findings revealed a heavy dependence on the journal literature.

Prasad (1998) noted that non-traditional literature such as unpublished conference and symposia papers, research proposals, policy guidelines, and project reports are also popular among scholars.

Analysis and Findings

The following sections discuss the findings under several themes; age, gender of the respondents, types of assignments received, resources consulted, evaluation criteria, people asked for assistance with evaluation of material, and difficulty of tasks related to course-related research. Out of 300 questionnaires distributed 289 students (216 Male and 73 Female) have responded by completing them and they are analyzed below:

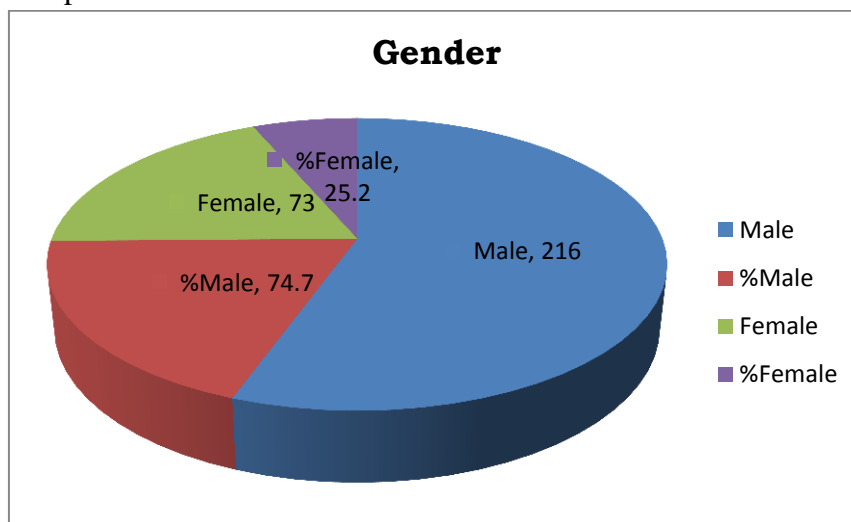
Age and Gender of the Students

Of the total respondents, the majority 155 (71.7%) is of male students in the age group of 18-20 years, 44 (60.3%) are females in the same age group and only 2 are above 26 years in male and none in female on this category, which is presented below in Table 2:

Table 2: Frequency of Age and Gender of the students of AVM (JU)

S.No.	Age(in years)	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	18-20	155	71.7	44	60.3
2	21-23	50	23.1	20	27.4
3	24-26	9	4.2	9	12.3
4	More than 26	2	0.9	0	0
	Total	216	100	73	100
5	Gender	216	74.7	73	25.2

It is also seen that male students have responded more (74.7%) than female students. The same is shown as pie chart below:



It was requested about their frequency of visit to the library, accordingly the collected data is given below in Table 3:

Table 3: Frequency of Visit to the Library (AVM-JU)

S.No.	Frequency	No. of Students visited			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Daily	143	66.2	53	72.6
2	Twice a week	18	8.3	11	15.0
3	Weekly	30	13.9	5	6.8
4	Monthly	16	7.4	4	5.5
5	Occasionally	9	4.1	0	0

	Total	216	100	73	100
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The same is depicted below as bar diagram:

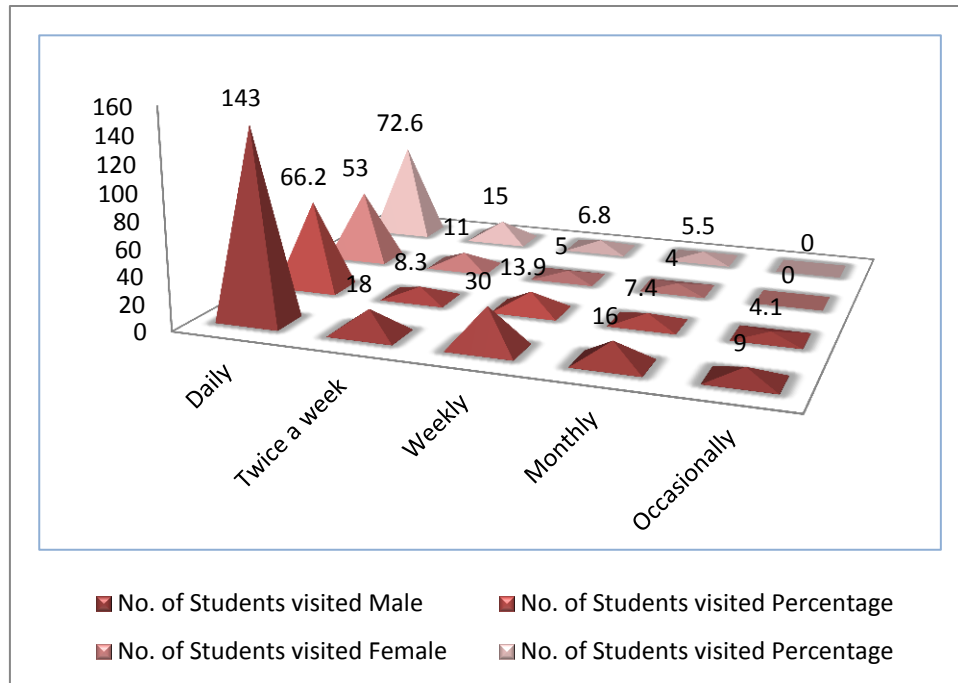


Figure 1 Frequency of visit

From the above it is found that most of the students - male 143 (66.2%) and female 53 (72.6%) visit the library daily for their information needs. Only 9 male students visit occasionally.

It was also requested in the questionnaire regarding hours spent towards accessing e-resources. The collected data has been given below as Table 4:

Table 4: Hours spent on e-resources

S.No.	Hours spent	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	1 hour	17	7.9	5	6.8
2	2-5 hours	45	20.9	34	46.6
3	6-10 hours	108	50	26	35.6
4	11-15 hours	30	13.8	7	9.5
5	16-20 hours	9	4.1	1	1.4
6	More than 20 hours	7	3.2	0	0
	Total	216	100	73	100

It is found from the above that most of the male students 108 (50%) spend their time (6-10 hours) for getting the information from e-resources, whereas 34 (46.6%) female students (maximum) spend their time for 2-5 hours.

It was also requested regarding the awareness of the services provided by AVM-JU library. The collected data is given below as Table 5:

Table 5: Awareness of the services provided by AVM-JU library

S.No.	Awareness of services*	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Reference	27	12.5	12	16.4
2	Reading hall	125	57.9	63	86.3
3	CAS/SDI Service	57	26.3	26	35.6
4	Internet facility	144	66.7	73	100
5	Library Hours	90	41.6	45	61.6
6	Lending facility	75	34.7	36	49.3
7	E-Resources / E-DBs	153	70.8	65	89
8	Photocopy service	170	78.7	71	97.2
9	Newspaper	39	18	34	46.5

**multiple options were given*

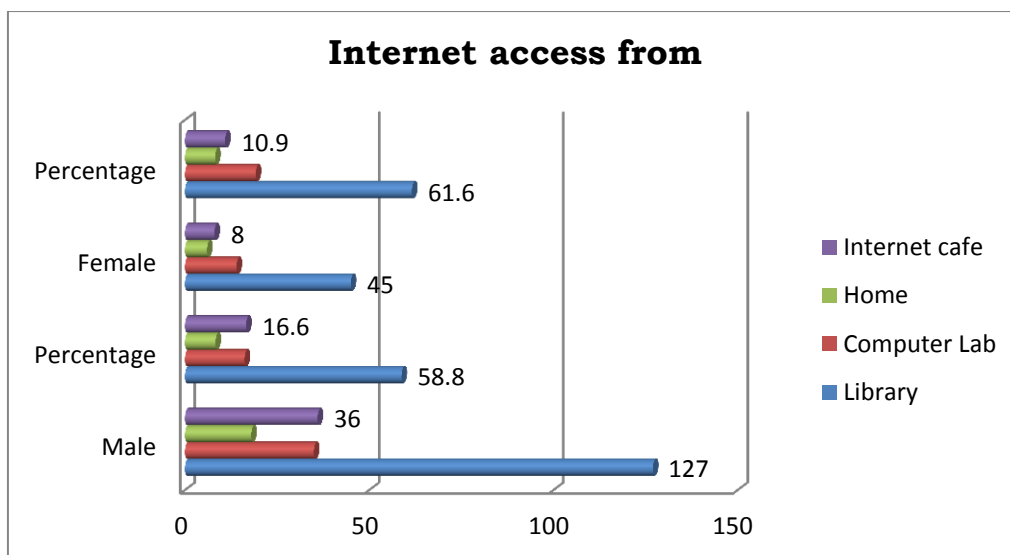
From the above Table 5, it is found that students are aware of the services like photocopy, e-resources, internet facility to the users, reading hall provision with the library hours for using the services. Particularly all of the students male and female are aware of internet and photocopy services, as they are very important for their learning and research activity. Mostly students always try to take the photocopies, for reading leisurely at their rooms / home.

It was requested about the place of accessing the internet facility in the questionnaire. Accordingly the collected data has been tabulated below:

Table 6: Accessing Internet facility

S.No.	Accessing Internet Facility from	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Library (AVM-JU)	127	58.8	45	61.6
2	Computer Lab	35	16.2	14	19.2
3	Home	18	8.3	6	8.2
4	Internet cafe	36	16.6	8	10.9
	Total	216	100	73	100

The same is depicted as bar diagram below:



The above data shows that the 127 (58.8%) male students and 45 (61.6%) female students are using the internet facility in the library. It shows that they are regular users' of the library.

Resources consulted by the students have been requested to find out the type of information seeking from the library. The collected data through questionnaire has been given below as Table 7:

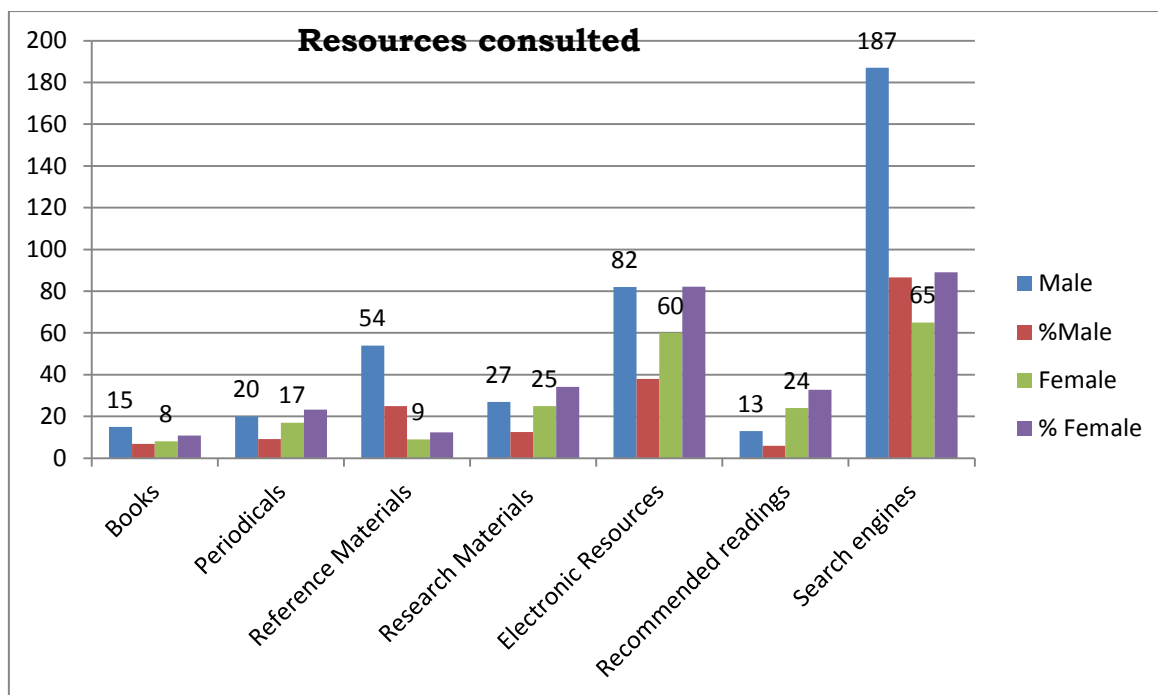
Table 7: Resources consulted by students of AVM-JU

S.No.	Resources consulted*	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Books	15	6.9	8	10.9
2	Periodicals	20	9.2	17	23.2
3	Reference Materials	54	25	9	12.3
4	Research Materials	27	12.5	25	34.2
5	Electronic Resources	82	38	60	82.1
6	Recommended readings	13	6	24	32.8
7	Search engines	187	86.6	65	89
	TOTAL	216		73	

**Multiple options has been given*

From the above it is found that most of the students either male 187 (86.6%) or Female 65 (89%) consult the search engines as a resource, secondly they use e-resources and 13 male students use only recommended readings as least, wherein 8 female students use books as a last resource.

The above data has been shown below as bar diagram for easy understanding.



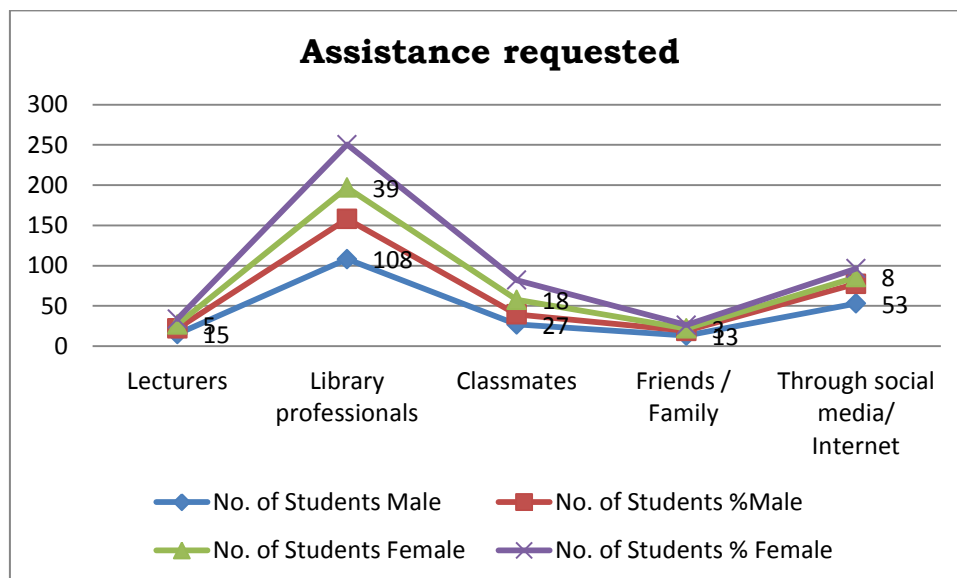
Students may not be much aware of the resources to consult for their study and research. They are taking assistance from lecturers, librarians and others. When it was requested about that, they have given the response, which is given below as Table 8:

Table 8: Assistance requested by students for Resources

S.No.	Assistance requested from	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Lecturers	15	6.9	5	6.8
2	Library professionals	108	50	39	53.4
3	Classmates	27	12.5	18	24.6
4	Friends / Family	13	6.01	3	4.1
5	Through social media/ Internet	53	24.5	8	10.9
	TOTAL	216	100	73	100

From the above, it is found that most of the students both 108 male (50%) and 39 female (53.4%) consult the library professionals for their needy resources, as now library is equipped with lot of resources in print and electronic form. Also library professionals are well aware of the e-resources, which are mostly given by International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications (INASP) and hence they are able to assist the users of different categories. 53 (24.5%) Male students are also taking the assistance through social media, as now they are using it very much for contacting other students of by making use of internet. 18 (24.6%) female students are taking assistance from their own classmates.

The above data has been shown below as line diagram for easy understanding.



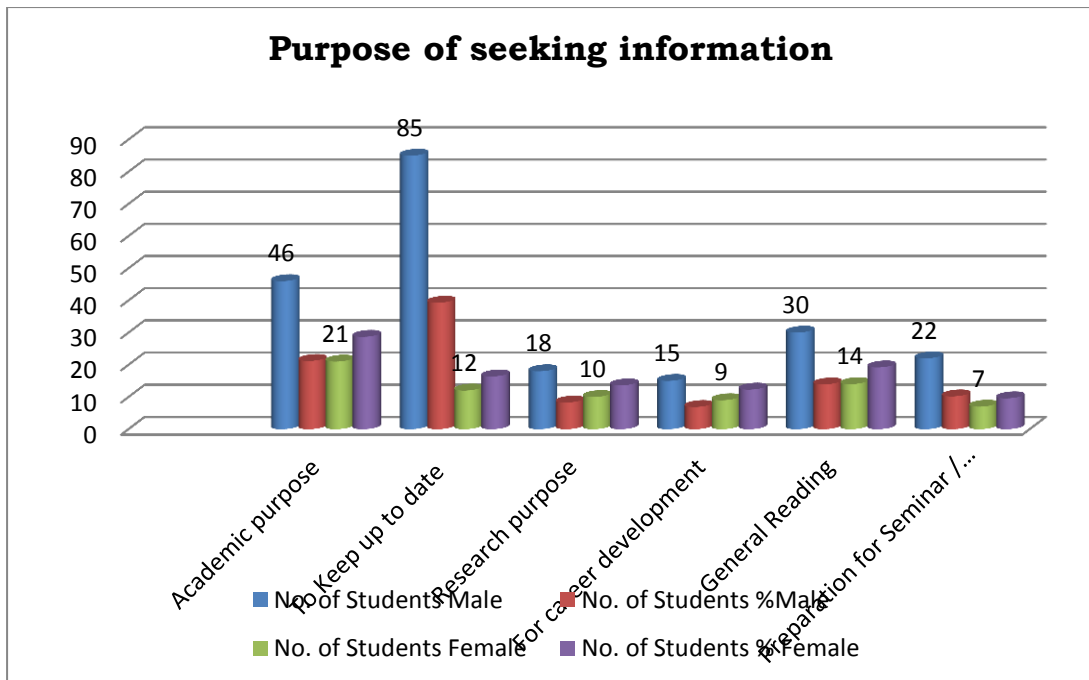
The students have been using the library, internet access, e-resources and other facility from the library. It has been requested from them for what purpose they are seeking different types of information. The collected data has been given below in Table 9:

Table 9: Purpose of seeking information

S.No	Purpose of seeking	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Academic purpose	46	21.2	21	28.7
2	To keep up to date	85	39.3	12	16.4
3	Research purpose	18	8.3	10	13.6
4	For career development	15	6.9	9	12.3
5	General Reading	30	13.9	14	19.2
6	Preparation for Seminar / conferences	22	10.2	7	9.6
	Total	216	100	73	100

From the above it is found that maximum of 85 (39.3%) male students are seeking information for keeping up to date in their subject, wherein 21 (28.7%) of girls students informed that are using mostly for academic purpose. For career development, only 15 (6.9%) male students are seeking the information, wherein 7 (9.6%) of female students are using for preparation for seminar / conferences as least. Some of the students are using for general reading and research purpose also.

The same tabular data is depicted as bar diagram below:



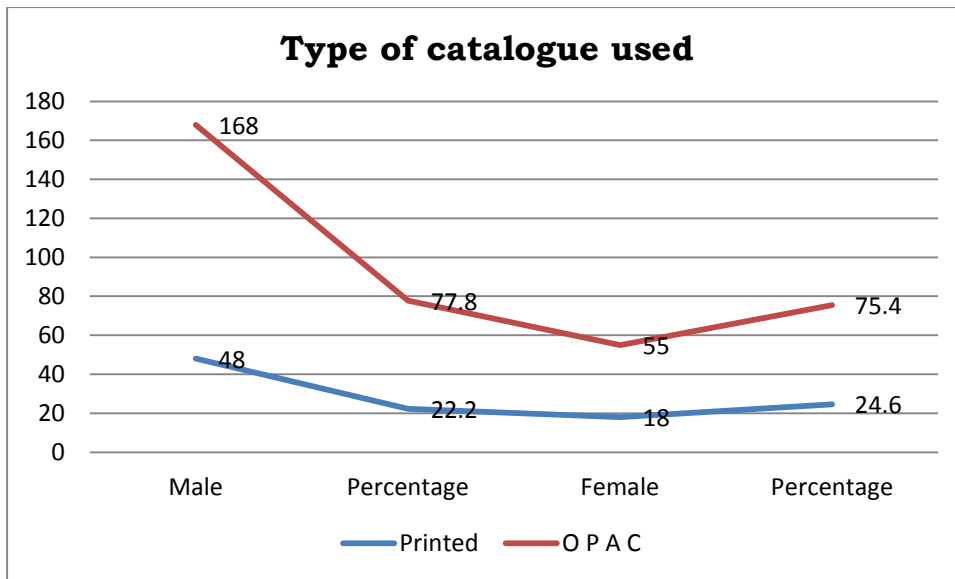
The preference of using catalogue for searching the resources from the library was requested in the questionnaire. The collected data is given below as Table 10:

Table 10: Students vs. Type of catalogue used for getting information

S.No.	Type of catalogue	No. of Students			
		Male	Percentage	Female	Percentage
1	Printed	48	22.2	18	24.6
2	Online Public Access Catalogue	168	77.8	55	75.4
	Total	216	100	73	100

From the above it is found that both male (168) and female (55) students prefer to use Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), as it has the facility for searching by different keywords in comparison with printed catalogue.

The same tabular data is depicted as line diagram below:



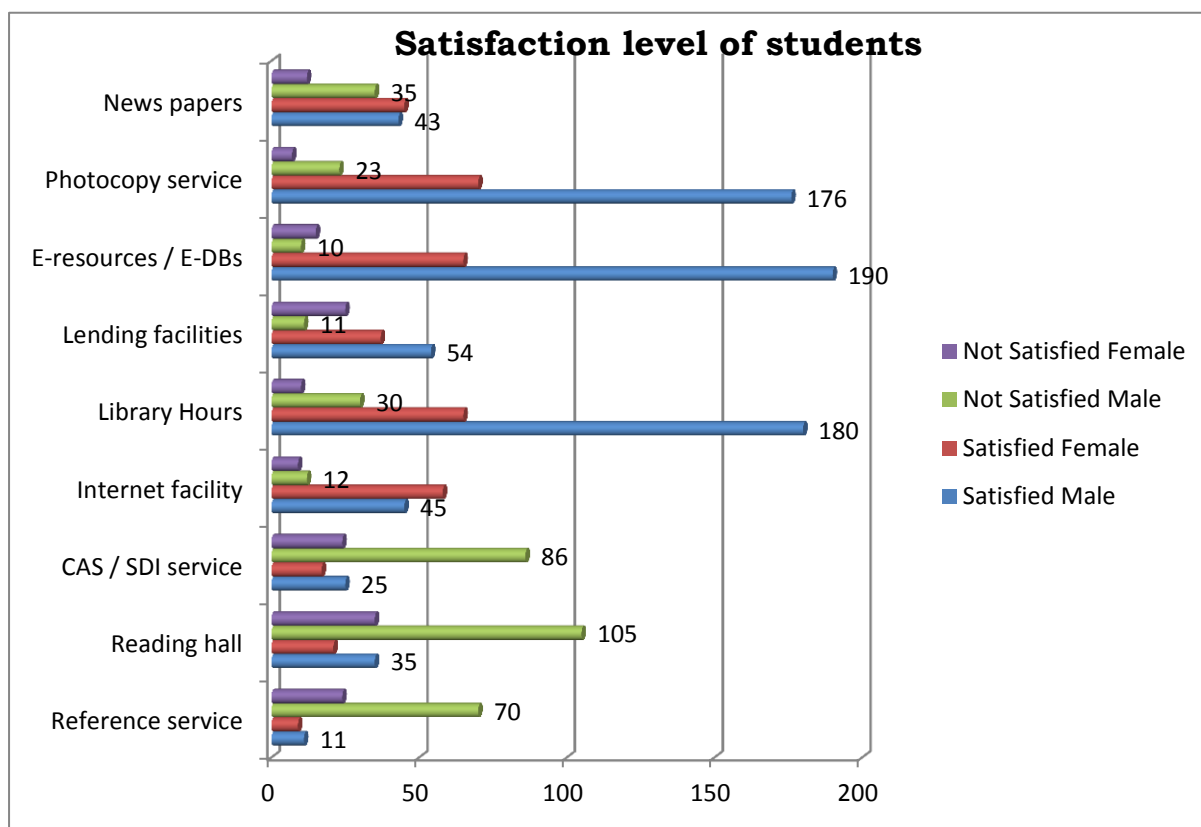
It has been requested in the questionnaire regarding the satisfaction of the library services (with multiple options) provided at AVM-JU library. The collected data has been given below in Table 11:

Table 11: Satisfaction level of students vs. Library services
*Multiple options are given

S.No.	Services provided by library*	No. of Students Satisfied		No. of Students Not Satisfied	
		Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
1	Reference service	11 (5.1)	9 (12.3)	70 (32.4)	24 (32.9)
2	Reading hall	35 (16.2)	21 (28.8)	105 (48.6)	35 (47.9)
3	CAS / SDI service	25 (11.6)	17 (23.3)	86 (39.8)	24 (32.9)
4	Internet facility	45 (20.8)	58 (79.4)	12 (5.6)	9 (12.3)
5	Library Hours	180 (83.3)	65 (89.0)	30 (13.9)	10 (13.7)
6	Lending facilities	54 (25)	37 (50.7)	11 (5.1)	25 (34.2)
7	E-resources / E-DBs	190 (87.9)	65 (89.0)	10 (4.6)	15 (20.5)
8	Photocopy service	176 (81.5)	70 (95.9)	23 (10.6)	7 (9.5)
9	News papers	43 (19.9)	45 (61.6)	35 (16.2)	12 (16.4)
	Total	216 (100)	73 (100)	216 (100)	73 (100)

From the above table it is found that most of the male students were satisfied with all the services like CAS/SDI, Internet facility, Lending facility, E-resources, Photocopy. They were not happy with reading hall and reference service. This may be due to lack of insufficient space with furniture in the reading hall and there is no specific reference librarian is available at AVM-JU. In the same line female students are also satisfied with the services like internet, e-resources, photocopy service, etc and they are also not satisfied with the reading hall facility.

The above table is given below as bar diagram below.



Findings and Suggestions

The study has been carried out for the information seeking behavior of students of agriculture and veterinary medicine of Jimma University with the objectives to find out the users behavior and information seeking strategies. The study findings are as follows:

Findings

1. From the study it is found that library has rich collection of Books, Periodicals and other materials.
2. Majority of the students, 143 male and 53 female visits the library daily and they use internet facility more within the library.
3. As they visit mostly library, they also take assistance from the library professionals for information seeking from different resources.
4. Majority of the students use e-resources to the maximum of 6-10 hours (male), 2-5 hours (female) and are satisfied with collection of the library.
5. Most of the students are aware about e-resources and their purpose of seeking information is for academic purpose and also to update their subject interest.
6. Majority of the students both male and female (>80%) are fully satisfied with services provided by the library.

7. Majority of the respondents (>75%) preferred OPAC for searching the catalogue, as it has the provision for multiple way of searching a document.
8. More than 80% of the students are satisfied with the services provided and few of the students are not satisfied with the reading hall and reference service. This may be due to the lack of qualified reference librarian at AVM-JU.

Suggestions

Suggestions have been requested in the questionnaire, for further improvement or any comments of the existing facility. Accordingly the suggestions by the students are given below:

- Most of the students visit the library daily and generally they use the internet facility in order to consult the different resources. For consulting they found the difficulty of reading hall and they suggested that library may have more reading hall with sufficient furniture to use.
- Most of the students use Internet services for email and they face the problem of speed in downloading and power interruption at many times. They suggested having Generator facility and arrangement may be made for better internet bandwidth for the library.
- Photocopying is the most widely used service in the library. They have to wait more time to get the photocopy as they have only two photocopiers and therefore they suggested having more photocopiers with full manpower and infrastructure.
- Most of the students use the library's e-journals and other e-databases. They complained sometimes they have some problem in accessing the required full text articles, as they are not available. Library may try to procure and supply them or arrange to have through INASP some agreement. Suggested to have more e-resources in agriculture with full text.

Conclusion

From this study, it is concluded that Information seeking pattern of undergraduate students of agriculture and veterinary medicine of Jimma university seems to be same as in other studies (Kumar and Shukla, 2013; Das and Achary, 2014), like the students visit library regularly, use internet, maximum use of e-resources, and the purpose is for updating the information for academic purpose. They use OPAC and they are very much satisfied with the services provided by the AVM-JU library except few. The results of the study may be used by the library authorities to understand the information seeking pattern of the students and accordingly mold their collection development to satisfy information needs. However the needs of the students continue to expand on a daily basis as a result of the emergence of new frontiers in agriculture and veterinary medicine. Library professionals should be able to arrange to provide the required resources either on demand or in anticipation to the student community as per their curriculum and research. Information seeking is a complex process and, as a result, the role of librarians is correspondingly more complex and more demanding to facilitate the information seeking process. Librarians should be proactive in service

delivery. This is because many students depend on the libraries to access information, as e-resources are now made available mostly. Advance searching methods and use of e-discovery tools in library may be adopted for better handling the students and faculty for their learning and research.

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