# ASSESMENT OF USERS BY LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

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**ABSTRACT**

*The library has been created by actual necessities in modern civilization. The change in the trend and format gave rise to the need of special knowledge, technologies and skills that helped the Library professionals to cope with the information demand of the users. Hence, the present study is taken up to assess the different categories of users with the help of user studies by the library professionals in India.*

***Keywords:*** *Assessment, User and Library Professional*

## 1. Introduction

Today we look upon library as a social agency. The library has been created by actual necessities in modern civilization. Hence, it is rightly said, "Library and Society are interlinked and inter-dependent, society without libraries have no significance, and libraries without society has no origin" *(Khanna, 1994)*. Free library services for all are one of the changing dimensions of the libraries And the library is logically developed to disseminate knowledge for creating enlightened citizenry. With the change in trend of libraries and the formats of the documents the user responsive information services were enhanced. This gave rise to the need of special knowledge, technologies and skills that helped the Library and information science professionals to cope with the information demand of the users. To meet the information demand of the users satisfactorily there is a need for Library and Information Professionals to assess their users and user studies considered as one of the best methods in assessing the different categories of the library users and their different needs. Hence, the present study is taken up to assess the different categories of users in India with the help of user studies by the Library Professionals.

## 2. Review of Literature

Morris and O'Neill (1990) explore that library and information science professionals have the skills to become knowledge engineers to develop expert systems. Examines the tasks undertaken by a knowledge engineer and discusses the traditional LIS skills which might be useful in expert system work. There is however a demand for information specialists to assist in particular aspects of the design process and for personnel to develop expert systems for LIS tasks.

Garrod and Sidgreaves (1997) outline the methods and findings of an Electronic Libraries (eLib) programme research project: SKIP (Skills for new Information Professionals); which aimed to evaluate the impact of information technology on the skills and roles of staff working in libraries and information services.

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*Cronin* (1998) describes the strategic significance of information and intelligence management to socioeconomic growth. He considers the implications in terms of human and structural intellectual capital development. Provides demand- and supply-side analyzes of the knowledge and skills required of information professionals in the digital age.

According to *Chen* (1998) information resources management (IRM) is a major management reform that deals with information as an organizational resource that is planned, managed and controlled in ways similar to other resources, such as human resources. He describes the characteristics of IRM and its relationship with knowledge management (KM).

*Abell* (1998) considers the key skills likely to be of importance to these new 'Chief Knowledge Officers' and frames the discussion in the light of the TFPL study, undertaken for the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, to examine the skills and competency required by employers in the corporate sector from candidates for first and second level posts.

Defining the information professional in the information age *Langerman* (2001) addresses several aspects of the roles and responsibilities of current librarians and information specialists. The profound changes taking place in the profession have brought on an identity crisis. And he concludes that librarianship requires academic education and continuing professional development.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives undertaken for the study are:

- ✓ To know the ability of Library professionals in identifying their users
- ✓ To identify the different categories of users
- ✓ To know the usefulness of user studies

## 4. Methodology

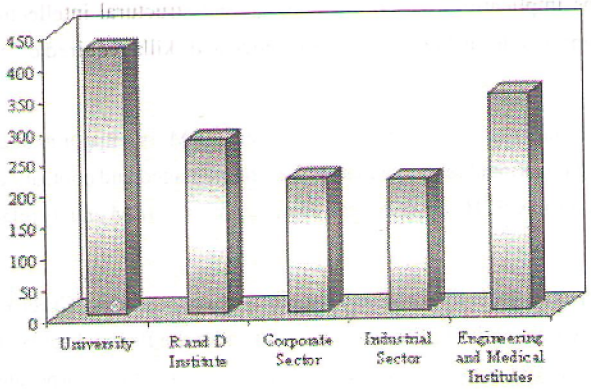
The present study analyzes and interprets the research data collected from Library professionals who had visited LIS forum at least once between 22nd July 2009 and 31st December 2010, allover India in order to assess their ability in identifying their users with the help of user studies. The Library professionals who are either Head Librarian or Deputy Librarian or Assistant Librarian were included for the present study.

## 5. Results and Discussions

**Table 5.1 Types of Institution to which Library professionals belong to**

| Institutions | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| University | 424 | 28.8 |
| R and D Institute | 278 | 18.9 |
| Corporate Sector | 214 | 14.5 |
| Industrial Sector | 210 | 14.3 |
| Engineering and Medical Institutes | 346 | 23.5 |
| Total | 1472 | 100 |

Fig. 5.1. Types of Institution to which LIS professionals belong to




Types of institutions to which Library professionals belong to is shown in table 5.1 (Fig. 5.1). It is found that among 1472 Library professionals nearly twenty nine percent (28.8%, N=424) are from Universities, more than twenty three percent (23.5%, N=346) are from engineering and medical institutes, nearly nineteen percent (18.9%, N=278) are from R and D Institutes, as many as fourteen percent (14.5%, N=214) are from corporate sector and 14.3% (N=210) are from industrial sector.

**Table-5.2 Designation wise distribution of Library Professionals**

| Designation | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Head Librarian | 669 | 45.4 |
| Deputy Librarian | 353 | 24.0 |
| Assistant Librarian | 450 | 30.6 |
| Total | 1472 | 100.0 |

Fig. 5.2. Designation wise distribution of LIS Professionals

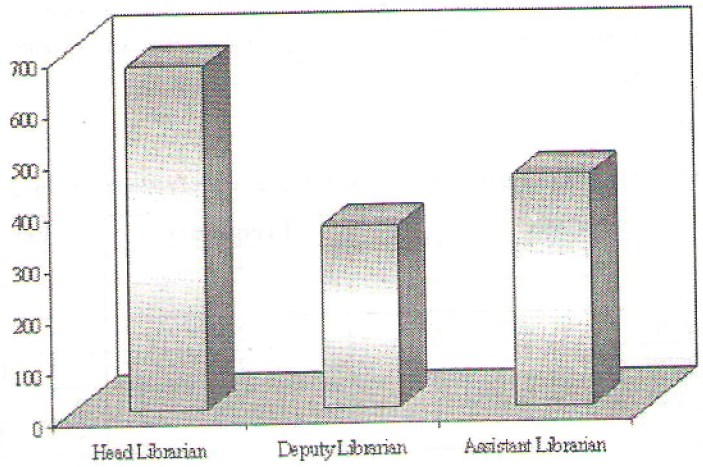
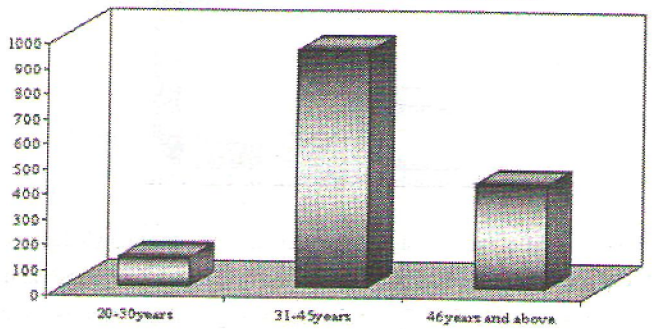


Table 5.2 (Fig. 5.2) shows the designation of Library professionals under study. More than forty five percent (45.4%, N=669) are Head Librarians, more than thirty percent (30.6%, N=450) are Assistant Librarians and twenty four percent (N=353) are Deputy Librarians.

**Table 5.3 Age wise distribution of Library Professionals**

| Age | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| 20-30years | 114 | 7.7 |
| 31-45years | 944 | 64.2 |
| 46years and above | 414 | 28.1 |
| Total | 1472 | 100.0 |

Fig. 5.3. Age wise distribution of LIS Professionals

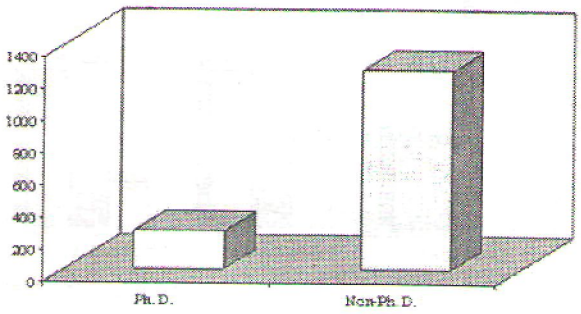



Age wise distribution of Library professionals is shown in table 5.3 (Fig. 5.3). It can be observed that sixty four percent (64.2%, N=944) of Library professionals are in the age group of 31-45 years, twenty eight percent 28.1% (N=414) are above 46 years and more than seven percent (7.7%, N=114) are in the age group of 20-30 years. This indicates that nearly three fourth of Library professionals are young.

**Table 5.4 Qualification wise distribution of Library Professionals**

| Qualification | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Ph. D. | 236 | 16.0 |
| Non-Ph. D. | 1236 | 84.0 |
| Total | 1472 | 100.0 |

Fig. 5.4. Qualification wise distribution of LIS Professionals

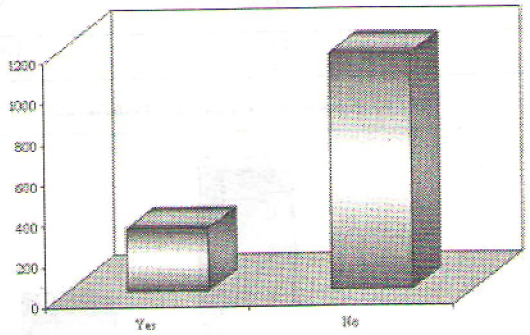


It is found from table 5.4 (Fig. 5.4) that eighty four percent of the Library professionals (84% N=1236) do not possess Ph.D. On the other hand only sixteen percent (N=236) of them have Ph.D.

**Table 5.5 Foreign Languages known by Library Professionals**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 310 | 21.1 |
| No | 1162 | 78.9 |
| Total | 1472 | 100.0 |

Fig. 5.5. Foreign Languages known by LIS Professionals

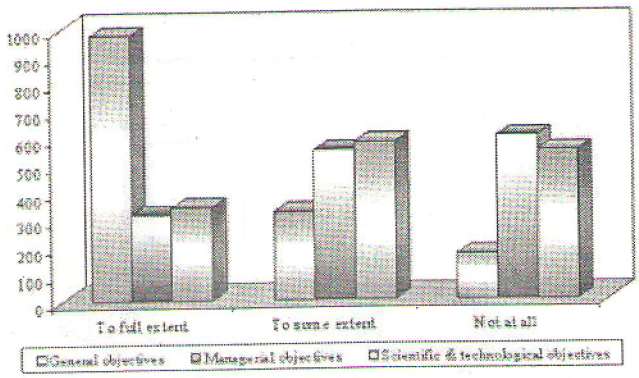



As the literature is published in different languages other than English, the knowledge of other foreign languages is required which helps in translating the literature published in different languages and providing the IACRD service. But it is observed from table 5.5 (Fig. 5.5) that nearly seventy nine percent (78.9%, N=1162) of Library professionals are not aware of Foreign Languages other than English and remaining twenty one percent (21.1%, N=310) have Knowledge of different foreign languages.

**Table 5.6 Knowledge of objectives of the institutions by Library Professionals**

| Knowledge | To full extent | | To some extent | | Not at all | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Fre. | % | Fre. | % | Fre. | % |
| General objectives | 978 | 66.4 | 326 | 22.2 | 168 | 11.4 |
| Managerial objectives | 319 | 21.7 | 551 | 37.4 | 602 | 40.9 |
| Scientific & technological objectives | 344 | 23.4 | 581 | 39.4 | 547 | 37.2 |

Fig. 5.6: Knowledge of objectives of the institutions by LIS Professionals



The knowledge about the objectives of the parent institution is also very important to provide ICP. The Library professional should have the knowledge of the general objectives, managerial objectives and also the scientific and technological objectives of the institutions. It is only then the Library professional will be in a position to provide a full fledged ICP to its users. It is observed from table 5.6 that more than sixty six percent (66.4%, N=978) the Library professionals have the knowledge of general objectives of the institute to the full extent, more than twenty two percent (22.2%, N=326) are aware of general objectives to some extent, and more than eleven percent 11.4% (N=168) of them are unaware of general objectives. As concerned to managerial objectives forty percent (40.9%, N=602) of Library professionals have noknowledge at all, as many as thirty seven percent (37.4%, N=551) are to some extent aware of managerial objectives 21.7%(N=319) of professionals are aware of managerial objectives to the full extent. More than thirty nine percent (39.4%, N=581) of the professionals are aware of scientific and technological objectives to some extent and more than thirty seven percent (37.2%, N=547) are completely unaware of scientific and technical objectives. More than twenty three percent (23.4%, N=344) of Library professionals are aware of scientific and technological objectives to full extent. This shows that Library professionals have the knowledge of general objectives of the institution, where as knowledge of managerial and scientific and technological objectives is acquired only to some extent, which is very much required for compilation of ICP

**Table 5.7 Ability of Library Professionals to identify users**

| Ability | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 1472 | 100.0 |
| No | - | - |
| Total | 1472 | 100.0 |

The knowledge about the users of the institution is also very essential in regard to IACRD aspects. Without the knowledge of the users the Library professionals cannot prepare a tailor made information service for them. It is found from table 5.7 that every single (N=1472) of Library professional can identify their users.

**Table 5.8 Category of users identified by Library Professionals**

| Category | Yes | | No | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
| UG students | 370 | 25.1 | 1102 | 74.9 |
| PG students | 626 | 42.5 | 846 | 57.5 |
| Teaching fraternity | 849 | 57.7 | 634 | 42.3 |
| Research scholars | 838 | 56.9 | 634 | 43.1 |
| Scientists | 598 | 40.6 | 874 | 59.4 |
| Technical staff | 819 | 55.6 | 653 | 44.4 |

Fig. 5.7 Category of users identified by LIS Professionals

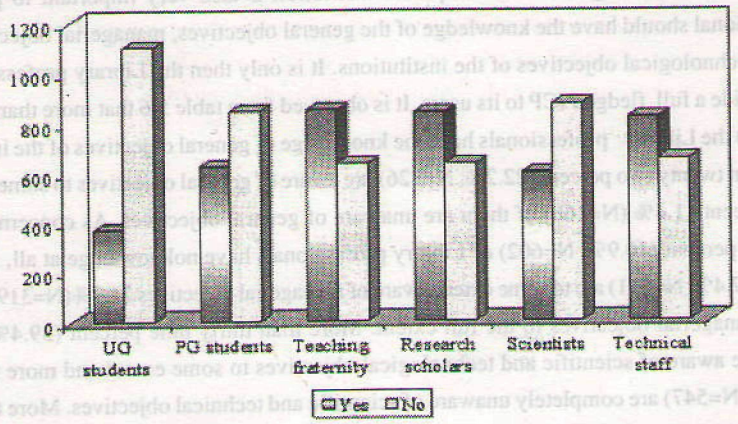



Table 5.8 (Fig. 5.7) shows the category of users found in their respective libraries. Teaching fraternity (57.7%, N=849), research scholars (56.9%, N=838) and technical staff (56.6%, N=819) are the major category of users found in their respective libraries PG students (42.5%, N=626) and scientists (40.6%, N=598) are the other two categories of the users.

**Table 5.9 Assessment of Requirements of Users**

| Methods | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Personal Rapport | 18 | 1.2 |
| Reference queries | 32 | 2.1 |
| Usage statistics | 25 | 1.6 |
| Conducting user studies | 1397 | 94.9 |
| Total | 1472 | 100 |

Fig. 5.8. Assessment of requirements of Users

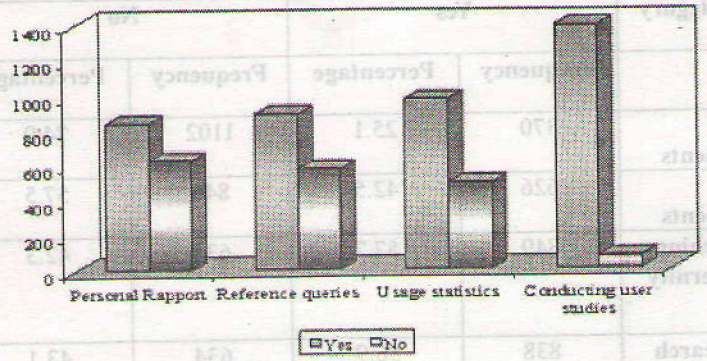
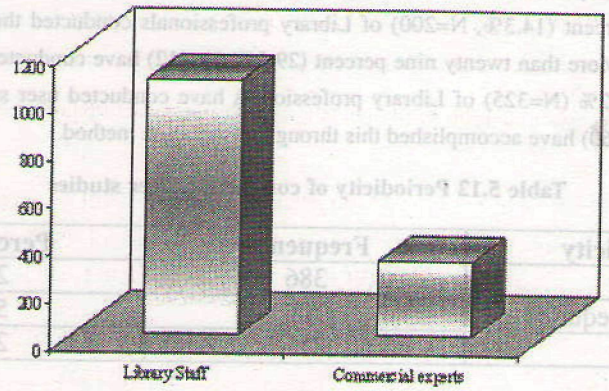


Table 5.9 (Fig. 5.8) reveals that the requirements of users are assessed. It is found that Library professionals assess the requirements of their users by conducting user studies with a majority of 94.9% (N=1397), where as 2.1% (N=32) of Library professionals assess the requirements of the users by reference queries, 1.6% (N=25) through usage statistics, and 1.2% (N=18) of the professionals through personal rapport.

**Table 5.10 Types of personnel conducting user studies**

| Personnel | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Library Staff | 1078 | 77.2 |
| Commercial experts | 319 | 22.8 |

Fig. 5.9 Types of personnel conducting user studies

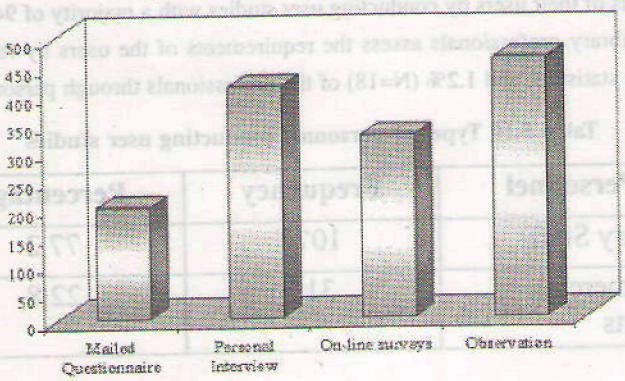



As the Library professionals serve the users and the institution and accordingly prepare the IACRD service and products, it is essential to know the process of conducting user studies. It is found from table 5.10 (Fig. 5.9) that more than seventy seven percent (77.2%, N=1078) of Library professionals claim that user studies are conducted by Library staff only and twenty two percent (22.8%, N=319) of Library professionals say that user studies are conducted by commercial experts.

**Table 5.11 Method used to Conduct User studies**

| Methods | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Mailed Questionnaire | 200 | 14.3 |
| Personal Interview | 412 | 29.5 |
| On-line surveys | 325 | 23.2 |
| Observation | 460 | 33.0 |

Fig. 5.10. Method used to conduct User studies

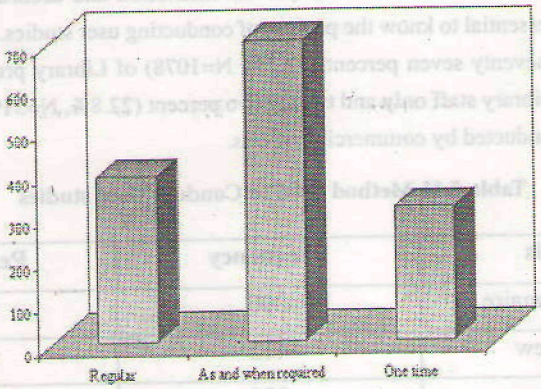



From table 5.11 (Fig. 5.10) it is clear that Library professionals conduct user studies using different methods. More than fourteen percent (14.3%, N=200) of Library professionals conducted the user studies through mailed questionnaire. More than twenty nine percent (29.5%, N=412) have conducted user studies through personal interview, 23.2% (N=325) of Library professionals have conducted user studies through on-line surveys and 33% (N=460) have accomplished this through observation method.

**Table 5.12 Periodicity of conducting User studies**

| Periodicity | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Once in a year | 386 | 27.6 |
| As and when required | 700 | 50.1 |
| One time | 311 | 22.3 |

Fig. 5.11. Periodicity of conducting User studies




From table 5.12 (Fig. 5.11) it can be found that only twenty seven percent (27.6%, N=386) of Library professionals conducted user studies regularly once in a year. Fifty percent (50.1%, N=700) of Library professionals conducted user studies as and when required to them and only twenty two percent (22.3%, N=311) of the Library professionals have conducted users studies only once.

## 6. Conclusion

It has become very essential that a Library and Information professional should be aware of all the objectives of the institution for which it is rendering service and also the different categories of users which they are supposed to provide service. There are different methods of knowing the library users and user studies are considered the best method for knowing the different categories of user of a particular library. In the present study after knowing the different users the different methods followed for user studies and the periodicity of conducting user studies are described and it is found that observation is considered the best method of user studies and it is done as and when required by the library staff.

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