



## Information Seeking Behaviour of Users at Usilampatti Public Library, Tamilnadu, India: A Case Study

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### Abstract

*Public libraries are the standing testimonies of democracies. They are the social transformers and cultural saviours. They are the storehouses of intellectual heredity of our forefathers. They are the lighthouses fostering creative leisure activities. This study was conducted with the help of structured questionnaires to analyze the information seeking behavior randomly selected 50 users at Usilampatti Public Library, Usilampatty, Tamilnadu in 2013. The data was entered and analyzed in MS Excel using simple average and percentage methods and presented using various chart options available therein. The major findings of the study are : A majority of respondents use the branch library at Usilampatti for preparing themselves for various competitive exams; 30 % respondents use the library once a week; Majority of users visit the library to read newspapers and reference books; While 12 respondents (24%) have time constraints in using the resources, 11 respondents (22%) opined that lack of adequate library staff is their major problem. 26 respondents (52%) search for materials subject wise and 12 respondents (24%) search for materials title-wise; 37 respondents (74%) opine that the quality of internet service offered by the library is good; 32 respondents (64%) are highly satisfied with the information they access from magazines and journals; 24 respondents (48%) rated the quality of overall library services as very good.*

**Keywords:** Public libraries, Usilampatty library, information seeking behavior, purpose of library visits, constraints, internet services.

### Introduction

**Public Libraries:** Public Library is generally defined as an institution of social life of the community towards fruitful use of leisure time. It helps the citizens to sustain and raise their standards of public and social conduct. It is a most powerful instrument for sustaining the desire to learn. It is a multipurpose social institution where anybody is free to become a reader to fulfill any of his personal aspirations. The aim of public libraries is to promote the general diffusion of knowledge and information by means of fiction and nonfiction books which lead to the general development of culture.

UNESCO Manifesto for public libraries (issued in 1949 and revised in 1972) states, "the public library is a practical demonstration of democracy's faith in universal education as a continuing and lifelong process in the apparition of the achievement of humanity in knowledge and culture. It is the principal means whereby the record of man's thoughts and ideas and the expression of his creative imagination are made freely available to all. It is concerned with the refreshment of man's spirit by the provision of books for relaxation and pleasure".

The aims of public library are to provide free access to its holdings and offer free information services to all citizens of the area.

**Usilampatti public library: History:** Usilampatti public library was established by Tamilnadu state government for the benefit

of Usilampatti dwelling general people and students. Usilampatti branch public library was started on 8<sup>th</sup> may 1955 under the control of Madurai district library. The library is running in its oven building. The library working hours are 12 hours (morning 8A.M to evening 8P.M). The library is situated in the Vinayagar Kovil street, Usilampatti. It had 2378 members in 2001 which was increased to 4009 in 2010-11. The users count has increased from 17408 in 2001 to 33,285 in 2010-11. While 7482 books were issued in 2001, 14964 books were issued in 2010-11.

**Services of the Usilampatty public library:** Reference service, Lending services, Home delivery, Open Access and Other services like Text Book Wing; Periodicals and News Papers; Video ; Xerox; Compilation of Bibliography; I.A.S Study Centre etc.

**Review of literature:** Wani (2008) traced the history and development of public libraries in India. The paper presented a theoretical outline of how public libraries grown in pre-independent and post-independent India. It elaborated on the recommendations given by the Advisory committees for the development of public libraries. It discussed the role and objectives of Raja Ram Mohan Roy Foundation in promoting public library movement in India<sup>1</sup>.

Parvathamma and Reddy analysed the use of information sources and services in the public libraries of Bidar District, Karnataka State. Data collected from 152 respondents reveal that majority of the users are men in the age group of 11-30 years. The respondents spend less than one hour and inconvenient timing was the reason why they don't visit quite often. News papers and magazines were most read information sources and fictions were the most borrowed documents<sup>2</sup>.

Oyeronke discussed the roles of public libraries in Nigeria and also examined various ways in which public libraries can help curb unemployment among youths by providing them with timely and accurate information. He explained the problems and prospects of public libraries highlighting issues like Inadequate budgets, lack of public awareness, non-availability of latest resources and the need for training library staff<sup>3</sup>.

Balasubramanian conducted a study on the extension activities of the District Central Library, Tirunelveli. The study found out that: The number of books referred by the users keep on increasing; The number of book issued during the study period is less than that of previous years. The number of members has not increased tremendously. The study suggests congenial sitting facility and attractive physical layout to attract more users to the library<sup>4</sup>.

Das tried to depict the picture of public libraries under Chhaygaon development block area. The present scenario of the public libraries as it exists today is not satisfactory. The public libraries under the study area are suffering from funding problem very much. Besides financial problem, the public libraries of the area are also suffering from many other burning problems which are also another significant causes for the limiting the growth and development of libraries in chhaygaon development block area<sup>5</sup>.

Balasubramanian, Baalachandran and Swamidoss analysed the modernization programmes taken place in 30 district central (public) libraries of Tamil Nadu using questionnaires and interviews. A sample of 300 users had been selected at the rate of 10 from each library on the basis of random sampling method. It was found that: All the libraries conduct cultural meetings and organize library week celebrations. They all felt lack of adequate physical facilities, training and improper salary structure as their problems. All of them are blessed with 3-12 computers. A majority of the users are satisfied (medium) with library services<sup>6</sup>.

Saravanan, Mahendra and Slia carried out a study to identify the information needs and satisfactory level of users at Connemara Public Library, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. The data were collected from randomly selected users through questionnaire. The study found that: most of the respondents visit the library daily; maximum number of users are satisfied with library collections; They prefer print sources and 70% of them are unaware of the electronic resources available in the library. The

respondents suggested increased collections, better infrastructure and more library timings as the measures to improve library services<sup>7</sup>.

Partap attempted to take the opinions from the Senior Citizen as the users of T.S. Central State Library, Chandigarh (India). Questionnaire based survey method was used. 57.72% users used the library once a day. 85.36% respondents were satisfied with the reading room facility. For 98.37% of the respondents, present working hours are most suitable. 70.73% read fictions. 92.68% respondents were satisfied with the assistance given by the library staff. 95.12% users were fully satisfied with the present location of the library. The collection of the newspapers and books were adequate. The respondents demanded for a separate internet browsing area. To magazines and general reading materials<sup>8</sup>.

Velmurugan conducted a survey study to examine the use of library sources and services of Virudhunagar district central library. Majority of the respondents are satisfied with reference collection. Only 8% of them don't get required information from the catalogue. Most of the users want the reprographic service in the library. Almost all of them are satisfied with the newspapers available in the library<sup>9</sup>.

Ravanan, Murugan and Stephen collected data from 120 users by administrating questionnaires among them to elicit their attitude towards reading habits and purpose of the visiting of libraries at Vellore District Public Library Tamil Nadu. The study reveals that majority of users visit the library once a week; The library users are not able to come to library more often because of their personal work and lack of time; Users don't use non-print materials; Library professionals are skilled and helpful; Most of the users come to library to improve their general knowledge and update their current affairs status. The users love to read non-fiction materials. The users prefer gooks in Tamil their reading attitude is moderately positive<sup>10</sup>.

Fahmi et al. did an analytical study to discover the attitude towards rural library services among youths in Malaysia. It also considers the individual factors that might influence attitudes towards the services offered. This is a correlational study in nature, and uses a developed questionnaire to obtain the data needed. A total of 400 respondents among rural youths from 16 selected rural libraries in four states of Peninsular Malaysia were chosen. It is concluded that rural youths have a favorable attitude towards the services offered by local libraries and frequency of attending rural libraries has a positive relationship with attitude towards rural library services<sup>11</sup>.

Xin, Jianxiong and Jinmin presented a case study of services of selected public libraries in the underdeveloped regions in China. The study reviewed the public library system in Shanxi and suggested measures like resource sharing to reach rural areas of china in terms of public library services. The paper called for the joint efforts of the government, library professionals and the

general public to improve the condition of public libraries in the underprivileged regions of China<sup>12</sup>.

**Objectives of the study:** i. To identify the categories of users by sex. ii. To study about visiting frequency the respondents. iii. To study the purposes of visiting library. iv. To study the mode of searching information. v. To study the satisfaction level of respondents about the library services. vi. To know the sources used maximum by the respondents. vii. To find out the constraints faced by the respondents in using the library. viii. To find out the quality of information retrieved by the respondents from the journals and magazines. ix. To elicit the opinion of the respondents on the quality of internet services offered and x. To trace out the kind of resources used by the respondents to get relevant information.

### Methodology

**Sampling and Data Collection:** The type of sampling adopted in the investigation is a random sampling. The samples for the study (100 in numbers) were selected from the users visiting the library. Questionnaire method was used to collect primary data from the respondents.

**Analysis of data:** At the outset, the data was recorded on data sheets and the typed into the computer personally. Then, the data has been worked out with statistical tools like percentage and average etc. The collected data was represented in the form of tables.

**Limitations of the Study:** The study includes users belonging only to the Usilampatty public library; but not to the branch libraries. Period of study was from January 2013 to April 2013.

### Results and Discussions

**Gender of respondents:** Out of the respondents taken for the study, male respondents are 33 in numbers with 66 % and the female respondents are 17 in numbers with 34 % of the total.

**Table-1**  
**Gender of respondents**

S. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	33	66%
2	Female	17	34%
TOTAL		50	100%

**Marital Status:** The table shows that 17 respondents, among the 50 respondents, are married people who share 34%. The unmarried respondents numbering 33 share 66 %. It means that unmarried respondents use the library services more.

**Table-2**  
**Marital Status**

S. No.	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Married	17	34%
2	Unmarried	33	66%
TOTAL		50	100%

**Frequency:** This Table shows that among the 50 respondents, 13 respondents constituting 26% use the library daily, 15 respondents (30%) use library once a week, 09 respondents use library once a fortnight and 12 respondents (24%) use the library occasionally.

**Table-3**  
**Frequency**

S. No.	Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	13	26%
2	Weekly	15	30%
4	Fortnightly	9	18%
6	Occasionally	12	24%
Total		50	100%

**Purpose of visiting the library:** From this Table, it is observed that among the 50 respondents, 14 respondents visit the library for reading news, 03 respondents visit for preparing themselves for various competitive exams, 13 respondents for employment information, 14 respondents for general knowledge and 03 respondents for academic improvement. It is so concluded that majority of respondents use the branch library at Usilampatti for preparing themselves for various competitive exams.

**Table-4**  
**Purpose of visiting the library**

S. No.	Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Reading Newspaper	14	28%
2	Competitive Exams	3	6%
3	Employment News	13	26%
4	General knowledge	14	28%
5	Academic Improvement	3	6%
6	Entertainment	00	00
7	Others	2	4%
Total		50	100%

**Information Sources consulted:** From this Table, it is observed that among the 50 respondents, 14 respondents (28%) use newspapers, 05 respondents (10%) use employment newspaper, 05 respondents (10%) use the Journals and Magazine, 11 respondents (22%) use reference Books, 05 respondents (10%) use the books and 02 respondents (04%) use the e-resources to get required information.

**Table-5**  
**Information Sources consulted**

S. No.	Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Novels	5	10 %
2	Newspapers	14	28%
3	Employment Newspaper	5	10%
4	Journal/Magazines	5	10%
5	Books	11	22%
6	Reference books	5	10%
7	E-Resources	2	4%
8	Others	3	6%
Total		50	100%

**Search Strategy:** This Table reveals that out of 50 respondents, 26 respondents (52%) search for materials subject wise, 10 respondents (20%) search for materials using authors as keywords, 02 respondents (4%) search for materials publisher wise and 12 respondents (24%) search for materials title-wise. Hence maximum users employ 'subject search' at branch library in Usilampatti.

**Table-6**  
**Search Strategy**

S. No.	Search Strategy	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Subject Search	26	52%
2	Author Search	10	20%
3	Publisher Search	2	4%
4	Title Search	12	24%
Total		50	100%

**Quality of Internet services:** It is observed from Table No. 7 that out of 50 respondents, 37 respondents (74%) opine that the quality of internet service offered by the library is good, 04 respondents each (8%) feel it is fair/poor and 01 respondent (2%) feel that the quality of internet services is moderate.

**Table-7**  
**Quality of Internet services**

S. No.	Internet Services	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Good	37	74%
2	Fair	4	8%
3	No opinion	4	8%
4	Moderate	1	2%
5	Poor	4	8%
Total		50	100%

**Level of the satisfaction (Journals, Magazines and Periodicals):** It is understood from the above table that out of 50 respondents, while 32 respondents (64%) are highly satisfied with the information they access from magazines and journals, 09 respondents (18%) are satisfied, 08 respondents (16%) are less satisfied, only 01 respondent (2%) is dissatisfied with the information they get from magazines and journals.

**Table-8**  
**Level of the satisfaction (Journals, Magazines and Periodicals)**

S. No.	Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Highly satisfied	32	64%
2	Satisfied	9	18%
3	Less satisfied	8	16%
4	Dissatisfied	1	2%
Total		50	100%

**Opinion on Overall Library Services:** Form the above table, it is inferred that out of 50 respondents, 16 respondents (32%) opine that the quality of overall library services is good, 24 respondents (48%) feel it is very good, 01 respondent (2%) feels it is satisfactory and 07 respondents (14%) rate the quality of overall library services as poor.

**Table-9**  
**Opinion on Overall Library Services**

S. No.	Library Services	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Good	16	32%
2	Very good	24	48%
3	No comments	2	4%
4	Satisfactory	1	2%
5	Poor	7	14%
Total		50	100%

**Difficulties in the use of information sources:** Table 10 shows that while 12 respondents (24%) have time constraints in using the resources, 11 respondents (22%) opined that lack of adequate library staff is their major problem. 05 respondents (10%) report that lack of resources is the problem in using the library.

**Table-10**  
**Difficulties in the use of information sources**

S. No.	Difficulties	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Lack of time	12	24%
2	Lack of staff	11	22%
3	Lack of sources	5	10%
4	Confusion over the arrangements of sources	7	14%
5	Others	16	32%
Total		50	100%

**Findings:** i. Out of the respondents taken for the study, male respondents are 33 in numbers with 66 % and the female respondents are 17 in numbers with 34 % of the total. 17 (34 %)

respondents are married people and 33 (66 %) are unmarried. ii. Among the 50 respondents, 14 respondents visit the library for reading news, 03 respondents visit for preparing themselves for various competitive exams, 13 respondents for employment information, 14 respondents for general knowledge and 03 respondents for academic improvement. It is so concluded that majority of respondents use the branch library at Usilampatti for preparing themselves for various competitive exams. iii. 13 respondents constituting 26% use the library daily, 15 respondents (30%) use library once a week, 09 respondents use library once a fortnight and 12 respondents (24%) use the library occasionally. iv. 14 respondents (28%) use newspapers, 05 respondents (10%) use employment newspaper, 05 respondents (10%) use the Journals and Magazine, 11 respondents (22%) use reference Books, 05 respondents (10%) use the books and 02 respondents (04%) use the e-resources to get relevant information from the library. Thus, majority of users visit the library to read newspapers and reference books. v. While 12 respondents (24%) have time constraints in using the resources, 11 respondents (22%) opined that lack of adequate library staff is their major problem. 05 respondents (10%) report that lack of resources is the problem in using the library. vi. 26 respondents (52%) search for materials subject wise, 10 respondents (20%) search for materials using authors as keywords, 02 respondents (4%) search for materials publisher wise and 12 respondents (24%) search for materials title-wise. Hence maximum users employ 'subject wise search' at branch library in Usilampatti. vii. 37 respondents (74%) opine that the quality of internet service offered by the library is good, 04 respondents each (8%) feel it is fair/poor and 01 respondent (2%) feels that the quality of internet services is moderate. viii. While 32 respondents (64%) are highly satisfied with the information they access from magazines and journals, 09 respondents (18%) are satisfied, 08 respondents (16%) are less satisfied, only 01 respondent (2%) is dissatisfied with the information they get from magazines and journals. ix. 16 respondents (32%) opine that the quality of overall library services is good, 24 respondents (48%) feel it is very good, 01 respondent (2%) feels it is satisfactory and 07 respondents (14%) rate the quality of overall library services as poor.

**Areas for Further Research:** The following areas can be taken up for future research. i. Use of Internet services by the users in Usilampatti Public Library (UPL). ii. Relevance and use of Special Collections in UPL. iii. Modernization efforts in UPL (Library automation, library websites etc.). iv. Collection development and stock management in UPL. v. Community resources in UPL

## Conclusion

The Usilampatti Public Library deserves kudos for their yeomen's service in diffusing relevant information among the residents of Usilampatti town. To make its services better and attractive, it is suggested that i. more resources in various formats

are to be collected; ii. sufficient, qualified library staff should be made available; iii. library can be automated with free or open source softwares and d) infrastructure for internet services is to be made stronger.

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