

Information Seeking Behaviour and Utilization of Arabic and Islamic Studies Teachers in Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper examines the information seeking behavior and utilization of Arabic and Islamic Studies Teachers in Nigeria. Data were collected by using a structured questionnaire from delegates at National Association of Arabic and Islamic Teachers in Nigeria (NATAIS) Conference at Oshogbo in July 2009. One hundred and eighty six respondents were surveyed. The data collected include types of information sources, information access tools, use of various formal, informal and internet sources. The findings revealed that the main information demands that led Arabic and Islamic teachers into seeking information include updating of knowledge, research, and preparation for lecture. The teachers were also found to rely mainly on textbooks with very little use of other information resources like journals (both print and electronic). The paper recommends that teachers of Arabic and Islamic studies should be provided more access to libraries and the electronic information resources to enable them perform their functions. Incentives and other motivations such locating access to information sources and resources at distance not far from their offices and equipped the teachers with skills on how to utilize them will increase usage and ultimately improve their teachings.

Keywords: Information Services, Information Seeking Behaviour, Information Needs, Information Utilization, Arabic Studies Teachers, Islamic Studies Teachers

Introduction

The nature of information is not easy to describe. One definition from the literature defines information as recorded experience that is used in decision-making. It means different things to different people. To some people, it is news while others refer to it as facts, or a processed data. Information seeking is a basic activity indulged in by all people and manifested through a particular behavior. It is also an aspect of scholarly work of most interest to academic librarians who strive to develop collections, services, and organizational structures that facilitate information seeking (Wiberley, 1989). Mann (1993) notes that most researchers, even with computers, find only a fraction of the sources available to them, in spite of plentiful online information. He explains that researchers tend to work within one or another mental framework that limits their basic perception of the universe of knowledge available to them. Teachers utilized a subject-disciplinary approach that leads them to a specific list of sources on a particular subject.

Today, information technology has developed rapidly and has had a huge impact on access to information and on information seeking. Information seeking is the process or activity of attempting to obtain information in both human and technological contexts. Information seeking is related to, but yet different from, information retrieval (IR) behavior. Librarians and library-staff must understand the criteria of information seeking and information used by users for providing information services. The need for changes and improvement in the quality of education has become apparent in Nigeria especially in Arabic and Islamic courses in the higher education sector during the last two decades. The motivations for such a change have been the explosion and proliferation

Statement of the problem

Arabic and Islamic teachers are expected to maximally utilize the library as one of their major sources of information. However, noting from observation and from the studies conducted on library use of Teachers in Nigeria it was established that teachers do not use most of the library information resources. It was assumed that teachers could be experiencing technical problems in accessing information resources; coupled with lack of knowledge and awareness of the resources. The teacher's poor information seeking behavior and utilization was singled out as the biggest cause that needed investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find the answers to the following questions:

- * what kind of information is needed for teaching?
- * what sources and channels are used, how and why are they used?
- * what kinds of informal methods of acquiring information are used?
- * what difficulties and interconnected issues are involved in information seeking?
- * what is the users' response towards new information and communication technology, i.e., Internet and computerized catalogue?
- * what study places are preferred by Arabic and Islamic teachers?
- * does the physical environment of the library facilitate active learning and teaching?

Literature Review

Researchers have frequently examined the information seeking behaviour of particular professional groups in an effort to map their locating and use of information and to enhance information provision to these groups. Leckie et al. (1996) produced a model of professional group's information seeking of examining the common characteristics of the behaviour of these groups. When seeking information for their projects, engineers turned to a variety of library guides and leaflets, library catalogue, library staff, journals, online databases; previous students projects. However, similar to other studies of information behaviour of engineering professionals (Anderson et al 2001), the library was not the first place students looked for information like professional engineers, engineering students tended to use the library midway through their information seeking process for their projects and to regard librarian as leads to information sources. There is more to information seeking than just knowing where to find information; that is, it also includes problem solving and explanation of sources. The ability to validate sources is probably even more important today with the volume of information available on the internet

An accurate, in depth identification of the information needs and information seeking behaviour of engineering and law students in Ireland is crucial in assessing the effectiveness of a library or information service in meeting its information and training requirements. Agha recommends that library services

should, know the user well and decide on how best they can be served. (Agha, 1994). Information must be available whenever and wherever it is needed.

(Henorth, 2000; Hartmann, 2001; Genoni and partridge 2000) in their studies revealed that the students tended to display poor judgement in their choice of electronic resources when attempting to match information needs. Ajidahun (1990) established that information needs were job related, and that information needs differ according to areas of specialization and most researchers made private arrangement such as subscription to journals and purchase of books to keep themselves up to date with information relevant to their fields of specialization. Corcoran-Perry and graves, (1990) opined that in most professions, the information needs and seeking behaviour of nurses had been in a state of flux over the years, due to both rapid development in the field, as well as the emergence of new information technologies. Thompson (2004) found that despite nurses comprising 31% of hospital employees, only about 6% visit the library to pursue their information needs. Bucket (1992) also contend that information seeking behaviour is significantly influenced by the nature of the institution in which the user works, the researchers job, subject and rank or academic training of information seekers.

Haruna et al. (2000) who carried out a study on professional effectiveness attributes of legal practitioners as correlates of information utilization in Lagos, Nigeria. He investigated the relationship between information resources utilization and professional effectiveness attributes of legal practitioners of Lagos, Nigeria. The study highlights the heavy dependence of legal practice on utilization of relevant and timely information. By inference, legal practitioners who patronised libraries and utilize current information are more effective in their profession than those who do not. The present era is the era of information and knowledge revolution. Many electronic resources are available in the library. The increase in information available on the web has affected information seeking behaviour. Innumerable types of information, in a large variety of containers and in many different locations, are all available in one place (Fidel, et al, 1999

There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent or ignorant and should actively seek knowledge. "Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence" (Marchionini, 1995). Information seeking behaviour is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. In the course of seeking, the individual may

interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or a library), or with computer-based systems (such as the web) (Wilson, 2000).

Information seeking behaviour involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kind of information which are being sought (Leckie, Pettigrew, and sylian, 1996). Information seeking behaviour is expected in various forms, from reading printed materials to research and experimentation, scholars, students and faculties actively seek current information from the various media available in libraries, e.g. encyclopaedia, journals and currently, electronic media. Abels, (2004) mentioned that the frequency of use of the internet in 1998-2000 had greatly increased. At this same time, expenditures on monography showed steady increase.

Research Design and Data Collection

The data for this study was based on questionnaires, interviews, opinions, and comments by delegates at National Association of Arabic and Islamic Teachers in Nigeria (NATAIS) Conference. A questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed questions was prepared and sent the one hundred and fifty delegates at National Association of Arabic and Islamic Teachers in Nigeria (NATAIS) Conference at Oshogbo in July 2009 .Delegates were requested to take part in the survey from the thirty-six states of Nigeria selected randomly for the purpose of collecting the data. The delegates were from the list of states in Nigeria as stated below.

Table 1: Sex of respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Female	18	9.7
Male	168	90.3
Total	186	100

Table 1 shows that there were 18 female respondents representing 9.7 percentages of the total respondents and 168 male respondents representing 90.3 percent. This apparently shows that the number of male respondents is not only higher than that of female.

Table 2: Age of respondents

Age ranges	Frequency	Percentage
30-40 years	59	31.7
41-59 years	122	65.6
60 years and above	5	2.7
Total	186	100

Table 2 indicates that there were 59 respondents representing 31.7% in the age bracket of 30-40 years, while there were 122 respondents representing 65.6 % within the age bracket of 41-59 years and 5 respondents representing 2.7 % were in the age bracket of 60 years and above. This is confirming that respondents in the age bracket of 41-59 years are more in number than any other categories, the statement here is that an average productive age of NATAIS member and attendees at the association conferences and activities fall within the age bracket of 41-59 year.

Table 3: Designation of respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Professor	7	3.8
Reader	7	3.8
Lecturers	51	27.4
Class teachers	99	53.2
Others	22	11.8
Total	186	100

From table 3, it can be seen that 7 (3.8%) respondents were Professors, 7 respondents representing 3.8% are Readers, 51 respondents representing 27.4% while 99 respondents representing 53.2% were class teachers and 22 respondents representing 11.8 constituted others. In this category were students, retiree members and those in non formal sectors. From the above table, one can infer that class teachers, those who teach in primary and secondary schools constituted

the dominant respondents and attendees at the NATAIS conferences. The table also shows that the composition of the Association demonstrate openness of membership to people from array of education sectors.

Table 4: Qualification of respondents

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor degree	91	48.9
Masters degree	73	39.2
Ph. D	22	11.8
Total	186	100

Table 4 shows that 91 respondents representing 48.9% had Bachelor degrees, 73 respondents representing 39.2% were Masters degree holders, while 22 respondents representing 11.8% were PhD holders. The above analysis indicates that an ample number of respondents are either Bachelor degree holders or Masters Degree holders, indicating that members and attendees at NATAIS conferences are graduates.

Table 5: Institutions of respondents

Institutions	Frequency	Percentage
University	30	16.1
Colleges of Education	44	23.7
Secondary School	55	29.6
College of Arabic and Islamic Studies	17	9.1
Others	40	21.5
Total	186	100

Table 5 shows that 30 respondents representing 16.1% worked in the University, 44 respondents representing 23.7% worked in the colleges of education while 55 respondents representing 29.6% work in the secondary schools, 17 respondents representing 9.1 work in the College of Arabic and

Islamic Studies and 40 respondents representing 21.5% worked in others, especially informal and private sectors. This goes to show that respondents from secondary schools and colleges of education attend the NATAIS conferences and constitutes majority groups of respondents.

Table 6: Information sources of respondents

Information sources	Frequency	Percentage
Discussion with colleagues	62	33.3
Consult a knowledgeable person in the field	64	34.4
Discussion with librarian	36	19.4
Consults abstract and journals	7	3.8
Consult indexing and Journals	6	3.2
Consult library catalogue	9	4.8
Other sources	2	1.1
Total	186	100

Table 6 reveals that 62 (33.3%) respondents relied on discussion with colleagues as source of information, 64 (34.4%) respondents preferred consulting knowledgeable person in the field, 36 (19.4%) respondents discussed with librarian, 7 (3.8%) respondents consulted abstract and journals, 6 (3.2%) respondents consulted indexing and journals while 9 (4.8%) respondents consult library catalogue and two (1.1%) respondents consulted other sources. It is apparent from the foregoing that discussion with colleagues and knowledgeable persons in the field formed the bulk of sources of information consulted by the respondents.

Table 7 indicates that 26 (14.0%) respondents primarily sought information for the purpose of preparing class lecture, 85 (45.7%) respondents for updating knowledge, 41 (22.0%) respondents for research purpose, 14 (7.5%) respondents for preparing seminar and conference papers, 6 (3.2%) respondents for further studies, 11 (5.9%) for dawah purposes and 3 (1.6%) sought information for the purpose of entertainment. It shows that the respondents sought information mostly for the purpose of preparing class lecture.

Table 7: Purpose for seeking Information by respondents

Purpose for seeking Information	Frequency	Percentage
Preparing class lecture	26	14.0
For updating knowledge	85	45.7
For research purpose	41	22.0
For preparing seminar and conference paper	14	7.5
For further studies	6	3.2
For dawah purpose	11	5.9
For entertainment purpose	3	1.6
Total	186	100

Table 8 depicts that 139 (74.7%) sought information from text book, 14 (7.5%) from periodicals, 7 (3.8%) from newspapers, 16 (8.6%) from Journals, 6 (3.2%) from theses and project and 4 (2.2%) from other library materials. One can deduce from the above analysis that large percentage of respondents still preferred seeking information from textbooks an old traditional source of seeking information.

Table 8: Type of materials respondents sought information in their institution library

Library materials	Frequency	Percentage
Text book	139	74.7
Periodicals	14	7.5
Newspapers	7	3.8
Journals	16	8.6
Thesis and projects	6	3.2
Other library materials	4	2.2
Total	186	100

Table 9: Library Tools Respondents use to Access their Information Needs

Library tools	Frequency	Percentage
Library catalogue	99	53.2
Index	13	7.0
Abstract	9	4.8
Bibliographies	23	12.4
Ask a librarian	36	19.4
Others	6	3.2
Total	186	100

Table 9 indicates that 99 (53.2%) respondents used library catalogue to meet their information needs, 13 (7.0%) used index, 9 (4.8%) used abstract, 23 (12.4%) used bibliographies, 36 (19.4%) asked librarians and 6 (3.2%) accessed information through other sources. Library catalogue accounted for largest tool through which respondents access their information needs.

Table 10: Problems encountered while seeking information

Problems	Frequency	Percentage
Catalogue not detailed	39	21.0
Library staff are unwilling to assist	28	15.1
Materials not available	82	44.1
Time constraint	19	10.2
Do not know how to use catalogue	16	8.6
Other problems	2	1.1
Total	186	100

Table 10 shows that 39 (21.0%) respondents encountered problems of catalogue not detailed, 28 (15.1%) library staff were unwilling to assist, 82 (44.1%) materials not available, 19 (10.2%) time constraint, 16 (8.6%) did not know how to use catalogue and two (1.1%) encountered other problems

associated with library use. It is therefore apparent that non availability of relevant library materials was the major problem encountered by respondents while seeking information.

Table 11: Internet use by respondents

Do you use the internet	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	139	74.7
No	47	25.3
Total	186	100

Table 11 indicates that 139 (74.7%) respondents use the internet while 47 (25.3%) respondents did not use the internet. It is noteworthy that a large percentage of respondents used the internet to seek information being complementary to literature search and use in the library.

Table 12: Frequency of use of the Internet by the Respondents

Frequency of use of the internet	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently	72	38.7
Rarely	9	4.8
Occasionally	60	32.3
Not at all	45	24.2
Total	186	100

Table 12 shows that 72 (38.7%) respondents frequently used the internet, 9 (4.8%) respondents used the internet rarely, 60 (32.3%) used the internet occasionally while 45 (24.2%) respondents did not use the internet at all. The above responses show that a good percentage of respondents use the internet frequently and occasionally while seeking information.

Table 13: Purpose for use of internet

Purpose for use of internet	Frequency	Percentage
Education	144	77.4
Entertainment	4	2.2
News	14	7.5
Sports	24	12.9
Total	186	100

The purpose for the use of the internet in the table 13 indicates that 144 (77.4%) respondents was for education purpose, 4 (2.2%) respondents for entertainment, 14 (7.5%) respondents for the purpose of listening to the news and 24 (12.9%) respondents used the internet for the purpose of seeking sports information. Seeking education information is the hallmark of respondents' purpose of internet usage from the above analysis.

Table 14: Locations used by Respondents for Internet

Location	Frequency	Percentage
In my office	33	17.7
In the library	10	5.4
In the café	90	48.4
At home	15	8.1
Others	38	20.4
Total	186	100

Table 14 shows that the locations where the respondents used the internet were respondents office 33 (17.7%), in the library 10 (5.4%), 90 (48.4%) in the café, 15 (8.1%) at home and 38 (20.4%) respondents used other locations to use the internet. Apparently most respondents used the café to access internet because of relative conducive atmosphere of café that provide regular service at cheaper rates.

Table 15: Search Engine used by Respondents

Search engine	Frequency	Percentage
Google.com	62	33.3
Yahoo.com	96	51.6
Altervista.com	Nil	Nil
Excite.com	Nil	Nil
Lycos.com	Nil	Nil
Others	28	15.1
Total	186	100

Table 15 indicates that 62 (33.3%) respondents used google.com to search on the internet, while 96 (51.6%) respondents used yahoo.com and 28 (15.1%) used other not too prominent search engines. Yahoo.com search engine was the most popular search engine used by respondents to seek information from the internet.

Table 16: Use of e-mail for Communication by Respondents

Do you use e-mail for communication	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	137	73.7
No	43	23.1
Others	6	3.2
Total	186	100

When respondents were asked if they used email table 16 indicates that 137 (73.7%) confirmed that they use e-mail accounts for communication while 43 (23.1%) respondents did not use e-mail for communication and 6 (3.2%) did not disclose their stand on the use of e-mail for communication. Large number of respondents used e-mail for communication on teaching, social and other engagements.

on how to utilize information resources will increase usage and ultimately improve their teachings.

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