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Contents

Experiences in the school library usage as a guideline for planning information literacy programmes: with special reference to the new entrants of LLB programme at University of Peradeniya

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Abstract

The paper discusses the prior experiences of the use of a library in the stream of Law by new entrants of University of Peradeniya in 2015. Survey research strategy was used with a structured questionnaire administered for the new intake of the Department of Law at the point of registration in the library. Out of the total of 56, 38(68%) responded. Of the respondents, 94.7% have been asked by their teachers to read material other than the classroom notes, 97.4 have borrowed books from their school library but only 37.8% have used magazines and 81.6% have studied in the school library, 48.6% confirmed that they had a catalogue but 66.7% did not have computers in the library. They have secured reading material required from the library, from friends and relatives. In response to their access to email and social media, 64.9% confirmed that they have email, but the use of other media (Face book, skype and twitter, are not common) but 70.3% have a smart phone and 83% have expressed that they would like to receive SMS from the university library. Based on these findings it is recommended that the training for new entrants must provide more training on the use of journals, online and card catalogues and computers to search and retrieve information. It is also recommended to design the communication channels through email and social media as the majority of the students like to communicate with the university library through these media.

Keywords: *New Entrants, Undergraduates, School Library, Social Media, University of Peradeniya, Law*

1.0 Introduction

It is a prevailing belief in the university that the school children are familiar with libraries and that they do not need any special training in using the university library. However, there is no statistical evidence to prove this belief in

the Sri Lankan context. Yet, the School Library Manifesto of IFLA/UNESCO (2006) affirms that they need cooperation with and training from various parties, such as teachers, senior school leaders, administrators, parents, community groups, and librarians. In order to assess whether the new entrants to the Faculty of Arts of University of Peradeniya, have adequate experience in using a school library, a survey was conducted in 2015.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to identify the experiences in the use of a school library by the new entrants to the Department of Law, University of Peradeniya in 2015 and the following objectives were formulated;

1. To study the prior experiences of using the school library
2. To inquire into the sources of information they used, other than the school library
3. To investigate their access with e-mail and social media
4. To assess the willingness to communicate with the library digitally.

3.0 Review of Literature

With advances in the technology, more information becomes available to all kinds of users through a wide range of channels. Users can access information not only through the traditional, printed sources, but also sources in various formats via the Internet. Sometimes the lack of basic ICT skills may retard the college students' ability in performing fundamental tasks required at the university level.

Experience relating to the use of information resource has been surveyed by many researchers. In 2011 Mashroofa surveyed seeking preferences, information behavior, and their needs and in relation to a university library using the freshman students as sample in three universities (Jaffna, Eastern and South Eastern) in Sri Lanka. According to this survey less than 30% visit the library once a day and only 2.86% access the Internet. Although these libraries have electronic resources and other multimedia facilities the students' usage is very poor and she pointed out that this was due to lack of instruction or unawareness of students. Moreover, she stated that 24% did not have library instruction to use the library and 64% liked to have regular help from the library. This further proved that without getting the university library instructions the experience they gain from the school library usage is not adequate to use the university libraries. Regarding the library communication although they were not interested to get the help from instant messaging, most of them preferred to meet the librarian directly. Most of them are familiar with use of Google and few use the library web page to get information. Some of them use e-mail, facebook and messages. However, majority of the students still like to use printed materials more than the non print materials.

Karunarathna (2014) surveyed the electronic resources usage of Law degree students of Anuradhapura Regional Centre of the Open University of Sri Lanka. He found that only 17% had very good computer skills and 15% were poor. Also only 11% had very good English language skills and 12 of respondents were weak. Majority of them often used e- resources, 27% of them sometimes used e-resources and 16% of them used very often and 14% of them used e-resources rarely. With these outcomes they recommended that it was necessary to organize workshops and information literacy programs to increase the use of e- resources of Law Degree students and two key skills of students such as computer skills and the English language skills.

Another survey study carried out by Kumara (2014) with the freshman students of University of Moratuwa indicated that use of Internet was 92.4%, use of Wikis, Blogs, Video websites 92.9%, Social Networking websites 92.7%, Web searching for information 90.9%, and Emails 90.9%. According to these results, the University of Moratuwa freshman had more experience in using e-information than the percentage indicated by Mashroofa in 2011. Moreover, the largest percentage of respondents have rated themselves as being very skilful in using Social Networking websites, 88.4% believe that using ICTs they can have a better communication and 86.3% believe that ICTs will make a more convenient environment to perform their course activities. Majority of the students (74%) perception is that Internet/E-mail is mostly useful, for improving learning and doing course activities more conveniently. To encourage the use of ICT by freshmen, he recommended that the duration of providing access to ICTs in libraries should be extended; the libraries need to be kept open for extra hours and Library staff should be more helpful for freshmen in using ICTs.

Library usage characteristics of undergraduates were identified by Alade, Iyoro and Amusa (2014) in Nigeria and it was stated that the prior knowledge and skills in the use of a library at school or college level may have positive influence on undergraduate library use. According to their survey only 52% confirmed that school library experience have a fairly significant influence on the use of an academic library. Moreover they identified that the library instruction or user education program (37%) influenced them greatly to use the library and 54% indicated fair influence. They recommended that the library instruction programs being provided to the students should be improved upon and it should be made more practical so that the undergraduates can really learn the process of information retrieval.

Bikos, Papadimitriou and Giannakopoulos, (2014) stated that, in schools with libraries and trained library personnel, students tend to read more, not exclusively for their school work, but also for general information and for the sake of entertainment in its own right. Further he mentioned that, the incorporation of information literacy into the curriculum may improve the knowledge and skills of students and it will help to develop strong positive impact on learning.

Regarding the use of social media and email, in 2011 Head and Eisenberg indicated that, 81% students said that they had checked for messages using a variety of different devices in order to keep up on email, or Face book. Kim, Yoo-Lee, and Sin, (2011) identified that more than 70% of teens and young adults who go online use at least one social networking site such as Face book, MySpace and LinkdedIn. Twitter use has increased from 8% in 2009 to 13% in 2010, whereas blog usage among young adults has declined.

4.0 Methodology

A two page structured questionnaire was distributed to all the new entrants to the Faculty of Arts at the point of registration in the Main Library in February 2015. The questionnaire inquired dealt with their biographic data, whether they used the school library for their GCE/AL studies or not, how often and for what purposes they used the library, the reasons for not using the library (if they did not use), and the sources they used to find information for their studies. The study also delved into their access to e-mail and social media and whether they liked to communicate with the library digitally. Responses were collected from all those who attended the registration sessions which went on for two successive days. Data was analysed by using Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22. Descriptive data was presented.

5.0 Findings

Total population of law entrants into the Dept. of Law (56) was surveyed and 38 responded (68%). Of them 73% were female while 27% were male. Of the respondents, 94.7% have been asked by their teachers to read material in addition to the notes given in the classroom and 100% confirmed that they used the school library.

However when delving deeper into their library usage with the materials available in the library, 97.4% indicated that they have borrowed books but only 37.8% have used magazines, 81.6% have used the school library to study in, 48.6% confirmed that they had a catalogue in the library but 44.7% confirmed that they did not use it to search for books. Of the respondents, 66.7% have said that they did not have computers in their school library and the same percentage (66%) confirmed that they did not use computers in the library. The rest have not responded whether they had computers or whether they used them in their school library.

With regard to their use of a variety of information sources, they used for study-related information. 52.8% stated that they obtain the material from the school library, 61.1% confirmed that they bought material from bookshops, 37.8 borrowed material from friends and relatives, 13.9% have used material given from the tuition classes, 11.1% have obtained information from the Internet,

36.1% have used Wikipedia, while 2.8% have visited public libraries and 36.1 % have visited other libraries but no one has contacted knowledgeable people.

In response to the queries on their access to email and social media, it was indicated that 37.8% had a Face book account, 29.7% had a Skype account, but only 8.1% had twitter accounts, 64.9% confirmed that they had email and 64.9% have confirmed that they would like to communicate with the university library through their e-mail and social media accounts. Of the respondents, 70.3% confirmed that they have a smart phone and 83% confirmed that they would like to receive SMSs from the university library.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The majority of the respondents are female and all of them have different degrees of experiences in using the school library resources and services. Many have used books but not magazines, and almost half do not have experience in using the library catalogue or computers in the library. Majority does not have access to social media but almost 65% have email accounts and the same amount is willing to communicate with the university library digitally. However, it should not be assumed that the rest of the 35% are not willing to communicate digitally, but as they do not have any experience in using social media or email at present they may not know how these media could be used to communicate with the library. The study also revealed that over 70% have smart phones and over 83% would like to receive SMSs from the library. These findings indicate that the new entrants to the Department of Law are keen receive library related messages fast and digitally. At the same time the findings indicate that they do not have much experience in using the library catalogues, journals or the computers to search for information.

Based on these findings it is recommended that the training for new entrants must be planned in such a way to provide more training on the use of journals, online and card catalogues and the computers to search and retrieve information. It is also recommended to design communication channels through email and social media as the majority of the students like to communicate with the university library through these media.

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