Students' information behavior and a role of academic library

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Purpose of the seminar paper

• to offer a review of most important research results from some available studies concerning information behavior of university students (undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate)
• to present some major issues about a meaning of academic (university) libraries in information seeking behavior of students
  – such as types of sources and services used by students, reasons and frequency of library use
• to give a review of some research issues that are significant for further research
• research methods
  – literature overview
  – analysis of the literature
George et al. (2006)

- graduate students' information seeking behavior had been influenced by the academic staff
  - advisers and professors (96%) were often first step in their research process
  - recommendations, guidance or directions, and some resources like books, journal articles, research papers

- most of the students (77%) described the Internet as extremely useful
  - it was their next step after meeting with advisers, or the primary search method
  - the half of all graduate students used the Internet to find research papers, journal articles, white papers, or/and working papers
• university library was playing an important role for more than half of all graduate students (55%), and as many as 75% students of arts and architecture in their research
  – 82% of the respondents came to the university library for books, and reference materials, while 58% of the students used physical resources like printed periodicals
Kerins, Madden and Fulton (2004)

• key factors for engineering students when selecting an information source in library use were opening hours, physical distance of a resource, speed and ease of use, and accessible language
  – they preferred channels that require the least effort, like the Internet, from which they expected to define initial information needs
  – students consulted books, journals and technical handbooks from the library to validate the information they had founded on the Internet
  – students turned to library in the middle of their information seeking process
Martin (2008)

• Internet has been used for the class-related research by almost three fourths of the students
  – although 79% of students considered that academic library resources (such as books, and journals) were more credible than the Internet sources

• 78% of the respondents have chosen a free available Internet instead of the library’s resources
Callinan (2005)

• the main reasons for visiting the university library given by first year biology, and the final year biochemistry students
  – borrowing of the books, and studying the course material
  – using the computers
  – photocopying
• reasons why the undergraduate students searched for information were of an academic nature (93.2%) for writing the course assignments, seminar papers, tests and examinations, class discussions, and research papers in their final year
• it has been established that for the most students (82.4%) library was a primary source to obtain information
• Ellis’ model
  – 65.2% of the respondents indicated browsing the library collections to find relevant materials
  – 60% indicated using a differentiating strategy
  – monitoring (using the card catalogues, or lists from the library notice boards) has been used by 57.2% of students
Seiden, Szymborski and Norelli (1997)

• the factors for using the computer based resources mentioned by the students from English, Psychology, Art, Studio, Business and Government
  – efficiency (43%), convenience (38%), full text (17%), currency of the data (14%), completeness of the data (12%), Boolean capabilities (7%), requirement and familiarity with the usage of the online databases as opposed to the print sources (5%), availability and the possibility of printing from the online databases (2%)
Head and Eisenberg (2010)

- study of students’ Wikipedia use
  - respondents mostly turned to course readings (97%), Google (95%), online scholarly databases (93%), OPAC (90%), instructors (87%), and Wikipedia (85%) when needed background information about their research topic
  - library shelves (69%), and librarians (45%) were less frequent sources
  - participants from social sciences, humanities, sciences, education, business, engineering, and occupational training
the most common method for seeking information was tracking references in other sources (particularly at the beginning when students were not familiar with the subject)

all of the respondents looked for information in the library using the title, the author's name, or the subject in order to make goal-oriented searches

since the respondents experienced troubles in finding reliable scholarly publications by using Google, or Altavista, many of them searched Universities' databases (Proquest and Ebsco)

journal articles were most used by psychology students (55%), and respondents studying mathematics mostly consulted monographs and course literature (79%)
Rowlands and Nicholas (2008)

- Cluster I (12%)
  - male (99.4%), graduate students (42.8%), and staff (39.6%) who have a high dependence on Google and Amazon, and the lowest dependence on the library systems

- Cluster II (12%)
  - mainly female (94.2%), and undergraduate, or graduate students (94.9%) with the highest dependency on using the UCL library, and its catalogue, averagely dependent on the external library sources

- Cluster III (18%)
  - male (100%), graduate students (53%), and faculty (44%) from a wide range of disciplines who have a high level of dependence on institutional library services, and the lowest trust in general search engines

- Cluster IV (13%)
  - male undergraduate students (99.4%) across all disciplines
  - less depending upon book reviews and publishers' catalogues, they are highly dependent on institutional provision following up reading lists, and moderately ‘self-sufficient’
• Cluster V (9%)
  – female (100%), and almost entirely undergraduate students (98.3%) from the medical (40.7%), or life (28.8%) sciences
  – prefer their friends being a source for the book recommendations
  – high dependence on the institutional library systems

• Cluster VI (20%)
  – female (97.3%), graduate students (47.8%), and faculty (40.4%) from the medical (26.8%) and life (24.3%) sciences
  – high ratings for the informal, and personal search modes, and a very low dependence on personal uses of library services being reasonably self-sufficient

• Cluster VII (16%)
  – female group (99.5%) in which dominate graduate (48.6%), and undergraduate (38.5%) students studying the arts, and humanities (73.6%)
  – the lowest propensity for the informal modes of book discovery (in particular a lack of interest in Google, Amazon, and other Web services)
  – the highest tendency of using libraries and catalogues
Whitmire (2001)

- students’ library use was low in first, second and third year without exceeding for the third year of study
- the most important library activity at all stages of undergraduates was using the computers in the library
- the library catalogue (card or online) was most frequently used by first year of undergraduate students
Connaway, Dickey and Radford (2011)

• two multi-year projects (Sense-making the information confluence: The whys and how’s of college and university user satisfying of information needs and Seeking synchronicity: Evaluating virtual reference services from user, non-user, and librarian perspectives)
  – “both studies especially highlighted the millennials’ preference for Google, and human sources for quick searches for information”
  – convenience was more typical for the academic library users in research-connected than in personal situations, and more often appeared as a factor in selecting Internet search engines, electronic databases or the university libraries
Google generation

- digital information seeking behavior of diverse, volatile, and promiscuous users in virtual libraries can be described as
  - horizontal and bouncing (60% of the respondents look only one or two pages from an academic site)
  - navigating (spending much time to find a way around)
  - squirreling (downloading content)
  - checking (assessing authority, and relying on favored brands)
  - viewing in nature (users spend mostly from four to eight minutes on e-journal and e-book sites)
Taylor (2012)

- information search process of the millennial generation (born between 1982 and 2000)
- respondents retrieved around 35% of the documents after completing the rough draft
  - backfilling (adding sources late in the research process after finalizing their report)
- students selected more categories like structure, depth, amount of information and recency, than authority, validity or quality of the Web resources
Generation Y doctoral students

- a longitudinal qualitative study on Generation Y doctoral students
- students were influenced by the suggestions (50%) of their peers in using open web technology
- Generation Y received less help from the library staff (34%) than the older students (42%)
New trends in academic libraries

• 51.2% of undergraduate students had an Internet-capable handheld device, and 14.8% of respondents wanted to use library services from their handheld devices

• new services in academic libraries have to be provided in relation to growth of mobile applications and handheld devices like for instance smart phones, iPads, e-book which impact user expectations
Research questions for further studies

• students were not very satisfied with the organized library instructions, and the amount of the new sources in the library, but it was obvious that academic libraries had a very significant role in satisfying university students’ information needs

• some research questions that arise from selected studies
  – information seeking behavior of the students between different disciplines considering various context situations in which information tasks are performed
  – factors that affect students’ library use
  – significance of the library instruction in improving academic library services for the students