

## **INFORMATION GATHERING BEHAVIOUR OF UNDERGRADUATE AND POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN THE FACULTIES OF AGRICULTURE AND SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA**

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Information gathering behaviour of students, both undergraduate and postgraduate in the Faculties of Agriculture and Science along with their respective Postgraduate Institutes was studied. This survey was aimed at finding information gathering behaviour, adequacy of resources and the deficiencies of the library system. Cross sectional research design was employed to determine the information gathering characteristics of the student population. The research instrument was a self administered questionnaire consisting of four parts; personal data, information gathering behaviour, information sources and services and user satisfaction and suggestions for improvement. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected and descriptive statistical methods were employed to analyse the data.

The sample consisted of 1185 students representing approximately half the undergraduate population and almost all postgraduate students. The average response rate was 76.74 %. Results show that around 73.35 % of subjects visit the library only once a week and the main purpose being to read lecture notes. Books were considered the most important information source followed by reading lecture notes and handouts. Sources such as CD-ROM and audiovisual material received low priority. Most undergraduates felt that the libraries were adequately stocked while postgraduates felt that libraries are only moderately stocked.

Among other libraries used, the main library came first and very few appear to use other libraries. Most subjects responded positively regarding the use of sources such as encyclopaedias, bibliographies, abstracts in print or CD-ROM, library catalogues and internet facilities. It was apparent that there is an increasing trend to use internet facilities as an information source. Provision of photocopying facilities was considered as the most important service provided by the library. While around 50 % of the users expressed satisfaction on the opening hours and assistance by library staff, a considerable number complained about excessive noise levels in the library. As suggestions to improve services provided, most considered the need for new books, multiple copies of textbooks, extending the loan period of books and the necessity of a more efficient security service. Acquisition of new books was ranked as most important by postgraduate students.

This study revealed that the majority of the students were not aware of the on-line public access catalogues and electronic access to resources provided by the library web pages. This study highlights the importance of incorporating a module on information gathering and exploiting library resources to the undergraduate curriculum. There is also a need for the academics to focus more attention to direct the students to gather information independently.

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