Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Postgraduate Students in the Digital Age: A Case Study of Chandigarh University

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Abstract

Information Seeking Behaviour (ISB) is the process by which users determine their information requirements and actively seek out pertinent information through the use of different sources and systems. ISB has been greatly transformed in the current digital and AI-driven academic landscape because of the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), digital libraries, and artificial intelligence tools. The current research explores information seeking behaviour of postgraduate students at the Chandigarh University in the Faculty of Social Sciences. The survey technique was used in the form of a structured questionnaire that was administered to 300 postgraduate students of which 260 respondents returned the questionnaires (response rate: 86.67%). The paper notes that online materials, search engines and AI-related applications have a substantial impact on the information seeking behaviors of students. Although use of libraries has been reduced, a hybrid between use of print and electronic resources is still predominant. The results indicate that students like to have access to digital information fast but still use textbooks and reference materials to gain the academic depth. Information overload, insufficient advanced search skills, and knowledge of institutional digital resources are among the critical issues. The research finds that academic libraries need to incorporate AI tools, digital literacy initiatives, and user-centric services to stay pertinent in the changing knowledge ecosystem.

Keywords: Information Seeking Behaviour, Digital Environment, ICT, Academic Libraries, Artificial Intelligence, Postgraduate Students.

Introduction

The 21 st century is an information-based society where the accessibility of a relative, accurate and timely information is of the essence to academic success and research productivity. Information has evolved to be a strategic resource that affects learning, innovation and decision-making. As digital technologies are fast developing, the character of information seeking behaviour changed: no longer in the traditional library environments but instead in the digital and AI-supported ones.

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Information Seeking Behaviour according to Wilson (2003) is all the activities involved in determining the information requirements, finding the information, judging the sources and applying the knowledge obtained. Digital services and tools like online databases, institutional repositories, and AI applications like chatbots and intelligent search engines contribute to this behaviour in contemporary academic environments.

The digital infrastructure, e-resources, and smart library services at Chandigarh University are a perfect setting to examine the changing ISB trends among postgraduate students. These trends are very crucial in understanding how to better the library services, improve customer satisfaction, and foster academic excellence.

Literature Review

Kumar and Naick (2015) pointed out the significance of information literacy skills in the effective use of resources.

Joo and Choi (2015) emphasized that the perceived usefulness and ease of use play a significant role in the choice of digital resources.

Manjunath and Babu (2018) established that e-resources are becoming a regular resource among the research scholars because they are accessible and convenient.

According to Gyesi (2020), three primary ISB patterns exist: active search, passive search, and ongoing search.

Gabriela, Florescu (2023) Universities and university libraries have seen a reduction in their physical significance all around the world. A number of factors have contributed to this decline, including shifting user expectations and needs, universities moving away from strictly on-site work and instruction to remote or more flexible schedules, the availability of alternative information sources, the use of new technologies (such as social networks and mobile technologies), the desire for anytime, anywhere access from personal devices, the need for increased system compatibility and interoperability, and the role of library users as content creators rather than consumers. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how college students obtain information using both traditional and modern sources.

Chandigarh University (CU), Mohali-Punjab

S. No.	Information	Details
1.	Type	Private
2.	Location	Mohali, Punjab
3.	Established	2012
4.	Known For	Engineering, business, hospitality, and liberal arts
5.	Remarks	Rapidly growing with international collaborations

Chandigarh University (CU), One of India's fastest-growing private universities, Chandigarh University (CU) is situated in Gharuan, close to Mohali, Punjab, and is a well-known hub for academic excellence, innovation, and international interaction. Since its founding in 2012 and

approval by the University Grants Commission (UGC), CU has quickly established a reputation for providing education that is both globally relevant and connected with industry. Numerous undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate degrees in fields like as engineering, business, law, the humanities, sciences, architecture, and more are available at the institution. It uses a choice-based credit system (CBCS), which gives students freedom to plan how they want to study. Through faculty and student exchange programs, dual degrees, and joint research, the university offers worldwide exposure through more than 400 international collaborations in the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and Europe.

CU is ranked among the best private universities in India with its NAAC A+ accreditation and QS Asia ranking. Many of the faculty members have international credentials and are seasoned professionals and scholars. Through its specialized research institutes in areas including biotechnology, data science, robotics, artificial intelligence, and renewable energy, CU places a high priority on research and innovation. Through organizations like the Institution's Innovation Council (IIC) and ARIIA, the university has submitted multiple patent applications and been acknowledged by the Indian government for its innovation and entrepreneurship. Additionally, more than 900 international firms have recruited from CU, demonstrating the school's stellar placement record.

Leading companies like Microsoft, Amazon, Deloitte, IBM, and Infosys have extended employment offers to students, with annual packages for overseas placements reaching up to ₹1 crore. Career preparedness is supported by a specialized Corporate Resource Center (CRC) that offers industry projects, internships, and training. Over 100 acres make up the CU campus, which has state-of-the-art facilities like digital libraries, smart classrooms, tech-enabled labs, sports complexes, and distinct dorms for foreign, male, and female students. Numerous clubs run by students, cultural gatherings, festivals, and athletic contests all contribute to a lively campus life. A comfortable and safe student experience is facilitated by amenities including cafeterias, round-the-clock medical care, transportation, and Wi-Fi connectivity. Students from all around India and overseas choose Chandigarh University because of its dedication to global standards, holistic education, and ongoing innovation. It serves as a springboard for upcoming leaders, businesspeople, and change agents in addition to being an institution.

Knowledge Resource Centre (KRC), Chandigarh University, Mohali-Punjab

The Chandigarh University Library, also called the Knowledge Resource Centre (KRC), is a cutting-edge establishment that supports the university's academic, research, and innovation goals by acting as its intellectual center. The library, which is spread across many floors and is ideally situated on campus, provides a contemporary, student-friendly setting with state-of-the-art equipment, a wealth of digital resources, and plenty of reading space. The library supports the wide range of academic subjects the university offers with its collection of more than one lakh print volumes, which includes textbooks, reference books, research journals, periodicals, and national and international publications.

Through subscriptions to platforms like IEEE, Springer, Elsevier, J-Gate, and DELNET, the library offers access to hundreds of e-journals, e-books, and academic databases in addition to its extensive print resources, making it an essential resource for both academics and students. Integrated library management systems have completely automated and digitalized the

Chandigarh University Library, enabling smooth cataloguing, remote access, and effective resource sharing. It provides computer terminals, digital learning pods, Wi-Fi connectivity, and areas specifically designed for doctorate and postgraduate students. In order to support both individual and group study, the KRC also has quiet reading halls, multimedia areas, and discussion spaces. The library routinely holds workshops, research advice sessions, book displays, and orientation to promote a culture of academic inquiry and lifelong learning.

The library guarantees accessibility and convenience for all faculty and students with its user-friendly services and extended working hours. The Chandigarh University Library, a vibrant academic resource center that complies with international standards, positions itself as a crucial component of the university's mission to deliver top-notch education by fostering research productivity, intellectual development, and innovation across disciplines in addition to supporting classroom instruction.

Present Status of the Knowledge Resource Centre (KRC), Chandigarh University, Mohali-Punjab

S. No.	**Particulars**	**Data as on 27- May-2025**
1.	Books Collection	1.50 Lakh Approx.
2.	No. of rare books collections & Manuscripts	708 Approx.
3.	Current Periodicals	356 Approx
4.	E-Resources	1. CMIE 2. Delnet 3. EBSCO (Arts & Architecture) 4. EBSCO (Hospitality & Tourism Complete) 5. EBSCO (Management Collection) 6. Hein Online 7. IEEE (ASPP Online) 8. IEEE (POP) 9. J-Gate (Science & Technology) 10. J-Gate (Social Science & Humanities) 11. Myloft (Remote Access) 12. NDLI 13. SCC Online Web Edition 14. Scopus

		15. Web of Science 16. EBSCO 17. McGraw 18. Person 19. Wiley
5.	No. of Staff	96 Approx
6.	Working Hours	7:00 AM to 10:00 PM
7.	Classification Scheme	DDC
8.	Cataloguing code	AACR II
9.	Automation	Fully Library Computerized
10.	Library Management software use	KOHA

Statement of Problem

Postgraduate students nowadays are over-dependent on electronic and artificial intelligence-based information sources. Nonetheless, their search, assessment, and use of information is not very consistent. This paper will examine the evolving trends in ISB and find out the problems that students experience in a new academic setting.

Objectives

- To investigate information seeking behaviour of postgraduate students.
- To locate preferred information sources and formats.
- To examine the effects of digital technologies and AI tools.
- To determine difficulties encountered in seeking information.
- To propose changes in academic library services.

Methodology

- The research method is quantitative research with a structured questionnaire.
- Sample Size: 300 PG students.
- Responses Received: 260
- Response Rate: 86.67%
- Instruments: Questionnaire + Statistical Analysis.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This section shows the analysis of the data gathered among postgraduate students in Chandigarh University. Percentages and descriptive statistics have been used to systematically analyze and interpret the data.

Gender Distribution

The gender-wise distribution of respondents is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

S.No.	Gender	Percentage (%)
1.	Male	54%
2.	Female	46%
3.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: The information shows that more male respondents 54% participated as opposed to female respondents 46%. Nevertheless, the disparity is insignificant, indicating that both genders are equally represented in the study.

Frequency of Library Visit

The frequency of library visits by respondents is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Frequency of Library Visit

S. No	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Rarely	28%
2.	Several times/week	27%
3.	Daily	21%
4.	During exams	18%
5.	Once a week	6%
6.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: The largest group of students (28) visits the library infrequently and the second category 27% visits the library several times a week. The number of people who visit the library on a daily basis is only 21%. This tendency demonstrates obviously the replacement of the physical use of libraries by the use of digital information sources, the increasing role of online resources and artificial intelligence tools.

Time Spent in Library

The time spent by students in the library is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Time Spent in Library

S. No	Time Duration	Percentage (%)
1	Less than 2 hours	50%
2	2–4 hours	20%

3	4–6 hours	20%
4	More than 6 hours	10%
5	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: 50% of the respondents (50) spend less than two hours in the library meaning they do not have physical action. Only a tenth of them spend over six hours, which indicates that the long study hours are not as popular in the digital age.

Purpose of Library Visit

The purpose for visiting the library is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4: Purpose of Library Visit

S. No.	Purpose	Percentage (%)
1.	Borrowing books	42%
2.	Reading materials	26%
3.	Reference use	15%
4.	E-resources usage	10%
5.	Internet use	7%
6.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: Borrowing books (42%), reading materials (26%), are the main reasons why people come to the library. The relatively low use of e-resources (10) in the library implies that students choose to access digital resource remotely.

Satisfaction Level with Library Resources

The satisfaction level of students is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Satisfaction Level

S. No.	Response	Percentage (%)
1.	Satisfied	60%
2.	Not Satisfied	40%
3.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: Most respondents (60) are satisfied with the library resources and 40 are not satisfied, which means that there is an opportunity to improve the digital service, subscription, and infrastructure.

Preferred Format of Information

The preferred format for accessing information is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Preferred Format

S. N0.	Format Type	Percentage (%)
1.	Both (Print + Digital)	55%
2.	Print	28%
3.	Digital	17%
4.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: The majority of the students (55%) are more than willing to have a hybrid format- print-digital resources, which implies that traditional materials will remain relevant, as well as digital platforms.

Use of Information Sources

The types of information sources used by respondents are shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Information Sources Used

S. No.	Source Type	Percentage (%)
1.	Textbooks	65%
2	Reference Books	55%
3.	Journals	35%
4.	Online Databases	Increasing

Interpretation: Textbooks (65) and reference books (55) are still the most common sources. There is however, a trend towards the use of online databases as a shift towards digital scholarly resources.

Search Tools Used

The search tools used by respondents are presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Search Tools Used

S. No.	Search Tool	Percentage (%)
1.	Google / AI Tools	60%
2.	Library Catalogue	25%

3.	Indexing Tools	10%
4.	Abstracting Tools	5%

Interpretation: most students (60%) use Google and AI tools like ChatGPT to search information. This underscores the increasing supremacy of AI-based information retrieval systems.

Place of Accessing Information

The preferred location for accessing information is shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Place of Access

S. No.	Access Point	Percentage (%)
1.	Central Library	45%
2.	Hostel/Home	20%
3.	Internet Cafes	5%
4.	Departments	30%
Total	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: The main access point (45% is central library) but still a considerable number of students (30%) access information at Departments, which means that they are more dependent on remote digital access.

Problems Faced by Students

The challenges faced by students while seeking information are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: Problems Faced

S. No.	Problem	Percentage (%)
1.	Weak Internet	45%
2.	Information Overload	20%
3.	Lack of Skills	15%
4.	Limited Subscriptions	15%
5.	Power Issues	5%
6.	**Total**	**100%**

Interpretation: The significant issue with students is low internet connection (45%), information overload (20%). These issues reveal the necessity of the enhancement of digital infrastructure and user training programs.

Discussion

The analysis indicates that there is a hybrid model of information seeking in which students integrate the traditional and digital sources. Although digital tools are supreme in first searches, the academic validation continues to use print and peer-reviewed material. With the increased usage of AI-based tools such as ChatGPT, there is a trend towards intelligent information systems, but it is associated with concerns regarding accuracy and critical analysis.

Conclusion

Information seeking behaviour of postgraduate students at Chandigarh University is an indication of a shift towards a digitally integrated model of using libraries as compared to traditional library usage. Students are ready to use the information systems that are fast, easy to use, and with the help of AI, but still, they need to use authoritative academic sources to deepen the research.

To be able to satisfy the expectations of users, academic libraries will have to transform in a way that will allow them to become hybrid knowledge centers, integrating digital technologies, AI tools, and traditional resources.

Recommendations

- Implement library assistants and chatbots that are AI-based.
- Organize information literacy and research skills trainings.
- Enhance digital and internet access.
- Expand e-resource subscriptions
- Design easy-to-use online platforms.

Future Scope

- Interuniversal comparisons.
- Effects of artificial intelligence tools on the quality of researches.
- Undergraduate vs postgraduate behaviour.
- The role of academic libraries in education based on AI

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