Everyday Life Information Seeking Behaviours of Mahasarakham University Students

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Abstract

This study presents findings on the everyday life information seeking behaviours of Mahasarakham University undergraduate students. 379 Year 2-4 undergraduate students participated in the study. Topic mostly searched by students was current news while specific resource used by students to search for information in daily life mostly was search engine. Person who students rely on for the data in daily life most was fellow student. The hardest obstacles were to frame the topic to be more specific, to find update information, and to choose to use information obtained from search that is not consistent with the topic.

Keywords: *Information Seeking, Information Behaviour, Mahasarakham University, Everyday Life, Thailand*

Introduction

Information behaviour is defined as"...how individuals approach and handle information. This includes searching for it, using it, modifying it, sharing it, hoarding it, even ignoring it. Consequently, when we manage information behaviour, we're attempting to improve the overall effectiveness of an organisation's information environment through concerted action." (Davenport, 1997) Information seeking behaviour has been traditionally seen as 1) work related; 2) everyday life (Savolainen, 2010).

Information literacy education first started being compulsory in universities was emphasized on using libraries and report writing, and later after 2000 has indirectly extended to basic education level. The new university curriculum as well as school curriculum focuses on information and communication technology. Mahasarakham University is among the top largest university in Thailand, with the most number of students in the northeast region, teaching in undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The Office of General Education, Mahasarakham University, is responsible for overseeing the teaching of basic information literacy courses provided for undergraduate students. The overall objectives are to understand individuals and their society as a natural curiosity, be able to think rationally, and be able to apply their knowledge to use in their daily life and in society. There are courses to support information literacy such as Information and Communication Technology for Lifelong Learning and New Age Information management in Daily Life. The various courses are those the students need to have necessary skills in information literacy. The Academic Resource Center (Library) is the agency that supports the teaching and learning activities as well as to promote information literacy of university students. The services include online tutorials, training, and information retrieval, to meet the needs of students.

This study investigates the information seeking behaviours of Thai college students with a focus on Mahasarakham University, the largest regional university in Thailand in everyday life contexts to help libraries and information agencies, including academic libraries, can provide effective information services and courses.

Objective

To study the pattern in searching for information, using information source, and obstacle and problem in information retrieval procedure in solving various problems in daily life of Mahasarakham University undergraduate students

Methodology

1. Population and sample used in the research included 37,745 undergraduates of Mahasarakham University of Academic Year of 2010. Samples used in the research included 379 Year 2 – 4 undergraduates. The method of multi-stage random sampling was used; the size of sample was specified from the Krejcie & Morgan's Table. After that, stratified random sampling was used under the Faculty, each zone had size of sample that was proportionate with the ratio of the population for 379 persons.

2. PIL Survey Instrument Questionnaire used in Project Information Literacy of Washington University was modified and arranged the form to be convenient to use as tool in collecting data.

Table 1: Number of samples classified under the Faculty

Faculty	Samples
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	26
Faculty of Science	23
Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management	25
Faculty of Accounting and Management	87
Faculty of Medicines	6
Faculty of Engineering	17
Faculty of Liberal Arts	6
Faculty of Technology	14
Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences	8
Faculty of Informatics	31
Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies	10
Faculty of Public Health	19
Faculty of Veterinary Science	9
Faculty of Architecture Urban Design and Creative Arts	13
College of Music	5
College of Politics and Governance	51
Total	379

According to Table 1, it was found that most students study in the Faculty of Accounting and Management equivalent to 23 percent, secondly it was college of Politics and Governance equivalent to 13 percent, next was the Faculty of Informatics equivalent to 5 percent, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences equivalent to 6 percent, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management for 9 percent, Faculty of Education for 6.6 percent, Faculty of Science for 6.5 percent, Faculty of Public Health for 1 percent, Faculty of Engineering for 4.3 percent, Faculty of Technology for 5.3 percent, Faculty of Architecture Urban Design and Creative Arts for 7 percent, Faculty of Environment and Resource Studies for percent, Faculty of Veterinary Science for 2 percent, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Science for 1

percent, Faculty of Medicine for 1.1 percent, College of Music for 6 percent, and Faculty of Nursing Science for 1 percent, respectively.

Findings

Topic that students once searched for during 6 past months, particular resources used for searching information in daily life and the part that students deemed it hard in the searching process concerned with daily life were identified.

Table 2: Searched topics

Searched topics	Frequency	Percent
News/current issues	307	81.0
Matters related to the work	232	61.2
Health issue (of oneself or of closed friends)	229	60.4
Travel information (such as the plan for travel)	212	55.9
Buying stuff (such as goods or service)	196	51.7
Personal life (such as residential information)	182	48.0
Social contact for common interest	154	40.6
Job (such as salary, vacancy)	152	40.1
Supporting information (such as politics)	111	29.3
Spiritual belief	75	19.8
Seek for expert (such as doctor)	69	18.2

According to Table 2, it was found that during past 6 months, the topics mostly searched by students was current news for 61 percent, secondly was the work to do, next was health issue, and travel information (such as plan for work) 55.9 percent, buying stuff (such as goods or service) for 51.7 percent, personal life for 48 percent, job for 40 percent, supporting information for 29 percent, spiritual information for 19 percent, and seek for expert for 8 percent, respectively.

Table 3: Particular resources used for searching information in daily life

Resources	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Level
Search engine such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask.com)	5.35	0.81	much
Wikipedia (via Google or directly to Wikipedia)	5.08	0.88	much
Fellow students	4.92	0.96	much
Books in the library	4.75	0.99	much
Website of government agencies	4.64	0.90	much
Teacher	4.64	0.95	much
Collected information	4.58	0.98	much
Friend, family	4.55	1.05	much
Social network	4.42	1.01	much
Database of library such as EBSCO,JSTOR, ProQuest)	4.37	1.10	much
Encyclopedia such as Britannica, published or online	4.30	0.97	much
Blog	4.22	1.09	much

Librarian	3.88	1.10	Moderate
Average	4.56	0.55	much

According to Table 3, it was found that students used particular resource when searching for information for daily life in much level. Resources mostly used include search engine such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask.com for 5.35, secondly it was Wikipedia via Google or website of Wikipedia directly for 5, fellow students for 4, books in library for 4, website of government agencies for percent, collected data for percent, social network for percent, database via website of library such as EBSCO, JSTOR, ProQuest for percent, encyclopedia such as Britannica published or online for percent, Blog for percent, and librarian for percent, respectively.

Table 4: Part that students deemed it hard in the searching process concerned with daily life

Obstacles	$\overline{X}$	S.D.	Level
Hard to frame the topic to be more specific	5.53	0.89	much
Hard to find update information	5.47	1.02	much
Hard to choose information related to daily life	5.46	0.99	much
Hard to search for articles in research database such as EBSCO, JSTORE, ProQuest)	5.45	1.05	much
Hard to decide on the reliability of the information sources	5.45	1.02	much
Hard to specify keyword	5.44	0.95	much
Hard to find the answer to be searched for in the web	5.44	1.02	much
Hard to assess the data sources	5.39	0.99	much
Hard to start searching for information related to daily life	5.38	0.91	much
Hard to identify that what is required from the search related to daily life	5.37	0.99	much
Hard to collect data sources obtained from the search	5.35	1.06	much
Hard to find information to be used from web such as Google, Wikipedia, website of government agency	5.31	1.10	much
Hard to decide that whether the search is complete	5.27	1.02	much
Hard to read document	5.24	1.00	much
Hard to find the sources of data related to daily life	5.21	1.00	much
Average	5.38	0.72	much

According to Table 4, it was found that in all search related to daily life, students deemed it hard in much level, the one deemed mostly hard by students was that it was hard to frame the topic to be more specific, secondly it was hard to find update information such as online and publication for percent, hard to choose information concerned with daily life to be used for percent, hard to find articles in database of research in web of library such as EBSCO, JSTORE, ProQuest for percent, hard to decide about the reliability of the data source for percent, hard to specify keyword for percent, hard to assess the data source obtained for percent, hard to start searching for information related to daily life for percent, hard to specify that what is required from searching in daily life for percent, hard to collect data sources obtained from search for percent, hard to find information to be used from web such as Google, Wikipedia, websites of government agency for percent, hard to decide that whether the search is complete already or

not for percent, hard to read document for percent, hard to find the source of data related to daily life for percent, respectively.

Conclusion and discussion

The topic mostly searched by students was current news, specific resource used by students to search for information in daily life mostly was search engine such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, Ask.com, resources mostly used by students in second rank was Wikipedia. The exploration of matters in Wikipedia was found that Wikipedia was in the same criteria with Encyclopedia Britannica on the accuracy of data, this made some students that admit that currently, Wikipedia was the source for searching for information and relying on when in need sufficiently, but not quite completely. It is noticeable that students chose to seek information from fellow friends, teachers, database, or librarian, this was consistent with the study of Feldman and Newcomb (1969), that concluded on the relationship of fellow students on students in that it was for encouraging on general matter that could not be obtained. The assessment of information found in website from searching in daily life of students was under the theory of information assessment including the consideration on the modernity, variety, impartiality, and reliability of information; and it was not different from the information assessment to work on the assignment given by teacher. Persons whom students rely on for the data in daily life most were fellow student; this might be because fellow students were the closest ones and were the ones who learnt together at the same class. This made students choose fellow students to help assess data sources more than instructors and family. For all searching process concerned with daily life, the things that were seen by students to be the hardest ones were to frame the topic to be more specific, to find update information, and to choose to use information obtained from search that is not consistent with the topic.

Acknowledgement:

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