

## Information seeking behaviour of the students of National Law University, Uttar Pradesh

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### Abstract

Access to information is vital and the library professionals have to face challenges for providing adequate qualitative information to users of legal institutions. In the era of information explosion and information overload it becomes essential that information needs of students and faculties in legal institution can be met effectively. Hence, the need of users of law libraries and their Information Seeking Behaviour for planning and information collection, services and facilities of libraries are felt necessary. The purpose of this study is to investigate the awareness of legal e-resources and information seeking behaviour amongst the law students in National Law Universities. In this study we investigated into the information seeking behaviour and information technology skills of the students of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow as case study. The study focuses on legal information needs of law students, awareness of legal information resources, the information seeking strategy, utilisation of digital legal resources, challenges and problems of law students with regards to accessing digital legal information in present digital environment.

**Keywords:** information needs, seeking behaviour, legal research

### 1. Introduction

Legal education generally refers to the education of lawyers before entering into professional practice. Legal education in India is offered at different levels by the traditional universities and the specialised law universities and schools only after completion of an undergraduate degree or as an integrated degree. The students from the different branches of social science and higher education, legal education is responsible for enlargement and development of legal community which lead to social development of the country. The core objective of legal education is to develop a judicial system useful for the civilised society. The role of legal education is to produce the competent Jurists, Advocates, Judges and legal professionals for a progressive country in adequate numbers. Legal Education aims for developing and applying social values and concepts that help to the people and solve problems of democratic society.

The legal education has gained importance to develop legal fraternity and is acting as an emerging discipline to develop law. The basic aim and purpose of legal education is to develop legal professionals, jurists to be part of the judicial system and aim to the justice for all. Globalization, liberalization and privatization have tremendous influence on the civilized society and legal education everywhere including India.

#### 1.1 National Law Universities

To implement the reforms in legal education the first autonomous law school was established as National Law School of India University in Bangalore. Following the NLS model, various national law schools have been established in many states. While these essentially differ from NLS in terms of modalities etc., the structure and

model of imparting legal education in these law schools has remained the same. Quite in contrast with the existing pattern of legal education, the autonomous law schools varied in structural design and in various other aspects. These Schools are recognized by the University Grants Commission as 'state universities' and are affiliated to the Bar Council of India. Each of these law schools were to be established under a specific legislation, to be passed by the State legislature of establishing a law school in the states. To improve standards of legal education and ensure education imparted in these institutions met desired standards, the Bar Council of India involved various prestigious and talented individuals with these law schools such as the Chief Justice of India or the Chief Justice of the High Courts as the 'Visitors' or 'Chancellors' of the National law schools.

Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University was established by the Government of Uttar Pradesh in Lucknow in the year 2006 to meet out the new challenges in legal field and to strengthen the vision that was given by the establishment of first National Law School of the country. The University provides excellent infrastructural facilities and environment to advance and disseminate learning and knowledge of law and legal process and to develop in the students and research scholars a sense of responsibilities to serve the society in the field of law by developing skills in advocacy, judicial and other legal services and legislations. It sustains vibrant intellectual life and strong community spirit by encouraging collaboration and new ways of thinking, seeking new ways to support its work and providing the finest facilities to its students. It has made available a wide range of legal materials of more than 22000 documents and provides access to numerous online legal databases and digital resources including EPW, HeinOnline,

JSTOR, Kluwer Arbitration, Lexis-Nexis, Manupatra, Supreme Court Cases, Taxmann and Westlaw online as well as online e-books for its students in well equipped modern 'Madhu Limaye Library' managed by trained library professionals.

## 1.2 Concept of ISB

Information is now accepted as a resource with equal emphasis on its content and means of delivery. The three basic resources are people, information and system. The first two categories have to do with means of delivery of information. In context of information Needs it is meaningful to examine the relationship between the originator i.e. author or writer, intermediary i.e. Librarian or information professionals and user i.e. seeker of information. Information has to do with all forms of data, documents and literature etc. In other words, it is the data of value in decision-making. The system is concerned with the creation, storage, repacking, disposal and interpretation of information.

Information seeking behaviour deals with those activities a person engages in when identifying his or her own need of information, searching for such information in a better way and using or transferring of information. Information behaviour is the totality of human behaviour in relation to the sources and channels of information including both active and passive information seeking and information use. Thus it includes face to face and online communication with others as well as the passive reception of information. ISB involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. ISB is expressed in various forms from reading printed material to research and experimentation. The scholars, students and teachers actively seek information from the various media available in the libraries of the institutes.

## 2. Review of Literature

Legal information is a valuable resource needed in the society of legal professionals, including law students that are learning how to become advocate. The law students plays vital role in society, especially in acting as a voice for others in every capacity of law or in legal issues that occur on a regular basis, which one cannot handle nor have the time to handle. Engaging an advocate to take care of one's legal affairs is very much required and it is one sure way to become free from unnecessary headaches. Oke-Samuel (2008) <sup>[18]</sup> corroborates that "lawyers' roles include giving legal advice and that they must know where to find laws."

According to Wilson (1997) <sup>[25]</sup>, "the problem of studying information seeking behavior starts with the concept of information need, which has proved difficult due to the subjective nature of needs as it is experienced or occurred only in the mind of the person in need. This experience can be discovered by deduction from behavior or through the reports of the person in need because need cannot be directly observed." Bumkrant, defines the subjective character need as "as cognitive representation of a future goal that is desired". In spite of the subjective nature of need, various types of needs have been defined through

deduction and report. Odusanya and Amusa (2003) <sup>[17]</sup> "identify four aspects of education related information needs of law students including Current information on research findings, Information related to pursuance of innovative ideas, Current affairs and knowledge and for legal administration."

"Majid and Kassim (2000) have conducted various studies to investigate the information seeking strategy of library users based on their subject, occupation, information environment and geographical location. Information seeking behavior of law students and legal professionals has also been a popular areas of research, where earlier sties have reported that law students and legal professionals heavily used books and journals. The study also reveals that the respondents prefer printed format over electronic format and that they first consult their personals collection before resorting to other information providing sources and agencies." Kuhlthau and Tama (2001) submit that "lawyers prefer printed text." Beautieu (2003) <sup>[4]</sup> studied on approaches to users based studies information seeking and Retrieval. Ikoja-Odongo and Ocholla (2004) <sup>[11]</sup> indicates that "the term information has been defined, understood and differently interpreted across various disciplines and professions. The decision maker's viz. Politicians, managers, legal professionals etc. Perceive information as the process by which event of external world are conceived and thus provides opportunity to form decisions on economic, education, moral and legal issues." According to Folorunsho and Ibrahim (2005) <sup>[8]</sup>, "information is a fact, an opinion or an idea from any source, which can give support to making adequate decisions." Smith and Mostert (2012) <sup>[19]</sup> also defined "information as a property of matter, any message, documents or information resource or any data." Therefore it can be stated that information is an important instrument used in the realisation of any goal set by an individual, society or institution.

Igbeka and Atinmo (2002) <sup>[10]</sup> agree that "information is a valuable resource required in any society and a vital organ of human existence, without which the whole of humanity would have been in darkness. It is a vital resource that stimulates the socio-economic development of the society. Information is important to people in diverse vocations." The jurists, legal professionals and law students require information in their routine activities. For instance, they need information on how to determine the case, argue or represent the client before the court and for passing the law examinations respectively. In modern legal society, information is a vital instrument required for the routine activities of people in the legal profession, who need legal information to make vital and rational decisions as these are directly touches the human life. If retrieved legal information is accurate, then they are a high proximity of making good decisions. Reddy (2010) stated that "information can be acquired, processed and disseminated through the university law libraries, where library resources users and information managers interact together for the transmission of information of knowledge. He agreed that it is imperative for library managers to understand how library resources are

searched and utilized by library users.” Thanuskodi (2010), observed that “majority of respondents were not aware of e-resources. The study also shows that the respondents used IT based library sources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources. Kadli and Hanchinal (2015) [13], in a comparative study of Law Students in two law colleges of Mumbai find that the law students use IT based library sources and facilities ore frequently along with printed sources. From the literature it is found that awareness about legal information resources among legal professionals was not less. Now-a-days with the advancement of ICT applications, Information Technology became a part of day today life of all the people. Awareness of online legal resources and use of internet and multimedia applications are increasing among the lawyers. The review of studies shows that there is scarcity of studies related to the information seeking behavior of law student in India.

**3. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are -

1. Identify the frequency and purpose of use of library by law students.
2. Know the awareness about internet and e-resources among law students
3. Identify the frequency and purpose of use of internet and electronic resources.
4. Find out the usage of legal e-resources by the students of NLU.
5. Find out the awareness of popular online legal databases used by the law students.

**4. Research Methodology**

The literature review exposed some research gaps which need to be investigated on. These research gaps are in Information needs and information seeking behaviour. On the basis of above observation and on the objectives of the study, it was necessary to use questionnaire to get expansive data which could be used to generalise findings. This study is based on a questionnaire based survey of the law students of National Law University Lucknow. The students pursuing degree course are included in the study to investigate the information seeking behaviour of law students with reference to legal information, adequacy of library services, digital resources and online legal databases.

A structured questionnaire was designed for collection of data. A total number of 300 questionnaires were distributed among the students randomly and 246 filled up questionnaire were received. The response rate was 82 percent. The collected data were analysed using latest version of MS-Excel worksheet for appropriate statistical analysis.

**5. Scope & Purpose**

Many studies on use pattern and information seeking behaviour of users have been carried out in various fields but the review of the past studies reveals that very fewer studies have been earlier carried out for the law students. In this reason it was thought proper to carry out a study for the students of the legal subject. Because of the

information growth, complexity of information systems, the complexities of the profession, the difficulty in the interpretation of information in legal field has made the information more intricate complex which has direct impact on the information seeking pattern of the students, who are the consumer of the legal information.

The law students of Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia National Law University, Lucknow were included as sample since the study of all National Law Universities in India was not possible owing to constraint of money, time and financial difficulties. The National Law University of Uttar Pradesh is one of the leading institutions amongst 20 National law schools of India.

**6. Data Analysis**

**6.1 Gender-wise Distribution**

We have received 246 out of 300 questionnaires distributed amongst the Law students. The rate of respondent is 82%. It is observed that in this study 144 (58.54%) respondents are male and 102 (41.46%) are Female students. It is clear that ratio of female is lesser than the male in the field of law.

**6.2 Frequency of using the Library**

It is observed that 80.89% respondents are visiting library daily, 15.85% alternate day and only 3.26% as per requirement. It is clear that most of the legal professionals are using the library services regularly to fulfill their legal information needs.

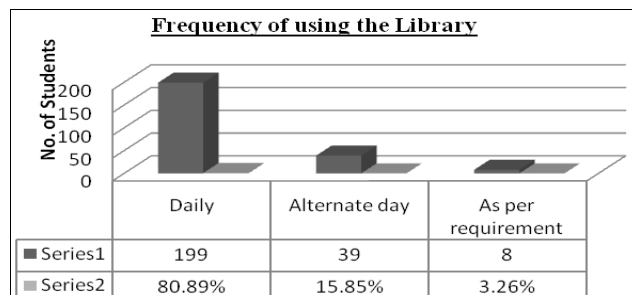


Fig 1

**6.3 Purpose to visit the Library**

The table shows purpose to visit the library by the legal professionals. The highest numbers of 32.11% respondents are referring the books in the library while 30.49% needed information for preparation of notes and 25.61% accessing web resources and 11.79% for Assignment and Projects. It is clear that most of the legal professionals visited the library to collect legal information from the legal books as well as accessing legal databases.

Table 1

S. No.	Purpose	Respondent	Percentage
1	Referring books	79	32.11%
2	Prepare notes	75	30.49%
3	Assignment & Projects	29	11.79%
4	Accessing web resource	63	25.61%
		246	100%

**6.4 Accessing digital information through internet**

The respondents who are using various devices to access internet for gather information, 50.81% using on

computer system, 19.11% using Laptop, 30.08% using Mobile Phones. It is found that all the law students are using internet to access digital information.

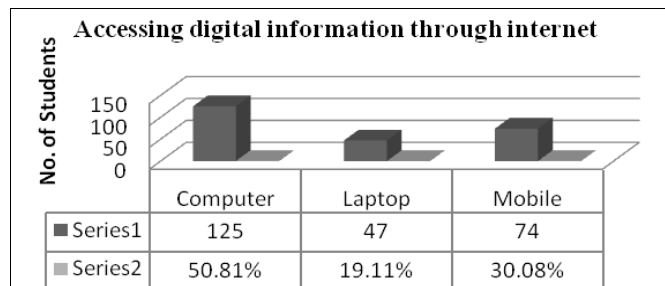


Fig 2

**6.5 Use Pattern of Digital Information and media**

The study aimed to find out use patter of information and their level of knowledge that helps them to access online resources to access the digital information. It is found that out of total responded 34% respondents prefer digital resources, 47% prefer Print resources and 19% are using both digital and print resources for the purpose of collection information for their study. It shows that print resources are preferred for the course of study between law students.

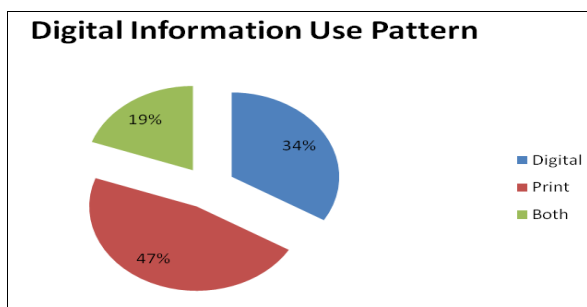


Fig 3

**6.6 Purpose of using Internet**

As shown in the table use of internet facilities among law students is higher for email and social networking. It is found that 33.74% students are aware and using electronic mail and social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc. Which is highest followed by 31.30% for Project Work/Moot court. 16.67% for prepare class notes and writing articles as well as 18.29% using internet for searching legal information for study purpose.

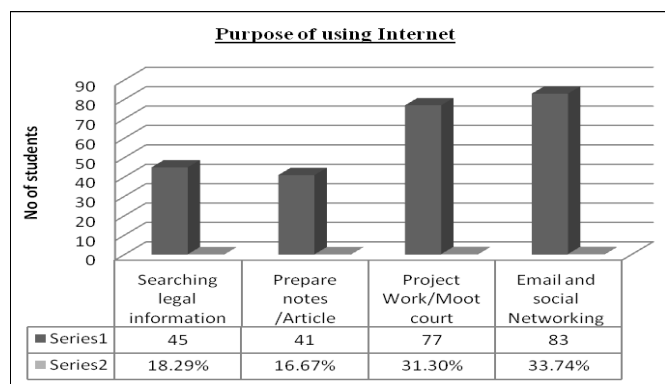


Fig 4

**6.7 Frequency of using internet and digital resources**

As per study it is found that highest number of the respondent 70.73% are using internet daily, 26.42% using alternate day, 2.85% reported weekly. It is clear that the students of NLU are frequently using Internet and digital resources.

**6.8 Time Spent on internet for information gathering in a day**

The study describes the time spent by the respondents to accessing online information in a day. Out of total respondents using internet maximum 102 (41.46%) spent one hour, 83 (33.74%) spent two hours, 32 (13.01%) spent three hours spent and 29 (11.79%) spent above 4 hours per day for getting information. It shows that the law students frequently using internet for searching electronic information regularly.

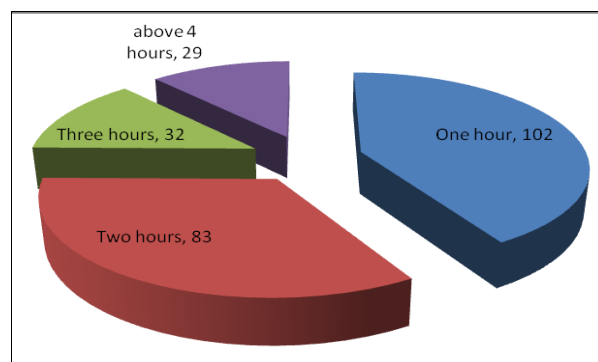


Fig 5

**6.9 Awareness of online Databases of Court Judgments preference wise**

The question was intended to know awareness of popular legal database containing information about court judgments among the law students. The users were asked to indicate a name on preference basis. The study shows that maximum 39.43% respondents refer SCC online whereas 33.74% Manupatra online, 16.67% AIR and rest 10.16% refer Taxmann and others. The above statistics shows that preference wise rank is SCC Online, Manupatra, AIR and others.

Table 2

S. No.	Legal Databases	Respondents	Percentage
1	AIR	41	16.67%
2	Manupatra	83	33.74%
3	SCC online	97	39.43%
4	others	25	10.16%
		246	100%

**6.10 Awareness of online legal Databases**

The law students were asked to indicate a name on preference basis about awareness of online legal databases on preference basis. As shown in the Table the respondents' preference was 25.61% of Lexis-Nexis and 25.20% of Westlaw is higher than JSTOR, Hein Online and Kluwer. It is clear that the law students of National law schools are using legal databases frequently for gathering legal information through digital resources.

Table 3

S. No.	Legal Databases	Respondents	Percentage
1	JSTOR	43	17.48%
2	Kluwer	37	15.04%
3	Lexis-Nexis	62	25.20%
4	Hein Online	41	16.67%
5	Westlaw	63	25.61%
		246	100%

**6.11 Awareness of legal web resources**

The responses received from the law students shows the preference of legal web resources higher 37.80% for Indian kanoon followed by 19.11% for STPL-India, 26.42% Judi’s and 16.67% other free web resources to be accessed for legal information. It is observed from the rate of access to Indian Kanoon is higher among the law students which is available freely.

Table 4

S. No.	Web resources	Respondents	Percentage
1	Indian Kanoon	93	37.80 %
2	STPL-India	47	19.11%
3	Judi’s	65	26.42%
4	Others	41	16.67%
		246	100%

**6.12 Problem faced while seeking digital Information**

The respondents were asked to provide information as problem faced while seeking digital information. As per responses received maximum students 43.50% feels ‘Information scattered in too many sources’. Another 34.55% of the respondents perceived as ‘Information overload on Internet’, 11.38 % of the respondents assessed as ‘Incomplete information’ and remaining 10.57% of the respondents said ‘Internet speed is very low’. Majority of the respondents were faced problems due to very vast information scattered in too many sources.

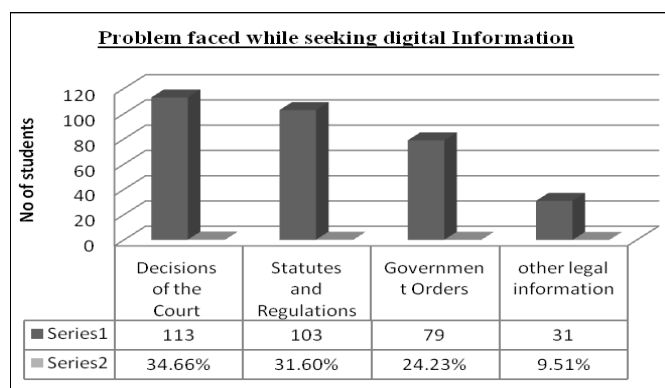


Fig 6

**6.13 General Assessment about the Library Services**

The respondents were asked to provide their overall general assessment of the library services to meet out their information requirement. As shown in the table majority of law students 59.35 % considered 'Excellent' to fulfill their information needs. Another 26.02% of the respondents perceived the library as 'Very Good', 10.16% of the respondents assessed as 'Good' and remaining

4.47% of the respondents said ‘Satisfactory’. It is clear that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the collections, services and facilities provided by the library to meet out their information needs as shown in the table.

Table 5

Serial	Description	Respondents	Percentage
1	Excellent	146	59.35 %
2	Very Good	64	26.02%
3	Good	25	10.16%
4	Satisfactory	11	4.47%
		246	100%

**7. Findings**

The study revealed that Internet is the most preferred medium of access to legal information among the majority of law students. It is observed that all the law students of National law schools are aware of digital resources and online legal databases that help them to access information. There are more students who participated in the study are using personal phones to access internet. It is also found that a large number of students are aware of the online legal databases that help to access information in alternative formats easily. The findings also shows that-

- It is found that most of the law students visiting the library daily and using library resources and services regularly to gather legal information required for their study.
- Most of the law students visit the library with the purpose to reading books as well as accessing online legal resources from the library.
- It is observed that most of the law students visit the library accessing digital resources from the computers available in the library and also from the laptop or mobile phones. It indicates that online digital resources are necessary in the libraries of the law institutes along with print resources.
- It is observed that large number of law students spend more than one hour in a day on internet for accessing information and to update their legal knowledge also.
- It is found that the law students are also accessing online legal databases available in the library. The rate of access to SCC online, Manupatra, LexisNexis and Westlaw is higher in order to provide updated legal information.
- Most of the law students are aware about free online legal databases. The students rated high for Indiankanoon online database and followed by STPL, Judi’s and STPL. They are aware of online legal resources and using them regularly.
- Majority of students were satisfied with the collections, services and facilities provided by the library to meet out their information needs and rated the library of the institute at ‘Excellent’.

**8. Conclusion**

The new generation of law students made use of texts in print but there was the expectation from them that digital sources would make their study easier. The study revealed that apart from the formal legal sources, law students are aware about use of electronic resources.

Keeping in mind the needs of the future and with the growth of IT applications, equipment and telecommunications, India has geared itself to meet the ever rising demand for data communications. With the increasing need for legal databases by large users, dedicated online databases are spreading across the World. These databases henceforth can provide better online legal services to their clients with the fast growing application of information superhighway. There are a large number of online legal database and web resources available for access to legal information as well as handling of services and activities of legal institutions in India. The law students are using online legal resources and facilities frequently along with printed documents. The law students depend upon a variety of information sources to complete course of study, projects assignments, and writing. Most of the students often face the problem of the information overload on internet and lack of information skills to search. Therefore library staff should be trained to render quality services and train the students to find digital information on their own. To improve the facility and services in law libraries it is suggested that they should adopt the practice of taking users feedback which will certainly help strength of the library services.

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