

Abstract

The basic objective of a public library is to provide information to the public to satisfy their informative, education and recreational needs. However, it has been observed that the use of public libraries is decreasing day by day. Despite hundreds of user studies, we still know very little about the information needs of various communities, which is a prerequisite for designing information services to serve them. It is therefore crucial to conduct a comprehensive investigation of the information requirements of both users and non-users of public libraries in order to effectively meet the societal demands. In this study, an attempt has been made to study the use and nonuse of public libraries to assess the public library awareness, information behaviour, library usage pattern and reasons behind nonuse of public libraries by the users and as well as nonusers in the Presidency Division of West Bengal, India. In order to achieve the objective of the study, it was intended to collect data from a total sample of 410 individuals from rural, urban and sub-urban areas of five districts – 24 Pgs. (South), 24 Pgs.(North), Nadia, Howrah and Kolkata under this Division. It is worth noting here that samples have been selected through stratified random sampling method. From each district, two blocks have been selected and for Kolkata two municipal wards have been selected to serve the purpose. Then from each block/ward one primary unit library has been selected and from their adjunct areas forty-one respondents are surveyed according to availability and convenience of the study. A structured questionnaire was framed to collect required data. Data were collected from the selected sample using a combination of both questionnaire and interview. At the pre-processing stage, collected qualitative data were converted into quantitative data. Respondent's preferences, in case of multiple choices, were translated into corresponding integer, i.e. a whole number. After the analysis of gathered responses from the respondents certain outcomes arise that users come from with specific information need, having multiple information facilities at home and workplace, prefer both print and digital media and attempt first in internet for their information; non-users generally have difficulty articulating their information needs clearly, and

they rely more on human sources for their required information; psychological makeup including ability/skill of an individual and accessibility to information influence use and nonuse of public libraries; apathy towards reading is one of the reasons for nonuse of public libraries and public libraries' infrastructure including resources, services, staff strength and lack of user-friendliness also lead to nonuse of public libraries.

Keywords:Public library; Library awareness; Library user; Library usage pattern; Public library nonuse; Nonuser; Information behaviour; Presidency Division; Reasons of nonuse