

**A METHODOLOGY FOR THE IDENTIFICATION
OF INFORMATION NEEDS OF USERS,
POTENTIAL USERS AND NON-USERS**

The Foundation for any Library and Information Activity

DR. FRANCIS J. DEVADASON

KANSAS LIBRARY CONFERENCE

April 9-11, 2008

WICHITA, KS

Thanks to the organisers of this conference, especially the CULS committee for the opportunity provided.

Thanks to Mr. Jason Coleman for the introduction and encouragement.

Pardon me for my South Indian English and accent, you are welcome to laugh at those and enjoy yourself during the presentation.

If you do not follow certain words or expressions, you may jolly well forget them because, most probably you know what I am talking about already.

The tiny stories, anecdotes and tit bits I may mention here are for illustrative purposes only and do not have any other implications. (Though, expected to be heart-warming, these are removed in this handout !)

There will be a lot that I would have to learn from you, as some of the techniques I would mention may not be appropriate and compatible with the practices existing here.

You are welcome to comment, question, tear me to pieces, condemn me to a firing squad, or offer suggestions and modification for improvement...

Well I am ready to learn from you .

I acknowledge with thanks the contributions of my friend Mr. Pratap Lingam

In the evolution of our profession, we are at a particular point in time wherein we as Librarians and Information professionals have to attach much more importance to our users, than we ever did before.

It is mainly because of the recent developments in the web world. Most of the information needed by our clients are supposedly, available on the web, on the web pages, on the sub-pages, on documents embedded in them, and as online accessible databases, and so on.

The screenshot displays the Omgili website interface within a web browser window. The browser's address bar shows the URL "http://www.omgili.com". The page features a central search bar with the text "Anonymous Search" and a "search" button. To the left of the search bar, there are three categories listed: "Personal experiences", "Solutions to problems", and "Ideas and opinions". To the right, under the heading "Example search topics:", there are several categories with sub-topics: "Consumer Experiences" (Best Laptop, P52 vs. W5, MP3 Player, Best Digital Camera, Plasma vs LCD), "Personal Experiences" (Relationship Problems, Best Diet, High Blood Sugar, GR Suggestions), "Troubleshooting" (Remove Virus, Vista Installation, Linux), "Recommendations" (Favorite Book, Cheese Cake, Top 10 Paris), and "Opinions" (Who will be the next president, Yes, Christmas vs. Diwali). At the bottom of the page, there is a navigation menu with links for "About", "Blog", "Help", "Pages", "Webinars", and "Useful". A footer note states "Omgili Search and Research applications are protected by worldwide patents". The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button and several open applications, including "Omgili - Find ou...", "KLA-INFORMED-2...", "Microsoft Power...", "IDENTIFICATION...", and "Omgili-Regis...", with the system clock showing 9:49 PM.

BlogRovR: your blogs, delivered - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Bookmarks Tools Help

BlogRovR: your blogs, delivered

BlogRovR

your blogs delivered, wherever you roam

We are currently fetching these blogs for you:
(and we're following you personalized recommended posts in Science and Technology)

Search [input] Search

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 VC Venture Capital and Tech 4x4in All Things Digital blog.parcis.com Cognitive Daily Comic Variance Dave Oberst aka Savage4Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engadget Feld Thoughts ForbesIndustries - web 2.0, social Google Blogoscoop Jeff Clavier's Software Only Let the Good Times Roll by Guy Ni Lifehacker Lifehacker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MMK Blog O'Reilly Asks On Malls on Broadway Profy.Com Read/WriteWeb RealClimate Subscriber - Tech Geek Blogger Silk on Alley Insider
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Sticks and BlogRovR: the conversation

BlogRovR Tray

- Posts from the flow: Welcome to BlogRovR. 12/11/07
- Sticks and BlogRovR: the conversation is everywhere. 10/16/07
- Sticks and BlogRovR: the conversation is everywhere. 10/15/07
- Mashable! 10/15/07

11 tags

blogging, BlogRovR, company & product profiles, mashable, search, social networking, social software, sticks, thoughts, web 2.0, web2.0

What they are saying... [Jack Hampshire, YouTube Video](#), Sept. 2007. "BlogRovR, RSS feed reader: the Bahamut All of feed"

What's new in the world of... [Google BlogRovR](#)

Start | BlogRovR: your... | KLA-BEPRD-3... | Microsoft Power... | IDENTIFICATION... | Google BlogRovR... | 9:49 PM

intute - the best Web resources for education and research - Windows Internet Explorer

http://www.intute.ac.uk/

Search [input]

intute

Search [input]

Who we are

- About Intute
- Working with Intute
- Suggest materials
- Projects

Internet catalogues

- A-Z of services
- New resources
- Suggest a site
- Resources for FE
- User support

Internet training

- Virtual Training Suite
- Intutans
- Seminars and events

intute is a free online service providing you with access to the very best Web resources for education and research. The service is created by a network of UK universities and partners. Subject specialists select and evaluate the websites in our database and write high quality descriptions of the resources. The database contains 12032 records.

intute: With a UK Amazon partner, we do all know what you think of books!

Search our database

Search [input]

Subject area(s)

- All subjects
- Arts and Humanities
- Health and Life Sciences
- Science Engineering and Technology
- Social Sciences

Advanced search Subject A-Z new resources help

Browse [input] Browse by subject

intute - AUSS and digital assets

intute accepts Jason Facchini Award

Advert Calendar

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Why do you invest with your intute?

The Cut of the Amante

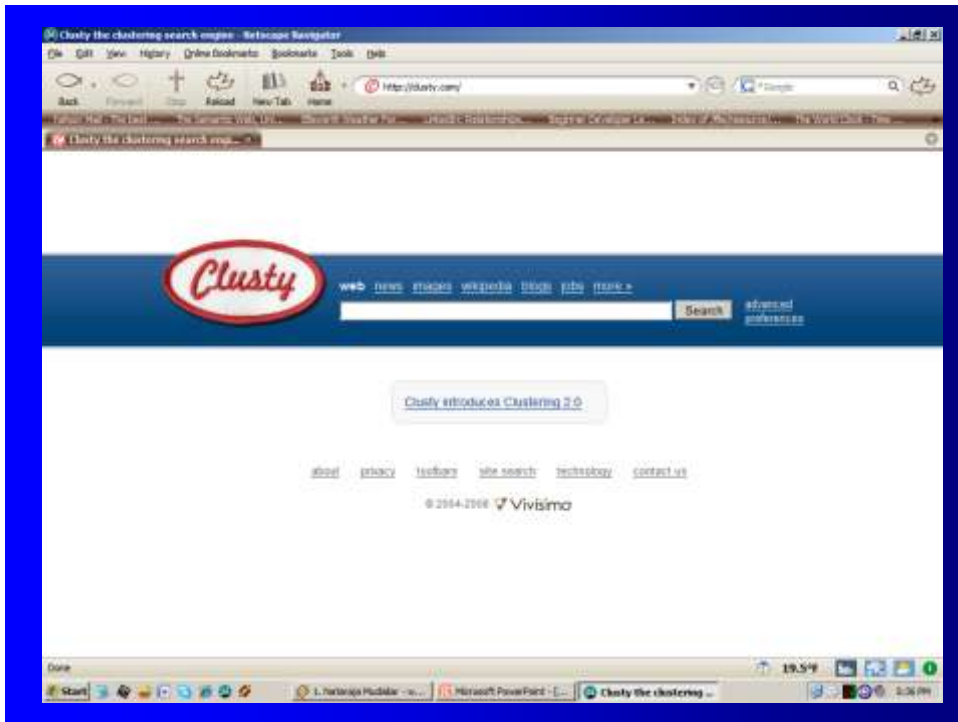
>> Go to Blog

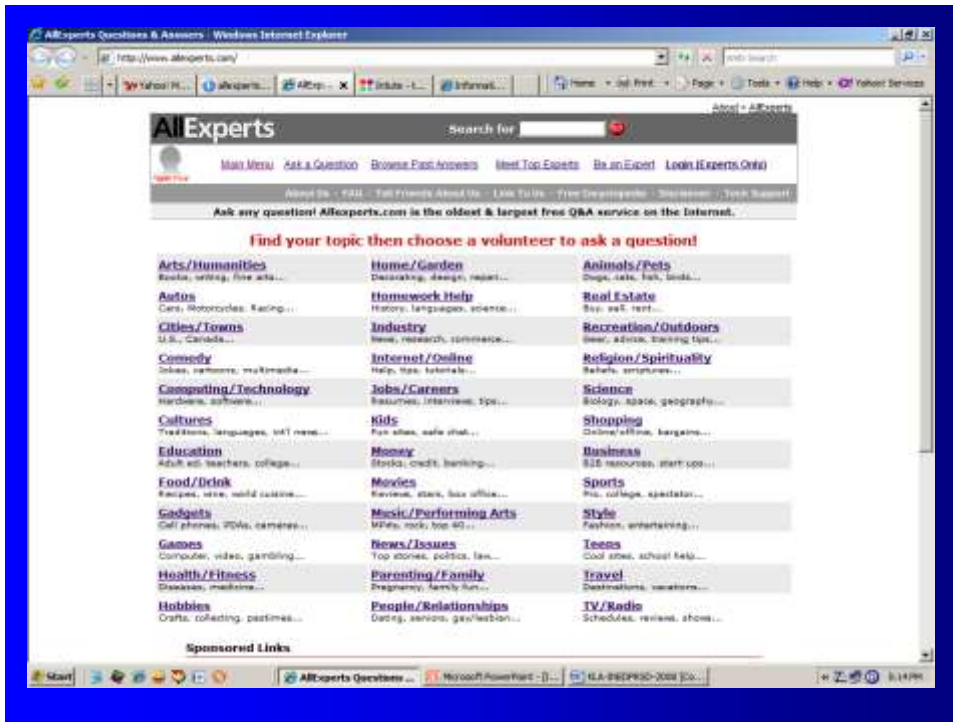
Behind the Headlines

Our Agents Room

Scientists have discovered that human brains effectively "scramble" as

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Ask MetaFilter | Community Writing - Internet Explorer

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Ask MetaFilter | Community Writing

MetaFilter AskMeFT Projects Music Jobs Podcast MetaTalk

Home Archives Tags Search Random

Log In New User

Recent Posts Popular Favorites Answered Unanswered

You're not logged in, [login here](#).

January 14

Where can I go in NYC that serves both ice cream AND hard squer-- as many varieties of both as possible?
 posted by [hurdalaska](#) to [food & drink](#) at 3:55 PM - 0 answers

What is the music used in the [Wall-E trailer](#)? [\[more inside\]](#)
 posted by [Weslosgal](#) to [media & arts](#) at 3:46 PM - 2 answers ✓

Give me your favorite simple Catfish or Tilapia recipe! [\[more inside\]](#)
 posted by [castman](#) to [food & drink](#) at 3:40 PM - 0 answers

Tattoo filter: My second tattoo question. I would like to get an Arabic themed sleeve on my arm. What sort of things can I look for in inspiration. Any Arab art that might be a good start? My goal would be to show the artist pieces that I liked and have him draw his own interpretation of it. Any help is truly appreciated.
 posted by [brynmamal](#) to [media & arts](#) at 3:40 PM - 4 answers

My mom's quasi-incestuous behavior towards my younger brother seriously squaks me out. Is her behavior actually quasi-incestuous? And what should I do? [\[more inside\]](#)
 posted by [anonymous](#) to [human relations](#) at 3:41 PM - 7 answers

I will soon receive an inheritance of about \$100,000-\$150,000 (numbers are vague right now). I'm looking for tips and advice for managing that money. [\[more inside\]](#)
 posted by [anonymous](#) to [work & money](#) at 3:41 PM - 5 answers

how do I find a cheap place in London quickly? [\[more inside\]](#)
 posted by [kwardand](#) to [grab bag](#) at 3:27 PM - 2 answers

I need some suggestions for a place to live that fits me better than NYC - somewhere liberal, outdoorsy, and

Ask MetaFilter is a questions and answers area of MetaFilter.

20 most popular tags in the past month:

music (79) travel (41) books (40) beer (33) photography (33) food (32) christmas (28) cooking (27) nyc (27) gift (27) video (25) book (24) car (24) computer (20) internet (20) health (20) business (21) family (21) film (21) laptop (21)

Posts by category in the past month:

clothing, beauty, & fashion (10) computers & internet (104) education (10) food & drink (122) grab bag (64) health (154) home & garden (44) human relations (122) law & government (12)

Start | Yahoo! Mail | deviantart | Ask MetaFilter | Com... 6:36 PM

Yahoo! Answers - Home - Internet Explorer

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Back Forward Stop Reload New Tab Home

http://answers.yahoo.com/

Yahoo! Answers - Home

Visit My Yahoo! Mail Make Y! your home page Search: Web Search

YAHOO! ANSWERS Sign In New User? Sign Up Answers Home - Forum - Blog - Help

ask. Can't find it with search? Ask **Post Question**

answer. Share knowledge Help others Earn points What people think of Answers How does it work?

discover. A new tool you can use to make Answers a better place **Find Out How**

Search for questions Search Advanced My Profile

Ready to Participate? Get Started!

Categories

- Best of Answers
- Arts & Humanities
- Beauty & Style
- Business & Finance
- Cars & Transportation

Yahoo! Answers Blog

Ask Mike: The Commuter's Blues

Most statements are subjective. Here's one that is an absolute, irrefutable fact: Commuting stinks. The question isn't whether a long commute is a lousy way to start the day, but rather how workers can make their daily trudge more tolerable.

[Read the Answers Blog >](#)

Done 19.5°F Microsoft PowerPoint - Yahoo! Answers - Ho... 5:33 PM



Apart from searching using search engines, due to social networking, users have other options such as joining appropriate discussion lists and groups and scan the Q&As and FAQs.

In fact, through social networking technology, they can ask the global community to answer their queries (not just Librarians, but the so called experts in each field who are ready to answer) especially when the question is specific and the expected answer is not more than a few sentences.

Due to these technological advances, users can try to find out for themselves the information they need.

But they must spend some time on their networked computers, patiently scan through the information retrieved, and sift / filter to get the most relevant ones.

Because of these factors the Information Service that is offered to them by us, must be pin-pointed and capable of initiating action on their part, making them thrilled to receive it.

In order to render such pin-pointed information services we have to identify their information needs also pin pointedly.

If we identify the information needs precisely, then very specific and suitable information services could be rendered.

If we render such KITR (Kick In The Rear) information services, the users will first hit our Library web site and hit any other search engine next or not at all.

**(IF YOU HIT GOOGLE, I WILL GIVE YOU ONE IN YOUR KNUCKLE ☺)
(Poster in my Library!)**

**Watch out ,
Identify Information Needs and
reach out
with specific information services
that would make them
shoot out
of their seats and do something
good !**

**There is no one, single, universal method for
identifying information needs, as it is a sort of
investigative / detective work !**

**The methodology will need modification to suit
individual organisations, individual situations,
manpower and other resources available for
carrying out the study and of course the kind
of persons being studied.**

It is not necessary to study the information needs of every user in such an elaborate manner. Select a few, may be 3 to 5, or three to five cohesive and distinct groups working on specific projects, who are quite influential , that is, whose intellectual work / decision will benefit quite a number of people. Similarly , you need not follow all the steps of this methodology ! You can have your selection as per your need and time available.

IDEA

•An idea in one sense, is a unit mental existent, and it is used to refer to any one of the following:

- a percept – that is a meaningful impression of an existent obtained through primary senses;**
- a mental image formed out of association of several percepts -- usually called a percept association;**
- a general mental image abstracted from several associations of percepts – usually called a concept.**

Concepts are normally the products of reasoning, generalizing mental operation, mental reflection, imagination and intuition.

MESSAGE

A message is a meaningful construction arrived at by mentally systematizing (organizing) symbols standing for ideas, which is fully or partially intended to describe, explain, clarify, educate, enlighten, advise, appeal, urge, warn, encourage, provide emotional satisfaction, discourage, create emotional disturbance and so on.

INFORMATION

Information is any kind of message which is of interest to a recipient.

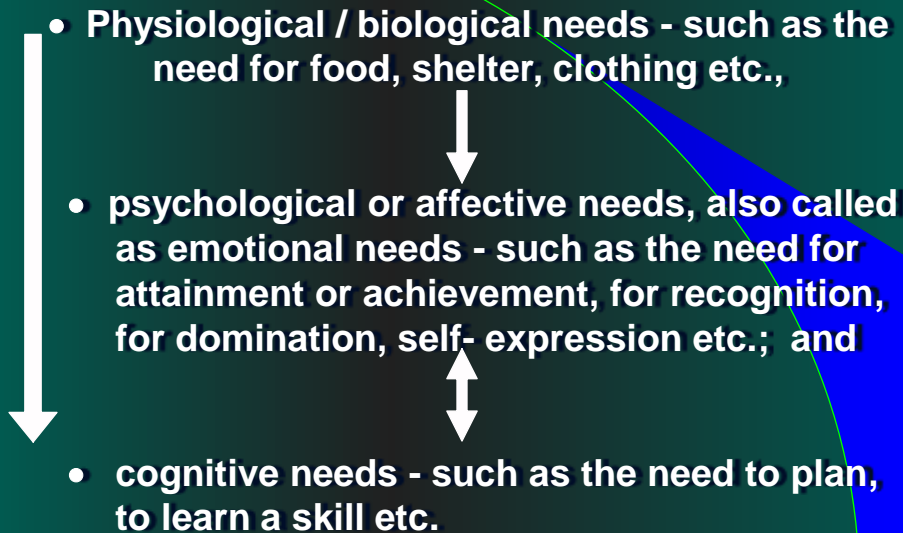
INFORMATION

Information is the message conveyed or recorded with an intention of being conveyed by a systematized (organized) body of ideas or its accepted or acceptable substitutes, which is capable of changing the image structure (state of knowledge) and is of interest to a recipient.

TYPES OF INFORMATION

- **Scientific and technical information, enabling learning, research, technical decisions and actions;**
- **Policy and management information, enabling decision on alternate choices, negotiation, comparison and so on; and**
- **Operational and industrial information, enabling production, maintenance and so on.**

HUMAN NEEDS

- Physiological / biological needs - such as the need for food, shelter, clothing etc.,
 - psychological or affective needs, also called as emotional needs - such as the need for attainment or achievement, for recognition, for domination, self-expression etc.; and
 - cognitive needs - such as the need to plan, to learn a skill etc.
- 

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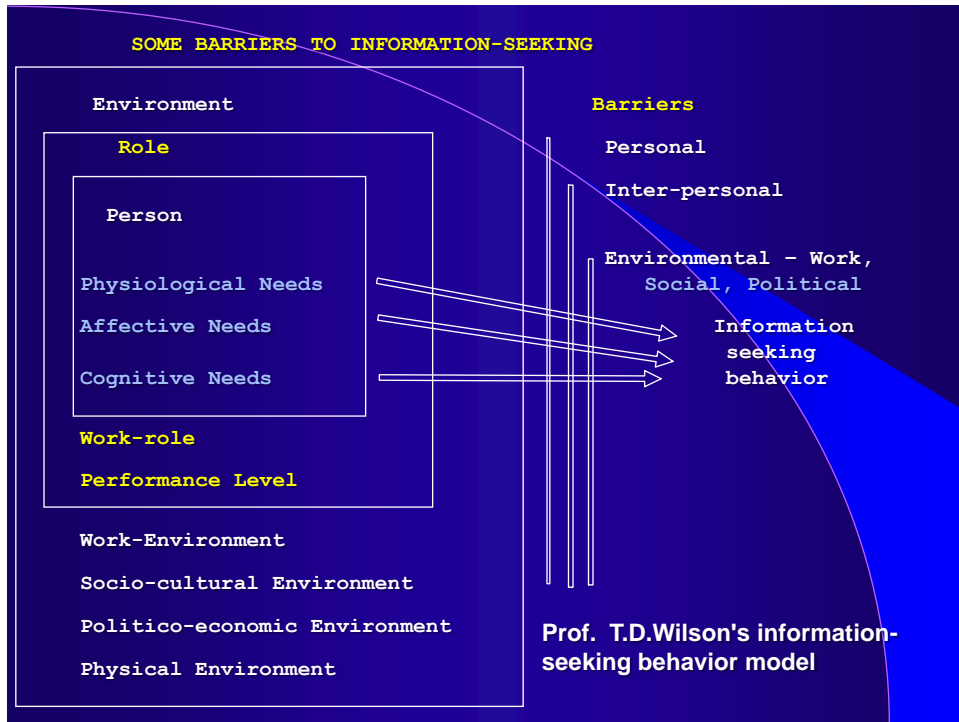
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FACTORS THAT MAY TRIGGER INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

- the importance of satisfying the need;
- the penalty incurred or that will be incurred or expected to be incurred by acting in the absence of full information;
- the availability of information sources; and
- the cost of using them; and so on.

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Information Needs:

- ☺ Expressed / articulated
- ☹ Unexpressed but aware of
- ☹ Dormant / Hidden and unaware of

- ☺ Time-bound
 - Immediate
 - Deferred

- ☹ Shaped by activity
 - As per the stage of a project
 - Latent

- 1) a clearly identified, expressed or articulated information need;
- 2) an unexpressed information need which the user is aware of but does not like to express;
- 3) a deliquescent or dormant or hidden information need which the user is unaware of;
- 4) a sort of vague, hazy idea of what information one really needs;
- 5) a latent information need which manifests through a passive reception of information to be stored as knowledge.

Information Needs depend on:

- **Work activity**
- **Discipline/ subject/ mission**
- **Availability of facilities**
- **Hierarchical position of individuals**
- **Motivation factors for information needs**
- **Need to take a decision**
- **Need to seek new ideas**
- **Need to validate the correct ones**
- **Need to make professional contributions**
- **Need to establish priority for discovery**
- **etc.**

FACTORS AFFECTING INFORMATION NEEDS:

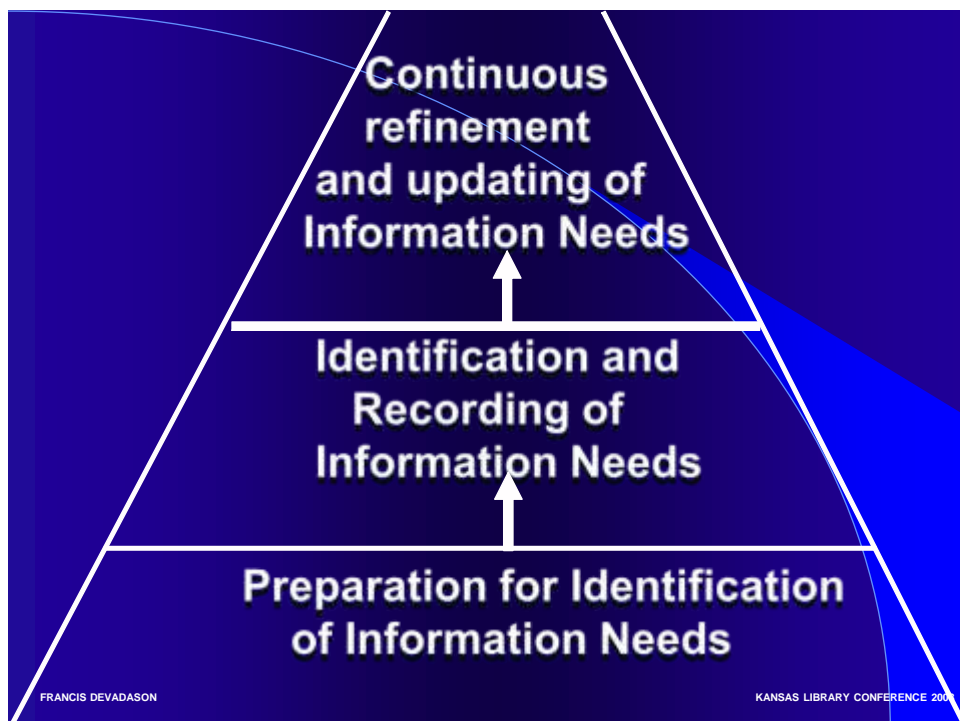
- **the range of information sources available ;**
- **the uses to which the information will be put;**
- **the background, motivation, professional orientation and other individual characteristics of the user;**
- **the social, political, economic, legal and regulatory systems surrounding the user;**
and
- **the consequences of information use**

PROBLEMS DUE TO INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR :

A user may not like to reveal his/her need as s/he may like to show that s/he is above (any) requirements and that s/he knows his/ her sources.

To divert or mislead s/he may give pseudo information needs. Or just because some one else is getting an information s/he may give a pseudo need to receive the same information.

A super-ordinate (immediate boss), to avoid a subordinate getting informed, may give it as a pseudo need and try to with-hold the information received.



**STUDY OF THE SUBJECT(s) / FIELD(s) OF INTEREST TO
THE ORGANISATION/ USER(s)**



**STUDY OF THE ORGANISATION AND
ITS ENVIRONMENT**



STUDY OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT OF USER(s)



STUDY OF THE USER(s)



FORMAL INTERVIEW



**IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**



**ANALYSIS AND REFINEMENT OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**

STUDY OF SUBJECT

**Collection of Information about subject(s) of
interest to the User / Organization**

***DEFINITION* of the term denoting the subject**

- **From various sources - dictionaries (ordinary and technical), encyclopedias, glossaries etc.**
- **Formulation of consolidated and comprehensive definition by analysis, comparison, de-duplication and synthesis**

SCOPE of the Subject as a whole

- **Divisions and Sub-divisions of the subject, the definition and scope of each of the terms denoting them**
 - **From articles in encyclopedias, text books, treatises etc., and documents describing curriculum, courses and syllabi**
 - **From analysis of the classificatory treatment of the subject by specialists for teaching and learning**

✂ ***APPLICATION* of the Subject to other subjects for their respective development**

✂ ***TOOL SUBJECTS* applicable to the subject concerned for its development**

CLASSIFICATION

Special Classification schemes designed by specialists such as, taxonomic classification, their analysis and preparation of summary tables

Library (Document) Classification schemes such as DDC, UDC, LC and others used by indexing and abstracting services

Thesaurus, Subject Headings etc., their analysis and preparation of summary tables

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT of the subject giving

- **Landmarks in the development of the subject and its broad divisions and sub-divisions**
Chronological list of significant contributions giving
 - 1) **Year of the contribution**
 - 2) **Name of the contributor**
 - 3) **Name/ Title**
 - 4) **Source of publication, if any,**
 - 5) **Short biographical sketch of the contributor (if necessary – useful to chit chat with the User)**
- **Trend of Research ascertained from indexing and abstracting services as to the broad areas of current research, growth of literature, see page and scatter**

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- **Documentary Sources (Important ones)**
 - Reference Books
 - Advanced text books
 - Core primary periodicals
 - Secondary (indexing and abstracting) periodicals/ databases
 - Ad- hoc bibliographies
 - Annual reviews, Advances in ...
 - Conference publications - Regular/ Ad-hoc
 - Electronic Data Bases

- **Digital Collections / Digital Libraries**
- **Virtual Libraries/ Organized and annotated lists of Links / Subject Directories, Portals.**
- **Networked Resources**
 - **Professional Discussion Groups / Lists**
 - **Prominent and Relevant Blogs / News Feeds / RSS Feeds, Podcasts**

- **Specialized Search Engines**
- **Specialized Software Resources**
- **Specialized non-documentary Databases, (Image, Data), Simulation Models, Case Studies, Tests, Skill Development Games, Training Tutorials etc.**

- **Institutional/ Organizational Sources (Reputed ones having similar interests)**
 - * **International, Regional, National and local institutions, professional associations, government departments, R & D laboratories, commercial organizations**
 - * **Specialized Equipment / Tool/ Hardware manufacturers , directories of these.**
- **Human Resources**
 - * **International, National, Local experts/ consultants**

**STUDY OF THE SUBJECT(s) / FIELD(s) OF INTEREST TO
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**STUDY OF THE ORGANISATION AND
ITS ENVIRONMENT**

STUDY OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT OF USER(s)

STUDY OF THE USER(s)

FORMAL INTERVIEW

**IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**

**ANALYSIS AND REFINEMENT OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**

Organization and its Environment

- **Overall Objectives**
- **Functions**
- **Environment**
 - **Political**
 - **Social**
 - **Cultural**
 - **Technological**
 - **Regulatory**

REGULATORY CONDITIONS INFLUENCING AN ENTERPRISE INCLUDE

- **Industrial licensing policy;**
- **Import restrictions and regulations;**
- **Monopoly and Restrictive Trade Practices (MRTPA) or Monopoly Regulation and Fair Trade (MRFTA) Act ;**
- **Anti- trust laws;**
- **Differential taxation measures;**
- **Tax exemptions and remissions;**
- **Allocation of foreign exchange for import of capital goods, strategic raw materials and components not available indigenously;**
- **Policy on export obligations and import substitution including incentives and/ or obligations for expenditures on R & D;**

- **Commodity rationing;**
- **Price controls;**
- **Channeling of foreign aid and collaborations;**
- **Technical collaboration with foreign firms;**
- **Availability of credit guarantees, priority sector credit etc.;**
- **Capital issues control;**
- **Reservation of areas for public sector investment;**
- **Labor legislation; and**
- **Judicial decisions affecting government regulations**

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FORMAL INTERVIEW

**IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF
-INFORMATION NEEDS**

**ANALYSIS AND REFINEMENT OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**

USER'S CLIMATE/ IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT

- **Background or history of the unit;**
- **Objectives and functions of the unit;**
- **Organizational structure;**
- **Details of products and/or processes of manufacture and/or research;**
- **Details of plant, machinery, equipment, testing and other facilities;**
- **Scope of each discernible activity/ function of the department/ unit;**

- **Information flow (vertical and horizontal) in the functioning of the department/ unit;**
- **Present sources of information (external and internal) and the channels and media used in the units;**
- **Types of information services being used in the unit;**
- **Specific subjects on which information is being sought including type of information and kind of presentation (theoretical, experimental, commercial, technical - - digests, reviews, data/ compilations, opinions/ view points etc.) required;**

- **Recent significant events, problems solved, the way they were solved including specific information used in solving the problems and the sources of the required information;**
- **Problems faced and not solved or projects that have failed and the probable reasons for the failure; and**
- **Any other items of interest such as on-going projects, training programs etc., in the unit.**

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FORMAL INTERVIEW

**IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF
--INFORMATION NEEDS**

**ANALYSIS AND REFINEMENT OF
INFORMATION NEEDS**

TYPES OF USERS

- **Potential user** - the one who needs information which might or might not be provided by specific services of the Library / information facility
- **Expected user** - the one who is known to have the intent of using certain information services (subscriber to a specific information service such as an abstracting service)
- **Actual User** - the one who has actually used an information service regardless of whether any advantage was derived from it or not.
- **Beneficiary** - the one who derives measurable advantage from information services

USERS ACCORDING TO GENERAL WORK-ROLES

- **Top Management** - responsible for policy-making, strategic/ long-range planning regarding mergers, acquisitions, capitals, new product lines.
- **R & D Scientists** - responsible for research, innovation, technical know-how generation etc.
- **Middle Management** - responsible for solving problems and making decisions required to fulfill the goals and implement policies set up by the top management.
- **Supervisors** - responsible for ensuring that the products and services are produced on time, within the cost and quality level set.
- **Operating Personnel / Technicians** - responsible for routine operations.

SPECIFIC ROLES OF USERS

Specific Roles of Managers :

- **Team Leader**
- **Liaison**
- **Monitor/ Controller**
- **Disseminator**
- **Spokesman**
- **Disturbance Handler/
Trouble shooter**
- **Resource allocator**
- **Resource Seeker**
- **Negotiator**
- **Decision Maker**

SPECIFIC ROLE ACTIVITIES / EVENTS:

- **receiving facts, opinions, advice etc. ;**
- **giving facts, opinions, advice etc.;**
- **seeking facts, opinions, advice etc. ;**
- **exchanging of information
(general discussion, meetings);**
- **preparing, annotating and moving
documents, memos etc.**

THREE DIRECTIONS OF INFORMATION FLOW

1. Communication down the line :-

- **Job instructions - specific task directives**
- **Job rationale - information designed to produce understanding of the task and its relation to other organizational tasks;**
- **Information about organizational procedures and practices;**
- **Feedback to the subordinate about his/ her performance; and**
- **Indoctrination of goals - information of an ideological character, to inculcate a sense of mission.**

2. Communication upward which can be reduced to what people say:

- **about themselves, their performance and their problems;**
- **about others and their problems**
- **about organizational policies and practices; and**
- **about what needs to be done, how and when**

3. Horizontal communication between colleagues at the same hierarchical level

User, in his professional capacity, interacts with:

- ✂ **his culture that sets values and policies, and other influences and attitudes;**
- ✂ **the political system that can promote or inhibit activity and information flow;**
- ✂ **the legal and economic systems that impose legal and financial restraints on access to information;**
- ✂ **formal information systems such as libraries and information centers;**

- ✂ **membership group(s) such as professional societies that control official information channels;**
- ✂ **reference group(s) composed of individuals with similar specialization or interests but who are not necessarily in the same membership groups;**
- ✂ **invisible college(s), gate-keeper(s) - a type of reference group sufficiently distinguished by its membership criteria and communication patterns to warrant separate identification;**

- ✂ **formal organizations such as his employing organization;**
 - ✂ **his work team, a sub-system of the organization that is distinguished because of interpersonal characteristics;**
- and**
- ✂ **himself, that is his cognitive system, motivations, attitudes etc.**

DIRECT METHODS OF USER STUDY

- ✂ **Survey using questionnaire**
- ✂ **Observing the user at his work-spot (office, laboratory, factory, group-meeting etc.);**
- ✂ **Dialogue with the user while rendering information services to him/her;**
- ✂ **Observing the user while using information sources and services;**
- ✂ **Observing the user while at discussion with his colleagues;**

- **Observing the user while giving a lecture/ demonstration etc.;**
- **Interviewing the user, his/ her supervisors, his subordinates, his/her personal secretary/ assistant or his colleagues of co-ordinate status; and**
- **Personal informal contacts with the user**

INDIRECT METHODS OF USER STUDY

- Study of job description of the user;
- Analysis of reference queries received from the user;
- Study of documents used by the user;
- Analysis of user's response/ feed-back to information services;
- Study of citations/ references given in the user's publications;

- Study of papers, books etc., published by the user;
- ✂ Study of citations received by the user's publications;
- ✂ Scanning correspondence and reports prepared and received by the user;
- ✂ Analysis of the patents, designs etc., held by the user; and
- ✂ Study of diary record of activities/ functions/ events maintained by the user.

PARTICULAR ATTRIBUTES OF THE USER TO BE NOTED

- **Subject and associated interests - specific subjects, allied subjects;**
- **Authors and Corporate Bodies, whose works are of interest;**
- **Annual Reviews and other Series publications in which interested;**
- **Periodicals often containing articles of interest which are to be specifically notified etc.;**
- **Education, training and special expertise:**
- **Foreign language competence;**
- **Functions, activities, tasks (job description) and responsibilities (specific work- roles) in the organization;**

- **Membership in committees, task groups etc.;**
- **Membership in professional bodies, professional discussion groups, professional expert Q& A groups;**
- **Periodicals and other information services received through membership/ subscription etc.;**
- **Types of reports - both internal and external - received and sent by the user;**
- **Types of reports - both internal and external - which the user is not receiving but would like to receive;**
- **Channels of communication between the user and other departments/ personnel of the organization**

- **Outside organizations with which the user has academic or professional contacts;**
- **Kinds of information media preferred;**
- **Types of information notices/ services preferred by the user;**
- **Whether the user is an Information Gatekeeper in the organization;**
- **Approximate time available to the user in a day or week for reading; and**
- **Time most convenient to the user to receive information services.**

STUDY OF USER'S WORK DIARY giving:

- **details of projects engaged in;**
- **procedures, techniques used and/or planned to use;**
- **working details;**
- **observations;**
- **results arrived at;**
- **cases of problems faced;**
- **method of solution or probable reasons for non-solution;**
- **route of search for specific information, kinds of documents/ sources/ services/ channels/ media consulted / used and their usefulness;**

- **discussions/ meetings with experts and / or with colleagues, for specific problems, and their solution;**
- **comments on how improvement could be achieved in the organization, patents to be analyzed for exploitation;**
- **important activities like filing of license applications, critical events and incidents;**
- **the consultants/ consultancy organizations preferred etc.**

In some organizations such a diary or record is required to be maintained by each member of staff above a certain level as a part of the project routine, generally in a prescribed form.

SURVEY OF INFORMATION SOURCES USED

This study is to bring out

- **the relevance of different types of sources/ services used;**
- **the frequency of use;**
- **the availability/ accessibility of the sources/ services;**
- **preferences/ priority assigned to the different types of sources and services**
- **the relevance of record keeping in the users' departments/ units.**

STUDY OF THE SUBJECT(s) / FIELD(s) OF INTEREST TO THE ORGANISATION/ USER(s)



STUDY OF THE ORGANISATION AND ITS ENVIRONMENT



STUDY OF THE IMMEDIATE ENVIRONMENT OF USER(s)



STUDY OF THE USER(s)



FORMAL INTERVIEW



IDENTIFICATION AND RECORDING OF INFORMATION NEEDS



ANALYSIS AND REFINEMENT OF INFORMATION NEEDS

FORMAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Based on the studies carried out, draw up the relevant questions (related to specific work-roles) to be asked, the clarification's to be sought and such other points for discussion with each individual user.

This would of course depend upon, among other things, the category of the user, his environment and the specific roles he plays in carrying out his responsibilities. The questions would be mostly related to the specific work-roles the user plays.

Q: To play 'this role ' say Marketing Manager what will you do?

A: Evaluate competitors market share.

Q: How?

A: Get sales figures of competitors, total sales figures in the country/ region, our own organization/ industry's sales figures, how much percentage of the market is with us

(In short, EXTERNAL information - sales figures for the country/ region and competitors' information, i.e., market intelligence; and INTERNAL information about sales).

Note: You will not be asking such a general question. You will be asking very specific questions relating to the specific role he played recently.

DRAFT INFORMATION NEEDS

Before the formal interview, a document for each user should be prepared, using the information gathered, giving :

- a rough estimate of a list of anticipated information needs of each user (a sort of a forecast of the information needs);**
- the types of information services required;**
- the existing information sources and services in the organization which are being used; and**
- the sources and services that are available but not used.**

This estimate of draft information needs is the basic document for the interview -- to confirm actual needs and to eliminate pseudo needs.

Some of the data gathered will require clarification from the user. Some of the identified information needs may turn out to be temporary interests.

DOCUMENTS FOR THE INTERVIEW

- **report of the 'study of subject'**
- **the profile of the organization/ unit**
- **well prepared classification scheme for the subject**
- **vocabulary control tool such as a thesaurus for the subject**
- **representative samples of relevant information service products/ publications; and**

the document giving

- **a rough estimate of the list of anticipated information needs, (a sort of a forecast of the information needs);**
- **the type of information services required,**
- **the existing information sources and services in the organization which are being used ; and**
- **the sources and services that are available but not used.**

SUBJECT INTEREST vs. INFORMATION NEED

Merely identifying the subject interests will not reflect the true information needs of individual users owing to the fact that different users have different views/ value systems for the same subject/ information.

The intended use of information has a greater bearing on the actual information required than the user's discipline/ subject.

FOR EACH SPECIFIC INFORMATION NEED

- **what kind/ nature of information - facts (free of value judgments), opinions, view points, advice, technical details, statistical data, news, theory;**
- **in what form - digest, executive brief, table, graph, state-of-the-art, trend report, original document;**
- **to what extent of coverage - exhaustive, selective, only recent, limited by specific time period;**

- **how often - daily, weekly, monthly, as often as required depending on announcement/ publication of such information;**
- **in what media - print, audio / podcast, visual presentation through graphic software, video clip / webcast;**
- **in what quantity - enough to read/ see/ hear in 5 / 10 / 30 minutes; and**
- **with what priority - very high, high, low etc.; are to be ascertained from the user.**

The user should be made to make specific, the value of the information need in relation to his specific function / task. (Of course, the value of the need is directly proportional to the level of the function or task and the level of the category of the user. If the need is at a high policy level affecting the whole institution / organization, then the information need is of high value). This would help to assess whether a need is a true need or a pseudo need.

INTERVIEWING

- By giving examples of relevant information services show how s/he can be helped in meeting his/her information needs.
- By posing the actual problems likely to be faced by the user in day to day activities, extract potential information needs - i.e., needs which are there but not expressed explicitly.

💡 By providing appropriate terminology, help the users enunciate their needs clearly.

💡 Using the subject profile of the organization or a good schedule of classification scheme, help the user narrow down / pinpoint his subject interests precisely.

♥ By illustrating a few services which the user has already contemplated, gather opinion about different types of services required, by seeking their own ideas of information services.

♥ By showing existing sources of information, identify the other sources the user uses and also the most useful sources from which ideas for cost/ product improvement come.

♥ By showing the formal channels prevailing in the organization, unearth the informal modes of communication used by the user – Ning Network, Blog Membership - among other things.

PRIORITY OF INFORMATION NEEDS:

The value attached to a need is an indicator of the priority that can be assigned to an information need. The value of the information need is directly proportional to the level of the function/ task and the level of the category of the user.

By suitable questioning of the user

which information needs are of high priority, which are actual, which are potential, which are distantly related, which may be dropped from, and which are to be added to the forecasted needs are to be delineated.

FACTORS AFFECTING PRIORITY OF NEEDS

- (a) responsibilities;**
- (b) position in the organizational structure**
- (c) organizational functions and procedures affecting his work;**
- (d) functions, work assignment;**
- (e) own priorities for various activities; and**
- (f) regulatory measures which affect his work either directly or indirectly affecting the whole organization.**

Items (a) to (d) can be kept track of by a perusal of internal circulars, memos and through informal meetings. Item (f) is significant -

- changes in regulations (announced through circulars, government notifications, budget announcements, Chambers of Commerce circulars, Federal Bank notices etc.) may not only change the priority, but may change potential needs to actual needs or drop existing needs or bring new needs which were hitherto unknown.

COMMITTEES & MEETINGS

To sense the changes and modifications in the information needs, their priorities and in anticipating

- new potential information needs; and**
- already identified information needs converting into demands**

it is necessary to attend committee/ task force/ project/ technical and other problem solving/ decision making meetings (where problems and projects are discussed) of which the user is a member.

It may also be necessary to attend committee meetings in areas which fall within the purview of the functions and responsibilities of the user.

Feed-back from information services rendered and suggestions from users about their changing interests, of the departments and of the organization as a whole would be of help. You may use any suitable web technology for the continuous feedback from the users.

INVITED USER GROUP DISCUSSION

It is a good practice to invite periodically small groups, not more than 15 persons of homogenous composition for discussion with information service personnel about the information services provided, and the information needs, including changes in the information needs of the group.

Members should be encouraged to mention in some detail about the present work they are engaged in, the problems they face, the information required and the information service(s) likely to be of interest and help in their work, including comments on how the existing information services should be tuned to suit their particular information needs.

Through these discussions the changes that are taking place and that are likely to take place in future, could be ascertained and the organization's dynamic situation could be monitored.

If your organization is spread across the globe, then intranet tele-conference would bring the concerned group together for the discussion.

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POST</u>	<u>DEPARTMENT</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>	<u>INFN NEED</u>	<u>TYPE OF INF REQD.</u>	<u>PRIORITY</u>	<u>PRESENTATION</u>
DR. PRODUCT DIVERSIFIER	MANAGER	CORP. PLANNING, OF TEXTILE COMPANY	E-MAIL	IMPORT RESTRICTION / REGULATION ON SYNTHETIC YARN	ONLY FACTS AS REPORTED	HIGH (VERY HIGH/ HIGH/ MEDIUM /LOW)	EXECUTIVE BRIEF / NOTE

<u>IMPLICATION TO THE ORGANIZATION/ COMPANY</u>	<u>COVERAGE</u>	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>PERIODICITY</u>	<u>MEDIA</u>	<u>DATE SENT LAST TIME</u>	<u>REMARKS</u>
NEEDED, BUT AS ATTACHMENT ONLY	SELECTIVE --- ONLY RECENT	READ 2-3 MINS.	MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY BULLETIN / ANNOUNCEMENTS/	IMMEDIATELY UP ON ANNOUNCEMENT	E-MAIL & FAX		USER IS SPECIFIC THAT HE LIKES TO COMPARE HIS OWN IMPLICATIONS WITH OURS !

The concept of identification of information need is embedded in the studies of users; their environment; and information use.

This area is one of the most amorphous areas of research in library and information science.

It is hoped that the present methodology would be easy to perceive and be translatable into practice. Perhaps the methodology would become clearer and clearer as each step in it is put into practice and this would help in fine tuning the procedure to be followed in particular situations to unearth real information needs.

If you identify the information needs of your users this way, then, you will be able to build highly selective and precisely relevant information resources (paper, digital, non-paper, and whatever in future); develop wonderfully organized collection of these as real / virtual / digital library / web portal / and whatever in future; providing access to all users. Also, the information services you will be rendering to satisfy these information needs, would initiate action and bring about positive changes in the users, their outlook and the organization as a whole elevating your library services to the KITR Level that will comprehend "Library 0.0" to "Library ∞ Infinity . 0 " !

The moment of revelation may pass unmarked / unnoticed, as leaf upon leaf is turned on (while reading a book). But it will remain in the memory and rise to serve whenever needed.

Learning this methodology by carrying out this study, will have the same effect.

Wish you good luck