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## Information Seeking Behaviour of Female Software Professionals of Chennai City: A Study

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### Abstract

*This study investigated the information seeking behaviour of female software professionals of Chennai city. This study has employed descriptive survey method. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. Out of 275 questionnaires distributed among the female software professionals of 5 software companies, 199 filled in questionnaires were received and included for the analysis. The study reveals that : A majority of 67.8% (135) of the female software professionalshold a BE / B.Tech Degree; A majority of 45.2 % (90) of the female Software Professionals are SW Developers; A majority of 155 (77.9 %) female software professionals are seeking information for updating their knowledge; 129 (64.8) software professionals are searching for information on the changes and new developments in the field of their interests. 175 (87.9%) respondents referred Company library to get the information.*

### Keywords

Female Software Professionals; Information Seeking Behaviour; formal Sources; Informal Sources; Search Engines; Chennai.

### Electronic access

The journal is available at [www.jalis.in](http://www.jalis.in)



Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science  
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 6. No.4. 2017. pp.376-383

## INTRODUCTION

Information is a dynamic and unending resource that affects all discipline in all walks of life whether it is for information support, research or development. Recent advances in technologies and electronics have cast great impact upon Modern society. These advances have either provided a capability previously not known or resulted in the improvement of efficiency. Technologies, especially computer and telecommunication technology have revolutionized the field of library and information services. They facilitate collection, storage, organization, processing, analysis, presentation, communication and dissemination of data. With the introduction of new technology, libraries are expected to use various types of technologies to provide information more quickly and in greater volume than before. "Knowledge is power". Libraries are the reservoirs of Knowledge and this knowledge should not be kept unused rather it should be used optimally. The main purpose of any information System is to develop a comprehensive, need based and updated collection and keep it active by disseminating them.

## INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

With the growth of information deluge, each one needs information of increasing variety and diversity of level, frequency, volume and use. This complex situation appears to be ambiguous and heterogeneous in character as that, information needs of a particular group of users and information flow from a specific/organization are difficult to determine. Again, the use of information is so complex that there cannot be a simple system to cope up with the task of effective retrieval without assessing their specific needs. This situation has given rise to the growing concept of information searching and the manner of determining the pattern of searching is said to be considered information seeking behaviour.

## SOFTWARE PROFESSIONALS

Software Engineer is a person who designs, writes and tests computer programs. These engineers typically fall into two categories: computer applications software engineer and computer systems software engineer. Typically a computer software engineer will work on a host of projects, including manufacturing, industry, government and educational institutions.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Padma and Ramasamy (2017) conducted a study to analyze the digital information seeking behavior of lawyers of Madurai District Court Library, Madurai. The study reveals that :137 (90.13%) respondents are male lawyers. Majority of the respondents i.e. 71 (46.71%) lawyers belong to above 40 age group. 97 (63.82 %) respondents have three year B.L degrees and 52 respondents (34.21%) have five year B.L degrees. Yoganantham and Padma (2017) tried to understand the e-resources seeking behaviour of the randomly selected 85 software professionals of Chennai City. The study reveals that :a majority of (34) software professionals hold BE/B.Tech degree followed by MCS/MSc (26) and M.S/M.E/M.Tech (25).83.33% (20) of delivery managers, 77.78 % (14) of Project/Tech/Module Leads, 76.19 % (16) of Project / Program managers and 68.18% (15) of Project/Software engineers are aware of e-resources. Yoganantham and Padma (2017) evaluated the awareness and preferences of e-resources among the software professionals of Chennai City. Data was collected from 85 randomly selected respondents using questionnaires. The study reveals that : 83.33% (20) of delivery managers, 77.78 % (14) of Project/Tech/Module Leads, 76.19 % (16) of Project / Program managers and 68.18% (15) of Project/Software engineers are aware of e-resources.

Chinnasamy (2016) investigated information need and information seeking behaviour of engineering college students in Madurai. It was found that 55.33% respondents are using the library for preparing for the examination, 38% respondents are using the print copy and 81.33% respondents are using the pen drive. OketunjiandOketunji (2016)reported a study which investigated informationneeds and information seeking behaviour of physically challenged people. The techniques for collecting qualitative data included two focus groups involving 45 participants and 15 individual interviewees, from the Home. The findings of the study address issues of information needs, Information sources, the role of the library in meeting needs and the barriersto the use of the library.A major conclusion is that people who are physically challenged deserve to be provided with a range of ways of meeting their information needs, as are available for people that are not physically challenged.

Patil and Patil(2016)undertook a study to investigate the information seeking patterns and types of information sources used by software professionals which are in Pune region of western India. The study shows that software professionals have shown more

affection to Library collection: they preferred Non print material with Internet. Software professionals are using Internet as a media to get the information which is followed by online databases.

Selvi and Dhanavandan (2014) examined the Information seeking attitude among the women LIS (Library and Information Science) professionals in Chennai. The profession in various categories of schoollibraries, college libraries, university libraries and public libraries were selected for this study.Questionnaire method was adopted to collect the data. Out of 175 Questionnaire 156 were receivedback. The study reveals that :23(14.74) respondents gather information daily. 53(33.97) respondents update their knowledge through professional meetings, seminars, symposia lectures and 26(16.66) through educational and training courses. 17(10.89) respondents gather the information for general awareness, for getting new knowledge and to write and publish papers and 23(14.74) to participate in seminars, conferences etc.,. Padma, Ramasamy and SakthiRenugadevi (2013) conducted a study with a sampling population of 50 post graduate students of School of Economics, Madurai Kamaraj University with a specific purpose to trace out their information needs and information seeking behavior. A structured questionnaire was used as a data gathering tool. The findings of the study revealed that: 26% of the respondents use the internet of web pages and 24% of the respondents use the on line e-resources to get information; 22% of the respondents are using the internet daily in the library; 40% of the respondents use Google, 22% of the respondents use Yahoo and Alta vista and 16% of the respondents use other search engines.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives had been formulated for carrying out the present study.

1. To present the socio demographic profile the female software professionals.
2. To study the primary purposes of seeking information among the female software professionals.
3. To trace out various types of information searched often by the female software professionals.
4. To find out the Information resources that are available in the working place of the female software professionals.
5. To find out preferred mode of access of the female software professionals.

6. To investigate the use of formal and informal information resources by female software professionals.
7. To explore the use of Search Engines by female software professionals.
8. To point out the problems encountered by the female software professionals while seeking information and
9. To offer suggestions towards having a new digital environment to seek and access information easily and effectively.

### METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive research. Survey method is employed. A well-structured questionnaire was used to collect the data. 275 randomly selected female software professionals working in Chennai city form the sample. The quantum of 275 questionnaires were distributed among the female software professionals of 5 software companies when they visit the library in such a way that each company was given 55 questionnaires and 199 filled in questionnaires were received back and taken for the analysis. The response rate is 72.36 %.

### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

**Table 1:** Educational Qualification of the Respondents

S. No	Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1	B.E / B.Tech	135	67.8	67.8
2	M.Sc.,(IT/CS)	30	15.1	82.9
3	M.E/M.Tech	34	17.1	100.0
Total		199	100.0	

It is noted that a majority of 67.8% (135) of the female software professionals hold a BE / B.Tech Degree. While 17.1% (34) of the software professionals hold aME/M.Tech Degree, the least number of 15.1% (30) of the female software professionals hold a M.Sc., (IT / CS) degrees (Table 1).

**Table 2:** Nature of the Work

S.No	Nature of	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
1	SW	15	7.5	7.5
2	SW	90	45.2	52.8

3	SW Test	52	26.1	78.9
4	System	42	21.1	100.0
Total		199	100.0	

The majority 45.2 % (90) of the female Software Professionals are SW Developer. While 26.1 % (52) of the female Software Professionals are SW Test Engineers, 21.1 % (42) of the female Software Professionals are the System Administrators. Just 7.5 % (15) of the Software Professionals are SW Programmers. Thus, SW Developer and SW Test Engineer are the two most sought after areas of specialization among the responders under this study (Table 2).

**Table 3:** Primary purposes of seeking information

S.No	Primary	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	For Work	74	37.2	125	62.8	199
2	For	155	77.9	44	22.1	199
3	For doing	83	41.7	116	58.3	199
4	For	43	21.6	156	78.4	199
5	For	35	17.6	164	82.4	199
6	For	91	39.4	140	60.6	199
7	Papers for	40	17.3	191	82.7	199

‘Updating knowledge’ is the primary reason for seeking information among the Female software professionals (155, 77.9 %). “Knowledge transfer to colleagues” is the reason for seeking information among 91 (39.4 %) respondents “Doing Project / Research” is the reason for 83 (41.7 %) respondents. “Work Presentation” is the reason for seeking information among 74 (37.2%) respondents, “preparing Papers for conference / workshop / seminars” is the reason among 40 (17.3%) respondents. Just 35 (17.6 %) female respondents are seeking information for delivering talk (Table 3).

**Table 4 :**Type of information searched often

S.No	Information	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Background	52	26.1	147	73.9	199
2	Government	22	11.1	177	88.9	199
3	Information	125	62.8	74	37.2	199
4	Changes and	129	64.8	70	35.2	199
5	Social	32	16.1	167	83.9	199
6	New research	47	23.6	152	76.4	199

A majority of 129(64.8 %)software professionals are searching for the information on changes and new developments in their field of interest followed 125 (62.8%) respondents searching for Information in specific areas. While 52 (26.1%) respondents search for Background information, 47 (23.6%)respondents search for 'New research problems'. 32 (16.1%) respondents search for information on Social problems while the least number 22 (11.1%) respondents search for Government information. 177 (88.9%) software professionals are not interested in governmentinformation and 167 (83.9%) on Social problems,152 (76.4%) on New research problemsand147 (73.9%)on Background information (Table 4).

**Table 5:** Information resources referred in your work place (Software Company)

S.No	Information	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Company	175	87.9	24	12.1	199
2	Departmental	110	55.3	89	44.7	199
3	Internet	173	86.9	26	13.1	199
4	Online	130	65.3	69	34.7	199
5	Annual	77	38.7	122	61.3	199
6	Personal	82	41.2	117	58.8	199

175 (87.9%)respondents referred Company library to get the information while 173 (86.9 %) referred internet and 130 (65.3%) professionals referred online databases to get the information. 110 (55.3%)

professionals refer departmental collection while 82 (41.2%) professionals use personal collections and 77 (38.7%) respondents use annual reports and statistics reports to get information (Table 5).

**Table 6 :** Preferred Format of information sought

S.No	Mode of	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Print form	62	31.2	137	68.8	199
2	Digital /	100	50.3	99	49.7	199
3	Audio / Video	57	28.6	142	71.4	199
4	Print and	53	26.6	146	73.4	199
5	Print and	21	10.6	178	89.4	199
6	Audio/Video	38	19.1	161	80.9	199
7	All the three	56	28.1	143	71.9	199

A majority of 100 (50.3 %) respondents prefer Digital / online information while 62 (31.2% ) female software professionalsprefer print form information. 57 (28.6%) respondents prefer Audio / video form of information while 56 ( 28.1 % ) prefer information in all three formats. 53(26.6% ) respondents prefer both Print and Digital/Online information and 38(19.1%) respondents prefer both Audio/Video and Digital/Online information. The least number of 21 (10.6%) female software professionals prefer both Print and Audio/Video form information (Table 6).

**Table 7 :**Use of formal Information Sources

Sl. No.	Formal Sources	To a great extent		To some extent		To a very little extent	
		No	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Journal articles / Periodicals	100	50.3	64	32.2	35	17.6
2	Review articles	97	48.7	76	38.2	26	13.1
3	General books	161	80.9	33	16.6	5	2.5
4	Monographs	35	17.6	97	48.7	67	33.7
5	Research reports	40	20.1	95	47.7	64	32.2
6	Seminar/Conference Proceedings	37	18.6	94	47.2	68	34.2
7	Patents and Standards	28	14.1	92	46.2	79	39.7
8	Reference Sources (Such as Bibliographies, Databases, Handbooks, Indexing / Abstracting Sources etc.)	67	33.7	90	45.2	42	21.1
9	Online Journals	157	78.9	41	20.6	1	.5
10	E – Books	165	82.9	31	15.6	3	1.5
11	Internet	169	84.9	27	13.6	3	1.5
12	Audio/ Video	111	55.8	75	37.7	13	6.5
13	CD-ROM /DVD	91	45.7	81	40.7	27	13.6

14	News Paper	171	85.9222	26	13.1	2	1.0
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**To a great extent**

A majority of 171 (85.9 %) respondents use Newspapers to a great extent followed by 169(84.9%)respondents using internet, 165(82.9%) respondents using E-books,161(80.9 %) respondents using General books and 157 (78.9%) respondents using Online Journals to a great extent. 111(55.8% ) respondents use Audio/ Video materials while 100 (50.3%) respondents use Journal articles / Periodicals. 97 (48.7%) respondents use Review articles,91 ((45.7%) use CD-ROM /DVD ,67 (33.7%) use Reference Sources (Such as Bibliographies, Databases,Handbooks, Indexing / Abstracting Sources etc.,) and 40 (20.1% ) respondents use Research reports. The least number of 37 (18.6%) respondents use Seminar/Conference Proceedings, 35 (17.6%) use Monographs and 28 (14.1%) use Patents and Standards to a great extent (Table 7).

**To some extent**

A majority of 97 (48.7 %) respondents use Monographs to some extent followed by 95 (47.7%) respondents using Research reports, 94 (47.2 %) using Seminar/Conference proceedings, 92 (46.2 %) using Patents and Standards and 90 (45.2 %) respondents using Reference Sources (Such as Bibliographies, Databases, Handbooks, Indexing / Abstracting Sources etc.,) to some extent. While 81(40.7% ) respondents use CD-ROM /DVDs, 76 (38.2%) use Review articles, 75 (37.7%) use Audio/ Videos,64 (32.2 %) use Journal articles / Periodicals, 41 (20.6 %) use Online Journals, 33(16.6 % ) use General books and 31 (15.6%) respondent use E – Books, 27 (13.6%) use Internet and 26 (13.1%) respondents use News Paper to some extent (Table 7).

**To a very little extent**

The formal information sources which are used to a very little extent are Patents and Standards (79, 39.7 %), Seminar/Conference proceedings (68, 34.2 %), Monographs (67, 33.7 %), Research reports (64, 32.2 % ) and are Reference Sources such as Bibliographies, Databases, Handbooks, Indexing / Abstracting Sources etc., (42, 21.1 %). 35 (17.6 % )

respondents use Journal articles / Periodicals to a very little extent followed by 27 (13.6 %) respondents using CD-ROM /DVDs, 26 (13.1%) using Review articles and 13 (6.5 %) respondents using Audio/ Videos to a very little extent (Table 7).

**Overall Analysis**

The WAM (Weighted Arithmetic Mean) values for various formal information sources are listed along with the respective ranks. Newspaper stands first with the WAM of 2.85 denoting the highest usage. It is followed by 4 sources with the WAM of more than 2.50. There are five other sources like audio/video, review articles, journal articles, CD-DVDs and References having the WAM ranging from 2.13 to 2.49. Four sources have the WAM of less than 2.0 the lowest being 1.74 for the patents and standards (Table 8)

**Table 8 :** Ranking of Formal Information Sources

Rank	Formal Information Sources	WAM
Rank 1	News Paper	2.85
Rank 2	Internet	2.83
Rank 3	E – Books	2.81
Rank 4	General books	2.78
Rank 4	Online Journals	2.78
Rank 5	Audio/ Video	2.49
Rank 6	Review articles	2.36
Rank 7	Journal articles / Periodicals	2.33
Rank 8	CD-ROM /DVD	2.32
Rank 9	Reference Sources (Such as Bibliographies, Databases, Handbooks, Indexing / Abstracting Sources etc.,)	2.13
Rank 10	Research reports	1.88
Rank 11	Seminar/Conference	1.84
Rank 11	Monographs	1.84
Rank 12	Patents and Standards	1.74

**Table 9:**Use of informal Information Sources

Sl. No	Informal Sources	To a great extent		To some extent		To a very little extent	
		Yes	%	Yes	%	Yes	%

1	E-mail	162	81.4	37	18.6	0	0
2	Face to Face Discussion	128	64.3	66	33.2	5	2.5
3	Conversations with Colleagues	141	70.9	56	28.1	2	1.0
4	Meetings/ Seminar/Conferences/Workshops	63	31.7	97	48.7	39	19.6
5	Consult with Managers	73	36.7	93	46.7	33	16.6
6	Discussion Forum	68	34.2	88	44.2	43	21.6
7	Private Correspondences	45	22.6	65	32.7	89	44.7
8	Discussion with Librarian	123	61.8	64	32.2	12	6.0
9	Consult with Knowledgeable person	102	51.3	94	47.2	3	1.5

**To a great extent**

Among the informal sources used to a great extent by the respondents, E-mail tops the table (162, 81.4 %) followed by Conversations with Colleagues (141, 70.9%), Face to Face Discussion (128, 64.3 %) and Discussion with Librarian (123, 61.8 %). While 102 (51.3 %) respondents consult with Knowledgeable person, 73 (36.7 %) Consult with Managers, 68 (34.2 %) take part in the Discussion Forum, 63 (31.7%) get information from Meetings/Seminar/Conferences/Workshops, just 45 (22.6%) respondents use Private Correspondences to get required information (Table 9).

**To some extent**

A majority of 97 (48.7 %) respondents use Meetings/ Seminar/Conferences/Workshops to get required information to some extent. It is followed by 94 (47.2%) respondent who consult with Knowledgeable person, 93 (46.7 %) who consult with Managers, 88 (44.2 %) who take part in Discussion Forum and 66 (33.2 %) respondents who engage in Face to Face Discussion to get information to some extent. While 65 (32.7 %) respondents use private Correspondences, 64 (32.2 %) discuss with Librarians, 56 (28.1%) converse with Colleagues and 37 (18.6 %) respondents use E-mail to get relevant information to some extent (Table 9).

**To a very little extent**

Private Correspondences are used to a very little extent by the respondents (89, 44.7%) followed by Discussion Forum (43, 21.6%), Meetings / Seminar/Conferences/Workshops (39, 19.6 %), Consultation with Managers (33, 16.6%) and Discussion with Librarian (12, 6.0 %) (Table 9).

**Overall Analysis**

The ranks of usage given to various informal information sources based on their WAM is given in

the following Table. Email is the most used informal information source among the female software professionals. It has the WAM of 2.81 followed by four other resources with the WAM ranging from 2.50 to 2.70. While three sources (consult with managers, discussion forums and meetings) have the WAM ranging between 2.12 and 2.20, the least used informal source is private correspondences with the least WAM of 1.78 (Table 10).

**Table 10 :** Ranking of informal information sources

Rank	Informal Information Sources	WAM
Rank 1	E-mail	2.81
Rank 2	Conversations with Colleagues	2.70
Rank 3	Face to Face Discussion	2.62
Rank 4	Discussion with Librarian	2.56
Rank 5	Consult with Knowledgeable person	2.50
Rank 6	Consult with Managers	2.20
Rank 7	Discussion Forum	2.13
Rank 8	Meetings/ Seminar/Conferences/Workshops	2.12
Rank 9	Private Correspondences	1.78

**Table 11:** Use of Search Engines

S.No	Search Engines	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Google	184	92.5	15	7.5	199
2	Yahoo	27	13.6	172	86.4	199
3	Excite	5	2.5	194	97.5	199
4	Lycos	1	.5	198	99.5	199
5	MSN	8	4.0	191	96.0	199

Google is the most used search engine among the female software professionals under the study. A majority of 184 (92.5 %) respondents use Google

search engine followed by 27(13.6 %) respondents using Yahoo and 8 (4.0%) respondents using MSN, The search engines like Excite and Lycos were the least used ones among the respondents (Table 11).

**Table 12:** Problems you encounter in seeking information

S. No	Problems	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Specific information is not	86	43.2	113	56.8	199
2	Library staff is not cooperative	25	12.6	174	87.4	199
3	Shortage of resources available in	56	28.1	143	71.9	199
4	Information is too scattered	74	37.2	125	62.8	199
5	Lack of time	119	59.8	80	40.2	199
6	Internet speed is too slow	71	35.7	128	64.3	199
7	Lack of sufficient library	35	17.6	164	82.4	199
8	Language barrier	29	14.6	170	85.4	199
9	Power supply and backup	29	14.6	170	85.4	199

Lack of time is the problem for the majority of female software professionals working in software companies in seeking information. A majority of 119 (59.8%) respondents felt so. 'Specific information is not available' is the problem for 86 (43.2%) respondents followed by other problems like 'Scattered Information' (74, 37.2%), 'Low speed of Internet' (71, 35.7%) and 'Shortage of resources available in the software company libraries' (56, 28.1%). While 35 (17.6%) female software professionals cited that 'lack of sufficient library facility' is the problem in seeking information, 29 (14.6 %) respondents cited 'language barrier' and 'Power supply and backup issues' as hindrances to access information. The least number of 25 (12.6 %

)female software professionals stated that 'the library staff is not cooperative' (Table 12).

**Table 13:** Suggestion(s) towards having a new digital environment to seek and access information easily and effectively

S.No	Suggestions	Yes	%	No	%	Total
1	Faster internet service	157	78.9	42	21.1	199
2	Resource sharing facilities	98	49.2	101	50.8	199
3	Introducing innovative practices in	122	61.3	77	38.7	199
4	User education programmes	75	37.7	124	62.3	199
5	Developing library collections	125	62.8	74	37.2	199
6	Non-stop power supply	47	23.6	152	76.4	199

A Majority of 157 (78.9%) female software professionals suggested that library may provide "Faster internet service" to the users followed by 125 (62.8%) female software professionals suggesting 'collection development as per user needs' and 122 (61.3%) female software professionals suggesting the introduction of innovative practices in library services. 98 (49.2%) female software professionals suggested that Library may provide 'Resource sharing facilities' while 75(37.7%) female software professionals suggested that Library may conduct 'User education programmes'. Just 47 (23.6%) female software professionals suggested that library should have infrastructure to provide non-stop power supply (Table 13).

**FINDINGS**

The major findings of the study are, inter alia:

- A majority of 67.8% (135) of the female software professionals hold a BE / B.Tech Degree.
- A majority of 45.2 % (90) of the female Software Professionals are SW Developers.

- A majority of 155 (77.9 %) female software professionals are seeking information for updating their knowledge.
- 129 (64.8) software professionals are searching for information on the changes and new developments in the field of their interests whereas 177 (88.9) respondents are not interested in Government information.
- 175 (87.9%) respondents referred Company library to get the information.
- A majority of 100 (50.3 %) female software professionals prefer digital / online information.
- 184 (92.5 %) professionals use Google search engine.
- Lack of time is the major problem for female software professionals (119, 59.8%) while seeking information whereas a majority of 174 (87.4%) female software professionals opined that library staff are very much help to get them required seeking information in the software company libraries.
- A majority of 157 (78.9%) female software professionals suggested the libraries to provide "Faster internet service".

## CONCLUSION

At present the growth and development era of the world is the discovery, invention, and new research in the field of software. The field of software is changing day by day at a fast pace. On one hand, we see advances in the software, while on the other, we see various new advanced technology, new software application development and new software application programme and challenges emerging on a regular basis. Thus, it is evident that the responsibilities of software professionals have increased considerably. Software Professionals have to analyze the problem, identify the reason and have to give proper action. To do so, Software Professionals need proper channel of information. Software professionals need to keep them self-updated, with these changes. Software professionals also need, latest information and updated recent advances to keep themselves updated, in their relevant fields. The results of such kind of studies will enable the library and information science professionals to plan, create, innovate, renew and modify their collections, services, ICT usage to reach the users with right information in right time.

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