



## Information Needs and Information-Seeking Behavior Among Students of Film, Theater and Animation Studies: A Case Study

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**Abstract.** The objective of this study is to determine the nature of information-seeking behavior among student in Faculty of Film, Theater, and Animation and to understand the way they search information to fulfill their information needs. The qualitative approach had served in this research. Ref. [14] model had been used in constructing the interview question. An interview session was conducted with nine (9) students. The triangulation data collection technique was employed in this case study. The findings of this study are that most participants' had mentioned that they seek for information independently from the internet and friends. Due to that, they had spent much time in seeking information in order to represent it accurately. The limitation of this study is the participants and time constrain. This research only covers undergraduate students from the Faculty of Arts, Film and Theater which only represent a small part of the arts community. Additionally, the researcher also had difficulties in making an appointment with them as most of their time had been allocated for attending class and had outdoors activity.

**Keywords.** Information needs; Information-seeking behavior; Music student; Theater student; Visual artist

MSC. 68P20

**Received:** May 22, 2016

**Accepted:** August 18, 2016

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## 1. Introduction

Many current studies investigating the information behavior of individuals in everyday life mainly focused on information-seeking and behavior based on different categories of users, occupations, roles, demographic and socioeconomic groups [1, 4, 11, 12]. Previous studies are primarily focused on scientists and technologists to assist in building information resources and systems to effectively meet their information needs [2, 5, 14, 15]. Later the scope of information-seeking studies was expanded to include researchers, scholars and academicians from other disciplines [7, 8].

Countless factors are such as to shape the information-seeking behavior of an individual or a group of individuals. In recent years, many factors have helped to make the information arena more dynamic and complex. The era of information scarcity to information abundance had been left out since years ago, thus it leads to the phenomenon of information overload and anxiety. Similarly, rapid growth in the capabilities of smart mobile devices for information discovery and access has resulted in new opportunities and challenges. The same information may be obtained in multiple formats and accessible through a variety of delivery channels. Thus, researchers have frequently examined the information seeking behavior of particular professional groups in an effort to map their locating and use of information and to enhance information provision to these groups.

## 2. Problem Statements

According to [1], a professional group of visual artists has made a highly mysterious community of information seekers, whether in the library and information science literature and in library practice. Artists have been defined as verbally uncommunicative, textually inept, and “not easy to get hold of” [2]. Meanwhile, [3] had stated artists as a “phantom” community that uses libraries yet goes unnoticed. Same goes to theater artists, [4] had mentioned, this community often engaged in intensive processes of information seeking and gathering and that they may view this process as critical to the craft of making theater. Ref. [4] also stated that several research studies have focused on the information behavior of visual artists, art students, and art researchers, but fewer scholars have attempted to understand practicing theater artists. Due to the statement, there is a curiosity in information seeking behavior among the students of the Film, Theater and Animation Studies.

This study is a case study research in one of the well-known faculties for Film, Theater and Animation Studies at a public university in Malaysia. Generally, this faculty offers Diploma and Degree programs in the performing arts. This faculty uses two approaches which consist of practical and theoretical knowledge of the performing arts. Take into account these approaches, the students in these arts fields also need to possess basic information literacy skills in order to select, evaluate and use accurate, reliable and current information sources to successfully meet their study-related information needs. A previous study by [1] had stated lots of literature concerning information seeking behavior on art students, art school, and music students are being conducted in the United States.

However, information needs and seeking behavior among students of related schools of thought in Malaysia is unknown. The research literature is scarce and no evidence of research has been undertaken in order to investigate the information behavior and needs of the students in the related fields. This study is devoted to the nature of performing arts students dealing with information-seeking, and how do they behave during searching information as well as the types of information they need. Therefore, this research is undertaken in order to investigate the nature of information needs and seeking behavior among students of Film, Theater and Animation Studies. The results of this study are expected to develop an independent, self-learn and lifelong creative showbiz entrepreneurs and crews.

### 3. Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are (a) to identify the nature of information-seeking behavior among students by: (i) exploring the work role and task that influenced information needs (ii) understand the sources of information used (iii) investigate the level of awareness regarding the resources and services provided by library for them; and (b) to understand the way the students' search information to fulfil their information needs

### 4. Significance Contributions

Information needs and use or information seeking behavior forms an important part of students' life and it cannot be assumed that all students in each field had same skilled in finding and evaluating resources needed for their various educational needs. Thus, this study is significant as it can help faculty members know about their student potential in retrieving information. In addition, this study will help faculty members make collaboration with the library in order to provide real sources that their student needs. Ref. [4] stated that theater artists have a constant need to learn about other theater productions, events, and artists. In order to stay current on the field, they need to have the skills to find the information they need as well as right sources for learning more about the history of the profession and past productions. Since there is a rapid growth of students in this field, it is better for academic institutions in Malaysia giving attention to this type of education in order to generate more employment opportunities for the citizens and a better quality of entertainment and leisure product and services. Perhaps this would be a good approach to certifying and educate entertainers, artists or show producers in the field.

Theoretically, the results of this research would create a fresh knowledge for the local scholars about the information need and seek behavior of students in this field. The research is called upon to add the knowledge block of Malaysian research output. Practically, having a better understanding of students in this field can help the library and the university leaders in planning, initiating and implementing new sources of information that is specifically needed by the students in this field. As stated by [4], research conducted in order to identify the information behavior of theater artists can become valuable in helping librarians understand how best to serve artistic patrons and to make decisions regarding collections. It was expected,

that through this study more initiative can be implemented and perhaps the faculty members would utilize the result, therefore university ranking and names could be improved and familiar as well as the alumni of this university will become “hot item” in any organization or institution.

## 5. Literature Review

Numerous scholars had defined information needs. One definition is by [5] which stated it is “the drive to seek information in accordance with the individuals’ responses to their perception of need and the processes or actions involved in response to the needs”. Information need, as defined by [6], is “a state or process started when one notice that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem”. Similarly, [7] also refers information needs as “the desire to acquire knowledge in order to reduce the knowledge gap during the problem-solving process in academic environment”. These scholars view information needs as an internal process as a result of solving problems. In addition, information needs in the context of this study refer to graduate students’ need for work roles-based information which enables them to carry out and complete their task or assignment within a stipulated timeframe.

Meanwhile, [8] defines information seeking as “a simple activity that enjoys with all people and demonstrated through a particular way of behavior”. Ref. [9] describes information seeking as “a procedure that requires information seekers or also is called as personal information structures, such as a person’s knowledge, skills to solve a problem or task domain, knowledge specific to a system and knowledge regarding information seeking”. Ref. [10] simply viewed information seeking behavior as, “which indicates how individuals go and find the resources they need”. Numerous definitions of information behaviors as presented by different researchers make the area more interesting to explore.

Ref. [4] explores the information needs and behavior of practicing theater artist. She provides a framework for understanding both theater artists’ information seeking behavior and the role of information seeking and gathering in the creative process. Since theater artists appear to demonstrate some creative behaviors that are similar to those of other types of artists, research into the information behavior of visual artists provided a starting place for this study. The research method for her study is qualitative. Her study discovers that theater artists seek information for six main purposes which consist of understanding a work’s historical, cultural, and critical background; learning about contemporary or historical theater productions, finding sources of inspiration; artists, and events; learning technical or process information; finding performance materials, and furthering career goals. Apart from that, the participants mentioned that they sought for information independently from various sources such as the internet, people, library and others. Due to that, they had spent much time in researching on certain issues in order to represent it accurately. The paper proves that studies of artists can be used to understand the role of information seeking and gathering in the creative processes of people working in various subject domains.

Ref. [1] has chosen visual artists as his scope of the study. He attempts to reveal the information-seeking and use patterns of a specific community of practicing visual artists.

He seeks to determine if the hypothetical models that are described in the literature are suitable for practicing artists' community. Unfortunately, minimal literature focuses on art students, academic art school, or librarians and very few studies conducted in this community. He discovers that most artists seek information for inspiration, distinctive visual element, knowledge of material and techniques, marketing and career guidance and lastly for knowledge of current trends in the art world. He chooses quantitative as his research methodology, and about 44 participants are involved in this research. Results indicate that the hypothetical model is valid in all aspects of practicing visual artists. It proves that practicing artist is one part of art, films, theater community. Moreover, the interviewees have also stated that browsing is the preferred information-seeking behavior among this community. From this study, it indicates that this community is more comfortable using the internet as their source information searching.

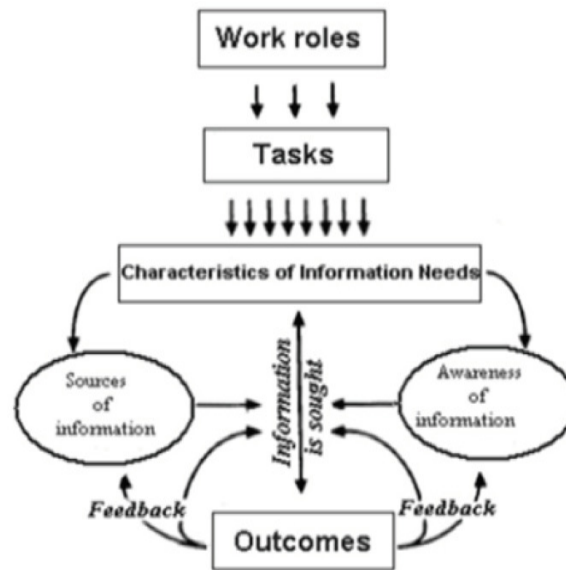
Further, [11] explores how and by what tools music student is used to identify, locate, and access music materials in their music study. He mentions that musicians need materials beyond books, journals, and other printed resources. This study states that music students prefer resources like a musical score, recordings and other. Several of formats such as CDs for vocal, music and miniature scores for printed music score also are part of their principal resources. The researcher also coined [12]'s statement, which is, music students treat the music scores as important resources, compared to other resources and used them more frequently. This study uses a qualitative approach while the data collections are from the survey and focus group. The results identify that some of them use the myriad library and some of them preferred non-library tools such as websites, blog, to discover and retrieved their score and recording. Thus, this study also shows that most of the music students love to browse information from the internet compared to the library.

Lastly, [13] examines information seeking behavior among amateur musicians, accompanied by empirical evidence from a survey on a community concert band. This research also uses a qualitative approach. The theoretical construct for the survey derives from [5]'s macro model of information-seeking behavior. This model is used as a guide to get a better understanding of information need, as well as obstacles towards seeking information behavior of the musician community. The researcher mentions about web characteristic that usually can support music student and amateur musician in developing their musical knowledge and performance skill. As for the finding, it is found that musicians seek information not only for entertainment but for educational purposes as well as for the acquisition of certain musical works. The use of the internet for information-seeking as well as the gradual adoption of online social networks has provided access to new musical resources within the digital music networks.

## 6. Theoretical Frameworks

This research adopts the [14]'s information-seeking of the professional model. Based on the previous studies, it is decided that the information-seeking of professional model framework offers a new perspective regarding information needs and seeking behavior. This model consists of a few dimensions, namely work roles, task, characteristic of information needs, awareness of information, sources of information and lastly outcomes. Figure 1 illustrates the information-

seeking of the professional model and is chosen as a framework for this research.



**Figure 1.** Information-seeking of professional model [14]

Ref. [14] model is used as a guide in order to explore information-seeking behavior among professionals. This model has been used in a few studies such as [15]. They stated that students in the engineering program will become professional engineers. Thus, they will carry out many tasks, such as design, development, documentation and implementation. These tasks, whether technical or non-technical, require specific information. Similarly with the student in arts, film, theater and music field, when they become professional, they also will carry many tasks, such as designing the theater, producing the film, writing the script, composing music or song and others. Thus, this model can be adopted in order to figure out their nature of information needs and seeking behavior.

When information needs do not fulfill the requirement of the user, the user may begin the information-seeking process again or redefine the information need. Ref. [14] suggest a feedback loop, which highlights the benefit of the outcome of the information-seeking process to the original information need or task, as well as other roles unexpectedly. In this model, [14] imply that the feedback loop only loops back as far as the characteristics of the information need. However, it is conceivable that the looping could also go back to the task and work roles, at which point the information need, as well as the task or role, may be redefined and further rounds of information-seeking may be undertaken, employing different combinations of sources and awareness factors.

Last but not least, although the model is not meant to be directly applicable to higher education students, yet it is a useful aid in the research that adopts this model. This is because the outcomes of information seeking to rely on the sources of information available, as well as the awareness of those sources. Apart from that, it can be argued that student should be made fully aware of all information resources accessible to and fully utilized the resources. It is like that during the courses of their education, information-seeking habits are constructed which

may be carried with them throughout their professional as legal production practitioners or educated artist.

## 7. Methodology

Ref. [16] explain that qualitative research is undertaken in an environment or setting where people communicated in person. Qualitative research focuses on meanings which are communicated by the participants, which including their behavior and facial expression and takes into consideration the social, cultural, belief and physical contexts within which the participants live, work, and interact. It is also developed to get a better understanding through the first-hand experiences, truthful reporting, and quotation of actual conversation. Thus, this research has adopted a qualitative approach as more detailed information can be obtained when participants giving their feedback to the given question. Since a lot of studies is conducted in a qualitative approach, thus, this time, the qualitative method approach still being used in this research as it might suitable to get extract information that might not be able to be collected by using a questionnaire.

Meanwhile, the population of user target for this study had been reduced into the Degree holder only. The reason for choosing this target group because of lack of attention is being given to this community regarding on their information needs and seeking behavior as well as their awareness towards library resources and services. Basically, qualitative researchers do not usually know the number of people in the research beforehand. In addition, the sample may change in size and type during research. Sampling goes on until saturation has been achieved, namely, no new information is generated [17]. Thus, for this study, researcher interview into 9 students until it reaches the saturation point.

The triangulation data collection technique is employed in this case study. Basically, interviewing is not enough to ensure the validity and reliability of the information provided by participants. Therefore, the researcher also had recorded all conversation during the interview session and jot down the important words. For this research, the researchers decided to hear the recording during the interview session and did some field notes.

## 8. Findings and Discussion

The findings were analyzed according to the part of a subtopic that includes a participant's profile and information seeking behavior. It has been divided into few parts which are work roles, task, characteristic information needs, awareness of information, sources of information and outcomes.

### Work Role

From the findings, it has been determined that this faculty had five courses. The students of each course are focused on work roles which fit with the courses they took in. Management students work role is related to finding the location and budget in order to manage the event or film. Besides, writing students' roles is working on towards their script writing, novel or

academic article. Meanwhile, theater students' work roles are focusing on their live performance as well as sharpening their acting and dancing skills. As for animation students, their main work roles are producing new character animation as well as polishing their sketching and coloring skills. Lastly, screen students, which their work role usually required them to do a lot of outdoor activities as they are required to produce a short film, advertisement, music video and others. However, when was talking about their future role in the real industry, they still had few similarities among each other courses which are all of them can work in production. Additionally, it also indicates that different courses need different types of information.

### **Task**

According to the interview, all participants had commented that they will perform information seeking to complete certain tasks that were given by their lecturer. There were clear distinctions in the behaviors and choices of each five courses. This is likely primarily the result of the nature of their assignments. Apart from that, like was mentioned before, each course had different work role which aligns with the task that been given by their lecturer. Booking place, manage events, finding budget and sponsor usually is handled by a management student. Writing a script, produce novel and articles is the main task for writing student which helping them to sharpen their writing skills. Creating new animation utilizing 2D and 3D technology is the task that animations need to handle. Performing live action, dancing and singing in front of the public is usually a task that theater student gets in order to make them familiar with the environment as well as improving their talent. Lastly, for the task of screen student, they play important roles behind the scene of each production as they need to produce film, music video and others. However, all participants who in the last year will get a task to write theses and research proposal, which required a lot of reference material in order to accomplish it. Meanwhile, for performing information seeking task some participant takes a longer time to search for information and some participant take a shorter time to find the information they want. Due to that, it indicates each participant had unique information-seeking behavior and searching information techniques.

### **Characteristic information needs**

Information that is accurate, complete and from resources that can be trusted is the characteristic of information that most participants look at when searching their information needs. Additionally, few of them will look at the latest and current the information. Those participants comment that information must always update to prevent irrelevant facts or outdated facts being presented and included when completing the task given.

### **Awareness of information**

Basically, based on the interview, it seems that student of film, theater and art studies rely more on a search engine like Google and depend on lecturers' recommendations regarding on material or sources that they need to use in their learning. The interview discovers that most participants are not aware of information or services that were provided by the university library. One interesting discovery about this community, most of them not really want to get to



the library as they felt they did not really rely on the information that the library provided and usually they go to the library after being requested by their lecturers. However, few of them willing to learn about the library services that was provided, yet they do not know to whom they can voice out as well as no in-depth explanation regarding on this matter.

### **Sources of information**

Regarding the sources of information, most of the participant love to use non-printed sources as it is in digital form so, it makes user easy to bring anywhere as it can be accessed through their mobile phone or tablet. In addition, comments indicated that students were likely to use non-Library resources as it was easier or more convenient to be done. They also perceive to be easier to find information using Google search engine as well as video material through the YouTube as they felt it most convenient ways.

### **Outcomes**

According to participants' comments, almost half of them satisfied with the outcomes or search result of information they find by using the Google search engine. However, they do not brave enough to give 100% of the information they retrieved. Additionally, it had been revealed that most participants do not have appropriate searching techniques regarding on finding the information they need. Commonly, they only used basic searching techniques which are by randomly entering a keyword. However, few of them also complaint to find a scholarly article is quite hard when searching using Google search engine. Nevertheless, this community of student still uses various efforts during searching and seeking information process. Such as revising the keywords, change the language and some of them will ask for help from other people in order to retrieve the information they want. Moreover, it can be said most of them willing to start from scratch if their first attempt to find information was failed. Last but not least, they also alert with the plagiarism issues as they will revise or rewrite back all the information they get in their own words.

## **9. Limitations**

For the limitation, this research only covers a degree student of arts, film and theater study which only come from the small part of the arts community. Participants should come from many groups of professional that relate to this field in order to see what their nature during information seeking. Additionally, the researcher also had difficulties during making an appointment with them as most of their time had been devoted to attending class and during free time they had outdoors activity. Last but not least, is the setting place of the research which was only conducted in the university library and not including other arts, film and theater university.

## **10. Conclusion and Recommendation**

From the analysis of findings and discussion, it can be possible to conclude that work roles, task, characteristic information need, awareness of information, sources of information as well as

outcomes of the searching can influence the individual information-seeking behavior. Apart from that, what the researcher had discovered that library management has put less effort on literate this community. Owing to that, library management needs to find ways or strategies in order to attract this community to use all information services that been provided by the library. It also indicates that information seeking behavior of students in the Faculty of Film, Theater was motivated by their lecturers as well they need to fully understand certain information before they can complete their task. It shows that their lecturers play an important role regarding this matter. This is being supported by [13], which had been stated that information-seeking behavior is not only a personal and individual research, but is engaging people them with the everyday information-seeking process. Through the results, it had been seen that students try to become independent searchers and seeking information first before they asking people to assist them to fulfill their information needs.

For this reason, students need to be taught effective search strategies and how to evaluate resources in their earliest years, as it is crucial to having this soft skill in this age of technology. As students become more set in their research ways it is more difficult to convince them to use different tools, even if those tools may be more beneficial than the ones they have been using. Attempts should need to be done to incorporate information literacy sessions across the curriculum and not just in introductory classes. Libraries must actively and effectively market their printed and electronic collections and attempt to assess whether these resources are utilized or not. In the end, they must attempt to determine whether it is due to awareness issues or because the resources simply do not meet students' needs. All of the recommendations should be applied to enhance the library performance and avoid this community continue losing their trustworthy towards the library organization.

## Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to thank the participants which are the students from Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Selangor, Puncak Perdana Campus who participated in this research survey and became as the principal contributors of the findings of this research. Special thanks to Dr. Saidatul Akmar Ismail for her support in term of guidance, comments and ideas sharing.

## Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

## Authors' Contributions

All the authors contributed significantly in writing this article. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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