

Abstract

A survey was carried out to understand the information seeking behaviour of medical scientists in Sri Lanka. Specifically, this survey was sought to ascertain the type of information these scientists require to meet their needs and the reasons prompting them to seek information; to identify the sources from which they obtain information; and to determine the factors that influence their information needs and the use of resources. The survey was carried out as a user study based on users of two postgraduate libraries in Kandy and Peradeniya Teaching Hospitals, and the Medical Library of University of Peradeniya. Data collection was carried out by a questionnaire followed by interviews. The participants were members of the academic staff from the Medical Faculty of the University of Peradeniya and consultants, postgraduate trainees and medical officers attached to Kandy and Peradeniya Teaching Hospitals.

It was found that Medical scientists' information needs are greatly influenced by the nature of their work. It was noted that senior and experienced medical scientists such as professors and consultants do not require as much information support as newly qualified doctors. As a single group, 55% of the respondents use a library everyday and 50% participate in the book selection process. Medical scientists are heavily dependent on printed media while the use of electronic sources including the world-wide web is low. Major difficulties faced by the medical scientists in seeking information are the lack of time and the inadequacy of resources. The comments made by the respondents indicated that medical libraries should focus on the enhancement of collections and equipment to cater to new demands. Conducting user education programmes on new technology such as CDs, Internet and email, enhanced resource-sharing activities; more training programmes for staff to extend more support to the users were suggested as means to overcome the existing lapses. A major action that could redress the issues related to the present unsystematic information delivery would be to strengthen the information delivery services in networks like HELLIS.