

IDENTIFYING USERS' INFORMATION NEEDS: A CASE OF SIDC LIBRARY

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The Securities Industry Development Centre (SIDC) is the education and training arm of the Securities Commission (SC), and the SIDC Library serves both SC staff and the securities industry. The SIDC Library is a specialised library that has its resources focused on the capital market. Identifying users' information needs is a first step towards analysing the information needs of SIDC Library members and the SC staff. The study was motivated by the fact that an analysis of information needs help identify the SIDC Library resources for further development to ensure the delivery of information services matches users' needs. In this paper, we would like to share a study that was conducted to analyse how the SIDC Library services were tailored to meet the information needs of users. By studying this aspect, we will be able to see how the library defines and classifies its user types, and addresses issues impacting information services through proper operation planning and practices.

The respondents for this paper were mainly SIDC Library members and SC staff. The result of the study is based on a collection of survey questionnaires, personal interviews and records of user requests for documents. From this study, a profile of user information needs was established; enabling the library management to identify, support and provide an efficient delivery mechanism for meeting users' information needs. This study helped SIDC librarians identify the kind of information that was needed and generated, and to support those which are not readily available by further developing a comprehensive new subject/collection of SIDC Library information resources. This will also provide an insight into the users' expectations on content resources and services of the SIDC Library, as well as for developing library user education programmes. Thus, the study of users' information needs is one tool that enables SIDC Librarians to discover, evaluate, implement, maintain and improve its management of information resources.

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, this study was carried out only on the SC staff. Due to time constraints, the survey was not extended to external members as mentioned in the abstract. Also, at the point of writing this report, there were a couple of initial objectives that could not be met because of the time factor.

The continuous development in the information and communication technology brings new ways of publishing and disseminating information. This advancement in technology allows access to information using the world wide web via a variety of network-connected devices; and with the rapid growth of information, libraries and information services need to adapt to changing expectations and the manner in which stakeholders are accessing information in order to remain relevant to their parent organizations. Therefore, information on segmented specialised groups, such as engineers, doctors, regulators, etc. can reveal vital information in library science research. One particular area is to study information needs and how a target group searches and accesses information.

Objectives

This study is to provide the SIDC Library with a means to identify users information needs. This study was intended to–

- identify the information needs of SIDC Library members and SC staff;
- help identify the SIDC Library resources for further development; and

- define and classify its user types, and address issues impacting information services through proper operation planning and practices.

More specifically the objectives of the study include:

- To enable library users to communicate on their information needs;
- To identify the areas that need improvement and manage the expectation affecting information needs of users; and
- To provide records from the feedback for future reference.

METHODOLOGY

The study uses questionnaires and past records from the staff research enquiries.

Target Group

The study survey was sent via e-mails to staff in the executive levels, i.e. junior, executive and senior executives. For this study, we identified about 250 executives to provide feedback on their information needs. However, at the end of the survey, we only received 53 responses (21%).

The study also includes an analysis of the reference research data, gathered from staff enquiries on specific subjects relevant to their job in terms of research, enhancement of subject understanding, new regulatory framework or general information. This is the first study on staff information needs and no comparisons were made with findings of the industry as the feedback from users was purely for our information and to facilitate our efforts to enhance the library's book collection.

The Survey Process

The survey questionnaire and the reference enquiries report form the core of the user information needs analysis. The survey contained 15 questions arranged in three sections – services, library portal and online resources. The survey questionnaire sought feedback from users to obtain key variables on information needs and the media used. It requires respondents to tick the options, which they think are appropriate to their information usage pattern and needs.

Limitation

Due to time constraints, this survey has the following limitations:

- Only staffs in the executive levels were taken into consideration; and
- Respondents were only given a period of a week to reply to the survey.

The Questionnaires and Survey Feedback

To date, there has been no study on the information needs of the capital market regulator. The following questions relate to library services and collections:

Part A – SIDC Library Services (Q1–Q5)

Question 1.

Do you know that the SIDC Library provides the following services?

Current article alert	44	85%
Selective dissemination of information	18	35%
Reference help desk	42	81%
Research services	38	73%
Library orientation programme (LOP)	45	87%
Library tour	41	79%
Information workshop	20	38%
Daily newspapers alert	32	62%
Inter-library loan services	28	54%
Long-term loan services	35	67%
Investor education corner	22	42%
Licensing examination corner	28	54%
General collection and loans	32	62%

Question 2.

Have you used any the following services?

Current article alert	25	48%
Selective dissemination of information	11	21%
Reference help desk	22	42%
Research services	14	27%
Library orientation programme (LOP)	22	42%
Library tour	18	35%
Information workshop	8	15%
Daily newspapers alert	14	27%
Inter-library loan services	6	12%
Long-term loan services	11	21%
Investor education corner	4	8%
Licensing examination corner	4	8%
General collection and loans	22	42%

Question 3.

How often do you visit the SIDC Library?

Daily	3	6%
Few times a week	6	12%
Few times a month	37	71%
Never	4	8%

Question 4.

Do you find that the SIDC Library conducive for your research?

Yes	42	81%
No	9	17%

Question 5.

How can we improve the SIDC Library for you?

Increase library book collection	35	67%
Subscribe to more online journal and newspapers	23	44%
Improve the library condition, e.g. lighting, books arrangement, etc.	12	23%
Others	5	10%

Part B – Awareness of the SIDC Library Portal (Q6–Q9)

Question 6.

How often do you use the SIDC Library Portal?

Daily	5	10%
Few times a week	8	15%
Few times a month	24	46%
Never	14	27%

Question 7.

What is your primary purpose of using the SIDC Library Portal?

To browse library resources	22	42%
To search for project materials	14	27%
To read the daily news headlines	13	25%
To read the article alerts	17	33%
To get online resources	13	25%
To retrieve dissertation and theses online	3	6%
To get latest online statistical data and report	3	6%
Own study	3	6%
Others	3	6%

Question 8.

Which other online sources do you search for information?

Internet	48	92%
Academic library online services	4	8%
Personal online subscription	2	4%
Other	2	4%

Question 9.

Do you find the SIDC Library portal easy to use?

Yes	33	63%
No	11	21%

Part C – Awareness of SIDC Library Online Resources (Q10–Q15)

Question 10.

Are you aware that apart from print materials, the SIDC Library also subscribes to online resources?

Yes	39	75%
No	6	12%

Question 11.

Which of these online resources have you used?

Online newspapers	18	35%
Online journals	19	37%
Online databases	17	33%
Online legal cases and acts	14	27%

Question 12.

How often do you conduct searches on the SIDC Library online resources?

Daily	4	8%
Few times a week	2	4%

Few times a month	24	46%
Never	9	17%

Question 13.

Which resources do you frequently use in the SIDC Library?

Books	30	58%
Printed journals	19	37%
Newspapers	15	29%
Law reports and acts	10	19%
Annual reports	7	13%
Conference proceedings	3	6%
Book Club	4	8%
Others	2	4%

Question 14.

If the library offers online retrieval lessons to staff, would you prefer–

Hands-on workshop	28	54%
Training demonstration	23	44%
CD-ROM training	8	15%
Web training programme	7	13%
Small group discussion	8	15%
Self-reading and practice	8	15%

Question 15.

If the library offers online retrieval workshops to staff, would you prefer–

Morning sessions	24	46%
Afternoon sessions	21	40%

Conclusion

Information gathered from a total of 53 respondents, revealed the staff's awareness of the various library services as follows – LOP (87%), current article alert (85%), reference services (81%) and general collection (62%). The most commonly used and inquired library services are current article alert (48%), general loan (42%), reference service (42%), LOP (42%) and loan services (42%).

On ways to improve the library collection, 35 respondents (67%) suggested enlarging the book collection, while 23 (44%) suggested subscribing to more journals. While indicating that the staff used the library services a few times in a month, the survey also shows that 48 respondents (92%) utilised the Internet as their alternative source of information to library services.

As part of the development in identifying staff information needs, we offered the Library Research Service in April 2004, which recorded 76 requests in 2004 and 435 requests in 2005. We started promoting the usage of online databases (namely ProQuest, LexisNexis, Westlaw, E-media and IFIS) in 2004, conducting training courses throughout the year. The statistics show that in 2005, SC staff logged-in to search for information 18,638 times, averaging 1,500 times per month. In 2004, the online usage was 9,769 – showing that the usage of this resource had doubled in 2005.

This is in line with the prevailing trend where the Internet is often the first and most commonly sought source of information and confirmed that the library is moving in the right direction in its efforts to establish a comprehensive e-library and make more industry information available online.