THE STUDY ON INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ACADEMIC STAFF AT TALLINN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN 2014

Aiki Tibar

TUT Library, Head of Research and Development Division

Summary

In 2014 Tallinn University of Technology Library conducted a study on information needs and information-seeking behaviour of academic staff of the university. The aim of the study was to find out various aspects of information behaviour of academic staff, such as assessments on usefulness of information sources and developments for information seeking possibilities, problems in information seeking, criteria for the selection of information sources, forms of collaboration and information exchange with ohter researchers/specialists, preferred forums for publishing research results, etc.

Data were gathered through a web questionnaire. Lecturers and researchers received information about the study and a link to the web questionnaire by e-mail. The sample comprised of 827 lecturers and researchers from eight faculties and eight institutions. The number of respondents was 145 and response rate 17.5%. The majority of respondents were from the faculty of information technology (15.2%), followed by the faculty of science (13.1%), civil engineering (12.4%) and mechanical engineering (11.7%). Division by age of the respondents was as follows: under 30 – 13.1%; 30–39-years old – 33.8%; 40–49 – 17.2%; 50–59 – 17.2% and over 60 – 18.6%. Division by academic position of the respondents was as follows: senior research scientists – 21.4%; professors – 20.7%; associate professors – 15.8%; lecturers – 15.2%; research scientists – 9.6%; early stage researchers – 7.6%; assistants – 6.2%; lead research scientists – 2.1%; other – 1.4%.

Data analysis is yet to be finished, therefore the article presents only a part of the results, such as assessments on usefulness of information sources and developments for information seeking possibilities, problems in information seeking, and attendance at user training seminars of the library. Respondents were asked to assess usefulness of information sources for two purposes – first, to keep abreast of new developments and second, to solve specific problems. According to the study results, the three most useful sources for keeping abreast of new developments were web search engines (97.9% of the respondents considered these *useful* or *very useful*), web in general (97.2%), and e-journals (90.3%); the three most useful sources for solving

specific problems were web search engines (95.8%), web in general (93.8%) and colleagues within the same faculty/institution at the university (88.2%).

Respondents were asked how often they face various problems when seeking printed sources and with searching information from databases. The most common problems faced by respondents when seeking printed sources were lack of time to search/select information (64.1% of respondents answered *often* or *very often*); needed publication is not available in Estonia (45.5%); relevant information is for fee and insufficient knowledge on relevant sources (both 42.7%). In case of searching information in databases respondents faced most problems regarding restricted access to databases (41.4% of respondents answered *often* or *very often*); it is difficult to find relevant information (25.5%) and insufficient knowledge on search options in databases (23.4%).

The question „Have you attended any user training seminar/session of Tallinn University of Technology Library?" was answered as follows: yes 29% and no 71% of the respondents. Some of the respondents who answered no, specified a reason by choosing following options: the time was not suitable (41); the topic was irrelevant (25); I do not need training (25); I had no information about the training (23).

Respondents were asked what kind of training seminars for lecturers and researchers should the TUT Library arrange in the future. Respondents could choose various topics: 60 respondents were interested in introduction to databases of e-books and e-journals; 57 in search strategies and techniques to find information in databases; 47 in systems for citing references and reference management software; 43 in acquisition and lending of e-books.

The question „How important are the following developments for you during the next few years?" was answered as follows (percentage includes assessments *important* and *very important*):

- Online access to older volumes of scientific journals (92.3%);
- Increasing access to full-text databases via libraries (92%);
- Technological advancements in search engines to have more effective searches (92%);
- Research articles and other material are available in open access journals and repositories (87.3%);
- Electronic information resources of Estonian libraries are accessible via joint website (86.7%);
- Digitization of printed works (84.8%);
- Scientific journals are available only in electronic form (75.9);
- Maintaining the quality of print collection in libraries (71.3%);
- Scientific journals are equally available in printed and electronic form (51.1%).

Additional data will be gathered from about ten interviews with lecturers and researchers to complement questionnaire data and study further their information behaviour. Interview data can explain some questionnaire results and add reliability to the latter.