

**INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION  
GATHERING BEHAVIOUR OF  
PURE SCIENTISTS IN THE UNIVERSITIES  
OF  
SRI LANKA**



*Co-661*

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by

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the information needs and information gathering behaviour of pure scientists in the universities of Sri Lanka with a view to identify such needs of pure scientists with respect of their main subject areas, their peripheral research areas of interests and their teaching programmes. This survey was based on the responses of 89 pure scientists out of a total of 220 in six universities and covers all areas of disciplines of biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics and physics.

The main research tool employed was a self administered questionnaire and simple random sampling method was utilised treating each university as a cluster. The results were analyzed in terms of percentage frequencies, rank orders and Kendall's coefficient of concordance, W.

The study revealed that except for one, all the pure scientists are involved in research in addition to teaching. A further 17.98% of the sample are involved in additional administrative work. Most scientists who are trained in a narrow subject area of specialization often continue to work in the same or a closely related area of research while there is also a tendency to drastically change their main research areas over a period of time.

It was found that the major purpose for which pure scientists seek information is to support research work in progress and to keep up with current developments. The majority of scientists indicated that the services provided by the libraries as

inadequate in providing the necessary information and this determines the information gathering behaviour of scientists. Journals were ranked as the most important source for obtaining current information followed by reviewing media. The existence of an "invisible college" is also evident, specially amongst physicists and chemists where personal contacts in foreign countries are utilized in obtaining current scientific information. This study also reveals that library indexes were ranked last by all categories of scientists.

A majority of scientists (74.15%) do not maintain personal card index files but 56.18% of the scientists maintain their own reprint files.

This survey analyzed the use of formal, semiformal and informal sources of information for the four approaches, viz. current, everyday, exhaustive and brush-up. It was found that periodicals/journals, abstract journals were the most widely employed sources of information for all four approaches. Formal sources were considered the most important by a vast majority of scientists (88.8%). It appears that the use of printed media is by far more prevalent compared to meetings, conferences and conversation with peers etc.

The most important services expected by scientists from the university libraries is the provision of current awareness services followed by interlibrary loans. Literature searches and selective dissemination of information were considered the least important.

It was revealed that only 20% of the scientists are satisfied with the libraries as