

**INFORMATION NEEDS AND INFORMATION SEEKING
BEHAVIOUR OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS
IN SRI LANKA.**

U.G.C.C. GAMAGE.

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Abstract

The main objectives of this study is to evaluate information needs and information seeking behaviour of environmental scientists in Sri Lanka in view of providing fundamental information for the development of environmental information system in the country.

Ninety three environmental scientists from 36 institutions comprising 9 academic institutions, 17 government institutions, 10 Non-Government Organizations were taken as respondents of this study.

The main research tool of this study was a Questionnaire constructed by the researcher.

The results were analyzed in terms of percentages, frequencies, rank orders, Kendall's co-efficient of concordance 'W' according to the objectives of the study.

The study revealed that 68 percent of the Scientists in Sri Lanka are actively engaged in professional work on environmental management without considering of their institutional affiliations. Sixty one percent of them are engaged in research work on environmental issues while 55 percent are engaged in teaching activities.

Subject areas in which these scientists are specialized helps only to little extent in the environmental management and research. Environmental policy and management, and water relations are the main areas of subject specialization of these scientists which comprise 27.9% and 16% respectively. Similarly, major areas of research interests are water

relations where 44 scientists (47.3%) and Environmental Policy and management where 35 scientists (37.6%) are involved.

This study reveals that these scientists seek information with two objectives; to gain knowledge on the current advances and to develop competence in their specialized areas.

About 49 percent of environmental scientists do their literature searches by themselves while others get assistance mainly from librarians and research assistants up to 40 percent of their literature search.

Browsing through book shelves in libraries, library displays of new publications and book/Journal reviews are the important tools for environmental scientists for current awareness and for location of new publications in their fields.

Periodicals/Journals, reviews and abstracts are the most commonly used formal sources of information used by the environmental scientists for the current, Everyday, Exhaustive and Brush up approaches. Informal sources are highly useful sources to environmental scientists in Sri Lanka in all four approaches, Fifty four percent of the environmental scientists depend on informal sources, 35 percent depend on formal sources and 11 percent on semiformal sources.

The majority of the respondents (81%) use other libraries due to lack of facilities in their institutional libraries. It was found out that 27% of these scientists use British Council Library and 16% use Public Library in Colombo to obtain information, while 11% and 9% use Post Graduate Institute of Agriculture library and the main library of the University of

Peradeniya respectively. Inter library loans are the most useful services offered by the libraries to environmental scientists.

Modern information technology is used by about 50% of the environmental scientists while modern information media is not familiar to the majority of the environmental scientists.

A number of problems are faced by these scientists, of which the most important one is the collections in the libraries are not up to date. The environmental scientists agree with the rank order given to the shortcomings of the libraries. Most of the environmental scientists (52.7%) are in the opinion that the information available in libraries are not adequate. However, majority of the scientists in the academic institutions are satisfied with the availability of information in the libraries. Majority of scientists stressed the need of having a up to date collection of periodicals is extremely important in improving the library services in Sri Lanka.

The major suggestion of these scientists is to improve the information services for environmental scientists in this country.