

Study of Information Literacy Skills among Male Prison Inmates in Sri Lanka

Chandani, J.G. and Weerasooriya, W.A.

chandani@sjp.ac.lk, sooria29@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore and explain the information literacy skills and information resources use by Sri Lankan prisoners. The study employed the survey research design. It recommended that prison administrators should be in collaboration with prison library officers and various organization bodies to introduce library hour, provide information resources and provide conducive environment in the prison to motivate information use by prison inmates.

Keywords: *Information literacy, Prisoners, Sri Lanka, Information resources, Literacy skills*

Introduction

Literacy and education are keys to opportunity in this society, and perhaps no one realizes this more clearly than prisoners. An inmate in a maximum security prison reflected on the importance of learning and literacy in this way. Prisoners have basic information needs for survival in prison and in preparation for successful life after release. However, it has been observed that information resources use among prison inmates is low. This has been attributed to low level information literacy skills and environmental factors. Literature showed that information needs, information seeking, information resources use and literacy skills of prisoners have not been studied and characterized. Hence, this study was undertaken to identify the prisoners' information literacy skills and their information resources usage.

Literature Review

Information literate individuals can recognize the need for information; can access information; evaluate the information; and creatively use that information in a socially responsible manner (Mokhtar, 2008). Information literate individuals have “learned how to learn” utilizing a higher-level set of theories and abilities (Probert, 2009). Information literacy skills are an obligatory part of new western culture and the ability to access and estimate information is critical to success in both our work and personal lives (Julien & Barker, 2009). Those who have the ability to access and manage large amounts of information will be significant providers to society (Nember, 2008).

A significant number of prisoners have been found to have low literacy and insufficient employability skills. According to the International Federation of Library Associations and