Music Information Needs and Methods of Getting Information among Music Students in a Public Institution of Higher Education

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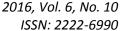Email: norzaina@salam.uitm.edu.my

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study that identifies the information needs of music students at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM). A survey method using questionnaires were distributed to 150 respondents of music students, of which 130 (86.67 %) were returned. The findings revealed that the most needed music information by respondents are music theory, notation, aural skill, music recordings, music instrument, rhythms, music resources, harmony (chord), arranging (score) and music history. The methods used to get the information are by discussing with their friends/relative, talking to senior students, surfing internet, read book and advice from the expert in order to get the information. The findings will assist the librarians to identify the information required by music students and improve the information sources to

fulfill these students' information needs especially regarding the academic matters towards their academic development.

Keywords: information needs, information sources, music students, music information

Introduction

These days, as we live in the Information era, the need for information is felt at all levels of society, regardless of an individual's location, social condition or intellectual achievement. Moreover, the rapid developments in the information and communication technologies in the last few decades have enabled libraries to transform themselves into gateways to the world of information, which information can be retrieved and accessed. For that reason, the libraries had been recognized as the important information centers in order to gain information. This is evidence of the human need for information.

Many studies have been conducted in the information needs' field to define the terms of information needs and other topics regarding information needs. Information needs are diverse and constantly changing (Haruna & Mabawonku, 2001). The information need is something not directly observable but has its "structures unseen"; which exists in the mind of the users. Hence, understanding the information needs of library users is necessary for planning and providing high quality library services, as well as to avoid misallocating resources. It is important to understand users' various approaches in seeking information which are characterized by wide-spread and voluminous production and consumption of information. As a result, when librarians and other designers of information services understand their users' information seeking behavior, they can adjust their services and resources to these patterns, and thus offer better services to the users (Agosto & Hughes-Hassell, 2005).

Furthermore, previous study found that the information needs are also depending on the discipline of study and level of individual education itself. A study found that users are not consistent and their library use behavior may differ considerably from one person to another depending on their academic discipline, gender, or other factors (Hiller, 2010). It also discovered that the lack of awareness of library resources and services available could be a barrier to information access and lastly the use of resources and services depend on the ability to use information access tools (Bates, 1996).

Constantly, decisions were often made based on librarians' perception of users' needs in order to serve users (Clegg, 1985). It is important to prioritize purchases wisely based on actual needs (Casey & Taylor, 1995). Librarians must also have a clear picture of the specific users served, understand how they do research, and identify which collections will be most useful to them (Stoller, 2005). Moreover, it is very challenging to understand the user's information needs because every person has their own information need in order to manage their work efficiently. Musicians need materials beyond books and journals. Musical scores and recordings are of primary importance to performing musicians and music scholars, and come with their own inherent discovery difficulties. The multitude of formats, such as LPs and CDs for recordings and full, vocal, and miniature scores for printed music scores (not to mention parts), versions that

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have been orchestrated or arranged for different instruments/voices, the high occurrence of foreign languages, the frequent presence of both generic (e.g. sonata) and nickname titles (e.g. "Eroica" Symphony), and the resulting need for uniform titles in catalog records, and the frequent need to find a smaller item in a larger context, such as one song in an anthology, CD, or collected works edition, make finding music scores and recordings a tricky subject to navigate for the average patron. This is why even a "known item" music search can be quite involved and why many music reference interactions involve a high level of instruction (Dougan, 2013).

In everyday life, it is common for music students, professional musician or other person seeking information on music. It is because by seeking and gathering the information it will enable them to increase their knowledge and performance efficiently especially in their academic matters. Here, academic matters refer to the students matters such as an examination, a research assignment or other activity to be done outside the class, work that is in whole or partial satisfaction of requirements for the receipt of course credit for participation and an activity for which course credit is given. Unfortunately, until now there are only a few studies that had been conducted which focused on this population's information needs specifically regarding the music students' information needs in academic matter.

Narveson (1999) studied the information needs and seeking behaviors of amateur musicians. She studied the musicians in routinely used friends, family, co-workers and acquaintances to find information. Although there have been few studies that examined the amateur musician's information needs, this is not contradicted by other literature examining information needs in which some generalizations are made regarding user behavior. All of the musicians in this study cited "word of mouth" as the most common way of finding information regarding musical needs.

Moreover, Laplante and Downie (2006) conducted an ethnographic study of music information seeking behavior reported on the importance of informal channels and music information seeking as a non-goal oriented activity. Their informants preferred information from informal channels such as friends to information from "experts," such as critics or music store employees. However, it was also recognized that friends can be a limited source of information and so it is often still necessary to consult other sources. Theses sources were typically music-related websites such as *allmusic,* MySpace, or artist and label websites.

From the observation of literature review, it showed that in Malaysia there is no research that has focused on musicians or music students' information need. Furthermore, due to the constant changes in the ways people listen to, store, and share music, it is essential to regularly conduct user studies in order to stay informed about current needs and behavior (Jin Ha, Hyerim & Yea-Seul, 2015). Therefore, this study was conducted to 1) identify the information needs of music students in terms of the types of information needed and 2) determine the methods of getting the needed music information used by music students.

Methods

A total of 150 questionnaires were distributed to all undergraduate classes from Part 1 to Part 7 which were the students of Bachelor of Music Education (Hons.) (MU220), Bachelor of Music (Hons.) (Composition) (MU221), Bachelor of Music (Hons.) (Performance) (MU222) and Diploma of in Music (MU 110) of Faculty of Music, Universiti Teknologi MARA. However, only 130 (86.7%) of the questionnaires were completed. The questionnaire was designed on a 1 through 5 Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were used in analyzing the data.

Results

Profile of the Respondents

The profile of respondents shows that those in the 21-23 age group account for the largest proportion (81 or 62.3%) of the respondents, followed by those in the 18-20 age group (27 or 20.8%) and those in the 24-25 age group (17 or 13.1%). Meanwhile, only 5 (3.8%) belongs to the 26 and above age group. Moreover, 77 (59.2%) of the respondents are male respondents, while 53 (40.8%) constitutes female respondents and almost all (129 or 99.2%) of the respondents are single except 1 (0.8%) is married. The largest course's proportion (63 or 48.5%) are respondents taking MU 220, followed by MU 110 (38 or 29.2%) and MU 221 (24 or 18.5%). The smallest proportion (5 or 3.8%) are those from MU 222. Slightly less than half of the respondents (62 or 47.7%) are those in the second year of study. Slightly less than one-third (39 or 30.0%) are in the first year of study and followed by 19 (14.6%) are in the third year and 10 (7.7%) are in the fourth and above years of study. Besides, it also presents the respondents' specialization of instrument. The results show that the highest percentages (27 or 20.8%) of respondents are specializing in guitar, followed by violin (23 or 17.7%) and percussion (21 or 16.2%). While the lowest (1 or 0.8%) is specializing in French horn and trombone respectively.

Information Needs of Music Students

Types (Kinds) of Music Information Needed of Respondents

The types (kinds) of music information needed of the respondents are shown in Table 1, arranged in descending order of percentage size. The findings show that music theory accounts for the largest proportion (105 or 80.8%) of the needed information of respondents. It can be assumed that majority of the respondents need the information of music theory in order to increase their knowledge and skills about the music so that they can get a clear picture about the music environment. Moreover, there are seven types of information that have more than 70 per cent of the respondents identifying them as such. These are information on notation (98 or 75.4%), aural skill (95 or 73.1%), music recordings and music instrument (94 or 72.3% respectively), rhythms (93 or 71.5%), music resources (92 or 70.8%) and harmony (chord) (91 or 70.0%). At the extreme end, four types of information are relatively the least commonly needed

ones. These are tempo (76 or 58.5 %), music counterpoint (76 or 58.5 %), lyrics story (75 or 57.7 %) and private lesson (67 or 51.5 %).

Table 1: Types (Kinds) of Music Information Needed of Respondents

Types of Information Needs	Frequency	Percent
Music Theory	105	80.8
Notation	98	75.4
Aural Skill	95	73.1
Music Recordings	94	72.3
Music Instrument	94	72.3
Rhythms	93	71.5
Music Resources	92	70.8
Harmony (Chord)	91	70.0
Arranging (Score)	90	69.2
Music History	89	68.5
Composition (Arrangement)	89	68.5
Music Orchestration	88	67.7
Learning Method	88	67.7
Music Bibliography	86	66.2
AV Material	85	65.4
Music Genre	84	64.6
Music Background	83	63.8
Lyrics	80	61.5
Music Styles	80	61.5
Tempo	76	58.5
Music Counterpoint	76	58.5
Lyric Story	75	57.7
Private Lesson	67	51.5
Total	**130**	**100.0**

The following conclusions can be made from the above statistics. The specific kinds of music information needed by music students are wide ranging. From Table 1, it shows that the most needed music information by respondents is music theory. It must be pointed out that the percentage figures for the top ten types (kinds) of the needed music information merely point to the basic of information requirement by the majority of the respondents in their learning

environment as music students. The information needed are information on notation, aural skill, music recordings, music instrument, rhythms, music resources, harmony (chord), arranging (score) and music history. Besides, the table also shows that, there are several types (kinds) of information that have the same in terms of frequency and percentage. It can be assumed that, the respondents feel that the information is equally critically needed in their learning process. Meanwhile, for the types (kinds) of information needed on lyrics story and private lesson, both are not critically at least at the initial stage of music student, hence their lower requirement for information on these aspects.

Methods of Getting the Needed Information

There are many ways of getting one's music information needs. In this section, the respondents were asked on their ways of getting information where they are free to search information from whatever sources, formally or informally. It is an important point to bear in mind that these respondents are the music student who need the information to complete their learning task. The interest of this section is on the actual experience of the respondents getting their music information and the percentage of respondents for each method, reported in decreasing order of percentage respondents.

There are many ways of getting information by the respondents and these are shown in Table 2, arranged in descending order of percentage size. The largest proportion (86 or 66.2%) of the respondents obtained information by discussing with friends/relative. This is followed by talking to their senior student (81 or 62.3%); surfing Internet (79 or 60.8%); read book (73 or 56.2%); talk to expert (70 or 53.8%); going to industrial training (69 or 53.1%); visit to music festival (65 or 50.0%); visit to recording company (64 or 49.2%); reading newspaper and magazine (63 or 48.5%); advice from lecturer (63 or 48.5%); watching television (63 or 48.5%); read brochures (62 or 47.7%); listening radio (61 or 46.9%); ask librarian (59 or 45.5%); use email (58 or 44.6%); and read journal (53 or 40.8%). Two other methods, namely, ask faculty and interview artists do not feature that much and have the same 36.9 per cent of the respondents, respectively.

What is obvious is the simplicity with which the respondents obtain their information. They did by discussing with friends/relatives, talking to the senior student, surfing the Internet, read book and talk to expert. The evident is overwhelming that the respondents most rely on their friends/relative, senior students, Internet, book and expert in order to get the information. On the other hand, faculty and artist are being the least popular source of music information to respondents. Therefore, besides discussing with friends/relative and senior students, Internet is the popular source of information because the respondents can always seek information at anywhere and anytime.

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Table 2: Methods of Getting the Needed Information

Method	Frequency	Percent
Discuss with Friend/relative	86	66.2
Talk to Senior Students	81	62.3
Surfing Internet	79	60.8
Read Book	73	56.2
Talk to Expert	70	53.8
Industrial Training	69	53.1
Visit Music festival	65	50.0
Visit Recording company	64	49.2
Reading Newspaper and magazine	63	48.5
Advice from Lectures	63	48.5
Watching Television	63	48.5
Read Brochures	62	47.7
Listening Radio	61	46.9
Ask Librarian	59	45.4
Use Email	58	44.6
Read Journals	53	40.8
Ask Faculty	48	36.9
Interview artists	48	36.9
Total	**130**	**100.0**

Discussions and Conclusion

The study highlighted some information on the types of music information needed by music students and methods of getting the music information needed. The findings will be useful in providing better library and information services to this group of students. The results will also assist librarians and other researchers in planning effective instructional programs especially in information skill and information literacy which will enable them to identify the information needed which are related to their studies.

The study hopes that librarians and other researchers will take note of the findings, and strive towards meeting the information needs of music students, musicians and other individuals who are concerned in this area. The outcome of meeting the information needs of this group can be mutually beneficial to both the library, institution and to the students themselves.

Acknowledgement

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