

Role of a Corporate Library in Enhancing the Information Literacy of its Users

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Abstract

Wikipedia says information literacy is "A set of competencies that an informed citizen of an information society ought to possess to participate intelligently and actively in that society". This definition is apt for the Information Technology industry, where all employees are informed citizens of an information society. Assessing their information literacy is imperative in the knowledge environment. It aids them to realize their potential and promote their sustainable development in their organization. This paper explores how a corporate library is assisting the employees of the organization in enhancing their information literacy through its customized products and services. To understand the library's reach among the employees at various roles in the organization, a survey covering 111 employees of Tata Consultancy Services, Chennai was conducted and the outcome of the survey is discussed.

Keywords: Information Literacy, Corporate Library, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Information Resource Centre.

1. Introduction

The term "Information Literacy" was coined by Paul G. Zurkowski in 1974 to describe the "techniques and skills" known by the information literate "for utilizing the wide range of information tools as well as primary sources in molding information solutions to their problems".[2]. Information Literacy is a life-long learning and starts at a young age as early as we start going to school. People acquire these skills at every stage of their life as their interactions with the outer world increases. Inquisitiveness to seek information, sustained motivation and a go-getter attitude are some characteristics which can help a person improve their information literacy levels.

According to American Library Association (ALA), "to be an information literate, a person must be able to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information" [3]. In a typical IT Industry corporate environment wherein the literacy levels are high, the young and energetic techies coming from world-class institutions are likely to possess the best possible information literacy skills. The corporate library plays an important role in enhancing these skills through varied products and services.

2. Characteristics of Corporate Users

Today's organization needs to have an information literate workforce in order to be a world-class firm. The workforce consists of alumnus of leading institution and universities which promote Information Literacy through various courses and programs. Hence sustaining and enhancing the literacy levels of such people becomes a real challenge.

Mike Eisenberg and Bob Berkowitz designed an information and technology literacy model called Big6 [4], which are widely adopted across the world to teach Information and technology skills. This model describes six stages by which people find and process information.

Task Definition ⇒ **Information Seeking Strategies** ⇒ **Location and Access** ⇒ **Use of Information** ⇒ **Synthesis** ⇒ **Evaluation**

In this model, it is not necessary that a person acquires literacy in a linear order, but can also skip one stage to proceed to the next one. Based on this model, a few attributes which is closely applicable to corporate library users are as follows.

- ◆ Ability to realize the need for information and realize the importance of accuracy of information
- ◆ Ability to identify and explore all potential sources of information
- ◆ Ability to develop successful search strategies and seek information from all potential sources
- ◆ Ability to synthesize and integrate collected information into the existing body of knowledge
- ◆ Ability to present information using the apt software and hardware tools to an in-house audience or to a remote audience using the right technology

3. TCS IRC as a promoter of Information Literacy

Corporate library at TCS is named the "Information Resource Centre (IRC)". Aptly named so, due to its diverse products and services. The change can also be attributed to a tangential movement from the conventional library to a resource centre that caters to the needs of the dynamic requirements of the mammoth organization. Based on the regular feedbacks received from employees from time to time through the organizational surveys, department specific surveys that cover the user's queries in detail, the IRC has deployed several value added services.

An employee is welcomed into the organization by providing an induction by all support groups including the IRC. This is followed by circulation of "Welcome Mailers" consisting of detailed description of the guidelines, resources, services & links to the catalogue which is sent to mail ids' of employees.

Apart from the Transactional services like check-in, check-out, renewals & reservations, IRC provides selective dissemination of information service through its products – Info Watch, Info Bulletins & Client Specific Dossiers. These are newsletters on various domains, technologies, geographies, clients and comprise of latest news, articles, upcoming conference etc circulated electronically to the employees.

Global Reference Desk (GRD) is an online information service by which IRC meets the information requirements of employees across the globe. Monitored by team of information professionals, each request is governed by a service level agreement (SLA) to ensure timely closure of the request.

IRC organizes outreach Activities like Book Exhibitions, Subscription Drives, Take-away Drives, Customer Day, World Book & Copyright Day, JRD Tata Birth Anniversary Celebrations, etc., throughout the year to promote reading and marketing of the services.

IRC endeavors to promote reading through 'Book Talks' and 'Author Talks'. Employees have started to realize the importance of such talks and have started volunteering to deliver book talks. Leading authors are invited to the TCS premises to deliver talks thereby providing a scope for intellectual interactions between the author and the employees.

To coincide with the National Library Week in India, TCS IRC celebrates 'IRC Week' every year in the month of November. During this week, lots of events, competitions, exhibitions, subscription drives, book and author talks etc are organized to promote reading in library with fun-filled way. Employees await this event every year to get away from their coding and programming to display their creativity and talent. The IRC takes extra care to ensure that these fun activities also convey to the associates the gamut of services offered by the department.

In addition, IRC collaborates with niche groups and project core teams to provide value added services specific to their group. This is in line with the Forrester [5] recommendation to libraries to partner with IT Strategists and Project Managers. According to Forrester "A company has a technology infrastructure and content that goes over that infrastructure. IT staff has excellent competencies for managing the infrastructure; librarians have the expertise to manage the content traveling in the wires. Librarians complement IT and bring a tradition of understanding individual user is need and emphasizing the usability of technology"

To assess user's awareness, opinion and utility of IRC services in enhancing their Information literacy levels, a survey was conducted at one particular centre in TCS Chennai

4. Survey

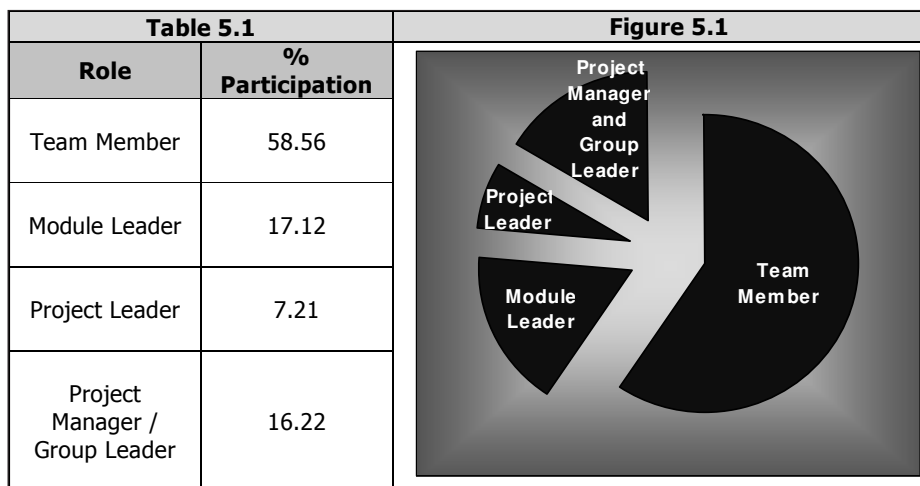
It is implicit that IT professionals are extremely busy and do not have the patience to respond to any survey that takes more than five minutes to complete. Hence a questionnaire comprising of 6 multiple choice questions were circulated to around 500 users. Questions were designed to elicit responses from 4 roles of users – Team member, Module Leader, Project leader & Project Manager/Group Leader.

Feedback were collected by distributing the forms to the users visiting the IRC and through emails sent to their mail ids. When sent electronically, it was noticed that the rate of response was high as soon as the mail was read by the user and dwindles down as time proceeds. Maximum responses were received within 12 hours of sending the mail. About 111 responses were received from a group of 500 recipients which was taken as the sample size.

5. Findings

5.1 Roles of users

First question was designed to find out the role played by the user in a team.



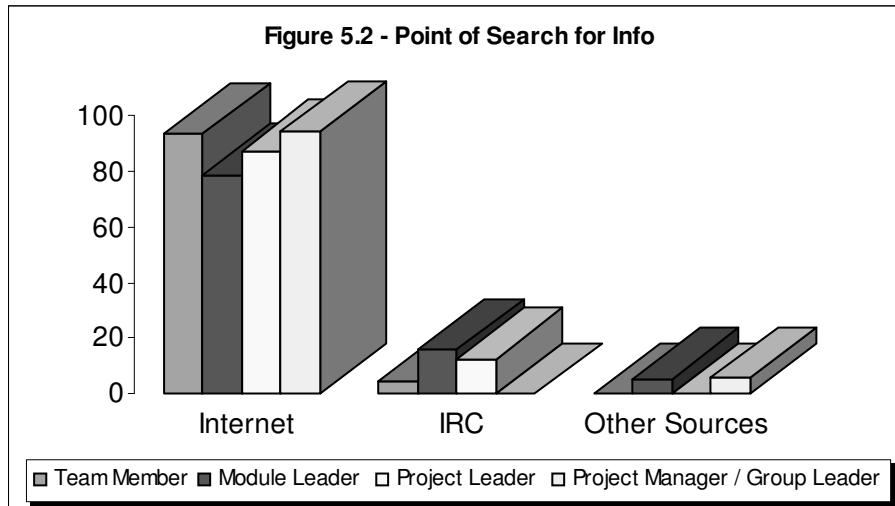
The organization consists predominantly of team members and fairly so, the response also has been the highest from this group of people followed by the module leaders and the group leaders. The response was the least from the project leaders.

5.2 Point of Search for Information

Second question was designed to find out the point of search, when the user is in need of information.

Table 5.2			
Role	Internet	IRC	Other Sources
Team Member	93.85	4.62	0.00
Module Leader	78.95	15.79	5.26
Project Leader	87.50	12.50	0.00
Project Manager / Group Leader	94.44	0.00	5.56

It was found that all the survey participants, irrespective of their roles preferred internet to other sources of information. The reason being that, being in an organization from the IT Industry, almost all associates have internet access at their desktop. The requirement is also time bound & the employees find that the easiest solution was to browse the Internet. The internet has volumes of authentic as well as unauthentic information in abundance. The question that now arises is – are these users contented with the information so received? A fair percentage of users who are module leaders and project leaders seem to be approaching the IRC for their information needs.

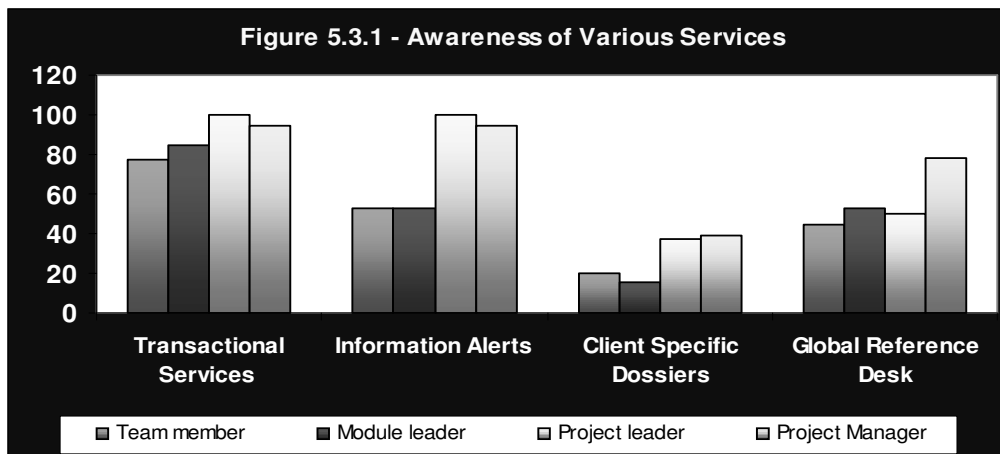


5.3 Information Services Awareness & Utility

Third question was framed to find out the awareness of IRC services and to assess its utility. This question gains significance as the response to 2nd question (5.2) has been that the maximum number of users preferred the internet search to the IRC search due to internet access at their desktops. It was imperative to understand if the employees were aware of the services rendered by the IRC and also to evaluate the utility of these services.

5.3.1 Awareness of Various Services

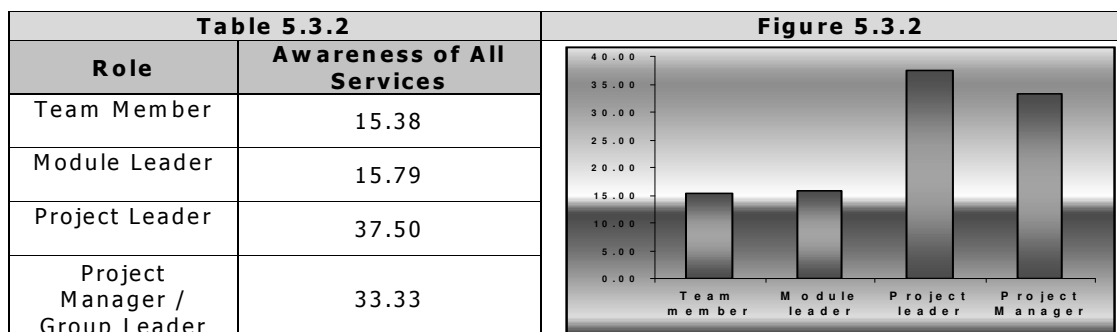
Role	Transactional Services	Information Alerts	Client Specific Dossiers	Global Reference Desk
Team Member	76.92	52.31	20.00	44.62
Module Leader	84.21	52.63	15.79	52.63
Project Leader	100.00	100.00	37.50	50.00
Project Manager / Group Leader	94.44	94.44	38.89	77.78



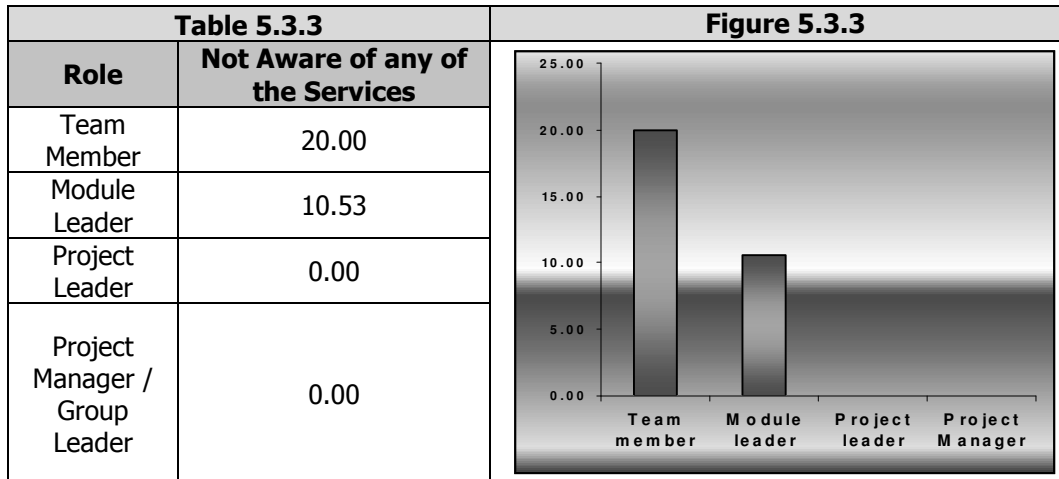
The employees at all roles seem to be aware of the physical presence of the library, to be specific, the transactional activities. The information bulletins and alerts that were based on subscriptions by employees belonging to a specific domain, such as, Banking and Financial Services, Telecommunications saw lesser awareness. The Client Dossiers sent out by the IRC more specifically to seniors seems to be popular at the project leader & project manager/group leader level. This is so, because there are more of client interactions by employees in these roles.

The IRC subscribes to some niche research databases and provide services based on requests received through the Global Reference Desk. The IRC also does an extensive search at the organization’s knowledge portal and provides relevant information to the professionals based on requests received from them, thus making this popular particularly among the associates at the senior level. On a macro level, an organization-wide GRD survey conducted during August 2010 revealed that 41.5 % users were aware about GRD, out of which 5.3% were active users of the service.

5.3.2 Awareness of ALL services



5.3.3 NOT Aware of ANY of the Services

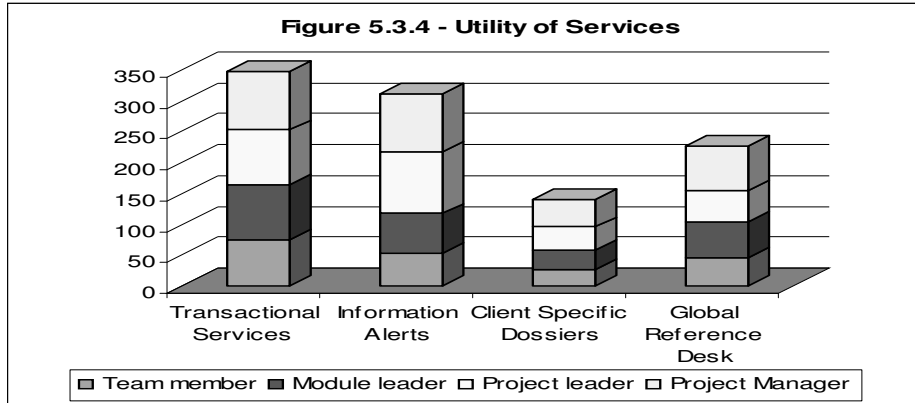


From Figure 5.3.2 & Figure 5.3.3, it is clear that all employees at the senior level, project leader and above aware of all the services rendered by the IRC. There by showing elevated information literacy levels.

5.3.4 Utility of Services

After assessing the awareness level among employees, it was imperative to evaluate the utility of the services rendered by the IRC, without which the very purpose of this survey would have been defeated. The most popular of all the services was the transactional activity, which associates to the reading habit among the employees. The employees seem to be scaling up their information literacy levels through reading books available at the IRC. The IRC at Chennai that houses 35000 books is a treasure trove of technical, management and soft skills books in print as well as electronic format. Rest of the services also found high utility, particularly at the senior levels. There by showing higher literacy levels among the senior users of the IRC.

Table 5.3.4				
Role	Transactional Services	Information Alerts	Client Specific Dossiers	Global Reference Desk
Team Member	75.38	53.85	26.15	46.15
Module Leader	89.47	63.16	31.58	57.89
Project Leader	87.50	100.00	37.50	50.00
Project Manager	94.44	94.44	44.44	72.22



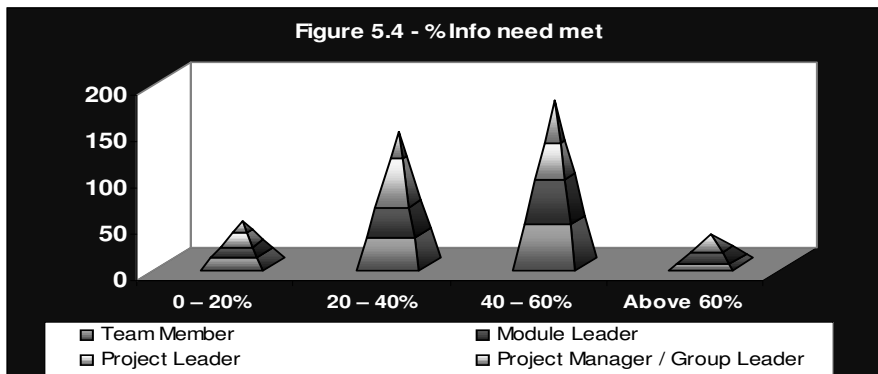
5.4 Information need met

Fourth question was designed to find out the percentage of information needs that was satisfied by IRC's resources.

Table 5.4: Information Need Met

Role	0 – 20%	20 – 40%	40 – 60%	Above 60%
Team Member	12.31	33.85	47.69	6.15
Module Leader	10.53	31.58	47.37	10.53
Project Leader	12.50	50.00	37.50	0.00
Project Manager / Group Leader	11.11	27.78	44.44	16.67

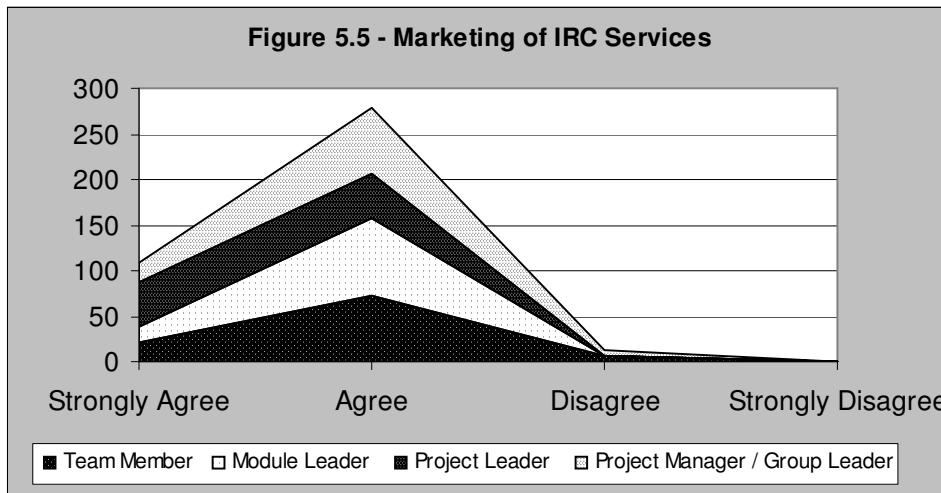
This question directly hits the bull's eye in assessing the applicability of the information provided by the IRC to the IT professionals in the organization. At the senior level, the employees seem to be able to directly apply the information provided to them through the various services rendered by the IRC.



5.5 Marketing of IRC Services

Fifth question was designed to find out if IRC markets its services well.

Table 5.5: Marketing of IRC Services				
Role	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Team Member	21.54	72.31	6.15	0.00
Module Leader	15.79	84.21	0.00	0.00
Project Leader	50.00	50.00	0.00	0.00
Project Manager / Group Leader	22.22	72.22	5.56	0.00



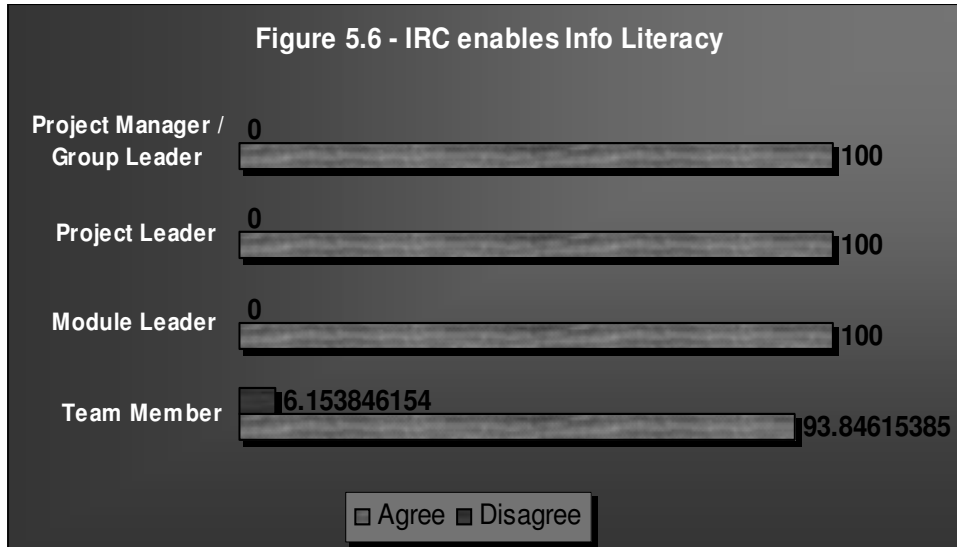
The question on the reach of the IRC services preempts the other questions particularly where the employees have expressed unawareness of IRC’s services. Here too, the employees have clearly provided their mandate and believe that IRC extensively markets its services.

5.6 IRC as an enabler of Information Literacy

Last question was designed to assess if users perceived IRC to be an enabler of their Information Literacy.

Table 5.6		
Role	Agree	Disagree
Team Member	93.85	6.15
Module Leader	100.00	0.00
Project Leader	100.00	0.00
Project Manager / Group Leader	100.00	0.00

Here again, the IT professionals at TCS believe that IRC has played a predominant role in enhancing their information literacy skills. The IRC understands its user's needs through various feedback mechanisms and provides customized solutions to the professionals that has been well appreciated by them.



6. Limitation

This survey was conducted at a specific centre at TCS Chennai. These results are only indicative and represent a picture of only those who chose to respond to the survey. They do not represent a picture of all TCSers in these roles and no such claims are inferred.

7. Conclusion

The information literacy levels at the Project Leader & Project Manager levels seem to be high. The awareness of the various resources and their applications are understood by them and are leveraging these for their immediate project requirements. However, a large population that predominantly consists of team members seems to be less aware of the immediate help available at hand. Here is where the IRC has to step up its marketing and redesign and customize certain services so as to include the needs of the employees in the role of team member. The study has helped in assessing the gaps in the coverage of services by the IRC & further interactions and meetings with these user groups in future will give a clear picture of their requirements that will aid in working out suitable niche services and improving their information literacy levels.

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