

How Undergraduate Students experience Distance Learning as Part of Their Information Literacy

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Submission date: 30-Nov-2020 01:46PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1459995153

File name: ence_Distance_Learning_as_Part_of_Their_Information_Literacy.pdf (194.19K)

Word count: 3214

Character count: 18395

How Undergraduate Students experience Distance Learning as Part of Their Information Literacy

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Abstract. Information comes in different forms, and it influences people's preference in finding and using information. The covid 19 pandemic which has been experienced by Indonesian undergraduate students may have provide new ways on how they looking and using information related to their study. This qualitative study explores the distance learning experience of undergraduate students in one of the University in Semarang during their study from home. It aims to identify how these students have developed their remote study as well as their strategies on searching and using information. A qualitative method was employed by applying semi-structured interviews for collecting data. The data then analyzed by using Thematic Analysis to uncover the pattern of the distance experience of the students. The preliminary findings show that most of the participants have some issues on using optimizing the learning systems, however they finally able to build their own strategies to cope with this new situation. Electronic resources becomes their main information resources because accessing the physical library building is no longer an option. These preliminary findings benefit not only for the next process of the research but also to inform university library about the way undergraduate students experience information resources so that it can be used for the library for developing their information services to students.

1 Introduction

The emergence of scholarly discourses about the engagement of undergraduate students with information and how libraries enable that engagement has become significant issues in recent years. Over the years, these scholarly discussions have moved from simplistic to more complex understandings of the information worlds and information behaviour [1]. The discussions were about the resource use, library use, library skill instruction, information access and use, and now it has coming to the everyday life experiences of people as

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information users. University students is considered to be a challenging profession. It requires students to deal with some amounts of works during their times in university. The academic works which commonly known as assignments which also comes with different forms, such as essays, is something that students need to deal with. To be able to do those works students need to have a good information skill. It is a skill that enable them to understand what is the assignment about and how to solve problem that come with the assignments. This the skills that include of the knowledge on locating information and understand the best strategies to acquire the relevant information through the available information sources. Online information search strategies are among the important variable in effective and efficient information skills. Previous research has shown that lecturers and students experience issues in acquiring, accessing and using information both online and offline [2] [3]. The issues may cause by lack of technical competencies as well as infrastructural problems [3]. Technical competencies can be understood as students' ability on locating and applying online information search strategies.

The vast amount of information as well as the availability of information resources is something that is understood very well by many students. As today's students is known as a generation that live and grown with the development of Internet and its rich application. They are known as digital native generation. However, being said as a digital native generation has leave them with a question about their ability on completing their task in the university by using different source of information that is available. This study is investigating how students in one of the faculty in Diponegoro University, Semarang finding and using information during their study.

It is hope that the findings will contributing to the scholarly discourse about people's information literacy experience especially the undergraduate students experience for researchers to build upon. The discovery will contribute to knowledge that involves theoretical understanding undergraduate students use of information resources as part of their broaden information world. The contribution will also support in the practice area where Indonesian university libraries will be able to use the findings from the study to inform the development of library instruction programs thus helping to ensure the programs genuinely meet the information literacy needs of this group of students.

Rest of the paper is organized as follows, Section I contains the introduction of the study. Section II contain the related work of how undergraduate students experience information literacy. Section III describes how the study conducted, Section IV contain how students experience distance learning as part of their information literacy, it contains any tools they prefer to use and why. Section V concludes research work with future directions.

2 Literature review

Research understanding how information is used in learning and university context have emerge from range of theoretical perspective influenced by the field of information behaviour and information literacy [4]. Information behaviour perspectives have seen the utilization of information services to improve the information literacy [5], while information literacy have been seen by three different perspectives understanding how information is experienced [6]. [7] introduces one of the perspectives named relational information literacy, it is the perspective that focuses on the various ways people relate to information and interact with elements of their informational worlds [6]. This is the perspective that does not assess information literacy as a set of skills but rather looking at the experience of information users when they engage with information. A study examining students' information literacy was undertaken by [8] who studied the ability of Brazilian students to find and use updated scientific information. In this study information literacy was understood to be essentials skills and knowledge to find information based on students' academic need, analyse and use the

information in an effective way [8]. The aim was to identify the information behaviours of the researcher. In the second phase, the researchers took part in a focus group that aimed to discover the way researchers managed information overload and to identify what skills they required to deal with information overload.

The study revealed the students' dissemination of information, their interactions with librarians, their use of information and communication technology. The findings showed that all students are familiar with information searches strategies, however they admitted that they do not have adequate competency of it because they have limited knowledge about academic databases, as well as about refining search strategies, and dealing with information overload.

[9] explored the reliance of research students in using electronic information resources. Using Grounded Theory, interviews were conducted with 15 research students (5 masters and 10 PhD) from the Faculty of Information Technology, Monash University. The interview questions explored three main areas: (i) use of information sources; (ii) when to stop finding information; and (iii) collecting and handling the information found. The findings indicated that most of the participants used Google for finding information as well as the databases provided by the university library. While the previous studies have provided a foundation for research on students' information use, they investigated how good and skilled they were on finding information. They did not look at how the students have engaged with the information they found and use. This is the gap the current study filled.

3 Methodology

This qualitative study addressed research question how undergraduate students experience distance learning as part of their information literacy. Qualitative study allowed the author to explore the undergraduate student' experience of any aspects that contribute to their distance learning during the pandemic situation. To date, data collection involved semi-structured interviews with five undergraduate students from two faculties. The data collection process is not finished yet. The participant recruitment is still conducted. An interview is an appropriated collecting data strategy for any research that is purposed to answer 'how' questions, because an interview provide a qualitative data that enables the researcher investigating the lived experiences of the interviewee, therefore it is important for the two parties to have a "theme of mutual interest" [10].

The interviews were conducted to reveal an understanding of how the participants experience distance learning during the covid 19 pandemic. Following established qualitative practice, data analysis involved thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying and analysing patterns or themes within the data that are considered to be important to the descriptions of the phenomenon of the study [11]. The thematic analysis method is used for this study to interprets various aspects from the topic that was studied by 'encoding' the qualitative data that has been gathered [12].

4 Results

In order to gain insights about how students experience their study from home as part of their information literacy, participants were asked about how they experience their lectures and how they manage their assignments. Participants were also asked to provide brief details about their assignment's topic, what was required, and what information sources they used. All of the participants described how they manage their first-time experience using the online learning systems required by the university. The participants clearly mentioned that the lack of training from the university had created some issues on how to install and how to use the application for most of the participants. Moreover, the majority of the participants stated that

they learned how to use the system by themselves without some guidance from the university, hence when they faced problems about the systems, they more relied on their peers, and it is through this connection the participants and their peers created knowledge that benefit to the whole members of the group who might have similar problems during their first interaction with the online learning system.

The experience of the participants creating knowledge that was helpful for other member of their group can be seen as the participants' information literacy, as suggested by [13]. [13] conceptualized information literacy by defining as people who are engaged, enabled, and enriched by social and physical information that surround them. [13] similar study was focused on how firefighters locate, access and use information to learn about their work practices. This previous study found that the firefighters have accessed and used information available in their workplace, and one source that they have seen as information source was their peer.

Another result that this current study found to date is that the information source the participants use during their online study. The majority of the participants commented that it is common for them to look for information during the lectures. The online mode where have put the participants connected to their tools such as handphone or laptop have enabled them to find information they need related to their lectures. One participant said that sometime they need to find one or two definitions of some concepts that was being discussed during the lectures. The way they search for information is by using Google.

Most of the students who use Google and Google Scholars made a comment that these two search engines were easy to use, very straight forward and led them to the information they need. But, when the students asked whether they found information they need through Google and Google Scholars, the students replied sometimes they could not find them. Some students responded that not all information they need were available through Google. In that case, some participants then turn their search into Google Scholar.

A picture of students using Google or Google Scholars for finding information is not new. [14] reported that the majority of students they studied were utilizing Google for finding information. More to that, [6] even find more compelling result for their study, it was not only undergraduate students who use Google, but even postgraduate students and lecturers were also use Google when it comes for getting information.

However, in both studies conducted by [14] and [6] reported that Google were only the initial step the students use for information search. It also being used only for getting ideas about the right keywords or terms for their search. When they finally know what they are looking for, they then move to library databases. While participants in this current study did not make any comment or indicate the use of library resources or any academic databases subscribed by the library. The following paragraph is describing the ways the participants connected with Google.

For instance, one participant claimed that they prefer to use Google by applying keywords, while another participant expressed his interest on Google's result by opening up of each result from the first page. The next step they did was they following up where the link will lead into, as they expect that they would find information needed through the upcoming websites.

Meanwhile other participant commented that they sometimes found information that they believe it will be useful for future times, in that case the participant bookmarked the website. One participant was also looking at a Blog through the Google's result. The area where they interest most of the blog is the reference list sections. It is the place where their information search process continues.

This time preferences were also experienced by a participant who is a Health Education student who is conducting co-assistance. Co-assistance is a process for Health Education students where have completed all the courses and have to implement what they studied by

interacting with a patient with a special health problem. In this stage, the students will need to support themselves with adequate information to do their work properly. The participant commented that she mostly relies on Google scholar to get herself updated with current health information related to the health problem of her patient.

The variations of the participants using Google during their online study denotes one aspect of the participants' information literacy related to their information search. The use of Google for an initial search is only the small picture of how the participants interacting with information sources. Hence it confirms that every participant has their own unique experience when relating to their information world.

The preliminary findings of this current study provide a way of raising awareness of how every individual interact differently to their information world. Seeing information literacy of an individual from the perspective of skills may have missed the variations shown by the information users. This study provides an illustration of how investigation into information literacy from relational perspective, which focuses on uncovering variation in experience reveal particular kind of knowledge [15].

5 Conclusion

Online learning experiences are meaningfully different from online courses offered online in response to a crisis or disaster [16]. A short preparation online course due the pandemic that is happening in Indonesia has bring new perspective from university students related to the current situations. This current study shows the preliminary finding about how the participants experience the study from home as part of their information literacy. These findings can help the university stakeholders to gain deeper understanding of how students' response to their distance learning due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study may also benefit the library how to supports students during their online learning, and also in enhancing their information literacy program for undergraduate students.

As early mentioned that this preliminary finding of the whole research process about how undergraduate students' experience distance learning part of their information literacy. This study currently in the process of data collection that is conducted in the conjunction with data analysis. Hence the result cannot be generalized for the whole students in the university studied as there are a lot more to uncover from the rich experience of students when they engaging with their information world during their study. Due to the nature of qualitative research which does not intend to generalize its finding, the sample of this research is focused on undergraduate students only. Another group of students, for instance postgraduate students, might bring in a different perspective of the live experience of students using information resources.

Acknowledgment

This research was funded by Diponegoro University for the year of 2020. Sincere thanks to the 5 undergraduate students for their interest and participation in this study, and to Diponegoro University Library for supporting the research process.

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