

# Information Seeking Behavior of International Students at the University of Tsukuba

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The significant growth of the number of international students around the world, and in Japan in particular, have come to draw the attention of many researchers to the importance of studying the difficulties international students face while they adapt to the new environment. Several studies have focused on social adaptation and adjustment of international students and the difficulties they face. Some other studies in English-speaking countries looked at the information seeking behavior of international students. However, studies that examined information-seeking behavior of international students in Asia, which is culturally very different from English-speaking countries, are limited.

In this study, we aimed to elicit information needs of international students at the University of Tsukuba, and the difficulties they face in their search tasks. This will allow us to understand their information seeking behavior and suggest a how to support their daily search tasks and information access.

A questionnaire composed of closed and open-ended questions was distributed online through mailing lists, social media and posters, provided the main methodological framework for the study.

The survey consisted of five main sections. The first section gathers demographic data about the respondents, and the other four sections gather data about the respondents' personal experiences with four different information channels: official university website, mailing lists, online community sources (social networking services), and offline sources (academic staff, library staff, bulletin boards). We collected a total of 85 answers among which only 37 were valid. Respondents were from 25 different countries and spoke 20 different native languages.

Results show that among the four channels, the most frequently used one was mailing lists followed by online community sources, offline sources and university website. However, the most highly ranked channel was offline sources, followed by online community sources. Official University Website and Mailing lists come at the bottom of the ranking. Findings of this study show that international students prefer interactive ways of accessing information. This is done through academic staff, librarians and Facebook friends in spite of any language barriers they may have. Students seemed to need flexible and interactive information sources that are able to deal with the nuances of their difficulties rather than static information on websites and mailing lists.

( Supervisor Hideo Joho )