

# **Characteristics of Social Science Literature: A Study of Bibliographic Citations of Dissertations Submitted in University of North Eastern Region**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Assessing user needs is a complex phenomenon which differs in different environment<sup>1</sup> from individual to individual, group to group and community to community. Its determination and satisfaction is the primary goal of the profession in the present context of increased interest and concern in user studies. But its assessment is not as easy as it appears. "Whatever an individual needs or asks for, it is quite impossible to know in advance which text or set of text will in fact, suit the task of an individual"<sup>1</sup>. Patric Wilson believes that "Perfect knowledge of an enquirer's predictions and perfect knowledge of all the texts which could possibly be used by an enquirer would be necessary before ideal set could be identified"<sup>2</sup>. The problem becomes more complicated when the user cannot identify the information he wants.

Irrespective of the complexity of the problems, there is no solution except investigating into information requirements of users.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The study has been initiated to ascertain the information needs of the social science scholars in the three universities of North-Eastern Region; North-Eastern Hill University, Gauhati University and Manipur University engaged in area studies on North East India.

The main objectives of the study are to ascertain the:

- (a) Type and forms of literature being used;
- (b) The age and language of the documents cited; and

- (c) Distribution of publications by the country of origin.

**METHODOLOGY**

User need can be studied by various techniques. The popular ones are: questionnaire, interview observation, statistical analysis of library records, maintenance of dairy by the user and bibliographic citation. In order to find out the core literature being used, citation is more suitable and valid having less subjectivity. Moreover, this methodology can be applied independently according to the convenience of the investigator. The same methodology has been applied in the present study to examine 65 dissertations submitted in NEHU, Gauhati University and Manipur University for the award of M.Phil and Ph.D degrees during the period 1981-1986. All the selected theses are on area studies on North-East. The selection of the theses, from these universities are as under:

North Eastern Hill University	=	35
Gauhati University	=	15
Manipur University	=	15

The total of 4808 citations have been analysed from the above dissertations by taking the following information form each citation:

- (a) Year of publication of the cited document;
- (b) Country of publication;
- (c) Language of the document;
- (d) Subject of the dissertation; and
- (e) Types and forms of the cited document as indicated in Table 4.

The data collected on a sheet of paper was transferred and tabulated in the following formats on separate sheet of paper for each type of information:

<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>AGE OF THE DOCUMENTS DIVIDED IN THE INTERVAL OF 10 YEARS BLOCK</b></p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1800 - 1809</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1810 - 1819</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1900 - 1909</p>	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>TYPES OF DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">1. Govt. Publication</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">2. Reports ....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">3. Seminars/ Conferences</p>
<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>COUNTRY OF ORIGIN</b></p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">India ....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">UK. ....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">USA.....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Other ...</p>	<p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;"><b>LANGUAGE OF THE DOCUMENTS</b></p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">English ....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;"><i>Regional Languages</i></p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Khasi .....</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Assamese ...</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Manipur .....</p>

This way the requisite information has been gathered and interpreted. To determine the age of the documents, median year and median age have been

worked out. The percentage of references to the form and types of literature cited has been worked out and presented in the tabular form to reveal the extent of use of literature.

## FINDINGS

The analysis reveals that maximum literature cited falls in the decade of '1970-1979' with 34.5% . The median year of the total cited publications is 1968.90, showing that 50% of the literature cited are within the period of 10-15 years from the citing year. (Table 2).

The subject-wise analysis also falls in the same decade *ie* '1970-1979' in which education ranks first with 69.29%, followed by Anthropology Political Science Geography, Economics, Sociology and History with 37.74% 36.46, 33.33%, 33.10%, 32.44% and 26.92%, respectively (Table 1 (a-g)). The maximum of literature cited is 10-15 years old. Engelbert<sup>3</sup> has revealed the same result in his study that in Social and Economics Sciences, there is less use of

*Table 1 (a)*  
*Age Distribution of Citations in Education*

	Year of Publication	Frequency of citation	Percentage Frequency	Cumulative
1.	1800-1809	0	0.00	0
2.	1810-1819	0	0.00	0
3.	1820-1829	0	0.00	0
4.	1830-1839	0	0.00	0
5.	1840-1849	0	0.00	0
6.	1850-1859	0	0.00	0
7.	1860-1869	0	0.00	0
8.	1870-1879	0	0.00	0
9.	1880-1889	0	0.00	0
10.	1900-1909	0		0
11.	1910-1919	0		0
12.	1920-1929	2	1.57	2
13.	1930-1939	1	0.78	3
14.	1940-1949	0	0.00	3
15.	1950-1959	3	2.36	6
16.	1960-1969	26	20.47	32
17.	1970-1979	88	69.29	120
18.	1980-1989	7	5.51	127
	Total	127		

Median Class : 1970-79  
Median Year : 1973-83,

Table 1 (b)  
Age Distribution of Citations in Economics

	Year of Publication	Frequency of Publication	Percentage	Cumulative frequency
1.	1800-1809	0	0.00	0
2.	1810-1819	0	0.00	0
3.	1820-1829	0	0.00	0
4.	1830-1839	1	0.13	1
5.	1840-1849	1	0.13	2
6.	1850-1859	1	0.13	3
7.	1860-1869	0	0.00	3
8.	1870-1879	0	0.00	3
9.	1880-1889	0		3
10.	1890-1899	0	0.00	3
11.	1900-1909	4	0.55	7
12.	1910-1919	3	0.41	10
13.	1920-1929	4	0.55	14
14.	1930-1939	8	1.10	22
15.	1940-1949	7	0.96	29
16.	1950-1959	81	11.17	110
17.	1960-1969	178	24.55	288
18.	1970-1979	240	33.10	528
19.	1980-1989	197	26.89	725
	Total	725		

Median Class : 1970-79  
Median Year : 1972-79

Note : Documents with no date of publication are not included in the table (Total = 59)

Table 1 (c)  
Age Distribution Citations in Political Science

	Year of Publication	Frequency	Percentage of Citation	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	0	0.00	0
2.	1810-1819	0	0.00	0
3.	1820-1829	0	0.00	0
4.	1830-1839	3	0.32	3
5.	1840-1849	0	0.00	3
6.	1850-1859	1	0.10	4
↓7.	1860-1869	1	0.10	5

8.	1870-1879	5	0.54	10
9.	1880-1889	2	0.21	12
10.	1890-1899	10	1.09	22
11.	1900-1909	8	0.87	30
12.	1910-1919	7	0.76	37
13.	1920-1929	7	0.76	44
14.	1930-1939	10	1.09	54
15.	1940-1949	27	2.94	81
16.	1950-1959	54	5.89	135
17.	1960-1969	173	10.88	308
18.	1970-1979	334	36.46	642
19.	1980-1989	274	29.91	916
Total		916		

Median Class 1970-79

Median Year 1972.10

*Table 1 (d)*  
*Age Distribution of Citation in Anthropology*

	Year of publication	Frequency of Citation	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	0	0	0
2.	1810-1819	0	0	0
3.	1820-1829	1	0.23	1
4.	1830-1839	0	0	0
5.	1840-1849	1	0.22	2
6.	1850-1859	3	0.66	5
7.	1860-1869	1	0.22	6
8.	1870-1879	3	0.66	9
9.	1880-1889	0	0.00	9
10.	1890-1899	4	0.88	13
11.	1900-1909	4	0.88	17
12.	1910-1919	3	0.66	20
13.	1920-1929	12	2.64	32
14.	1930-1939	12	2.64	44
15.	1940-1949	18	3.97	62
16.	1950-1959	57	12.58	119
17.	1960-1969	135	29.80	254
18.	1970-1979	171	37.74	425
19.	1980-1989	28	6.18	453
Total		453		

Median Class 1960-1969

Median Year 1967.16

*Table 1 (e)*  
*Age Distribution of Citations of Sociology*

	Year of Publication	Frequency of citations	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	0	0.00	0
2.	1810-1819	0	0.00	0
3.	1820-1829	4	0.27	4
4.	1830-1839	3	0.20	7
5.	1840-1849	4	0.27	11
6.	1850-1859	7	0.48	18
7.	1860-1869	2	0.13	20
8.	1870-1879	41	2.86	61
9.	1880-1889	5	0.34	66
10.	1890-1899	29	2.02	95
11.	1900-1909	29	2.02	124
12.	1910-1919	37	2.58	161
13.	1920-1929	35	2.44	196
14.	1930-1939	53	3.69	249
15.	1940-1949	67	4.67	316
16.	1950-1959	179	12.49	495
17.	1960-1969	341	23.79	836
18.	1970-1979	465	32.44	1301
19.	1980-1989	132	9.21	1433
	Total	1433		

Median Class : 1960-69  
Median Year : 1965.85

Before 1800

Note: 1310-1470 = 4 citations  
1750-1790 = 3 citations

*Table 1 (f)*  
*Age Distribution of Citations in Geography*

	Year of Publication	Frequency	Percentage of Citation	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	4	0.97	4
2.	1810-1819	1	0.24	5
3.	1820-1829	6	1.45	11
4.	1830-1839	1	0.24	12
5.	1840-1849	0	0.00	12
6.	1850-1859	0	0.00	12

7.	1860-1869	5	1.21	17
8.	1870-1879	20	4.86	37
9.	1880-1889	3	0.72	40
10.	1890-1899	6	1.45	46
11.	1900-1909	6	1.45	52
12.	1910-1919	4	0.97	57
13.	1920-1929	5	1.21	61
14.	1930-1939	14	3.40	75
15.	1940-1949	14	3.40	89
16.	1950-1959	42	10.21	131
17.	1960-1969	117	28.46	248
18.	1970-1979	137	33.33	385
19.	1980-1989	25	6.08	410
Total		410		

Median Class : 1960-1969

Median Year : 1965.65

*Table 1 (g)*  
*Age Distribution of Citations in History*

	Year of Publication	Frequency of Citation	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	0	0.0	0
2.	1810-1819	3	0.39	3
3.	1820-1829	10	1.32	13
4.	1830-1839	16	2.12	29
5.	1840-1849	9	1.19	38
6.	1850-1859	15	1.98	53
7.	1860-1869	9	1.19	62
8.	1870-1879	35	4.64	97
9.	1880-1889	15	1.98	112
10.	1890-1899	14	1.85	126
11.	1900-1909	27	3.58	153
12.	1910-1919	26	4.77	179
13.	1920-1929	36	4.24	215
14.	1930-1939	32	4.24	247
15.	1940-1949	48	6.36	295
16.	1950-1959	56	7.42	351
17.	1960-1969	108	14.32	459
18.	1970-1979	203	26.92	662
19.	1980-1989	92	12.20	754
TOTAL		754		

Median Class : 1960-1969

Median Year : 1962.16

Table 2  
Age Distribution of Citations in Social Science Literature

	Year of Publications	Frequency	Percentage of Citation	Cumulative Frequency
1.	1800-1809	4	0.00	4
2.	1810-1819	4	0.08	8
3.	1820-1829	21	0.43	29
4.	1830-1839	24	0.49	53
5.	1840-1849	15	0.31	68
6.	1850-1859	27	0.56	95
7.	1860-1869	18	0.37	113
8.	1870-1879	104	2.16	217
9.	1880-1889	25	0.51	242
10.	1890-1899	53	1.10	295
11.	1900-1909	78	1.62	373
12.	1910-1919	80	1.66	453
13.	1920-1929	101	2.10	554
14.	1930-1939	130	2.90	684
15.	1940-1949	181	3.76	865
16.	1950-1959	472	9.81	1337
17.	1960-1969	1078	22.42	2415
18.	1970-1979	1638	34.06	4053
19.	1980-1989	755	15.70	4808
	TOTAL	4808		

Median Class: 1960-1969  
Median Year : 1968.90

Table 3

	Name of Subject	No. of Citations	Median Year
1.	Education	127	1973.83
2.	Economics	725	1972.79
3.	Political Science	916	1972.10
4.	Anthropology	453	1967.16
5.	Sociology	1433	1965.85
6.	Geography	411	1965.65
7.	History	754	1962.16
	TOTAL	4808	1969

documents which are more than 10 years old. In spite of this recency in the use of social science literature, it is also evident from the findings that literature published before 1880's is also being referred and used even after a century, in 1980, indicating that the old publications are also important for retrospective investigations. This characteristics of social science literature has implications on the acquisition policy of the library.

The highest percentage of cited documents is of general books, ie 48.88% followed by official publications, reports, seminar/ conference proceedings, census reports, statistical sources, gazetteer etc. with the percentage of 13.51, 8.66, 5.73, 2.97, 2.58, 2.30, respectively (Table 4) showing substantial use of

*Table 4*  
*Distribution of Citation by Type of Literature*

	Type of Source	No. of citations	Percentage
1.	Govt. Publication	486	13.51
2.	Reports (General)	312	8.66
3.	Seminars and Conference	206	5.73
4.	Census Reports	107	2.97
5.	Statistical sources	93	2.58
6.	Gazetteer	83	2.30
7.	Newspapers	78	2.16
8.	Office Records	74	2.05
9.	Monographs	69	1.92
10.	Theses and dissertations	60	1.67
11.	Informal communication (Interview etc)	60	1.67
12.	Handbooks	59	1.63
13.	Acts	38	1.05
14.	Manuscripts	32	0.88
15.	Encyclopeadia	27	0.75
16.	Pamphlets	27	0.75
17.	Microforms	12	0.33
18.	Recorded Speeches in documents	8	0.22
19.	Directories	5	0.14
20.	Biographies	5	0.14
21.	General Books	1760	48.87
	Total	3601	99.99

government publications to carry out area studies.

Indian publications are the main sources of information being used in research to the extent of 71.67% followed by UK and USA with 14.75% and 11.19%. The use of other foreign publications is negligible (Table 5).

Table 5  
*Place of Publication of Cited Documents other than periodical articles*

	Place of publication	No. of Citation	Percentage
1.	United Kingdom	531	14.75
2.	United States of America	403	11.19
3.	India	2581	71.67
4.	Other countries	86	2.38
	Total	3601	99.99

Maximum literature being referred is in English Language, *ie* 85.05% but literature published in local languages of the North- East are also in good percentage, *ie* 10.84. These languages include: Khasi, Mizo, Naga, Manipuri, Boro, Assamese, Bengali, and Burmese (Table 6). This reveals that for local area studies, literature in local languages play an important role. Comparing the literature in the forms of books and periodicals, maximum use is of books, followed by periodical articles (74.89% and 25%) respectively.

Table 6  
*Language Distribution of Cited Documents*

	Language of cited document	No. of citations	Percentage
1.	English	3171	88.05
2.	North Eastern Languages *	390	10.84
3.	Nepali language	25	0.69
4.	Hindi	12	0.33
5.	Sanskrit	3	0.08
	Total	3601	99.99

\*include Khasi, Assamese, Mizo, Naga, Manipuri, Boro, Bengali and Burmese languages.

## CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above findings that Social Science Research in North East India is mainly based on the available resources in book form. The periodical usage is much below the desired rank. This under-utilization of periodical literature may be due to the following reasons:

- (a) Non-availability of periodical literature on North East India; and
- (b) Non-retrieval of the available literature due to unfamiliarity with the location tools.

The use of official publications, reports, seminar/ conference proceedings dissertations and statistical sources etc as given in table 4 is quite significant, confirming that these publications are one of the chief sources of information in social sciences particularly on area studies. Therefore, it is an urgent priority to create a centre for data base on North-East India in order to meet the present need of information scientists. Any one of the universities, research centres in the region shall have to take initiative for the purpose involving others institutions to coordinate in the venture.

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