



DILIGENT IN SEARCHING FOR RELIABLE HISTORICAL SOURCES: THE PATTERN OF HISTORIANS' INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Introduction: Due to the fact that archival institutions are organised differently and operate under different administrations, a study is needed to identify how historians seek out information and the external and internal changes that affect their behaviour.

Method: The 190 survey participants included 80 history professors from Malaysian public universities' social sciences and arts and humanities departments, as well as 110 lecturers teaching Malaysian General Studies (Malaysian history) to future teachers at the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia. The study included 14 Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia branches in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak, as well as seven (7) public universities that awarded bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees.

Analysis: Questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 20.0. Descriptive statistics such as percentages and means were used to present the results.

Results: In the earlier stages, the respondents used catalogues, databases, and the internet to seek information. In addition, information was also acquired through networking channels such as conferences and social gatherings, where colleagues would follow up as needed to track the current information. Overall, according to the findings, there was a positive outlook on how academic lecturers who taught history and Malaysian General Studies sought information in the context of their profession.

Conclusions: The findings of this survey generated surface results showing that a significant percentage of historians were motivated to complete their job through financial incentives, promotions, and public recognition. Additionally, there was a promising percentage of participants who expressed a strong dedication to commitment and belief in the completion of the historical research. It was discovered that there were higher tendencies for networking among historians in terms of preparedness to participate in collaborative projects and openness to sharing information. Moreover, the findings of this research reported that the advancement of information technology and the barriers that hindered historians from conducting information seeking, such as cost, time, language, and distance, were the most significant discoveries.

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1. Introduction

Throughout the history of civilization, archives and libraries have been the providers of knowledge and the centre of historians' intellectual pursuit to collect and gather their records of information. Archives and libraries are responsible for maintaining the integrity of a country's historical material as a significant source of reference for the next generation. However, both have different roles whereby archives gather a primary collection that has yet to be interpreted, while libraries gather a secondary collection of printed and electronic media. Today, historians are increasingly using the historical method, which emphasises the originality of an individual's understanding of the past, rather than relying solely on narratives. In addition, current advances in history have highlighted the importance of researching and identifying reliable sources of information. As experts in their field, historians must be meticulous in their research efforts. There is limited research on the information seeking behaviour of historians in Malaysia (Idris, 2022). Further study is needed to identify the patterns of information seeking behaviour among historians in Malaysia and the findings would be beneficiary to improve the way that historians conduct their research. In addition, there has been a surge in interest of the public in Malaysian historical facts recently. A growing number of issues have been reared in the media that have questioned Malaysian history's integrity. An insult to the nation resulted from a newspaper article that included a local politician who stated that a member of a communist party who fought during the pre-war period was an independent combatant. As a result, it caused the public to react negatively to the article. (The Star, 28 August 2011). Following this, another essay was released on Malaya not having ever been a British colony but rather be regarded as a protectorate state by the British. It was based on the author's interpretation of an original historical account cited in the article (Malaysiakini.com, 9 September 2011).

Although many historians considered this phrase to be little more than a legal fiction, they have reached a consensus on this contentious issue. As a direct result of this, the government of Malaysia mandated in 2013 that all students graduating from secondary schools in Malaysia must have a passing grade in history before they can enrol in the university (MStar, 23 October 2010). In response to the enormous interest displayed and exhibited in history, a committee of researchers was established to re-evaluate the year of the beginning rulers of the Empire of Malacca while rejecting the year 1400 provided by the Suma Oriental, which Tome Pires wrote between the years 1512 and 1515.

According to Abdul Rahman Ismail's interpretation of the Sulalatus Salatin, as presented in the version authored by Raja Bongsu, the first year of the Malay Sultanate began in 1262 (Ismail et al., 2012). Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, a concerned historian scholar, advocated that discourse should be created between other experts and society at large in order to avoid any potential implications (The Star, 6 September 2012). Similarly, other instances were brought up by a few individuals who claimed to be descendants of the old Malay Kingdom, which existed before Malaysia was constituted as a country. Before this, three different instances claimed to be royal ancestors of the states of Johor, Selangor, and Melaka; as a result, there were claims for the crown's assets and property despite inadequate proof. Some of these situations were considered emergency and have been debated at length in a series of polemic sessions. This gave historians a place to share and discuss recent research in their field. The sessions were held to provide historians with a forum to discuss the latest findings related to history. As a result, contemporary historians need help attempting to find answers to questions about events that occurred in the past (Badriyah & Tan, 1996; Arbai'yah, 2006). Since historical polemics and limited access to information sources themselves put the veracity of historical facts at risk, there is an urgent need to understand how information is gathered and how historians use historical sources. To address this issue, this study objective was to investigate the pattern of information seeking behaviours of historians.

Although the Public Record Office was established in 1957 and the National Museum of Malaya in 1958, followed by the establishment of both the National Library and National Art Galleries to safeguard all historical artefacts, documents and records, the majority of archival materials were removed and taken away during the reign of colonial power in this country. The National Archives of London and the British Museum Library still possess 3,000 entries of Malaysian history (Rozeman, 2004). Similarly, the library in Portugal also keeps 200 pages of publications related to Malaysia (Abdul Wahid, 1991). From 2010 to 2016, an ANM expedition team studied archives and libraries in Indonesia, the Netherlands, India, and the United Kingdom, uncovering and duplicating many historical materials in the form of records, manuscripts, drawing plans, and images. The expeditions were carried out in phases by several agencies throughout three continents (Berita Arkib Puspawangsa, Bil4/2013). Access to the data had become difficult due to a significant loss of historical sources when the colonial powers were

in control. Consequently, the data are scattered across several locations and have been expensive to retrieve since the post-colonial era.

Literature Review

After the turn of the century and the beginning of the 1920s, a large number of Malaysian professionals, among others Abdul Hadi Hasan, Buyong Adil, Darus Ahmad, A. Samad Ahmad, Nik Anuar Mahmud, Nik Hassan Shuhaimi, and Khoo

Kay Kim, transitioned into academic scholars at Malaysia's most prestigious educational institutions (Muhd Yusof, 1997). The traditional definition of historian has now been re-defined. As a result of the disparity of tasks and approaches, a terminology for modern historians was established to indicate the proper handling of writing a scholarly synthesis in accordance with scientific principles (Arbai'yah, 2006; Rozeman, 2004). For the past 50, there has been a rapid increase in the development of the field of history. To this day, the school of history has a solid foundation as a discipline. Although the paradigm of history can be linked to the school of art, it is also occasionally considered to be a part of the social science and human sciences when approached from a multi-

disciplinary perspective (Gordon, 1991; Badriyah & Tan, 1996). In Malaysia, the new millennium has led to a positive trend in information seeking behaviour among historians. Developments in information technology may have led to a renewed interest in how historians seek information in their quest for valid information and knowledge. Thus, the continuity of traditional historians did not just end there; it has endured until today and has attracted non-academic professionals in the public to become historians. In the study of historians' information seeking behaviour, digital information emerged later and revealed different trends. Tibbo (2002) asked 300 historians to study American history with their students in order to determine essential tools of the modern era, explain what they teach doctoral students about research materials, and discuss how they expected archives or libraries to develop and change in the future. According to the study findings, historical research resources, such as traditional paper-based and modern digital methods, are required in a variety of ways. Finding aids, footnotes, and archivist expertise are all valuable resources for historians looking for specific information, according to the findings of a study conducted by Duff et al. (2004a, 2004b). There have been substantial differences in the research of information seeking behaviour from the user's perspective from librarian to librarian and information professional to information

professional (Ellis, 1989; Ellis et al., 1993; Meho & Tibbo, 2003). Nevertheless, a number of models were chosen for this study's structure and breadth on the basis of comparison in order to achieve its objective. Theories of information seeking must take into account a way of important factors, such as offering a reasonable theoretical foundation for predicting changes in information seeking behaviours, directing effective design strategies for enhancing information seeking, explicitly conceptualising information seeking behaviour, developing thorough descriptions of it, and clarifying why particular types of information seeking are motivated in the contexts they are.

Historian's Historical Method

Many various research procedures are employed in the social sciences and humanities. One of these methods is historical research, which is a unique type of inquiry. The focus of the history topic area is on historical occurrences from antiquity. But often, certain historians are similarly fascinated by recent and modern history. Humans experience past events or activities, sometimes referred to as prior events and activities, either knowingly or unknowingly. These events could be traced back as recently as a few minutes or as far as more than a century. Artefacts and numerous manuscripts that have survived to the present day because they were neither destroyed nor lost are still evidence of past events.

The other aspect, there are also evidence that sources have indeed been intentionally or carelessly destroyed. Discrepancies in historical sources of a person or event would be eradicated if artefacts and texts were wilfully removed. Due to this, it would be difficult to reconstruct the historical and cultural context as well as being inconsistent with the facts. Historical interpretation has advanced significantly since the 17th century. The historical process has already finally grown and developed by the 19th century. This century saw the birth of "scientific history," also known as "critical history" or "empirical history," all of which are words that are used interchangeably (Treitler, 1967). Leopold von Ranke seems to have been a leading light in Germany in conducting research as a scientific field, demonstrating accurately how historical incidents happened (Von Ranke, 2010). The historical method could be divided into three different parts or phases of activity, which can be summarised in **basic terms as follows:**

- i. The method of searching for primary sources, which might also refer to historical evidence or knowledge sources. At this occasion, the writing of historical sources begins.
- ii. An investigation or verification of the genuine worth (the truth) or perhaps a perspective of the original source. This second phase, known as

discourse analysis, is a crucial stage in the as a whole cycle. It is also regarded to as historical critique.

iii. The third phase comprised of compilation and presentation or accounting (often in significant text format), each of which must occur inside the limitations of objective reality, interpretation, and purpose. The third stage in the process is synthesis and writing. In particular with respect to these phases, Gray (1964) underlined the main investigation techniques

that historians frequently employ: a. Choose title of the study or the research issue that will be explored or researched.

b. The requirement for proof or access to the sources themselves (including primary and secondary sources). The second phase entails several strategies for gathering source content bibliographic cards (notes).

c. The authenticity and trustworthiness of the information's sources (criticism).

The third phase would be the construction and information exchange phase

d. A simple and unambiguous mode of communication based on scientific principles and the compilation of research findings.

e. History writing and synthesis are employed to generate the findings of the study for summaries and histories.

When historical methodology is tied to searching for historical materials and presenting them in recorded history, it is a science that provides discipline about the authenticity of the procedures. In its most basic form, it consists of three basic operations: (1) seeking the required resources for information sources; (2) providing a thorough appraisal based on the perspective of the material; and (3) finally coming at a concluding result (Garraghan, 1946). In this context, the term "method" refers to the method that historians take to their work, together with the activities, perceptions, and procedures that they abide when investigating. Identifying sources, gathering, examining, and analysing sources, as well as the instruments required for performing and conducting research, should all be part of historical research techniques (Tosh, 2013, Muhd Yusof & Mahayudin, 1988).

Leveraging any of the many different types of historical sources is a viable option for assembling historical data. Archival material, secondary sources, and personal recollections are instances of this type of information. Archival records, also known as primary sources, are heavily relied on by historians for the majority of their research. Government reports, newspapers, and other artefacts could be found in archives, museums, and

other repositories, including libraries, which are also regarded archival data sources. Until then, a secondary source is a document written by a historian. It refers towards another historian who carried out the research and decided to write about the past. Finally, memorabilia includes a variety of sources, such as autobiographies, memoirs, and diaries (Brundage, 2002).

Comparison studies with other works can take many different forms. Throughout addition to primary and secondary sources, historians placed a high priority on the documents' authenticity. Each piece of content must be meticulously scrutinized to see whether it was created with artificial materials. Shafer (1974), in particular, emphasized the importance of contemplating content analysis when considering anachronisms in language, as well as interesting and attractive allusions and consistency with a specific societal environment, among other factors. When attempting to validate the reliability of the records at hand, a variety of methods should be taken into account. Palaeography, handwriting style analysis, stylometry, and literary style comparisons with well-known authors are some instances. When discovering documents, a historian should be able to establish two things: authenticity and credibility (Gottschalk, 1969). It ensures that the originality of the interpretation of history is confirmed, preventing forgeries and accurate information from being misconstrued. The terms "information searching" and "seeking" are unassailable in the eyes of historians and information professionals. Information searching is not the same as historical research (Iredale 1974). The fact that there is an implicit idea of historians seeking information at the beginning of the historical method, but as a general behaviour. As a result, the historical phrase method has a different meaning than the term information seeking behaviour because it adheres to specific constraints of actions that fall solely under the study methodology.

Numerous studies—quantitative and qualitative—have been conducted and written about how social scientists and humanists act when seeking out information. Several researchers attempted to understand the behaviour of a specific group of scholars and developed a variety of related models, including Rhee's (2012) Model, Wilson's (1999) Model, Bronstein's (2007) Model, Meho and Tibbo's (2003) Model, Uva's (1977) Model, and Foster's (2005) Model. To put it briefly, each model offers a distinct behavioural pattern tailored to academic requirements and information seeking browsing. These models, which have been used in the humanities and social science sectors, demonstrate how the environment and one's immediate surrounds interact to influence behaviour related to information seeking.

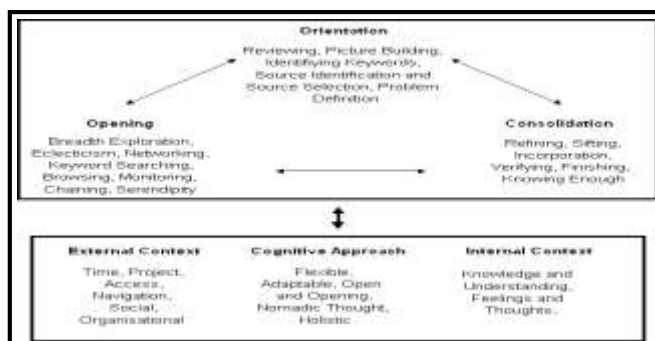
Foster Model (2005) for information seeking Behaviour

The three main information seeking strategy

phases in the study—orientation, openness, and consolidation—were all inspired by Foster's (2005)

Model. The reason this non-linear information seeking model was selected was because it closely matched the underlying theories that investigate the level of contextual interaction (internal context, external context, and cognitive processes) which affect information seeking tactics.

Figure 1: Information Seeking Behaviour of Foster's (2005) Non-linear Model



Orientation

The problem identification was the main orientation (Foster, 2005). With exception of Wilson (1997), who described information behaviour as starting with a complicated situation, the beginning in this study did not be the initial start (Ellis 1989; Kuhlthau 1993).

Opening

Opening was defined as the shift from orienting to actively seeking, examining, and disclosing information. The goal of the actions under this component was to determine whether or not issues had been addressed in earlier studies. It covers the actual knowledge gathering activities. The two sub-components of this process (breadth exploration and eclecticism) were deemed complicated because they operate in conjunction with other activities, encompassing the combination from several activities to create a broader process. Eclecticism is the process of collecting, obtaining, and storing the information, whilst breadth exploration is the process of broadening the search techniques of each available channel. This study, in distinctive, confirmed two behaviours first reported by Ellis (1989). Serendipity, in contrast hand, is the accidental discovery of information that can be connected with browsing, eclecticism, and networking (Foster & Ford, 2003).

Consolidation

Though that stage of the search process has seen sufficient information and a level of integrity for the material provided by the researchers, consolidation is unlikely to take place in the early stages of this search process. The threshold of

relevance or sifting was used to incorporate a combination of thinking, writing, and talking with peers. Notwithstanding, this model found that verification was the least common trait in information behaviour. Respondents expressed a desire for greater certainty in their ability to assess the accuracy of materials from other fields. Regrettably, the interviewees stated that the massive amount of information prevented them from conducting additional search queries to verify the components of the publications. The process's completion marked the end of the last step. The problem-solving framework used in many previous models (e.g., Kuhlthau, 1993; Wilson, 1997), according to Foster, is not the most common strategy for acquiring new knowledge. Instead, the model's findings show that problem definition and, more broadly, information seeking behaviour are repetitive, holistic, contextual, and centred on the concept of orientation. Interactions between the external, internal, and cognitive levels of context can have a significant impact on the three fundamental strategies. The cognitive approach refers to the interaction of the individual mind, especially in decision-making, whereas the external context refers to the foreign factor. The internal context serves as an adequate response during the search process.

2. Method of the Study

An exploratory survey and a questionnaire instrument were used to achieve the study's objective of examining Malaysian historians' patterns in information seeking behaviours. The study's intended participants were history professors from Malaysian public universities'

social sciences and arts and humanities departments, as well as lecturers teaching Malaysian General Studies (Malaysian history) courses for future teachers at the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia. It included seven public university institutions represented by history schools or departments awarding bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees, as well as 14 branches of the Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia located throughout Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah, and Sarawak. The study was incorporated

into a simple random sampling technique that involved selecting a sample that was thought to be representative of a given population with an equal chance of being chosen as a subject (Sekaran, 2006). As a result, respondents had an equal chance of being chosen. Table 1 shows the total population and the minimum number of required sample sizes for each institution, as determined by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size calculation.

Table 1: The Calculation of Sample Size

Institution	Population of Each Institution (N)	Sample Size Required (S) (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970)
Malaysian Public Universities	80	63
Institute of Teacher Education Malaysia	110	92
Total	190	155

Prior to data collection, compliance with legal requirements and approval from the relevant authorities overseeing the institutions and universities have to be met. The Ministry of Higher Education is in charge of all the colleges and institutions that were considered for the study. Following this, Universiti Teknologi MARA sent a letter of support to the Ministry of Higher Education confirming the researcher's enrolment as a student there. In the letter, permission and authorisation were requested in order to do research at the institutions and universities mentioned. The letter also explained the study's objective and provided specifics on how the questionnaire would be distributed. The questionnaire was sent to an expert in quantitative research at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia due to the possibility of errors. This was done to correct any potential errors in the creation of the surveys instrument. After that, the instrument was also sent for a content validity check to ensure acceptability; as a result, it can be regarded as reasonable and suitable for use. In addition to four curators

employed by the Department of Museums in Malaysia, the instruments were handed to academics working at the Department of History in the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Malaya. The data for this descriptive survey was generated using SPSS Statistics version 20. The total population was 190 lecturers, with an approximate response rate of 81.5%. The 155 fully completed questionnaires received can be considered usable and can be used by the researcher as a result (Table 1). A hard copy and printed structured questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument. It consisted of 72 questions in total, and the respondents were kept anonymous throughout the process. The reliability test was used to determine whether the researcher could rely on the data source and the data itself. Cronbach's coefficient alpha is the most commonly used consistency reliability test. Cronbach's alpha with a higher internal consistency is equal to 1.00 for a higher degree of accuracy (George & Mallery, 2013). Acceptance reliability is greater than 0.7.

Findings

Demographic Profile

Table 2: Demographic Profile

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage %
Gender	Male	89 57.4
	Female	66 42.6
Age	25-35	53 34.2

	36-45	54	34.8
	46-55	39	25.2
	Above 56	9	5.8
Total		155	100.0

At 89 responders, male made up 57.4% of the group. The majority of the population is 36–45 years old. The demographic profile is shown in Table 2.

Table 3: Experiences in Historical Writing

Experience in Historical Writing	Frequency (yes)	Percentage %
School Textbooks	23	14.8
Public History Books	32	20.6
Academic Journal	96	61.9
Newspaper	47	30.3
Magazine & Bulletin	78	50.3
Official Report for Government Agencies	49	31.6
Encyclopaedias	12	7.7
Research for Work Purposes	131	84.5

When asked to specify their prior experience in historical writing, the respondents had the choice of picking more than one answer. Based on Table 3 above, 84.5% of respondents indicated they wrote historical writing for their research projects, while 61.9% claimed they wrote for the publication of scholarly journals. The least proficient writing was found in encyclopaedias (7.7%).

Table 4: Areas of Research

Areas of Research in Three Years	Frequency (yes)	Percentage %
Political History	78	50.3
Military History	35	22.6
Religion History	43	27.7
Archaeological History	54	34.8
Cultural History	119	76.8
Diplomatic History	53	34.2
Economic History	34	21.9
International History	19	12.3

To gain a general understanding of the expertise, each respondent was asked to identify their areas of research in the previous three years, with each respondent having the option of selecting more than one area. The three most common areas of expertise stated by respondents were Cultural History (76.8%), Political History (50.3%), and Archaeological History (34.8%). Historians has the lowest frequency of expertise in International History, which is 12.3%. The complete areas of research is shown by Table 4.

Table 5: Usage of Information Sources

Usage of Information Sources	More Frequently Use (%)	Less Frequently Use (%)
School Textbooks	144 (92.9)	11 (7.1)

Public History Books	147 (94.8)	8 (5.2)
Academic Journal	133 (85.8)	22 (14.2)
Newspaper	129 (83.2)	26 (16.8)
Government Documents	129 (83.2)	26 (16.8)
Statistical Sources	101 (65.2)	54 (34.8)
Audio/Visual Materials	54 (34.8)	101 (65.2)
Artefacts/Museum Pieces	74 (47.7)	80 (51.6)
Maps	109 (70.3)	46 (29.7)
Photographs	126 (81.3)	26(16.8)
Dissertations	82 (52.9)	73(47.1)
Conference Proceedings	76 (49)	79 (51)
Publication of Scholarly Organisations	81 (52.3)	74(47.7)
Websites	127 (81.9)	28(18.1)
Oral Interviews	92 (59.4)	63(40.6)
School Textbooks	144 (92.9)	11 (7.1)

According to Table 5, the most frequently referred sources were public history books (94.8%) and school textbooks (92.9%).

Table 6: Membership of Association

Membership	Frequency	Percentage %
Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia	75	48.3
Ikatan Ahli Arkeologi Malaysia	22	14.1
Persatuan Sejarah Lisan	6	3.9
Malaysian Branch of The Royal Asiatic Society Institute of Historical Research	2	1.2
Assoc. of Business Historians (UK)	1	0.6
Business History Conference (US)	1	0.6
Pustaka Negeri Sarawak	1	0.6
Total		69.3

Table 6 indicated that The Malaysian Historical Society (Persatuan Sejarah Malaysia) received 69.3% of the historians who responded to a question about their professional membership, while Pustaka Negeri Sarawak, the American Association of Business Historians, and the Business History Conference (US) received only 0.6%. All of the organisations listed are dedicated to advancing the interests of historians of all disciplines and fields. They are a consistent advocate for the value of historical thinking in public discourse, historical research, and historical education.

3. Results of Descriptive Analysis of Information Seeking Activities

No.	Item	Mean
1.	I would expand my exploration on the background information before selecting a topic for my research work.	5.92
2.	I try to seek all sources of information from other disciplinary fields for my research.	5.35
3.	I am open to new paradigms in methods of historical research.	5.35

4.	I will search for information from primary sources first.	6.19
5.	I will store and organise every information gathered systematically.	5.64
6.	I will use all channels of networking (conferences, social gathering, colleagues, and departmental research groups) to obtain information for my research	5.55
7.	I prefer to conduct my own search when seeking for information.	5.50
8.	I will use the catalogues, databases, and Internet in searching for information.	5.50
9.	I have difficulties finding the proper terminology for keywords searching across disciplines.	4.17
10.	I prefer to search for information sources from the National Archives.	5.83
11.	I exchange personal email with colleagues to keep track of the current information on the historical perspective.	5.25
12.	I request assistance from archivists and librarians to get information.	4.66
13.	I will further trace the citations and references in the books or articles that I read.	5.52
14.	I will read and refer to relevant journals to get the latest and current information.	5.43
15.	I will read and refer to relevant newspapers to get the latest and current information.	5.68
16.	Sometimes unintentionally I found other information which can be used for other research topics.	4.49

Table 7: Interpretation of Mean Scores

Descriptive surveys were carried out to determine the current situation in terms of monitoring what people truly believe in and what people are doing at any given time (Baumgartner et al., 2002). The mean scores were interpreted by Table 7 as below.

Mean score	Interpretation
1.0 – 1.85	Neutral
1.86 – 2.70	Regularly
2.71 – 3.56	Occasionally
3.57 – 4.42	Sometimes
4.43 – 5.28	Usually
5.29 – 6.14	Always
6.15 – 7.00	Frequently

Table 8: Descriptive Means for Opening

Table 8 exhibits the results of the opening process, which is the first stage of information seeking. "Seeking primary sources" was prioritised in the search for sources of information and received the most responses. It received a mean score of 6.19, while "requesting assistance from archivists and librarians" received a lower mean score of 4.66. Meanwhile, the majority of the results were deemed moderate. Respondents scored poorly on a few indicators, including "proper search keywords across disciplines," with a mean score of 4.17, and "unintentional information that can be used for other research," with a mean score of 4.49.

Table 9 : Descriptive Means for Orientation

No.	Item	Mean
1.	I consider primary sources as important.	6.34

2.	I consider secondary sources as important.	6.02
3.	When seeking information, I would prefer well-known authors.	5.35
4.	I would prefer renowned documents when doing information searching.	5.26
5.	I use picture mapping on paper to get the clearer overview concept of my research.	4.72
6.	I would like to have more convenient access to the documents.	5.89
7.	I will utilise advanced search on the web to identify keywords that I used.	5.03
8.	There is no difference in quality between a publication of a digital document (e.g. online journals) and a printed document (e.g. books, manuscripts).	4.57
9.	As I go deeper into searching information, my understanding about research problems and issues become much clearer.	5.61
10.	Information which I have acquired at the beginning of seeking, have confirmed what I have already known about the problem.	5.24
11.	The more information I gathered, the more I get interested in the issues researched.	5.85
12.	In the course of reviewing information, I focus on selecting the specific information related to my research.	5.83
13.	In judging the relevant information, I put emphasis on a document written in a clear and plain manner.	5.72
14.	In judging the relevant information, I select just the information that I can use immediately	5.29
15.	In relevance judgements I have selected just those recently written documents.	5.06
16.	Throughout information seeking, I incorporate all information I discussed with my colleague/s.	5.10
18.	I trust the accuracy of news stated in the newspaper.	4.52
19.	The government institutions provide a reliable and trustworthy information.	5.39
20.	I will check the source of information provider to determine the trustworthiness of the information.	5.52
21.	I will obtain information from the National Archives in other countries when necessary.	4.54
22.	I will stop searching for information once the research is completed.	4.92
23.	I would go back to search for more relevant information when I feel the amount of information is not sufficient.	5.33

Table 9 shows the results from the process of orientation towards identifying and looking at the information sources. Both primary and secondary sources were regarded almost equally through higher inclination of scores by the respondents. The importance of “primary sources” was slightly higher with a score of 6.34 compared to “secondary sources” at 6.02. Meanwhile, the score for “picture mapping” was with a score of 4.72, which was low, and this was also shared with the “no difference in term of quality of the digital document versus printed document” at 4.57.

Results of Frequencies of of Information Seeking Activities

The following items were included to examine the frequency of the pattern of historians' information seeking behaviour: Opening (the process of opening up to information method); Orientation (focus on identification and where to look); and Consolidation (judging and integrating the work in progress and deciding whether further information

is necessary). All items were measured on a seven-point frequency scale from: Never (N), Rarely (R), Occasionally (O), Sometimes (S), Usually (U), Always (A), Frequently (F). On the scale of the options given, the respondents were asked to mark the information-searching process in three phases (opening, orientation, and consolidation) as a critical requirement in research.

Table 10: Frequency Result of Opening

	Opening (the process of opening up to information method)	N %	R %	O %	S %	U %	A %	F %
1.	I would expand my exploration on the background information before selecting a topic for my research work.	1.3	1.3	2.6	5.8	14.2	37.4	37.4
2.	I try to seek all sources of information from other disciplinary field for my research.	1.3	1.9	5.2	18.1	17.4	38.1	18.1
3.	I am open to new paradigm in methods of historical research.	0	0	7.1	22.6	20.6	27.1	22.6
4.	I will search for information from the primary sources first.	0.6	0	1.3	8.4	8.4	30.3	51.0
5.	I will store and organise every information gathered systematically.	0.6	1.9	1.3	10.3	26.5	33.5	25.8
6.	I will use all channels of networking (conferences, social gathering, colleagues, and departmental research groups) to obtain information for my research	0	1.3	1.9	16.1	21.9	24.2	25.8
7.	I prefer to conduct my own search when seeking for information.	0	3.9	1.3	12.9	29.7	27.1	25.2
8.	I will use the catalogues, databases, and Internet in searching for information.	0	1.9	4.5	18.1	18.1	32.3	25.2
9.	I have difficulties in finding the proper terminology for keywords searching across disciplines.	2.6	15.5	13.5	31.6	14.2	12.3	10.3
10.	I prefer to search information sources from the National Archives.	1.3	1.3	3.2	9.0	16.1	30.3	38.7
11.	I exchange personal email with colleagues to keep track of the current information on historical perspective.	1.9	3.2	1.9	21.9	19.4	34.8	16.8
12.	I request assistance from the archivists and librarians to get the information.	0.6	7.1	19.4	22.6	11.6	25.8	12.9
13.	I will further trace the citations and references in the books or articles that I read.	1.3	1.9	1.3	11.6	24.5	41.9	17.4
14.	I will read and refer to relevant journals to get the latest and current information.	1.5	1.5	1.5	12.1	27.3	37.9	18.2
15.	I will read and refer to relevant newspaper to get the latest and current information.	0.6	3.2	1.3	14.2	11.6	40.6	28.4
16.	Sometimes unintentionally I found other information which can be used for other research topic.	-	9.0	15.5	28.4	21.3	16.1	9.7

Based on Table 10, it is clear that the item "expand exploration on the background information before starting a new topic" has the highest score of 37.4% (frequently), and for "try to seek from

another disciplinary field before selecting a topic," the score is 38.1% (always). Furthermore, "tracing the citation of references from books and journals also received a higher figure always" scored

41.9%. Meanwhile, for "read and refer to relevant journals also to get the latest and current information", the score had the higher figure of 37.9% (always). For "open to a new paradigm in methods of historical research," a score of 27.1% (always) denotes that the results need to be probed further in the second phase. Next, "the use of terminology in searching" scored 31.6% (sometimes), which seems moderate and could be due to the respondent's difficulties in choosing the correct terminology across disciplines when performing their search. In the case of "the relevancy of referring to a newspaper in updating information," it achieved a high score of 40.6% (always). However, at some point, there is a possibility that the respondents found some information leads in newspapers, as in "unintentionally found a reference for another topic," which achieved a score of 28.4 (sometimes).

Table 11 below is to elicit responses by identifying sources and their locations. The significance of "primary sources" was stated as being frequently used by the respondents, with the highest score of 60% (frequently), but "secondary sources"

achieved a slightly lower score of 38.7% (frequently). The respondents preferred "a well-known author," which received a score of 31% (usually). "Convenient access to sources" received the highest score of 37.4% (frequently), while "Utilize advanced web search to identify keywords" received the lowest score of 31% (always). For the item, "no difference in terms of quality between a publication of a digital document (e.g. online journals) and a printed document (e.g. books, manuscripts)", most of the respondents answered "always." The item received the highest rating of 25.8% (always). The majority of the respondents answered "always" when asked whether their "understanding deepened as they understood further about research problems and issues become much clearer". The item received the highest possible score of 41.9% (always). When asked whether the "information that respondents have acquired at the beginning of their search has confirmed what they already knew about the problem," the majority answered "always." The item received the highest possible score of 33.5% (always).

Table 11: Frequency Result of Orientation

Orientation (focus on identification and where to look)	N %	R %	O %	S %	U %	A %	F %
1. I consider primary sources as important.	0	0.6	1.9	4.5	9.0	23.9	60.0
2. I consider secondary sources as important.	0.6	0.6	1.3	6.5	14.2	38.1	38.7
3. When seeking information, I would prefer well-known authors.	1.3	1.3	3.2	17.4	31.0	23.9	21.9
4. I would prefer renowned documents when doing information searching	1.5	2.6	7.1	18.1	24.5	25.8	21.3
5. I use picture mapping on paper to get, the clearer overview concept of my research.	1.9	4.5	19.4	21.3	18.7	14.8	19.4
6. I would like to have more convenient access to the documents.	0	0.6	2.6	9.7	18.7	31.0	37.4
7. I will utilise advanced search on the web to identify keywords that I used.	0	7.1	9.0	21.9	14.2	31.0	16.8
8. There is no difference in quality between a publication of a digital document (e.g., online journals) and a printed document (e.g., books, manuscripts).	2.6	12.9	12.9	18.7	14.8	25.8	12.3
9. As I go deeper into searching information, my understanding about research problems and issues become much clearer.	0.6	2.6	2.6	11.6	17.4	41.9	23.2
10. Information which I have acquired at the beginning of seeking, have confirmed what I have already known about the problem.	0.6	1.9	5.2	16.8	29.0	33.5	12.9
11. The more information I gathered, the more I get interested in the issues researched.	0.6	0	1.9	7.1	20.6	41.3	28.4

Table 12 derived findings of the questions on how the work progress would next be evaluated and integrated. The working approach was consolidated. Most of the respondents said "always" when inquired about "the reviewing information." This received the highest rating of 44.5% (always). The major goal of the information review was to identify the specific data that was pertinent to the study. Both questions received the same highest scores, 37.4%, for "evaluating the relevant information," "document written in a clear and plain manner," and "selection should be made based on the information that can be used immediately" (always). Most respondents provided

an average response, with "always" receiving the highest score at 31.6% and "often" coming in at 16.8%. (frequently). The survey was curious to know if respondents would be prepared to "get the material from the National Archives in other nations" if necessary. When asked whether they "finish and halt the search for information once the research is concluded," majority of respondents said "always" or 26.5% was given to this. Most respondents chose "always" in response to the question about "going back to search for more relevant information when it feels the amount of information is insufficient" with score of 36.8%.

Consolidation (the process of judging and integrating the work in progress and deciding whether further information method is necessary)		N	R	O	S	U	A	F
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1.	In the course of reviewing information, I focus on selecting the specific information related to my research.	1.3	2.6	2.6	3.2	16.1	44.5	29.7
2.	In judging the relevant information, I put emphasis on a document written in a clear and plain manner.	0	3.9	2.6	6.5	20.6	37.4	29.0
3.	In judging the relevant information, I select just the information that I can use immediately.	1.3	3.2	5.8	15.5	20.0	37.4	16.8
4.	In relevance judgements I have selected just those recently written documents.	1.3	5.2	11.6	14.2	19.4	32.3	16.1
5.	Throughout information seeking, I incorporate all information I discussed with my colleague/s.	1.3	3.9	5.8	18.7	27.1	29.0	14.2
6.	I trust the accuracy of news stated in the newspaper.	0.6	11.6	7.7	30.3	21.3	21.3	7.1
7.	The government institutions provide a reliable and trustworthy information.	0.6	2.6	1.3	20.0	20.6	37.4	17.4
8.	I will check the source of information provider to determine the trustworthiness of the information.	0.6	2.6	7.1	11.6	15.5	37.4	25.2
9.	I will obtain information from the National Archives in other countries when necessary.	7.7	20.0	5.8	8.4	9.7	31.6	16.8
10.	I will stop searching for information once the research is completed.	3.9	7.7	9.0	11.6	24.5	26.5	16.8
11.	I would go back to search for more relevant information when I feel the amount of information is not sufficient.	0	7.1	8.4	12.3	12.3	36.8	23.2

Table 12: Frequency Result of Consolidation

Results of Overall Means for Information Seeking Activities

The overall means of all the dimensions indicated that the means for opening, orientation, and consolidation ranged from a low score of 5.202 to a high score of 5.443, as shown in Table 11. Descriptive statistics in means for the respondents were computed in multiple dimensions that were acquired through the questionnaire distributed. The mean scores for opening, orientation and consolidation are presented as in Table 4.11. With regards to the dimensions of information seeking behaviour acquired from the questionnaire, Table 13 indicated that the means for opening, orientation and consolidation ranged from a low score of 5.202 to a high score of 5.443.

Table 13: Overall Means

Information Seeking Activities	Minimum	Maximum	Means
Opening	4.174	6.187	5.378
Orientation	4.568	6.335	5.443
Consolidation	4.523	5.826	5.202

4. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed that higher percentages of information seekers prioritized primary sources over secondary sources across the respondent survey. The findings indicate However, an earlier study by Stieg (1981) on historians working in the United States specified that books were more frequently used than manuscripts and that periodicals and books were the most convenient sources. In contrast, microfilms and manuscripts were the least convenient. They rated bibliographies and references in footnotes as the most important sources for identifying information on their current topic, and they rated librarians as the least important source for this task. A study by Xuemei (2010) only revealed that it was generally accepted for social scientists to rely largely on periodicals, whereas humanities researchers rely more on books and primary materials. Overall, it would imply that historians prefer primary sources to all other available information sources. The findings also suggest that fewer people preferred printed sources over digital ones. However, studies from the literature review confirmed that print sources remain a highly dependable source even in the face of the increasing usage of electronic information resources, which shows that print sources have not lost their significance over time (Bello, 2014, Folorunso, 2014; Khan & Bhatti, 2012; Marouf & Anwar, 2010; Tahir et al., 2008). The printed format remains relevant to historians regardless of how advanced technology becomes. The key element of integrating the research progress was laid on the respondent's decision on their judgement of the information sources. The findings of this research reported higher percentages of respondents authenticating the credibility and trustworthiness of the source of information. The most reliable and trustworthy sources of information were those provided by government

similarities with previous studies on historians' preferences towards primary sources over other information sources (Dalton & Charnigo, 2004; Duff et al., 2004b).

agencies or the institution of the national archive, compared to the newspaper, which received a lower percentage. Every archival institution in the world has demonstrated that each has its standards of procedure for document appraisal and the collection of information sources. In addition, the advancement of technology has provided a dynamic transformation to the digital collection material to meet the user's needs. In another context, historians also demand and place the highest regard on verifying information (Russell & Kane, 2008). Credibility and trustworthiness were the two main criteria exercised by historians during this process. They were one reason the documents were kept in archives: to restrict access and prevent document changes (Borchardt, 2009). Restricted access would help keep the sources from being misused by the users.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Analyses from 2011 until the current day have indicated improved digitization of the archival institution and a massive improvement in the institution's facilities, which are now provided with current information technology to enhance the information needs of historians. It is vital to comprehend historians' practices, as they are also required to aid librarians and archivists in the long term. Following the results of the survey, it was discovered that historians' primary areas of interest are political history and cultural history, with political history being the most widespread. Other significant areas of interest earned either a low or a moderate percentage of votes. It denotes that the

areas of interest for historians are politics and culture. Overall, according to the findings, there was a positive outlook on how academic lecturers who taught history and Malaysian General Studies sought information in the context of their profession. The respondents used databases, catalogues, and the internet to look up information in earlier stages. In addition, information was also acquired through networking channels such as conferences and social groups, where colleagues would follow up as needed to track the recent information. There are numerous unanswered questions about Malaysian historians' information seeking behaviour. In many ways, the scope of this study is limited. However, the limitations highlight some areas that warrant further investigation. In comparison to the field of libraries, significantly fewer user studies have been conducted in the field of archives since the 1980s (Rhee, 2015). A few suggestions are made to broaden the findings in this field: (I) To define potential users and their needs for related information, a study of user needs and an introduction to the study of history from an archival perspective can be conducted. In addition to the National Archives of Malaysia, there are other places to look for information. One of these is the Malay Manuscript Centre, which is part of the National Library of Malaysia. It has gathered and digitalized information on a variety of topics, including historiography, literature, laws and regulations, letters, traditional medicine, poems, religious texts, advice, talismans, horoscopes, fortune-telling stories, and more. Understanding archives and record-making processes is essential for an archivist. An archivist's primary responsibilities include archival activities such as document collection, appraisal, and cataloguing of archival records. The method by which scholars access or use the material is typically of little interest to archivists, as is the reason for such access or usage (Duff & Johnson, 2002). The archival community should make more initiatives to put archival user studies study results into practice. Within this auspice, Rhee (2015) asserted that two fundamental requirements must be fulfilled before archival institutions can effectively use user studies to inform archive practices: the ability to conduct user studies and the availability of user study results. It would deepen historians' understanding of historical information needs through their information seeking practices (Dunley & Pugh, 2021). It is suggested that upcoming studies include the identification of current and potential users, along with current and future materials. (II) Future research on a new framework for other academic groups to broaden their understanding of information seeking behaviour. The findings of this study revealed that Malaysian politics have always played a prominent

role in Malaysian history. A researcher even proposed that certain countries have a broad category of subjects and genres under historical research (Duff et al., 2004a, 2004b). Since the theory does not contribute to giving evidence for the interpretation of history, some historians still refuse to embrace it as a tool for thorough exploration. The rationale for this is that research difficulties remain within the same areas and will not extend far outside the topic. Historians will shape only a few changes regarding the number of years for the event in history or the shortening of the theme. Although the historical method remains the foundation of historical research, the conservative approach to the discipline is no longer practised alone. Even though its approach is historical, it will continue to mobilise knowledge from various disciplines to improve the study of historical events and provide supporting information for the analysis. (III) User studies should focus more on Malaysian archival and library institutions' existing facilities. Using the findings, the researcher concluded that historians have universally shared attitudes towards new trends in digital information, which influence historians' information seeking behaviour. Over time, the need for information seeking behaviour has shifted dramatically. Regardless, there is always a need for a better understanding of how historians use archives to better understand the emerging preferences for various formats in the digital age. Identifying current and potential users, current and future materials, information technology development, website development, software application, online finding aids and bibliographic tools, preferred distribution techniques, and navigation techniques are all recommended for future research (Idris, 2022).

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