INFORMATION NEEDS OF FOREIGN WOMEN IN MALAYSIA,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SUDANESE
COMMUNITY

SAMIA MOHAMED MALIK

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Library and Information Science.
Faculty of Computer and Information Technology
University of Malaya
2000
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, praise be to Allah for without His blessings I would not have had the strength and commitment to carry out this research.

This dissertation has been made possible with the assistance of many individuals, without whose aid this work would not have possessed whatever virtues it does. I am grateful for their contribution and support. I would like to express my gratitude to the teaching staff of the Master of Library and Information Science program, University of Malaya.

Dr. Diljit Singh, my research supervisor, has freely given his time and effort to assist and guide me throughout the various stages of this research study. I am pleased to acknowledge his sound advice and much needed encouragement during the inchoative aspect of writing this work. It is also for his patience in explaining to me what was obvious to him and for forcing me to explain what was obscure to him. Words cannot express my gratitude for the contribution he has made. I am also grateful to the staff of the University of Malaya Library, and the Computer Laboratory of the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology for their help.

I express my deep appreciation to the friends and the members of my family, in particular my husband Prof. E. Elkanzi, my daughter Zeinab, and my sons Ahmad, Khalid, Mohamed and Omer, and to my many friends. I am truly thankful for their support.
ABSTRACT

The primary aim of this study was to assess the information needs of foreign women in Malaysia, with a particular focus on the Sudanese community. The study identified the main information needs, the sources they used to find the information, their use of the library and the types of materials they utilized in seeking information.

A postal questionnaire was used for data collection. Ninety copies of questionnaires were distributed to the Sudanese women living in Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya. The response rate was 73.3%, with 66 out of the 90 questionnaires being returned. The majority of the respondents were housewives (48.5%) with students being next (33.3%).

An analysis of the data showed that the main information needs were related to continuing their education, the education of their children, parenting, concerns about their family health, child-care, tackling youth problems and other every day concerns. The respondents showed a tendency to have multiple information needs and sources. The main sources of information for housewives were through contact with friends, radio, television and newspapers. The students cited the library and the Internet as their main information sources. The student respondents mentioned books as their main sources of information in the library, while journals, the Internet and newspapers came next.

The main obstacles in meeting the information needs of the respondents, were limitations in Bahasa Melayu and the English language, lack of information
regarding continuing their education, chances of education for their children and lack of finance.

On the facilities available in the library, it was found that CD-ROMs and the Internet were mostly used. It was noted also that most of the students did not have library user instruction programs.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables vii

**CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

- Background to Study 1
- Background to Malaysia and the Sudan 4
- Statement of Problem 6
- Objectives of Study 6
- Research Questions 7
- Significance of the Study 7
- Scope/Limitations of the Study 8
- Definition of Terms 8
- Organization of the Report 10

**CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

- Information Needs of Women 11
- Information Needs of Women in Education 13
- Information Needs of Women Workers 17
- Information Needs of Women Working in Agriculture 17
- Information Needs of Parents 18
- Information Needs of Abused Women 22
- Health Information Needs of Women 25
- Information Needs of Rural and Urban Groups 33
- Library Use and Information Seeking Behavior 38
- Varying Information Needs of Women 42
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Survey Method 48
The Questionnaire 49
Development of Instrument 50
Pre-Testing 51
Population and Sample 51
Data Collection 52
Distribution and Collection of the Questionnaire 52
Data Analysis 52

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Analysis and Discussion of Results 53
Main Information Needs 56
Main Sources of Information 58
Use of Library 60
Barriers to Meeting Information Needs 63
Cross-Tabulation of the Main Information Needs 72

CHAPTER FIVE: MAJOR FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary of the Findings and Discussion 80
The Main Information Needs of the Sudanese Women Community 81
The Main Sources of Information 81
The Use of the Library by the Sudanese Women Living in Malaysia 83
Types of Materials used by the Sudanese Women in the Library 83
Recommendations 84
Conclusions 85

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Cover Letter for the Questionnaire 86
Appendix 2: The Questionnaire 87

BIBLIOGRAPHY 95
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Respondents' Occupations</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Combinations of Respondents' Occupations</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ranges of Ages of the Respondents</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Marital Status of the Respondents</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education Level of the Respondents</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Income of Respondent Student</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The Main information Needs</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Combinations of Main Information Needs</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Main Sources of Information</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Combinations of Main Sources of Information</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Access, Use, Facilities and User Education Programs</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Frequency of Use of the Library within the Last Six Months</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Materials Mostly Used in the Library</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Awareness of Information Services about the Sudan in Malaysia</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Barriers of Meeting Information Needs in Malaysia</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Combinations of Barriers</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Preferred Sources of Information about Child-rearing</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Combinations of Preferred Sources about Child-rearing</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Information Needs of Every Day Concern</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Combinations of Information Needs of Every Day</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Difficulties in Getting Information Regarding Continuing Education</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
22 Consumers of Health-care 70
23 Information Needs, Sources and Problems not Included in the Study 71
24 Main Information Needs against Occupations 72
25 Main Information Needs against Marital Status 74
26 Main Information Needs against Level of Education 75
27 Main Information Needs against Age 76
28 Main Information Needs against Income 78