UNIT 5 HUMANS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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5.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to:

- differentiate between human source and human resource;
- describe the core information professionals, who are engaged in generation, gathering, processing, dissemination, and many other activities related to information;
• identify peripheral information professionals as group separate from the core information professionals; and
• explain the role of human sources in writing a biography of a celebrity, or a report on an event.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Every sensible human being is a source of information. S/he may be a child of five or nonagenarian of ninety-five, a charming lady or an incorrigible bore, a famous cricketer or an infamous footballer, a dare devil adventurer or a cautious wayfarer, a blind musician or a deaf mathematician, a high profile professor or an illiterate person, and all others irrespective of caste, creed, religion, race, gender, etc. There are professionals like information generators, information gatherers, information processors, information recorders, information disseminators, information retrievers, and information technologists who earn their livelihood basing information or information related activities and products. There are others who do not pertain to information profession but acts as sources of information. In this Unit you will be able to see how information professionals as well as information non-professionals are acting as important sources of information.

5.2 HUMAN SOURCE VS. HUMAN RESOURCE

In the field of library and information science we have different types of sources of information such as documentary source, non-documentary source, printed source, non-printed source. All these sources harbour information, and information can be obtained from them whenever necessary. Similarly all sensible human beings also possess information, and usually deliver the same when needed. Thus they become ‘human source’ of information. As you can see human source is a term belonging to library and information science.

You must have heard about human resource development, we have even a Ministry of Human Resource Development. The term ‘human resources’ has been defined as (i) “the people that staff and operate an organization” (Tracey); and (ii) “the personnel employed in an organization” (http://en.wiktionary.org). The term belongs to the field of management as well as economics. According to the definition, all the staff engaged in a library is human resource. In this Unit we are considering not only library staff but also non-library staff who by virtue of their experience, qualification, expertise, and knowledge have become source of information.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answer in the space given below.

ii) Check your answer with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) Differentiate between the concepts ‘human source’ and ‘human resource’.

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5.3 CORE INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

By core information professionals we mean those professionals whose principal functions are to generate, gather, process, record, disseminate, retrieve information, and provide various types of information services. All these professionals are being described below as:

5.3.1 Information Generators

Researchers, inventors, innovators, discoverers, thinkers, authors, planners, policy makers, decision makers, judges are some examples of generators of information. All these people know in and out of the information they have generated and thus they become good sources of information. Let us see how they generate information.

A researcher surveys, observes, thinks, hypothesises, designs and conducts experiments, records the results, and finally draws conclusions. Sometimes s/he surveys, tabulates the data, analyses the tabulated data. All these give rise to new information.

After a great deal of hard work, sometimes lasting for a number of years, an inventor develops a new machine, equipment, tool or the like. S/he discloses her/his invention through a patent, which contains details of the invention. The inventor continuously strives to enhance the productivity and efficiency of the machine. The success in her/his attempts, needless to say, gives rise to new information.

An astronomer while scanning the night sky with her/his telescope may encounter a comet not seen before. The moment s/he informs the media about her/his finding, information generates and the world comes to know about it. A doctor while investigating a new epidemic may chance upon a new virus. Doubtless it will generate new information.

The thinking of philosophers over the ages has given birth to a large number of philosophical systems all over the world. Philosophers developed their views after a great deal of thinking and made that known to people helping in the generation of new information.

The output of an author’s mind can be seen in a variety of forms like books, articles, paintings, drawings, sculptures, etc. In many cases an author gleans information from various sources, weaves them together, adds something from her/his own thinking, experimentation or experience and brings out a book or an article. The new information content of the book may vary widely. For example, Ranganathan’s Prolegomena to Library Classification harbourd a huge amount of new information when it appeared for the first time.

A reputed industrialist planning a new enterprise or a new product, a multinational giant planning to start a joint venture in a developing country, an internationally renowned athlete planning to build a modern stadium, etc. all these generate information the moment a particular plan is disclosed. Quite often these type of information figure in mass media – locally, nationally and even internationally.
The decisions made by the head of a state, prime minister, or others in top positions almost always generate information of national and international significance, the moment the decision is made known. The decisions of the top executives of reputed industrial houses, business concerns, institutions and organisations also generate information of significance.

5.3.2 Information Gatherers

Reporters, correspondents, detectives, spies, police, compilers, enumerators, etc. are information gatherers by profession. All these people receive training for the job they do. Of course, there are many others in the society who gather information for various purposes. For example, a student gathers information to enrich her/his knowledge, a lawyer gathers information from her/his client to defend her/his case, a doctor gathers information from her/his patient to diagnose the disease, etc. However, we shall discuss under this category only those personnel whose profession is to gather information.

You know that information is generated through human activities. Whatever may be the case, a reporter is to collect information depending on its importance and reports it to the press along with photographs and other associated materials if that is possible. One moral responsibility that lies with the reporter is that the information s/he passes on to the press for wider dissemination should be authentic to the best of her/his knowledge. To establish the authenticity of the report, s/he has to check and crosscheck the information from various vital sources. Suppose, due to police firing some persons have been injured. When the reporter reaches the spot, s/he is likely to get different figures from different persons as to the number of persons injured and different views as to the cause of firing. To establish the actual number of persons injured, s/he may have to go to the nearby doctors and hospital(s) where the persons have received first aid or have been admitted for treatment. S/he may also visit the concerned police station to ascertain the number of persons injured and the cause of firing. S/he may also interview the injured people themselves, the people present at the scene, local political leaders, and other reliable sources to build up her/his entire report. Hence, for the information of a particular incident, a reporter proves to be a very good source of information.

‘A correspondent is a person employed by a news agency, periodical, or the like, to gather, report or contribute news, articles, etc. regularly from a distant place’ (Urdang: 302). Broadcasting agencies like BBC and CNN also appoint correspondents. From the definition, it is clear that a correspondent is also a reporter who reports from a distant place, usually a foreign country.

One of the important areas of journalism is investigative journalism. Here the investigative journalist engages herself/himself in unearthing such information as smacks of malpractices and corruption in the government machinery or elsewhere. Obviously, to unearth the information, the journalist acts very cautiously and gleans information very secretly bit by bit to build up the whole story. The disclosure of the information many a time has got a far-reaching effect. The downfall of President Nixon was the outcome of investigative journalism.

Crime detection is considered as one of the most important activities of police. In bigger police establishments, there are specialised police personnel to investigate crimes.
For crime detection, the police have to gather information from a number of sources by using various means. If one of the accomplices is nabbed, then the police tries to extract information about others from her/him employing various methods including interrogation. Apart from criminals, they question many people in search of clues. In addition, blood stains, pieces of cloth, strands of hair, cigarette ends, footprints, finger prints, etc. act as valuable sources of information as they form evidence. Those who analyse the aforesaid items are called **forensic scientists**.

The registers maintained by the police contain valuable information on crimes. These registers are still found to be useful for ferreting out valuable information about our freedom fighters.

As it has been pointed out earlier, a **detective** is usually a member of the police force. Sometimes, they may belong to private detective agencies as well. Their job, however, remains more or less the same. A **spy** on the other hand is ‘a person employed by a government to obtain secret information or intelligence about another country’ (Urdang: 1274). Spies employ various means and methods including various gadgets such as eavesdropping devices [a device used for secretly listening to conversation] to obtain required information. Thus, a police officer, a spy, a detective, possesses a great deal of information about criminals of the area they serve.

### 5.3.3 Compilers

Bibliographers, lexicographers, encyclopaedists and reviewers stand prominently among the set of **compilers**. Compilers are also gatherers of information. Take for example, a bibliographer gathers the bibliographical details of documents of her/his interest from numerous sources. Once the details are collected, s/he prepares a standard entry for each of the items. The entries are then organised in a helpful sequence which may be alphabetically author-wise, subject-wise, or year-wise. Thus a bibliographer becomes knowledgeable about the subject pertaining to the bibliography, and the sources from where data can be gathered.

A **lexicographer** first gathers words, phrases, idioms, proverbs, etc. of a language from written as well as spoken sources and then records the meaning and other details of each and every item. In many cases, s/he has to consult experts to fix the meaning of a particular word or phrase. In some cases s/he is to use her/his own judgment to decide the meaning of a word. Apart from this, s/he has to do many jobs such as the derivation and definition of a word to give final shape to a dictionary. Thus, a lexicographer becomes an excellent source of information on dictionary compilation and master of words.

The job of an **encyclopaedist** is far more laborious and time consuming than that of a lexicographer since an encyclopaedia includes thousands of articles of lengths varying from a few lines to scores of pages. For writing each article, the encyclopaedist gathers information from numerous sources, goes through each and every item thoroughly, and then writes down the article for the encyclopaedia covering each and every aspect. Till the middle of twentieth century, in some cases a single person brought out a multi-volume encyclopaedia spending her/his whole life. For example, Nagendra Nath Basu brought out his magnum opus called *Vishwa Kosh* in Bengali as well as in Hindi, both in twenty volumes!
Non-Documentary Sources

Nowadays multi-volume encyclopaedias are usually brought out by renowned publishers where hundreds of authors contribute articles. Encyclopaedists by virtue of their knowledge gained during their work turn into a mine of information.

In this context by the word ‘reviewer’ we mean a professional who authors state-of-the-art reviews, critical reviews, etc. These reviews are totally different from book reviews and depict the overall development of a narrow subject during a particular period, say, one or two years. For this purpose s/he undertakes a thorough search of relevant literature and compiles a comprehensive bibliography. Thereafter, s/he procures the full-text and in some cases abstracts of the documents. Having gone through the documents and getting a clear-cut understanding of the topic s/he jots down the review. This job updates her/his knowledge and makes her/him an up-to-date source of information on the field.

For bringing out reference sources like yearbooks, directories, books of general knowledge, biographies, gazetteers, etc. the information is gathered by the compilers from diverse sources using various methods. For the compilation of some reference sources like Directory of Scientific Research Institutions in India, and Who's Who the information is gathered by mailing questionnaires. For other sources, information is usually gathered from primary and secondary sources. The compilers of these categories of publications also become experts in the respective areas.

During census, conducted once in ten years in India, you must have noticed that a person visits your house and fills up a questionnaire asking the head or any other responsible person of the family a number of questions about the family members, their age, qualifications, occupations, etc. These people are called enumerators. The information gathered by these people is then processed using powerful computers to generate census reports from various angles. The enumerator becomes a good source of information about the area s/he has covered.

### 5.3.4 Information Processors

Under this category we shall discuss editors and their varieties, and also the information technologists especially software specialists who write programs for data processing.

When books, articles, reports, etc. are received for publication, in many cases plenty of inconsistencies, inaccuracies, redundancies, incompleteness, etc. are observed. To give final shape to the writing, editorial process becomes essential.

The editor while going through the writing, corrects spelling mistakes, capitalisation errors, wrong use of articles, incorrect use of words and punctuation marks, errors in syntax and paraphrasing, removes superfluous sentences, verbose, repetitions and inconsistencies, and fills up omissions. In many cases, the writing is sent back to the author with the corrections and remarks to elicit the author’s consent. At this stage the author generally conveys her/his consent with minor alterations and additions. The writing thus attains its final shape and is sent for composition.

In big publishing houses, there are different types of editors such as technical editors, style editors, language editors, and the general editors. A technical editor is one who edits technical information. Many publishing houses have got
their own style of printing. For example, you will find in *Reader’s Digest* that the first letter of an article is always printed with a big font. The numbers occurring in a sentence are spelt out if it is from one to ten, and written with figures if they are beyond ten. Just see the sentence “…when cancer patients who lacked family support wrote about their illness for 20 minutes a day, they reported less stress for up to six months” (*Reader’s Digest*:161). You may note that in the sentence twenty has been written as 20, and the other number as six. This is because 20 is greater than ten, hence it is written in figures, six is less than ten , hence it is written in words. This is the house style of *Reader’s Digest*. The style editor has to ensure that the publication conforms to the style of the house. Language editors are responsible to ensure correctness of the writing from linguistic point of view. Sometime back *European Journal of Vascular and Endovascular Surgery* needed an English language editor for ensuring the grammatical quality of articles accepted for publication in the printed journal (Internet). A general editor looks after almost every aspect of editing. These editors are knowledgeable in the art of editing. Moreover, they know the subjects thoroughly well they are dealing with. For example, the editor of a newspaper is an expert on current affairs.

A programmer is a computer professional who writes programs for computers. The data inputted in a computer is processed by the computer following the program that has been loaded into the computer for the purpose. Suppose, a library intends to retrieve books by the title, author(s), collaborator(s), subject, series, place of publication and publisher from the computerised catalogue. Here, the programmer will have to write programs in such a way whereby the computer will be able to process the information to provide the required answer. A programmer is an expert in programming. However, s/he gathers a good bit of knowledge about the activity for which s/he has written the program.

The expertise, which various types of editors and programmers possess, makes them important sources of information in the areas of their specialisation.

### 5.3.5 Information Recorders

The author and the reporter in most cases are found to be the first recorder of information. Inscribers, engravers, scribes, calligraphers, printers, data entry operators, typists, stenographers, compositors, proofreaders, videographers, photographers, painters, sculptors, etc. are other professionals that belong to this category.

Recording of information through writing has been going on for thousands of years. The early man recorded information not with a set of letters as we do today, but with symbols and pictures. The famous cave pictures at Altamira in Spain and Lascaux in France daubed at least 20,000 years ago seem to convey some definite message such as “Send us more animals like these” [Odhams.41]. The oldest known writing found on clay tablets in Mesopotamia dates to 3,000 BC or earlier. They were the writings of Sumerians [Odhams 44]. Large number of seals found in Indus Valley also contains writings that date back to 2,000 BC or earlier.

In this category of professionals, all are sources of information relating to their activity and environment. However, some category of professionals, like printers, at times prove to be good sources of information. By virtue of their job they come in contact with many authors whereby they get acquainted with various
Non-Documentary Sources

aspects of their personality, publications, lifestyles, etc. Thus, for biographers, printers become good sources of information. Take for example, wild life photographers. The area they cover for wild life photography is well known to them. They know the geography of the area as well as the various animals, plants, people, etc. found in the area.

All the recorders listed here may not be a good sources of information. An English typist or data entry operator can type a book say in Spanish language, because the script of both the languages is the same. But s/he won’t know anything about the content of the Spanish book. Similarly a typist can easily type a book on nuclear physics without gaining practically any knowledge of the subject.

5.3.6 Information Disseminators

You can see a great variety of professionals in this category, and most of them are important sources of information. The professionals belonging to this category are: library professionals, documentalists, information officers, extension workers, publishers, representatives of firms, receptionists, consultants, marketing officers, broadcasting professionals, press professionals, advertisers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and hawkers. In addition, all persons engaged in telecommunication activities are also indirectly related to information dissemination. All these people are knowledgeable about the activities they are involved in. Say, for example, a good reference librarian, knows thoroughly the collection of a library and the information contained in the books. As a result s/he can handle any query for information with ease.

Among the library professionals, a librarian, a reference librarian, compilers of accessions lists or documentation lists, etc. are the disseminators of information. **Librarians** disseminate information in various ways. All librarians compile a catalogue of books and other documents available in the library. Using the catalogue s/he tells inquirers what books by an author are available in the library, books available on a particular subject or pertaining to a series, whether a book with a particular title is available in the library, etc. Many librarians bring out accession list of the library concerned from time to time. This list informs users about the books added to the library during a particular time. A reference librarian answers many queries of the users using the library collection. Often s/he also informs where a particular book or periodical may be available which is not there in her/his library collection.

A **documentalist** involves herself/himself in a number of activities like acquisition, recording, processing of documents and dissemination of information by way of supplying photocopies, computerised outputs, translations, bibliographies, and providing current awareness and selective dissemination of information services. At times, they also provide reference service as well. All these activities make her/him a good source of information.

**Information officers**, etc. In certain institutions, documentalists are designated as information officers, information scientists, etc. and they perform the same job as documentalists. However, in most cases, information officers are encountered in information centres/bureaus, enquiry offices, etc. of government ministries and departments. Many of our state governments like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh have their respective information centres in Delhi. Sometimes these units are called Public Relations Office or Reception and the officer
shouldering the responsibility of the office is called Public Relations Officer (PRO) or Receptionist. In various districts of our country, we have district information centres. Whatever may be the designation, the basic fact is that they are important sources of information and answer various queries posed by the public or any other person. Let us take a few examples.

A person sitting at the railway enquiry counter is a potential source of information as to the arrival and departure of various trains, fare between stations, and availability of seats/berths on a particular day at a particular train, etc. In big railway stations, the information about the arrival and departure of trains is updated almost every minute throughout the day.

The Information Officer of a State Information Centre provides information about business opportunities, educational facilities, important personages, tourism attractions, etc. of a state. In many cases they also supply a booklet usually containing a map of the state and description of important places, industry, sightseeing places, etc.

A District Information Officer may provide you a booklet containing fairly good information about the district. S/he may also tell you about the facilities the district authorities can provide for the starting of an industry, a business, and so on.

A well dressed smart person sitting at the Reception Counter of a renowned hotel provides information to potential guests as to the availability of room/s and various other services provided by the hotel and the respective charges thereof through phone, e-mail, fax, etc.

The PRO of the Ministry of External Affairs is there to enlighten you about the various formalities to be fulfilled for obtaining a new passport, renewing an old one, etc.

Only a glimpse is being provided here about the plethora of information supplied by various information officers and their subordinates. The importance of these personnel as sources of information need not be overemphasised. You can well imagine the number and variety of persons engaged in the job and the type of information they are disseminating.

**Extension Workers**: We have not yet been able to eradicate illiteracy completely from our country. Still a large percentage of people cannot read or write. The number of such people is more in rural areas compared to urban areas. Print material will not be appropriate for imparting knowledge on healthy living, better methods of farming, low-cost housing, benefits and multiple methods of family planning to a large number of illiterate people. They can be taught all these to a certain extent through radio and television (TV) broadcasting. Unfortunately, many in our country, especially those living in the rural areas, cannot afford a radio set or a TV. As a result, the only option left to us is to deploy extension workers in the rural areas. Using lecture-and-demonstration method, they have been educating our rural folk for decades now. Carrying the message of high-yielding varieties of crops and demonstrating to them the method of cultivation have turned our food-deficit country of 1950s to a slightly food-surplus country of 1970s. This shows the effectiveness of extension workers in the dissemination...
Non-Documentary Sources

of information and varieties of information they possess. To villagers and other illiterate people they are proving to be a big source of information. There are various types of extension workers, for example, an agricultural extension worker is an intermediary who helps in the transfer of research results from the laboratory to the field. A public health extension worker disseminates information about methods of healthy living, family planning, etc.

Marketing Professionals: These professionals comprise of marketing executives, trade representatives, advertisers, hawkers, etc. A marketing executive is a person who is highly knowledgeable about the dynamism of the market. S/he knows the demand and supply position of various products and services, market trends, dynamic and sometimes volatile price situation of various commodities, customer psychology, formidable competitors, potential buyers, etc. Basing her/his knowledge on these s/he can visualise to a certain extent the future demand of a particular commodity or service, and further decide upon the marketing as well as advertising strategy in opportune time, and post the trade representatives at strategic positions.

A trade representative is a person who is employed by a firm for sales promotion and allied activities. Usually s/he is smart, speaks well, sometimes knows more than one language, has the capability of convincing people, and possesses basic knowledge about the products s/he is putting into market. Her/his activities, among others, include sales promotion, market survey, study of user reaction, identifying competitors in the field, locating prospective buyers, etc. This undoubtedly makes her/him a good source of information. Take for example, a medical representative. S/he covers a particular area and knows the names of all the doctors practising in the area, representatives of other companies operating there; the diseases people are suffering from, the medicines being prescribed by the doctors, medical facilities like hospitals, dispensaries, nursing homes, maternity centres, etc. existing there.

You might have noticed persons in buses, trains, weekly markets, and other busy places carrying some products and loudly announcing their benefits, qualities, prices, etc. These people are called hawkers and are usually employed by smaller forms for bringing their products to the notice of common people.

Recently call centres have emerged as a big disseminator of product and service information. Employees of the call centres contact the prospective customers through telephone and give them details about the products and services. It is like door to door dissemination of information, personalised, and hence, the effect in many cases is highly rewarding. Many foreign concerns, especially American, are taking the help of call centres in India to advertise their products and services in America itself to cut cost of advertising radically. Thus, people in call centres are becoming knowledgeable about American products and services.

By now, you must have realised that marketing executives, trade representatives, even hawkers are good sources of information for particular products. If you do not know how to advertise a product then the sources of information are advertising people.
**Publishers:** A publisher is usually a company that prints books, magazines, newspapers, etc. and make them available to the public at a cost. A regular publisher sends the book for review in newspapers, journals, etc. for review; advertises the book; sends representatives to libraries, displays the books in book fairs, etc. A publisher has the knowledge of the book market, the renowned authors whose books are sold in large numbers, the type of books which are sold more; and thus can decide which book is worthy of publishing and earning her/him profit.

**Broadcasting Personnel:** Newsreaders are the best examples of information disseminators. However, from the gathering of the news to its broadcast, apart from newsreaders, there are reporters, cameramen, editors, and others who give final shape to the news for broadcasting. Many of these people are also good sources of information on current affairs.

**Consultants:** A consultant is a professional who provides advice usually on payment basis. There are various categories of consultants such as legal consultants, engineering consultants, consulting physician, etc. In the case of litigation, we take the advice of a legal consultant. For setting up an air conditioning plant for an office building, a cinema hall, etc. we consult an engineer who is an expert in the matter. For our ailments, we consult a physician. In all cases we are to pay fees fixed by the consultants.

Teachers, doctors, lawyers and many others are also disseminators of information. We shall discuss some of them later.

**5.3.7 Translators**

Articles, news items, books, periodicals, patents, theses, etc. are appearing in numerous languages in the world such as English, Russian, German, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Hindi and Bengali. It is not possible for a person to learn all the languages. Hence, the need for translation or interpretation arises quite often. For getting a piece of writing translated we generally go to a translator. S/he informs us about the cost involved in translation and approximate time s/he will take for translating the piece. If s/he fails to undertake the job s/he may inform about another translator who can do the job. When oral translation is needed, we look for an interpreter. S/he also informs about her/his charges and availability. Some translators are highly knowledgeable about bilingual and multilingual dictionaries.

**5.3.8 Information Condensers**

Often information needs to be condensed as per the requirement of the user. Suppose, a minister has spoken about the information policy of a country for about an hour. A broadcasting agency is to report the speech of the minister in the news. Obviously, in 15-minute news, it is not possible to accommodate the one-hour-long speech of the minister. Hence, the editor has to put only the gist of the lecture in the news which can be read, say, in a minute or less. Similarly, a researcher may like to have the gist of an article published in a foreign language to ensure whether or not the article will be of any use to her/him. For these jobs we need persons who can condense the information. These persons are called abstractors. They know the art of abstracting, summarising, gist making, etc.
5.3.9 Information Retrievers

In this category we usually include those personnel who retrieve information on demand by searching reference books, databases, Internet, etc. We call these people reference librarians, database searchers, Internet searchers, etc. All these people are experts in their respective fields and good sources of information in the sense that they know where the information is available and can search out the information on demand.

5.3.10 Informetricians

Every moment information is being continuously generated in the world and is cumulating day by day. It is necessary, for various purposes, to know the rate of growth, decay, and many other properties of information. To study all these phenomena a new species of information professional has emerged called informetricians. They possess information about generation, growth, propagation, use and obsolescence of information, various laws governing these factors, the efficiency of information systems, services and products, and various types or relationship existing among subjects.

5.3.11 Information Preservers

Man since time immemorial has been trying to preserve information by various means. Even today man is discovering and inventing newer methods and media of preservation. These professionals are good sources of information about document preservation.

Self Check Exercise

Note: i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answers given at the end of this Unit.

2) Enumerate different species of information gatherers and describe the function of a reporter.

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3) Describe the function of a trade representative.

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4) Who are information disseminators? Explain how a librarian performs the function of an information disseminator.

5.4 PERIPHERAL INFORMATION PROFESSIONALS

In this category we intend to include those who are usually not considered information professionals per se. But all of them are good sources of information. We are going to discuss some of them in the following sub-sections.

5.4.1 Lawyers

Form purchase of assets, to solving disputes, getting a society registered, and for various other purposes, we require legal help. Lawyers are the persons who provide us the necessary information. Like doctors, the lawyers also charge fees. There are various categories of lawyers. Some of them deal with civil cases like marriage registration, registration of journals, sales tax, income tax; legal procedure involved in the sale or purchase of properties, obtaining licenses for doing business, etc. Another category of lawyers deals with criminal cases such as cheating, theft, robbery, murder, etc. Depending on the crime the lawyer informs about the quantum of punishment, the possibility of winning a particular case, etc. There are patent attorneys who help the inventor in filing applications for patent, fighting cases relating to patents, etc. Lawyers collect information in the form of facts and compile petitions and prepare arguments.

5.4.2 Doctors

A person suffering from an ailment goes to a doctor for medicines whereby s/he is cured. The doctor first of all gathers information from the patient about the symptoms. Thereafter the doctor examines the patient. If the doctor can diagnose the disease, s/he informs the patient about the disease s/he is suffering from, prescribes medicines which the patient has to take or apply, tells her/him how many times and for how many days the medicines are to be taken, and also how the medicines are to be taken - by mouth or injection or they are simply to be applied on the affected area. For example, while prescribing antacid tablets like Digene for acidity, the doctor tells the patient to chew the tablet before swallowing. In case, the doctor cannot diagnose the disease, s/he asks the patient to get some pathological tests done. The results of the test help the doctor to diagnose the disease correctly. For health and diseases, doctors are the best source of information.
5.4.3 Teachers

Teachers possess information on the subject they teach, books and journals on the subject, institutions where the subject is taught within the country and abroad, other teachers on the subject, availability of scholarships, job opportunities, research facilities available within the country and abroad, etc. They also possess information about the students of their classes and many students whom they have taught earlier.

5.4.4 Experts

An expert is a person who possesses sound knowledge on a subject, technique, etc. On many occasions we need their help. For example, for appointing an information scientist in an organisation, we set up an interview board comprising of experts. They interview the candidates, judge their suitability for the post, and finally choose the best candidate depending on her/his knowledge, skill, qualification and experience. For classifying a book, many a times a classifier cannot decide the subject. In such a case, s/he usually takes the help of an expert who knows the subject.

5.4.5 Resource Persons

The connotation of the term ‘resource person’ varies depending on the context. Normally a resource person enriches a programme by virtue of her/his vast knowledge. S/he provides the main intellectual input to the course for which s/he is the resource person by delivering lectures, and enriching others lectures by her/his comments and suggestions.

5.4.6 Technological Gatekeepers

A technological gatekeeper is a well-informed person in a particular field. Usually, some scientists, technologists, and professionals in business, etc. have got a tendency (possibly inborn) to acquire information from various sources, to keep herself/himself abreast of the development in the field, and to disseminate the information to a person or group who may be interested in the information. There is no formal course to train a person as a technological gatekeeper. Almost automatically, they grow into a technological gatekeeper. According to Zagnoli [Internet 2] a technological gatekeeper should have:

i) ‘technical authority, a high standard of technical and scientific professionalism and a high level of verifiable performance (scientific publications, congress communications and internal relationships, etc.);

ii) a formal role in the organization (often gatekeepers are coordinators of groups or project managers);

iii) a proponent and constructive attitude to the general problems of the business; and

iv) an open and interested attitude to innovation problems and to discussion with colleagues’.

5.4.7 Invisible College

In reality, an invisible college is not a college. Around 1645 A.D. a group of persons interested in natural philosophy and other parts of human learning started
meeting secretly at Gresham College and elsewhere in London under the name of the ‘invisible college’. In these meetings, they used to discuss about their research activities, results obtained, new areas that can be researched, etc. The practice continues till today, of course, not in secret but in open meetings like national and international conferences where scholars belonging to the same discipline get acquainted with each other, come to know who is doing what, and discuss during tea time, lunch and dinner their areas of research, problems they are facing, latest findings, etc. This acquaintance often turns into friendship which continues when they exchange their reprints, correspond with one another through letters, talk over the phone, etc. In this way, nowadays invisible colleges are formed. Hence, we can now define an invisible college as a loosely formed association of like minded people who come together to share their experiences and knowledge. It is more or less like an area specific knowledge society.

5.4.8 Common People

Children – A growing child starts picking up information while exploring her/his house, meeting relatives, playing with toys, etc. By the time a child is three, s/he can tell where a particular toy s/he has kept. In the pre-school a child learns about her/his friends, teachers, toys and equipment for playing available in the school, school building, environ of the school, etc. S/he gives this information to parents and others. In this way even in pre-schools s/he becomes a source of information.

In the school a child gathers a great deal of information and can provide information about the location of the school, school compound, school uniforms for boys and girls, classmates, teachers, books, school library, and the subjects s/he are being taught, various events happening in the school, etc.

In the school-going age a child starts reading newspapers, listening to radio, viewing TV, meeting relatives, family friends, and persons of the locality, exploring the locality, and thus gathers a world of information. A child by virtue of being curious often gathers more information than an adult. All these make a child a very good source of information.

In many cases, the information given by an innocent child is considered highly trustworthy. For example, the Rohini Court Special Judge Manoj Jain ‘relied almost solely on the eye-witness account of the six-year old [Aman Verma] to pass the verdict against his father’[Pooran Verma] for murdering Sangeeta Verma [Aman’s mother] in a gruesome way in June 2008 (Bagga).

During user survey of school libraries, the children of the school provide all information required by the investigator.

Head of a family – During census operations and other surveys, usually the head of the family is consulted for various information. The information obtainable from her/him includes among others the name, age (date of birth, if available), sex, educational qualification, profession, marital status, health status, etc. of each family member. This apart, s/he can provide a lot of information such as, the house where the family lives, the amount of land and other property the family possesses, income the family generates, religion and caste of the family, religious ceremonies the family performs, holy places the family visits, relatives of the family and their respective locations, small scale industry the family is

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engaged in, mode of communication as well as means of transport (cycles, scooters, etc.), of the family, costume of the family members, language the family speaks, sources of water and energy, doctors the family consults, hospitals the family visits, electronic gadgets the family uses (fridge, computer, radio, TV, VCR, etc.), crops the family cultivates, fruits the family grows, domestic animals including pets the family rears, food habit of the family, cultural programmes as well as sports and games the family takes part or views on TV, literary activities of the family (someone writing poems or composing songs), and also the history and genealogy of the family.

**Village head** – Possesses information about libraries or reading rooms (if any), non-government organisations working in the village; newspapers the villagers read, religions the villagers follow, religious and other festivals they organise, shrines the village has, castes of the village people, political affiliation of the villagers, panchayats, financial status of the villagers, availability of banks and loan providing institutions, household industries and small scale industries, development plans being executed, social welfare activities of the villagers, families falling below the poverty line, educational facilities available in the village and nearby areas, educational status of the village people, most educated person in the village; existence of post office, roads and transport facilities, folklores, the marriage customs, adults (both male and female) looking for marriage, languages and dialects the villagers speak, names of plants and animals in the local language/s, common diseases the villagers suffer from, availability of health facilities in the village and nearby areas, herbal drugs the villagers use, family planning methods being adopted by families, status of agricultural land, irrigation facilities, agricultural implements used, crops and vegetables grown throughout the year, fertilisers and pesticides used, forest and forest produce (if any), fruits and flowers grown, domestic animals reared, milk and milk products generated households, pisciculture, sericulture, beekeeping activities (if any), food and drink habit, garments they make and wear; status of housing (buildings, tin sheds, thatched houses, etc.), cultural activities they perform (music, dance, dramas, etc.), literature they generate (some villagers even those who are illiterate compose poems and songs, create short stories, jokes, etc. which form folk literature); archaeological site (if any), and also the history of the village.

The help of village head is often sought by government officials to prepare a list of families falling below the poverty lines, the family planning methods the villagers are adopting, polling booth for the village voters at the time of election, and various other information pertaining to the village. When house to house survey is not needed, the village head can provide the general information about the village.

**Priest** – A priest is an important person in a society. Usually s/he possesses the almanac (panchang) which provides plethora of information about the date and time of various religious festivals, ceremonies like marriage and mundan, auspicious time and inauspicious time of everyday, forecast for the year of each zodiac sign (rashi), list of items necessary for performing various pujas and other religious ceremonies, dates and times of solar and lunar eclipses, etc. In many cases s/he is a horoscope reader as well. By going through the horoscope of a person the priest tells about her/his future. Some priest maintain a good collection of almanacs using which s/he can tell the corresponding dates of two different eras, say Samvat and Gregorian era. Suppose your horoscope shows
your date of birth in Samvat era. If you are interested in knowing the corresponding date according to Gregorian calendar (the English calendar we use follows Gregorian calendar), a priest can help you.

**Postman** – Possesses information about every household and adult person of the area that falls under her/his jurisdiction. S/he also knows the names of all many adult persons of the locality. Sometimes police and strangers go to the postman to locate a particular person or household. Many a times police requires information from the postman as to the place or person wherefrom a particular person receives letters or money orders.

**Police** – Possess information about the law and order situation of the area which they serve and also information about every household. They are also aware about the criminals and criminal history of the area that falls under their jurisdiction. Biographers get a good deal of information from the police about celebrities who had spent sometime in jail while fighting for freedom or any other cause.

**Matchmaker** – In many countries of the world, arranged marriages are still prevalent where match makers are generally found. They possess information about brides and bridegrooms. Usually they keep in their records the photograph, information regarding height, age, complexion, qualification, employment, salary, family history, caste, religion, gotra, etc. of the bride and bridegroom. What they maintain can be termed as a small manually compiled or electronically generated database. They provide the information on payment basis. For obtaining information from a matchmaker one has to provide her/him the expected profile of a bride or bridegroom. If there is a match between the given profile and the profile within the “database”, the inquirer is informed.

**Receptionist** – Usually receptionists are found in commercial organisations like hotels, industrial establishments, banks, insurance companies, and airlines offices. They are also to be seen in many government and non-government offices. Usually they are smart, good looking, well-mannered, and fluent in conversation. Often they present the first information about an organisation. They possess substantial information about the organisation, its employees, the names and phone numbers of the head of the organisation, senior executives, junior executives, and others, history, objectives, functions, and achievements of the organisation, testing and other facilities (if any) the organisation has, products of the organisation (if any), publications of the organisation (if any), etc.

**Self Check Exercise**

**Note:**

i) Write your answers in the space given below.

ii) Check your answers with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

5) Explain how a teacher performs the function of a disseminator of information.
6) Who are technological gatekeepers? Briefly explain.

5.5 BIOGRAPHY OF A CELEBRITY

Information is usually obtained from such human sources as parents (if alive), brother/s, sister/s, son/s, daughter/s, relatives, friends, co-workers, personal secretaries, and aides. For a freedom fighter’s biography, jailors at times become a potential source of information. This apart, usual help is taken from librarians, information scientists, etc.

5.6 EVENTS

Everyday countless events are taking place in the world such as meetings, conferences, festivals, fairs, exhibitions, games, births, deaths, and so on. In addition, there are events which had happened in the past, and there are many others that will take place in future. To gather information on many of these events human sources in many cases will be the best source and in some cases the only source.

5.6.1 Accidents and Disasters

Various types of accidents and disasters take place everyday on the earth. Information regarding these is usually gathered from eyewitnesses or the survivors. Some examples are given below:

Swine flu – In April 2009, people in Mexico were afflicted with a new disease called swine flu. In medical history this was the first time that humans became the victim of this disease. The deadly disease, caused by a virus called H1N1, spread across the world rapidly creating panic amongst people.

To generate a full-length report on the disease, the reporters of Reader’s Digest interviewed a survivor (Julie Cesar Ruiz Ocampo), a nurse, paramedic Armando Gonzalez, and Ricardo Quizano, the scientist who isolated the virus.

Titanic Disaster – The British luxury passenger liner called Titanic sank on 15 April 1912 in its maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York, USA after hitting an iceberg. The liner was carrying 2200 people, of which more than 1500 perished. It is the survivors who provided the entire information about the disaster.

5.7 SURVEY

Poll Prediction – Every time an election is held in India, various news channels predict the poll results in advance. For doing this the media people are to interview thousands of voters throughout the length and breadth of the country.
**Opinion Survey** – Many newspapers conduct an opinion survey everyday. The newspaper put a question which the readers answer. From the answer it becomes clear how the people are considering the issue.

**Survey for a Research Work** – Many researchers including LIS professionals follow survey method for their research work. Often, they prepare a questionnaire and distribute the same to the persons from whom information is being sought. Sometimes the research workers are to interview the persons also to elicit information. In this case also information is elicited from human sources only.

**Self Check Exercise**

**Note:**
1) Write your answer in the space given below.
2) Check your answer with the answer given at the end of this Unit.

7) For writing a biographical sketch of a person, whom would you consult for information?

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**5.8 SUMMARY**

In this Unit first of all an attempt has been made to differentiate between the concepts ‘human source’ and ‘human resource’. All sensible human beings are sources of information. Some are directly involved with information such as information generators, information gatherers, compilers, information processors, information recorders, information disseminators and many others. They have been termed as ‘core information professionals’. Apart from these there are others such as lawyers, doctors, teachers, experts and resource persons in various fields, technological gatekeepers, invisible college members, and finally commoners who also act as good sources of information. These people have been termed as ‘peripheral information professionals’. All these sources have been described to present before you the entire panorama of human sources. The categories of information sources that are to be consulted while writing a biography of a celebrity, preparing a report of an event, or conducting a survey have also been highlighted.

**5.9 ANSWERS TO SELF CHECK EXERCISES**

1) The term ‘human source’ belongs to library and information science, and ‘human resource’ to economics and management. Human sources mean human beings as sources of information and human resources mean employees of an organisation. The employees of a library or any other
organisation are human resources and all sensible human beings in the world are human sources of information.

2) Reporters, correspondents, detectives, spies, police, compilers, enumerators, etc. are information gatherers by profession.

A reporter collects all possible information relating to an event depending on its importance and reports it to the press along with photographs and other associated materials if that is possible. One moral responsibility that lies with the reporter is that the information s/he passes on to the press for wider dissemination should be authentic to the best of her/his knowledge. To establish the authenticity of the report, s/he has to check and crosscheck the information from various vital sources. Suppose, due to police firing some persons have been injured. When the reporter reaches the spot, s/he is likely to get different figures from different persons as to the number of persons injured and different views as to the cause of firing. To establish the actual number of persons injured, s/he may have to go to the nearby doctors and hospital(s) where the persons have received first aid or have been admitted for treatment. S/he may also visit the concerned police station to ascertain the number of persons injured and the cause of firing. S/he may also interview the injured people themselves, the people present at the scene, local political leaders, and other reliable sources to build up her/his entire report.

3) A trade representative is employed by a firm for sales promotion and allied activities. Usually s/he is smart, speaks well, sometimes knows more than one language, has the capability of convincing people, and possesses basic knowledge about the products s/he is putting into market. Her/his activities, among others, include sales promotion, market survey, study of user reaction, identifying competitors in the field, locating prospective buyers, etc. This undoubtedly makes her/him a good source of information. Take, for example, a medical representative. Usually s/he possesses the degree of B. Pharm. and is knowledgeable about all medicines usually used for treatment. S/he covers a particular area and knows the names of all the doctors practising in the area, representatives of other companies operating there, the diseases people are suffering from, the medicines being prescribed by the doctors, medical facilities like hospitals, dispensaries, nursing homes, maternity centres, etc. existing there.

4) The professionals belonging to this category are: library professionals, documentalists, information officers, extension workers, publishers, trade representatives, receptionists, consultants, marketing officers, broadcasting professionals, press professionals, advertisers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, and hawkers.

Librarians disseminate information in various ways. All librarians compile a catalogue of books and other documents available in the library. Using the catalogue they tell inquirers what books by an author are available in the library, books available on a particular subject or pertaining to a series, whether a book with a particular title is available in the library, etc. Many librarians bring out accession list of the library concerned from time to time. This list informs users about the books added to the library during a particular time. A reference librarian answers many queries of the users using the library
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5) A teacher is an expert on the subject s/he teaches. The same information s/he disseminates to her/his students in the class. S/he also knows about books and journals on her/his subject, institutions where her/his subject is taught within the country and abroad, other teachers on her/his subject, availability of scholarships, job opportunities, research facilities available within the country and abroad, etc. On inquiry, s/he disseminates these information.

6) A technological gatekeeper is a well-informed person in a particular field. Usually, some scientists, technologists, and professionals in business, etc. have got a tendency (possibly inborn) to acquire information from various sources, to keep themselves abreast of the development in their field, and to disseminate the information to a person or group who may be interested in the information. There is no formal course to train a person as a technological gatekeeper. Almost automatically, they grow into a technological gatekeeper.

7) Information is usually gathered from such human sources as parents (if alive), spouse, brother/s, sister/s, son/s, daughter/s, relatives, friends, co-workers, personal secretaries, and aides. For a freedom fighter’s biography, jailors at times become a potential source of information. This apart, usual help is taken from librarians, information scientists, etc.

5.10 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


