
WEB CONTENT OF LIBRARY PORTALS IN KARNATAKA : ROLE OF LIBRARIANS IN THE INTERNET WORLD

Suresh Jange
Lalitha K Sami

Mallikarjun Angdi
Shyamala Subramaniam

Abstract

The Library and Information Centres are expected to reveal the world to serve the users with information regarding their services and special collections using the World Wide Web and as such the Library managers acting as Content Managers in the Internet world have to design the library web page to facilitate and supplement access to current information resources and services. An attempt has been made in this paper to analyze the library web portals of academic institutions in Karnataka in order to enhance the effective use of library web sites to become more user friendly for information access. Academic Library web sites in Karnataka are analyzed and the results show that, majority of library portals are very concise and lack the current awareness services and updation policy. Also highlights the review of literature and addresses the considerations that must be made when serving library information over the World Wide Web.

Keywords : Library Portals, Internet Librarian, World Wide Web.

1. Introduction

In just a few years the web has become a vast storehouse of information, ideas, opinions, data, lies, and self-promotion. It's a resource that most users can't afford to ignore; at the same time, it's an undifferentiated collection that readers must evaluate carefully. There is a need to distinguish between reliable and unreliable data, informed argument and unsupported opinion, unbiased research and self-serving advertisement. The techniques for evaluating the authority and reliability of web sites are similar to those that should be applied to print materials. The evaluation of Web site usage plays an important role in its maintenance and development. Analyzing and exploring regularities in the visitor's behavior can be used to enhance the quality and facilitate delivery of information services, identify visitors' interests, and improve the server's performance on the net, besides evaluation based on quality standards. The information on the Web site provides a great opportunity to learn more about the behavior of visitors to the Web site.

The quantity of information distributed on the Internet is rising much more quickly than that available through other mass media. There is a need to critically assess the quality of Web sites and to determine the extent to which they meet users' needs and requirements. The Librarians as content managers in the web world rely on their Web sites and on their Web catalogs to provide users with a variety of information, access to full-text resources and digital library services. This growing reliance on the Web to deliver library services and resources means that academic libraries must pay more attention to how effective their sites are and how easy they are to navigate. Since the web sites in general and library web sites in particular plays dominant role in marketing their information products and services, special care has to be given in designing and implementing library web sites for information accessibility and use. McGills and Toms (2001) study was to assess the usability of academic library web sites and found that despite their subjects success in completing tasks assigned participants experienced in knowing where to start with the site's information architecture – in particular, with interpreting the categories and labels. In this

context, the significance of evaluating the library web sites has been felt and attempts were made to analyze the library web sites in Karnataka in order to enhance the effective use of library web sites to become more user friendly for information access.

2. Library Web Site : Rationale

The library web site might be able to function as sort of “electronic signpost” to address a number of problems in the existing provision of information services, by means of publicizing the library and its services beyond its historical user base and immediate geographical catchments area; providing considerably enhanced access to library services and other electronic sources from home for staff during their working day; providing a window to selected, quality-filtered information geared to the specific needs and interests of practitioners working in mental health, and in community and primary care; offering an effective, customized means of access to the large variety of electronic journals which the library provides; and making available internal resources and products (Palmer, 1999). It is a greater responsibility on the part of library managers as a Web Content Managers in the Internet world to be more meticulous in providing the information on the their library web sites keeping in view of the user community.

3. Review of Literature

To improve the design of the library home page and facilitate user access, a Web usage analysis was conducted at Texas A and M University libraries through examination of statistics generated by Web tracking software. The study examined the geographic distribution of users and usage patterns of the library Web page, the peak usage times, and the computer environment information, which includes type of Web browsers, operating systems, screen resolutions, and screen and colours. The study also compared usage statistics gathered before and after Web page promotion, to measure the effectiveness of these library marketing efforts. The findings concentrate on identifying Web page design problems, thus allowing the establishment of recommendations to modify standards of library Web page design and improve library home page promotion (Li-X, 1999). Gupta, R.C (2002) attempts to describe the status, methodology and organization involved, and some different ideas to be considered in designing a serviceable library web site. The most popular suggestion made by McMullen (2001) based on usability study for improving the site was to reduce the amount of text and make links more significant since users do not want to spend the time and reading. So also Callicott (2002) found that, the basic hierarchy of the library web site is to bring certain links closer to the home page as well as rename and reorganize certain tags that they made sense to all users, not just librarians.

Japanese and Chinese medical school libraries and users were surveyed on availability and use of web pages based on the questionnaire method to elicit information from 129 libraries, 111 of which had web pages, and 240 users. Over 80 per cent of Japanese and 60-80 per cent of Chinese libraries provide access to basic services through their web pages. However, few libraries offer a document delivery service with OPAC connection, annotation of linked sites or reference question forms. It is also stated that Web pages should provide an all-round guide to traditional and web-based library services (Zhou, J and Others, 2002). While Takishita, (1997) discusses the issues and problems she encountered when constructing a content-based electronic library Web page for the Malaysian University-College Library in British Columbia, Canada and outlines the site objectives and examines issues within three decision categories: management, content, and organization. It also discusses the factors that include publishing with HTML, universal readability, use of Netscape features, the addition of graphics, page updating, creating outward links, and internal linking.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to determine the information content on the library web pages of academic/university web sites in Karnataka for better accessibility and use. More specifically, the study aims

- To determine the basic information about the library available on the web site;
- To identify the library services offered to the users through the web pertaining to books, journals and other information services;
- To understand whether the library web sites makes provision for searching information including Web OPAC and Feedback form; and
- To know, whether the librarians provide links to other web resources of interest to the librarians and users
- To suggest the information content of library web sites in an academic environ.

5. Methodology

The Library web sites of academic/university web sites in Karnataka have been taken for the study and the contents are analyzed based on the studies conducted by Ebenezer (2001), Spool (2001) and guidelines of Indiana State University. The library web sites covered in the study are

6. Library Web Site

Karnataka Women's University, Bijapur	http://www.womenuniversity.kar.nic.in/
Karnatak University, Dharwad	http://kud.ernet.in/Central_facilities
Kuvempu University, Shimoga	http://www.kuvempuuniversity.org/faci.html
Bangalore University, Bangalore	http://www.bub.ac.in/index1.htm
Mangalore University, Mangalore	http://www.mangaloreuniversity.ac.in/services.htm#ce
University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore	http://uasbng.kar.nic.in/libcampus.asp
University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad	http://www.uasd.edu/
University of Mysore, Mysore	http://www.uni-mysore.ac.in/
Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore	http://www.library.iisc.ernet.in/
Gulbarga University, Gulbarga	http://www.gulbargauniversity.kar.nic.in/library.htm.htm

The Bangalore university at <http://www.bub.ac.in/index1.htm> does not provide information about its library and however the new library web site launched recently during 2005 could not be opened due to technical problem of its server.

7. Analysis and Findings

The Library web portals are the index to the world revealing its knowledge contents and as such, the information contents of academic Library web sites in Karnataka are analyzed. Efforts were made to understand the information Contents of library site with respect to basics about the library, library services based on Books, Journals and other information resources, searching options, WEB OPAC access,

Database searching, compiling links to library and other resources on the net and feedback form. Table 1 shows the information analysis of Academic Library Web Sites in Karnataka

The major findings of the study are :

- Majority of the Library web pages are very concise of one to two pages only.
- The information content of library portals mainly contains its profile that includes about library, collection and few services
- The basic services of library such as Current Alert Services (Journal Articles) or Recent Additions (Books) are not integral part of Library portals
- Almost all the academic library portals except Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Web OPAC is still a dream on the net.
- Only few libraries have made an effort to link other libraries in the country through their respective site.
- The Library portal of Mysore University does not reveal anything about the Library profile.
- Library rules and Travel information have been ignored by many of the library portals in Karnataka.
- Regular updation of latest news pertaining to library events is lacking in the Library portals and so also feedback form.
- Customized information of the region is not been felt in any of the library web sites.

Table 1: Analysis of Academic Library Web Sites in Karnataka

Web Site Contents		GUC	KUD	BUB	KUS	MLOREU	MUM	WBLJU	IISc	AGRIB	AGRID
Library basics	About the library	✓		NA	✓	✓	NA	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Library news								✓	✓	
	Opening hours							✓	✓	✓	
	Contact	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	
	Library staff	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Travel information										
Library services											
Books	Our book stock	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
	New Arrivals								✓		
	Library Rules										
	Inter-library loans and article requests										
Journals	Journals stock	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
	New Issue Arrivals								✓		
	Print journals list								✓		
Literature searching	Locally networked databases (CD-ROM)										
	Free-based online databases										
	Web OPAC								✓		
Other services			✓		✓			✓	✓	✓	
Links to other sites	Other Libraries							✓	✓		
	Free Web databases/ Other resources								✓		
Feedback form									✓		

8. Role of Librarians in the Internet World as Content Managers

The competency of a librarian in CM is represented by different sets of skills, attitudes and values to explore the skills of Internet technology in retrieving and accessing required digital documents in time; archiving, publishing and digital preservation. The librarian can play a dynamic role in easy accessing of computer-held digital information including abstracts, indexes, full-text databases, sound and video recording in digital formats. In the context of CM librarians are required to:

- Organize digital information;
- Disseminate digital information from the computer-held digital content;
- Provide digital reference services and electronic information services;
- Handle the tasks of massive digitization, digital storage process, and digital preservation;
- Provide universal access and retrieval of digital content;
- Catalogue and classify digital documents;
- Maintain the intranet, managing new inputs, user access control, etc.

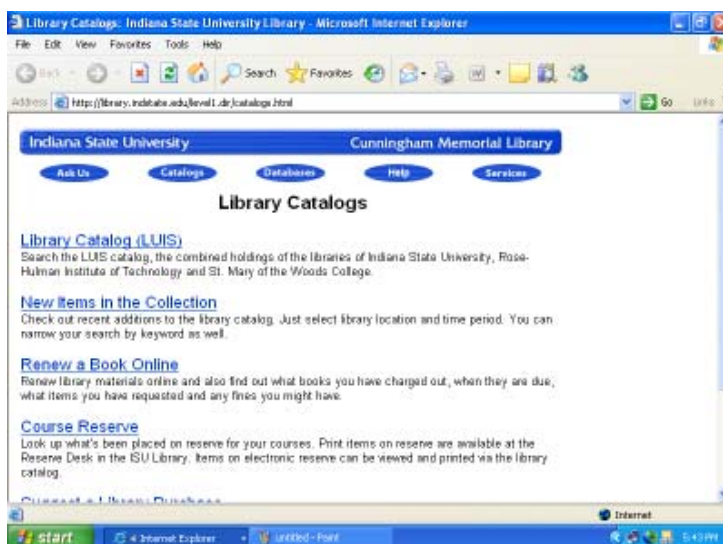
As Content Manager in the Internet world, the Library managers have to design the library web page to facilitate and supplement access to current Library resources and services. It is not necessary that, they should be expert in creating and designing the Library web page on their own, rather, they should provide crystal overview of contents of information on the Library portal and provide to the Web master.

As per the Library Web standards CDLIL (2001), the creating library web pages should be

1. Be concise. Reading from screen is 25% slower than reading from print.
2. Users do not like to scroll. Provide essential information on the initial page, perhaps adding a Table of Contents with links to appropriate sections on the pages. Move detailed information to secondary pages.
3. Write for scannability. Most Web readers scan pages for relevant information rather than reading through a document word by word. Use these tricks:
 - Subheadings (meaningful, not “clever” ones), Bulleted lists rather than paragraphs, if appropriate, Highlighted keywords via hypertext links, typeface variations, Short paragraphs, one idea per paragraph with first few words catching attention of reader, Inverted pyramid style, starting with the conclusion. Put the main points of your document in the first paragraph, so that readers scanning your pages will not miss your point, Simple writing style, half the word count (or less) than conventional writing. Use simple sentence structures. Convoluted writing and complex words are even harder to understand online, Avoid “marketese”, promotional writing style with boastful subjective claims. Give the straight facts without exaggeration
4. Limit graphics to shorten load time. If using images, use small inline images and link large versions to small thumbnails. Use image compression available with the JPEG format - 50% looks OK.
5. If your page is going to be posted on the Library websites, please conform to the colors of background and font used on Library Web pages.

6. Review and update your page frequently to ensure accuracy and credibility. Links need to be working. Statistics, numbers, and examples should be recent.
7. Documents are easier to print from a single Web page. Don't break your narrative into small segments if users will be printing the information. If usage is difficult to predict, offer both a Web version and a link to an easy-to-print page or printing alternative (e.g., PDF file).
8. Refrain from using excessive linking. Readers should not have to follow links to gain an understanding of the information. Links are for those who wish to pursue the topic further. Too many links can disrupt narrative flow in several ways:
 - Visual distraction - Users will click on links directly without ever reading the text that forms its context.
 - Disruption of narrative - Users may follow links and never return to your site.
 - Lack of context - Readers move into unfamiliar territory and may become frustrated and bewildered.
9. Avoid using abbreviations or acronyms unfamiliar to the general user.
10. Adhere to copyright restrictions that apply to both graphics and text.
11. Use the active rather than passive voice in your writing.

Further, the guidelines have been created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) which has developed interoperable technologies i.e. specifications, software and tools to lead the Web to its full potential. The format of Image Bar Template are available on the net can be used for creating the contents of main library web pages for a major area of the library.



In addition to the basic information about the library, collections and services, a special care has to be taken to include indigenous information on the Library web page Viz.

-
- PG Syllabus
 - Research productivity of the university including R & D projects
 - Question Papers
 - Local political, economical, social and religious information
 - Directory of libraries/ academic and research institutions etc.

9. Conclusion

Mere proclaiming as Information Officers and organizers of information in the Internet world is not enough, it is a responsibility to show their information content to the world by creating comprehensive and pertinent library portal either by their own or assigning to web masters. As Library portals reflects the mirror of its image, the existing guidelines and standards taking into consideration of local variation has to be designed by forming a team of web content managers to give a meaning to the Information officers in the techno-environ.

10. References

1. Palmer, Katherine (1999). Signposts to information for community mental health workers: a research project funded by the South and West Health Care Libraries Unit. Bournemouth: Bournemouth University Library and Information Services.
2. Zhou, J and Others (2002). Present status and future development of the medical school library web page services in Japan and China. *Igaku-Toshokan-(Journal -of-the-Japan-Medical-Library-Association)*, 49 (3): 253-63
3. Gupta, R.C (2002). Library web page: concept and content classification. *SRELS-Journal-of-Information-Management*, 39 (4): 383-6
4. Li-X (1999). Library Web page usage: a statistical analysis. *Bottom Line*, 12 (4): 153-9
5. Takishita, F (1997). Constructing an electronic library web page. *Indexer*, 20 (3): 125-6
6. McGills, Louise and Toms, Elaine (2001). Usability of Academic Library Web site: Implications and design. *College and Research Libraries*, 62 (4): 355-67
7. McMullen, Susan (2001). Usability testing in a library web site redesign project. *Reference Service Review*, 1: 7-22
8. Callicott, Burton (2002). Library Web Site User Training. *College and Undergraduate Libraries*, 9(1): 1-17.
9. Ebenezer, Catherine (2001). *Usability evaluation of the South London and Maudsle. Available at NHS Trust Library web site <http://slamlibrary.xiy.net> (Accessed on 13th May 2005)*
10. Spool, Jared M (2001). The usability of usability. Available at <http://www.webword.com/interviews/spool2.html> (Accessed on 24th July 2004)
11. Indiana State University. Available at <http://www.indstate.edu/webguide/> (Accessed on Dec 5, 2005)
12. Library Web Standards. Available at http://www.uleth.ca/lib/about_us/webstandards-public.pdf (Accessed on July 12, 2005). Web Page Working Group, a sub-committee of Collection Development, Liaison & Information Literacy, Ratified by members of CDLIL (2001 December 4).