

Best Practices in a Modern Library and Information Center - The Case of Central Library, IIT Bombay

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Abstract

The paper defines the concept and describes the strategy for application of best practices in an organization. It discusses importance of introducing best practices in a modern library and information centre (LIC) to enable it to improve its processes and activities, optimize resource utilization, and deliver high quality, value added services to its users. It reviews the attempts made by IFLA, ALA, ACRL, Australian Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and NAAC in India to develop best practices / guidelines for different types of libraries and /or for specific services. The paper has suggested / listed the characteristics of the best LIC. It presents the case study of the Central Library of Indian Institute of Technology Bombay to illustrate that adoption of well defined, transparent, user-focused, and technology-oriented processes and practices with a flexibility to change and improve can lead the LIC to be the best. The practices followed by the Central Library, IIT Bombay have been discussed under : (a) Resource development and management, (b) User services, (c) ICT-enabled services, (d) Users empowerment, Information literacy and library marketing, (e) Other activities. It concludes that the best practices is not a one time solution, but a continuous process. The sense of curiosity, willingness to change and learn from experience of others, and pursuit for superior performance can lead the librarians and libraries to Best Practices.

Keywords : Modern Library, Best Practice, Case Study, IIT Bombay

1. Introduction

Best practices are the best ways to perform a process, a function, or an activity that leads to a superior performance. These pertain to the processes, practices, and systems identified in public and private organizations that perform exceptionally well and are widely recognized as improving organization's performance and efficiency. Successfully identifying and applying best practices can reduce costs and improve quality. Best Practices are the means by which leading organizations in any field have achieved top performance, and they serve as goals for the other organizations striving for excellence.

Australian Best Practice Demonstration Program defines best practice as, "the pursuit of world class performance. It is the way in which the most successful organizations manage and organize their operations. It is a moving target. As the leading organizations continue to improve the 'best practice', goalposts are constantly moving. The concept of continuous improvement is integral to the achievement of best practice" (7)

"Best Practice is a management idea which asserts that there is a technique, method, process,

activity, incentive or reward that is more effective at delivering a particular outcome than any other technique, method, process, etc. The idea is that with proper processes, checks, and testing, a desired outcome can be delivered with fewer problems and unforeseen complications. Best practices can also be defined as the most efficient (least amount of effort) and effective (best results) way of accomplishing a task, based on repeatable procedures that have proved themselves over time for large number of people.” (1)

Best practices add commendable value to an institution and various stakeholders, and are considered as reliable benchmarks or standards of quality. Best practices encompass the implementation of quality frameworks, and the use of benchmarking and performance measurement as tools for the continuous improvement of products, processes and services. The best institutions are those which widely use them. The main purpose of the Best Practices benchmarking can be summarized as the:

- ◆ development of an understanding of the fundamentals that lead to success,
- ◆ focus on continuous improvement efforts, and
- ◆ management of the overall change process to close the gap between an existing practice of the institution and that of the best-in-class institutions with reference to the most relevant key performance variables.

A commitment to using the best practices in any field is a commitment to using all the knowledge and technology at one’s disposal to ensure success. The term is used frequently in the fields of health care, administration, the education system, construction, transportation, business management, project management, hardware and software product development, and elsewhere. In software development, a best practice is a well-defined method that contributes to a successful step in product development.

It is believed that a best practice tends to spread throughout a field or industry after a success has been demonstrated. However, it is often noted that demonstrated best practices can be slow to spread, even within an organization. According to the American Productivity and Quality Center, the three main barriers to adoption of a best practice are

- ◆ a lack of knowledge about current best practices,
- ◆ a lack of motivation to make changes involved in their adoption, and
- ◆ a lack of knowledge and skills required to do so.

2. Strategy for Application of Best Practices

The successful application of the best practices can be achieved by adopting the following five-stage strategy (6) :

1. Identification of best practices
2. Implementation of best practices

3. Institutionalization of best practices
4. Internalization of best practices
5. Dissemination of best practices

2.1 Identification of Best Practices

The identification of best practices depends on institutional mission and goals, nature of users, global context and local relevance, competencies of staff, infrastructure, and governance requirements. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education has suggested following guidelines for the identification and application of good practices :-

- ◆ be dynamic and revisited periodically;
- ◆ recognize diversity and cultural and historical contexts;
- ◆ not lead to dominance of one specific view or approach; and
- ◆ promote quality of performance.

While it may be difficult to develop best practices that are universally applicable, we need to identify the ones that are context-free, less subjective, have wider acceptability and can add value for all stakeholders. These must meet the 'fitness for purpose' criteria. One of the important ways of identifying is to ask professionals to describe and justify their best practices and the improvements brought about. The criteria of economy, efficiency and effectiveness may also be used in identifying them.

2.2 Implementation of Best Practices

However, difficult it may be, all of us have some understanding of what the best practices are. The implementation is really the challenge. There may be some genuine limitations in the application of best practices, but many are imaginary. Instead of finding solutions to problems, sometimes our 'professionalism' may lead us to find problems in every solution. The implementation strategies shall include planning, resource mobilization, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation. The implementation approach focuses more on performance than on promises.

2.3 Institutionalization of Best Practices

Institutionalization is the process of making the best practices an integral part of the institutions' functioning. It has been observed that many best practices are institution-specific and individual managed where individual happens to be the leader or head of the institution. This approach runs the risk of disruption if and when the individual is changed. If, however, such a practice is formalized as an essential requirement, it will continue to be pursued and implemented without any hindrance. Secondly, many best practices require extra effort and to sustain that effort it has to become an integral part of the functioning of the institution, gradually. Institutionalization is an effort to make it more institution centric than leader or individual centric and also to make the best practices as a normal practice.

2.4 Internalization of Best Practices

What institutionalization is in the context of institutions, it is internalization when it refers to individuals in the institution. Internalization refers to making things a part of one's nature by conscious learning and assimilation. Internalization of best practices means making excellence an integral part of one's habit and nature. Such internalization may also be looked upon as making permanent the principle and essence of the best practices as part of the characteristic performance of an institution. The aggregate of such internalized best practices principally goes to make what we loosely call the 'ethos' or 'tradition' or 'culture' of an institution. Internalization is an attitude formation conducive to sustaining quality in what ever we do.

2.5 Dissemination of Best Practices

It is not enough for the institutions to adopt best practices, it is equally important for them to disseminate these practices for wider application in the system. Many institutions do not attempt certain practices due to lack of information about the feasibility and adaptability of the best practices. It is fact that the best practices are the borrowed practices and we must learn and benefit from each other's experience. Even within an institution, at times there are communication gaps which affect the expected outcome of the practice. It also makes building on experience and reviewing the practice difficult. Effective use of recording and reviewing is essential to develop conviction in the system for a particular practice. Institutions may have to evolve suitable strategies like database of good practices, review forums, recording evidences for success etc. to discuss within and among institutions.

3. Best Practices in a Modern Library and Information Centre

For a vibrant knowledge-based society, knowledge is the primary resource. Efficient utilization of existing knowledge can create comprehensive wealth of the nation, and also improve the quality of life. Ability to create and maintain the knowledge infrastructure, develop knowledge workers and enhance their productivity through creation, growth and exploitation of new knowledge, will be the key factors in deciding the prosperity of a society or a nation. Library and Information Centres (LIC) in institutions of higher learning play the central role in facilitating dissemination and creation of new knowledge. In today's high-tech learning environment, the LIC as a learning resource is taking up increasingly more academic space and time in the life of a learner. Thus, it is timely to identify a set of best practices that can lead LICs to improve their processes and activities, optimize resource utilization, and deliver high quality, value added services to their users.

Several attempts have been made at the international level to develop broad-based, generic guidelines / best practices which can be suitably reoriented and implemented. International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) has developed best practices and guidelines for various types of libraries as well as for specific services (<http://www.ifla.org>). Australian Department of

Education, Training and Youth Affairs has brought out the "Best Practice Handbook for Australian University Libraries" (7). American Library Association (<http://www.ala.org>) and its various organs like ACRL have also brought out best practices for various types of libraries and their services. The National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), which advocates for the best practices benchmarking approach in higher education in India, also strives for quality and excellence in library and information services (LIS) in improving academic environment. As a part of the institutional accreditation, it assesses the LIC of that institution. The NAAC has identified a set of best practices with the help of a few case presentations from selected libraries of the accredited universities and colleges (2). It sponsored a "National Seminar on Best Practices in Library and Information Services" which was held at the University of Bangalore, Bangalore from 9-12 August 2006 (5). NAAC has also developed "Guidelines on Quality Indicators in Library and Information Service" for universities / autonomous, college, and affiliated / constituent colleges (3,4). These are welcome steps in encouraging the LICs in identifying, sharing and adopting best practices in India.

When we speak of best practices in a modern LIC, we mean the LIC that offers services and processes of the highest order. Such LICs provide borderless services and are regarded as the valuable resource. These LICs become partners in the achievements of the institutions' mission and goals. Its collections, systems and services reflect the organizations' objectives. The best LIC can be said to have following characteristics :

1. It reflects the values, mission and the goals of the institution
2. It accommodates myriad new information and learning technologies and the way information is accessed and used
3. It is the only centralized location where new and emerging technologies can be combined with traditional knowledge resources
4. As an extension of class room, it embodies new pedagogies including collaborative and interactive learning
5. offers user-focused, service-rich environment supporting contemporary social and educational patterns of learning, teaching, and research
6. offers an ambiance that is extremely conducive for assimilation and creation of new knowledge. Whereas the Internet has tended to isolate people, the library as a physical space, has done just the opposite.
7. enables acquiring life long information gathering skills so that they can acquire, access, evaluate, and use the information whenever they need even after completion of their formal education.
8. facilitates technology-enhanced distance and continuing learning

9. collaborates with users in service creation, evaluation and updating
10. rapidly changes - flexible enough to adapt to the changing scenario in terms of size of the collection, user requirements, technology application, organizational structures, and periodic up gradation
11. makes library space (both virtual and physical) more interactive, collaborative and driven by community needs
12. Chief Knowledge and Learning Resource where one can truly experience and benefit from the centrality of an institution's intellectual community.

Let us study the practices being followed in Central Library, IIT Bombay – considered to be one of the most modern LICs in the country.

4. Best practices in Central Library, IIT Bombay – A Case Study

Central Library occupies a place of pride in IIT Bombay and is an essential component of the institutes' outstanding research and education mission. It enables learning, and promotes discovery, scholarship and advancement of knowledge. The mission of the central library is to facilitate creation of new knowledge through acquisition, organization and dissemination of knowledge resources and providing for value added services. It is a major resource centre for engineering, science and technology information in this part of the world.

In order to be able to provide world class services to the users, the library adopts processes and practices that are not only considered to be the best but are comparable with the best in the market. An attempt is being made here to discuss and disseminate these processes and practices for the benefit of other libraries under following categories :

- ◆ Resource development and management
- ◆ User services
- ◆ ICT-enabled Services
- ◆ Users empowerment and information literacy
- ◆ Other activities

4.1 Resource Development and Management

a. Collection Development

The main objective of the collection development is to make available all kinds of required reading material, i.e. Books, reference books, text books, reports, patents, standards, theses, serials, journals, electronic and multimedia resources etc to support learning, teaching and research pursuits of the students, faculty and staff within shortest possible time and at a reasonable price. Our collection as on 31st Jan 2008 stands as given below :

Collection	As on January 2008
Books, theses, CDs, Videos	2,15,713
TLL & BC (Book bank) collection	11,030
Bound volumes of journals	1,07,896
Reports, pamphlets, standards	66,735
Photocopies, films	4410
Total	4,05,784
Subscription to current journals	1400

Selection

The selection of reading material is driven by the needs of faculty and students. The faculty suggests books in a prescribed proforma (<http://www.library.iitb.ac.in/down/book.pdf>) and forward it to the library either directly (individual suggestions limited to 5 books) or through HOD. Students can also submit their suggestions for books through concerned faculty/course teacher. Suggestions for Book Bank are submitted through Convener, SC/ST Cell or concerned faculty/course teacher. Reference Books are selected by the faculty and the library. The library also organizes the books exhibition every year to facilitate the faculty, students, staff and other campus residents to browse, select, and buy books for their personal use or to recommend to the library.

The library also subscribes to over 1400 print journals, several thousand e-journals, e-books, databases and multimedia products. All the request for addition and/or deletion of such sources are reviewed by the Library Committee every year before renewal of the subscription. Serial publications are received against standing orders. The titles on order are reviewed periodically in consultation with Departments and appropriate additions/deletions are affected before renewing the standing orders.

Procurement

1. The library maintains a list of approved vendors for supply of books along with a list of publishers whose titles can be supplied by them. The suggestions received are sorted according to the urgency. Depending upon the publisher of the book and the performance of the vendor to supply, the order is placed .
2. In case faculty suggests the availability of the some books with a particular vendor , order for those books is placed with the same vendor so as to procure the suggested titles at the earliest. However, the suggested vendor needs to supply books as per the library's terms and conditions.
3. Library follows bank exchange rate for conversion of foreign currencies for procurement of books and journals. The rate is posted on the library website every fortnightly.

4. The entire process of purchase is automated. All the processes beginning with the receipt of the suggestion till the documents are processed and sent to the shelves are computerized. An email is automatically sent to the faculty when ever a book suggested by him/her has been received.
5. Library prefers to subscribe to journals, e-resources and databases directly from publishers, database producers and/or their preferred/authorized dealers. However, library also subscribes to journals from approved vendors.

Budget

- ◆ The library is allocated a lump sum amount of money for procurement of all kinds of publications every financial year. There is an increase by 10-15% every year on account of price rise and fluctuation in exchange rates of foreign currencies. The expenditure on purchase of books is incurred department-wise. Budget allocation takes into consideration number of the faculty, students and courses offered by a department. The library circulates quarterly statement of expenditure among all departments reflecting the amount spent and the balance available.
- ◆ The library also receives donations (endowments) from different sources including our Alumni. A part of the expenditure on procurement of publications is also made from the interest earned.

b. Collection Organization

The library collection is divided into the following sub-collections which are located on different floors of the building :

1. General and text books
2. Reference books
3. Current journals
4. Bound volumes of journals
5. Reports, pamphlets and theses
6. Multimedia products, CDs, DVDs, Videocassettes etc

The books and theses are classified and catalogued as per UDC and AACR-2 respectively. The library catalogue is available on-line and can be accessed on the web. Current journals are displayed broad subject-wise, while bound journals are arranged in UDC classified order. List of current journals as well as bound journals are available on the library web site.

c. Collection Management – Access, Shelf management, Stock Verification, Periodic Weeding out, Library Security

The library provides open access to its collection except theses and rare books. It takes special care to ensure that the entire collection is properly and regularly shelved, library stack are neatly maintained

and users get the desired documents without wasting time. The concerned staff has been given the responsibility of maintaining specific number of shelves. Professional staff undertakes shelf rectification at regular intervals. As stated earlier, the library collection can be accessed through Web-OPAC. Adequate number of work stations have been placed in the building for this purpose.

The library conducts sample stock verification every five years and total stock verification after two sample verifications. The books found in damaged and mutilated condition or found missing are written off as per rules. Although, library does not have a defined policy for weeding out of old, unused and outdated material, it however attempts to segregate and write off such material selectively in consultation with the faculty.

The security of library material is a challenge in an academic institution. The library has installed 3M's Electromagnetic Surveillance System in 2000-01 to prevent pilferage. It comprises of a gate lattice, a book check and a workstation. All books in the library have been inserted with a tattle (magnetic) tape which need to be discharged while issuing a book failing which the sensors at the gate will raise an alarm to prevent unauthorized check out. The performance of the system has been quite satisfactory so far. The library will have to plan for better solution (RFID and CCTV), once the present system has worn out.

4.2 User Services

a. Library Hours & Holidays

The library remains open on all days of the year except on 26th January, 15th August and 2nd October (National Holidays) and observes following time schedule :

- ◆ Monday through Friday 0900 – 2300 hrs, till 0100 hrs during examination
- ◆ Saturdays / Sundays / Holidays 1000 – 1700 hrs, till 0100 hrs during examination

Library also maintains a reading hall open 24x7 where students can bring and study their personal books.

b. Membership

Library membership is free to all students, faculty and staff of the IIT Bombay. Students, faculty and research scholars from the government institutions are also allowed to use the library (reference only) free of charge. In order to optimize the use of library resources, the membership is also offered to IIT Bombay Alumni, retired faculty and officers, Industries and Corporate Houses, and engineering educational institutions on payment of fees as per details below:

Description	No. of Books	Period of Loan
Students B. Tech (up to 3 rd year)	07	30 days
Students B. Tech (Final) / M. Sc /M. Tech / M. Des / M. Mgt. /Ph D	09	30 days
Faculty, Research Engineers, Scientists, Professor/ Scientist Emeritus, Life-time Achievement Awardees, Librarian, Registrar and equivalent officers	20	One Semester
Dy. Librarian, Executive Engineer, SMO, Senior Programmer, System Programmer and equivalent staff	10	One Semester
PRO, Dy. Registrar, Asst. Librarian, Security Officer, Asst. Engineer, Tech Officer, Med Officer, Superintendent, SRF, STA, SPA, TA, Hindi Officer, Student Counselor and equivalent staff	07	One Semester
Managers, Senior Stenographer, SRA, JRA, JRF, JE, PGT, TGT and equivalent	07	30 days
Foreman, ASO, Physical Training Instructor, Senior Draftsman, Data Processor and equivalent staff	05	30 days
Staff not covered above	02	30 days
Alumni Members	02	30 days
Corporate Members (with borrowing facility)	03	14 days
Retired faculty / officers of IIT Bombay	02	30 days

d. Reference Service

A service that connects users with the library and helps them to make full use of the resources. It includes guidance in the use of information resources and services, help in locating required documents, instructions for accessing on line library resource including OPAC, e-journals, e-books, databases, multimedia products etc. This is the human interface between library and its users.

e. Document Delivery Service

The library provides free photocopying service to the faculty of the Institute. An external outfit operating within the premises of the library offers the service on payment to students, staff and walk-in users. The library also supplies photocopies of articles to individuals and organizations on payment. A number of organizations maintain a deposit account with the library for availing the service quickly.

f. Resource Sharing (Inter-library loan)

The library has excellent resource sharing arrangements with a number of institutions and libraries including IITs, BARC, NITIE, C-DAC, IISc, IIG, TIFR, IGIDR, TISS and UICT for exchange of books,

journals, photocopies and videocassettes for the mutual benefit of our users. JCCC (J-Gate Custom Content for Consortia), - a customized solution for accessing and sharing 5,676+ e-Journals subscribed by all the IITs, IISc and IIMs, facilitates on-line requests for copies of articles from the holding library.

g. Book Bank

The library maintains a book bank comprising mainly of undergraduate level text books to help students belonging to weaker sections of the society. The books (5-7) from this collection are issued for a period of one semester to the SC/ST/OBC , as well as to economically weaker students.

4.3 ICT-Enabled Services – Digital Library Services

Central Library has computerized all its operations and activities, and is a part of the institute-wide network built around a fiber optic Giga-bit ethernet backbone comprising of five routing switches. It is connected to the backbone through one of the routing switches. Institutes' backbone is connected to 32 mbps of Internet band width on leased links. The library has 12 servers, 70 PCs and other accessories adequate to cater to its needs. 25 PC are meant for users to access OPAC, databases, e-books, e-journals and other e-resources. The reading area in the library has been WI-Fi enabled.

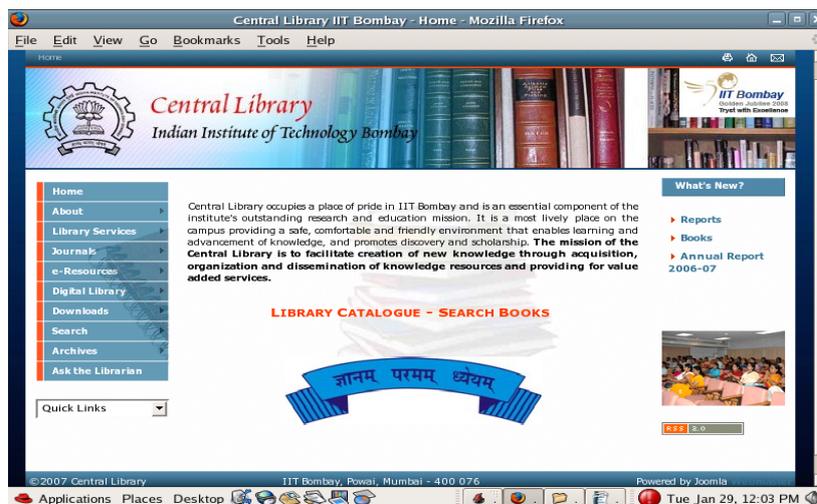
a. Library Portal (<http://www.library.iitb.ac.in>)

The Library Portal is a gateway to its resources and services. The purpose of an information gateway of this type is to help users discover high quality, relevant web-based information quickly and effectively. The portal besides providing information about the staff, collection and services, allows access to the OPAC, and provides direct link to e-resources on publishers' site. Multimedia library links to CD-ROM collection available in the library. Users can download library brochure, membership forms, book suggestion form etc. The web site also enables M. Tech and Ph. D Students to submit their theses and dissertations electronically. Announcement of new additions and services is made on 'What is New'. 'FAQs' and 'Quick Links' facilitate users to know more about any of our activities and provide direct access to the desired page of the site. User interaction is encouraged through a number of e-mail links.

The Library portal of IIT Bombay has been developed using Joomla – an open source content management system for publishing content on the web or intranets. The Web portal comprises of 160 contents pages occupying 350 MB Disc Space, and provides over 6500 links to e-resources. The portal also has the following features :

- ◆ News Flash/News Scroll
- ◆ Quick links

- ◆ Random Image
- ◆ RSS
- ◆ Contacts
- ◆ Polls
- ◆ Site Search etc.



b. Web-OPAC

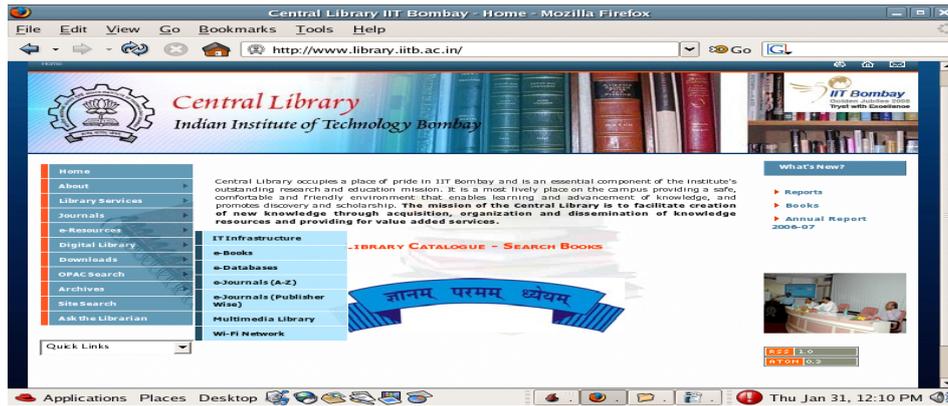
The collection of the library can be accessed through on line catalogue – Web OPAC. It allows simple, and complex, multi-field search (using Boolean logic) options. The search results are displayed with minimal information. The selected item can be displayed in full format. The output also gives information whether a particular document is already loaned to any member and the scheduled date of its return. The interested members can make reservation /claim to borrow on return of such documents.

c. e-Resources

E-Resources are available 24x7, allow multiple concurrent users, are more current than their print counterparts, support distance education, reach to remote and under-served areas and have no constraint of time and location besides saving library space. These sources can be searched, browsed and interlinked with other publications and databases, downloaded and saved in different formats for future use. The Central Library provides web-based access to over 450 books, 10,000 full text journals and 10 databases 24 x 7 on institute-wide network. Appropriate links have been

provided from library website to access these resources (publisher-wise or title-wise). Users have also been provided with guidelines for fair use of e-resources.

d. Electronic Theses & Dissertations (<http://etd.library.iitb.ac.in>)



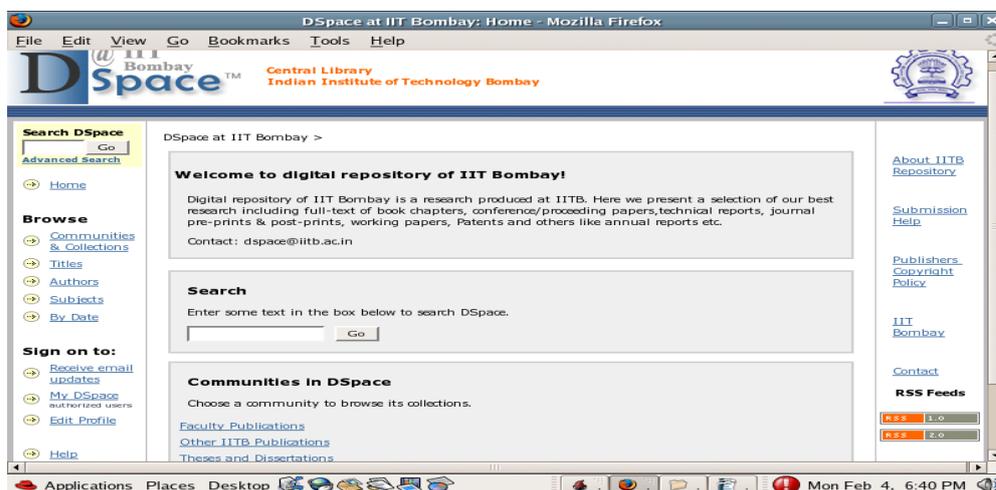
IIT Bombay is probably the first academic institution in the country to accept on-line submission of Ph. D. theses and M. Tech. dissertations by its postgraduate and doctoral students respectively. It allows students to register and upload their theses, to obtain supervisor's approval and finally submit to the library (etd) database. Central Library supports and maintains the full-text database of over 4500 items submitted since 1999-2000 on Intranet. The library has also developed a database (providing bibliographic details and abstract) using open source software, GSDL of all the Masters Dissertations and Ph. D. Theses submitted since 1999 and 1965 respectively. This database containing over 5000 records is accessible through the library homepage.



e. Institutional Archive

Central Library has recently set up an archive of publications brought out by the faculty and the institute, using open source software, DSpace. The archive, accessible initially on the Intranet facilitates on-line submission of the publications by the authors permissible within the copyright regulations. The archive will become a full-text database of all publications produced by the IIT Bombay community and will be available on the Internet through the library homepage. A link has been provided to assist authors to submit / upload their publications. A link has also been provided to Publisher copyright policies & self-archiving (<http://www.sherpa.ac.uk/romeo.php>). The setting up of an institutional archive is a low-cost solution to enhance accessibility of research information / literature across the globe.

IIT Bombay has been a strong supporter of open source and open access movement. The campus network has migrated to LINUX platform several years ago. Most of the application software including library management package use open source DBMS like MySQL, PostGres etc. The Central Library has also been a leading library in the country to use open source software. It has created web-based database of theses and dissertations using like GSDL beside DSpace for creating an institutional repository. The application of Joomla for designing library portal is another example of our open source policy.



f. Consortium

Central Library is an active member of the MHRD-supported, INDEST Consortium and obtains access to over several thousand e-journals, and databases. The consortium approach is extremely

beneficial as it allows to leverage collective strength of member libraries to negotiate for better deals with the publishers and database producers. The participating libraries can also extend their collaboration to organize and undertake several programmes for mutual benefits including cross-sharing of their resources using the platform of the consortium.

4.4 User Empowerment, Information Literacy, Library Marketing

a. Orientation Programmes

IIT Bombay organizes intensive programmes for orientation of new students both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in the beginning of the academic year. Institute librarian is a regular invitee to address the new entrants and explains them the important role a library plays in higher education in science and technology. An audio-visual presentation is made to introduce them to the facilities, rules, resources (print and electronic), and services of the library. Training sessions are also organized whenever a new product or service is introduced.

b. Library Tours

All the new entrants are taken to the library tour in small groups to physically show them the library resources, how to access these resources and various other services that they can avail during their studies. Live demonstration of e-resource is one of the important components of the tour. Library tour is also arranged for various other groups who visit the library from industrial and corporate houses, educational and R&D institutions, IIT Alumni and so on.

c. Information Alert Services

The library offers a number of current awareness services to inform and alert its users. A weekly/fortnightly list of recent additions of books, pamphlets, reports, standards, annual reports and faculty publications added to the collection is put on the library website. It displays important information of interest appearing in journals, newspapers, newsletters and other sources. The library also displays announcements of forthcoming conferences and international events, and list of articles of general interest scanned from the current issues of journals received.

d. List Services (Servs) and E-mail

IIT Bombay maintains several list services (mailing lists) to cater to different communities of users, e.g. faculty, research scholars, etc. These lists aim to broadcast a message to a large number of people within the institute or beyond the boundaries of the institute. The library makes good use of all these list services to communicate with the users particularly when a new e-resource is introduced or a service is launched. These services are also useful for informing or inviting users to a seminar or a demonstration organized by the library. It is an extremely important medium to market library resources and services.

e. News Groups

IIT Bombay also has several news groups which can be subscribed to by users depending upon their area of work and interest. The Central Library has created a newsgroup where information about latest happenings as well as new services and sources is posted for wider dissemination. It also allows subscribers (users) to post their suggestions/feedback. All posting on this newsgroup are regularly monitored by the librarian to take follow up action. The library shall be soon launching a "Library Blog" to widely broadcast new developments and resources so that users can subscribe and access the relevant information quickly.

f. Web-based Instructions, FAQs

The library uses its website optimally to provide appropriate instructions so that users are able to use various resources and services effectively. A link to FAQs attempts to answer general queries that users normally ask. Other web-based instructions provided are as given below :

- ◆ Guidelines for fair use of E-Resources at IIT Bombay
- ◆ Submission help (for institutional archive)
- ◆ FAQs (online submission of theses)

g. Virtual Reference Desk/Ask your Librarian

All our users as well as others can ask any question related to the library using the link "Ask your Librarian" through our website. This link serves as a virtual reference desk.

h. Training Seminars and Workshops

The library organizes training sessions and workshops for the users whenever a new product , database or service is introduced. These programmes include presentations, demonstrations and exhibitions, and are organized at the institute level as well as at the department level depending upon the relevance and need.

i. Vendors' Participation

One of the important methods of user awareness is active involvement of the publishers and vendors. It is different from vendors selling their products. They regularly visit the institute to interact with library staff and the users to update them with new developments and/or features added to their product. Publishers or their representatives are also invited to give a detailed presentation about that resource followed by a live demonstration. Many publishers/vendors request the library to let them conduct training sessions to update users

about the new features incorporated in their product. They also help the library in monitoring the usage and maintaining the statistics required while conducting an evaluation of the e-resource.

j. Library Brochure

Central Library has produced a colourful brochure which is distributed freely to all our new students, faculty and visitors. The brochure entitled "Know Your Library" is a very popular medium of dissemination of information about our resources and services. A copy of the brochure is also available for download from library web site. This brochure provides a detailed account of all our activities, rules, resources and services.

k. Institute Newsletter

IIT Bombay brings out a monthly newsletter called "Campus Diary" which publishes all the new activities and programmes of the institute. Central Library regularly uses this medium to publicize information about resources and services.

l. One-on-one Appointments

It is an excellent way to get to know the library users personally and to understand their information needs better. It also gives user an opportunity to informally interact with library staff and clarify any of his doubts, queries and to better understand as to how to use various resources and services of the library resulting in the enhanced usage.

4.5 Other Activities

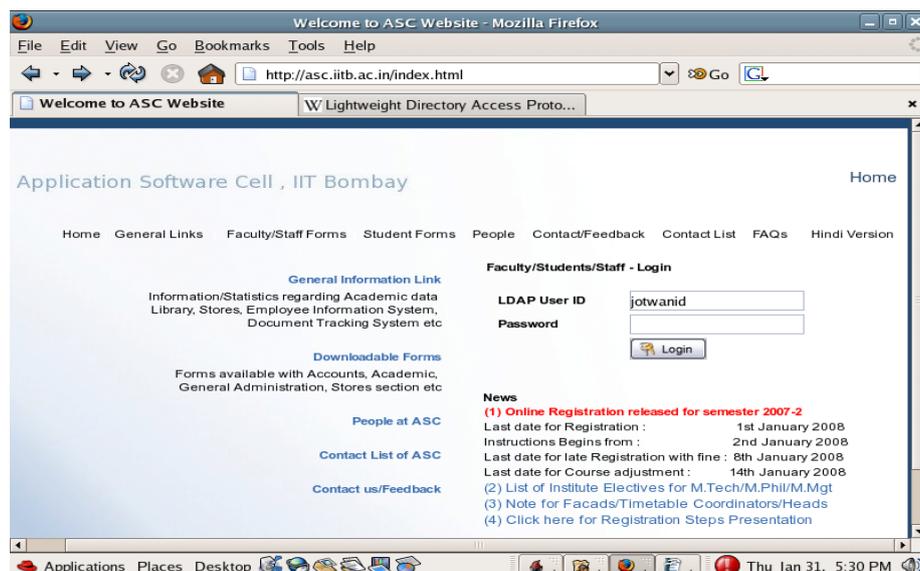
a. HR Initiatives

Central Library is a reflection of the talent, energy and willingness of the officers and staff who have a shared commitment to providing the best possible service to the world class community of faculty, students and staff of IIT Bombay. Beside performing their jobs in the library, many of them undertake academic assignments, act as faculty and research guide, deliver lectures, present papers and participate in national and international conferences and workshops. The library has a strength of 7 officers, 12 professional staff, 6 administrative staff, and 25 support staff. The library also has an Internship Programme of one year duration for fresh graduates / postgraduates in Library and Information Science. They get an opportunity to undergo on-the-job training in different aspects of the functioning of a modern library like ours and are paid monthly stipend.

d. User Database

IIT Bombay maintains a database (directory) of all students, faculty and staff using LDA Protocol - an application protocol for querying and modifying directory services over TCP/

IP. It allows to use the same data for different functions. Users can also access to various services of the institute using single User ID and password. They can login to the system to view their library account showing books borrowed, their due date of return, over due charge, books claimed by them etc.



c. Seminars/Workshop for LIS Professionals

The Central Library has been regularly organizing various programmes like conferences and workshops to facilitate and encourage librarians from scientific and research organizations to improve their knowledge and skills so that they are able to utilize latest tools and techniques of information handling. The library has organized following workshops in last few years :

- ◆ Workshop on Optimal Use of E-Resources, May 2004
- ◆ Workshop on ICT for Information Management, May 2005
- ◆ Workshop on E-Resource and IPR Issues, June 2006
- ◆ National Workshop on LIS Education in Digital Era, June 2007

The main purpose of the above workshops was to improve awareness, to update on various issues for optimal use, technology and IPR implications, and to foster close interaction among librarians. These workshops attracted nation-wide participation from academic and R&D institutions including faculty and students from the IIT Bombay.

b. Projects and Consultancies

Central Library has a pool of expertise on scientific and technical library and information management, ICT application to library services etc. and have been advising to a number of organizations in establishing their library and information units. This not only brings financial rewards but also professional recognition.

e. Resource Mobilization

The library offers its membership and other services like reference, consultation, photocopying, search service, etc to industry, corporate houses, educational and R&D institutions, academicians, research scholars and others on payment and earned Rs 28.50 lakh during last financial year.

5. Conclusion

The notion of best practices does not commit us at IIT Bombay to one inflexible, unchanging practice. What is best today, may not be the best tomorrow. Therefore, we keep moving our targets and setting new goalposts. The 'Best Practice' is an attitude, an approach or a philosophy based on the desire for continuous learning and improvement. It helps discover and close performance gaps, solve a problem, create new opportunities, and positively impact our organization. Institutional excellence is the aggregate of the best practices followed in different areas of institutional activities.

Best practices do not have one template or form for everyone to follow. While documenting and charting of these practices may be complex and difficult for many libraries to implement due to several constraints, it is the pursuit of superior performance that can motivate and lead libraries to Best Practices. LICs need to take a first leap forward, even at a moderate level. A vibrant sense of curiosity, the willingness to change and learn from experience of others is a key to success.

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