Proper Content Management to the Library Web Site: Evaluation of all IIT's Library Websites

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Abstract

Today's savvy library users are starting to equate the library Web site with the physical library. The purpose of this study was to assess the content management and usability of an academic library Web site. This paper presents the major findings from evaluation of library Web sites of all IITs in India on the World Wide Web. This paper includes a brief examination of services provided on the Web sites in general and concerning library Web sites in particular. A new list of criteria for evaluation of academic libraries is compiled.

Keywords: Content Management, Library Web Site, Library Web Pootal

1.   Introduction

Library Web site is its virtual public face – the quasi equivalent of the front door, signage, pathfinders, collections or surrogates to the collections, services, and to an extent, its people. Because library web sites compete with a host of other Internet services and organizations for clientele, they must capture and motivate the user; provide useful, innovative, and the interactive services and products; give the library some form of identity; and encourage repeat visitation while holding the interest of users and simplifying their task (McGillis and Toms, 2001). Identifying and implementing best practice design principles in WWW pages is very difficult task for web developers. Designing a good web site with best resource management is as difficult as writing a poem or drawing a picture.

The existing library websites are as different as are the libraries – perhaps more different, some would say, because even a high-quality library may have a low-quality Web site that turns users off. Obviously, different libraries have a wide range of target groups, level of service, resources etc. Stover (1997) has outlined the different types of Web sites that academic, public and special libraries have created. In this paper authors will show how IITs have created their library website.

2.   Usability and Evaluation of Web Documents

In the traditional library, users had to enter the library in order to use its services; the collections, the reading-rooms, the equipment, or the lending and help services. With the development of electronic collections and services libraries have started to offer a new virtual entrance to their services: the library website. Users can visit the library and use many of its services from remote places, e.g. from their workplace or from home. Such visits, in analogy to the traditional physical visits, are called virtual visits. The library website may be the library's own domain, or it may be places within the institution's/community website.

Criteria for evaluating Web pages as follows:

1. Accuracy of Web documents: What is the purpose of the document and why was it produced; Who wrote the page and can you contact him or her; Is this person qualified to write this document?; Know the distinction between author and Webmaster; Make sure author provides e-mail or a contact address/phone number.

2. Authority of Web document: Check the domain of the document, what institution publishes this document; Who published the document and is it separate from the Webmaster; Does the publishers list his or her qualifications.

3. Objectivity of Web documents: How detailed is the information?; What goals/objectives does this page meet; What opinions are expressed by the author; Determine if page is a mask for advertising; if so information might be biased

4. Currency of Web documents: When was it produced; When was it updated; How up-to-date are the links; How many dated links are on the page; Are the links current or updated regularly; Is the information on the page outdated.

5. Coverage of the Web documents: Are the links evaluated and do they complement the documents theme; Is it all images or a balance of text and images; Is the information presented cited correctly; Is it free or is there a fee, to obtain the information.

There are different methods for evaluating the usability of a website:

Evaluation with user participation: Web surveys; Focus groups; Group tests; Observation; and Transaction logs.

Evaluation without user participation: Heuristic evaluation; cognitive walk-through.

The most important issue when designing a library's website is to consider the special needs, competences and behaviour of the individual library's population. This may differ widely between types of libraries. What users generally want when accessing a website is either to find a specific information or to perform a specific activity.

3. How to get a better web page with content management

By using the evaluation method as described or other methods like tests and surveys, the library will probably find specific shortcoming of its web page.

There are some general issues that should be considered for a webpage:

◆ FAQ (Frequently asked question): Many libraries put a FAQ option on their homepage that lists frequently asked questions and their answers. But if a question appears frequently, it seems more efficient to put a link to the requested service or information directly on the webpage.

◆ Options for different user groups: Different user groups may have different needs and a different level of experience that will influence their search. The library should therefore offer options for different user groups on its homepage.

User groups that should be considered on the webpage could be:

◆ first-time visitors

◆ disabled persons

◆ external users

◆ first-year students

◆ graduates

◆ faculty

A potential user planning a first-time visit will need information about address, way and opening times, about his options for registering and lending and possible fees. A graduate student will need direct access to databases and electronic journals, if possible via subject access, or to interlibrary lending and document delivery. With the knowledge of HML, Java Script, SQL, PHP and some artistic and aesthetic view one can build a very good library web page. Beginners can also start with Robohelp, Frontpage, Dreamweaver which makes it very easier. But the real problem is lying with content management.

4.   Table: Seven IIT Library web sites survey

To find guidelines for a good content management through the library website, it has been surveyed seven IIT Central Library websites. Following table shows how these libraries presents their contents through website.

Library Services & miscellaneous	IIT-B	IIT-C	IIT-D	IIT-G	IIT-K	IIT-KGP	IIT-R
New Books Display	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO
Archives – New books display	YES	NO	NO	NF	NO	YES	NO
New issue Arrivals	YES	NF	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO
Web-OPAC facility	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NF
Online book reservation	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NF
Checking borrowing books online	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NF

Library webpage	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Frequency-Updating Library webpage	On regular basis	On regular basis	On regular basis	On regular basis	On regular basis	On regular basis	On regular basis
Library webpage Maintained by	Library staff	Library staff	Library staff	Library staff	Library staff	Library staff	Library staff
List of print journals	YES	YES	YES	YES	NF	YES	NO
List of print journals holdings	YES	NO	YES	YES	NF	NO	NF
List of e-journals (a-z)	YES	NF	NF	NO	NF	YES	Not accessed
List with e-journals with archives	NF	NO	YES	NO	NF	NO	Not accessed
List of e-journals with link	YES	YES	YES	YES	NF	YES	Not accessed
List of subscribed full text online databases	NF	NF	YES	NF	NF	YES	NF
List of subscribed bibliographic online databases	YES	NF	YES	YES	NF	YES	NF
List of free e-journals (respective discipline)	NF	YES	13 jrls through INDEST-AICTE Consortium	NO	NF	YES	NF
List of e-books	NF	NO	Some are password protected& some are open to search	NF	NF	YES	NF
Link to Institutional Repository	YES (DSpace)	Yes (e-prints)	Yes (e-prints)	NO	NO	Yes (Dspace)	NF

CAS	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
SDI	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Library Rules	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES
Borrowing Rules	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES
Section-wise information	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	YES
No. of Library Staff (LS)	19	33	34	14	NF	44	NF
List of Library staff	YES	YES	YES	YES	NF	YES	NO
Member of consortium	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Name of consortium	INDEST	INDEST	INDEST	INDEST	INDEST	INDEST	INDEST
No. of e-journals by consortium	6000+	6000+	6000+	6000+	6000+	6000+	provided 6000+
Librarian	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES

*NF: Not Found

5. Analysis

IITs have been recognized as one of the best institute not only in India but also in abroad with world-class faculties, top infrastructure facilities and quality manpower. By studying their websites, no symmetry was found in their contents provided by their websites. Though these websites are very informative, maintained by library professionals, but in maximum case, these websites are not very user friendly.

- ◆ All of them provide link to Web-OPAC; CAS; SDI services; e-journals; e-books

- ◆ All of them provide Library Rules except IIT-KGP

- ◆ All of them are member of INDEST-AICTE Consortium

- ◆ All the websites are maintained/updated by Library Professional

- ◆ Though all are exactly similar kind of institute but the content management of their library pages are mostly dissimilar.

- ◆ Only 3 library webpage give information about borrowing rules

- ◆ Most of the library webpage do not provide any information about journals holding

- ◆ Most of the library webpage do not provide any information, since when access to e-journals is being provided.

Website of IIT Kharagpur has classified its content as per various sections which is not very user friendly. User is more interested in various services preferred on main page itself. User may not know that link to new books display is being given under Technical Processing Section link or similar links to e-journals subscribed under INDEST Consortium are being given under Digital Library Section.

A good example of the content management of a library website as fig. 1

Fig. 1: Library Website

6. Conclusion

In this work, content management and usability of an academic websites have been examined. In the process of doing so, authors learned about the problem that users have in interacting with the library web site. How information is categorized and labeled for library web sites seems to be not intuitive for users. As important, people did not know where to begin. The website provided a directory-style listing of options but failed to provide sufficient advice on how to interact with tools, services, and produces.

So far, a special form of evaluation of library and information center web sites has not been available. Though there is a growing number of ways and means of contacting users and showing the library's services, the library website should always be the main starting-point for searches and the one virtual "entrance" to the library. The main criteria for quality for a library website can be summarized thus adequate language; clear structure; options for different user groups; all information up-to-date and short, concise information.

The best preparation for creating a website is for library staff to spend some time by surfing the websites of similar libraries or organizations. This activity will give the staff an indication of what works and what does not, what is interesting to the online visitor and what is not pleasant to use. The library authority also needs to be identifying the skilled manpower and form a web team who will be responsible to present library to the global community through WWW.

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