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## Role of the Library Homepage as a New Platform for Library Services: A Case Study

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### Abstract

*There is an enormous range of available information in the world. In electronic environment many libraries have created a presence on the Web, but have we really thought about why we want to be there? Should library Web sites be grounded in the past or look forward to the future, or both? This paper has tried to focus on various issues related to the object and importance of the library homepage, how to create, what is requirement etc for library homepage. The role of the library is to select, acquire, organize and make available an appropriate subset of this information. Proving electronic information to its users has become a common feature of many special libraries through their homepages. A case study of IUCAA library's homepage is presented. It discusses how IUCAA Library has taken challenges of the new emerging technologies and increasing demands of its users by adopting electronic information sources and services and how it generates value added electronic information for its users. This paper also describes the important electronic sources in astronomy & astrophysics, which is used in IUCAA library.*

**Keywords :** Library Services, Library Homepage, Portal

### 0. Introduction

In the Internet era, for a library to be recognized and its services to be made available globally creation of a homepage is indispensable. Internet is bringing sweeping changes in most of our daily activities. It is offering access to news, banking services, business opportunities, mails, educational facilities and technology online at our desktops, laptops, and mobile phones. This has changed the overall ways and means, mode and methods of information dissemination. Here the only mantra is how fast the information can be sent to the end users. Like other fields, in the field of library and information science too it has made a great impact. It has changed the overall concept of libraries, role of librarians and has shown the library professionals how the information can be disseminated to their clientele at minimum cost, effort and time. With the fast growth and easy accessibility to Internet, libraries either now or in the near future have to develop their own homepages to meet the wide information requirements of their clientele. Considering the huge costs involved in developing the necessary infrastructure such as owning and maintaining the web servers, high bandwidth Internet connection, the required software, and the technical know-how many libraries, with little knowledge of HTML, librarians can develop homepages utilizing the services of web space providers like Geocities, Tripod, etc. (Pujar, and Manjunath, 2000)

### 1. Role/Importance of Library Homepage

It should be clear to all of us that the object of a library Web site is connected to the type of library represented. My own context is a special library, so the mission of special library's homepage is provides library service to scientists/Associates/Visitors etc of the Institutions for their information needs. The research library's homepage can support research in higher education through providing access to Internet research tools and full text databases, e-resources virtual observatory etc. It can support user's information requirement through online full text reserves and other means as OPAC, Online journals, e-archive, databases etc. Special libraries generally need to service their parent organization, and the library homepage will reflect this through focusing almost exclusively on the parent institution's users and visitors. (Stover, Mark 1997)

### 1.1 Role of librarian/information scientists for library homepage

Librarians seeking to apply their traditional role of selection, organization, and dissemination to the Web environment can use some of the following examples in their work. Selection of information resources can be reflected on the homepage through creating links to other relevant sites as well as creating links to full text electronic resources. In fact, many librarians are beginning to view Web "collection development" as a task equally important to traditional (print-based) collection building. It is in some ways more challenging, given the changing nature of Web resources.

Providing access to information can be reflected on the Web through the following: internal search engines, online reference service, stable links to other Internet sites, access to the online catalog and other databases, basic information about the library (hours, staff, collections, etc.), and timely updates. Perhaps the most important of these is access to the online catalog of the library's local collection(s). While many library Web sites provide a telnet-based connection to their online catalog, a growing number are transitioning to a Web-based interface. A Web-based searchable online catalog is preferable in several respects: it provides a consistent and standardized interface for the user, it avoids the necessity of a helper application on the client side, and (in many cases) it allows more flexibility for the user in manipulating data retrieved from the online catalog (Stover, Mark, 1997).

## 2. Basic Requirements to Make/Maintain for Library Homepage

To start designing and developing a homepage, one must have the following hardware and software:

1. PC (Minimum Pentium series- I, II, III, IV)
2. Modem
3. Internet connection (Dialup/Leased line/VSAT)
4. Internet browser (Netscape/Internet Explorer)
5. Basic knowledge of HTML

Telephone connection if you have does not have leased line connection

### 2.1 Creation of Homepage

The creation of homepage/website and its subsequent hosting involves certain major steps such as, signing with the web space provider if you are planning to put your page through web space provider, creating contents, uploading the site by using FTP (File Transfer Protocol) and so on. Each one of these has to be dealt carefully to make the website live and interesting. (Pujar, and Manjunath, 2000)

## 3. Characteristics & Contents of Library Homepage

Initially one gets puzzled what to put on it. It is better to do some homework before actually creating the contents. This can be done by going through WebPages of other libraries, which are already available on the net. To start with, one can include the following information under four major categories:

### A. Information

- ✍ Brief introduction about library
- ✍ Details about library collection

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- ✍ Library working hours
  - ✍ About library staff
  - ✍ List of Current journals
  - ✍ Journal Holdings list (Back volumes)
  - ✍ Monthly additions of documents
- B. Services
- C. Databases available etc
- D. Links to other sites (with a disclaimer)

To create a homepage with above-mentioned contents, one needs to have an HTML editor. This editor is basically a helper program that lets the developer to manipulate the codes. These editors are popularly called as WYSIWYG editors. The term WYSIWYG stands for 'What You See Is What You Get'. These editors basically hide HTML codes and make creation of HTML pages a simple process just like word processing documents. But there is a limitation with these editors as it is not possible to do everything with HTML. Netscape composer or Front Page Express can also be used to create a HTML page. These come along with Netscape and Internet Explorer respectively. The HTML pages can also be created using MS-WORD. People who are familiar with HTML are recommended to use text editors such Norton Editor, EDIT or NOTEPAD and then insert the HTML commands to get the desired output (Pujar and Manjunath, 2000)

To set up a good website/homepage, one need not be a good designer. One can start with a simple design, without harsh colors and graphics. Usually harsh colors and too much of graphics make the web page unattractive and takes lot of time to get loaded. It is suggested not to put all the information on one page, instead try to make multiple pages and provide links to each other so that visitors can easily move from one page to another. Always it is desirable to name the first page as index.htm or index.html, as most of the web servers treat it as the first page. It is something like an index to the site. At the end of the first page, it is desirable to provide a link to the e-mail address, so those visitors can send their suggestions, comments or query instantly.

#### **4. Electronic Information & User's Need**

E-information may be broadly defined as " The information stored in a medium, which requires an electronic device to read /access its contents. Information stored in different electronic media such as CD-ROMs, Floppies, Magnetic Tape, Video, Hard – disk itself of PC which can be retrieved with help of Personal Computer, CD/VIDEO player, OPAC catalogue, online Journals, Archive, databases such as ADS, PROLA, VizieR catalogue etc.

The development of computer technology and the communication technology and mainly INTERNET has revolutionized the information provision process. The users are required to be well informed about the latest technical developments and their information requirement has become very complex. The users require information very quickly and they also need the information in readily usable format. In the fields of Astronomy and astrophysics, amount of information that is generates is tremendous and it is very difficult to cater to all the information needs of our users. Exploring the information technical developments and proving electronic information needs of the users can satisfy the extensive satisfied to a large extent. Handling information electronically has helped in providing fast and efficient information.

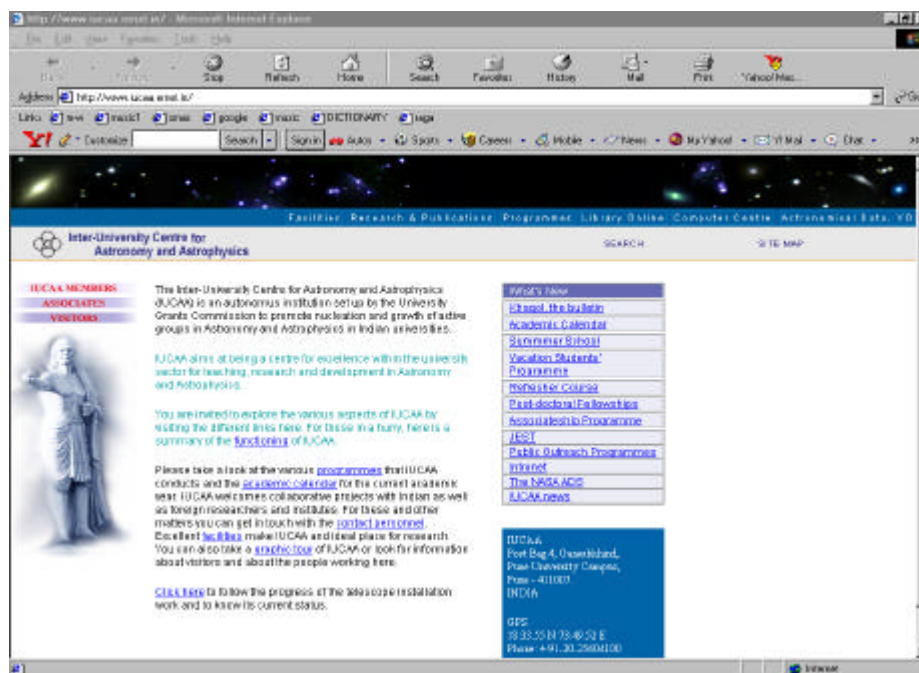
#### 4.1 Users services through library homepage

The following services can be provided through well-developed/mentioned library homepage.

1. Information about library, its collection, services to its users.
2. More information can be provided through linking of databases related to their interest for library users.
3. Current Awareness Services
4. OPAC: Online Public Access Catalogue
5. Online / Electronic Journals:
6. Contents page Service to remote users
7. Others web-based services to its users.

#### 5. About IUCAA & Its Library

The Inter University Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA) is an institution set up on 1989 by the University Grants Commission to promote nucleation and growth of active groups in Astronomy and Astrophysics in Indian Universities. IUCAA is a national autonomous institution and aims at being a center for excellence within the University sector for teaching, research and development in Astronomy and Astrophysics. IUCAA is a premier Scientific Institute engaged in promote nucleation and growth of active groups in Astronomy and Astrophysics in Indian Universities as well as engaged in research in frontier areas of Astronomy and Astrophysics. Its holds a prominent position among the top few institutions in the World. The Institute boasts of more than 60 scientists from IUCAA as well as from Indian Universities, who rate among the top scientists in India and many of them are held high esteem worldwide.



Slide No. 01: IUCAA Home page (<http://www.iucaa.ernet.in>)

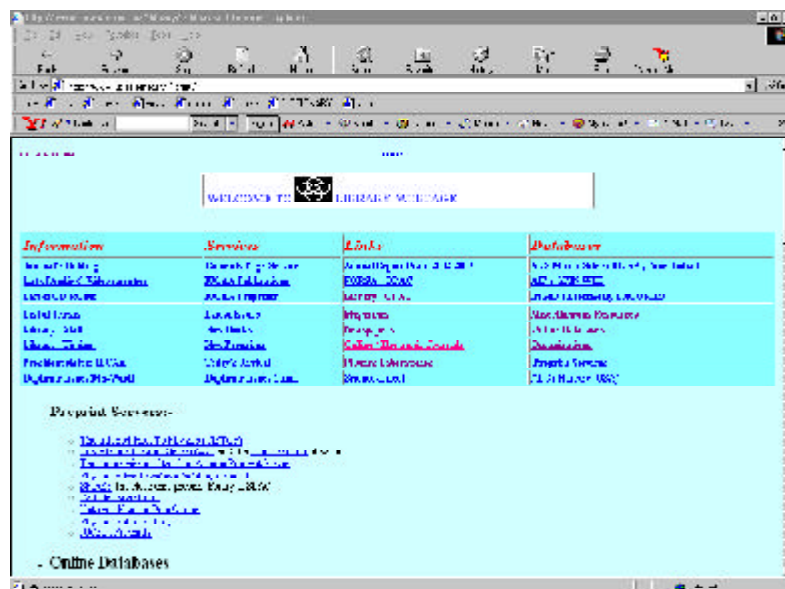
## 5.1 IUCAA Library

IUCAA library was established in the year 1989, as part of institution with following objects:

- ✍ To act as information/ reference center in Astronomy & Astrophysics and allied subjects for researcher and associates/visitors who is coming across the country for their research works.
- ✍ To collect, process, store and disseminate information in the field of Astronomy and astrophysics and allied subjects

The IUCAA Library is one of the most advanced modern libraries specializing in astronomy and astrophysics in India. It was the first library in the country to dispense with the card index in favor of a computerized database. Serving as the main resource library in astronomy and astrophysics in the university sector, it is extensively used both on and off campus. In the latter mode it provides references, copies etc. of relevant literature to users from all over India. The object of the library is to support the main objectives and to achieve the goal of parent organization. The books include major collections of astronomy and astrophysics, physics, mathematics, statistics, computer science and electronics, and also a representative collection of books from other branches of science. The library subscribes to important journals in the field of astronomy and astrophysics, many of which are received by airmail. The library is providing excellent service to the in-house faculty as well as to the associates, visitors, students, amateur astronomers, and teachers coming to IUCAA. It is extensively used both on and off campus. In the latter mode it provides references, copies etc. of relevant literature to users from all over India. Contents pages Service being provided to University community by IUCAA Library. The main purpose of IUCAA library is to promote the economical and efficient delivery of information within the university-sector for teaching, research and development in astronomy and astrophysics. It also encourages co-operative efforts for research resources, computing and communications network. Library also strengthens communication and collaboration between research and educational communities. Library takes a national leadership role in the generation and dissemination of knowledge in areas of strategic importance to India in the field of astronomy and astrophysics and also contributes to the lifelong learning opportunities to of all users of the community.

## 5.2 IUCAA Library Home Page:



Slide No. 2 : IUCAA Library Home Page (<http://www.iucaa.ernet.in/~library>)

### 5.3 Features of IUCAA Library Homepage:

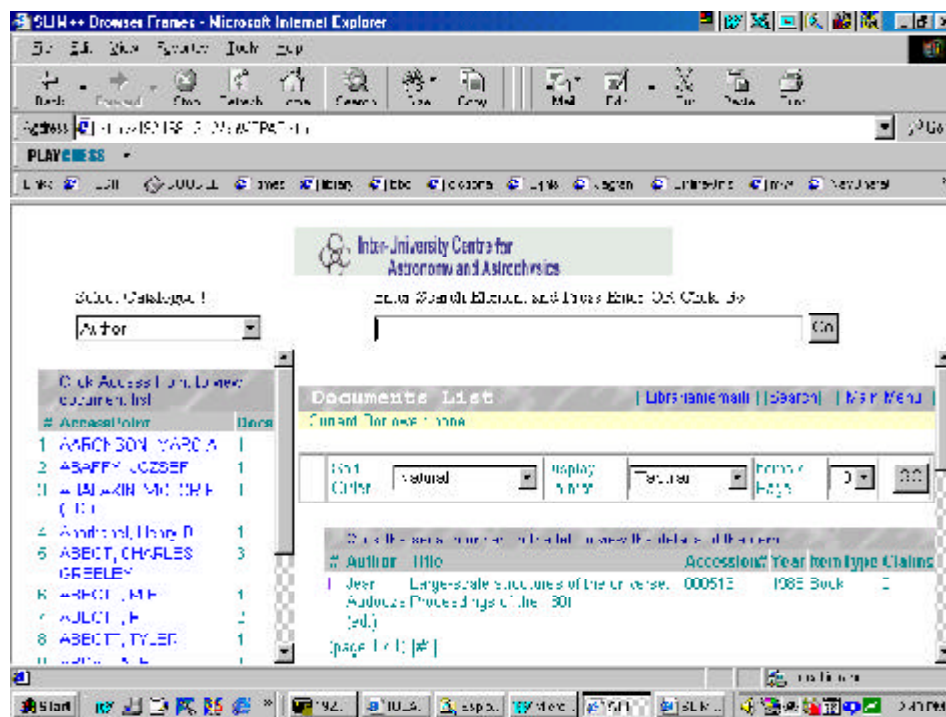
1. Library related information to users as about library, holding of journals, list of thesis, list of audio/video material, list of available CD-ROMS, list of available duplicate issues of journals, which may required by others library, information of library staff, library timing etc.
2. Services: This part of homepage has been given information about Current Awareness Services, which are given to its users, such as list of today's arrival, list of latest issues available in library, list of IUCAA preprints/Research papers, list of IUCAA publications, List of new books which is recently added in the library, information about contents page services which is given to remote users such as IUCAA Associates/Visitors.
3. Links: In the IUCAA library homepage various types of links has been linked to users as IUCAA OPAC, FORSA OPAC, list of Online journals subscribed by IUCAA library, list of magazines, list of newspapers etc.
4. Databases: In library homepage various databases also has been links which is frequently used by its users such as: ADS (Astronomical Data System of NASA), AIPs SPIN WEB, e-archive from lan.archive.org, PROLA, Astronomy & Astrophysics Abstracts, Annual Review of A & A, E-print archive, SISSAT.IT Preprint server, SPIRES HE-E-Server, ADS digital library, list of FORSA members with its subscribes journals, science-direct and many others importance archive databases related to A & A.

The homepage of library helps to develop interaction with other libraries. Let to know users about its collection, services, rules, and procedures other libraries such as dealing with same interest as FORSA groups are getting enough interactions among themselves by their homepage.

In the process of providing right information to the right reader at the right time to keep open mind it adapt the new technologies mainly Computers & communications. Libraries have often been among the first departments within an organization to use computers to automate housekeeping activities and were able to use the potential of information technology to access remote databases.

### 5.4 OPAC: Online Public Access Catalogue

The complete database of the library documents is available electronically. IUCAA library's OPAC can be accessed through INTRANET as well as through INTERNET (<http://libibm.iucaa.ernet.in>) other than library itself.



Slide no. 03: OPAC at IUCAA Library (<http://libbm.iucaa.ernet.in/>)

## 5.5 Online / Electronic Journals

Libraries having online access to electronic journals are suggested to link such journals through their homepage so that the individual user need not remember addresses of all the sites. IUCAA library has subscribed 130 journals. Out of 130, around 100 are available online in the full-text format in addition to the print subscription. IUCAA library's E-journals homepage provides link to about 110 journals, both subscribed and free. Till 1997 there were only traditional print subscriptions. At present around 110 journals can be accessed online. Though the access is through IP authentication for most of the journals, a few of them require password for full-text access. All the subscribed journals are available to the members in IUCAA domain; where as the journal in different IRC's can be accessed based on username and password. The library homepage facilitates the users by giving access to the individual journal homepages, well-maintained links, thus avoiding the hassle of remembering the password or the URL required. Further, some journals can be referred online at four more stations of IUCAA by username & password authentication, namely IRC's Cochin, Raipur, and New Delhi & Darjeeling. The dynamic IP addressing and access has given us the benefit of reaching these electronic journals, from different physical locations, just by subscribing a single copy of the print journal. IUCAA library homepage can access by following site: <http://www.iucaa.ernet.in/~library/Online.html> (Online/Electronic Journal's homepage at IUCAA Library)



Slide no. 04: Online Journal's Homepage at IUCAA Library  
(<http://www.iucaa.ernet.in/~library/Online.html>)

Library homepage has to be update on regular basis and information has to be given to its valuable users for their update.

## 6. Conclusion

Users requirement is basically depended on their research areas he/she has selected. User expectations have changed in the context of time, space & effort. Users are beginning to expect document Delivery rather than bibliographic pointers. New information technologies and electronic communication facilities provide opportunities for libraries to play an even more prominent role in the support of teaching, learning and research than before. The object of the library homepage will depend on its parent organization and its clientele. Academic, public, and special libraries will all have different objects, and sometimes-local considerations will impact the nature of a library's object. In any case, library Web site designers must have a clear understanding of the library's mission before embarking on construction of the site. Here an effort has been made to describe how a basic library homepage can be created at minimum cost without investing on web servers and related software. This may not be an exhaustive article where- in one may find every thing on web page development under one roof. Using other programming languages and software such as JAVA, PERL, etc can do future development of homepage.



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