

# **A Study of Resource Sharing and Networking of North Indian University Libraries**

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## **Abstract**

The study provides an idea about the availability of library resources, facilities and services of North Indian university libraries. By studying the 12 central university libraries in northern region of India and thereby to develop those libraries, the study has proposed a model/plan named as NIULNET (North Indian University Libraries Network). The main function of NIULNET is to improve the services of libraries of northern region by the way of resource sharing and networking. Again, the study puts some light on the organizational structures and work process of NIULNET.

**Keywords:** Resource Sharing, North-Indian University Libraries, NIULNET (North Indian University Libraries Network),

## **1. Introduction**

The developments in information and communication technology have led to the ascent of knowledge and information. We are living in an era of information revolution, where information and knowledge are increasing at a rapid speed. Information needs of users are also increasing and diversifying. Traditionally, libraries that were the only sources of such information now seem unable to satisfy the entire range of information needs of users as the budgets are shrinking. In view of the information and publication revolution, the prices of publications are rising, monopoly of commercial publishers and declining library budgets are compelling libraries to think of resource sharing. Subject specialization and user diversifications are additional factors favoring resource sharing via networking.

The rationale for this study arose from the fact that the library resources of many of the North Indian university libraries were insufficient to support users as well as teaching and research programmes of these universities. The exponential growth of information and the rate at which it is growing in the form of printed and electronic materials have created an uncontrollable and unmanageable situation. It was realized that one way to overcome these problems could be to set up a programme of coordination and cooperation among libraries so that availability of resources and services may be maximized and the expenses may be minimized.

## **2. Objectives of the Study**

Objectives for the purpose of this study are three-fold:

1. To study the library resources, facilities and services of North Indian University Libraries.
2. To ascertain the feasibility of resource sharing and networking and also to determine the areas where resource sharing can be resorted to with advantage.

3. To develop a plan for resource sharing and networking among the university libraries in North India.

### **3. Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited to 12 central university libraries in North Region of India, their names are: 1. Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (GNDU); 2. Punjabi University, Patiala (PbiU.); 3. Panjab University, Chandigarh (PU); 4. Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla (HPU); 5. University of Jammu (JU); 6. University of Kashmir, Sri Nagar (KU); 7. Jawaharlal University, New Delhi (JU); 8. University of Delhi, Delhi (DU); 9. Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra (KUK); 10. Maharishi Dayanand University, Rohtak (MDU); 11. University of Rajasthan, Jaipur (RU) and 12. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati University, Ajmer (MDSU). Deemed and Specialized (Technical, Medical and Agriculture) university libraries are not included and this study is also limited in the sense that the respondents have given their views in the situation prevailing at the time of survey.

### **4. Research Methodology**

Relevant data was generated through circulating questionnaires, conducting interviews and via analysis of the literature. To achieve objectives of the study, Library survey was conducted for the 12 sample university libraries and there was almost complete response received from these all universities. Interviews were held with a few members of the staff who were dealing with collection development, technical processing and reader services, the librarians/library in charges, and select group of users for all university libraries concerned with the research questions under this study. Interview was also conducted with the Director and Network Manager of one successful library network. The analysis of the literature was done to ascertain information on various aspects of resource sharing and networking. Collected data was processed through computer. Various statistical and mathematical techniques were used for data analysis.

### **5. Findings of the Study**

Following are the main findings of this study:

- ◆ Among the sampled universities, University of Delhi, Delhi is the oldest one, established in 1922 and the Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati University, Ajmer is the latest one, established in 1987. All the universities except Panjab University have established and developed their own libraries almost since the year of their establishment.
- ◆ As far as the manpower is concerned, University of Delhi is the best equipped institution with the largest number of manpower (406) including 108 library professionals working in it and the Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati University is the weakest one having the lowest number of staff (15) which includes 11 library professionals also.
- ◆ All the universities concerned have 81945 library users. The Kurukshetra University occupies the first place with 10697 (13.05%) users and the Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati University has the lowest ranking with 1201 (1.47%) of users.

- ◆ With regard to lending of books, teaching staff is given top priority with books being issued for a maximum period of 32.42 days followed by the researchers, students, non teaching staff and others users respectively in all the universities.
- ◆ All the university libraries are located in separate buildings on the university campuses and equipped with telephone, computer and reprographic facilities. Eleven libraries have the facility of fax and the Internet, 10 have CD Writer, Scanners, Projectors and telex are operational in 9, 8, 3 universities respectively. Micro copying and microfilm camera are established by the libraries of Guru Nanak Dev University & Punjabi University and University of Jammu respectively.
- ◆ DDC scheme of classification is most popular followed by CC. AACR2 is mostly used for cataloguing and Sears List is followed for subject heading. The large chunks of universities are computerized as far as the charging and discharging systems are concerned, and their data bases format is CCF.
- ◆ All the libraries are offering reference as well as reprographic services. Referral service and inter library loan facilities are available in 91.67% of universities whereas the Internet and guidance for educational & recreational material is offered by 83.33% of Universities. 75% of the institutions are providing CAS and user education, 50% are giving SDI while project planning & decision making is done only in 41.67% libraries.
- ◆ As far as the financial allocations are concerned, there is a perceptible increase in allocation in almost all the universities during the last five years. University of Delhi has earmarked the highest amount for books, periodicals, salaries and administrative expenses in 2007-08 (Rs.125, 301 and 506.92 lakhs respectively), whereas the Guru Nanak Dev University has topped in funding the audio-video materials (Rs.75000). However the allocation towards other reading materials, preservation and maintenance are almost negligible in all the universities.
- ◆ In respect of collection of documents, the University of Delhi tops with 1176600 current stocks of books, 212814 bound periodicals, 15529 dissertations, 6272 audio-video materials and 1285 current subscribed periodicals, whereas Kurukshetra University tops in manuscript collection (5074). The MDU and MDSU are at the lowest position as far as the collection of documents is concerned.
- ◆ Availability of computers is a pre-requisite for the library automation and networking. Kurukshetra University is best equipped with 205 computers of which 195 are connected with the Internet facility. It is followed by University of Delhi (160) and Jawaharlal Nehru University (104). University of Rajasthan is at the lowest rank with 5 computers with the Internet facility. Interestingly, the HPU library is running without the Internet connectivity.
- ◆ Computerization of Library operations is not similar for all categories of operations. Cataloguing and OPAC are dominant in the automation process. The acquisition, circulation and periodical sections are on their way to automation process but not with the same vigor as the cataloguing and OPAC operations are.
- ◆ Regarding the knowledge of computer operation of the library staff, the DU tops followed by the JNU and Kashmir universities. The HPU is almost devoid of computer knowledge with only 3 persons in the library being familiar with computer. People who got training in library automation

and networking are the highest in JNU (25) followed by JU (12), DU (11) and so on. The lowest number of computer knowing people who joined such programmes are in RU, MDSU and HPU.

◆ In order to find the extent of each cooperative activity, the libraries were asked to report the state of cooperation (a) within the university, (b) among universities, (c) with others types of libraries. It was found that cooperation in inter-library loan, photocopying, delivery service and education is 100% and it is 92% in union catalogue and union list of periodicals within university category. So far as the category cooperative activities among universities is concerned, union catalogue and union list of periodicals are 100%, interlibrary loan, photocopying and delivery service are 66.67%, and education is 58.33%. Interlibrary loan, union catalogue, union list of periodicals, photocopying and delivery service are reported to be 50% with other types of libraries. The online form of union catalogue is the most popular among the sample universities and is followed by 8 universities. Whereas the CD format is followed by the three universities and the printed format is followed by HPU.

◆ All libraries are member of the UGC Infonet Consortium along with three which are also members of the INDEST Consortium. All libraries are connected with INFLIBNET together with six that are interlinked with DELNET. Almost all types of users request for interlibrary loan except the non teaching staff.

◆ In order to fulfill the requests received from users for all materials, the response was received from 9 libraries out of 12 libraries. Jawaharlal Nehru University topped in fulfilling the requests of the users (98.37%), whereas Kurukshetra University ranked the lowest in fulfilling only 50% of the requests.

◆ It was found that all the university libraries are interested in resource sharing and networking of North Indian university libraries. The potential areas of interest for 33 cooperative activities were grouped into eight main functions: acquisitions, cataloguing/processing, interlibrary loan, reference service, delivery services, storage/preservation, electronic communication and education/research. In examining the mean which indicates the average degree of the desirability (highly desirable, desirable and not desirable) for each activity within each main function, it was found that for the acquisition function, all activities were desirable. For the cataloguing/processing all activities were highly desirable but the high rank (2.50) is for union list of serials. For the interlibrary loan function, four activities ranked highly desirable, but photocopying service ranked as highly desirable (2.83). In the reference service function, the means show that all the four activities are highly desirable, but the abstracting and indexing service is ranked as highly desirable (2.67). For the delivery services, both activities are desirable. A machine readable database (2.83) was considered more favorable than a special truck or mobile van delivery system (2.33). For the storage/ preservation function, both activities are desirable. In the electronic communication functions, five activities (E-mail, Bulletin Boards, Fax Transmissions, Teleconferencing, and Video Conferencing) are highly desirable but one activity telex transmission (1.00) is not desirable. For the education/training function, both activities personnel training and joint research projects are highly desirable (2.50).

- ◆ The degree of importance (very high, high, moderate, low and very low) for overcoming each of six cooperative problems, they are rated as follows: lack of institutional leadership and inadequate finance (4.08), lack of spirit of cooperation (3.92), communication barrier (3.33), lack of planning (3.17) and inadequate resources (3.00).
- ◆ Out of 12 university libraries, 11 libraries are prepared to join network and 10 libraries are ready to extend financial support for a network.

## **6 Conclusions**

- ◆ The major finding of the survey which was carried out to find the potential for the library resource sharing via networking has helped the investigators to reach a few workable conclusions. The sample universities were considered as homogenous groups as far as the courses they provide are concerned. In this group, there is a combination of strong and weak libraries. To give the best resources and service to its users, the strong libraries can help the weak libraries by sharing their collection through network.
- ◆ It has been observed that there are many libraries which have duplication of the reading materials. The rational investment could be made by resource sharing and networking which may help to avoid the duplication of the library material. It can save a lot of funds, for investing elsewhere to additional material required enriching the libraries.
- ◆ Other findings of the survey indicate that interest in library cooperation among the North Indian university librarians appears to be increasing. It is evident that there were six cooperative activities carried out among libraries and these include; interlibrary loan, union catalogue, union list of serials, photocopying, delivery service and education. However, most of these activities have not yet become operational among all universities. Moreover, the finding on the part of network opinion survey indicated that of thirty three activities listed, twenty two ( e-mail, photocopying services, machine readable database, reciprocal borrowing privileges, interlibrary loan for rare materials, abstracting and indexing services, bulletin boards, teleconferencing, video conferencing, reference services, subject bibliographies, fax transmission, union list of serials, interlibrary loan for non-print materials, personnel training, joint research projects, referral service, delivery services through special truck/mobile van, union shelf list, union list of monographic materials, centralized cataloguing unit and ISBD for network cataloguing) of them were rated as highly desirable, ten activities (acquisition of journals, acquisition of specific area, acquisition of non print and print materials, storage/preservation of monographic materials and journals, acquisition of books, union exchanging list, clearing house and central office order) were desirable and one activity (telex transmission ) was not desirable. The survey showed that all of the librarians/ library in charges expressed their interest in joining a university library network. They further indicated that thirty two activities were priority activities in which they would be interested in participating.
- ◆ The Interviews with the librarians indicate that increasing volume of literature (Print and Electronic forms), increasing specializations, subject diversifications, growing user expectations ,

rising costs of publications, shrinking budgets, etc. are making it difficult and impracticable on the part of libraries to develop an effective and balanced collection of resources. Hence, there is an urgent need for resource sharing via networking among the libraries to cater to the information needs of the users in a better way.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations are being put forward on the basis of the findings of this study:

- ◆ A network model is needed on the basis of all the findings of the study. The hierarchical (bus or tree like) topology is recommended for NIULNET (North Indian University Libraries Network).
- ◆ Communication could either be via broadband or satellite links. The CCF format is recommended for NIULNET.
- ◆ In the organizational structure, the Secretary of the University Grants Commission (UGC) would act as chairman of the network and coordinator of the network will act as secretary of the network. The Board of Directors would consist of 12 members: one from each of the twelve universities i.e. Librarian / Library Incharge.
- ◆ The Panjab University or Jawaharlal Nehru University is recommended to act as host center in this region. It will be a new organization. The UGC could provide the grant for the host center and the participants will have to make their own arrangements for the hardware, software and other required peripherals. NIULNET staff will provide training to the staff of the participant libraries. On the basis of existing facilities, the network may offer its services in three stages: electronic mail based services; catalogue-based services and acquisition and documentation services.
- ◆ The networking of the libraries of the North Indian universities will take place in three phases: The first phase of computer culture is established in the universities; in the second phase the network would be established and sample university libraries will be interlinked and in the third phase, other libraries in this region will be interlinked with the network, and the network would handshake with other local, national and international network.

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