

# Transformation of Indian Libraries: Review Based on Selected Library Websites

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## *Abstract*

*Indian libraries have witnessed a transformation during the past two decades. The paradigm shift has been driven by Information Technology enabled services and machine learning. New services have been introduced in the area of remote access, 24x7 access, use of Web 2.0 for interaction and feedback and all these make the library use more convenient and enriching. Many new products like digitized documents, pictures and audio-visual documents have been made available during the past few years. One of the most important changes has been in the area of library marketing for which the Web 2.0 serves as a vital tool. Services such as SDI have been made more efficient now with tools like RSS, Atom and through email alerts. This paper presents a study of 71 library web sites which showcase the varieties of services the libraries are rendering now. The libraries represented in the study are public, academic, special, circulating and children's libraries. The paper includes recommendations for further improvement of library services.*

**Keywords :** Indian Libraries, Library Outreach, Library Transformation, Library Websites, Marketing Libraries

## **1. Introduction**

There have been concreted efforts by the LIS professionals in India to transform the libraries in the past two decades. Particularly this transformation is noticed as an impact of information technology, installation of cyber infrastructure and automation. Since the early 1990s, there has been a spurt in introducing technologies to the Indian libraries. As a result, several library automation packages came up, some were supported by government agencies, some were the personal initiative of individual librarians, while the others were by private enterprises. During the middle of 1990s, the Internet started getting populer in the country and the librarians saw the potential to adopt the technology in order to supplement the library resources. Besides, around 2001 onwards, several open source software for library automation and digital libraries also were launched. Another driving factor is the all pervading effect of IT wherein users are used to technology in every part of life. We notice increasing application of IT everywhere, whether it is in bank transactions, government transactions or purchase of goods online, or booking the train/bus/air tickets.

Librarians have quickly risen to the occasion by adopting new technologies, which enables not only providing better facilities but also introduce so many new services, which were not available earlier. Library consortiums including INFLIBNET, Delnet, INDEST, National Knowledge Resource Consortium (CSIR) and HELINET have played an active role in driving the transformation. Their role included professional discussions and knowledge sharing, conducting workshops and refresher courses, providing e-resources funded by the government, facilitating document delivery services, joint negotiation for subscription prices with publishers, User education programs, compilation of union lists of journals, etc.

## 2. Present Study

In the present study, an effort has been made to survey the range of new innovation brought in by Indian libraries since the last two decades. We went through about 300 library websites which included all the different types of libraries, viz., public, academic (colleges and universities), special, school, children and circulating libraries.

We have chosen libraries which adopted the new ways of providing information and marketing, which are not found in traditional libraries. We specifically identified the libraries which have at least two of the following eight features;

1. use of IT for marketing of information (Information about library events, new book lists, jacket displays)
2. new kind of information is made available (eg audio/video files, online tutorials )
3. e-resources made available (remote access as well)
4. interactive facility is made available (eg feedback, contact us, ask the librarian, blogs etc)
5. in house digitization has been done (eg scanned e-books, question papers etc)
6. institutional repositories has been implemented
7. web 2.0 applications adopted
8. other innovations, e.g., location map, virtual tour, picture gallery, OPAC, etc.

Total of 71 libraries were found to have at least two or more of the above features and they were examined in detail in order to find out what innovative features have been implemented by them. Remaining about 230 library sites were left out since they were too brief and did not provide details of their services. Total number of libraries by their type is shown in below table.

Type of library	Number
Academic	40
Circulating Library	6
Special Library	7
Children's Library	3
Public Library	11
School Library	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>71</b>

A list of studied library websites for this paper is included in the Annexure at the end of this paper.

### **3. Innovations found in Indian Libraries**

#### **3.1 WebOPAC**

Total 67 libraries (94%) have Web OPACs and the users are able to know the library collection, availability of books on shelves and also other facilities such as online reservation.

#### **3.2 New ways of Marketing Library Resources**

One of the important developments since two decades has been the use of library websites for marketing the services (NOONSHINFARD and ZIAEI, 2011). 38 libraries (53.5%) use the web for marketing the new arrival list of books which are periodically uploaded on the library sites. Out of these, 21 libraries have either given the image of book jackets or have given link to the publisher's sites for the books. Some of the libraries such as MDI also provide the abstract of the book contents.

29 libraries use the web for providing information about the library events. Examples of events include: quiz of the week, launch of website, conference/workshops held, book exhibitions, training programs held in library, inauguration of mobile services, book fair, display of withdrawn books, etc. In Children libraries like Kitz Funtazy (Chennai), ToyZ Day Out (Chennai) and Nutty Newton (Bangalore) libraries, pictures of recent toys added were also put up on the website. School libraries such as Kendriya Vidyalaya (Madurai, Kanzhikode and Trivandrum) adopt marketing tools such as naming best reader of the week, best book of the month, author of the week, best reader of the month, etc.

#### **3.3 Integration of Multimedia Resources**

One of the important contributions of the technology in libraries has been to integrate the multi-media contents and provide remote access to them. Direct link to multimedia content has been given in the library websites such as IIT Kharagpur (online tutorials), Kendriya Vidyalaya, Trivandrum (literary videos and annual day functions), American embassy school library, Delhi (educational video links). Also some libraries such as IIM Kozhikode, NAL Bangalore, NML Jamshedpur, IIT Madras, DAIICT Gandhinagar and AIIMS Delhi have provided the list of audio/video resources available in the library.

#### **3.4 Online Access to e-resources**

One of the important changes since two decades has been the providing of direct access to e-resources (GRAPHERY and WHITE, 2012). Out of 71 libraries, 49 libraries (69%) have provided direct access to one or the other kind of e-resources. The varieties of e-resources include: e-theses (6 libraries), e-books (32 libraries), e-journals (44 libraries), own publications (1 library), e-patent access (1 library) and e-standard (1 library). Though one can download the required information, in most of the cases, the e-resources are IP based and are available on the institute's intranet. Some libraries have provided links to free e-books and e-journals besides providing subject gateways of free e-resources. E-journals are not only being well used, but, as several studies indicate, they are indeed preferred in comparison to the print resources in academic libraries. (ALI and NISHA, 2011; ROGERS, S. A., 2001; USHARANI, 2010; VASISHTA and NAVIJYOTI, 2011, VIJETA and SHRIVASTAVA, 2010).

### **3.5 Contact us & Feedback Facility**

Out of 71 libraries, 61 libraries (86%) have provided 'Contact Us' facility which provides the details of the senior staff available for contact or assistance. While in some libraries, only the details of the Chief Librarian has been given, in many others, the full details of all the library staff and their department has been given. 21 libraries have provided 'Feedback' facility wherein the user can send his/her views regarding library services, suggestions for improvement, etc.

### **3.6 Online Reference Service**

Online reference service (also termed Ask the Librarian or Virtual Reference Desk) is a replacement for traditional reference service offered in our libraries wherein the library staff provides personalized assistance to the user by looking up various sources and providing pin-pointed information. In online reference service, the user sends the enquiry online, which is answered by the library staff. 9 libraries have provided the online reference service.

### **3.7 Access to in House Digitized Documents**

22 libraries (31%) have provided access to the in-house digitized documents which include question papers, annual reports, own publications, old and rare books, theses, manuscripts, photographs, etc. Most of these materials are open to public and provide an opportunity to showcase the institute's contributions to public besides providing online content for the users.

### **3.8 Institutional Repositories**

22 libraries (31%) have built their own institutional repositories. Out of these, 11 libraries use d-space, while 5 use e-prints and the remaining 6 use other softwares such as bhagirathi, greenstone etc. While most of the libraries have provided public access to the abstracts, a few ones have provided access to the full text to the members of the parent institution. Very few libraries (e.g. IIM, Kozhikode) have provided public access to the full papers for public view.

### **3.9 Use of Web 2.0**

27 libraries (38%) use various tools from web 2.0. Out of them, 13 use blogs to provide information about library events, notices, photographs, author of the week, exhibition etc. 14 libraries use Facebook for interacting with the users and 11 libraries use Twitter and 2 libraries use Linked-in for sharing and updating information. While 6 libraries use Youtube for sharing videos of events held in the institution such as annual programs held, virtual tour of the library, lectures, etc. Four libraries provide chatting facility to interact with the library staff such as Geochat, etc. Nine libraries provide RSS facility which is a sort of selective dissemination of information though these libraries use it for information about library events.

### **3.10 Pictures and Virtual Tours of libraries**

22 (31%) libraries have given the pictures of their libraries which includes events held in the libraries while 5 libraries have provided links to virtual tour of the library either through Youtube or other tools.

### **3.11 Publications of the Institution**

Only 4 libraries have provided list of publications of faculty and staff of the institute including the library staff. One of the libraries has included the list of patents received by the parent institution.

### **3.12 Library Staff Awards**

Tata Institute of Social Sciences has provided the list of awards received by the library staff too on their website.

### **3.13 Floor Maps and Layout Plans**

Only 5 libraries have provided floor maps and layout plans of the library which gives the location of various library materials and service points.

### **3.14 Library Location Maps**

11 libraries provide location maps mostly using Google maps. This helps in location of library especially in large campuses.

### **3.15 Press Clippings**

Only 6 libraries have provided press clippings of the parent institution including events held in the library. Press clipping include both the latest news and the archives.

### **3.16 Special section for Disabled Persons**

TISS, Mumbai and Delhi Public Library provides a special section for disabled library users and this is mentioned in their library site.

### **3.17 Books and Toys on Rent**

Three libraries provide the facility of renting out books and toys on rent. This is a unique facility.

### **3.18 Pick and Drop Facility**

5 libraries provide the facility of pick and drop of books from homes. While four of them are commercial circulating libraries, one of them is a state government library (State Central Library, Chandigarh).

### **3.19 Booking Hall in the Library**

Connemara Public Library, Chennai provides a unique facility of providing halls for both academic and non-academic purposes and the booking can be done online.

### **3.20 Email & SMS Alert Service**

Two libraries are providing alert services either through email or through SMS. These libraries are Kendriya Vidyalaya, Trivandrum and DAIICT, Gandhinagar.

### 3.21 Interview with Authors

American School Library in Delhi gives details of prominent authors who visited the library and their interviews. While in some cases only the text of interview is given, in some other cases, interview video link also has been provided.

### 3.22 Campus Connect & Refer a Friend

Doorstep, a network of circulation libraries spread across various cities in India has a marketing scheme, by name, Campus Connect. In this, reader of the library who promotes the library and gets new members will be given some privileges such as free membership, merchandise and other promotional offers. In Refer a Friend scheme, points will be given to library members who refer or introduces their friends to the library.

## 4. Recommendations

1. Indian libraries are changing fast. A large number of libraries have already become hybrid libraries wherein both print and electronic resources co-exist. However, there are a large number of libraries which are reluctant to integrate electronic resources. For instance, many libraries are reluctant to allow laptops, I-pad, Netbook, Kindle etc. into the library on account of security reasons. Since use of web has become a part of our life, this sort of restrictions need be avoided.
2. While we notice the impact of automation and web in every field in the country, there are still, a large number of libraries who do not have library webpages or even computers. They need to adopt new technologies at the earliest, in order to provide better information service to customers.
3. Library websites need to be prominently placed in the parent institutions' sites which would attract more attention and traffic to the library sites besides improving the image of the library.
4. All library websites need to be kept up-to-date which will help develop their credibility and image.
5. Web 2.0 is a powerful tool not only to market the libraries but also for information outreach. Indian libraries need to use their imagination and apply the Web 2.0 increasingly, though hitherto the applications are very few.
6. Institutional repositories are good initiatives for showcasing institutions' research contributions and to support the open access movement. More libraries need to build their own institutional repositories.
7. One general observation is that, with the introduction of automation systems and the web, staff time is released (or reduced) from doing routine jobs such as reference service, shelving, typing, etc. The released staff time has to be utilized for improving traditional services as well as for developing technology enabled services. For instance, the working hours of the libraries, issue/return hours etc can be enhanced now in most of our libraries since staff time is released from routine tasks.

8. It is a known fact that with the increasing use of web, the footfalls to the print libraries is decreasing day by day. Libraries need to counter the downslide by innovative marketing, such as events, competitions; awards to readers, etc. and the web will serve as a handy tool for publicizing these events.
9. Realizing the fact that web is going to stay, we need to not only provide better facilities for web access in the library (eg WiFi in library with high speed internet), but also need to engage in continuous research in integrating both print and e-resources. While the developments in IT are fast, the challenge is to identify applications which will benefit the library and increase the use of resources.

## 5. Conclusion

During the past two decades, there has been a transformation of libraries in India, whether they belong to public library, special library, academic, school or circulating library. Many Indian libraries have been quick to harness the potential of information technology. The range of new services introduced by Indian libraries during the past two decades are many and the libraries have made a paradigm shift from being mere silent and customer –responsive to proactive and outreaching. New technology has enabled our SDI services to be delivered more efficiently by using tools such as RSS feeds and Atom. Library automation technology has helped in improving the housekeeping efficiency as well as in providing up-to-date information about the library materials and online reference. Greatest impact made by the libraries is in terms of marketing the resources by bringing in web OPAC, blogs, wikis, virtual tours, information about library events and showcasing the library resources over the web.

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