Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) : A Boon for Higher Education in India

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We must accept the computer. We must derive all the benefits it is capable of giving us.

– Dr. S.R. Ranganathan

Introduction

Modern Indian higher education is passing through the phase of Information/Knowledge revolution. In satisfying ever growing information needs of academic community, the Library and Information Networks are playing a great role through resource sharing.

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), USA in its National Programme Document (1975) defines a network as “two or more libraries and or other organizations engaged in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications, for some functional purpose. A network usually consists of formal arrangement whereby materials, information and services provided by a variety of libraries and other organizations are available to all potential users. Libraries may be in different jurisdictions but agree to serve one another on the same basis as each serves its own constituents. Computer and telecommunication may be among the tools used for facilitating communication among them2”. The growth of Library and Information Networks in India is now gaining momentum. INFLIBNET has emerged as a front runner, facilitating automation and networking of academic libraries for resource sharing among libraries using networking and access to information3. The main objective of this study is to assess the role of the INFLIBNET in higher education in India in modern scenario.

Higher Education in India

Indian higher education system is growing at tremendous speed. In the Indian system, higher education includes the education imparted after 10+2 – ten years of primary and secondary education followed by two years of higher secondary education4. With more than 17000 Colleges, 400 Universities, 13 Institutes of national importance and various other vocational institutes, the higher education system in India is one of the largest in the world5.

Library and Information Networks in India

Some of the important and significant networks that exist in India are given below6:


Library Networks (Wide Area): INFLIBNET (1991)

Information Networks (Sectoral): ERNET (1986), VIDYANET, OPNET, SIRNET, BTISNET, DESINET (1986)

Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET)

INFLIBNET is the National network of Indian University Libraries, located in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India.

Introduction

The INFLIBNET’s beginning was made in 1991 as a major programme of University Grants Commission (UGC) under the Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA). The INFLIBNET Centre was established in May 1996 as an independent, autonomous Inter-University Centre (IUC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC) with the target to network all the Academic Libraries of Higher Education in India for promotion of scholarly communication among academicians and researchers.
**Mission and Vision**
INFLIBNET’s mission and vision is as follows:

- Leveraging on the latest technology, create a virtual network of people and resources in academic institutions with an aim to provide effective and efficient access to knowledge through perseverance, innovation and collaboration.
- Provide seamless, reliable and ubiquitous access to scholarly, peer-reviewed electronic resources to the academic community in all educational institution with a focus on services and tools, processes and practices that support its effective use and increase value of this information.
- Build and strengthen ICT infrastructure in educational institution with value added services.
- Develop tools, techniques and procedures for secure and convenient access management enabling users to access information in electronic format from anywhere, anytime.
- Develop resource selection guides and online tutorials for effective delivery and usage of e-resources.
- Facilitate creation of open access digital repositories in every educational institution for hosting educational and research content created by these institutions.

**Activities/Services**

**Union Database Management**

One of the most important activities of the Centre is the development of the Union Catalogue of resources namely “IndCat” which is an important source of bibliographic information that can be used for collection development, inter-library loan as well as for copy cataloguing and retro-conversion of bibliographic records.

**Current Status of IndCat**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Database</th>
<th>No. of Records</th>
<th>No. of Universities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Books</td>
<td>1,06,77,998</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Current Serials</td>
<td>22,471</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Serial Holding</td>
<td>57,523</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Theses</td>
<td>2,20,206</td>
<td>238</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: IndCat: Union Catalogue of Indian Universities, INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad, 2009*

Other than IndCat, INFLIBNET has developed:

i) Experts: 15,880 records with profile of the subject experts serving the Universities.

ii) NISSAT project: 24,000 profiles of the experts in the field of Science & Technology.

**Software Development**

Considering the requirements of academic libraries for library automation, the SOUL (Software for University Libraries), state-of-the-art library management software has been designed and developed by the INFLIBNET Centre. The Current Unicode based SOUL 2.0 has six integrated modules i.e. Acquisition, Cataloguing, Circulation, Serial Control, OPAC and Administration. This is window based software working on client-server architecture. The software adheres to the international standards, i.e. MARC 21, RFID, ISO 2709 and other international bibliographic standards. "The Software has more than 1600 installations across the country."
Human Resource Development and Consultancy

The Centre has organized 483 training programmes, workshops and seminar focusing on the managing library automation and networking and so far 26,927 participants have been benefitted\(^\text{12}\). The Centre has initiated various programmes as part of the human resource development activities such as: CALIS, WANULIP, IRTPLA, SOUL Training Programmes, CALIBER and Convention PLANNER.

UGC-Infonet Internet Connectivity Programme:

Under this programme participating University has signed a quadripartite agreement with UGC, INFLIBNET and ERNET in order to have Internet bandwidth ranging from 256 kbps to 2 mbps using Broadband LL/SCPC/DAMA/FTDMA/RF Open Network Architecture. The INFLIBNET Centre controls and monitors the network and liaisons ERNET, UGC and Universities.

UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium

This consortium provides current as well as archival access to more than 5000 core and peer-reviewed journals and 9 bibliographic databases from 23 publishers and aggregators in different subjects. So far 150 universities out of 171 that come under the purview of UGC have been provided differential access to subscribed e-resources under the consortium\(^\text{13}\). The Electronic resources subscribed by this consortium as follows:


**Information Resources @INFLIBNET**

The articles published in CALIBER and PLANNER proceedings are being uploaded in to the institutional repository IR@INFLIBNET in PDF format and accessible at http://dspace.inflibnet.ac.in. The Repository also has course materials, Newspaper clippings etc. So far it has 500 full-text articles.

**New Initiatives** include Open Source Software R&D, Access Management R&D, Open Access R&D,Web2.0, Lib2.0 etc.

**Publications**


**Conclusion**

The INFLIBNET Centre is a great boon to Indian higher education system in satisfying its information needs. It may be hoped that many more activities/services will be added in the list of the INFLIBNET in future contributing to the progress and prosperity of the country.

**References**

4. [http://www.ugc.ac.in/studindia/programs/structure.html#top](http://www.ugc.ac.in/studindia/programs/structure.html#top) (July 28, 2009)
8. ibid., 2 & 3.
11. Ibid.
12. Ibid., 9