

# **The Need for Digital Library Resources In The Distance Education System In India**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Open and Distance Learning is widely known in the field of education. Its impact on education field is greatly appreciated. It opens all the way to learn through the development of technologies. With the growth of the internet and its viability, there are palpable opportunities for students pursuing distance education to gain access to valuable resources. Digital libraries can offer invaluable services to distance learners. However, it is of the utmost importance to ensure that various web-based technologies are in place in order to support Open and Distance Learners' needs and propensities. Digital libraries play a vital role in the expansion of Distance and Open Learning system in India. In present scenario, Digital Libraries are one of the essential information resource for the students who registered in the distance education system.*

*This paper discuss the importance, ease, need and flexibility of digital libraries for distance learners. The purpose of the proposed study is to analyze the role played by a digital library in the life of students pursuing distance education in India.*

**KEY WORDS:** Distance Learning, Open Learning, Distance Education, Digital Library, Technology, Distance Learners

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the educational world Distance and Open Learning is a well-known system for providing education. This way of education removes all the physical barriers to acquire knowledge. Any person who want to educate him or herself in any particular area or field but due to some certain reasons, he/she cannot accomplish his/her education through regular classes then Open and Distance Learning system is best option for them to continue their studies. Open and Distance education is an excellent way to deliver the knowledge or information to the people who are not physically available to attend the classes in a traditional way of teaching.

Distance education permits learners to access learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both. In distance learning, educators and learners are at different place. Due to some certain reasons which include being unable to continue the study or to get admission in higher studies through regular mode of studies to the students. Hence, the students are getting interested to continue their study through distance mode.

Appropriate education, study from home, excellent quality, less expensive, more flexibility, earning while learning are some reasons to get attention of the students towards distance learning. Due to all these advantages, DL is very popular in India.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Susie Skarl & Darcy Del Bosque (2019) found that mostly students of UNCV College of Urban Affairs are pleased with library resources. They stressed in their study that library needs to take some steps to alert the distance learners about the available services of the library. Library provides many online services but distance learners are not aware about the existed services.

Sayyed Mansoor Hosseini Naghavi & Shima Moradi (2018) described in their research that e-resources are easy to use in Payaam-e-Noor University. Research revealed that digitizing project of the university has resolved user problems, simplified studying and facilitated the distance education system in Iran.

Christopher M. Owusu-Ansah, Antonio Rodrigues and Thomas Van Der Walt (2018) conducted a research on individual factors impacting the usage of digital libraries by distance learners at the University of Education, Winneba in Ghana. The study indicated that distance learners did not need to use digital library resources for their academic tasks. It was exposed that distance learners are more comfortable using print resources. Finally, the study found that most distance learners had not received any training on the usage of digital library resources and this negatively affected their use of digital resources. They suggested that university draws up a policy for academic library and distance education authority. The aim of this policy is to acquire new teaching and learning strategies that enable independent learning. In this teaching process the provision of skills and training go hand in hand with the effective use of technology tools. Digital library managers should collaborate with distance education administrators and faculty to design training programs for distance learners and faculties.

Fredrick Olatunji Ajegbomogun, Rifqah Olufunmilayo Afolake Okunlaya & Mariam Kehinde Alawiye (2017) came up with positive impact for the use of e-learning resources on academic research activities of the students of Nigeria University. The students face some problems such as severe server issues and lack of users' skills that could accelerate effective use of the new technology. They also refer that students should consistently attend the conferences and seminars in order to maintain the adequate use of new technology.

Soojung Kim and Ji Woo Lee (2016) examined in their research that many distance learning universities in Korea do not provide sufficient library resources and services due to a lack of qualified librarians and necessary funds. In their study they ventured a hosting model. In this model, shared applications and resources reside on a central server and users from different universities access them remotely through the interfaces of individual library sites.

Sandra Tury, Lyn Robinson, David Bawden (2015) analysed that practical lessons such as promotion of systems and resources and training in their use are really important for distance learners.

The expectations of the library users go beyond the discovery of biographical data, but the opportunity to browse, navigate and share the resources on which the basics of Library 2.0 are firmly rooted. The advent of Library 2.0 necessitates the phenomenon of library automation that has enhanced the search library catalogues and web portals. Libraries must be inculcated with effective technology to engage the students to dwell into the available library sources. Discovery interfaces when attuned with the library solutions present various advantages, such as, OPACs,

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Web 2.0 qualities with developed search engines on the respective library website with search engine optimisation (SEO) strategies; multilingual provision and advanced search options; one-stop resource portal that includes meta-searching discovery tools; mobile-based features; digital assets curation and management services; personalised service features that are inclusive of alerts, export and e-mail, save, print, mail delivery alerts, notifications and more (Coombs and Hollister, 2014; Dickson and Holly, 2010; Rezaei Sharifabadi, 2006; Haneefa, 2007).

Given the significant growth in India in the higher education sector, Indian academic libraries have accommodated library automation in a comprehensive manner (Kaushik and Kumar, 2013). Although, India is a leading nation that has embraced information technology, however, such a technological influence cannot be perceived in the education sector due to lack of effective programs (Arif and Mahmood, 2012), lack of training and awareness (Rai and Kumar, 2011) and lack of technological inclusion within the libraries due to lack of both, financial and economic resources, lack of compliance and inattentiveness of the library staff; un-helpful nature of the management and admin staff (Balaji Babu and Krishnamurthy, 2012).

The concept of automation is advancing towards a new age wherein data, communities and services are augmented with the help of intelligent applications and functions that aim to provide a centralised, configurable, system of modules that comprehensively interact with one another to replace apparent hurdles on local hardware (Balaji Babu and Krishnamurthy, 2012).

Currently, ILMs software New GenLib which was developed in India is implemented at the Osmania University Library. Similarly, open source ILMs adaptations have been adapted worldwide, Koha being one of them.

In Tamil Nadu, 4028 public libraries which is spread in 32 districts existing three million records and all the cataloguing records supported by KOHA (Balaji Babu and Krishnamurthy, 2012). Various library based software have been reviewed in different states in the study conducted by Balaji Babu and Krishnamurthy (2012).

Library information search has advanced to a resource discovery destination with the advent of digitisation wherein the record of all the resources have to be considered in the library. These resources are unified and integrated seamlessly in the database for the collective use of students wanting to gain access. The search for library resources resonate with the faceted browsing or integrated approaches that are compiled in a vast index that highlights the catalogues, databases, digital collection; searching an encompassed amount of information at once (Thornton-Verma, 2011). Various indigenous private library software like Libsys, Libsoft, Libgenie have been developed in India, however, there is a need to develop them in accordance with the Indian libraries to augment their research discovery process which are presently devoid of programming, cooperating and community network opportunities (Rai and Kumar, 2011).

Various open content platforms are gaining importance due to the availability of study material that can be shared and collaborated in an open environment. Breeding (2009) mentioned the importance of open environment in libraries, "In the early days of library automation, when proprietary systems dominated, the need for standards was paramount since other means of interoperability and data exchange weren't possible. Today's focus on Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), web services, and open source systems make it possible to level of openness far beyond what was feasible in earlier times. In today's world where libraries face incredible challenges to be ever more interconnected within their broader organisations, in cooperative arrangements with other libraries, and with their users, we need to constantly work toward higher levels of openness".

Distance learners and regular students both have access to a plethora of digital resources through the process of digitisation; however, there are various challenges that are faced by students in India due to limited growth in the realm of library automation. Thus, a rigorous approach is required to infuse technology not just within educational institutions but also in libraries that house various sources of knowledge and information.

### **3. DISTANCE EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Distance education has a history of over four decades in India. There has been a vast growth in the number of learners who need education and thus also the corresponding channels of providing education. Due to the constraints of the traditional educational sector, open and distance learning has been found to be a workable alternative strategy in India. Distance Learning in India for higher education began in 1962. University of Delhi is the first university in India to introduce distance learning programs. This education system was initiated in the form of correspondence courses.

After that many universities start offering the correspondence courses in order to fulfill the demand for higher education. The establishment of IGNOU at New Delhi in 1985 has proved to be a *significant milestone in the development of Distance Learning in India*. The percentage of the enrolled students in distance learning programs has gradually increased. After that there are so many universities are open to provide distance education in India.

### **4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Distance learners and regular students both have access to a plethora of digital resources through the process of digitisation; however, there are various challenges that are faced by students in India due to limited growth in the realm of library automation. Thus, a rigorous approach is required to infuse technology not just within educational institutions but also in libraries that house various sources of knowledge and information. This paper discusses the importance, ease, need and flexibility of digital libraries for distance learners. The purpose of the proposed study is to analyze the role played by a digital library in the life of students pursuing distance education in India.

### **5. WHAT IS DIGITAL LIBRARY?**

The digital library is the collection of services and the collection of information objects that support users in dealing with information objects available directly or indirectly via electronic/digital formats and accessible over a network (Leiner, 1998).

“Digital libraries are a set of electronic resources and associated technical capabilities for creating, searching, and using information.” They are an extension and enhancement of information storage and retrieval systems that manipulate digital data in any medium and exist in distributed networks. Almost all digital libraries are made up of a number of virtual elements including the internet and intranets; digitization of materials; access to electronic publications; electronic document delivery; resource sharing; cooperative developments and end user services. (Borgman, 2003)

An informal definition of a digital library is “a managed collection of information, with associated services, where the information is stored in digital formats and accessible over a network.” (Arms, 2001)

A vital part of the above mentioned definition is that the information is managed. When the information is organized systematically then only it can be a collection of a digital library. Digital libraries comprehend various collections of information for use by many different users. The main important thing of the Digital Library is that

organized information is available on network with the techniques to select the material in the collections, to unify it, to make it accessible to users and to archive it. The collections of digital library are growing fast and the technology is getting more and more advanced. Advanced technology provides continuous help to improve the quality to relay the information easily.

### **6. ROLE OF DIGITAL LIBRARY IN DISTANCE LEARNING**

In today's world adapting quickly a new technology is recognized as a key to success. The adventure of new technologies has been accepted by libraries and information centers. New technology has become an indispensable part of the libraries. In modern times most of the libraries in the world use new and advanced technology to provide relevant and accurate information to the patrons. The libraries and information centers are changing from building that store the books and other printed resources into an electronic gateway to a developing global collection of digital content. Now information started to available electronically so the libraries also began to change the way to provide information to their patrons. Digital libraries open the gate for distance learners. With the use of Digital library resources, they can find the best information resources and get it in a second with the push button. Due to all these changes in technology, distance learners are benefited a lot. As they have less communication with their instructors, digital library can fill this gap. Below are some advantages that distance learners can take from Digital Libraries:

- Distance learners may be spread in the world and Digital Library designed different level of services according to the requirement of local as well as remote users.
- DL works to give proficient access to appropriate data. It helps to access large amounts of information to users wherever they are and whenever they need it.
- To archive the resources DL needs to sort rational, reliable and organized resources and to make them easily accessible and usable for users by specifying their usage rights.
- Provide up to date information to the patrons.
- Maintain the credibility of the information.
- To help the patrons to evaluate the data.
- To provide hypertext links for navigation.
- To help users to connect with specialized social network.
- To stimulate the users by encouraging them to produce and exchange knowledge.
- DL works to provide User friendly interface.
- Client-server architecture.
- Network accessibility on Intranet and Internet.
- To save the time of library staff by avoiding routine jobs

### **7. CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGITAL LIBRARY**

The major characteristics of the digital library as described by Chaudhary and Chaudhary:

- DL provide access to different kinds of digital information resources ranging from text to image, audio and video to the patrons.
- DL resolve the problem of the physical space. It needs less space and data can be made accessible through communication networks to anyone anywhere.
- Digital library includes both digital collections and traditional collections.

- Patrons of DL may be spread in the world and DL designed different level of services according to the requirement of local as well as remote patrons.
- DL offer the facility to the patrons to make their own personal collections.
- At the same time several users can use and access the same resources.
- User friendly interface
- Advanced search and retrieval
- Supporting multimedia content
- Accessibility from anywhere, home, school, libraries, during travel etc.
- Providing access to very large collections including access to primary and secondary information.
- Availability for long time
- Greater opportunity for publishing etc.

## **8. FEATURES OF DIGITAL LIBRARY**

Through Digital Library different user get the information in different kinds of formats like simple text, videos or audios. DL store the information and maintain the high quality of all the stored information. In the cataloging process all the descriptive information is accurate. Due to information accuracy it's easy to preserve the information for future. Most of the Digital library have these Search features: Boolean logic, Phrase and Proximity Searching, Relevancy ranking, Browsing of Indexes, Truncation, Field Searching, Extent of Searching, Save Search, Expand Search, Search History, Case Sensitive Searching, Controlled Vocabulary, Language Translation, Date/Range Searching, Refining of Initial Search, Multimedia Searching, Advance and Basic Search Facilities and Display Features.

Moreover, one of the important feature of DL is to provide different services like Alerting Service, Translation, Publishing, Classification, Document Delivery, Data Dissemination, Security and User Access Models, Trusted Document Server and, Multilingual etc. Several Digital Libraries are engaged in the project to provide digital access to all the existed material available in traditional libraries. For instance, scanned images of printed text, photographs, digitized video segments. From the above features we can say DL is :-

- 8.1 A library that worked for a particular group or a set of groups.
- 8.2 A clustered of multiple entities.
- 8.3 A library that integrate learning and access.
- 8.4 Library that Deliver quick and effectual access with multiple access.
- 8.5 A library with a large and endure collection, planned and managed including many formats and contain object

## **9. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY**

Services that rely on digital sources and platforms are an essential ingredient for open and distance learning system that is both efficient and effective. As the accessibility of internet-based courses increases for learners around the globe, often in parts of the world where the physical availability of scholarly collections is absent, so does the need for digital libraries. Such learners are highly dependent on the quality of the services offered by libraries and universities. Because the utility of a digital library is dependent on the range and content of its digital collections, libraries are forced to reformulate partnerships with publishers, and publishers are compelled to offer a greater

range of materials and novel modalities of access (Mathew, 2012). Thus, technological changes have modified the demands and expectations of consumers (including distance learners) and the ability of libraries to respond to such demands and expectations. Yet, challenges are not negligible. Libraries need to redefine their roles, including collaborations among each other and with users, as well as to be able to offer technical and instructional support to distance learners.

## **10. NEED OF DIGITAL LIBRARIES IN INDIA FOR DISTANCE LEARNERS**

In this study, we are more concerned about the academic university students who pursue distance education in India. They have less communication with the instructors as compare to regular students. Hence, they need more reliable resources to get the right information at right time. They need digital resources which they can access from anywhere at any time. This is the reason that digital resources are more important for them. There are some institute and universities in India which are in the process to change the existing library into Digital Library. For instance, Indira Gandhi National Open University, University of Delhi provides a strong collection of useful digital resources to the distance learners. On other hand, some universities who provide distance learning courses but they do not provide any digital resources specially remotely access to the students. Students just depend on the study material and weekly contact classes.

## **11. CHALLENGES**

Despite the infusion of application of information and communication technologies in libraries in India, it has not been possible to advance into a user-friendly platform that enhances library automation (Haneefa, 2007). Outside the library literature, very little attention has been given to the problems of providing Digital library services to support distance education programs. In fact, the need for equivalency of digital library support for on-site and distance programs is rarely addressed or even acknowledged. Academic libraries have begun to build impressive portfolios of online services and programs for remote users. Yet as libraries develop new services for their remote users, little notice is paid to whether or not the initiative are useful, successful, or whether targeted users are even aware of their availability.

## **12. CONCLUSION, SUGGESTIONS AND DISCUSSION**

Each university while offers courses through distance mode, should provide sufficient academic digital resources for all their students. In these resources, they should include :

Online study materials;

Online assignments;

Recorded class lectures

Chat online facility

Previous exam question papers

Direct link to other library holdings

This is the responsibility of the University Library to emphasis the use of digital resources for distance learners. Some of the students pursuing distance learning are not really aware of the digital library resources offers by university library. In this kind of situation university libraries should arrange workshops, hands on trainings, webinars for students as well as for faculty members in order to make them aware and update them about digital resources. The responsibility and workstyle of a librarian is different in digital library. Librarians need new expertise

and skills to run and maintain the standard of Digital Library. University who provides distance learning courses also should do some efforts whether the available resources are being used by the distance learners or are they really aware about them? University should not depend only the print materials they provided to the distance learners. Also one more point we should not forget here that these digital resources should be available to the distance learners on campus as well as off campus. As they have limited time to attend the classes or come to the study center, so it would be really beneficial for them if they can access the resources remotely from anywhere and anytime.

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