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Web-Based Services Expected from Libraries: A Case Study of Management Institutes in Mumbai City

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Abstract

This paper discusses the library portals and the web-based library services expected at management institutes in Mumbai City, Maharashtra State, India. The article explores the availability of institute website, importance and extent of the library details hosted on the institute website. This survey reveals that the lack of interest of users in library website is because of the inadequate and static information being made available on it. This case study also reveals about the services users expect to access through the Internet at their convenience. Suggestions are provided at the end on how to make library portal more informative in order to attract more and more users.

Keywords

Web portals, Management libraries, Web-based services

Introduction

Academic scenario, over the years, has undergone a tremendous change assuming new dimensions influenced by the technology driven applications. Management education is no exception to this. Traditional commerce and management education methods are observed to be inadequate. Quality service package delivery is a formidable task for all institutions of business education ([Gupta, 2003](#)). The long-term sustainable advantages in the business education require more attention to the issue of service, quality and cost in the national and international markets.

Libraries are mainly entrusted with a host of predetermined tasks like acquiring, organizing, preserving, retrieving and disseminating information to the users. Right from ancient times to the present Internet era, the primary objective of library has always been this. However, the way this purpose has been achieved has drastically changed.

Information technology has influenced the very nature of business and management libraries. They are undergoing significant changes today not only in outlook but also in function, services, methods and techniques for collection development, processing and dissemination of information ([Singh & Krishna, 2004](#)). The conventional set up of brick and mortar libraries that store information within a constrained physical space have given way to data centers that integrate data sources around the globe by way of networking. Libraries have not yet explored their full potential to the full ([Miao, 2001](#)). With the advancement in technology and its direct application to libraries, business and management libraries are becoming lean and agile libraries that streamline information supply. The pervasive nature of the Internet, coupled with platform independent database connectivity is turning library portals more and more effective.

The main purpose of this study is to study the availability of websites at management institutes and the extent of library information hosted on it. The study also aims to examine the reasons behind why websites have failed get the attention of majority of users and to identify the library services that they wish to carry through the internet.

Web Portals and Libraries

A Web Portal can be defined as a website for a specific audience that aggregates an array of content and provides an array of services ([Pienaar, 2003](#)). They are the sites on the World Wide Web that typically provide personalized capabilities to their visitors. They are designed to use distributed applications, different numbers and types of middleware, and hardware to provide services from a number of different sources. Content linked in library portal is superior to the open access content available on the Web ([Joint, 2005](#)). Authentication software, commonly known as Web Access Management (WAM) are available that allow the library to govern the access to licensed electronic content ([Myhill, 2004](#)). Commonly referred to as simply a portal, it is a website that offers access to a broad array of resources and services of libraries such as e-journals, online databases, Web OPAC, new additions and any other static information about library services.

The developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) and their subsequent absorption in library and information science (LIS) have forced information professionals to change the way they are functioning at present. Because of their popularity with the users, an overwhelming attention is being given to the web-based information services in libraries ([Krishnamurthy & Chan, 2005](#)). LIS community has realized that the academic world is increasingly becoming web-based. Those institutes who wish to attract prospective students and the faculty members must show significant improvements in the institute's infrastructure. Libraries with mere books and journals may no longer lend a credible support to the academic fraternity. Having a tech savvy library and information center with exhaustive information resources in all formats has become unavoidable. Libraries are procuring more and more electronic sources like electronic journals, electronic books, online databases along with locally digitized theses and dissertations. The efforts of libraries in providing users with an integrated way of checking the availability of a source in all possible formats have necessitated a properly designed web portal ([Cox & Yeates, 2003](#)). Management libraries are also supposed to define and redefine their services and continuously keep their efforts on value addition to the services offered by them. Proliferation of electronic resources has posed several challenges like multiple logins, multiple interfaces and resource discovery. Web portal offers effective solutions to these challenges([Groenewegen & Huggard, 2003](#)).

Need for the Study

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have brought a lot of conveniences to the library users ([Gupta, 1996](#)). Information being accessible at their desktop, the

productivity of the students and faculty members has increased. As libraries continues to be flooded by more and more electronic resources, future students will become more and more dependent on them ([McGeary, 2005](#)). Libraries in business and management institutes use propriety or in-house software packages for library management. Even though there is a growing trend in libraries to move towards e-resources, some of the libraries still depend upon books and journals. Print sources continue to dominate the library environment in such cases. In this scenario, basic library services like online public access catalogue (OPAC), reservation, accessing current awareness bulletins, pay for the library dues and document delivery needs to be done at the convenience of users.

A literature search on the LISA database and scanning the journal articles, conference and seminar proceedings revealed lack of availability of such literature which studies the web-based services expected from libraries in the management institutes. Hence, this need for the study.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- to study the availability of institutes' websites and the extent of library information hosted on the websites;
- to study the regular use of the Internet by users and their frequency of visit to institutes' websites; and
- to identify the library transactions that users wish to carry out using the Internet.

Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the study are:

- Institutes have failed in attracting the library users to their websites as they provide only static information about library and its services.
- The majority of the users in management institutes use the Internet on a regular basis.
- Most of transactions users do at the library should be carried out through the Internet at their convenience.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study is limited to studying the web-based services expected from libraries in All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) approved management institutes affiliated to the University of Mumbai .The limitation is that this article covers only the day to day library transactions like online catalogue, reservations, etc. Access to online resources is not studied as it is understood that they will have to be web-based only.

Methodology

This article is based on part of a questionnaire survey conducted for the doctoral studies at Karnatak University, Dharwad. This survey covered the management institutes in Mumbai City, Maharashtra State, India to understand and measure the impact of information technology applications on library resources and services. In all 24 management institutes approved by All India Council of Technical Education (AICTE) and affiliated to the University of Mumbai ([Appendix I](#)) were surveyed. Different questionnaires were administered to librarians and users (faculty members and students) to understand the usage pattern of the Internet and the web-based library services that are expected. The

questionnaire was designed to be quick and easy to complete. Among others, the questionnaire specifically contained questions on

- Availability of institute website
- Extent of library information on the website
- Regular use of the Internet by the users
- Frequency of visit to the institute website
- Web OPAC availability
- Library transactions wished to be carried out using the Web.

The questionnaire was piloted with few select management institutes and users and their comments were incorporated into the final version. For better results, questionnaire method was also followed by paying personal visits to the library so that the researchers can discuss with the librarian and users at the institutes. Out of 24 management institutes, 22 institutes responded to the survey by returning the questionnaire, thus resulting into a response rate of 91.66%. The collected data has been duly analyzed and presented below.

Availability of institutes' websites

Management institutes, new or old, pay particular attention to design and host their own website to showcase and create awareness about their profile. In this age, having a suitably designed website has become as important as their physical building itself. It is found that all the 22 institutes who have responded to this survey have their own website.

Extent of library information on institutes' websites

Table 1 presents data about the extent of information available about library on the institutes' websites. It is observed that almost all management institutes 20(90.91%) have only general information about library on their websites.

Table 1: Extent of Library Information on Institutes' Websites

Extent of Information on Website/Portal	No. of Management Libraries
General Information	22 (100.00)
Library Rules and Regulations	2 (9.09)
Library Staff Details	0 (0.00)
Current Awareness Service / Selective Dissemination of Information Bulletins	0 (0.00)
OPAC	0 (0.00)
Any Other	0 (0.00)
Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage.	

Regular use of the Internet by users

Faculty members and students were asked about their Internet usage. Table 2 mentions that an overwhelming number of faculty members 52(86.67%) and 175(92.11%) students have indicated the use of the Internet on a regular basis.

Table 2: Regular Use of Internet

Regular use of Internet	Faculty Members	Students	Total
Yes	52 (86.67)	175 (92.10)	227 (90.80)
No	6 (10.00)	14 (7.37)	20 (8.00)

Not sure	2 (3.33)	1 (0.53)	3 (1.20)
Total	60 (100.00)	190 (100.00)	250 (100.00)
Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage.			

It is also observed that 6(10.00%) faculty members and 14(7.37%) students indicated that they do not use the Internet regularly. A negligible 2(3.33%) faculty members and 1(0.53%) student are not sure about their Internet usage habit.

Frequency of visit to institutes' websites

As an Institute Website/Portal is an access point for all resources and services, it is necessary to know the frequency of users' visit to the website. Table 3 records the data about it.

Table 3: Frequency of Visit to Institute's Website

Frequency of Visit to Institute's website	Faculty Members	Students	Total
Daily	7 (13.46)	19 (10.86)	26 (11.45)
Weekly	9 (17.30)	35 (20.00)	44(19.39)
Fortnightly	18 (34.62)	60 (34.28)	78 (34.36)
Monthly	18 (34.62)	61 (34.86)	79(34.80)
Not at all	00.00	00.00	00.00
Total	52(100.00)	175 (100.00)	227(100.00)
Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage.			

It is observed that about 7(13.46%) faculty members and 19(10.86%) students visit their institutes' websites daily. Nine (17.30%) faculty members and 35(20.00%) students prefer to visit weekly and about 18(34.62%) faculty members and 60(34.28%) students visit the website fortnightly. About 18 (34.62%) of faculty members and 61 (34.8%6) of students visit the website on a monthly basis.

The poor number of visits that the institute website receives is because not all institutes give any dynamic and useful information on the website. These websites contain some static information about history of the institute, faculty profile and some description about resource units like library and computer lab.

Web OPAC availability:

Online public access catalogue (OPAC), when made available on the Web is called Web OPAC. Information may be available in any media; it is the catalogue that ensures maximum exposure and subsequent use of information sources. Web OPAC's have provision of boolean operators. While searching library collection using OPAC, we can use operators like AND, OR, NOT and make our query more specific. Web OPAC's also provide facilities like personalized onscreen display, save options, etc. It is surprising to know that none of the management libraries surveyed has its catalogue available on the Web.

Library transactions and the Internet

Users were asked for an explanation as to what are the library transactions they wish to carry out at their convenience through the Internet. The observations are given in the Table 4. About 40(66.67%) faculty members and 140(73.68%) students indicated that they wish

to search books' database. Thirty five (58.33%) faculty members and 116(61.05%) students indicated they wish to know the availability of a particular document. About 47(78.33%) faculty members and 158(83.16%) students, highest number of users, wish to do a refined search of books, using all possible approaches. Over 33(55%) faculty members and 140(73.68%) students indicated that they wish to reserve a book while 38 (63.33%) faculty members and 123 (64.74%) students indicated that they wish to access current awareness bulletins.

Table 4: Library Transactions Wished to Be Carried Out Using the Internet

Category	Faculty Members	Students
To search the books database	40 (66.67)	140 (73.68)
To know the availability of a particular document	35 (58.33)	116 (61.05)
To search books using all approaches	47 (78.33)	158 (83.16)
To reserve a book	33 (55.00)	140 (73.68)
To access Current Awareness Bulletins	38 (63.33)	123 (64.74)
To pay library dues	11 (18.33)	54 (28.42)
To pay for fee based library services, if any	11 (18.33)	63 (33.16)
To know more about services rendered by library	41 (68.33)	150 (78.95)
Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage.		

About 41(68.33%) faculty members and 150(78.95%) would access the website to know more about services rendered by library. Relatively low preferences were given to activities like to pay library dues; to pay for fee based library services, if any. A close scrutiny and comparison of responses reveals that faculty members and students agree with each other on what transactions they wish to carry out using the Internet.

Findings

- All the management institutes have their own website. However, the institutes' websites make a cursory mention of the library as a resource unit and provide only general information about library. Very insignificant number 2 (9.09%) of libraries have provided library rules and regulations on the website. Important details like library staff details, Current Awareness Bulletins/Selective Dissemination of Information (CAS/SDI) bulletins and OPAC is not made available on any institute website. Observations from Table 1 confirm the first hypotheses that the institutes have failed in attracting the library users to their websites as they provide only static information about library and its services.
- The majority of faculty members 52 (86.67%) and students 175 (92.10%) use the Internet on a regular basis. Observations from Table 2 confirm the second hypotheses that the majority of the users in management institutes use the Internet on a regular basis.
- In spite of the majority of users being regular users of the Internet, most of them do not visit institute website regularly. Their visits are scattered and range from daily to monthly.
- It was observed that users wish to carry out library transactions like searching for a document with all possible approaches, reservation, access library bulletins, pay for library dues and to know more about library resources and services. Observations from Table 4 confirm the third hypotheses that most of transactions users do at the library should be carried out through the Internet at their convenience.

Suggestions

The survey and the subsequent analysis of the data and the findings of the study have enabled the researchers to provide some practical suggestions about starting and improving the web-based services expected from management libraries.

The main suggestions for improvements are as follows:

- Websites should be developed into a more informative portal with detailed information like staff details with contact information, library bulletins like new additions, CAS and SDI bulletins, etc.
- Libraries should make the portal interactive by hosting the Web OPAC, announcements about new library resources and services, links to the websites of interest to the business and management studies.
- Library portal should provide a facility for users to access library databases and put a claim for document reservation.
- Every effort should be made on a consistent basis to update the library portal frequently. This will certainly entice users to library portal and then to the library resources and services.

Conclusion

Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have a profound impact on every sphere of academic activity. Library and information management is not an exception for this. Business and management libraries have so far not adapted the innovations of Internet and networking to the fullest extent. Earlier, card catalogue was called as the "*Mirror to the Library*". Now in this age of the Internet, it is the library portal that is being called as the "*Mirror of the Library*". Library portal reflects the strengths and weaknesses of the libraries very effectively. They are also the tool through which libraries are trying to reach out to the tech-savvy user. Libraries should make consistent efforts to provide web-based services to their users. The survey has revealed that management libraries in Mumbai city are lagging behind in exploiting the full potential of the library portal. It is hoped that libraries at the management institutes will attend to this lacunae by developing a fully functional web portal as soon as possible.

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Appendix I: List of Management Institutes in Mumbai surveyed

1. Allana Institute of Management Studies (AIIAIMS)
2. Atherva Institute of Management (AIM)
3. Bharati Vidyapeeth's Institute of Management Studies and Research (BVIMSR)
4. Chetana's R.K. and Chetana Institute of Management and Research (CRKCIMR)
5. Fr.C.Rodrigues Institute of Management Studies (CRIMS)
6. Gurunanak Institute of Management Studies (GNIMS)
7. Indian Education Society's Institute of Management College and Research
8. Jamanalal Bajaj Institute of Management Studies (JBIMS)
9. Lala Lajpat Rai Institute of Management (LLIM)
10. Mahatma Gandhi Mission's Institute of Management Studies and Research (MGMIMSR)
11. MET's Institute of Management (METIOM)
12. N.L.Dalmiya Institute of Management Studies and Research (NLDIMSR)
13. Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) (Now it's a Deemed University)
14. Pillai's Institute of Management Studies and Research, (PIMSR)
15. Prin. Welingkar Institute of Management Studies and Research (WIMDR)
16. Rizvi Institute of Management Studies and Research
17. SIES College of Management Studies (SIESCOMS)
18. Somaiya Institute of Management Studies and Research (SIMSR)
19. St.Francis Institute of Management and Research (SFIMAR)
20. Sydenham Institute of Management Studies, Research and Entrepreneurship Education (SIMSR)
21. Thakur Institute of Management Studies and Research (TIMSR)
22. Vivekanad Education Society's Management College and Research Center (VESMCRC)

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