



### Short Review Paper

## Digital Library Services in India: A survey on colleges of the State of West Bengal

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### Abstract

*In the last decade Indian libraries has seen major shift towards the digital libraries. However, managing the digital libraries are not the same as it was for the traditional libraries. Through this survey an attempt was made to understand the status of the management of digital libraries in the colleges of the State of West Bengal. The study mainly focused on the management of digital resources along with the traditional resources. The survey also focused on the demand of traditional vs. digital library resources by the student's community of these colleges. Data was collected from 10 colleges of the State of West Bengal, India through questionnaires and interviews. The collected data was analyzed by using different statistical measures including coefficient of variation. The study reveals that though the colleges started spending on digital resources, the demand for traditional resources is also equally good from the students community. It was also observed that the speed of internet is not adequate for the proper usage of resources also there is an urgent need for training for both the library staff as well as the users of digital resources.*

**Keywords:** Digital library, college, Indian, statistical tool, traditional library.

### Introduction

In 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian libraries and librarians have seen a paradigm shift in their way of functioning. The users of 21<sup>st</sup> century want information in more concise form and more importantly on time. They want information on their fingertips, as and when at their place of convenience. Considering all these factors, the traditional library system all over the world has changed a lot and Indian libraries have also changed as per the changing demand of the society. The term *digital library* was first popularized by the NSF/DARPA/NASA Digital Libraries Initiative in 1994. Digital libraries are considered to be the fastest source of accessioning documents of various types. The main advantage of digital library is its requirement of space which is very negligible as considered to traditional libraries. Considering all these factors and relative advantages the government of India Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) of Government of India under its National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT) has initiated the National Digital Library of India (NDL India) pilot project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility. This repository will provide support to all academic levels from researchers, to students to differently - abled learners. The modules are prepared in such a way that the students can get help to prepare for entrance and competitive examinations. Though government of India has invested a lot of amount for the establishment and development of digital libraries, it is now important to see the management of digital

library system in India which is quite a big challenge for the librarians who are otherwise used to work only on traditional method. Managing digital libraries with all technical gadgets needs proper training for the librarians and information professionals. It also requires proper internet connection and uninterrupted electric supply which needs to be taken in to account.

**Literature review:** There are some studies on digitization in general; however, work on managing digital libraries in college level is very negligible. Gaur<sup>1</sup> in his paper "Rethinking the Indian Digital Divide: The present state of digitization in Indian management libraries" discusses mainly on library automation though the title of the paper indicates digitization and digital divide. Jeevan<sup>2</sup> in his study defines digitization, its importance and process of implementation. He concentrates mainly on identifying sources of digital content in developing countries emphasizing Indian context. Sagar Kumbhar and Sae Priolkar (March 2015)<sup>3</sup> in their paper "Digital Library management: Challenges and opportunities" highlights the necessity of managing the digital resources for their proper dissemination to the end users. The focus was also on the challenges and opportunities that the librarians are facing in managing digital library. They opined that in spite of facing various challenges the library professionals play a vital role in management of digital library. In their paper "Library Documents Classification by Using the Web Tools" Rohtash Singh and Sudhir Tyagi<sup>4</sup> described how automation gave the freedom in documentation management by using classification

schemes. They have provided some web tools which are freely accessible without any login credentials. One can use the said online tools for reference and match them with original classification scheme. Shashi Rawat, Rohtash Singh and Sudhir Tyagi in their paper "Opportunities and challenges in digital library management" attempted to show the ways and means of providing digital services to its defined group of users along with the available traditional resources and unavoidable challenges. They opined that in today's world library professionals are facing various challenges to manage the digital collection, i.e. space, bandwidth, data preservation, rights management etc. However, they feel that all these challenges can easily be overcome with positive mindset. They also say that library and information science professionals play the key role in today's digital world in planning and execution of digital resources. Bush, Vannevar<sup>5</sup>, Bourne, C.P., and Hahn, T.B.<sup>6</sup>, Besser, H.<sup>7</sup>, Lynch, Clifford<sup>8</sup>, Witten, I.H. et. al.<sup>9</sup> discussed the basic aspect on information on libraries and Digital libraries. Lanagan, J., Smeaton, A.F.<sup>10</sup> introduced the concept of Video digital libraries.

Digital libraries operate at three levels, Fosmire said. The first is any online information. Second comes specialized collections, such as ones for engineers and scientists. Third is an even more narrow collection of papers, research projects, or other materials that may be class-specific, assigned by professors. The latter would be similar to traditional reserved materials, but with the digital library, they are available 24/7 to more than one person at a time, Fosmire said. As digital libraries continue to develop and become an integral part of student life, the information management systems universities implement will be key to their usage, said Peter Murray, assistant to the director for technology initiatives for the University of Connecticut Libraries. "Our next challenge is to embed our digital library collections and services into the new instructional tools and reposition academic libraries and archives in the creation-acquisition-dissemination flow of our institutions' research," Murray<sup>11</sup> discussed on it.

## Digital libraries in West Bengal Colleges

The college libraries play a vital role in acquiring and disseminating of information for academic and research activities. In addition to traditional libraries digital libraries are also contributing for the overall development of the college students by making educational data and information available to them. In digital libraries students can have access to multiple contents in a single interface. Having remote access to databases is one of the main reasons of its increasing popularity. Considering all these benefits and advantages an attempt was made to know the status of digital library services in the colleges of West Bengal. The author visited more than fifteen undergraduate colleges in the state of West Bengal to see the status of digital libraries in those colleges. A questionnaire was prepared to get the correct data not only from the librarians but also from the principals of most of these colleges. Information

regarding the students strength, the date of establishment of the college, the date of establishment of the library, number of students visit the library every day, number of teachers visit the library regularly, number of books that the library has, number of periodicals the library subscribes, whether the library services is automated? Does the library subscribe e-resources? If so how is the demand of e-resources? Between traditional and e-resource which resource is popular? What is the annual budget for e-resources and what is the budget for traditional resource? Whether the library staff are properly trained for the management of digital resources.

The overall responses confirm that despite the age of the college or the college library or the number of students, the number of volume of books and periodicals subscribed by the libraries are almost same. Most of the libraries have a collection of 13,000 – 18,000 books and subscribe 7-8 journals. Libraries subscribe e-resources through 'Enlist' provided by the INFLIBNET. As far as books, periodicals and e-resources budget is concerned, most of the colleges spend in the tune of Rupees 70,000 – 80,000 for books and Rs. 5,900 for e-resources annually. However, four principals mentioned that the budget for books and e-resources depend upon the amount received from the State Government. One principal mentioned that they spend about rupees 3,00,000 for books annually. While interviewing the college librarians it was observed that most of them consider library automation as the digitization of the library. When asked about the software they use for the automation the overall responses confirm mixed feelings to the author. Some librarians confirm that they use software like KOHA for the automation of their services while the others confirm that they are using customized software that suits their requirements. Some librarians confirmed about the fully automated service while others mentioned that their library services are partially automated. As far as the speed of internet is concerned, a mixed response was received from the librarians. Some said the internet speed is very good some opined the reverse.

Librarians were also asked about the remote access of their e-resources. It was found no library has the remote access facility for their students and faculty members.

While interviewing the librarians and college principals the demand of traditional vs. e-resources was analyzed. Surprisingly all the librarians feel that the traditional resource is much more popular than the electronic resources. While enquiring the reasons of popularity of traditional resources over e-resources most of the librarians opined that lack of knowledge about the usage of e-resources is the main reason of its less popularity.

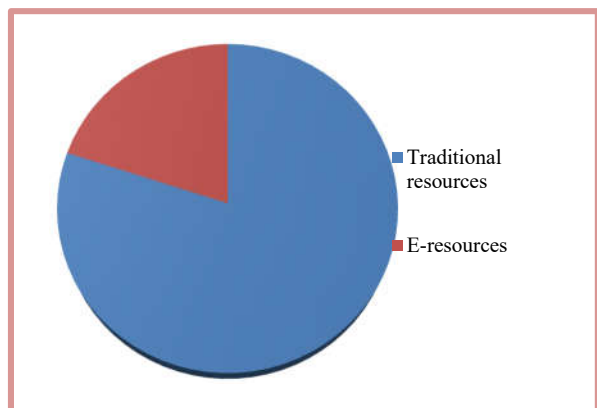
The principals of colleges on the other hand feel that the librarians should be more proactive in promoting the e-resources through user's education program. They should consider organizing user orientation program on e-resources to get the users attracted towards e-resources. Their views about the internet speed are also very interesting. When asked whether the

speed of internet is a hindrance for the promotion and usage of e-resources majority of them replied in negative. They considered lower level of awareness is the main reason of poor usage of the e-resources.

It was observed that though many colleges have e-resources but it is not being used at all. There comes the question of managing the e-resources. It is absolutely important to manage the e-resources in user friendly manner. The librarians should be well trained to manage these resources and promote it. They should be encouraged for knowledge enhancement activities. Librarians should have basic minimum skill for managing these databases and demonstrate it to the users. College authorities have a major role in motivating the librarians for the promotion of e-resources. We compare traditional resources and E-resources with statistical tool, pie chart here.

**Table-1:** Usage of traditional resources vs. E-resources.

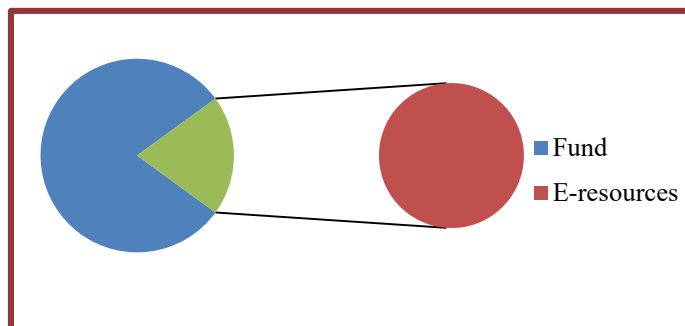
Traditional resources	E-resources
80%	20%



**Figure-1:** Usage of traditional resources vs. E-resources.

**Table-2:** Allocation of funds for books vs. E-resources.

Funds for books	E-resources
80%	5%



**Figure-2:** Allocation of funds for books vs. E-resources.

## Conclusion

Indian libraries have seen a major shift towards digitization in last decade considering this fact an attempt was made to review the library services in colleges of West Bengal. While and after doing the field survey, it is found that digitization has a very small impact for the functioning of college libraries. Most of the colleges do not have any infrastructure for digital resources. It is interesting to note that the demand of traditional resources is much higher as compared to digital resources. Students of few colleges revealed that they do not have any idea about digital resources. It is therefore important that the librarians of the colleges should promote digital resources of their respective colleges more aggressively. Creating awareness about digital resources is very important. The principals of colleges should encourage their librarians for the promotion of digital resources. Colleges should have appropriate infrastructure for this important resource. One of the main components of digital resources is high speed internet connectivity. It was observed that many colleges do not have proper high speed internet connectivity. It is the responsibility of the college authority to arrange proper internet to facilitate this service. This age is the age of digital resources so librarians cannot ignore this important resource for their service. It is therefore suggested that the librarians should give equal importance in promoting both traditional as well as digital resources with the help of college authorities.

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