
University Library Websites in Kerala: An Analysis (Web Survey)

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Abstract

The article is an analysis of library websites or web pages of the universities in Kerala. Factors like speed, size, downloading time, facilities for information services etc. have been analyzed. The survey was conducted during the period from 14-01-2013 to 19-01-2013. The study reveals that though the websites provide lot of useful information to the users, further improvement both in contents and management of it is needed in most of the library websites. The study also provided insight to judge the quality of the library websites and information services provided through them.

Keywords

Library Websites; Website Evaluation; Web Survey;
University Libraries; Library Services, Web 2.0.

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INTRODUCTION

For centuries, social and technological changes have been affecting every profession. During the last two decades, specifically for the last five years, rapid technological development has affected library services as well. National Knowledge Commission (2013)¹ recognized the fact that libraries play an important instrument of change for educational, cultural, social and economic development. Presently the world is undergoing a great deal of transformation due to the applications of ICT in the different categories do exist in India. In comparison with the library websites of western countries, the websites of Indian universities / libraries have to be improved considerably. While immense scope is available for information services through websites, the libraries can exploit this technology, especially for delivering services to the off-campus users and also to the users of affiliated institutions (Francis, 2012)². Now the users are not mere information consumers but are content creators also. In this context, libraries have to integrate several technologies in their services in order to effectively attract and satisfy the users. Mahamood and Richardson (2011)³ found that all the libraries were using Web 2.0 tools for sharing news, marketing their services, providing information literacy instruction, providing information about print and digital resources, and soliciting feedback of users. O'Reilly (2005)⁴ is responsible for coining the term Web 2.0 and this is a label attached to new capabilities and services offered by the online collaboration and sharing among users. Blogs, Wikis, RSS (Real Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary), Instant Messaging, Social Networking, Web Podcasting, Mashups, You Tube, Tagging etc. are some Web 2.0 tools used in library services (Library of Congress, 2013)⁵ (Anttiroiko & Savolainen, 2011)⁶.

Integrating library services through RSS feeds, Sarkar (2012)⁷ finds that increase professional understanding of the use of RSS and will guide future librarians in using library websites effectively for providing web based information services thereby enhancing sustainability and service value. Aharony (2012)⁸ revealed that the content of academic library websites in the years 2000 and 2010 has much changed over the ten years, presenting an increasing use of e-journals and Web 2.0 applications, as well as a focus on library users and great use of graphics in websites. The John Hopkins University (2013)⁹ propagates its Library services through the podcasting about collection, services it offers, user

groups, and how to use library services efficiently etc. Bierman and Valenteino (2011)¹⁰ found that one third of American Research Libraries have podcasting initiatives, to present wide range of information to their audience and those efforts deserve to be marketed appropriately.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Anwarul and Keita (2011)¹¹ evaluated some selected university websites in Bangladesh from the usability perspectives. They used two online automated tools, namely, html toolbox and webpage analyzer. Tools were used to measure the websites' internal attributes which can not be perceived by the users such as html code errors, download time, and size of the html pages. They concluded that university webmasters should pay more attention to the design and content of the websites to make them more attractive to the user community. Mithosh Joseph (2012)¹² described, "they too took to social networking to teach students" A group of teachers create a virtual classroom where assignments and doubts are 'posted'. When a group of professors in Kozhikode decided to join the fun and launched Social Network Learning (SNL) to interact with students in a virtual classroom. On an exclusive education portal, www.edmodo.com, the SNL covers over 3,000 students in 100 colleges under Calicut University. Mandal (2011)¹³ discusses the use of Web 2.0 in library and information services and also in today's social, cultural, civil and economic spheres of the society. He also stressed that the success of the weblogs depends on blogger's inspiration, motivation, dedication and ability. Alkindi and Bouazza (2010)¹⁴ evaluated two websites (Dhofar in Oman and Monash in Australia) and their comparison with Google, using standard criteria. The main findings was that Google and Monash University websites have established search and navigation systems that support website accessibility, which enhance site usability while Dhofar University websites uses navigation systems only because of content reasons. Ata-Ur-Rahman and Farzana Shafique (2011)¹⁵ evaluates all the library professionals were committed and well aware of the usage of Web 2.0 applications to deliver better services to the library users. Li Si (2011)¹⁶ investigates an overall picture of the application of Web 2.0 in 30 Chinese university libraries. It attempts to provide Chinese university libraries with helpful information to not only better understand how their peers apply Web 2.0 technologies but also better meet their user needs by effectively applying Web 2.0. Shri Ram (2011)¹⁷ investigates that the users of

the JUIT library still lack awareness about various Web 2.0 applications necessary for teaching and learning

PURPOSE OF SURVEY

The aim of this web survey was to have a clear picture about the extent of implementation of Web 2.0 technologies in the websites of university libraries in Kerala State, India. It also tries to understand how the university libraries were responding to the much talked about phenomenon, namely social networking.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The survey considered the universities in Kerala and conducted during the period from 14-01-2013 to 19-01-2013. Since web world is dynamic where changes in content of a web page or web based services may take place at any time, later developments at any site should not be taken as contrary to the information provided in this survey. Though the institutions like IIMK and NIT, Kozhikode and Sree Chitira Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences & Technology, Trivandrum were also offering programmes in higher education and research, we have not included them for the study as they were not listed in the UGC Website.

METHODOLOGY

List of universities functioning in Kerala and their details were collected from the official website of the University Grants Commission (UGC) (2013). As per that, there were 14 universities or deemed universities in Kerala (Table 1). Websites or homepages of University Libraries were visited. If separate websites were not available for libraries, library web pages in the websites of the universities were searched and assessed the availability of popular Web 2.0 icons like RSS, blog, facebook, twitter, Google +, portal etc. To analyze the size, speed and loading time of the websites of the libraries or universities, used "iwebtool"¹⁸. 'iwebtool' is an online automated tool freely available on web to analyse the average speed of the website, downloading time and size. Page load time depends on several factors such as the format and size of files, frames used, number, size, height and width attributes of images, tables, tags etc. Number of web servers employed for retrieval process also affects the performance.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The Internet was used as the main source for data collection. We have used Google search engine for

the study. Table 2 shows the status of application of different web 2.0 tools in library webpage.

Table 1: Universities or Deemed Universities in Kerala

Sl. No	Name of University	Year of Establishment	Address of University Website	Address of Library Website	
1	University of Calicut, Malappuram	CUM	1968	http://www.universityofcalicut.info/	Nil
2	Cochin University of Science & Technology, Cochin	CUSAT	1986	http://www.cusat.ac.in	http://library.cusat.ac.in/
3	Kannur University, Kannur	KANU	1996	http://www.kannuruniversity.ac.in/	http://kannuruniversitylibrary.ac.in
4	Kerala Agricultural University, Thrissur	KAU	1971	http://www.kau.edu	www.kaucentrallibrary.org/
5	University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram	KUT	1937	http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in/	www.kulib.in/
6	Kerala University of Fisheries and Ocean Studies, Ernakulam	KUFOS	2010	http://www.kufos.ac.in/	Nil
7	Kerala University of Health Sciences, Thrissur	KUHS	2010	http://kuhs.ac.in/	Nil
8	Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Wayanad	KVASU	2010	http://kvasu.ac.in	Nil
9	Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam	MGU	1983	http://www.mguniversity.edu/	Nil
10	The National University of Advanced Legal Studies, Kochi	NUALS	2008	http://www.nuals.ac.in/web/index.aspx	Nil
11	Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady	SSUS	1993	http://www.ssus.ac.in/	Nil
12	Kerala Kalamandalam Deemed University for Art and Culture	KKDU	2006	http://www.kalamandalam.org/	Nil
13	Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram	IIST	2008	http://www.iist.ac.in	Nil
14	Central University of Kerala, Kasaragod	CUK	2009	http://www.cukerala.ac.in/	Nil

Table 2: Availability of web tools in the websites of University Libraries or Universities

S No.	Name of University	Web Tools						
		Blog	Wiki	RSS	e-journal portal	Google+	Face book	Other tools
1	CUM	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
2	CUSAT	X	X	√	√	X	X	X
3	KANU	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
4	KAU	X	X	√	X	√	√	X
5	KUT	√	X	X	X	X	X	X
6	KUFOS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
7	KUHS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
8	KVASU	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
9	MGU	X	X	X	X	X	X	√
10	NUALS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
11	SSUS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
12	KKDU	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
13	IIST	X	X	X	√	X	X	X
14	CUK	√	X	X	X	X	X	X

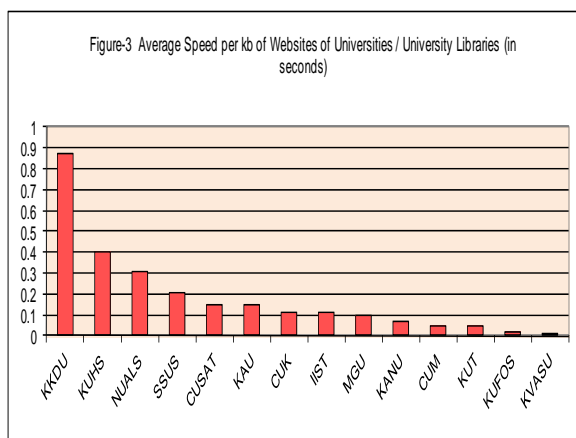
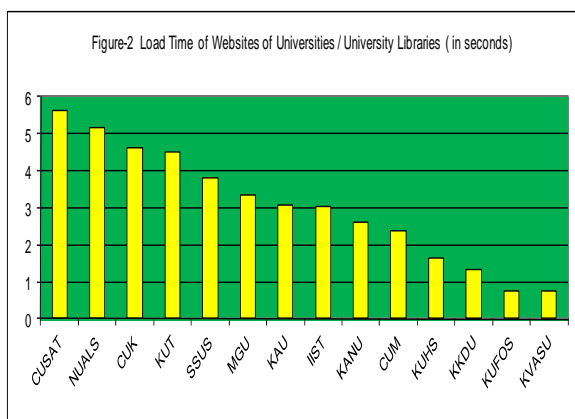
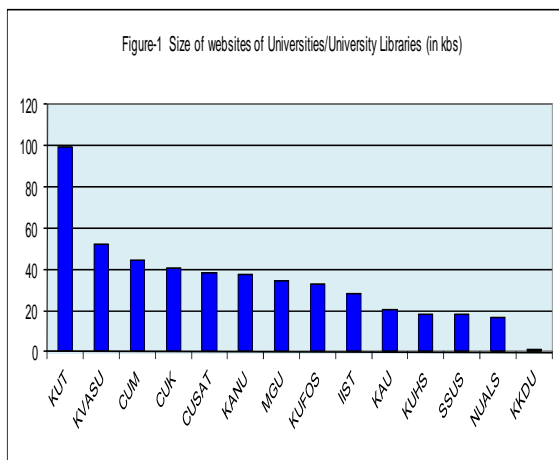
√ = Availability of web tool
X = Non-availability of web tool

Table 3: Number of Universities used the web tools in the Websites

Web Tools	No. of universities used
Blog	2
Wiki	0
RSS	2
E-Portal	2
Google+	1
Facebook	1
Other tools	1
Not used any web tools	8

Table 4: Speed test of the Websites of University Libraries or Universities

S. No	University	Domain Name	Size (in kb)	Load Time (in seconds)	Average Speed per kb (in seconds)
1	CUM	http://www.universityofcalicut.in/fo/	44.58	2.39	0.05
2	CUSAT	http://www.cusat.ac.in	38.70	5.62	0.15
3	KANU	http://www.kannuruniversity.ac.in/	37.19	2.60	0.07
4	KAU	http://www.kau.edu	20.16	3.09	0.15
5	KUT	http://www.keralauniversity.ac.in/	99.73	4.51	0.05
6	KUFOS	http://www.kufos.ac.in/	32.81	0.76	0.02
7	KUHS	http://kuhs.ac.in/	18.39	1.64	0.4
8	KVASU	http://kvasu.ac.in	52.05	0.75	0.01
9	MGU	http://www.mguniversity.edu/	34.56	3.34	0.1
10	NUALS	http://www.nuals.ac.in/web/index.aspx	16.62	5.17	0.31
11	SSUS	http://ssus.ac.in/	18.39	3.83	0.21
12	KKDU	http://www.kalamandalam.org/	1.53	1.34	0.87
13	IIST	http://www.iist.ac.in/	28.55	3.05	0.11
14	CUK	http://www.cukerala.ac.in/	40.35	4.62	0.11



ANALYSIS OF DATA

Out 14 universities studied, there were 11 state universities, one central university and two deemed

universities in Kerala. Out of this, only four universities have separate library websites and three universities did not have library website or library webpage. Only five universities had applied Web 2.0 tools in their library websites or web pages. While blog, RSS feed and e-portal were used by two universities, google+, face book and other tools were used by one university. Eight universities not found used any web tools. It was also noticed that web tools in many websites were not updated properly and also not functioning in a desired manner.

The size of website or webpage of the Kerala University was largest. The Website of Kerala University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences had shown quick loading with highest average speed in loading.

CONCLUSION

A society that takes its education seriously will take its libraries seriously. According to Srilata (2012)¹⁹ “Libraries, like forests, slow you down in a good sort of way. They are wise and silent teachers, the best in the world and teach you are done being a student in the formal sense”. Website is the strongest tool to provide library and information services to its clientele. Study on application of Web 2.0 technology and tools in library websites/web pages revealed that students and scholarly community of Kerala were not properly aware of the advantages. Some websites of libraries/universities used the web 2.0 icons as status symbol rather than tools for providing effective information services.

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