ICT BASED LIBRARY SERVICES IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY ON IGNOU LIBRARY

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Abstract:

Distance Education Bureau of University Grants Commission emphasizes on infrastructural facilities for the learners, and faculty members. It encompasses setting up and maintaining of separate library and resource centre. With the help of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) it is now a feature of every open and distance learning institutions to provide library services to its learners in an effective and efficient way.

The role of the library is vital in all types of education - conventional as well as distance mode. This paper discusses how Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) library provides innovative ICT based library services like RATE service; e-Gyankosh etc for the user community to access all subscribed online resources and databases from remote end. It also describes National Open and Distance Learners' Library and Information Network (NODLINET). NODLINET has a nationwide coverage for distance learning libraries. It helps in sharing resourses and services. This paper also highlights various other initiatives taken by the library like Discovery services, A-to -Z service, M-Library services, Mobile Augmented Reality service etc.

Keywords: RATE Services, A-to-Z Services, M-Library Services, NODLINET, Discovery Services, *e-Gyankosh.*

1.0 Introduction:

In higher education system library plays a vital role in disseminating information and knowledge to the user community – be it traditional teaching learning mode or distance mode. In the present day context of rapid growth of information and communication technology (ICT) libraries of higher learning institutions are delivering more and more web based services to its clientele than before.

The higher education system in India has encountered a paradigm shift during last three decades what can be seen through its mode of delivery system. Earlier this higher education

system was totally confined only within on-campus basis. Now it is within the reach of the pupils who are not capable of following on campus system. With the introduction of the off-campus based learning system the higher education is now free to access for a vast community of learners. Obviously ICT plays a vital role in distributing learning materials to the learners. Library and information system should also accept this ICT privilege in dissemination of knowledge.

Distance Education Bureau, UGC however stresses on sufficient building space for housing library materials, its storage and dispatch for the use of the learners and counsellors. With the technological growth, the concept of physical and tangible presence of library materials has been changed; it is now a feature of every open and distance learning institution to provide its users paperless library services in an efficient and attractive way.

IGNOU was established by an Act of Parliament in Sep 1985. IGNOU has twin roles of being a National Open University and an apex body for the initiation and advancement of open universities and distance education systems in India. As an apex body it undertakes the similar statutory responsibility as is assigned to the University Grants Commission in respect of the entire system of higher education in India.

The present paper deals with information and communication technology based innovative library services of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU).

2.0 Impact of ICT on library services in ODL System:

The impact of implementing ICT in library services for ODL system is perceived greater than in library services for conventional teaching learning system because of user's far-off access feature. To save valuable time and to perform various library related works within a limited period, the advent of ICT is the most effective tool. With the use of ICT service delivery process of library resources are very fast, they can reduce the physical and spatial barriers to library and information services. Recently almost all the libraries are using electronic communication technology as the gateway to contact with students. Distant library users are able to access online public access catalogue (OPAC), full text database and many more digital services. Librarians working in ODLIs can easily satisfy the need of distance learners and also other academic fraternity of such institutes.

Major Library Services using ICT provided in Open and Distance Learning System are as follows:

- ❖ Digital Reference Services
- ❖ Bibliographic services through Web OPAC and Single Window Search facility
- ❖ Gateway to institutional repositories

- ❖ Database of TEE (Term End Exam) Papers
- ❖ Document Delivery services
- ❖ Library Website based services
- ❖ Access to full text e-journal, databases and electronic resources
- ❖ ILL facilities
- ❖ Web-based tutorials
- ❖ M-Library Services
- ❖ Social networking based service
- ❖ SDI services, Content Alert Services (CAS)

3.0 IGNOU Library and Documentation Division (LDD):

IGNOU serves the educational objectives of more than thirty lakh learners in India and abroad through 21 Schools of Studies and 67 Regional Centers around 2,667 Learner Support Centers and 29 Partner Institutions in abroad. Library and Documentation Division has a hierarchical set up having the Central Library at the top with Regional Centre libraries and Study Centres in the subsequent flow.

IGNOU Library has the largest volume of resources in India for distance education arena. The library collection includes 1,43,981 books, 260 theses, 2,443 course materials, 4,160 CD-ROMS, 17,757 microforms. 12,284 bound journals etc (as on 31st March 2017) The Central Library offers facilities like: Digital Reference Service, Circulation Services, User Guidance and Awareness service, Online Public Access Catalogue, Online Database, E-Journal access facility.

IGNOU Library subscribes to a number of e-resources. The major e-journals and databases are from ACM Digital Library, EBSCO, JSTOR, Nature, OUP, Sage Journals, ProQuest, Springer, J-Gate, IEE e-books etc. The library also provides remote access to its e-resources for students, faculty and academic staff members.

4.0 ICT Based Library Services provided by IGNOU Library:

- ❖ **M-Library Services:**

The IGNOU Library is offering provisions for m-library services such as Web OPAC, RSS feeds, m-Blogs, login facilities to institutional repositories, e-resources etc at the reach of its user community.

- ❖ **National Open Distance Learners' Library and Information Network:**

National Open and Distance Learners' Library and Information Network (NODLINET), an IGNOU endeavour, has a nationwide coverage for distance learning libraries. It helps in

sharing resources. The network is available 24 X 7 to facilitate access to online electronic resources for authorized members of the NODLINET network.

❖ **Remote Access to E-Resources (RATE Service)**

Fig 1: Login Page for e-resources

User community of IGNOU at Central Library and Regional Centers with the help of remote authentication facility (off-campus learners) may obtain library's licensed electronic resources which is known as Remote Access to E-resources (RATE) service [Fig 1]. For the purpose of advanced learning and research, teaching and personal study, both on campus and off campus learners of IGNOU library would be capable to obtain RATE service 365 X 7.

❖ **A-to-Z Service:**

A-to-Z service is a fast and convenient service for listing of IGNOU library's e-collection in full-text form. The integrated e-journal table of contents (TOC) browsing enables A-to-Z one-stop location to access subscribed e-journals.

❖ **Resource Sharing Services using DELNET:**

The library is a member of Developing Library Network (DELNET). It offers services such as ILL(Inter Library Loan), DDS(Document Delivery Services), Union catalogue surfing facility etc.

❖ **Institutional Membership Services:**

IGNOU Library has membership of British Council Library (BCL) New Delhi, Indian Library Association (ILA), New Delhi and Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA), New Delhi. The registered members can avail reference, reading and lending services (through ILL) from these Institutions.

❖ **Single Window Search to Library Resources:**

The library provides single window search [Fig: 2] facility for students, faculty and employees for a quick access to exclusive IGNOU library resources and services, electronic resources and library catalogue in an exhaustive manner.
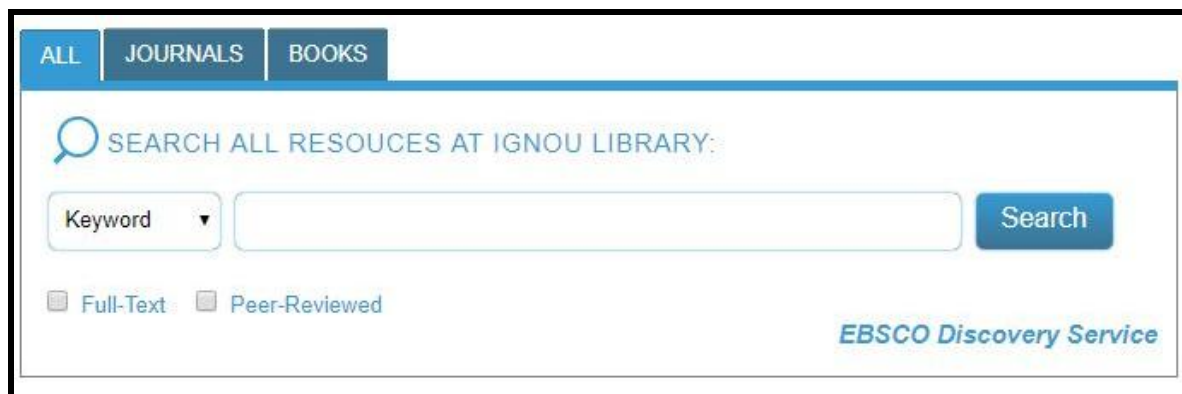

Fig 2: Single Window Search

❖ **Institutional Repositories (e-Gyankosh):**

IGNOU has developed e-Gyankosh, a National Digital Repository. Under this repository the entire study material of different courses has been digitized and made available to the IGNOU students through e-Gyankosh. At present the repository has 40,736+ documents. This library is planning to build repositories on special collections, photos and also publications of faculty members.

❖ **SDI Service**:

IGNOU Library provides its academic staff members with the content pages of periodicals to promote Selective Dissemination of Information. User specific bibliography is also sent to the user on demand. Through the help of e-mail service users are introduced with new arrivals and e-resources currently subscribed.

❖ **Assisted Technologies for the Disabled Student**:

The library has also taken some initiatives for physically disabled user community. The library has already procured the software like MAGic (screen magnification software), Braille embosser and scanner, Kurzweil (Braille translation software) etc.

❖ **QR Codes:**

QR (Quick Response) Code, a matrix barcode, is now very popular in library field. This code can be scanned by smart phones and thus it gives link to the corresponding URL etc. In case of URL, the mobile browser will lead the users to the respective website with the help of active internet connection. IGNOU Library uses this technique for browsing library shelves area or periodical section for getting access to online e-version of printed aspects or similar

subject guides. It uses this QR Code in video tutorials that are connected to YouTube via mobile applications.

- ❖ **Location Based Applications Mobile Augmented Reality**:

Mobile augmented reality application is in the pipeline in the library for increasing the scope of scanning physical book shelves, OCR, library navigation, facial recognition etc. Using this application subject of book stack is identified by app index and displayed on interface. Suggestions for procuring library materials are brought onto interface on real-time basis.

5.0 Conclusion:

The scope of Higher Education in developing countries like India is enormous. To cope with this the quality of higher education needs to be improved here library services will also be fine-tuned specifically for open and distance learning system. The products of open and distance learning system will have the power to "manifest their perfection" in the real world of complexity where unemployment looms large. So policy makers of our country should think on the education for sustainable development as we have to transform the status of our country from "developing one" to "developed one". Population of our country is exponentially increasing; this vast human resource must be mobilized to add value to our economy in such a way that unemployment problem can be reduced to a minimum level. For this Indian Higher Education System is giving thrust on the facets of modern time issues such as entrepreneurship education, vocational education, women education with emphasis on women empowerment. ICT based library and information services obviously supplement this education system. As IGNOU is now the largest university in India in the field of open and distance learning system, its library has to be equipped with the features of ongoing ICT development to play a greater role in the horizon of Indian Higher Education System.

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