Bibliographic Control of Indian Ph. D Theses: INFLIBNET's contribution

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Abstract

By imparting higher education, conducting research and interacting with individuals and institutions at different levels within and outside India, our universities have been major contributors to the generation and dissemination of knowledge. Being one of the significant contributions to the growth of knowledge, research work produced in the form of Ph.D. theses is the unique vital information sources. It is estimated that nearly 8000-10000 Ph.D. theses are produced every year by all the universities put together in India. Being a vital source of information, Ph. D theses have been attracting a great interest from academic and research communities in the country and abroad. INFLIBNET has therefore made an effort to collect, organise and make available this valuable information over the network. The Centre is also developing union bibliographic databases of Books, and Serials available in Indian Universities, and non-bibliographic databases of Indian Projects and Experts in various fields. All databases can be accessed through the website http://www.inflibnet.ac.in. This paper makes an attempt to give an overview of activities carried out by INFLIBNET Centre for the development of Theses Database and its online access. It discusses the purpose, objectives, benefits, and various steps in development, access points, and search methodology of this online database with illustrative examples, in detail. It also points out the drawbacks and future plans for making theses resources available in Indian Universities available on the Web.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) was initiated as a major program of University Grants Commission, under Ministry of HRD, Government of India in April 1991. Later it became a full-fledged autonomous Inter University Centre of UGC. The broad objectives of this program are, to computerize university libraries, create union databases of their holdings, facilitate resource sharing through networking and provide speedy access to the information at the national and international level [1].

2. UNION DATABASE DEVELOPMENT AT INFLIBNET

Objectives relating to union database creation and usage are, to provide reliable access to document collection of libraries, to provide access to bibliographic information sources, to optimize information resource utilization through shared cataloguing, inter-library loan service, catalogue production, collection development and thus avoiding duplication in acquisition to the extent possible. The Centre is developing union bibliographic databases of Books, Theses, and Serials available in Indian Universities, and non-bibliographic databases of Indian Projects and Experts in various fields [2,3]. All databases can be accessed through the website http://www.inflibnet.ac.in. This paper makes an attempt to give an overview of activities carried out by INFLIBNET Centre for the development of Theses Database and its online access.

2. UNIVERSITY THESES AND ITS IMPORTANCE

By imparting higher education, conducting research and interacting with individuals and institutions at different levels within and outside India, our universities have been major contributors to the generation and dissemination of knowledge. Being one of the significant contributions to the growth of knowledge, research work produced in the form of Ph.D. theses is the unique vital information sources. It is estimated that nearly 8000-10000 Ph.D. theses are produced every year by all the universities put together in India. These works are usually written in partial fulfillment of degree requirements, and contain valuable information, including focused literature reviews and details on research, which are not generally made available elsewhere. This genre supplements other types of documents, like reports, conference papers, journal articles, textbooks, and monographs. The purpose of the thesis or dissertation is to provide an experience in scholarship which will be of enduring value to the student in understanding how new knowledge is acquired and communicated within his/her chosen field. Thus, the thesis or dissertation should provide tangible evidence of the student's development as a scholar and especially his/her capacity to discover and effectively communicate research findings. The thesis or dissertation should also enlarge the body of knowledge in the student's chosen field. Being a vital source of information, Ph. D theses have been attracting a great interest from academic and research communities in the country and abroad. As there is no tool

available to find out or locate the research out put, which causes "Research Divide", INFLIBNET made an effort in this direction.

3. THESES DATABASE AT INFLIBNET

This database provides bibliographical details of Ph D theses or Doctoral Dissertations awarded by all Indian Universities. We have avoided M. Phil and Master Degree dissertations for quality in the content [4]. The database is being updated regularly. It can be accessed via Internet from our website http://www.inflibnet.ac.in.

3.1 Coverage

- The development was initiated in 1994.
- It contains records starting from the year 1905.
- It covers only Doctoral Dissertations, i.e., Ph Ds.
- It contains 1,37,000+ unique bibliographic records.
- It contains records from all subject areas.
- Data has been contributed by 194 universities/institutions from all over India, since its initiation

3.2 Benefits

Access to this unique online source of information

- Highlights the intellectual contribution of the universities in the country
- Gives trends in research in each area
- Gives trends in productivity of Indian Researchers
- Helps in determining one's research area
- Avoids duplication in research work
- Facilitates Inter-Library Loan wherever and whenever possible
- Promotes resource sharing

3.3 Access points of Theses Database

This online database has the provision to conduct search using the following access points to get the specified records, according to searchers' interest.

- Title of the Thesis

- Researcher

- Guide

- Department

- University

- Place

- Year of award

- Subject(s)

- Free Text (for searching in all fields)

- Boolean Search (for combination of more than access point by using AND, OR and NOT operators)
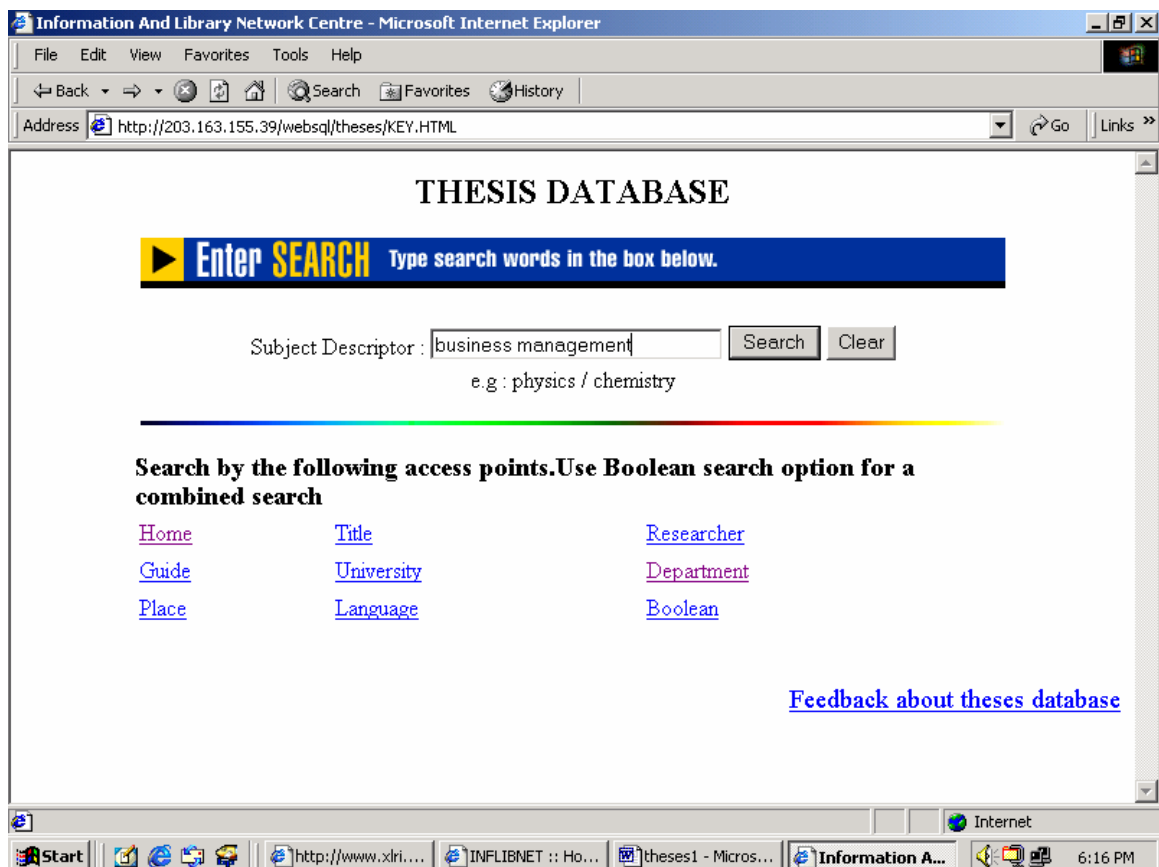
3.4 How to search Theses Database

As the first step go to INFLIBNET website at http://www.inflibnet.ac.in and click on databases. Then select Theses Database and the rest is self-explanatory. See the example here.
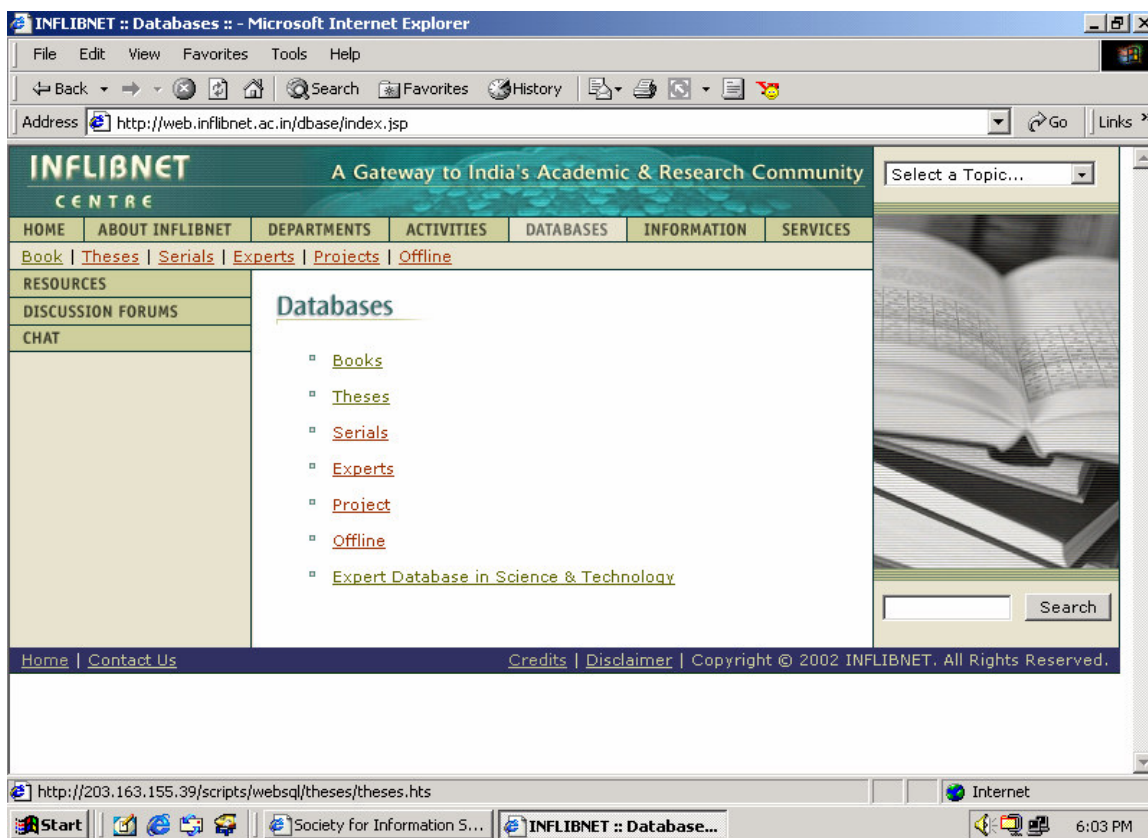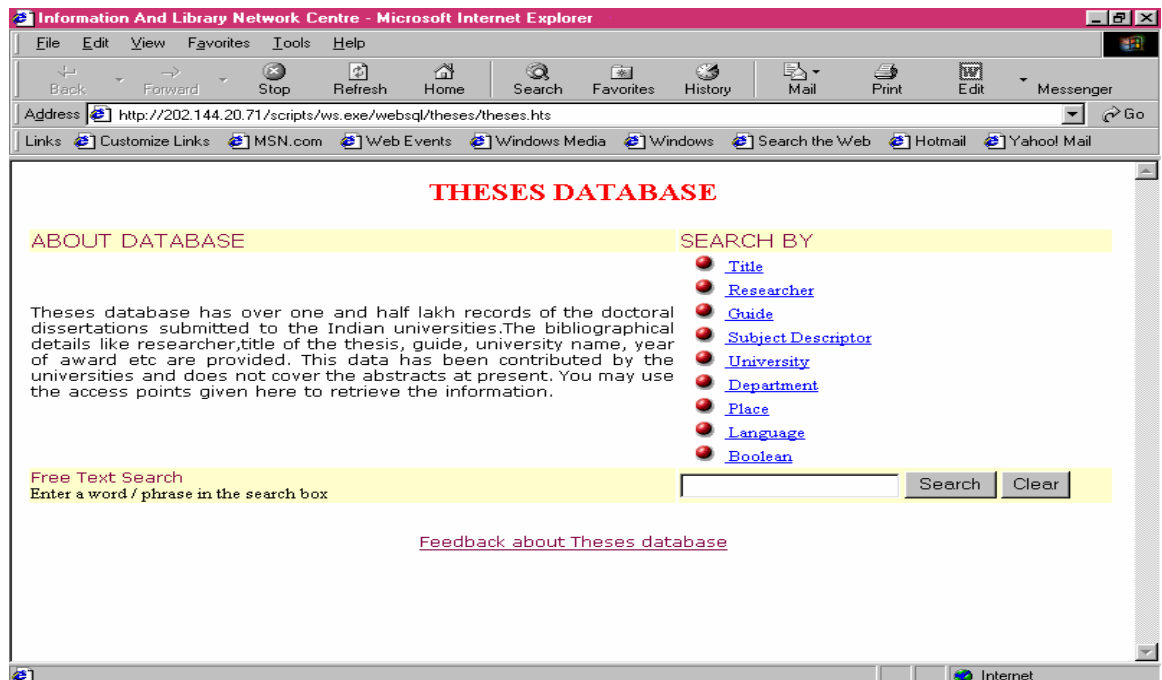
This is the first page for INFLIBNET online Theses Database. Select desired field for search (*for example select* Subject Descriptor *and type* **Business Management**).

It will show the total number of hits (718) first, and then the first 25 hits by displaying *Title* and *Researcher*. By clicking on the respective *Title*, you can see the full bibliographical details of that thesis, as given below (*for example select* 7th Title).

A Link is provided from the respective university to get the contact details.

3.5 Limitations of Theses Database

The major limitations of this database are the lack of 100-percentage coverage in terms of the total number of Ph Ds awarded in India, the unavailability of abstracts, quality in data sent by participating universities, irregular supply of data and multi-lingual problems. To solve these problems, serious initiatives are being worked out, and we expect wholehearted cooperation from Indian academic, research and librarian community by sending full details of their research with abstracts to INFLIBNET. We take this opportunity to congratulate the libraries of universities and other academic institutions for taking interest in this database development and providing data regularly.

4. CONCLUSION

It is proposed to regularize the flow of current data relating to the Ph.D. theses, added to the library. The methods suggested to participating universities are to send the data on a quarterly basis and take up retrospective conversion work in parallel and complete the same, during this current year. Here we need the wholehearted co-operation from all universities and institutions, which are awarding Ph Ds. A plan for bringing out the full database in CD-ROM has also been initiated. Even though locating tools are available, it is very difficult to access the theses physically in India, where they will be kept in respective university libraries. The idea of E- Theses and Dissertations (ETD) is coming up in International scenario, which can easily be located, readily accessible and delivered over the web (See Annexure). A plan for creating a digital library for Indian Doctoral Theses with two parallel components, such as the digitization of theses as part of the normal University submission process, and the digitization of a selected number of frequently requested existing theses is under consideration [5].

Access to information is crucial for education, sciences, and culture as well as for fostering democracy in the information society. The principle of free and universal access to information as well as freedom in the creation, treatment and dissemination of knowledge are fundamental elements of the global common good of humanity. INFLIBNET, as an ambitious program, is aiming at the fulfillment of information needs, by all possible means, and marching towards   for a digital divide free society.

Acknowledgement

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