

Regulation of Doctoral Research in Universities: Importance of INFLIBNET Online Doctoral Theses Database

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indian universities play a major role in generation and dissemination of knowledge by conducting research works and producing Ph D theses as a unique genre of information source. It is estimated that every year, nearly 10,000-12,000 Ph Ds are awarded in India. The purpose of the thesis 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 the chosen field. These works contain valuable content, including focused literature reviews and details on research, which are not generally made available elsewhere. At present there are some lacunas in publication, control and access theses information in India, and some attempts have been made to address them.

There are some initiatives in India for controlling the bibliographic information of Ph Ds produced in India. As a bibliographical tool to know about theses of awarded Ph Ds, Association of Indian Universities (AIU) started publishing of Doctoral Bibliographies in all subjects and "Theses of the Month column" through its weekly publication *University News*. The work done by AIU in this direction is a unique one and really helping the researchers to get the bibliographical details of dissertations. By recognizing the importance of the Ph D data in one place, in 1994 INFLIBNET hosted a regularly updated free online union database of Ph D theses submitted to Indian universities. At present it is freely available for searching at INFLIBNET website and contains around 1,50,000 of unique bibliographical records covering all subjects and all universities. Being the data supplied by the Universities themselves, it is considered as the only authoritative online-tool available to find-out the research output of Indian Universities.

2. THESES DATABASE AT INFLIBNET

As there were no online tool available to find out or locate the Ph D research out put of Indian Universities, which causes “Research Divide”, INFLIBNET made an effort in this direction in 1994. The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) is an autonomous Inter University Centre of University Grants Commission, under Ministry of HRD, Government of India. The broad objectives are to computerize university libraries, train the manpower, create union databases of their holdings, facilitate resource sharing through networking and provide speedy access to the information at the national and international level. 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. All databases can be accessed through the website <http://www.inflibnet.ac.in>.

Doctoral Theses database provides bibliographical details of Ph D theses or Doctoral Dissertations awarded by around 200 Indian Universities. The database contains around 1,50,000 unique records and is being updated regularly. It can be accessed free of cost via Internet from our website <http://unicat.inflibnet.ac.in/cgi-bin/thesis/thesis.jsp>.

The screenshot displays the INFLIBNET Union Catalogue web interface within a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar shows the URL: <http://unicat.inflibnet.ac.in/cgi-bin/thesis/thesis.jsp>. The page header includes the INFLIBNET logo and the text "Information and Library Network Centre (An IUC of UGC)".

On the left side, there is a navigation menu with links for "Books", "Serials", and "Theses". Below this, a section titled "Participating Universities" lists various universities and the number of records associated with each. The list includes:

No.	Name of University	Records
1.	Acharya N G Ranga Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University ->	173
2.	Alagappa University ->	59
3.	Aligarh Muslim University ->	2616
4.	All India Institute of Medical Sciences	208
5.	Amravati University	90
6.	Andhra University	2759
7.	Anna University	301
8.	Annamalai University	675

The main content area features a search interface with two tabs: "Basic Search" and "Advance Search". The "Basic Search" tab is active, showing a search form with the following fields:

- Search in:** Union catalogue of Thesis (Basic Search)
- Select the Field:** A dropdown menu with options: Title, Keyword, Researcher, and Guide. "Title" is currently selected.
- Enter the TERM to Search:** A text input field.
- No of Records:** A dropdown menu set to "10 per page".
- Buttons:** "Click to Search" and "Reset".

Below the search form, there is a "Search Type" section with a "Brief Help" link. It provides instructions for entering search terms:

- Title:** Enter all or initial part of title, starting with the first word: **Annals of Physics**. Drop initial articles (a, an, the) - Truncation is automatic.
- Researcher/Guide:** Enter all or initial part of name, starting with the Surname, e.g. **Gohel, Umesh or Gohel**.
- Subject Keyword:** Enter standard subject heading, name, or term: **PHYSICS**. Truncation is automatic.
- University:** Enter publisher name, or publisher place: **University of Calicut**. Start with the left-most word: - Truncation is automatic.

At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with links for "Home", "Contact Us", "Credits", "Disclaimer", and "Feedback". It also includes the text "Best view of this site in 1024 by 768 Pixels" and a copyright notice: "Copyright © 2003 INFLIBNET. All Rights Reserved." The page number "1020501" is displayed in the bottom left corner.

2.1 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 around 1,50,000 unique bibliographic records.
- It contains records from all subject areas.
- Around 200 universities and higher institutions from all over India have contributed data, since its initiation

2.2 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

2.3 COLLECTION OF INFORMATION

Under the INFLIBNET Programme of UGC, the member Universities who have received funds for library automation are mandated to create the databases of its collection as per the INFLIBNET guidelines. These Universities are sending the database of their collections like books, theses and serials to INFLIBNET for hosting at its Union Databases. The following Sources are used at INFLIBNET for collecting the Ph D Theses data.

- Data sent by participating libraries in various e-format
- Data send by participating libraries in print copy
- Announcements from Universities etc
- Announcements from Individual Faculty Members.
- News letters and other publications

- *Doctoral Dissertation Bibliographies* published by Association of Indian Universities (AIU), New Delhi
- *University News* published by Association of Indian Universities (AIU), New Delhi

3. CONCLUSION

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. The great role the university libraries and other academic institutions for taking interest in this database development and providing data regularly are appreciated. 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. Digital libraries of electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) offer an alternative to this waste of valuable academic scholarship and offer researchers and University Libraries in India opportunities to explore the possibilities electronic publishing trend in academic sector. The emergence of UGC Infonet, the aspiring and dream project of University Grants Commission, which also aims at Content Creation by Indian Academic Sector, will definitely boost this idea. As a main feature of UGC Infonet, a data center with large server capacity is being set up, where content of common interest can be maintained. Each University will have the option of hosting their website, digital content like ETDs and the E-journals subscribed through INFLIBNET Consortia.

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.

Academicians and Researchers in the country are requested to search the Database and provide INFLIBNET sufficient information for promoting the access to Indian Research.

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