

Development of an information system for regional literature and culture with INFLIBNET support

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1. Introduction

The objective of Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) programme of UGC is to automate and network libraries in academic and research and development systems to facilitate resource sharing at different levels and promote scholarly communication among academicians and researchers in the country. At present it mainly covers traditional universities only and excludes Agricultural Universities and many other specialised institutions supported by other agencies like ICAR, Departments of Science and Technology, culture etc. But the information requirement of the traditional universities included in INFLIBNET programme is not limited to resources held by them. In specialised areas like agriculture, biotechnology, environment, Indology, Orientalia and the like institutions presently not envisaged to come under the INFLIBNET programme have rare and valuable sources of information. As INFLIBNET will be responsible for providing access to the whole information resource of the nation for education, research and development activities going on in universities coming under it, INFLIBNET should have some provision for knowing and accessing valuable resource held by institutions which are presently not under its purview. This paper identifies one such important group of institutions having very valuable information resource which forms the only reliable source for research done in traditional universities in concerned areas.

Research on Indian culture, literature and related aspects is mainly conducted at universities coming under INFLIBNET programme. For this the academicians and students of the universities have to depend mainly on the Kendra Sahitya Akademi at Delhi and Sahitya Akademies for each State or languages existing in different parts of the country. Kendra Sahitya Akademi is having a vast and unique collection on Indian literature and culture and also studies on those topics done all over the world. The Sahitya Akademies for different languages existing in the States with people speaking those languages have unique collections on the concerned languages and their literature. Most of the Sahitya Akademies are accepted research centres of the universities doing research on those languages and literature. But their collections remain unorganised with poor facilities and insufficient staff. Many of the documents in their collections are rare and if lost will be lost for ever to the humanity. So INFLIBNET has to support in modernising the libraries in various Sahitya Akademies of the country and also for conserving the records of our heritage they hold to enable the universities doing research on those aspects to have required reliable information sources.

2. Sahitya Akademies

Sahitya Akademies of the States of India are premier institutions in the country; which have as their main objective the progress and development of regional literature and culture. Most of the activities; the Akademies undertake to achieve their objectives are related to collection, organization, conservation and publication of intellectual works of concerned region's writers and artists. These publications include journals, books, audio and video records and other materials. Akademies encourage and also provides research support to the writers for production of new works, and also for their publication.

The activities of the Akademies includes copying, preserving, translating, publishing, and documenting the intellectual works that originated in the region which are the cultural heritage of great value for coming generations. All these works which Akademies undertake are areas of activity in which Information and communication Technology (ICT) is presently offering

immense possibilities. ICT enables cost effectiveness and efficiency. Similar Akademies in developed countries have already got automated. Many specialised educational institutions in India have also automated their information handling systems.

The present information infrastructure of the Akademies are traditional and there is a felt need to automate their library and related services to ensure conservation of our literary heritage, their efficient organization, and to achieve cost effectiveness and speed in publication programmes related to regional literature as well as provide access to the system to writers and researchers from all over the state and the country using current computer and communication tools and facilities. Hence INFLIBNET with experience in automating library and information systems should provide technical support for automating Sahithya Akademies. On request by Kerala Sahithya Academy this author has conducted a detailed study of the library and information system of that Sahithya Akademi and some recommendations are made for establishing an Information System on Kerala Literature and Culture (KELCIS) at Kerala Sahithya Akademi by modernizing its present library and information system. On the basis of study made by the author the objectives of the information system under the Sahithya Academy in States can be identified as follows:

3. Objectives of the Systems

- ? to build up information resources, prepare computerised data bases on regional literature and culture and to develop relevant information handling tools and techniques.
- ? to continuously assess the information requirements of the writers, researcher and other people and institutions engaged in promoting the literature and culture of the region and to create necessary infrastructure to provide information support to them.
- ? to co-ordinate efforts to collect and disseminate information on regional culture and literature world wide and to serve as a central hub of such activities.

- ? to establish linkages with national and international information systems engaged in literary activities.
- ? to provide an active network mode in which writers get access to the world community of writers, answer requests for information in an interactive and discussive mode and actively initiate dialogue on the fields of poetry, novel, literary criticism, and related areas.
- ? to provide information retrieval services either online or offline in all areas of that region's literature and culture and to give overall information support in all areas of knowledge related to literature, linguistics and culture.
- ? to implement user education programmes for writers and artists on subjects like information sources, literature search, indexing and abstracting procedures, computerised information retrieval, use of computers for writing etc.
- ? Computerisation of the region's Bibliography of publications (Grantha Sooji), Writers Directory, and other publications.
- ? bringing out electronic versions of Akademi's publications like directories dictionaries, bibliographies etc of reference value and also journals and selected books.
- ? conservation of old and rare documents of cultural and literary value by copying them into electronic mediums.

4. Activities of the Akademies to be Automated

The different functional divisions of the Akademi that are identified for automation are; Administration, Library Division, Publications Division, Akademies Journals, Grantha Sooji, Writer's Directory, Multimedia Division, Conservation and the Sales Division.

4.1 Administration

Management Information System will form part of the system. Management Information for the President and Secretary which is now characterised by

sources presented in a variety of incompatible formats will become a sophisticated and integrated support system when automated. Information on the performance of the Akademi will become available to the President and the Secretary and will help further planning and programmes for development of activities and services found more relevant for the popularising good literature. Statistics will become available in the computer system; on books published by different publishers, in different subjects, books received at the Akademi, new books not yet received the sales statistics of Akademi publications etc. The Management Information System available when automated can facilitate; accurate and reliable Akademi management Information, availability of more sophisticated techniques for review and analysis of Akademi's collections and activities and services, quick and effective decision, efficient co-ordination, and need based further development of the Akademi.

4.2. Library Division

Sahithya Akademi Library is the most important collection in the state on that region's literature and culture. It is unique in quantity and quality. Many documents included in such collections are old and rare and have archival value as well as research value in addition to general interest. So Akademi's library will in its own way become the focal point of research on literature and culture of the State.

The collections contain books, bound volumes of periodicals, microfilm reels and audio cassettes and many manuscripts, pictures and other documents. Annual users of most of the Akademies may be above 6000 and book transactions above 5 lakhs per year. They will receive more than 500 periodicals on literature and general subjects published in that region as well as all over the country regularly. Their's will be the largest collection anywhere in the world on the concerned regional language and literature for the promotion of which they were constituted. So modernising them and making them accessible to all and ensuring the conservation of materials held by their libraries will be a great service to the cultural heritage; not only of the State or country, but the whole world.

Automation of these libraries can enable efficiency, cost effectiveness and can ensure preservation of the materials stocked for the sake of future generations. The following subsystems of the Akademi Libraries can be automated to achieve various benefits.

Acquisition System: Computerised document acquisition system forming part of the automated system can undertake with speed and efficiency; preparing of databases of available documents, maintaining of accurate and up-to-date record of books and other documents ordered, duplicate checking before placing orders, printing of purchase orders, sending timely reminders, maintaining of up-to-date fund account, maintaining of complete vendor file, preparing of current activity report, preparing vendor performance report, invoice accounting and listing of invoice for audit.

Stock Records: Computerised stock recording can allow up-to-date record of the collection for stock verification, can give opportunity to review losses, provide inventory file for replacing accession register or serve as shelf list. Barcode System can be used for automated stock verification as well as circulation and transfer of records to between divisions of the Akademi.

Classification System: Classification system using the computers can help the selection of isolate terms and group them and arrange them in their hierarchical sequence, synthesise the class number, save time avoiding the referring of schedules of classification, improve accuracy and speed in classification.

Circulation System: Computerised Circulation System can provide information on a document if not available in the shelf is issued to which section or officer, and details of the use of the documents and type of use and users.

Periodicals: Computerised Periodicals Management System can provide accurate and up-to-date record of subscription and holdings, print subscription renewal and reminder letters, maintain complete supplier file, and give supplier performance notice.

Reference Service: Computerised Library of the Akademi can provide all

types of reference services with speed and accuracy. The **Current Awareness Services (CAS)** provided through automated system can; review the select publications immediately on receipt, select the items of relevance to the works going on in the Akademi or projects supported by the Akademi and notify the items to the staff or writers to whose programmes they are related. When press, AIR, DD or other departments or Government requires information on writers or their poetry or talk recording or pictures or video clippings on them such items can be retrieved from the electronic library of the Akademi within seconds. **Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)** on Literature and Culture also can be done efficiently by the Akademi using automated system. SDI system can continuously watch the various documents received in the Akademi, evaluate the relevance of each document from the point of view of the various projects and programmes supported by the Akademi, form a comprehensive idea of the requirements of writers associating with the activities of the Akademi and its staff, save their search time for information, prepare individual notifications for them, and continuously interact with them through users profiles and customise services.

4.3. Akademi Journals

Most of the Sahithya Akademies are publishing various journals. These publications also can be composed inside the Akademi. Electronic versions also can be brought out simultaneously with the printed version. This can be made accessible online worldwide through Internet by putting it in Sahithya Akademi's Website at no extra cost.

4.4 Multimedia Division

At present various electronic documents on writers and literature are available as multimedia CDROMs. Many encyclopaedias have brought out their electronics versions which incorporate audio and video files in addition to the text. These are cost effective by more than 70% than the traditional printed versions. Then the Akademies also are having various films and audio tape recordings on writers, literature and culture of the region. These also can be copied into electronic mediums and made available for reference.

Hence a multimedia lab facility with necessary equipments should form part of the Academy's Information system.

4.5 Audio Visual Division

Akademies have very good collections of audio records, video films photographs and similar materials. Audio Visual Division of the Akademies needs to be improved with facility for screening and projecting video films and multimedia databases.

4.6 Conservation Division

Akademies are having a collection of very ancient manuscripts on palm leaf and other materials as well as very old and rare printed books and journals copies of which exists nowhere else at present. These items if lost or destroyed due to use they will be lost for ever with their knowledge content. Automated system can enable use of photographic, laser and computer technology to copy them into other lasting mediums for preservation as well as use.

4.7 Computerising Earlier Records

From the day of commissioning of the automated systems of the Akademi's all works can be done using computers. But the system to become a reliable source for information on earlier collections and other records all earlier catalogues of the library is to be fed into the computer. This work should go on parallel to the current activities. It should be finished in a prescribed time limit. Sufficient number of library professionals required to finish the work in a specific period can be engaged on contract basis under the supervision of a library staff of the Akademi to complete the works in six months or one year. The expected minimum expense for computerising approximately 1 lakh records will come to Rs 5.75 lakhs. Ancient books and manuscripts available in the Sahithya Akademies can be digitised using some digital archiving software. This can be linked to the concerned record in the electronic bibliography for speedy access. This will enable preserving originals without handling them for reference or use.

4.8 Sales Division

The system can also support the automation of the Sales Divisions of the Akademies which deals with the sale of Akademi publications, their stock maintenance and other aspects. Bar code system used for library automation can be utilised here also.

5. Regional Bibliography

Most of the Sahithya Akademies have already brought out in print; Regional Bibliographies - unique databases of all the books published in the region. When the prior records of catalogue of the Akademi or its bibliography are automated new entries can be made in the electronic database. The future volumes of printed bibliography can be generated from the computerised database as a by product. They can be edited in computer according to the requirements of printed format and pages can be set at the Akademi itself and final pages can be sent to press. Monthly or quarterly issues of such bibliography also can be generated from the computer database.

The earlier volumes already issued by Akademies in printed form can be fed into the computer within a prescribed time limit with support of INFLIBNET and when that work is also completed these regional bibliographies can be searched for the whole period from the year of the first book published in those languages to the present by author title or any other aspect and result can be obtained within seconds. Such Bibliographies can be put on Internet to make it accessible from anywhere in the world.

In Kerala Centre for South Indian studies is conducting research on developing Malayalam Script based database management systems. If such packages become available the Ganthasoojis of the Akademies can be published in Malayalam or concerned regional script and as CDROM publication with powerful search mechanisms.

6. Writers Directory

The works related to Writers Directory of the region which an Akademi serves can also be automated using the system. A computerised database of writers can be maintained in the Akademi in which each writer will be having a

record. Each record will contain fields for name, date of birth, place of birth, parents, qualifications, services, publications etc and also fields for pictures, audio, and video in which selected pictures of the writer, his poetry recitations or talks, and video clips on important incidence from his life if available can be maintained. The database will be updated daily by the library. From this database Writers Directory can be generated as a by product in every five years or ten years. It will require only an hour's work to make a master printout of the directory updated with additions, deletions and corrections made up to that day, to be send to the press. Information on any writer or his picture or video or talk can be given to press, AIR or Doordarsan within seconds after a request is received from those media or other users.

7. Publications Division

The proposed system can support the automation of the publication programmes of the Akademi also. Presently the Akademies are bringing out various publications in English and regional language. These books can be composed in the Akademi itself by using the computers and final pages can be sent to the press or printed by the Akademi itself if it acquires a small offset press. The additional advantage given is that the publications can be brought out in CDROM; floppy disks etc also simultaneously and can be made accessible online through networks. The automated system can enable the Akademi to publish CDROMs of the rare and valuable ancient manuscripts and other documents available at the Akademi.

8. Websites for the Akademies

Sahithya Akademies can launch web sites from which information on the Akademi, their officers, publications, as well as pictures, video clippings etc. on the Akademies will become available in Internet. Their journals, bibliographies, writers directory and selected publications having reference value etc. also can be made available for use through Internet.

9. Human ware for the System

Sahithya Akademi Libraries are to be considered as the most important resources existing in the State to support all activities related to the progress

of regional literature and culture. They are unique sources for researchers in these subject areas. They have to continue collecting and organizing various print and nonprint media and has to provide information to the writers, the researchers, the media and the State; right information at the right time. This necessitates the availability of sufficient number of qualified staff and required status for the Librarian. It is better for the Akademi to adopt the staff pattern followed in some research institute libraries of similar type.

If INFLIBNET supports in modernization of library and information systems of Kendra Sahithya Akademi and Sahithya Akademies in the States it will immensely enrich the information resources available to universities for research in Indian languages, literature and culture. INFLIBNET and universities can avoid duplication in developing collections and services in the areas of Indian languages and literature. Most of the documents and resources the Sahithya Akademies possess are rare and not otherwise available and hence if INFLIBNET programmes includes Sahithya Akademi libraries also it will be a great support to research in our language and literature as well as conserving our cultural heritage.

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