Karnataka State University Library Network: Linking Academic Libraries in the State of Karnataka

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"….. It is for the universities to create knowledge and train minds who would bring together the two, material resources and human energies. If our living standards are to be raised, a radical change of spirit is essential."…

Dr. S Radhakrishnan

Introduction

The role of libraries in the 21st century has expanded beyond that of preserving recorded knowledge and providing access to it. They are now increasingly being seen as knowledge partners and facilitators, especially in academic environments. This role has become possible since libraries have embraced new technologies on the one hand and have leveraged their understanding of relevant sources of information on the other. However, the schools of Library Science are yet to reach up to the expectations of the modern society.

Academic institutions in India have still not realized the importance of libraries and the proactive role that they can play in the emerging knowledge society. The NKC in its recommendations has clearly spelled out the need for libraries of all kinds to modernize and become the focal point of teaching, research and development. We believe that such a role can only be realized by:

- encouraging libraries to invest in new web-based Technologies,
- re-training of librarians to make effective use of new Technologies,
- networking academic libraries, e.g., university libraries with affiliated and constituent college libraries and then across such academic library networks.

This proposal is to achieve some of the above mentioned goals initially by developing a network of University Libraries in the State of Karnataka. This will include networking of all University Libraries in the first stage and all affiliated colleges of different Universities in the second stage.

In addition to the automation and networking of libraries, it is also necessary to develop the capability for students and teachers to access carefully identified full text resources, learning objects, courseware and other objects that are available on the web. The proposal is also for the development of a Knowledge Portal application that libraries can configure to provide access to needed but distributed resources.

Objectives

- To promote and establish communication facilities to improve capability in information transfer and access, that provide support to scholarship, learning, research and academic pursuit through cooperation and involvement of academic institutions in the State.

- ➲ To establish a Network of academic institutions in the State to link libraries and information centers in Universities, deemed to be Universities, Colleges, Institutions of National Importance and R & D institutions, etc. avoiding duplication of efforts.

  - ♦ to promote and implement automation in the academic libraries of the state, following a uniform standard;

  - ♦ to evolve standards and uniform guidelines in techniques, methods, procedures, computer hardware and software, services and promote their adoption in actual practice by all libraries, in order to facilitate pooling, sharing and exchange of information towards optimal use of resources and facilities:

  - ♦ to evolve a state network interconnecting various academic libraries in the state and to improve capability in information handling and service;

  - ♦ to provide reliable access to document collection of libraries by creating on-line union catalogue of serials, theses/ dissertations, books, monographs and non-book materials in various libraries in the state.

  - ♦ to provide access to bibliographic information sources with citations, abstracts, etc.

  - ♦ 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;

  - ♦ to enable the users dispersed all over the state, irrespective of location and distance, to have access to information regarding serials, theses/dissertation, books, monographic and non-book materials by locating the sources wherefrom available and to obtain it through the facilities of Karnataka Knowledge Network and union catalogue of documents;

  - ♦ to encourage co-operation among academic libraries, in the state, so that the resources can be pooled for the benefit of helping the resource poor libraries by resource rich ones; and

  - ♦ to train and develop human resources in the field of computerized library operations and networking to establish, manage and sustain Karnataka Knowledge Network.

- ➲ To facilitate academic communication amongst academics, faculties, researchers and students through electronic mail, file transfer, computer/audio/video conferencing, etc

➲ To collaborate with institutions, libraries, information centres and other organizations in India and abroad in the field relevant to the objectives of the Network;

➲ To establish Resource Centers in every University campuses with appropriate collection to facilitate the member Libraries.

➲ To promote R&D and develop necessary facilities and create technical positions for realizing the objectives of the Centre;

➲ To generate revenue by providing consultancies and information services; and

To do all other such things as may be necessary, incidental or conducive to the attainment of all or any of the above objectives

Need, Importance, Architecture and Benefits

Though there is a wealth of resources on a host of subjects (in English, Kannada and other languages) in all University Libraries in the state and Affiliated College Libraries, the situation today is as follows:

➲ There has been no means, so far, for students and faculty in these colleges to benefit from the widely held collections.

➲ A sizable user population, particularly in the rural regions served by the Universities, do not have access to useful resources since their college libraries do not as yet have eclectic collections, many of them having been started only in recent years.

➲ There is considerable avoidable duplication of resources since the University libraries and the college libraries are not aware of the resources of each other.

➲ It has not been possible for the libraries to share expensive resources.

➲ Equally, there has been no concerted effort to develop cooperative acquisitions policies especially for costly serials.

➲ Libraries are increasingly under financial pressure and acquisitions budgets in real terms are not able to cater to the demands of all categories of users.

➲ There is a paucity of trained library professionals at the University and college libraries.

➲ Many of the current library professional staff require to be retrained in using newer technologies, particularly web technologies and how to utilize resources on the web for the benefit of students and faculty.

➲ Not enough resources directly useful to the students and faculty, e.g., Learning Objects, lecture notes, path finders, etc., are available to students.

➲ Newer types of materials that are required by students and faculty are not described sufficiently enough in the BU and college libraries.

➲ Libraries both in Universities and the colleges require to embrace standards and technologies that are relevant to developing digital library paradigms. At present, there is poor understanding and use of contemporary metadata and interoperability standards.

➲ Libraries have become marginalized due to the easy availability of resources on the web and the trend to use information that is easy to obtain rather than relevant and validated can be counter-productive to the development of a healthy and inquiring body of students and faculty. Only libraries with good collections and ensure that such a trend is reversed.

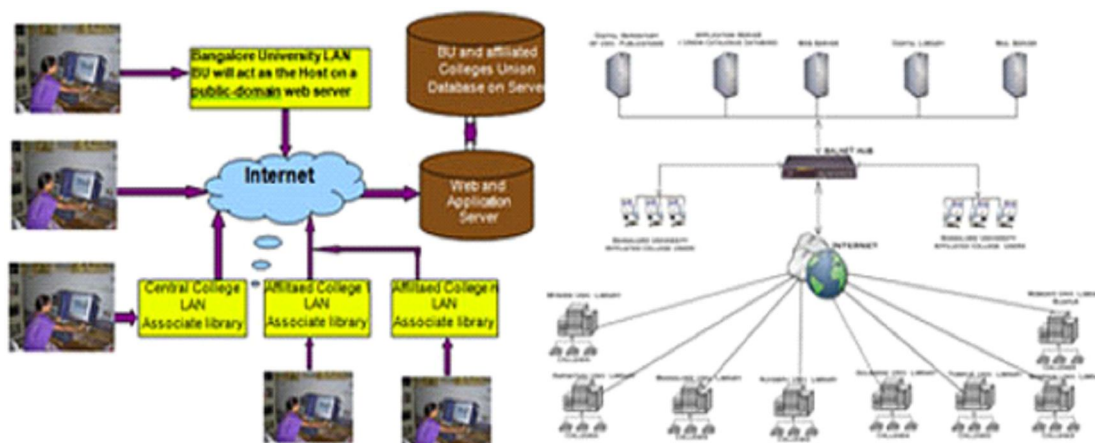All the above mentioned factors require that systems must be put in place to enable:

➲ Easy access to information about resources available throughout the libraries in Universities and colleges in Karnataka State.
➲ Easy access not only to metadata but also to the full text of important materials.
➲ Easy access to learning objects both for students and faculty
➲ Better sharing of resources and greater exchange of data and information among the different libraries.

Until the 1990's it was considered adequate for libraries to automate and make their collections available online. Today, however, libraries must not only automate to enable better efficiencies but also network if resources are to be made accessible equitably and shared efficiently for the benefit of students and faculty across the University. Fortunately, An academic library network is possible to be built cost-effectively using web-based technologies and this project outlines a plan for such a network.

The Project

The Project to be called "Karnataka State University Libraries Network" is the project envisioned as solution to address the problems above. This project will aggregate the catalogues of all University

Libraries in Karnataka and provide the base for promoting resource sharing services to the users of all the university libraries and affiliated colleges of all Universities in the state.

The salient features of the network architecture are as follows:

➲   The prime aim of the network is to link the resources of University Libraries in Karnataka State and their affiliated colleges and build the union catalogue. This will enable the resource poor libraries to help their users with complete information.

➲   The metadata resources of the all the Universities in the state and all the affiliated colleges of BU will be known to all students and faculty in the entire network via the Union Catalogue database that will result out of the network with the above architecture.

➲   Newer types of materials (web resources, multimedia, tutorials, learning objects, lecture presen tations, full text of reference and costly materials) can be selectively acquired and made acces sible to all stakeholders of the network.

➲   The library network will enhance the value of the different libraries to the academic community as such a network can truly participate in the teaching and research activities of the Universities and other colleges more effectively than at present.

However, it is necessary to state that any such effort will require a commitment on the part of the managements of participating institutions.

➲   to equip their libraries with suitable computer hardware (where such facilities are not already there) and make available reasonably good access to the Internet at the different libraries

- ➲ to equip their libraries with the means to make copies of articles and/or other documents that are required
- ➲ to ensure that their library resources are made available to any other user in the network on demand, subject to well defined rules for the sharing of hard copy as well as photocopy services

Benefits to Target Audiences

The benefits that are foreseen to the different target audiences from the proposed network are as follows:

Students
- ➲ Students across the universities and affiliated colleges have wider access to resources.
- ➲ Learning materials (created by faculty of Universities or other colleges or downloaded proactively by Network staff from the Web) can be put on the network and will become accessible to all students of the same subject across the network via the web
- ➲ Resources outside of the libraries (e.g., free full text reference books) could be made accessible.

Faculty Benefits
- ➲ They also have knowledge and access to resources across the network and beyond
- ➲ They can make their teaching materials (lecture notes, presentations, tutorials, specially created resources of the Distance Education department) available to other teachers and students in the network and also benefit from that of others who contribute their teaching resources.

Affiliated Colleges
- ➲ The introduction of new technologies in libraries will open the doors to wider sources of information.

- ➲ The colleges and university can begin to participate in cooperative arrangements that will enable wider access to electronic serials, costly reference materials in full text form for the benefit of students and faculty.
- ➲ Learning objects developed within the network and those downloaded and described in the Union database will become available

Libraries of Universities and Colleges
- ➲ Better efficiencies because of automation
- ➲ Possibility for new services, hitherto not possible

⮩ The Union database that will be developed in the network will have better quality metadata such data can be downloaded from free sources on the Web

⮩ Libraries can simply share metadata instead of duplicating their work

⮩ Costly resources are better possible to be shared.

⮩ Training provided to library staff at BU and colleges will update skills to enable library staff to handle newer web-based technologies and resources for the benefit of the academic community.

Conclusion

This paper has thrown light on establishing and implementing an efficient Library Network to link the University Libraries and their affiliated college Libraries in the state of Karnataka. Apart from this the proposed Network program will provide wide opportunities for University and College Libraries to strengthen their library resources, functions and services with application of innovative technologies, techniques, procedures etc, on cooperative basis. Thus a collective participation with open mind and effective implementation of the network program is the dire need of the day.

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