

Library and Information Networks in India

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Introduction

The explosion in the amount of literature that is available, increases among the number of users and their different needs, and the application of electronic media are forcing libraries to construct and participate in networks. Magnetic tapes, floppy disks, and CD-ROMs provide enough data storage capacity. Retrieval through telecommunications networks and access to international databases are available for searching for information on various subjects. With the advent of networks, remote transmission of texts and graphics, video clips and animated clips are also possible.

Definitions:

- A library network is broadly described as a group of libraries coming together with some agreement of understanding to help each other with a view to satisfying the information needs of their clientele.

- UNISIST II working document defines Information Network as

a set of inter-related information systems associated with communication facilities, which are cooperating through more or less formal agreements in order to implement information handling operations to offer better services to the users.

- The National Commission on Libraries & Information Science in its National Programme Document (1975) defines a network as

Two or more libraries engaged in a common pattern of information exchange, through communications for some functional purpose.

Objectives:

- To promote and support adoption of standards in library operations.

- To create databases for projects, specialists and institutions to provide online information services
- To improve the efficiency of housekeeping operations
- To coordinate with other regional, national & international network for exchange of information and documents
- To generate new services and to improve the efficiency of existing ones

Network Development in India:

Some factors that are responsible for the development of library and information networks in India are:

- The report of the working group of the planning commission on modernization of library services and informatics for the seventh five year plan, 1985-90
- The National Policy on Library & Information systems document (1986) accepted by the ministry of HRD, Government of India.
- The report on national policy on university libraries prepared by the Association of Indian Universities (1987)
- The UGC report on information systems for science and technology under the Department of Science & Industrial Research (DSIR) Government of India has been vigorously promoting an integrated approach to library automation and networking

Limitations in Network Development

A network may fail in the early stages if there is not proper planning or if adequate funds are not available. Moreover, a common memorandum of agreement signed by the participating libraries at the institutional level is essential for the success of a network venture. On a more practical level, catalog data must be in a standard, machine readable form for it to be shared and exchanged. And, finally, a continuous flow of external assistance is crucial for the network's survival.

Types of Networks:

Presently, there are three types of computer networks:

- LAN
- MAN
- WAN

Local Area Network (LAN):

A LAN is a number of related computers and electronic devices that share information over a transmission media.

A typical use of LAN is to tie together personal computers in an office so that they can all use a single printer and a file server. The LAN can be within a building or a campus wide network.

Metropolitan Area Network (MAN):

Attempts are being made to develop this type of network in metropolitan areas such Delhi, Calcutta, Bangalore, Madras, etc.

Wide Area Network (WAN):

A large-scale network, involving offices in different cities and countries is referred to as WAN, which is specially designed to interconnect data transmission devices over wide geographical areas.

Categories of Network

Library networks have been divided into two categories: general network and specialized network. The latter can further be divided into metropolitan network and countrywide network.

General Networks in India

NICNET (www.mylibnet.org):

Title: National Information Center Network

Sponsor: Planning Commission, Govt. of India.

Membership: Four national and regional nodes, 32 state and union territory nodes; seventy cities and towns

Services: Bulk file transfer; teleconferencing; full text and bibliographic retrieval services

Application: ICMRNIC Center; MEDLARS in India; Chemical Abstracts database

INDONET:

Title: INDONET data Network

Sponsor: CMC Ltd (1986) = Informatics India Ltd (1989)

Membership: Commercial computer network

Services: Database services such as DIALOG, COMPUSERVE; IP; SHARP

Applications: ACME; file transfer; international gateway

I – NET (VIKRAM):

Title: I – NET

Sponsor: Dept. of Telecommunications, Govt. of India

Connectivity: Packet switched public data network covering nine cities

Services: Information exchange through e-mail / FTP; Bibliographic databases

Specialized Networks

Metropolitan Networks

CALIBNET:

Title: Calcutta Libraries Network

Sponsor: NISSAT – Govt. of India

Applications: Cataloging; serials control; acquisitions; circulation

Services: CAS; SDI; union catalog; partial database; editing and retrieval of records; global information; search; full-text document delivery; library automation; CALIBNET INFO Services

BONET:

Title: Bombay Library Network

Sponsor: NISSAT & NCST (1994)

Objective: To promote cooperation among libraries in Bombay

Services: online catalog; online document delivery; IRS; interlibrary loan; dissemination of information

DELNET (delnet.nic.in/):

Title: Developing Library Network

Sponsor: NISSAT & NIC (1988)

Objective: To promote resource sharing; develop a network of libraries; collect, store, disseminate information

Members: 165 Institutions, 600 Libraries, 15 States in India, 5 from outside India

Services: resource sharing; free Software; ICE online facility; books database; thesis database; Indian specialists; database

ADINET (<http://www.alibnet.org/>):

Title: Ahmedabad Library Network

Sponsor: NISSAT, DSIR (1994) & INFLIBNET

Objective: To bring cooperation among its regional libraries; to develop databases; to integrate scientific and technical information systems

Members: nine libraries

Services: library automation; library holdings; database in progress

MYLIBNET (www.mylibnet.org):

Title: Mysore Library Network

Sponsor: NISSAT (1994)

Objective: Developing software tools; conducting seminar; workshops/training programs; conduct surveys

Host Site: CFTRI, Mysore

Members: 116 Institutions

Services: MYLIB Database; E-journals; food patents; CFTRI Library Bulletin; public services.

Countrywide Area Network:

DESINET:

Title: Defence Science Information Network

Sponsor: DESIDOC, Delhi

Activity: Focus on scientific, research and defense communities

ERNET:

Title: Educational and Research Network

Sponsor: Dept. of Electronics, Govt. of India; UNESCO (Financial assistance from UNDP)

Members: eight institutions (5 IITs, IISc., National Centre for Software Technology – Bombay, CCI wing of Dept. of Electronics)

Services: Communication services such as e-mail, file transfer, remote log on, database access, bulletin board etc.,

SIRNET:

Title: Scientific and Industrial Research Network

Sponsor: CSIR (Commissioned Agency- NCST, Bombay)

Members: 40 labs and R&D Institutions

Applications: scientific communication; leather technology; natural products; food technology; medicinal Plants

VIDYANET:

Title: VIDYANET (Dedicated Communication Computer Net)

Sponsor: TATA Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay

Objectives: To provide rapid means of communications by linking computers at various institutions in India to similar networks outside the country; to stimulate corporate research, the day-to-day exchange of research information and the execution of joint projects and publications

Services: File transfer facility; sharing of computer resources and access to remote applications, databases, libraries, etc.

BTISNET (www.btisnet.nic.in/):

Title: BTISNET (Specialized Information Network)

Sponsor: Dept. of Biotechnology, Govt. of India.

Connectivity: 10 Specialized Information Centres in genetic engineering, plant tissue culture; photosynthesis and plant molecular biology; cell transformation ; bio-process engineering.

Services: Data processing using applications software; online communication access; facsimile facility

INFLIBNET (www.inflibnet.ac.in/index.jsp):

Title: Information Library Network

Sponsor: UGC (1991)

Connectivity: computer communication network of universities and R&D; libraries and bibliographic information centers throughout the country

Members: 200 Universities; 400 College libraries; 200 R&D libraries

Services: catalog service; database Services; document supply services; e-mail; BBS: audio and video conferencing, etc.

BALNET:

Title: Bangalore Library Network

Sponsor: JRD;. Tata Memorial Library (1995)

Members: 100 Libraries

MALIBNET:

Title: Madras Library Network

Sponsor: INSDOC & NISSAT (1993)

Members: 15 Libraries

Activity: Two important databases, a directory database of current serials in Madras and a contents database covering articles published in 300 journals available in Madras libraries.

Conclusion:

During the recent period quite a large number of libraries and information centers are forming networks. The advent of computer networking as an accepted part of the library and information infrastructure has had a very significant impact on the way in

which library and information systems are perceived. India is thus on the threshold to a new era of computer communication networks both for general purposes and for library and information purposes.

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