

Library System and Information Services at the Indira Gandhi National Open University

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Background

The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) has been established by an Act of Parliament in September 1985. The organisational structure of the University has been designed to reflect each major functional area of operation. Accordingly it has at present, nine Schools of Studies and fifteen Divisions. The University follows a multimedia approach in producing learning packages and imparts instruction through self instructional print materials, face to face contact sessions, audio-video programmes, broadcasting, telecasting and teleconferencing. In last one decade, IGNOU has produced 38 programmes consisting 482 courses, published 2893 self-instructional materials, produced 782 audio and 756 video programmes. The University has established 21 Regional Centres, 342 Study Centres, 23 Partner institutions, 63 Multimedia Centres and 28 Distance Education Facilitators all over the country to provide support services to distance learners. The student support services include counselling sessions for providing guidance, peer group interaction, laboratory practicals, access to audio-video programmes and library facilities. In 1997-98, 163,394 students were admitted to various programmes courses raising the total number of students enrolled to 430,832. All together, 25196 students were awarded Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates in 1997-98.

Library System of IGNOU

IGNOU Library network operates through three-tier hierarchical system having Central Library at the zenith acting as the main coordinating link with the nodes i.e. the branch libraries at the Regional and Study Centres. The Central Library at the Headquarters combines the features and functions of both, an academic as well as a special library. This dual responsibility increases the complexities of library policies regarding collection development, selection of multimedia resources and acquisition management as well as rendering library and information services to its varied clientele at the Central Library and the branch libraries of the Regional and Study (R & S) Centres. The Central Library caters to the information needs of permanent academic, professional technical, and administrative staff as well as temporary consultants and other part-time academic staff posted at the Schools and Divisions. The library has enrolled 1474 members. The clientele of the libraries at the R & S Centres are students, counselors, academic and supporting staff of the Centres. The figure of membership at these R & S Centres differs depending upon the number of programmes activated and the enrolment of the students and counselors.

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Collection Development

The Central Library possesses collections in various media to develop it into a Multi-media Learning Centre.

Traditional Print Medium

- Books, Reports, Conference proceeding etc.	58097
- Bound Journal	4111
- IGNOU Self-Instructional Materials (SIMs)	422
- Pamphlets	80
- Theses	14

Miniaturized Medium

- Micro-films	133
- Microfiches	5306

Optical Medium

- CD-ROM Databases	47 +132
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Audio-Visual Medium

- Audio Cassettes	38
- Video Cassettes	2
• Magnetic Medium	
- Floppy Discs	76

IGNOU has a separate library for films, audio recordings and video recordings at the Electronic Media Production Centre due to shortage of space for stack room and viewing room area in the existing temporary building of the Library.

The Library has developed a special collection of distance education books, journals, course materials of the Open University - Milton Keynes, Indira Gandhi National Open University - New Delhi, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University - Hyderabad, Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University - Nashik and all the issues of the CD-ROM on Distance Education produced by the International Centre for Distance Learning, Milton Keynes from the inception till to-date.

The R & S Centres have a small library consisting of reference books, textbooks and books recommended in the SIMs for the programmes which are activated at each centre. They are also provided audio-video cassettes along with the equipment to render them usable. These audio-video programmes are supplementary to the SIMs and are played by counsellors during the contact programmes.

Library Services

The Central Library has been providing a variety of manual as well as electronic services to its users. Apart from the conventional library services such as reading, lending, reference, referral, bibliography, documentation i.e. indexing and abstracting, reprography, spiral binding and lamination, the Library also renders electronic services by retrieving information through OPAC, CD-ROM search, microform search and internet search. The Central Library provides inter-library loan service through which the users can access the union catalogue and borrow books for a short period from ninety five participating libraries in Delhi and neighbouring areas. In addition to this, IGNOU library has also become an institutional member of the American Center Library and British Council library to have an access to their print and non-print resources.

Computerisation of IGNOU Library System

The computerisation of the IGNOU Library had started way back in 1989 when the library received PC-XT and library staff were trained first for the CDS/ISIS-version 1 and then for CDS/ISIS-version 2.1. A humble beginning was made by creating a machine readable catalogue using CDS/ISIS. In 1990, IGNOU library procured an integrated software called LibSys to automate all the house-keeping operations. 1 3000 records created in CDS/ISIS were transported to LibSys on XENIX operating system. In 1991 LibSys with DOS operating system was acquired as the XENIX version had a limitation of capacity. It was installed on PC-286 and transferred to PC-386 later. In 1993 LibSys with UNIX operating system networking all the sections of the library using 12 terminals was installed. At present all the house-keeping activities are fully computerised and documentation work of indexing and abstracting of distance education journals is also carried out. The activities computerised so far include Acquisition, Cataloguing, Circulation, Serial Control as well Indexing and Abstracting of articles. Library has also acquired one multilingual terminal to create a database of Hindi books. In order to make the circulation system effective and efficient all library books have been barcoded and the process of issuing bar-coded membership cards is in progress. In-house generation of barcode labels using barcode printing software is also done at the library.

Digitisation at IGNOU Library

The digitisation of the Library Accession Registers and catalogue has been completed. Library has databases of various accession registers and catalogues of books having different sequences as enlisted below -

- | | |
|-------------------|---------|
| - English books | General |
| - Hindi books | H |
| - IGNOU books | I |
| - Gift books | G |
| - Bound journals | J |
| - These | T |
| - Pamphlets | P |
| - Books form NBHM | MP |

Library has also created databases using various software such as LibSys, CDS/ISIS, Dbase and so on. They are as under -

1. "Directory of Women's Study Organisations of India" published by the Association of Indian Universities and the Commonwealth of Learning.
2. "Catalogue of IGNOU Publications (Print, Audio & Video)" published by Library & Documentation Division in 3 editions.
3. "Database of Annotated Bibliography of Distance Education Publications by IGNOU Staff"
4. "Database of Books sent to Regional & Study Centres and the Directory of Addresses of the R & S Centres".
5. "Database of Periodicals including Subject Journals, Magazines and Newspapers" to retrieve information regarding titles of journals in each subject and lists of journals procured from each vendors.
6. "Database of Bound Journals".
7. "Database of Articles Published in various Distance Education Journals"
8. "Database of Books and Analytical Entries of Chapters of Edited Books on Distance Education".
9. "Database of Board of Management Meetings of IGNOU".

Future Plans

1. CD-Networking

The Library has already initiated action to install CD Workstation and CD Net to meet growing demands of the faculty members to hook to the CDROM databases through the existing university LAN and to have facilities of browsing as well as downloading sitting at their own desks.

2. CD-Publishing

The library has a mandate to maintain archival collections of all important publications as well as meeting minutes of various bodies of the University for posterity. A modest beginning has been made by producing CD-ROM of the "Catalogue of IGNOU Publications (Print, Audio & Video)". In the next three years, Library will take up the CD- ROM publishing of all IGNOU SIMs and other documents.

3. On-line Access to Commercial Database

Library will subscribe to world wide on-line databases and journals to provide access to up-to-date information to the academic community.

4. Internet Services

Library has devised a plan to launch internet service by locating, collating and organising scattered information on internet in the required format for the users.

5. Participation with External Library Networks

IGNOU Library is already an active member of INFLIBNET (Information & Libraries Network - a project of the University Grants Commission for networking of University Libraries) and DELNET (Delhi Libraries Network).

6. Local Area Network of IGNOU

The University has already initiated action to have Local Area Network (LAN) of nine School of Studies and fifteen Services Divisions. The library will play an effective role of transmitting information from the wealth of resources available at the library. LAN will facilitate the library to provide on-line and remote services such as -

- a. On-line Public Access to Catalogue (OPAC)
- b. On-line reservation of books to be borrowed
- c. On-line reference and referral services
- d. On-line request for reprographic services

7. Wide Area Networking of Distance Teaching Institutions

Actions have been initiated at the individual Open Universities and Correspondence Institutions to have Wide Area Networking (WAN). Once when the WAN is operable, libraries will be able to share and spare information and resources amongst each other. The staff, students and counsellors will immensely benefit by accessing information from the collections of various media and in varied range of physical formats of different universities.

8. Microform Laboratory

A number of rare documents are now available in the form of microforms. Micro films and microfiches are two important microforms which are durable and save space. IGNOU Library has procured Census from 1831 to 1971 and many other databases. Though microfilming is becoming an obsolete technology, microforms are easy to preserve and easy to retrieve information.

9. Subscription to list serves

At present library subscribes only to DENET list serve but in the near future library is planning to subscribe to various list serves of various disciplines to provide an access to information and render effective services to users.

Library Publications

Library has published a few publications and policies to have consistency in development and continuity in operations. They are -

1. “Catalogue of Library Publications (Print, Audio & Video)”

- Edition 1 in 1991
- Edition 2 in 1993
- Edition 3 in 1994
- Edition 4 is under preparation.

2. “Library Policies”

- Library Rules
- Circulation Policy for Central Library
- Policy for Lending Books to Schools
- Inter-Library Loan Policy
- Gift Policy
- Weeding Policy

These policies are already printed in English. The Hindi versions of the policies are in the press.

3. “Library Brochure”

Library Brochure has been already published in English and Hindi version is under preparation.

4. “Annotated Bibliography of Articles Published in Research and Distance Education Journals”

Annotated bibliographies of articles published in several other refereed journals of distance education are at different levels of preparation.

Conclusion

With the advent of multimedia technologies - both computer as well as communication technologies, the role of distance Librarian is changing fast from mere Librarian as a custodian of books to Documentation Officer, Information Scientist, Media Librarian and now with the fast growing networks, internet and intranets, the librarian has to assume a role of Net Librarian.