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WEB PRESENCE OF ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE LIBRARIES IN KERALA, INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF CONTENT

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Abstract

This study aims to ascertain how and to what extent the information regarding libraries is presented in the websites of the Arts and Science Colleges of Kerala, India. The contents of the library websites/webpages were analysed using a check-list containing 28 criteria, developed for this purpose. A sample of 32 colleges were selected for the study. The most popular features available in these websites were identified and the websites/webpages were ranked on the basis of certain scores assigned to every criterion. The major findings shows that majority of these colleges have a web presence and information regarding library opening hours, collection information and information regarding circulation are the popular content in the webpages. Another major observation is that most of these webpages do not provide sufficient links to provide access to the subscribed e-resources.

Introduction

The advances in web technologies and the wide spread use of smartphones and data networks, has revolutionised the mode of information access by the academics. With the shutdown of class rooms and restricted access to libraries during the pandemic, the online media became the only source of information for the academic community. As far as higher education institutions are concerned, the information dissemination is carried out to a great extent through their respective websites. Libraries being an indispensable component of a higher education institution, the websites of academic institutions around the globe provide due importance to their library contents/information in their homepage. Moreover, the library websites/ webpages provide information as well as facilitates access to a lot of electronic resources which is the

need of the hour. In this context the present study attempts to identify how the Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala, India present their libraries in their respective institutional websites.

Background

Kerala is the southwestern state of the Indian Union with 100% literacy rate and a well-established higher education system. According to Kerala State Government sources (<http://collegiateedu.kerala.gov.in/> accessed on 24-05-2021), the state has got 247 Arts and Science Colleges. Among these 66 colleges are in the government sector and 181 colleges in the aided/management sector. Since the teaching learning process are now undergoing a paradigm shift to online platforms, the role of the libraries attached to these institutions are also supposed to change accordingly. The situation is such that no library can proceed further without providing access to electronic contents and services to its clientele. Websites and portals are the best means for providing such services effectively and efficiently. Hence for providing better and standard services to the students, the academic libraries need to build up and maintain websites or portals that are accessible on a 24 x 7 basis. As far the college libraries in Kerala are concerned, most of them are now providing access to electronic resources through NList programme of the University Grants Commission of India. Many of these libraries are subscribing to various other electronic databases also. In such a scenario, this study is an investigation to find out how and to what extent is the libraries of the Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala are available over the web. And how these colleges are presenting their libraries in their respective college websites and what importance does these institutions give to showcase their libraries and its services.

Objectives

- 1) To ascertain how and to what extent the information regarding libraries is presented in the websites of the Arts and Science Colleges of Kerala.
- 2) To analyse the contents of the library websites/webpages in accordance with the criteria developed for this purpose.
- 3) To identify and rank the items most commonly seen in the websites/webpage of these libraries.
- 4) To rank the colleges on the basis of the above analysis.

Review of Literature

An analysis of related literature in the topic revealed that Library scholars were very much interested in this area. Earlier studies stressed the importance of having a library home page link on their parent institution's home page and provide access to online databases and free internet resources through the library's home page (Bao, 2000). Websites of science & engineering libraries numbering to 45 in the USA and Canada were analysed including their design characteristics and hypertext links by Osorio (2001) and found that these home pages have many of the elements found in other academic home pages and also have the problems and limitations typically found in such pages. The study identified the predominant design features and content elements and identified a model page from the selected sample. The content and design of academic library websites in Malaysia was evaluated qualitatively and quantitatively by Lee & Tee (2002) and found that these websites mainly provide general information about the libraries and its services. Further the author found that there is a lack of information organization in the websites and the websites are not up to the expectations of its clientele. Considerable guidance on creating and evaluating library web sites was put forward by Stropshire (2003). The study identified the salient issues in web site management and reviewed their practical application through examination of four case studies. A set of simple-to implement guidelines to help librarians design usable library websites was enumerated by Jasek (2004). These were based on a survey of literature on library website design and usability testing, results of usability reviews conducted by Elsevier for library customers, and established best practices in website usability. Detlor & Lewis (2006) evaluated the Association of Research Libraries' (ARL) member websites and suggested that information seeking must be central focus of library website interface design and not mere information access. Qutab & Mahmood (2009) analysed the web sites of 52 academic, special, public and national libraries in Pakistan based on a 77 item checklist. It was found that no library web site contained all items on the checklist. General features like access, speed, navigation, help facilities etc, were found. But the placement of library functions like OPAC, circulation, reference and other interactive services were not highly observed. Further he suggested the importance of user-centered studies to develop more interactive websites and added that the web sites should focus attention to fulfil information seeking needs of users. The design and structure of the library websites of IITs was analysed by Ratha, Joshi, and Naidu (2012) and found significant differences with respect to some important point of view such as the user supporting services, number of hyperlinks on home pages and whole websites, number of images, location of

images, In-active links and web pages, etc. Nasajpour...[et al.] (2014) made a qualitative evaluation of the college library websites in Iranian Medical Universities based on the Stover model. The results showed that there was a meaningful difference between the quality of the college library websites and the university types, resulting in college libraries of type one universities having the highest average score and the college libraries of type three universities having the lowest score. The availability of web 2.0 tools in the community college libraries' websites of United States of America was studied by Blummer & Kenton (2014) and found that Web 2.0 tools were utilized by 97% of the sample population and many of these sites contained more than one Web 2.0 tool. The study identified LibGuides, social networking tools, chat technology, photo video sharing sites and RSS updates as especially popular among these libraries. Rahman & Batcha (2020) analysed the accessibility, accuracy, currency and user-friendliness in ten selected library websites of the colleges affiliated to the University of Delhi. The study revealed that maximum number of college libraries have mentioned information related to introduction, library staff, library hours and membership on their websites and none of the library websites/web-pages had features of social networking tools, feedbacks, regular updates and they also lack in providing question papers, news-clippings, user manual and single window search.

Methodology

In Kerala, there are 247 Arts and Science Colleges of which 66 are run directly by government and the remaining 181 are under the aided sector (ie., run and managed by private individuals /organizations and financially aided by state government by paying off the salary of teachers and staff members). To make a representative sample of these colleges, this study made use of the list of participants who attended the 169th Faculty Induction Programme conducted by the University Grants Commission-Human Resource Development Centre, University of Kerala. There were 42 participants in the programme who belonged to the 32 Arts and Science Colleges in the State. These 32 colleges were selected for conducting the study and all these colleges are affiliated to different universities in the state.

After this a google search was conducted with the name of the colleges to identify whether these colleges have got a website. For those having a website, further analysis was done based on a check-list prepared for this study. The check-list was first prepared after an extensive literature survey. On comparison with the content available in these websites, some of the items were excluded from the check-list and the final check-list was formulated as shown in table 1.

Availability of Library Website/Webpage	Library has website
	A page dedicated
	A space in another page
Accessibility	Direct link on parent institutions website
	Link under “facilities/ resources / departments”, etc with the title “library”
	With the link “facilities/resources/departments”, etc with out the title “library”
General information	Introduction
	Collection
	Services
	Opening Hours
	Circulation Information
	Staff Information
	Membership
	Rules
	Different Sections
	Technical Organization
	Automation
	E—Mail/ Contact Address Of Librarian
	List Of Journals Subscribed
Links to Online Library Resources	OPAC
	E-journal links
	E-book links
	Digital library
	E-Question Papers
	E-databases links
Value added services	Ask a Librarian
	Links to other resources on net
	Others

Table1 Criteria for Analysis of Websites of Colleges

A total of 28 criteria were listed under 5 broad headings to analyse the availability, accessibility, general information provided, links to electronic resources and value added services. Each college/college library website (as the case may be) was analysed strictly with these criteria to rank the colleges and to find out the most popular content in these websites/webpages.

The observations were analysed using Microsoft Excel 2010 and the graphs and tables were also prepared using the same.

Analysis and Interpretations

The study analysed the websites of 32 Arts and Science Colleges in Kerala. This included colleges from all parts of the State. Out of these 10 are government colleges and the remaining 22 are managed by private bodies and aided by the state government. A quantitative analysis of these websites were made using 28 criteria listed under 5 broad headings as mentioned in table 1.

Availability of a Library Website / Webpage

The first and foremost requirement of a web presence (WP) is the availability of a particular content on the web. To ensure this the study tried to identify whether all these 32 colleges have a website. The observations are presented in the fig1 and a category wise analysis (Government College/Aided College) of the results is shown in the table 2.

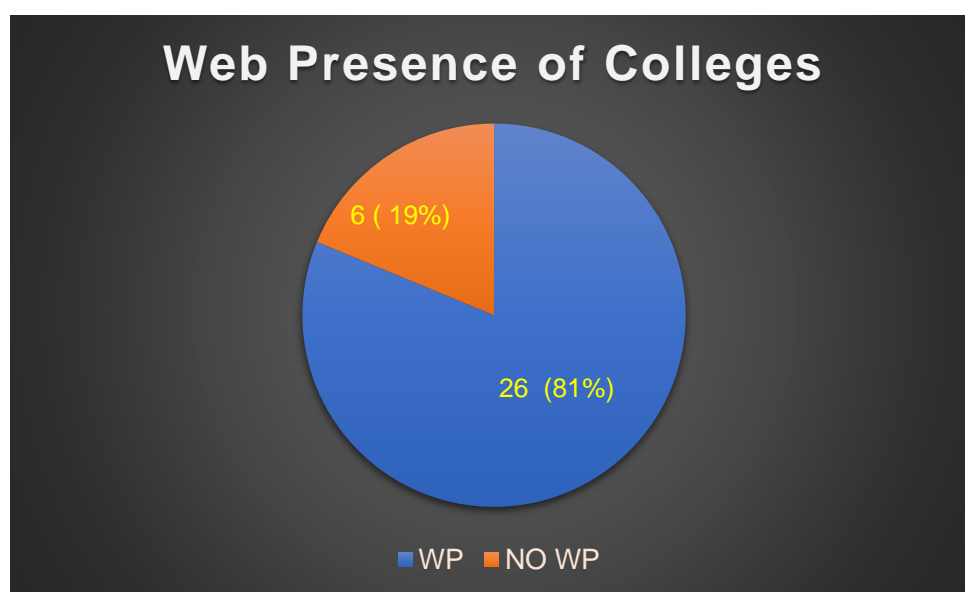


Fig 1

TYPE	With WP	PERC.(%)
Aided Colleges (n=22)	20	91%
Govt. Colleges (n=10)	6	60%
TOTAL (n=32)	26	81%

Table 2 Category Wise Analysis of WP of Colleges

The analysis shows that 81% of the college libraries under this study are having a web presence (WP). It is clear from the table2 that out of the 32 colleges studied, 26 colleges (20 Aided colleges and 6 Government colleges) have a web presence and these 26 colleges were qualified for further analysis.

To make an understanding about the extent of this WP, a detailed analysis was conducted under the criteria “Availability of Library Website/Webpage” of the check-list and the results are presented in fig 2 and discussed below:

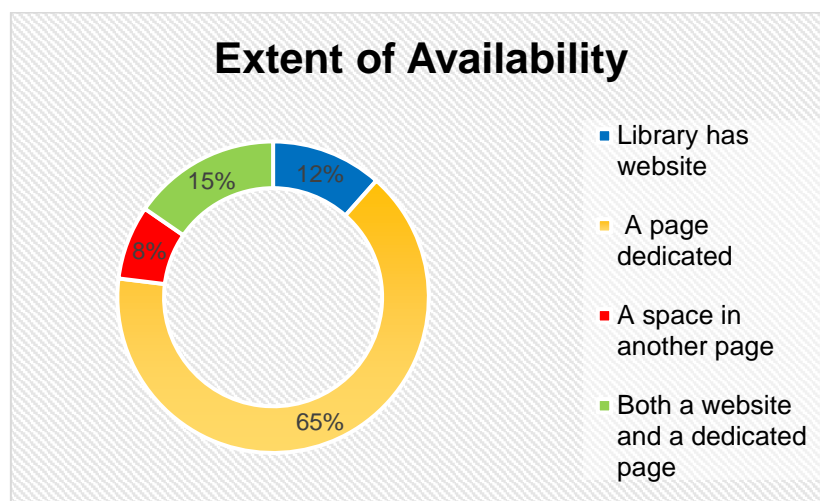


Fig 2

Even though the checklist enumerated only three criteria, the detailed analysis of these websites revealed that some of the library link provided by these websites led to a dedicated page and a link for their library website is provided in that page. Since the information regarding these libraries are available in both platforms, the analysis is made accordingly.

Accessibility of Library Website/Webpage

It is very important in a study dealing with website analysis to find out how speedily and easily one could access a particular page from the home page. Many of the previous studies have stressed the need for a direct link for the library in the parent institution's home page. The criteria under this group and their respective frequencies are listed in table 3.

Sl.No.	Criteria	Freq.	Percentage (n=26)
1	Direct link on parent institutions website	6	23%
2	Link under “facilities/ resources / departments”, etc with the title “library”	16	61%
3	With the link ‘facilities/resources/departments’, etc without the title “library”	2	8%
4	Both item 1 and 2	2	8%

Table 3 Accessibility of library websites/webpages

In this case also it was observed that some of the colleges provided a direct link as well as a link under “facilities/ resources / departments”, etc with the title “library” for their libraries. Hence one more criteria was also taken into consideration as depicted in table 3. It is evident that only 31% of these colleges provide a direct link for their libraries in their homepages. Among these only two of these colleges provided the link in the main menu bar whereas the other six colleges provided the link somewhere else in the homepage.

General Information regarding the Library

As far as a library is concerned, the general information corresponds to the collection, services, catalogs, opening hours, rules, etc. A library webpage is expected to provide such information. To identify the extend of general information provided by the webpages, a set of 13 criteria were considered and the respective frequencies are shown in table 4.

It is observed that among the 13 items (describing the general information) listed, 10 were provided by majority of the libraries. The less frequent items in these webpages were the information pertaining to technical organization of the libraries, contact details of the librarian and the list of journals subscribed. Information about the library opening hours is the most common item among these websites.

Sl.No.	Criteria	Freq.	Perc. (n=26)
1	Introduction	20	76.92%
2	Collection	19	73.08%
3	Services	17	65.38%
4	Opening hours	21	80.77%
5	Circulation information	19	73.08%
6	Staff information	15	57.69%
7	Membership	13	50.00%
8	Rules	15	57.69%
9	Different sections	16	61.54%
10	Technical Organization	8	30.77%
11	Automation	17	65.38%
12	E—mail/ contact address of Librarian	10	38.46%
13	List of Journals subscribed	2	7.69%

Table 4 General Information

Availability of Links to Online Resources

Access to online resources is the need of the hour. Moreover, most of these institutions are subscribing to the NList and some other e-resources as well as maintain a digital library / institutional repository and the access for the same are expected to be provided through their library webpages. In addition these webpages are expected to provide Access to Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACs), digitized versions of previous years' question papers, etc. The study analysed the availability of links to such online resources in the college library webpages. Six items under the broad category "Links to Online Library Resources" were considered for this analysis and the observations are shown in the fig 3.

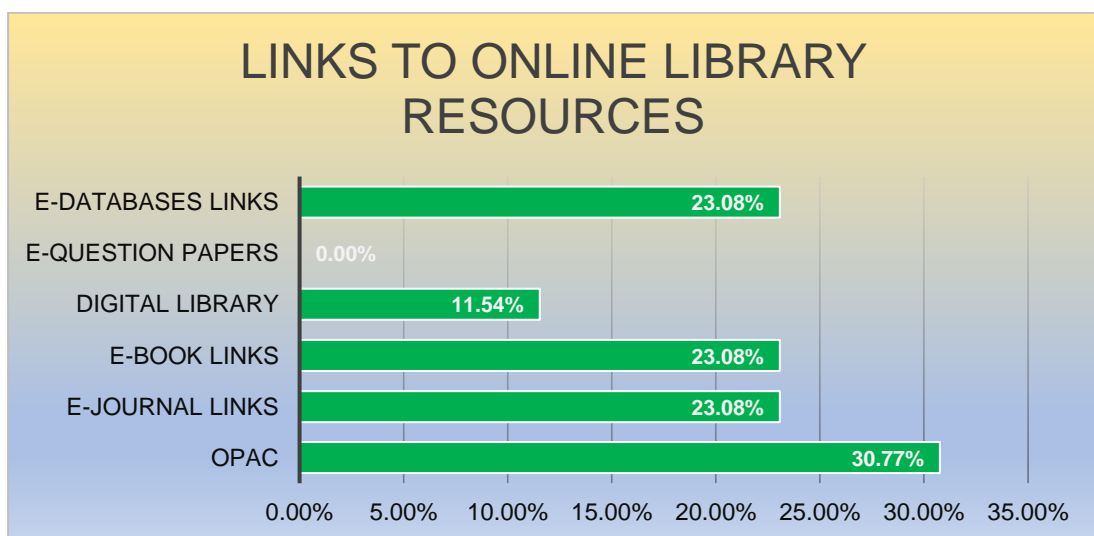


Fig 3 Links to Online Library Resources

Value Added Services

In addition to the conventional online services, libraries now a days provide some value-added services through their webpages. A lot of open resources are also now available for learning. The academic libraries around the globe do a greater job in identifying such resources applicable for their respective academic community and facilitating access to those resources. Virtual Reference Services like “Ask a Librarian” is now a common feature in academic library webpages. Four criteria were listed to analyse this and one of these “Feedback Form” was excluded from the list due to ‘zero’ hit. Thus 3 criteria were taken into consideration under this category and the observations are depicted in the table6.

Sl.No.	Criteria	Freq.	Perc.(n=26)
1	Ask a Librarian	4	15%
2	Links to other resources on net	8	31%
3	Others	2	8%

Table 6 Value Added Services

It is observed that only a few number of libraries provide value-added services online. “Links to other resources on net” was popular among these items. In the above listed criteria, “others” corresponds to Research Support System provided by one library and WhatsApp Book Reservation facility by another library.

Ranking of Items in Library Webpages

One of the objectives of this study is to rank the items present in the library webpages to identify the most common information provided. For this all the criteria excluding the “others” and those with zero hits were taken into consideration and the observations are plotted in fig 4. Opening Hours is the most popular information in these webpages followed by a general Introduction about the library. The third most common item found in these webpages are the information regarding the Collection as well as the information related to Circulation of books (ie; the number of books that can be issued and the period of issue, etc).

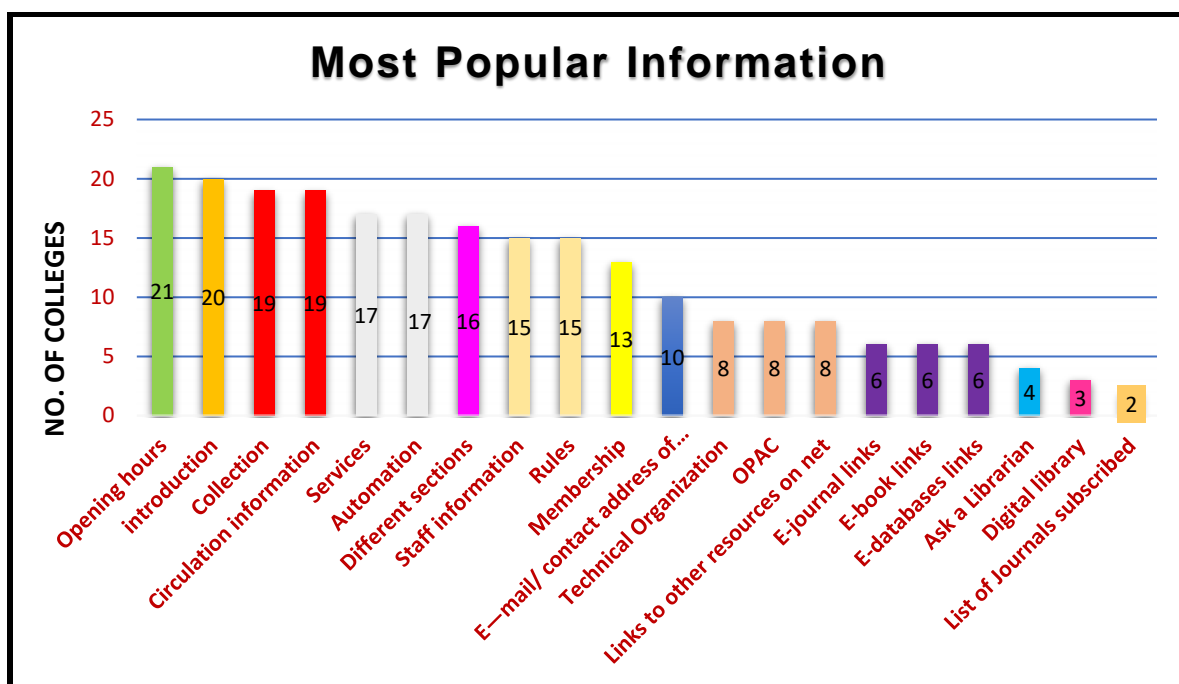


Fig 4 Ranking of Information available in the webpages/websites

Ranking of Websites/Webpages

On the basis of the above analysis an attempt is made here to rank the websites. For this certain criterion are given some weightage and is given as shown in table 7.

Sl.No.	Criteria	Weightage
1	Library has website	3
2	A page dedicated	2
3	A space in another page	1
4	Direct link on parent institutions website	3
5	Link under “facilities/ resources / departments”, etc with the title “library”	2
6	With the link “facilities/resources/departments”, etc with out the title “library”	1

Table 7 Weighted Criteria for ranking the websites/webpages

All other criteria (22) are given a weightage of “1” and the total score obtained by each college is calculated. It is observed that the Mahatma Gandhi College, Thiruvananthapuram bagged

the highest score (27) followed by Govt. Brennen College, Thalassery (24). St. Xavier's College, Thumba obtained the third position with a score of 23. Table 8 presents the rank, category, Name of College, URL, and scores obtained in detail.

Rank	Category	Name of College	URL	Score
1	Aided	MG College, Trivandrum	https://mgcollegetvm.ac.in/facilities/library/	27
2	Govt.	Govt. Brennen College, Thalassery	https://www.brennencollege.ac.in/	24
3	Aided	St. Xavier's College, Thumba	http://ww.stxaviersthumba.org/student-support/111/the-library	23
4	Aided	MSM College, Kayamkulam	https://www.msmcollege.in/departments/library/	21
4	Aided	SN College, Sivagiri	http://sncsivagirivarkala.com/library.php	21
5	Aided	Mar Ivanios College, Trivandrum	https://www.marivanioscollege.com/	20
6	Govt.	Govt. Arts College, Trivandrum	https://gactvm.org/about-us/library/	19
7	Aided	St. Dominic's College, Kanjirapally	https://sdck.in/library.php	17
8	Aided	Sree Ayyappa College, Chengannur	https://www.sreeayyappacollege.ac.in/facility/central-library	16
8	Aided	St. Michael's College, Cherthala	http://www.stmc.ac.in/library/	16
9	Govt.	KKTM College, Pullut	https://kktmcollege.com/library.html	15
10	Aided	NSS College, Cherthala	http://nsscollegecherthala.ac.in/facilities/library/	13
10	Govt.	University College, Trivandrum	http://universitycollege.ac.in/?page_id=491	13
11	Aided	Mar Thoma College, Tiruvalla	http://marthomacollegelibraryonline.org/index.php	12
11	Aided	Marthoma College for Women, Perumbavoor	https://marthomacollege.ac.in/college-library/	12
11	Aided	SD College, Alappuzha	http://sdcollege.in/library.html	12

12	Aided	SN College, Cherthala	http://www.sncollegecherthala.in/vision/library.html	11
12	Aided	SNM College, Maliankara	https://www.snmcollege.in/LibraryDigitalLibrary.aspx	11
12	Aided	St. George's College, Aruvithura	https://sgcaruvithura.ac.in/page/view/Library	11
13	Aided	Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara	http://bishopmoorecollege.org/library-2/	10
13	Govt.	Govt. College for Women, Trivandrum	https://www.gcwtvm.ac.in/	10
14	Aided	Bishop Chulaparambil Memorial College, Kottayam	https://bcmcollege.ac.in/faculties/digital-library/	9
15	Govt.	Govt. College, Ambalapuzha	http://gcambalapuzha.in/facilities/library-reading-room/	8
16	Aided	St. Thomas College, Kozhencherry	https://www.stthomascollege.info/resources?cxv=IjcZlg==	5
17	Aided	SVR NSS College, Vazhoor	https://www.svrnsscollege.com/facilities/	3
17	Aided	VTMNSS College, Dhanuvachapuram	http://vtmnsscollege.ac.in/library/	3

Table 8 Ranked List of Colleges

It is clear that the scores range from 3 to 27 with an average score of 14. The table shows that only 11 colleges scored above the average point which reveals that majority of the colleges under study are not giving proper importance to their libraries in their websites.

Findings

The major findings are:

- 1) Among the 32 colleges under study, 81% have a web presence.
- 2) Majority of the aided colleges have a web presence.
- 3) Among the colleges (26) with a web presence only 27% is having a website.
- 4) Most of these college libraries have a dedicated page in their respective college's websites.
- 5) 31% of these college websites provides a direct link to their libraries in their respective homepages.
- 6) Maximum number of colleges provides the information regarding 'opening hours' (81%) in their webpage/websites. This is followed by 'introduction' (77%) and the information regarding 'collection' and 'circulation' both 73% each.

- 7) OPAC is the most common e-resource provided by these websites/webpages.
- 8) E-question papers are not provided by any of these colleges.
- 9) Some of these college libraries maintains a functional website. But a link for the same is not provided in the college websites.
- 10) Proper updations of the webpages of government college libraries is not been observed.
- 11) Most of these libraries are not giving any importance to provide access to the subscribed e-resources through their library webpages/websites.

Recommendations

- Librarians should ensure that a direct link for the library is provided in the home page of the respective parent institutions.
- Librarians should convince the authorities about the importance of library website and actively participate in the development of it.
- Library websites should present & provide services and facilities that satisfies the user needs.
- Studies may be conducted to analyse & evaluate the performance of the websites and changes may be made accordingly.

Conclusion

It is evident from the study and the below average scores obtained by the colleges that majority of the websites of arts and science colleges in Kerala have least representation of their respective libraries. Negligence from the part of authorities in providing the links to library in their respective home pages is really regrettable. It is interesting to note that with a single page in the parent's website, some of the libraries provide more information and links than those with library websites. Owing to the changing nature of information requirements and access by the academics, libraries and their webpages/websites should rise up to provide sufficient online services to its clientele. It is high time for the library professionals associated with these institutions to be serious about the role of library websites in providing and marketing quality library services.

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