

Evaluation of University Library Websites: A Literature Review

Manjunath G. Lamani*, Keshava**

Abstract

This paper reviews websites of university libraries that pertain to methodological, and usability approaches to website evaluation. The paper analyzes the initial work and continues up to recent developments in website evaluation. In general, based on a set of website evaluation criteria's like Authority, Purpose, Coverage, Currency Objectivity, Superstructure, Graphics, Use of color, Content, Legibility, Page layout, Hyperlinks, Promotion, Searching and FAQ, these evaluation criteria's are the platform for the checking up the status of the university websites. The strengths and weaknesses of each method are examined. Research gaps and opportunities for future studies are discussed. Situation can only be improved if the University & their library websites update the latest information on a regular intervals, or the latest happenings comes in. And preparing a model for the university libraries websites.

Keywords: Website evaluation; Literature review; University libraries website; South India.

Introduction

A literature review is a description of the literature relevant to a particular field or topic. It gives an overview of what has been said, who are the key writers, what are the prevailing theories and hypotheses, what questions are being asked, and what methods and methodologies are appropriate and useful. As such, it is not in itself primary research, but rather it reports on other findings. In the present chapter an attempt has been made to review the literature available on the topic.

Review of literature

The general purpose of a university library Website is to serve as a tool for information reference, and research. Most of the sites do not offer instructions about library use or

information seeking skills. Many libraries have not maximized their sites functionality in terms of providing interactive forms and site's search engines Kaur, (2000).[1] Therefore, Libraries and library professionals have a rare opportunity to make a major contribution to the development of the global information infrastructure by making available some of their local, and often unique, information sources over the www; through the library home pages they are developing Chisenga J (1998).[2] The university library website has to be developed in such a way that, it should have effectiveness in terms of coverage and content. The aim of the Website is to provide access to quality information services for students and staff at a large decentralized university. However it aims, where possible, to give generalised advice to any academic library that is considering building a website with the hope that others will benefit from the experience Houghton D (2000).[3] To know this the university websites have to be evaluated, on the bases of certain criteria like authority; purpose; coverage; currency; objectivity; accuracy; superstructure; graphics; use of colour; contents; readability; page layout; hyperlinks; promotion; dynamic; future enhancement possibility; platform etc. Evaluation of library homepages gives an insight into a homepage's structure,

Author's Affiliation: *Research Scholar, Dept. of Library & Information Science, Karnataka University, Dharwad-01, Karnataka, India, ** Associate Professor, Dept. of Studies and Research in Library & Information Science, Tumkur University, Tumkur, Karnataka, India.

Reprint's request: Manjunath G Lamani, Research Scholar, Dept. of Library & Information Science, Karnataka University, Dharwad-01, Karnataka, India.

E-mail: leosigman@gmail.com

(Received on 31.12.2012, accepted on 28.06.2013)

information content and graphic design are very important for the user's further search behaviour. Websites vary according to the situation and target group, and are most successful if they reflect the library's condition, organization, purpose and role Clausen H, (1998).[4] The website is to be built with a uniform graphic design and a menu driven structure. The structure separates the information space by providing meaningful subject categories that enable efficient browsing. Because the categories are limited in their commonness a search engine based on the Harvest system is included. An evaluation of website access is carried out by analyzing and exploring the web server log files using data warehousing and OLA.P On-Line Analytical Processing technology. It suggests some possibilities for future development of the website Rozic; Todorovski & Hristovski, (1999).[5]

It is observed that the websites of university libraries in the USA are more user-oriented than those in Taiwan, and that the services delivered are very diverse and up-to-date both in the USA and in Taiwan Ueng H J and Hsieh P N, (1999).[6] Therefore, the navigational and design aspects of library websites should be improved; materials should be placed on the sites only if they are accessed and utilized by the user community; and libraries could profit by making greater use of online tutorials and virtual tours to supplement regular bibliographic instruction Tolppanen *et al*, (2000).[7] As websites continue to grow in size and complexity it becomes increasingly important to introduce automation to help manage them Gardner & Pinfield, (2001).[8] Therefore, it is suggested that a database-backed website offers many advantages over one built from static HTML pages. These include a consistency of style and content, the ability to present different views of the same data, devolved editing and enhanced security. The evaluation of website usage plays an important role in its maintenance and development. Analyzing and exploring regularities in the visitors' behavior can be used to enhance the quality and facilitate delivery of information services, identify visitors' interests, and improve the server's

performance (Hristovski A; Hristovski D; Todorovski L (2002).[9] Robins & Kelsey (2002)[10] have conducted a descriptive study of the Louisiana State University Libraries' website.

The aim of the study was to gain some idea of user demographics and satisfaction with the site at a given point of time and to test the site's navigation system. The goal was to find out who was using the site, why they were using it, and to what extent they were satisfied with the site's navigation. Tasks were assigned (searching for known items) to subjects to better determine the extent to which the site's navigation system facilitated locating information on the site. Evaluation of the navigation system was based on a ratio of correct clicks to the sum of incorrect and back button clicks. This ratio may be compared to some predetermined optimal number of clicks needed to retrieve a known item. The implications of their research were both theoretical and practical. According to Fagan (2002)[11] users did not understand the function of the search and tried to use it to find information of all kinds, not just library webpage. Queries often resembled the content of questions at a reference desk but without conversation and the expertise of library staff. The site search itself is effective for its intended purpose; users may need another feature, such as an online reference service similar in attitude to the site search but with a man answering the queries. It is generally accepted that users will not necessarily need nor be able to visit a library physically but their access to the resources electronically is necessary Brewerton, (2002).[12] In this regard, Oxford Brookes University Library set about revitalizing its web site in 2001 and formulating an ongoing strategy to market and develop it.

In India there is not enough study has been conducted on evaluation of university library website. But only a few study have been conducted. For instance an attempt has been made by Jalal *et al* (2010)[13] to rank central universities in India using appropriate webometric indicators. Results revealed that

based on WISER ranking, University of Delhi got top rank; Sikkim University occupied the last rank among central universities in India. The study also examined the link relationship through inlinks and outlinks among central universities using personal web crawler i.e. SocSciBot 3.0. The reason for hyper-linking is traced among the universities and is under progress. Finally, co-link matrix was formed to detect the link pattern among the central universities in India.

Conclusion

Most of the studies on the subject cited above were conducted in foreign countries only. A few studies on this topic are conducted in India, especially on usability aspects of library websites particularly on central universities. In this context, there is a need for further and extensive study on the websites of university libraries. Therefore the researcher is planning to overview the study on evaluation of university libraries websites in south India especially covering the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. State, Central Universities and Universities of National importance. In the concluding part one can see that the further research has to be undertaken, to find out the present study in the field of website design and development of university libraries. There should be a strict policy that every university libraries should aims at providing the up to date and current information for teaching learning and research, the information provided on the site should be continuously updated.

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