A Comparative Study Of University Library Websites Of Nepal

- Nira Manandhar [1]

Abstract:

Universities bear the responsibility of delivering higher education and research work. To achieve this goal, well-facilitated libraries are required. In the present scenario, the daily work of people is becoming easier with the use of internet. Hence, libraries and their services also need to show their presence on the web. The websites of Universities of Nepal have been explored using a checklist prepared for the purpose, of finding the status of central library websites and their services available via websites. The result showed that there is no uniformity in managing information in websites and available IT facilities are not being used properly in such an important sector of education. Library professionals now should make an effort to maintain uniformity in library websites which is now as much essential as the uniformity of cataloguing and classification work of libraries.

Keywords: *Academic libraries, Libraries - Web sites, Library services*, *Web sites - Design.*

Introduction:

Libraries of universities are established to fulfill the information needs of undergraduate/ graduate/ postgraduate students, research scholars, faculty members and staff. Simultaneously, it can provide service to other institutions as well as the general public. Library services are no longer limited to face-to-face interactions with users to facilitate their needs. The invention of the internet and web technology has brought changes in various activities of libraries. It has changed the nature of library services, the way of accomplishing library housekeeping operations and even the means of communicating with the users (Afolabi & Abidoye 2011).

For libraries, the value of providing information is becoming more important than

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having physical space. A library website is being used as a tool for making accessible maximum information to users promptly, at any time and from anywhere. Library website is becoming an important tool for showcasing collection details of the library and the services offered.

Not only in the library field, the intervention of the internet in day-to-day life has increased dependency on electronic devices for searching information, may it be the map of a place, the price of goods, the meaning of a word, information about any institution, etc. Advancements in information communication technology have facilitated many day-to-day activities of people like monetary transactions, sending messages, purchasing goods, ordering food, booking tickets and so on. The day-to-day work, for which people have to spend hours is now possible with a click. People have almost forgotten printed forms of dictionaries, directories, encyclopedias, maps, etc. which used to be essential tools for fulfilling instant information needs. Hence, libraries also need to show their presence on websites to cope with the present scenario (Quamar et al., 2020).

Library facilities available through electronic devices will be preferable for users as they can utilize those facilities anytime from anywhere instead of visiting physically within the limited opening hours of the library (Khan, 2016). Services provided virtually save the time of users and staff. 'Save the time of users', one of the fundamental laws of library science propounded by S.R. Ranganathan also guides library personnel to adopt innovative ways of delivering information that could save the time of users and staff.

Libraries now need to think about saving time by replacing manually performed services with new advanced technology. This is also true that all users are not technology-friendly. Becker and Yannotta have accepted the fact that despite the availability of well-designed library websites, users still need guidance for using the site and need education on developing information literacy skills (Becker & Yannotta, 2013). In spite of this truth, libraries should move forward taking the responsibility of pioneering support to its users which is also a prerequisite demand of today's information era. According to Chisita (Chisita, 2020), libraries can offer digital literacy training to their users to maintain their connection to reliable websites and access to reliable resources in virtual space.

Now the challenges for libraries basically university libraries are to develop visually pleasing, contextually rich websites that can provide easy access to basic information about libraries, useful electronic resources, quick search of printed resources in their collections, as well as offering various online services. A major attention in the design of university library websites should be on their diverse users and the level of information needs that exist in the university environment. Most of the academic libraries have started giving services to their users through their websites by providing access to OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue), e-journals, e-books, electronic databases,

digitized collections, digital copies of institutional repositories, general information about libraries along with rules and regulation of libraries and even facilitating quick answer to users' queries. Besides the useful content, the website should also be user-friendly and meet user expectations (Pant, 2015).

An academic library website can fulfill a wide variety of functions. Hence, their importance cannot be underestimated in universities which bears the responsibility of supporting research conducted during higher education and producing skilled professional in various fields required by the nation. We should not forget the role played by libraries when whole day-to-day activities of people were almost stopped during the pandemic. Academic libraries supported for the e-learning and information needs of higher education institutions by providing electronic resources crucial for the research and teaching-learning process during adverse situations like the COVID-19 lockdown period (Tsekea & Chigwada, 2021).

Higher education in Nepal does not have a long history. Tribhuvan University came into function in 1959 and was the only university in the nation till 1985. Other universities of Nepal that have exceeded ten years from their establishment date are nine in numbers. Central libraries of these universities are expected to be the most advanced and well-equipped libraries. It is a matter of concern how much universities of Nepal have given importance in presenting their libraries on web. To what extent they have facilitated their users by providing library services through websites? Hence, the websites of the universities of Nepal and their central libraries are chosen for this study. The universities, their date of establishment and URL of their websites are listed below.

1. Tribhuvan University (TU), 1959,   www.tu.edu.np
2. Nepal Sanskrit University (NSU), 1986,   www.nsu.edu.np
3. Kathmandu University (KU), 1991,   www.ku.edu.np
4. Purbanchal University (PU), 1994,   www.puruniv.edu.np
5. Pokhara University (PokU), 1997,   www.pu.edu.np
6. Lumbini Buddhist University (LBU), 2005,   www.lbu.edu.np
7. Far-western University (FWU), 2010,   www.fwu.edu.np,
8. Mid-western University (MWU), 2010,   www.mwu.edu.np,
9. Agriculture and Forestry University (AFU), 2010 www.afu.edu.np,

Objectives:

The main objective of this study is to explore the information being disseminated by central library of universities of Nepal through websites. This study has focused on following points.

1. The status of central libraries in websites and their URL.
2. The institutional publications disseminated through websites.
3. Information on libraries and their services delivered via websites.

Nine universities were chosen for this research on the basis of date of establishment, chronologically from the oldest. The study has limited on information available in the websites of the universities and their central libraries. The study is confined to the information grasped while visiting the websites by the researcher. The researcher has included only introductory information about library and online services provided regarding journals and other institutional publications. Here, the researcher has referred main library of the university as the central library which has been established to serve all departments and colleges of the university. The study was conducted during the month of March 2023.

Methodology:

The explorative research method was used via checklist prepared for the purpose. The websites of the universities were visited and the relevant information are collected as per the prepared checklists. Attempt was made finding websites of central libraries for the universities which have not provided link to libraries from their websites. Collected data were presented in tables and findings were analyzed to draw conclusions

Data analysis and findings:

Websites of all universities of Nepal were explored for library related information and noted. Summarized data are presented in the tables for analysis.

1. Status of library websites:

It was found that central libraries of universities have disseminated information either by maintaining a separate website or by using the main university website.

Table 1. *Status of library websites*

Status of website	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Separate Website designed for library	Yes					Yes			
A web page allocated in university website			Yes		Yes				

	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Information about publications in university website							Yes	Yes	Yes
General information in university website		Yes							

Source: Survey 2023

Collected data reveals that the central library of the oldest university of Nepal, Tribhuvan University and Lumbini Buddhist University has maintained separate website for facilitating their users, www.tucl.edu.np   and   www.library.lbu.edu.np respectively. Other two universities Kathmandu University and Pokhara University have used a webpage of their website for library purpose. The main website of university is being used by FWU, MWU and AFU for delivering information about their institutional publications without any significant space for their library. Whereas few lines about library is included in website of NSU. Separate website of the faculties and offices of Purbanchal University are found active though website of the university is not functioning.

2. General information:

General information about library includes basic introductory information about library which is essential for fulfilling common queries of users.

Table 2. *General information*

General information	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Introduction/ History/ Objectives	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes			
Opening hours	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes			
Membership obtaining	Yes				Yes				
Library rules	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes			
Personnel/ Library staffs	Yes								

Source: Survey 2023

The data shows that the universities that have maintained websites/ webpage for their central library have delivered general information about the introduction, objectives, opening hours and rules of library. In addition to this Tribhuvan University Central Library (TUCL) and Pokhara university have given information regarding membership obtaining criteria. Information about library staff in seen in the case of TUCL only.

3. Library collections and services:

Details of library collections and services should be in the library website as these are the reason for users to approach library. Users could get the information without visiting library physically.

Table 3.1 *Type of library collections*

Collections	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Books	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes			
Reference books	Yes								
Journals	Yes		Yes			Yes			
General magazines	Yes		Yes						
Thesis	Yes				Yes				
Manuscript	Yes								
Microfilm	Yes								
Maps	Yes								
Institutional repository	Yes		Yes			Yes			
CD's	Yes		Yes		Yes				
Video cassettes	Yes		Yes						
Audio books/cassettes	Yes		Yes						

Source: *Survey 2023*

Table 3.2. Library services

Services	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Book lending	Yes		Yes		Yes				
OPAC	Yes		Yes			Yes			
E-resources /IT	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes			
User education/ Orientation	Yes		Yes		Yes				
Outreach and training	Yes								
Audio books	Yes								

Services	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Reprographic service	Yes		Yes		Yes				
Reference service	Yes		Yes		Yes				
Indexing service									
Abstracting service									
CAS			Yes		Yes				
SDI			Yes						
Translation									
Newspaper clipping service			Yes						

Source: *Survey 2023*

Those libraries that have shown their presence in websites have information about their varieties of collections and same in the case of information about their services.

4. Downloadable materials:

Along with the information regarding library services, the downloadable materials in websites are actually a boon for library users.

Table 4. Downloadable materials

Downloads	TU	NSU	KU	PU	PokU	LBU	FWU	MWU	AFU
Bulletin/Reoprts/ Newsletters	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes		
Brochure	Yes						Yes		
Institutional journal articles full text	Yes		Yes			Yes			Yes
Research articles from linked database	Yes		Yes		Yes				
Thesis/ dissertation	Yes								
Proceedings									Yes
Information books								Yes	Yes
Syllabus							Yes		

Source: *Survey 2023*

Full text journal articles, bulletins/reports/ newsletters are available in the websites of TU, KU, and LBU. FWU, MWU and AFU. AFU though have not given importance of library website, have made access to its publications. TU, KU and PokU have made accessible to research article through linked database. NSU and PU is still lacking such crucial services. Additional service provided by central library of Tribhuvan University is full text thesis/ dissertation.

While exploring websites it was experienced that management of information in websites is different from each other. Pokhara University website has kept webpage of library in header navigation bar while in website of Kathmandu University, library is linked through a webpage 'KU online' located at header menu bar. Tribhuvan University website is not linked with website of its central library and reverse in the case of LBU.

Discussion:

General introductory information about library, library collection, library services are managed by the universities that have allocated space for libraries in their websites and in addition few download facilities are rendered. Very few central libraries of universities of Nepal have delivered services maintaining their websites. Universities, the highest level of academic institutions and role models for other lower education have shown their less eagerness in exposing their library facilities in web. Libraries whose importance is unavoidable for academic advancement, have not fully utilized available information technologies. Websites of the universities lack uniformity which created uneasy while retrieving information.

Conclusions:

Library services that are possible using internet need to be utilized fully. Resources available in the libraries should be made accessible to users as far as practicable though in electronic form. People today are stepping forward using internet for their daily works. In such condition libraries should not lack behind in using new technology because advancement in the library sector ensure the advancement of nation. Uniformity needs to be maintained in library websites. We library professionals have exercised a lot in maintaining uniformity in cataloging and classification. Now our focus should on library website design. User of one library should not get confused while using service of another library. Libraries should be guided by a fix guideline in maintaining websites. Since, convenience of library users is commitment of we library professionals.

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