

Chapter 11

Collaborative Digital Library Development in India: A Network Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Digital library provides an excellent opportunity to widely disseminate our documentary heritages and greatly increases access to library collections of rare documents as well as current research literature. Indian digital library initiatives aim at producing a vast amount of digitized documents pertaining to different forms of recorded human knowledge, ranging from the rare manuscripts to current research literature. Digitized documents are made accessible in online information systems either through intranet or Internet channels. However, maintaining an Internet-based online digital library system has several problems such as availability of web server for 24X7 timeframe, robust broadband connectivity, efficient retrieval engine, ownership of digitized documents, etc. This chapter tries to address and document some of the prevailing social networking issues affecting Indian digital library initiatives, particularly the collaboration patterns among participating institutions as well as funding agencies. This chapter also tries to identify social relationships amongst the networked institutions in terms of nodes and ties.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-61520-767-1.ch011

Nodes are the individual actors within the networks, and ties are the relationships between the actors. This chapter shows how social networks in the collaborative digital libraries play a critical role in determining the way problems are solved, organizations are run, and the degree to which individual projects succeed in achieving their goals. Digital Library of India (DLI) is the largest digitization initiative in India spreading across states of India and involving over ninety organizations to ensure several thousands of rare books written in Indian languages as well as non-Indian languages are accessible through Internet channel. This chapter critically appraises the formation of a formal social network in the DLI project embracing local memory institutions across the states of India as well as the funding agencies. Similarly, this chapter also critically analyses and elaborates another collaborative digital library initiative in India, namely, Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL).

INTRODUCTION

India is a country where cultural diversity and cultural pluralism are coexisting for their centuries. Over the time Indian cultural institutions became the repositories of rich collections of cultural heritage resources embracing culturally and linguistically diverse communities across states of India. While traditional knowledge of linguistically diverse communities is largely undocumented, there were several attempts to collate them. Systematic documentation of traditional knowledge is centuries old practice of scholars and researchers to make the knowledge re-usable by future generations. These documentation initiatives ended up with producing literature of various kinds. On the other hand, some of the documentary heritage resources available with Indian institutions are on the verge of extinction due to lack of preservation and conservation initiative at the institutional level.

As a member country of UNESCO, India became de-facto signatory of the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity*, adopted unanimously by the General Conference at its 31st session held on 2 November 2001. This is an international standard-setting legal instrument which raises cultural diversity to the rank of “common heritage of humanity” (India, Ministry

of Communication and Information Technology 2004; UNESCO, 2001). The Declaration attempts to respond to two major concerns: (i) to ensure respect for cultural identities with the participation of all people in a democratic framework, and (ii) to contribute to the emergence of a favourable climate for the creativity of all, thereby making culture a factor of development.

Article 6 of the *UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* emphasizes on equitable access to culturally diverse multilingual contents with help of digital technologies. Modern information and communication technologies (ICT), including internet technologies, have tremendous potential to act as enabler for intercultural dialogue through digital dissemination of cultural information, particularly with culturally diverse contents. Cultural informatics can also bridge linguistically diverse contents through translations and adaptations. Thus, cultural informatics can help in making culture a factor of development.

Networked knowledge societies give priorities in protecting documentary and cultural heritages by establishing documentary repositories. Digital library provides an excellent opportunity to widely disseminate our documentary heritages and greatly increases access to library collections of rare documents as well as current research literature. Indian digital library initiatives aim at producing a vast

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