

Assessing the Role of Libraries in the Websites Activities

#Dr. Aparna Rajendra, Mrs. Neeta Kulkarni

Abstract:

Most of the research institutes have hosted their websites on the various servers to exhibit their web presence. Further, they have provided an open access to visitors through Internet to browse their websites. During the initial period of website development, it is primarily the research institutes engaged in the domain of Science & Technology launched their websites. In fact the concept of website was conceived due to the need of scientific communication among the scientists and to exchange the data. The present study attempts to examine the role of libraries in the activities of the websites of their institute.

Keywords: Website, Library, Website skills, Librarians participation.

Introduction:

The twentieth century witnessed the information as well as knowledge explosion. During the twentieth century the rate of generation of knowledge was so terrific that it generated an enormous amount of knowledge that can be said to be thousands of times if compared with that was created for the past thousands of years or so. The need to get required information instantly has become prerequisite for any research venture. It resulted in the notion of knowledge databases which would cater the need of research especially in the field of Science & Technology. The advances of computer and communication technology brought this notion in to the reality. It was really a revolutionary event in the history of a mankind. One can able to communicate/ contact from any corner of world to anywhere in the world. The foundation of website is also one of the important features of these developments.

Concept of Website:

Oxford dictionary [1] defines the term website as 'an information system on the Internet which allows documents to be connected to other documents by hypertext links, enabling the user to search for information by moving from one document to another.' The Cambridge dictionary online [2], defines the term web in more comprehensive way. 'The system of connected documents on the internet, usually

with pictures, video, and sound, that can be searched for information about a particular subject.'

From the above mentioned definition it can be perceived that,

1. Website is an information system. It is in an electronic format.

On the other hand, library is also an information system, generally in physical format.

2. Website is accessible on the internet which allows connecting the web pages i.e. collection of web pages.

Like a reading material/books in the library.

3. The visitor can search these documents on the internet as per the need.

It is just like a reader searches the books with the help of catalogue in the library

The functions of the website and library appear to be very alike or overlapping to each other. It is therefore interesting to study the role of the libraries in the activities of websites.

Need of the Study:

Almost all the research institutions have launched their websites and made available on the Internet. It is worthwhile to examine the role of libraries in the activities of websites of their institutes. The libraries are passing through the phase of digital era and most of them are involved in creation of digital libraries in one way or the other. It is a well-established fact that library is referred as an information centre of the institute and prime role of the library is to disseminate the information services as per the need of the users. The libraries are performing various basic activities like collection, storage and dissemination of information over a long period and have developed expertise over it. Most of the website activities resemble with that of libraries activity. Further, most of the librarians have acquired and developed Information Technological skills. Under such circumstances it becomes vital to study and examine the role of libraries in the development of website of the institute.

Objectives of the Study:

There are two main objectives framed for this study purpose. These are as follows:

1. To undertake survey of websites of research institutes.
2. To examine the participation of libraries in activities of the website.

Scope of the study:

The scope of the study was restricted to the research institutes engaged in the domain of Science and Technology in Pune. The research institutes in the domain of Science and Technology are selected mainly because, they are usually updated and advanced in Information Technology applications. The twelve institutions of national reputation in Science & Technologies were selected for the study purpose.

Hypothesis:

The following two hypotheses were framed:

1. Most of the libraries participates in activities of the institutes' website
2. Most of the websites under the study, displays information about their libraries in a satisfactory way.

Review of Literature:

A lot of literature is available on the internet as well as published in the form of periodical articles/books about web site and library. However, some of the important and thought-provoking references are cited here.

Noruzi Alireza (3) in his interesting article 'Application of Ranganathan's Laws to the WEB' discussed in detail and analysed various aspects of Web in the context of Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science. From this study he derived "Five Laws of the Web". It is worth to mention here. 1 Web resources are for use. 2. Every user

his or her web resources. 3. Every web resource its user. 4. Save the time the user. 5. The Web is growing organism. He concluded that these five laws concisely represent the ideal service and organizational philosophy of the Web. These Five Laws of the Web can be applied to evaluate the web sites.

Jamali Hamid (4) in his article ' What is not available online is not worth reading' discussed an emerging trend in the information seeking behaviour of scientists. He further states that more scientists now assume that if article are of enough quality and significance, they must be available online and vice versa. This puts a pressure on the publishers, information providers and librarians to make more and more information available in digit format. He concludes that the use of Zip's least effort principle in providing information services is relevance in this context.

In the article 'Role of librarian in Internet and World Wide Web Environment' Rao Nageswara and K. H. Babu (5) discussed various aspects of World Wide Web in the context of library. The article describes in detail the transition of traditional library collection to digital or virtual collection presented the librarian with new opportunities. The Internet, Web environment and associated sophisticated tools have given the librarian a new dynamic role to play and serve the new information based society in better ways than hitherto.

From the above discussions it is clear that the libraries and librarians have new opportunities in the web environment. It is necessary to exploit them by participating in various web site activities of the institute. In this context, it is worth to examine the role of libraries in the website activities so as to ensure effective participation in web site activities.

Research Methodology:

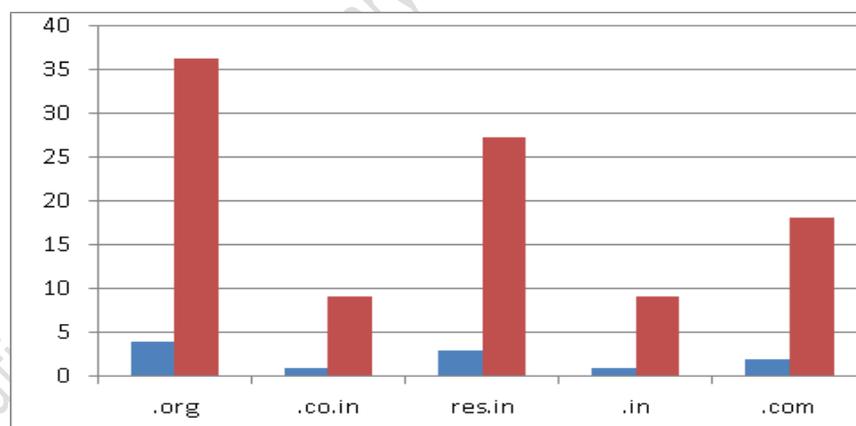
It has been observed from the review of literature that the descriptive research methodology is most suitable for such type of studies. Further the survey method is also employed to collect the data. A questionnaire was prepared with the combination of various close ended as well as few open ended questions. The questionnaire was sent through email to all the librarians belonging to research institutes engaged in Science & Technology research. The data were also collected

from the websites of these institutes available on the Internet. All the librarians are also interviewed to understand their view points. The published literatures, documents about the institutes were also consulted to get additional information. The collected data were organised, tabulated and interpretations were derived from it. The most important findings and conclusions are given below:

Data Analysis and Findings:

Domain Name of Websites

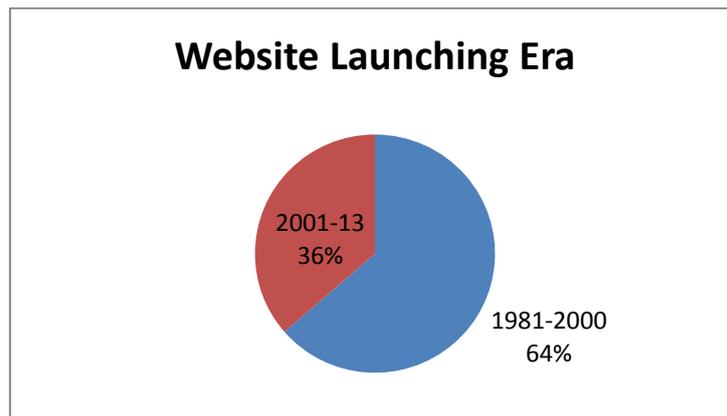
The domain is an important part of the website address. There three main domain names .org, .com. and .net are existing since inception. The institutions that have launched their websites during earlier period had only three choices and most of them selected .org as a domain names. However, with the ever increasing demand for website registration, the other several domain names were made available to give better choices to the clients. One of such domain names is [.res.in], which is reserved for research institutes in India.



However, the study shows that only 28% of institutes under study have .res.in domain name in their extension. The remaining 72% of the research institutes do not have .res.in as an extension in their domain name.

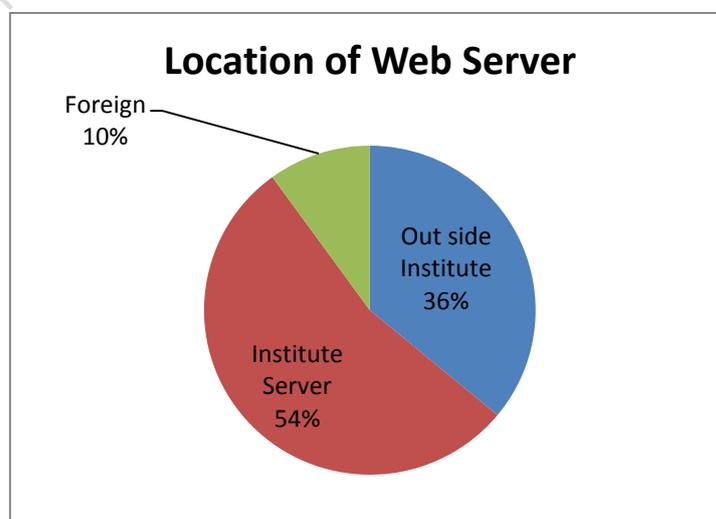
Launching of the Websites

- It has been found that the website activities in the most the institutes started from the year 1981 onwards. It is mainly due the emergence and advances of the Internet. Now-a-days websites have become an integral part of the institute and are launched along with the opening ceremony of the institute.



Location of the Web Server

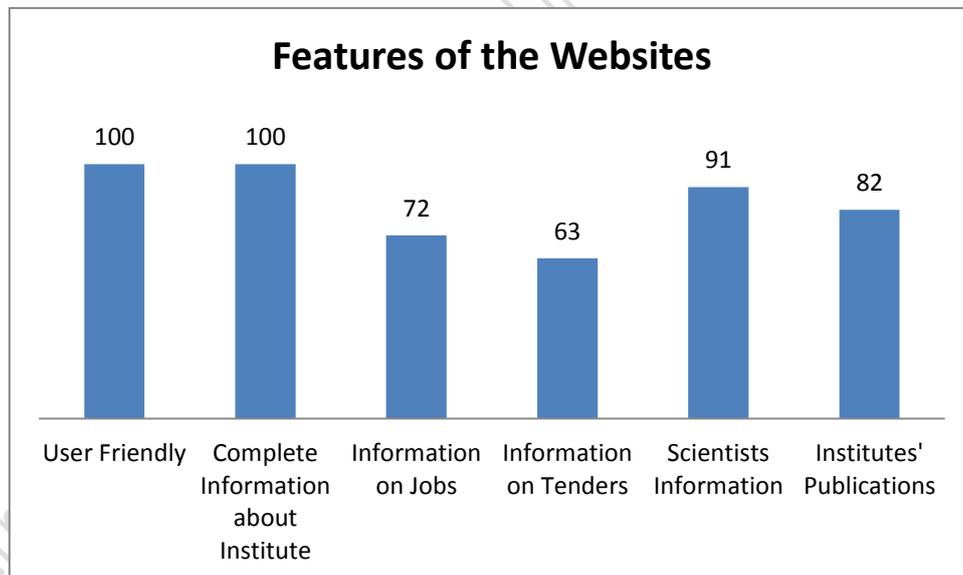
- Initially, the institutes were hosting their website on the server located outside India, i.e. in foreign countries. It has been found that 90% of the websites are hosted on the server located in the India and out of that, 54% of website are hosted on the institutes' server.



Features of the Websites

It has been observed that the websites under study have various features and these features play important role in attracting visitors to the websites. Some of the common features are given below:

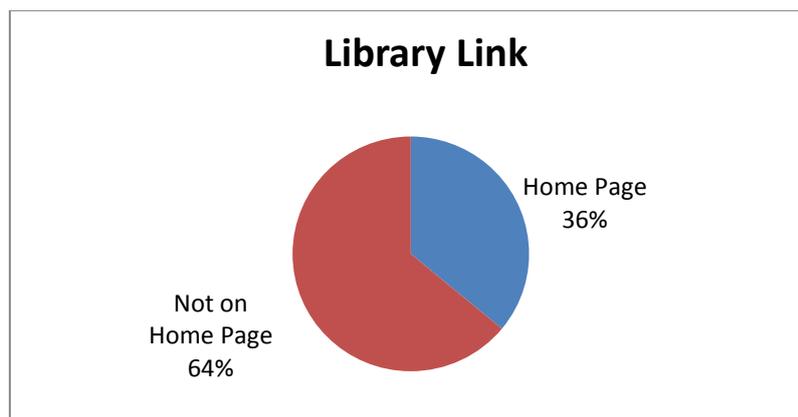
- The information about institutes' aims, purposes and objectives achieved so far etc. are prominently published on the home page of the websites.
- All the librarians believe that their websites are user friendly and gives complete information about their institutes. The information about scientists working in the institute and their publications is also one of the important features of the website as believed by more than 80% of the librarians. The information about Jobs opportunities, tenders notices related to the institute are considered essential by 72% and 63% of the websites respectively.



- The layout and presentation of the websites are dynamic in nature and eye-catching due to use of colourful graphs, images and designs.
- The renovation and redesigning activities of websites are undertaken from time to time to keep the website compatible with current information technology.

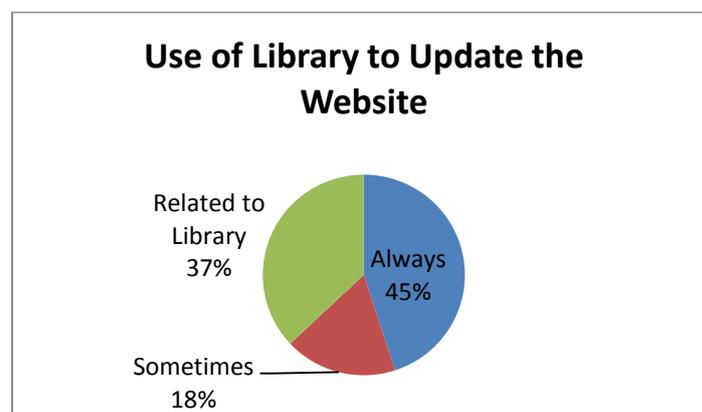
Website and the Library

- The information about library is a common feature of all the websites. Mostly it contains information about books collection; periodicals subscribed by the library, information services offered, library timings etc. However the coverage of information about library is not adequate. Only, 36% of websites provide hyperlink to the library page from home page, whereas remaining websites have not given any prominent position to the library web page/ link.



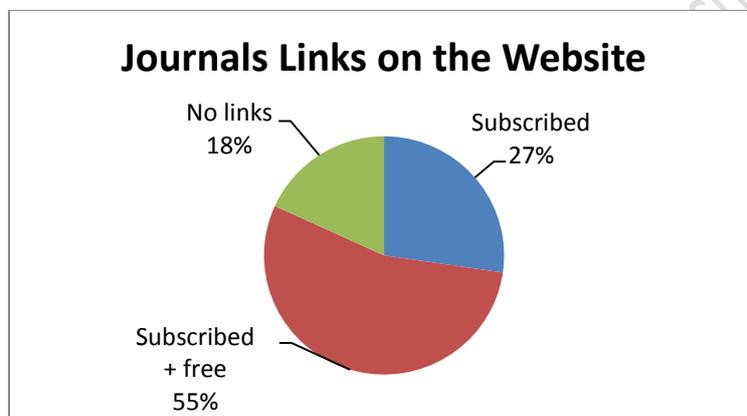
Library as a contents provider

- All the libraries compile their information about the library for the website purpose. All the libraries also take interest in providing information required to update the website. It is worth to note, the 45% of librarians are of opinion that the information required for the website is always compiled from the resources available in the library. Only the library related information is provided from the library resources as believed by 37% of librarians, whereas 18% are of opinion that the library is consulted sometimes to get such information.



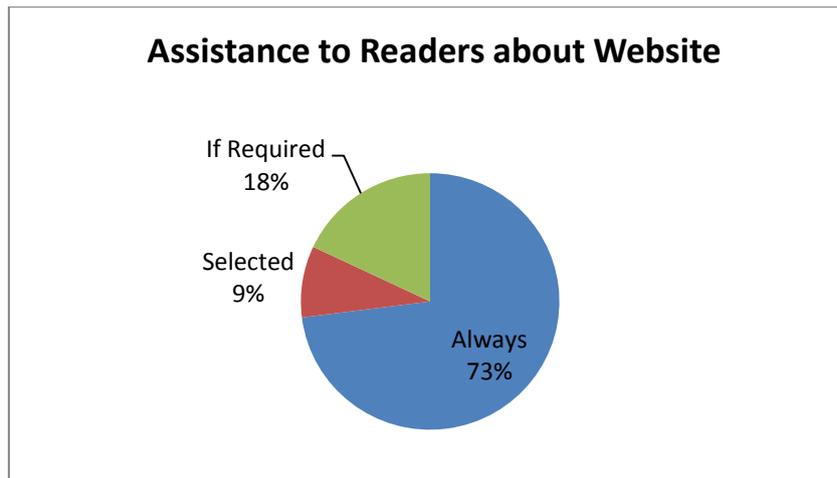
Hyper-links to E-resources

- The website is an excellent source to provide hyperlinks to e-resources available on the internet. In this way, website can also useful to provide links to other websites, databases, and online journals. It has been found that about 55% of libraries provide links to subscribe journals and also to free online journals available on the internet, whereas 27% provide only to subscribe journals. The remaining, 18% of libraries do not provide such links on their websites.

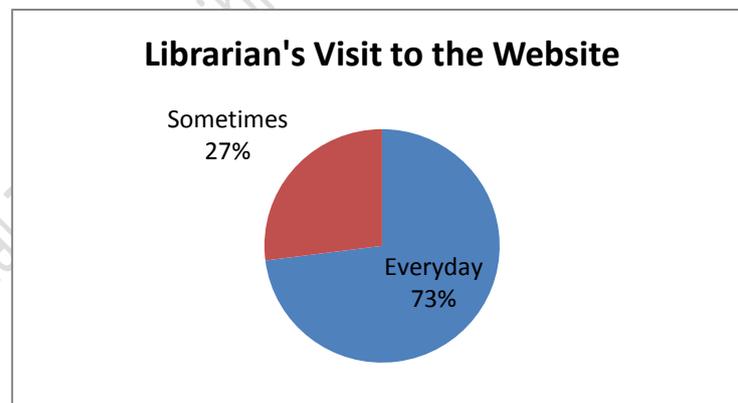


Assistance from the Library

- The information published on the websites needs to be updated regularly and also required to bring to the notice of the visitors. Otherwise, it becomes necessary on the part of visitor to visit the website frequently to find out new additions to the website. In this context, a library can play an important role in bringing out to the notice of the readers important additions to the website. It has been found that 73% of libraries always assist readers in informing new additions to website. The 18% of libraries assists only when if required by users and the remaining 9% libraries assist users only for selected information.

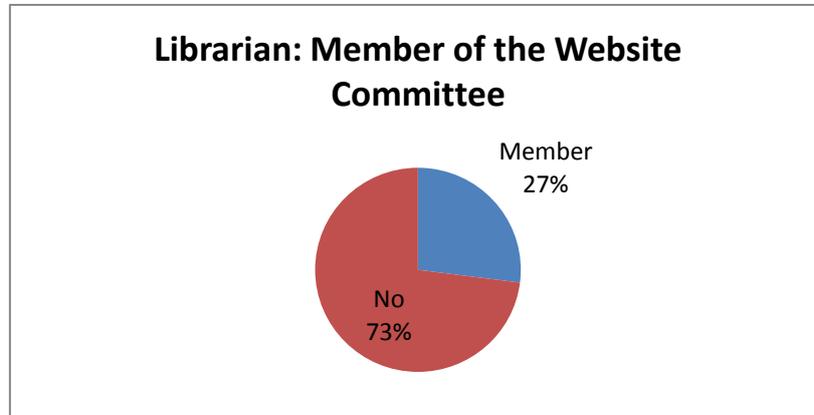


- It is necessary to visit the website regularly after launching or updating the contents to confirm about the online status and also to know discrepancies if any. It has been found that 73% of librarians visit the website every day and offer suggestions, the remaining 27% visit sometimes. This indicates that majority of librarians are taking interest in the website activities to run the website error free.



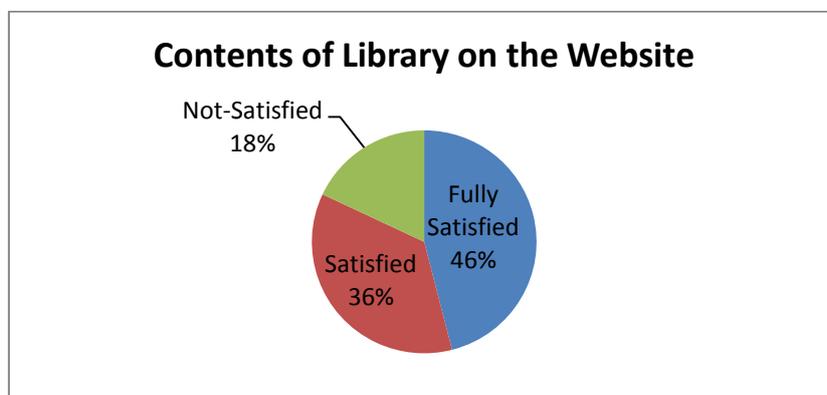
- The task of website management is complex phenomenon. A Website Committee is essential to manage it's all the activities properly and effectively. The members of the committee are selected from various departments/ sections so as to make the website all-inclusive. It has been found that only

27% of librarians are member of the Website Committee in their institute and a majority of librarians (73%) are not a member of such committee.



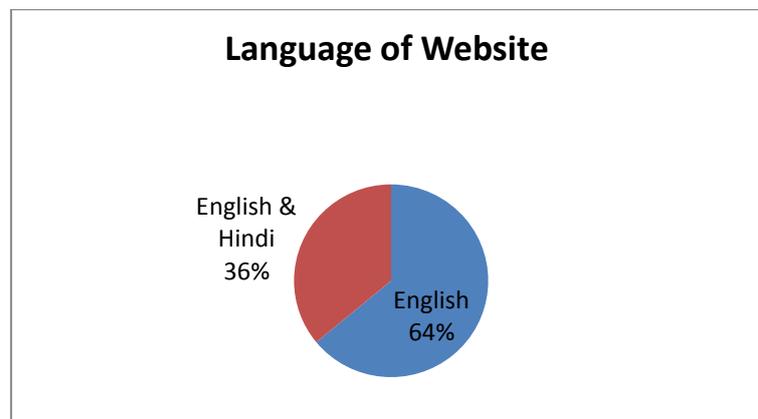
Contents of Library on the Website

- It is not possible to put all the information about the institute on the website. Further, the availability of limited space on the server put some restrictions on the contents of the website. It is therefore, selective and vital contents are published on the website. Under such circumstances some restrictions on the size of the contents to be included in the website need to be exercised. It has been found that the 46% of librarians are fully satisfied with their contents on the website, where as 36% are just satisfied and 18% are not satisfied. It can be said that the majority of librarians (82%) are satisfied with their contents on the website.



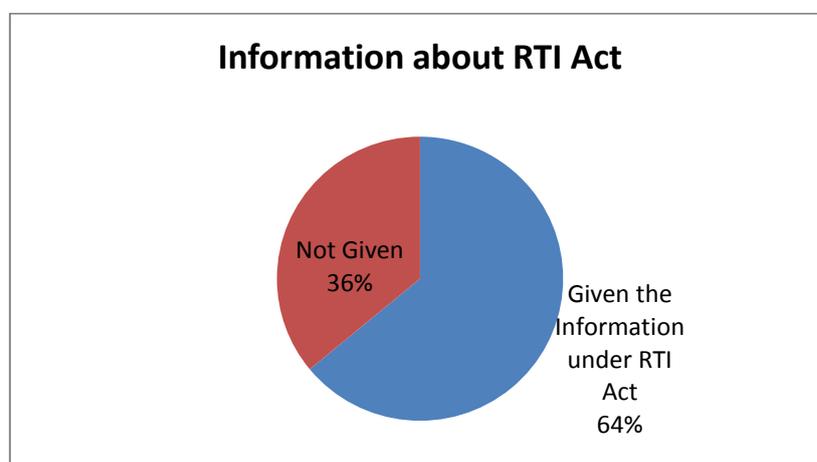
Language of the Contents on the Website

- The English language is very common for the contents writing of the website. Now-a-days various language options are available and bi-lingual or even multi-lingual websites developments become possible. It has been found that majority of websites (64%) are in English language whereas, the 36% of websites are bi-lingual i.e. (English & Hindi). It indicates that the trend of multi-lingual websites is on the way.



The RTI Information

- The information about the institute under RTI is required to be given on the website. It has been found that, the 64% of the websites have given such information on their websites; the remaining 36% of websites have not given it.



Conclusions

- Most of the librarians strongly believe that information published on the website about the library helps to increase the use of library. The libraries also make efforts to promote the website of the institute by various means. In this way, the library and website of the institute are mutually benefited and helps to achieve each other objectives.
- Almost all the librarians are of opinions that the library should have independent website so as to offer full fledged online services to users. The independent library website will be mainly used to offer SDI, Reference service and web OPAC facility as opined by the majority of librarians.
- The website committee of the institute need to expand the role of librarian in the website activities. The librarian can play vital role contents management and promotional activities of the website.
- The domain name .res.in needs to be give priority over the other domain names to bring all the research institutes in India under one common domain.

About Authors:

Dr. Aparna Rajendra, Deputy Librarian, University of Pune, Pune.

Mrs. Neeta Kulkarni, Editor, ITLIT, Pune

References:

1. <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/World-Wide-Web> accessed on 16.03/2014
2. <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/the-world-wide-web>
3. Noruzi Alireza, 'Applications of Ranganathan's Laws to the Web'. Webology, Vol.1 No.2, Dec 2004.
Available at <http://www.webology.org/2004/v1n2/a8.html> (access on 21/12/2013)
4. Jamali Hamid, 'What is not available online is not worth reading. Webology, Vol.5 No.4, Dec 2008. <http://www.webology.org/2008/v5n4/a63.html> (access on 21/12/2013)
5. Rao Nageswara K and Babu K. H., 'Role of Librarian in Internet and World Wide Web Environment' Information Science, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2001 pp.25-34