

SECTION 2

**OUTREACH LIBRARY SERVICES
IN INDIA**

Outreach Library and Information Services for Distance Learners of Indira Gandhi National Open University

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Backdrop

Distance education has grown tremendously all over the world during the last three decades. The growth in number of distance teaching institutions, increase in number of programmes/courses, exponential growth in literature on open and distance education (ODE), increasing number of conferences/workshops and the growth in number of distance learners – all these have contributed immensely towards the development and maturation of a strong and sustainable system of education.

Genesis and development of distance education in India

There had been a rapid and remarkable proliferation of educational institutions and universities after independence. But, they were not adequate to meet the ever-growing demand for higher education. To reduce the pressure on existing formal universities and colleges, the Union Ministry of Education constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S Kothari to examine the possibility of commencing correspondence courses in India. Based on the recommendation of the Committee, the University of Delhi started correspondence education as a pilot project in 1962. The Andhra Pradesh Open University, renamed as Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Open University (BRAOU), was established by an Act of State Legislature in August 1982 at Hyderabad, as the correspondence courses did not prove effective due to several limitations already inherent in the conventional education system.

Imbued by the success of Dr. BRAOU the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established at the national level in Delhi on September 20, 1985 by the Act of Parliament. Eight more state open universities are established: in Rajasthan in 1987, Bihar in 1987, Maharashtra in 1989, Madhya Pradesh in 1991, Gujarat in 1994, Karnataka in 1996, West Bengal in 1997 and Uttar Pradesh in 1998.

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)

IGNOU has attained popularity as a premier distance teaching institution not only in India but also across the world. IGNOU has at present over 800,000 students on rolls. The University follows a multi-media approach in producing learning packages and imparts instruction through self-instructional materials, face-to-face contact sessions, audio-video programmes, broadcasting, telecasting and teleconferencing. In the last one and a half decade, IGNOU has produced 74 programmes consisting of 850 courses, from certificate to post graduate / Ph.D. levels; published 3342 blocks of self-instructional materials, produced 1051 audio and 1102 video programmes.

Unique features of IGNOU

- National jurisdiction
- Flexible admission rules
- Individualized study: flexible in terms of place, pace and duration of study
- Use of latest information and communication technologies
- Student support services network
- Cost-effective programmes
- Modular programmes
- Resource sharing, collaboration and networking with other Open Universities
- Relevant programmes
- Comprehensive evaluation scheme.

Organizational structure

The organizational structure of the University has been designed to reflect each major functional area of operation. At present, there are nine schools of studies and sixteen divisions. IGNOU has established a network of 44 Regional Centres and over 1000 Study Centres spread all over the country to provide support services to distance learners. The student support services include counseling sessions for providing guidance, peer group interaction, laboratory practical, access to audio-video programmes and library services.

Library system

The Library network of IGNOU operates through a hierarchical system having Central Library at the zenith and the branch libraries located at the Regional and Study Centres. The Library and Documentation Division (L&DD) at the headquarters caters to the needs of academic, administrative and support staff. On the other hand, while the Regional Centre Libraries cater to the library requirements of their staff and those at the Study Centres are meant exclusively to meet the needs of the students and counselors.

Objectives of the university

In order to fulfil the vision of democratizing higher education and providing access to all citizens of India, the University Act (1985) states that the University shall:

- impart education and knowledge through various means suited to the open and distance education system;
- provide higher education not only to large sections of the population but particularly to disadvantaged segments of society;
- encourage, coordinate and assist open universities and distance education systems to uphold standards in such systems in India; and
- provide national integration and strengthen the natural and human resources of India through the medium of education

Objectives of IGNOU library

The Library and Documentation Division was established in 1986 to fulfil its objectives in tune with those of IGNOU. The objectives of the Library and Documentation Division are to:

- develop appropriate collections in various disciplines for satisfying the needs of the diverse clientele of the libraries of the University, Regional and Study Centres;
- provide reading, lending, reference, information and documentation facilities to all categories of staff and students, especially the disadvantaged segments of society through multi-media collections;
- develop a special collection of distance education books and journals at the libraries at the headquarters as well as Regional Centres; and
- render comprehensive reference, information and documentation services in areas related to distance education to other Open Universities of the world in general and of India in particular.

Trends

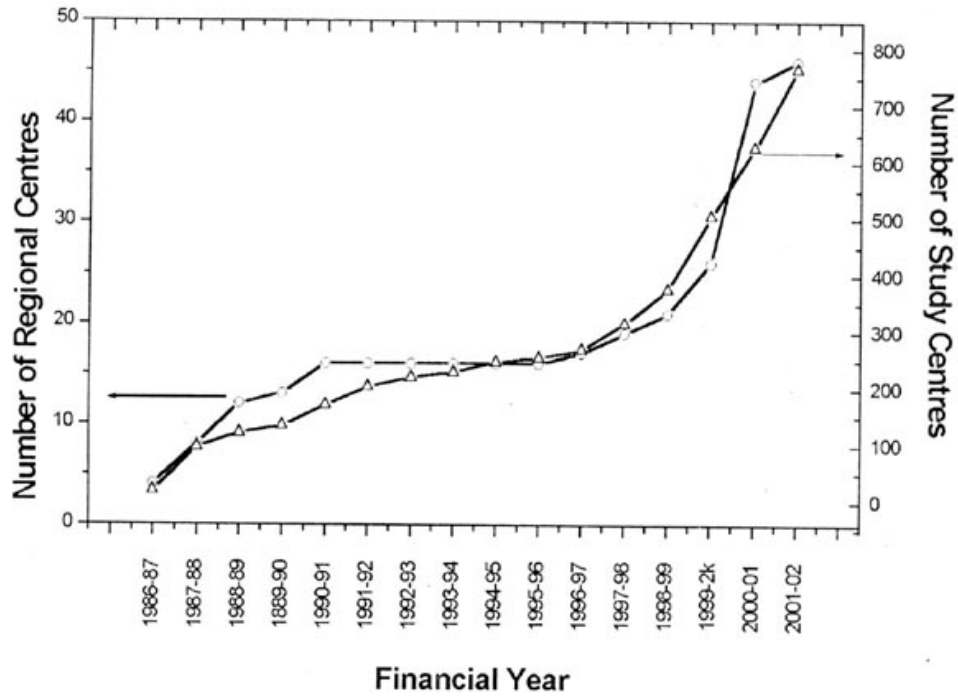
During last fifteen years, the Library and Documentation Division of the IGNOU has been striving hard to provide the books to the libraries of the Regional and Study Centres for reference and consultation for the students who visit the Centre's library. There are constant demands from the students and counselors at the Study Centres to send all the recommended books in the study materials and also issue the same for the home study. But the financial support received for the purpose does not commensurate with the requirements for the students to satisfy their demands. The trends in development are -

- Increase in number of academic programmes and courses leads to increase in enrollment of students;
- Increase in number of students necessitates establishment of more Regional and Study Centres. The growth of regional and study centers is shown in Table 4.1 below.
- Increase in number of academic programmes/courses as well as Regional and Study Centres requires acquisition of more number and copies of books and hence need for increase in funds for acquisition of books.

Table 4.1: Year-wise growth in academic programmes/courses, regional/study centres, number of books and expenditure

| S. No. | Academic Year | No. of Acad.Prog./ Courses | Regional Centres | Study Centres |
|--------|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| 1. | 1986-87 | 2/13 | 4 | 18 |
| 2. | 1987-88 | 5/43 | 8 | 95 |
| 3. | 1988-89 | 7/89 | 12 | 120 |
| 4. | 1989-90 | 8/128 | 13 | 133 |
| 5. | 1990-91 | 13/205 | 16 | 170 |
| 6. | 1991-92 | 26/256 | 16 | 202 |
| 7. | 1992-93 | 28/296 | 16 | 219 |
| 8. | 1993-94 | 28/368 | 16 | 229 |
| 9. | 1994-95 | 34/372 | 16 | 247 |
| 10. | 1995-96 | 36/435 | 16 | 254 |
| 11. | 1996-97 | 39/482 | 17 | 268 |
| 12. | 1997-98 | 39/486 | 19 | 315 |
| 13. | 1998-99 | 47/553 | 21 | 376 |
| 14. | 1999-2000 | 50/604 | 26 | 504 |
| 15. | 2000-2001 | 62/673 | 44 | 626 |
| 16. | 2001-2002 | 72/854 | 46 | 765 |

Chart 4.1: Growth of study and regional centres



Over a span of sixteen academic years, the total number of books held increased by 2243% from 13,122 books in 1987 to 3,03,433 in 2001-2002, (Table 4.2). This high rate of increase in the collection is in conformity with the popularity of IGNOU programmes and the corresponding increase of 6825% in the enrollment of students (Table 4.3).

Table 4.2: Year-wise increase in number of books at regional and study centres

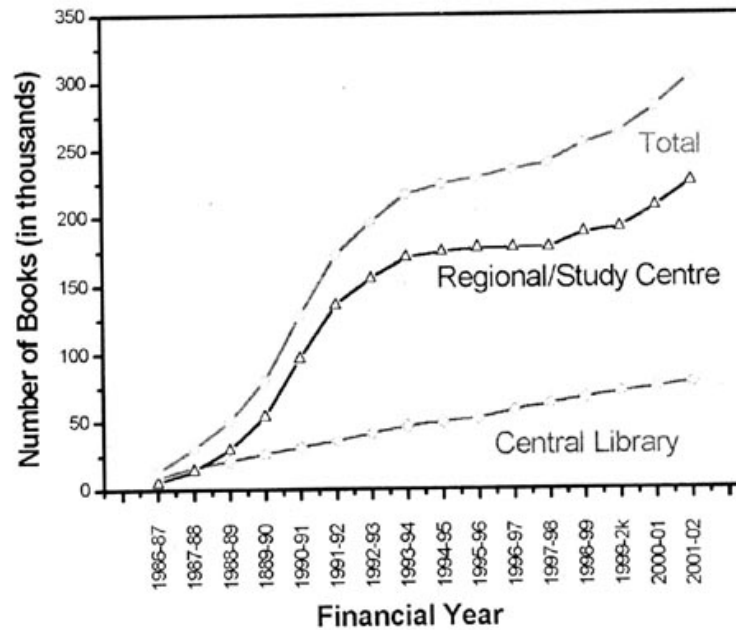
| Sl No. | Academic Year | Number of Books in | | | Number of Books Added in | | |
|--------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | | Central Library | Regional & Study Centres | Total Number of Books | Central Library | Regional & Study Centres | Percentage (%) Increase in Books |
| 1. | 1986-87 | 8422 | 4700 | 13122 | ---- | ---- | ---- |
| 2. | 1987-88 | 16261 | 13986 | 30247 | 7889 | 9286 | 131% |
| 3. | 1988-89 | 21254 | 29242 | 50496 | 4993 | 15256 | 286% |
| 4. | 1989-90 | 26269 | 53778 | 80047 | 5015 | 24536 | 512% |
| 5. | 1990-91 | 31093 | 96713 | 127806 | 4824 | 42896 | 878% |
| 6. | 1991-92 | 36162 | 135917 | 172079 | 5069 | 39204 | 1216% |
| 7. | 1992-93 | 41183 | 154965 | 196148 | 5021 | 19048 | 1400% |
| 8. | 1993-94 | 46332 | 170304 | 216636 | 5398 | 15339 | 1584% |
| 9. | 1994-95 | 19661 | 174419 | 224080 | 3080 | 4115 | 1639% |
| 10. | 1995-96 | 52219 | 176869 | 229088 | 2558 | 2450 | 1677% |
| 11. | 1996-97 | 57561 | 177282 | 234843 | 5342 | 413 | 1721% |
| 12. | 1997-98 | 62720 | 177354 | 240074 | 5159 | 72 | 1761% |
| 13. | 1998-99 | 67004 | 187769 | 254773 | 4284 | 10415 | 1873% |
| 14. | 1999-2000 | 71041 | 191525 | 262566 | 4037 | 3756 | 1932% |
| 15. | 2000-2001 | 74546 | 207085 | 281631 | 3505 | 15560 | 2077% |
| 16. | 2001-2002 | 77978 | 225455 | 303433 | 3431 | 18370 | 2243% |

Table 4.3: Year-wise trend in student enrollment, academic programs and increase in books

| S.No | Academic Year | No. of Acad. Prog. Courses | No. of Students | No. of Books in Regional & Study centres | % Increase in No. of Students | Ration of Books: Students |
|------|---------------|----------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 1986-87 | 2/13 | 4,381 | 4700 | ----- | 1.1 |
| 2. | 1987-88 | 5/43 | 16,811 | 13986 | 384 | 1.8 |
| 3. | 1988-89 | 7/89 | 42,324 | 29242 | 966 | 1.2 |
| 4. | 1989-90 | 8/128 | 48,281 | 53778 | 1102 | 1.7 |
| 5. | 1990-91 | 13/205 | 52,376 | 96713 | 1196 | 2.4 |
| 6. | 1991-92 | 26/256 | 62,375 | 135917 | 1424 | 2.8 |
| 7. | 1992-93 | 28/296 | 75,666 | 154965 | 1727 | 2.6 |
| 8. | 1993-94 | 28/368 | 84,175 | 170304 | 1921 | 2.6 |
| 9. | 1994-95 | 34/372 | 91,398 | 174419 | 2086 | 2.5 |
| 10. | 1995-96 | 36/435 | 1,30,354 | 176869 | 2975 | 1.8 |
| 11. | 1996-97 | 39/482 | 1,62,540 | 177282 | 3710 | 1.4 |
| 12. | 1997-98 | 39/486 | 1,63,394 | 177354 | 3730 | 1.5 |
| 13. | 1998-99 | 47/553 | 1,72,548 | 187769 | 3030 | 1.5 |
| 14. | 1999-2000 | 50/604 | 1,96,650 | 191525 | 4489 | 1.3 |
| 15. | 2000-2001 | 62/673 | 2,91,360 | 207085 | 6651 | 1 |
| 16. | 2001-2002 | 72/854 | 2,98,987 | 225455 | 6825 | 1 |

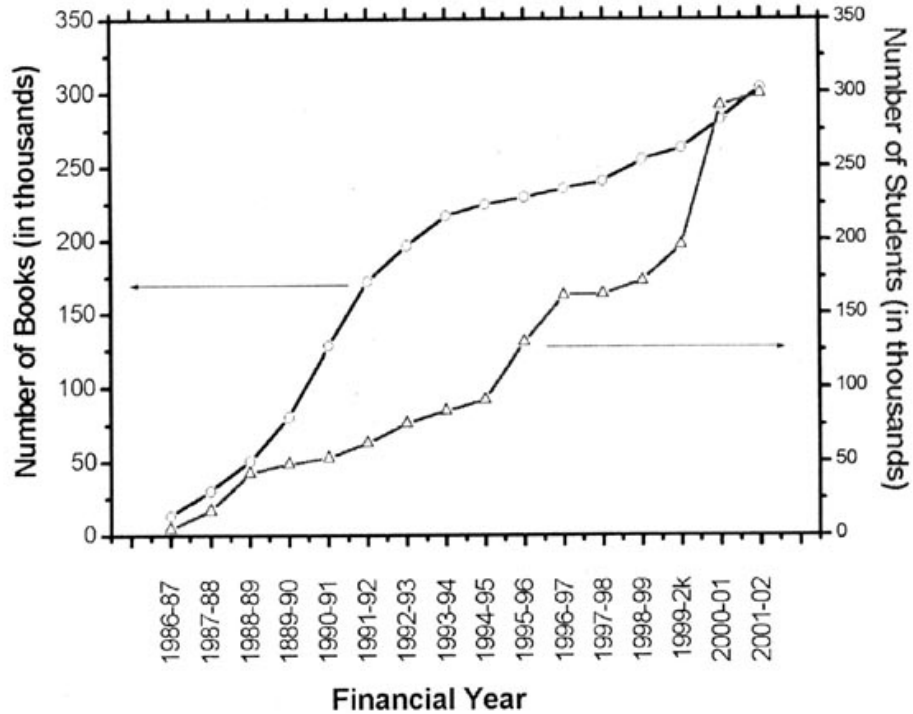
The total number of books in the central library was more than that at the regional/study centres until 1988. By 2001-02 the number of books in R/S centres has grown at a rate more than 5 times that of the central library as indicated in Chart 4.2. A fast increase in the number of books at the R/S Centres compared to the central library fits well with the fact that the increase in the number of students is very high.

Chart 4.2: Growth of books in central library and regional/study centre library



Although the percentage increase in the number of books is impressive, the books to student ratio has fallen to 1. (Table 4.3, Chart 4.3).

Chart 4.3: Comparative diagram showing increase in total number of books and number of students

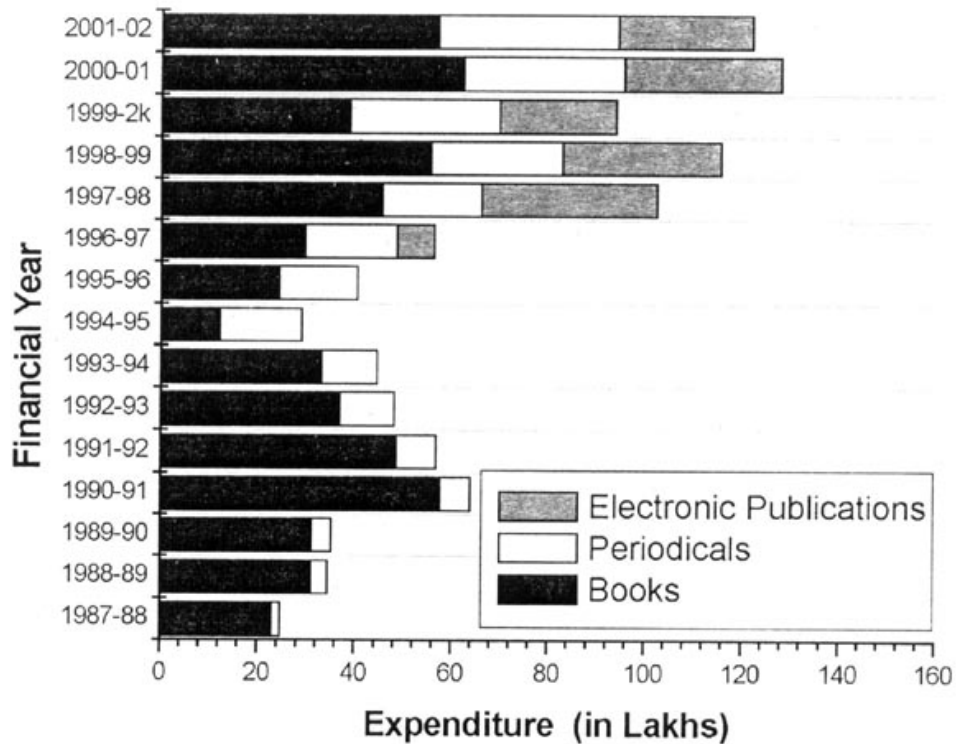


Ever rising enrollment number require, corresponding increase in the budget for books. Although the budget allocation for library has risen from 32, lakhs to 122.5 lakhs, there is marginal change in the book budget (Table 4.4). The trend is now towards procurement of journals and electronic publications (Chart 4.4). With rising cost of books on one hand and marginal increase in the book budget it is becoming difficult to cater to the needs of the learners.

Table 4.4: Year-wise allocation and expenditure for books, periodicals & electronic publishings

| Sl. No. | Academic Year | Books | | Periodicals | | Electronic Publications | |
|---------|---------------|------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | Allocation | Expenditure | Allocation | Expenditure | Allocation | Expenditure |
| 1. | 1987-88 | 30,00,000 | 22,88,479 | 2,00,000 | 1,67,200 | - | - |
| 2. | 1988-89 | 30,00,000 | 31,02,282 | 4,00,000 | 3,42,587 | - | - |
| 3. | 1989-90 | 35,00,000 | 31,17,118 | 4,00,000 | 3,91,680 | - | - |
| 4. | 1990-91 | 60,00,000 | 57,62,239 | 8,00,000 | 6,28,557 | - | - |
| 5. | 1991-92 | 50,00,000 | 48,44,289 | 8,00,000 | 8,25,961 | - | - |
| 6. | 1992-93 | 60,00,000 | 36,89,406 | 8,00,000 | 11,19,172 | - | - |
| 7. | 1993-94 | 50,00,000 | 32,98,930 | 13,00,000 | 11,53,977 | - | - |
| 8. | 1994-95 | 50,00,000 | 12,07,762 | 16,00,000 | 16,73,520 | - | - |
| 9. | 1995-96 | 35,00,000 | 24,22,493 | 16,00,000 | 16,13,387 | - | - |
| 10. | 1996-97 | 27,50,000 | 29,54,698 | 20,00,000 | 18,90,895 | 10,00,000 | 7,83,388 |
| 11. | 1997-98 | 45,00,000 | 45,46,717 | 20,00,000 | 20,55,015 | 35,00,000 | 36,40,587 |
| 12. | 1998-99 | 50,00,000 | 55,60,861 | 27,00,000 | 27,20,281 | 35,00,000 | 32,85,293 |
| 13. | 1999-2000 | 40,00,000 | 38,64,793 | 25,00,000 | 31,04,360 | 35,00,000 | 24,23,254 |
| 14. | 2000-2001 | 62,00,000 | 62,35,684 | 35,00,000 | 33,03,723 | 33,00,000 | 32,69,995 |
| 15. | 2001-2002 | 50,00,000 | 57,03,829 | 37,50,000 | 37,17,193 | 35,00,000 | 27,87,085 |

Chart 4.4: Expenditure on Books, Periodicals and Electronic Publications



Problems faced by students

- Learners require library services like reading reference and lending similar to their counterparts in conventional universities, but lending service is not provided to students at IGNOU.
- India being a vast country and having huge population scattered all over the country, learners have to travel long distances to reach study centers.
- Learners have to incur expenditure every time they visit their study centre to avail library services.
- As IGNOU students are part-time learners, they cannot get concessions for travelling by train or bus.
- Employers do not permit/grant leave on Saturdays and Sundays if the weekly off is on any week day.
- They have to arrange for lodging/boarding facilities to visit study centre on Saturdays and Sundays.
- Economic background and social commitments on holidays to their families and relatives cause difficulty in visiting study centre.
- Disadvantaged students such as women, physically challenged, residing in rural, remote hilly and backward areas as well as spouses and children of migrating population face problems in availing support services at the study centres.

- They do not get up-to-date information unless they visit the study centres.

Problems faced by IGNOU and library

- Lack of infra-structural facilities such as space, furniture, adequate staff, limited funds, literature explosion, spiraling prices, devaluation of rupee in the international market, complexity of demands from diverse learners of multi-disciplinary choice of programmes, shrinking budget etc hinders in providing support services to learners.
- Learner's demands for providing all books recommended as "Suggested Readings" in their blocks cannot be satisfied as either they are out of print/out of stock or they are too expensive/difficult to procure from foreign countries.
- Regional and study centres do not have adequate space and furniture for stack room and reading room.
- They also do not have professionally qualified and committed staff.
- Books are issued for consultation only at the premises for reading/reference but students do not have time to sit and read as they have to attend counseling sessions and view/listen to audio-video programmes. So they are underutilized.
- Circulation of books, viz. issuing, adjustments of loans, reservation of books is not possible as attendance at the counselling/contact programmes is optional. Books if issued may not be returned on time and thereby reducing significantly the availability of reading facility to others on the premises.
- Postgraduate students expect the library to subscribe journals for study centers but due to lack of permanent staff to undertake serial control activities, it is not feasible.
- Demand to get books on inter-library loan also cannot be fulfilled as study centres cannot spare books for sharing resources.
- Demand for books in regional languages cannot be satisfied as standard text books in professional subjects such as science and technology, management, computer science, engineering, etc are not available.
- Electronic gadgets like TV, VCR, tape recorder, radio, computer are not equally and adequately accessible to all learners.
- Budgetary constraints are graver and so multiple copies of books cannot be sent to each study centre for providing lending facilities.
- Library has no alternative but to play a significant role by undertaking measures to bridge the gap by outreaching library services to distance learners.

Measures taken to provide outreach library services for distance learners

Establishment of Learning Resource Centre

Library and Documentation Division has established IGNOU Learning Resource Centre on April 23, 2000 to provide reading, lending, reference and information services to students of management, computer science and library information science at – Leela Devi Public Library, A-82, Mohan Gardens, D.K. Post Office Building, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi 110 059.

Membership of DELNET for regional centres

IGNOU's Central Library has been the institutional member of DELNET – Developing Libraries Network since 1991. The annual membership has been provided to 22 Regional Centres to enable the postgraduate and research students visiting the Library of the Regional Centres to access the collection of 233 participating libraries.

Digitization of question papers

In order to satisfy the demands of learners for the question papers of the examinations of previous years, the Library has digitized all the question papers from 1987 to 2000 and has prepared year-wise, level wise and school-wise CDs of papers. They are being provided to all schools of studies, regional centres and regular study centres to facilitate them in providing question papers to students.

Installation of CD-Net workstation

The Library has acquired TNT Server 2000 CD-Net Workstation having capacity of stacking 28 CD-ROMs at a time. Software for accessing CD-Net facilities has been installed on the computers of academic staff networked with the University LAN. It facilitates teachers to browse, scan and download information for themselves as well as for their research and postgraduate students/without visiting the Library.

Subscription of CD-ROM full-text and bibliographic databases

Bibliographic and multi-user full-text CD-ROM databases have been subscribed for installing on CD-Net workstation for providing easy and quick access to information on their own computers.

Access to electronic journals through J-Gate

The Library has subscribed sixty journals in print format with which on-line access is available free. By entering the on-line gateway called J-Gate, the Library users can have access to 1400 gratis on-line journals linked through this gateway after obtaining a password from the library.

Future plans

Electronic reference library

University is introducing Ph.D. programmes in a few disciplines. Library proposes to install electronic reference library for management, computer science, humanities and social sciences to provide access to exponential literature to the postgraduate and research students.

Packages of reference materials

In order to provide reference materials prescribed for further reading as supplement to self instructional materials provided by the University, the Library will prepare packages of relevant chapters of books and articles of journals for professional postgraduate courses in consultation with faculty members. The same documents will also be posted on the University website after

taking necessary copyright permission from authors. Distance learners having access to Internet will download from the website whereas those who do not have access to Internet can request for the packages in the print format. They will be charged minimum photo copying and postal charges.

Mobile libraries

Outreach library services will be provided to learners residing in rural, remote, hilly and backward areas through mobile libraries.

Learning resource centres at public libraries

The Library and Documentation Division is exploring feasibility of establishing IGNOU Learning Resource Centres at various public libraries having adequate infrastructural facilities to provide reading, lending and reference services.

National policy for library services to distance learners

The Sectional Committee on Distance Education constituted by the Indian Library Association (ILA) has formulated Guidelines for Library Services for Distance Learners. The ILA can enter into Memorandum of Understanding with the Distance Education Council at IGNOU - the national body for co-ordination and monitoring of distance education in India - to implement these guidelines at the national level.

Web-based information

The Library also has a plan to provide web based information regarding :

- complete catalogue of IGNOU's print, audio and video programmes
- question papers of the examination of the previous years from 1987 to 2000
- catalogue of the Central Library
- holding of journals received at the L&DD
- catalogues of theses, IGNOU course materials microfiches and microfilms, holding of CD-ROMs and other databases.

Library and information services

After shifting to the permanent central building on the campus, the library will provide library and information services through telephone, e-mail, fax and postal service. Books will be lent through DELNET to regional centres for Ph. D students all over the country. The additional services include the following :

- reading, reference and lending services from the existing library block
- viewing and listening to audio-video programme
- reprographic services on subsidized charges
- information services from multi-media collections at the Central Library.

Library support to physically challenged learners

The Library support will be provided to physically challenged / blind students at the new building campus by procuring necessary hardware, software and braille collections.

Conclusion

With ever increasing students enrollment and escalation of cost of books and journals it is becoming difficult for the IGNOU library system to cater to the basic needs of reading material for the learners. Added to that, the scattering of the learners throughout the country, requires library services to be taken to the learners at their end. Alternate methods of delivery of materials and services are being planned to reach out to the learners. It is hoped that in future with setting up of digital library system it will be possible to provide effective services to the learners.

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