A Webometric Study of Selected International Library Association Websites: An Evaluative Study

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ABSTRACT

The official website of any organisation provides authentic information about it. The current study is a novel attempt to explore international library association websites and assess those websites based on web content evaluation and webometric parameters. Several library websites have been analysed by researchers. However, the same has not been attempted regarding the library association website at the international level. International library associations indexed by American Library association's website were taken as the sample. Data were collected using a link analysis tool from https://moz.com/ which helps in determining Domain Authority, Page Authority, in-links, and out-links; Google was used for the links. Official websites of the library associations were visited for the website evaluation with a well-structured checklist having 19 criteria. International Association of Law Libraries is found to have the highest simple web impact factor and external web impact factor. In contrast, the Association of Jewish Libraries has the highest internal web impact factor. All the websites examined in this study are hosted under the .org domain. The study revealed that 7 out of 8 (87.5 %) international library association websites' Domain Authority and Page Authority is below 50. Essential information like customer service, currency, and FAQ are not available on the websites. The results of this study will help the library associations in re-structuring and better maintenance of their website.

Keywords: Library association website; Webometric; Web content analysis; Website evaluation; IFLA CALA

1. INTRODUCTION

Library associations work for the welfare and betterment of the library professionals, and they usually function on a membership basis[1]. Library association offers its services to its members within a country or across the globe depending on its scope[2]. Any library association needs to have a well-documented website to provide valuable information such as upcoming conferences/ workshops/ seminars/ webinars, jobs, membership, awards, grants, scholarships, and its in-house publications to its members and non-members. The website is a collection of web pages including content in different multimedia formats such as images, videos, and other digital contents[3], and websites are one of the primary information sources. Like other information sources, it is necessary to evaluate websites as well to identify their link structure; how it performs on search engines; the accuracy, reliability, currency, and user-friendliness based on the web content available on their sites. Content analysis and evaluation of the websites provide significant insight related to the structure of the website. There are several indicators available for the evaluation of websites such as Web Impact Factor (WIF), Domain Authority (DA), and Page Authority (PA). Library association websites must cater to the need of their diverse members/ non-members especially in the case of international library associations as its

members are scattered across the globe. All library association websites do not provide sufficient information about products and services[2]. Various studies have been conducted in the past to evaluate websites of different types of libraries including academic, public, and national libraries[3-7]. However, evaluation of library association websites in the international level remains understudied. Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) tools provide the link and performance-related data for the websites which in turn help in conducting Webometric studies. There are different SEO tools and technologies available such as MOZ, smallseotools, Alexa, etc. These tools can be applied to understand a website's performance on the web and its link structure. The primary goal of the study is to identify what kind of services do these library association websites provide to their members/non-members, especially at a time when the whole world is depending to a great extent on web-based information. The other goal of the study focuses on understanding the link structure of these library association websites.

Webometric is the branch of study that deals with quantitative measurement of different aspects of a website[8]. Webometric is based on these four pillars: (1) content analysis of the webpage; (2) link structure analysis of the website; (3) usage analysis of the website and (4) web technology analysis[9]. This study tries to investigate selected international library associations' websites by applying webometrics indicators as well as website evaluation parameters which make the study a novel attempt.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous studies conducted in webometrics and web content analysis are reviewed to get an idea about what work is already done and what else can be done in the future in this area. In a pioneering study, 71 library association websites available in the English language were evaluated based on website evaluation parameters. The researcher tried to rank websites based on score and found that very few (21 out of 71 or 29.57 %) were high-ranking library websites[2]. Rahman and Batcha[4] conducted a recent study to analyse the web content of college library websites of Delhi University and it was discovered that only 10 per cent of them provide FAQs, Ask a Librarian features, and a single-window search option. Singha and Verma[5] evaluated library websites of libraries of veterinary institutes with a checklist having 65 parameters/criteria and graded the library websites based on the checklist and found that no Websites/Webpages fell under the "Outstanding" grade point having 53-65 score. In another significant study[6], websites of 8 national libraries of the South Asian region were examined to find out its Web Impact Factors (WIF) and the National Library of India was found to have the highest WIF. An interesting study regarding webometrics of public library websites in the Indian context was conducted by Brahma and Verma[7] and suggested that the Internal Web Impact Factor should be improved by the library websites as they have received low scores. The WISER webometric ranking method was applied in similar webometric studies[10-11]; Alexa traffic rank was employed by several studies to check the website performances[11-13]; Two of them used this tool to evaluate newspaper websites[12-13]. Bengali newspaper websites' performance on the web was found to be weak[12]. Mondal and Basu[13] found that 55 per cent of the top English newspaper websites were hosted under the .com domain. Hindustan Times from India was found to perform well on most aspects except for the bounce rate. Patel and Vyas[14] analysed the websites of Indian open universities and found IGNOU to have the highest domain authority. Verma and Brahma[15] investigated central university websites of North East India by applying similar webometric indicators and found low WIFs for all the university websites. Bulla and Hadagali[16] in their study checked the content quality of 33 central library websites in India and found that only 8 websites contained information on FAQ/Feedback/Ask Librarian. Pal, et al.[17] examined the Indian Council of Social Science Research sponsored research institutions' websites and found all the websites had more number internal links than external links. Gupta and Singh[18] analysed Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) websites and found ISI, Tezpur to have the most visible websites. Majhi and Das[19] conducted a webometric analysis of 25 Indian High Court websites in India and Andhra Pradesh high court websites found to have the highest Simple Web Impact Factor.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The review of the literature clearly shows that only one significant study was conducted eight years back attempting to evaluate selected international library association websites[2]. The websites were categorised into groups: high, medium, and low based on the availability of features in that study. However, that study's scope was limited to only web content evaluation and the researchers did not apply any webometric indicators. Since then, a website's features have also changed due to the rapid development of web technologies. Innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, bots, and semantic web have entered the web development scenario. Besides, features such as "an online forum for discussion" and "upcoming events and activities" were not included in the checklist of the previous study[2] which is included in the current study. While going through the literature, it is found that no webometric studies are conducted on international library association websites so far to understand the dynamics and evaluate the international library association websites in terms of their link structure and features. This void found in the universe of knowledge led us to conduct this present study to bridge the research gap by looking into the following objectives.

- To find out the impact of the international library association websites on the web
- To discover the domain authority and page authority of the international library association websites
- To evaluate the web content and features of the international library association websites

Table 1. International library associations

Name of the library association	Websites	Year of establishment	Location/ Country
International Federation of Library associations and Institutions (IFLA)	http://www.ifla.org/	1927	Netherland
Asian Pacific American Library association (APALA)	https://www.apalaweb.org/	1980	USA
Association for Health Information and Libraries in Africa (AHILA)	http://www.ahila.org/	1984	South Africa
Association of Jewish Libraries (ALJ)	http://www.jewishlibraries.org/	1966	USA
European Bureau of Library, Information, and Documentation Associations (EBLIDA)	http://www.eblida.org/	1992	Netherlands
International Association of Law Libraries (IALL)	http://www.iall.org/	1959	USA
International Association of Technological University Libraries (IATUL)	http://www.iatul.org/	1955	Germany
Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA)	http://www.cala-web.org/	1973	USA

Source: https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/iro/intlassocorgconf/libraryassociations[20]

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Design

In this study, international library association websites available in the English language indexed by American Library Association (ALA) are evaluated with a web content evaluation checklist containing 19 criteria. Furthermore, a webometric analysis is performed to find out the quality of websites.

4.2 Sample

There is a total of 23 international library association websites indexed in the ALA website. Out of the 23 websites, 15 websites are excluded from the study due to their non-functioning of URLs or websites being languages other than English. The sample population of the study consists of eight international level library association websites indexed in the ALA website and portrayed in Table 1.

4.3 Data Collection

The web content data from the sample websites were collected by visiting the library association websites. For finding out the metrics of websites, a link analysis tool called https://moz.com/ (the freely available version) which was previously known as open site explorer was used. MOZ is one of the most authentic and add-free online tools when it comes to Web analytics. It is robust in its coverage as it covers nearly 40.7 trillion links, 718 million domains, and 7 trillion pages as of Feb 2022. It's a tool employed by the previous studies as well[6-7,14-15]. The URL of a particular library association was copied and pasted on the search box for obtaining different webometric indicators like DA, PA, Internal Links (IL), External Links (EL), Total Links (TL), and Individualised domains.

Websites are one of the major information sources in today's world. Having an error-free, properly functioning and well-maintained website gives an edge to any organisation. Apart from the webometric analyses, to check the availability of different features on the library association websites, a detailed checklist with 19 web evaluation criteria was structured and employed. The criteria are available in Annexure I. The websites were personally visited and observed to collect relevant data.

4.4 Instruments

Webometric parameters such as DA, PA, and different types of WIFs are used in this study to measure the performance of the websites. DA is a measure of domain or subdomain. It indicates the quality of a website. Its value varies from 1 to 100. A higher value represents a higher rank[21]. In contrast, PA is the ranking of a single page on search engine result pages. Also, its score differs from 1 to 100[22]. On the other hand, WIF is based on Simple Web Impact Factor (SWIF), Internal Web Impact Factor (IWIF), and External Web Impact Factor (EWIF). SWIF is a ratio between the total number of links and the total number of web pages. Whereas, the total number of links is a combination of Internal Links and External Links. Here, the number of web pages was calculated by typing on Google search box the command "**site**:" followed by the URL of the library associations website. IWIF is a ratio between the total number of Internal Links and a total number of web pages. On the contrary, EWIF is the ratio of the total number of External Links and the total number of web pages. For the quantitative analysis, Microsoft Excel version 2019 is used in our study.

Peter Ingwersen[23] developed different types of Web Impact Factor, which is based on various links it received and the number of web pages they have. From the literature rereview it is evident that no previous studies have employed these formulas to analyse international library association websites. These formulas are used in the study as they are one of the most accepted formulas as used in several previous studies[7,15,18] to find out different WIFs and are discussed below

$$SWIF = \frac{\text{Total number of links}}{\text{Total number of web pages}}$$

$$IWIF = \frac{\text{Total number of internal links}}{\text{Total number of web pages}}$$

$$EWIF = \frac{\text{Total number of external links}}{\text{Total number of web pages}}$$

5. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Figure 1 depicts the name of the library association, its website, URL, and location or country. It reveals that out of all eight libraries IFLA is the oldest library, which was founded in 1927.
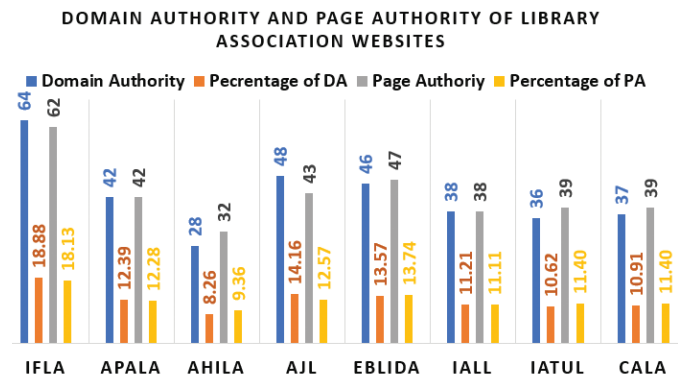

DOMAIN AUTHORITY AND PAGE AUTHORITY OF LIBRARY ASSOCIATION WEBSITES

Figure 1. Domain Authority and Page Authority of library association websites.

Figure 1 illustrates the DA and PA of international library association websites. The website of IFLA got the highest ranks in terms of DA of 64 and PA of 62. On the other hand, AHILA got the lowest rank in terms of DA of 28 and PA of 32. Also, the Majority of the association's websites i.e., 7 out of 8 associations websites have below 50 scores in respect of DA and PA.

Table 2 gives the total internal links, total external links, and total links. The AJL website has the highest number of internal links, IFLA has the highest number of external links. On the other hand, the AJL website ranks top in terms of the total number of links.

Table 3 represents the top two Individualised Root Domains of all the international library association websites under concern. It is noticed that popular websites such as wikipedia.org, youtube.com, microsoft.com are on the list

Table 2. **Total internal links, total external links, and total links**

Library association	Total internal links	Total external links	Total links
IFLA	28,996	1,329,334	1,358,330
APALA	0	11,970	11,970
AHILA	548	18,787	19,335
AJL	1,616,512	54,165	1,670,677
EBLIDA	369,933	165,594	535,527
IALL	167,407	545,200	712,606
IATUL	75,872	9,058	84,930
CALA	1,125,206	21,733	1,146,939
Total	3,384,474	2,155,841	5,540,314

Table 3. **Top Individualised root domains of library association websites**

LA	Root domain	DA	Linking domains
IFLA	youtube.com	100	19585797
	microsoft.com	99	4731227
APALA	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	feedburner.com	96	1749263
AHILA	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	fr.wikipedia.org	95	555330
AJL	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	nytimes.com	95	1847771
EBLIDA	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	europa.eu	97	1833273
IALL	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	es.wikipedia.org	95	843835
IATUL	microsoft.com	99	4731227
	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
CALA	en.wikipedia.org	98	6019227
	sites.google.com	97	1850576

Table 4. Web impact factor

Name of the LA	SWIF	IWIF	EWIF
IFLA	1.739	0.037	1.702
APALA	7.875	0	7.875
AHILA	19,335	548	18,787
AJL	278,446.17	269,418.67	9,027.50
EBLIDA	215.938	149.166	66.771
IALL	356,303	83703.5	272,600
IATUL	35.095	31.352	3.742
CALA	1,444.51	1417.136	27.371

of top individualised root domains of the library association websites.

Table 4 shows the WIF of eight international library association websites and visualises that in terms of SWIF the first, second and third place is occupied by IALL, AJL, and AHILA respectively. The AJL occupies the first position and APALA occupies the last position among eight libraries in terms of IWIF. On the other hand, the top 3 EWIFs are occupied by IALL, AHILA, and AJL respectively.

Web Content Analysis of eight international library association websites is evaluated based on a checklist having 19 categories as depicted in Annexure I. None of the library association websites received the maximum score of 19. It is found from the table that all the library association websites have information regarding its accuracy, contact us, authority, about the association, navigation and links, web 2.0, membership, and publication. The majority (75 %) of library association websites have a search option, copyright, and upcoming events/activities information.

6. DISCUSSION

The present study is carried out on eight international library association websites to evaluate their web presence. It is clear from the study that all the library association websites are using the .org domain invariably (Table 1). In terms of link dynamics, 4 out of 8 (50 %) websites have more external links than internal links displaying stronger connection with other websites. The remaining 50 per cent of the websites showed more interlinking with the same website but having weaker connections with other websites. Previously, researchers found that all the websites in their study[17] had more IL than EL. Only 1 website out of the 8 received a DA and PA score of more than 50. A previous study related to webometrics analysis of open universities in India[14] also stated similar results where they found that 1 out of 15 websites had more than 50 PA score and 2 out of 15 websites had more than 50 DA score. Another interesting fact stated in the study is that Wikipedia is there in the list of the top individualised links in the case of 7 out 8 Library association websites. In this study, google.com is found to be in the list of top individualised domains of one of the library association websites. Likewise, previous researchers[15] found google.com to be in the list of top individualised domains of the Mizoram University website. In terms of WIFs, there are no upper and lower limits. However, we found 0 IWIF for APALA, and similar results were found by previous researchers in their webometric studies of national library websites[6] and public library websites[7].

In a previous study related to the evaluation of websites[2], it was found that majority of the websites did not indicate the last date of update on their home pages. Likewise, in another study[4] conducted to evaluate college library websites of Delhi university, the researchers found that none of them mentioned the last date of update and 1 website had a FAQ feature. Similarly, we found that none of the Library association websites mention their website's last date of update and FAQ features (Annexure I). These features are necessary since they inform the user that the websites are up to date and provide answers to general queries related to the associations. In the case of Veterinary university library websites, 25 per cent had site maps on their websites[5] and a similar result is shown in our

study with 25 per cent of Library association websites having sitemaps. Unfortunately, IATUL and CALA have missed out on informing the users about the upcoming events and activities on their websites. An attempt from their side may be initiated to include this feature for providing better services to their users. The study shows that only 12.5 per cent of Library association websites provided an online forum for discussion feature and more Library association websites should include this feature so the users can be benefitted.

7. CONCLUSION

The study reveals how the websites of eight international Library association websites are performing on the web. The study proves that the IFLA website is performing much better than the other international library association websites in terms of the quality of the website as it received the highest DA and PA scores. In an earlier study[2], the IFLA website stood at the 13th rank out of 71 international LA websites in terms of web content availability. In our study, it stood at 2nd rank. The four websites having fewer external links should try to work on their external links to have better connectivity with other websites. The library associations should take the initiatives to make the quality of their websites better as most of them received below 50 DA and PA scores.

We have seen a paradigm shift in academic discussions going from traditional to digital formats during the ongoing pandemic. Having an efficiently functioning website guarantees the success of any institute or organisation in the digital environment and being able to communicate directly with any association with the help of the website is crucial today. In this situation, library association websites may utilise interactive features such as instant messaging tools, online discussion forums, chat rooms, etc., to maintain a better relationship with their members/non-members. Similarly, it should incorporate more dynamic features on websites by employing the latest web tools such as various web 3.0 tools, which help in easy identification of users' needs and behavior to stay relevant in the ever-changing technological era.

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Annexure I
Web Content Analysis

Criterion	Name of the international library association								
	IFLA	APALA	AHILA	AJL	EBLIDA	IALL	IATUL	CALA	Total score (out of 8)
Website	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Contact Us	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Accuracy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Authority	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
About Association	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Navigation & Links	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Customer Service	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	0
Search Option	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	6 (75%)
Copyright	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	6 (75%)
Currency	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	0
Sitemap	N	Y	N	N	Y	N	N	N	2 (25%)
FAQ	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	0
Web 2.0	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Membership	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Upcoming Events/ Activities	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	6 (75%)
An Online Forum for Discussion	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	1 (12.50%)
About Grants and Fellowship	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	7 (87.50%)
Awards	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	7 (87.50%)
Publication	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	8 (100%)
Score (out of 19)	14	15	13	13	15	13	12	12	

Y= presence of the feature in the website   N= absence of the feature in the website