Making a Database Product Self-Sustain: The Experience of *TEXINCON*

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Abstract

TEXINCON is a bibliographic database, containing self explanatory summaries of articles, developments, books, standards, etc. in the field of textile and allied subjects, being produced by Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association. The contents, management, publicity, marketing and sales efforts being done for *TEXINCON* have been covered in this article.

1. INTRODUCTION

The library of ATIRA (Ahmedabad Textile Industry's Research Association) was the first in India to start industry oriented documentation services in early 1960. These services were provided primarily to the member textile mills and to the staff of ATIRA. Realising the importance of information services to the Indian textile industry, a proposal was mooted in 1965 for the establishment of a 'Centralised Information System for the Indian Textile Industry'. However, shortage of funds prevented ATIRA from taking any concrete step. In 1987, a proposal for the establishment of the NICTAS (National Information Centre for Textile and Allied Subjects) was approved by NISSAT (National Information System for Science and Technology).

Two of the prime objectives of NICTAS are:

(1) To develop resources of information appropriate to the needs of the Indian users of textile information.

(2) To integrate and coordinate the existing and future scientific and technical information systems and services, related to textile and allied subjects, into an organised and effective network, with voluntary cooperation of different scientific and technical agencies in the country, and also establishing linkage with textile and allied subjects information centres outside India.

ATIRA library used to publish, since 1963 the *Current Textile Literature* with abstracts that was supplied to its member industries free of charge. This service was discontinued in 1980 because of its limited utility as an economy measure.

ATIRA did a survey of the information needs of the textile industry in India in 1980. A detailed report of over 200 pages was published. The survey established the following conclusions:

A vast quantum of information is available but that is not being utilised due to the following reasons:

⊕ It is not easily accessible to all interested in India.

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* A large portion of it is not related to the Indian context.

* It misses out on much Indian information, and

* It is expensive to acquire.

In view of the above findings, when NICTAS was established, it was decided to develop a database and publish a journal containing self explanatory summaries of articles, developments, books, standards, etc., useful to identify user groups of India and in other developing countries in the field of textile and allied subjects.

2. DEVELOPMENTAL EFFORTS

Before starting the development of the database, following actions/decisions were taken.

2.1 Brain Storming Session

A brain storming session was arranged in ATIRA, where many textile scientists, technologists and others actively participated and various useful suggestions were received. Contents of the databases were discussed in detail.

2.2 Naming Contest

What is in a 'name'? but in this world everything is known by 'name'. Hence, a well designed colourful poster was prepared and copies were sent to all Indian textile R&D and teaching institutions in India. All were requested to suggest a suitable name and a symbol as per the description given in the poster. An award was announced for the winning entries. Over 450 names were suggested by more than 75 persons from all parts of India. The naming context committee finally selected the name TEXINCON (TEXtile INformation CONdensed).

2.3 Guidelines for Preparing Summaries

Clear cut guidelines and instructions were prepared for preparing summaries of articles, books, standards, developments, etc. This helped in bringing uniformity in the context of summaries.

2.4 Help of Subject Specialists

In order to have more purposeful and self contained summaries, it was decided to entrust this task only to subject specialists. This was an unique experiment on cooperative inputting. At present over 90 senior professors scientists and technologists from over 26 R&D and teaching institutions in India are helping NICTAS in preparing summaries for TEXINCON. Only a token honorarium is paid and a TEXINCON copy is supplied free to the participating institutions. The uninterrupted smooth working of this system over 9 years shows that this unique experiment has indeed been very successful.

2.5 Identification of User Groups

The following TEXINCON user groups were identified. The carefully designed contents of TEXINCON ensure that all user groups would find some information of their own use in some context in each issue.

TEXINCON user groups (Beneficiaries of TEXINCON), in alphabetical order, are listed here:

* Ancillary Equipment Makers

* Chemical and Textile Auxiliary Manufacturers

* Consultants/Trainers

* Designers/Fashion Creators

* Educationists/Students

* Entrepreneurs: Decentralized Sector (Handlooms, Powerlooms, Processing Houses, etc.)

* Exporters/Importers

* Fibre Manufacturers

* Garment Manufacturers

* Machinery Manufacturers

* Managers

* Marketers/Traders

* Policy makers/Administrators

* Researchers

* Technologists

* Textile Consumers and their organisations

2.6 *TEXINCON* Contents

TEXINCON was visualised not only as a secondary periodical but also as one quite different in several ways.

Each issue of *TEXINCON* would contain:

* One lead article in a significant area written by a renowned person/specialist exclusively for *TEXINCON*

* Carefully selected self contained summaries of articles, books, developments, etc. useful to identified User Group

* User Groups Index

* Key-word Index

* Spot-light

* Advertisements of products useful to Indian textile and allied industries

User Groups and User Group Index is a speciality of *TEXINCON*. This has been highly appreciated by users. No other journal (Database) in the world gives User Groups Index.

It was decided that *TEXINCON* should cover informations published on 'all fibres' in the areas: production and properties; yarn forming; fabric forming; chemical and finishing processes; products; manufacture, properties and aftercare; designing and fashions; analysis, testing and quality control; mill engineering (including energy); environment protection; management; and generalities.

2.7 Back-up services

The following decisions were also taken:

* Full text of any article summarised in *TEXINCON* should be supplied within two working days and can be supplied by Regd. Post. For this purpose the *TEXINCON* photocopy coupons should be made available.

* Well planned marketing efforts must be undertaken.

* It was decided to have a well-designed cover page for *TEXINCON*, without any advertisement, for *TEXINCON* and it must be well printed also.

* *TEXINCON* should be available as paper copy and on magnetic media (on floppy).

* All work of *TEXINCON* will be done using word processor/computers for ensuring speed, efficiency and quality.

* *TEXINCON* may be published quarterly.

It will be thus seen that a thorough preparation was made before launching *TEXINCON*.

2.8 Birth of *TEXINCON*

Based on above decisions, the first issue of *TEXINCON* was prepared and was released by Dr Abid Hussain, Member of the Planning Commission, on February 9, 1989 during the 30th Joint Technological Conference held at ATIRA, Ahmedabad. This conference was attended by over 900 technologists and managers from the textile industry, covering all textile centres in India.

3. MANAGING *TEXINCON*

In order to maintain high quality and utility a series of steps are taken. These refer to managing each of the three aspects of work (1) Selection of contents (2) production and despatch, and (3) after sale-services.

3.1 Lead Article

NICTAS invites, well in advance, prominent experts from all over the world to write the lead articles. Each author has to follow strictly the guidelines provided by NICTAS. Indian authors are paid an honorarium of Rs 500 and foreign authors are given free *TEXINCON* copy for one year.

The manuscript received from the author is sent to some experts for editing and modifications, if any. If major modifications are needed, the modified version is sent back to the author for approval/change.

In this context, it may be mentioned that *TEXINCON* also includes the results of a comprehensive literature search on the subject of the lead article.

3.2 Advertisements from Industry

For financial sustenance, *TEXINCON* accepts advertisements from textiles and related companies.

3.3 Summary Preparation

Selection is made keeping in view only one objective—any scientific and technical literature or development useful to one or more identified User Groups in India and other developing countries.

Articles, books, developments are selected from over 400 periodicals, received in 20 institutions. Each institution has been allotted specific titles of journals to avoid duplication. Photocopies of selected articles are also sent directly to subject specialists for preparing summaries.

Summaries of books are done by subject specialists from the books received in their libraries as per selection guidelines.

Useful developments are identified by NICTAS and their summaries are prepared. Summaries of developments in textile research institutes in India are also included.

3.4 Spotlight

To cope for the benefit of *TEXINCON* readers, NICTAS started a new service from April 1993, called SPOTLIGHT. It addition to the citation details and summaries, titles of selected publications on current subjects such as denims, ISO 9000, jute and environment of current interest is included in each issue of *TEXINCON*. Each issue lists 50 such articles.

3.5 Computer Check for Duplication

All summaries are checked to avoid duplication, within a issue or from past issues.

3.6 Collection Management

Each of the 26 collaborating R & D/teaching institutions has a 'Coordinator' working for NICTAS. Coordinator of each institution collects summaries prepared by subject specialists of his/her institution and sends these once in a month by registered post to Coordinator, NICTAS.

An honorarium of Rs 20 per summary is given to the person who prepares summary and Rs 2 per summary is given to the person who coordinates the work in an institute. Payment to summary writers and coordinators is made as soon as the issue of *TEXINCON* is published.

All participating organisations get *TEXINCON* free of charge.

3.7 Editing and Checking

All summaries are very carefully edited and checked for:

⊕ Language

⊕ Technical content

⊕ Complete bibliographical details as per the NICTAS approved standard format.

After necessary corrections, summaries are passed on for allotting keywords, identifying user groups. After arranging under the 11 subject headings, each summary is given a unique summary number. All summaries are arranged according to this number. Thereafter, two indexes viz., keyword index and user group index, are prepared.

3.8 Document Delivery

The photocopy of articles included in *TEXINCON* are supplied on demand, to all readers at a reasonable price within two working days. This time limit is observed meticulously, so as to ensure good customer satisfaction.

3.9 VITAMIN

VITAMIN (Vital Information on Textile Announced for Moulding Industrialised Nations), VITAMIN is a supplement to *TEXINCON*, is also supplied to *TEXINCON* subscribers from January 1994.

TEXINCON covers 200 items with summaries and another 50 without summaries. Still certain relevant articles are left out. The listing of these residual items

constitute the VITAMIN, a photocopy of which is available on demand.

4. PUBLICITY, MARKETING & SALES EFFORTS

4.1 Publicity

A strong promotional measure has been designed to support the TEXINCON activity. Pamphlets on NICTAS and TEXINCON are regularly distributed during various national textile conferences, to all branches of Textile Association (India) and teaching institutes. Textile Research Association, textile mills, all processing houses, cooperative spinning mills, textile machinery manufacturers, textile export houses, etc.

In addition, regular press releases on NICTAS services including the list of available bibliographies, are made. NICTAS has started publishing articles on services provided by NICTAS and on TEXINCON in textile and other related journals in India & abroad. TEXINCON & State-of-the-Art reports are displayed and are available for purchase at the airports of Ahmedabad, Mumbai & Bangalore.

4.2 Individualized Marketing

In marketing information products and services, direct interaction with the consumers is deemed to be more effective than the traditional advertising and promotion. Keeping this in view, NICTAS staff undertakes liaison visits to users, lectures cum demonstration to students and teachers and users of services at various places in India.

The goodwill of the Textile Association (India), a 12,000 member strong professional body with 23 branches all over India, is used to organise lectures cum demonstration programmes in various cities.

4.3 Incentives to Buyers

Several other incentives are given to encourage a large body of potential users to utilise the availability of TEXINCON and other services from NICTAS.

a) The following services are given free to TEXINCON subscribers:

* 40 pages free photocopies of articles, etc. summaried in TEXINCON, SPOTLIGHT & VITAMIN.

* A cumulative index of TEXINCON.

* Publication of TEXINCON users 'Comments'.

b) Free supply of specimen copy of TEXINCON to potential users.

c) 50% concession is given to bonafied students & teachers on TEXINCON subscription and on NICTAS State-of-the-Art reports.

d) TEXINCON subscribers get State-of-the-Art reports at 50% concession.

4.4 Extra Services to Readers

NICTAS services coupons are made available against advance payment to facilitate procurement.

Full text of the articles are supplied on demand by registered post, within 2 working days.

For books, TEXINCON subscribers are requested to contact the bookseller or the publisher directly.

For more information on developments, subscribers are advised to contact directly the company or institution concerned.

The annual subscription is kept quite low for an extensive service like TEXINCON. Concessional rates are offered for subscription for longer period of 3 years.

At present TEXINCON has over 400 subscribers, including several from outside India.

5. CONCLUSION

TEXINCON is an ideal example of how a bibliographic database product could make a mark in the impoverished information market in India. This mainly owes to the quality and punctuality maintenance and responsiveness to users requirements-these have come about through preparations from the design stage itself. The success has also been reinforced

through astute marketing strategies and after-sales support.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT