

# Free Information Sources and Services on Internet for Libraries: A Selective Compilation

Subhash Khode & Divik Kumar

## Abstract

Over the last few years, internet has revolutionised the ways by which librarians can provide information sources and services to their users. This paper describes how with the help of internet, librarians provide access to the various types of online information sources and services to their users, which are freely available on internet including e-journals, e-books, online databases, encyclopaedias, virtual libraries etc. The paper also contains various examples of these sources with their Universal Resource Locator (URLs).

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of internet in the libraries is rapidly increasing and is changing the traditional functions and services of the libraries as well as role of the librarians. Internet is being used as an efficient medium for accessing, storing and disseminating of information worldwide. Internet also provides worldwide access to various useful paid as well as free information sources and services such as online databases, library catalogue, publishers' catalogues, electronic journals, online encyclopaedias, online dictionaries, e-books, e-conferences, virtual libraries, website of organisations, etc. With the advent of computer, networking and internet, it is possible to access information sources from anywhere at anytime. Many digital libraries, publishers and organisations provide access to their online information sources 24 hours to global users on internet. Printed information sources are being replaced by electronic information sources and are available on CD-ROMs, online databases, internet and other networks due to developments in information and communication technology. Authors and publishers are also much in favour of making available their articles online

for a fee or free, because studies have shown that online accessibility of articles have dramatically increased their citation, increasing the journal's impact factor and the author's prestige<sup>1</sup>.

Internet is also being used as a very important tool to access free information sources and services. Free online information sources and services can be access on internet without paying any subscription charges to the publishers and users do not need to have any membership in the organisation. Users can access and download required information available on these sources in their computers and can use for their academic and research purpose only.

The selection of free websites as part of collection development is activity practised by many librarians and is an important topic for discussion<sup>3</sup>. With the introduction and popularity of internet, most of the commercial, government, educational and research organisations/bodies/institutions such as banks, companies, universities, etc., have developed their own websites and provide latest and useful information including data, services, products, publications, programs and changes related to their fields/subjects.

Therefore these websites can be useful for researchers who always require the latest information.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Online information sources and services have been identified using various search engines on internet. The search is limited to only free online information sources and services. The words 'free online journal', 'free online electronic encyclopaedia', 'free trial', and 'free dictionary', etc., were used as keywords for searching. The examples of free information sources and services given in this paper are not limited to any specific disciplines but includes various disciplines. The free sources are not exhaustive but only examples because it is not possible to list out all the information sources and services available on internet in this paper.

## 3. FREE INFORMATION SOURCES

The internet provides following free information sources:

### 3.1 Free Online E-Journals

Electronic journals (E-Journals) are published in electronic format and distributed to its users via internet or CD-ROM. E—journals are also known as 'Digital Journals', 'Online Journals', 'Electronic Serials' and 'Electronic Publications'. E—journals do not require time consuming printing and mailing process. Many publishers and organisations offer free access to their online journals. The following are some examples of free online electronic journals, which also maintain archives of their past issues:

- ◆ *Current Research In Social Psychology*  
<http://www.uiowa.edu/~grproc/crisp/crisp.html>
- ◆ *Information Research: Electronic journal*  
<http://informationr.net/>
- ◆ *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*  
<http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/>
- ◆ *Advancing Women in Leadership*  
<http://www.advancingwomen.com/awl/awl.html>

- ◆ *Journal of Digital Information(JoDI)*  
<http://jodi.ecs.soton.ac.uk/>
- ◆ *Journal of Economic Education*  
<http://www.indiana.edu/~econed/>
- ◆ *Education Review*  
<http://www.triangle.co.uk/index.htm>

### 3.2 Directories of E-Journals

There are many directories of e-journals available on internet, in which some include only free online e-journals and some include both free and fee based. For example

- DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals)  
<http://www.doaj.org/>

This directory provides links to 550 free online journals covering all subjects and languages.

### 3.3 Free Online E-Books

E-books provide powerful search and retrieval facilities to the users. E-books are available in two forms:

- (a) Electronic version of printed books
- (b) Published in only electronic form.

Agee<sup>4</sup> states that e-books and downloadable literature are becoming more popular. When the library users need good literature in digital format, one of these three outstanding internet sources can be tried for the download. In just a few keystrokes library users can download an immense amount of literature absolutely free:

- ◆ Project Gutenberg  
<http://promo.net/pg/>
- ◆ The University of Virginia (USA)  
<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/books>
- ◆ Internet Public Library (IPL)  
[www.ipl.org](http://www.ipl.org)

Many educational and research organizations/institutions provide free access to their e-books collection or provide link to free e-books available on internet. For examples

- ◆ <http://www.free-ebooks.net/>

This site provides access to free fictions, tutorials, marketing and business e-books as

well as resources to aid in promoting e-books. E-books can be downloaded.

- ◆ <http://www.free-books.org/>

This site includes more than 100,000 pages of free books and teaching materials. Over 20,000 pages of books and commentaries by Carl Peterson and over 1000 classic books reformatted to Peterson e-writing styles are available.

- ◆ <http://www.ebooks4free.net/>

This site provides hundreds of links to e-books and manuscripts, historical documents and literature and much more.

- ◆ [www.ebrary.com](http://www.ebrary.com)

This site now has over 20,000 e-book titles available. A Middle East collection of approximately 100 full-text books and maps is now available for free online viewing.

### 3.4 Free Conference Proceedings

Many full text conference proceedings are also available free of charge to all on internet. For examples:

- ◆ 6th Annual Defense Economics Conference OSD (PA&E)/Institute for Defense Analysis, September 28-29, 2000  
[http://www.economics.osd.mil/Complete\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.economics.osd.mil/Complete_Summary.pdf)
- ◆ Informing Science + IT Education Conference, Finland, June 24-27, 2003  
<http://2003.InSITE.nu>

February 2003 issue of *Infocus* Newsletter provides links to various full text papers of conference proceedings in the area of library and information science at <http://www.infolibrarian.com/confpr.htm>. Some of these are given below:

- ◆ Digital Libraries, 1995: The Second Annual Conference on the Theory and Practice of Digital Libraries, 1995.  
<http://www.csdl.tamu.edu/DL95/contents.html>
- ◆ Special Libraries Association Conference: Putting Knowledge to Work, 2002.  
<http://www.sla.org/content/Events/conference/2002annual/confpap2002/papers2002conf.cfm>

### 3.5 Free Newspapers

The newspapers provide information about current events on various issues through news, articles and advertisements. Many major newspapers are also offering free electronic access to their readers. Some popular titles are:

- ◆ The Times of India  
<http://www.timesofindia.com>
- ◆ The Hindu  
[www.hinduonnet.com](http://www.hinduonnet.com)
- ◆ Korea Times  
<http://www.koreatimes.co.kr>
- ◆ Washington Post  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com>

### 3.6 Free Online Dictionaries

There are many free online dictionaries available on internet. Some of them are:

- ◆ Free On-line Dictionary of Computing  
<http://foldoc.doc.ic.ac.uk/foldoc/index.html>
- ◆ Internet Picture Dictionary  
<http://www.pdictionary.com/>
- ◆ Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science  
<http://www.wesu.edu/library/odlis.html>

### 3.7 Free Online Databases, Encyclopaedias

One of the major revolutions introduced by the internet is the vastly increased access to online information made possible via the world wide web. The range of information sources, in terms of both bibliographic and image databases and specialized websites on all subjects is vast<sup>6</sup>. There are many free online databases, encyclopaedias and dictionaries available on the web. For example:

- ◆ US Patent Database  
<http://www.uspto.gov/patft/index.html>
- ◆ ERIC Database  
<http://askeric.org/Eric/>

ERIC is the world's largest source of education information, with more than one million abstracts of documents and journal articles on education research and practice.

- ◆ Conservation Database  
<http://www.wcmc.org.uk/cis/index.html>
- ◆ Encyclopedia.com  
It is internet's premiere free encyclopaedia, that provides users with more than 57,000 frequently updated articles from the Columbia Encyclopaedia, Ed. 6. Each article is enhanced with links to articles of newspapers and magazines, pictures and maps.
- ◆ Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopaedia  
<http://www.wikipedia.org/>

Wikipedia is a multilingual project to create a complete and accurate free content encyclopaedia. It was started in January 2001 and are currently working on 168375 articles in the English version.

### 3.8 Free Virtual Libraries

Virtual Libraries offer a universe of information to the users 24 hours. The few virtual libraries are:

- ◆ Free Management Library  
<http://www.managementhelp.org/>
- ◆ Environmental Virtual Library  
<http://earthsystems.org/virtuallibrary/vhome.html>
- ◆ Virtual Library of Energy  
<http://www.crest.org/index.html>
- ◆ Virtual Library: Business and Economics  
<http://vlib.org/BusinessEconomics.html>
- ◆ Marketing Virtual Library  
<http://www.knowthis.com/>
- ◆ Education Virtual Library  
<http://www.byu.edu/ipt/vlibrary/>

## 4. FREE ONLINE SERVICES

Following types of services are available free to the internet users:

### 4.1 Free Online Sample Copies

Traditionally some publishers and organisations provide sample copies of their journals for business promotion but it is not possible for any publisher to provide free sample copy of their printed journals to all the libraries. With the advent of internet many publishers and organisations are making available the free sample copy of their

journals on their websites. Librarians and researchers can use these online sample copies before subscribing to them. For example :

- Sage Publications has launched an online sample copy service for all visitors to their website:  
[www.sagepub.co.uk](http://www.sagepub.co.uk).
- Taylor & Francis Group provides a sample copy of all its journal published at  
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/listings/t.html>

Some publishers and organisations provide a facility to fill-up a form on their website to get free sample copy of their printed journal. A sample copy of following journals can be get to fill-up a form available on their website:

- ◆ MIT Sloan Management Review  
<http://mit-smr.com/freeissue.html>
- ◆ Learned Publishing  
<http://www.alpsp.org/form/lpsamfm.htm>
- ◆ Managing Information  
<http://www.managinginformation.com/subscriptions.htm>

### 4.2 Free Tables of Contents Service

Many leading publishers and organisations do not provide sample copies of their journals but they provide table of contents of their journal/s on their website. For example:

- Elsevier Journals  
[www.elsevier.com/locate/contentsdirect](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/contentsdirect)
- Blackwell Journals  
<http://select.blackwellpublishers.co.uk>

### 4.3 Free Abstracts Services

Some of the publishers provide abstracts of the articles of their journals. For examples:

- Kluwer  
<http://www.wkap.nl/kaphtml.htm/TOCSEARCH>

Kluwer online search function allows searching of tables of contents and abstracts of articles contained in the Kluwer Online collection of over 250 journals.

#### 4.4 Journal of the Week Service

In addition to these free online e-journals, Journal of the Week is a wonderful service available on internet for librarians, researchers and teachers offered by Emerald. This service provides free full text access to the current and past volumes of two different journals every week. These two journals are available to access at <http://www.emeraldinsight.com/jotw/> for the period of one week from the given date. The journals which are available to free access via this service, cannot refer as free e-journals because they are available to access for a week only. Users who are interested to know titles of other forthcoming free full text journals, can click on 'forthcoming journals' and get list of journals with date of access. Users can also get details of each month's selected journals of the week via e-mail to join 'e-mail updated' list.

#### 4.5 Free Online Catalogues

Librarians have opportunity to access free online catalogues of publishers, suppliers and other libraries which greatly help in their acquisition process. Book selection can be enhanced by the ability to check online bibliographic databases. Now most of the publishers have online catalogues of their publications on their own website and some publishers also provide the facilities for online ordering of the publication.

- ◆ Amazon.com - Online Book Supplier  
[www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)
- ◆ Library of Congress - Library  
<http://catalog.loc.gov/>
- ◆ Prentice Hall of India Pvt. Ltd.- Publisher  
[www.phindia.com](http://www.phindia.com)
- ◆ Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Ltd. - Publisher  
[www.tatamcgrawhill.com](http://www.tatamcgrawhill.com)

#### 4.6 Free Electronic Notification Service by E-mail

Internet is also being used as an effective and fast medium of communication. Many publishers and organisations provide facilities to sign up for free e-mail notice; free

newsletters and news bulletins to inform about their services, products and publications. Libraries can also send list of new arrivals to their users and can receive recommendations for purchase from them. E-mail can be used for sending orders and reminders of books and journals. Librarians can join/subscribe various online listservs, discussion lists and newsgroups available on internet to discuss on related topics, query or problems with other library professionals in all over world and exchange of information, experiences, sources, and services.

### 5. FREE TRIAL OF ONLINE SOURCES

Several publishers and organizations offer free access to their online sources on trial basis for a limited period via internet. Libraries can avail this opportunity to enhance library and information services, and take decision whether these sources are useful or not for their users. For example

- Wilson Full Text  
<http://www.hwwilson.com/frtrials.htm>
- Macmillan Online Publishing  
<http://www.macmillanonline.net/trials/index.htm>

#### 5.1 Electronic Encyclopaedias

The following electronic encyclopaedias are available for a free trial on their websites:

- ◆ Encyclopaedia Britannica  
<http://www.eb.com/>
- ◆ Groliers Encyclopaedia  
<http://gme.grolier.com/>
- ◆ World Book Encyclopaedia  
<http://www.worldbook.com/>

#### 5.2 Emerald Journals

Emerald (<http://www.emeraldinsight.com>) publishes over 100 leading journals. Its electronic collection of journals is designed to meet the increasing demands for electronic access, particularly amongst academic libraries. Emerald offers following database:

- (a) Emerald Full Text
- (b) Emerald Management Reviews

- (c) Emerald Abstracts
- (d) Emerald Journals

Emerald offers free 30 days trial via internet for all their online journals and databases.

## CONCLUSION

When the costs of the books, journals and other reading materials are rapidly increasing and budgets are reducing in the libraries, internet is becoming a useful tool for accessing free information sources. Librarians should continue to discover free information sources and services using various search engines. There are many search engines and directories available to search information on internet such as Info seek (<http://infoseek.com>), Yahoo ([www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com)), Hotbot (<http://www.hotbot.com>), Excite (<http://www.excite.com/>), AltaVista (<http://www.altavista.digital.com/>), etc.

Librarians should maintain an index of online e-journals, magazines and other

information sources, which are freely available on the internet in the library to save space and money of the library and time of their users in searching the information.

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<b>Contributors:</b> <b>Sh Subhash Khode</b> , Deputy Librarian, Prestige Institute of Management and Research, 2 Education and Health Sector, Scheme 54, Indore, M.P. – 452010 e-mail: <a href="mailto:pimrindore@sancharnet.in">pimrindore@sancharnet.in</a> <b>Sh Divik Kumar</b> , Student, BE IIInd year, Shri Vaisnav Institute of Technology and Science, Indore.
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