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# Challenging the internet, the predator of libraries

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## **Challenging the internet, the predator of libraries**

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### **Abstract:**

The internet with its growing wings is slowly shadowing the library. It is true that the internet has brought a revolutionary change in the way information is dealt with, but the internet has also brought some perils with it. Throughout the ages, libraries have been considered as the bank of knowledge. But nowadays this faith has been challenged quite unreasonably. The evil side of the internet has manifested itself in the form of fake, false, manufactured news and information. At this juncture, it is important to burst the myth of the internet as the sole distinguished source of information and repose our trust in libraries to shun the malicious side of the internet from doing any harm to our society. In this piece, the areas where internet appears to be more attractive than library has been analyzed, and simultaneously, it has been shown that the library is still better than the internet in these areas. Further, some suggestions have been provided so that libraries can combat the current situation and regain their trust.

**Keywords:** Librarianship, Internet , Fake news, Changing library environment, Skilled librarian

### **Introduction:**

One can be sure that a person would like to use Google rather than visiting the library to find information. In the good old days, both academicians and non-academicians were largely dependent on libraries for gathering knowledge. But nowadays the trend is changing. The footfall in libraries is decreasing day by day and earlier library users are turning to the web for their everyday work. In such a situation, proponents of other profession have raised their voice questioning the need and existence of library and librarianship centering funding. It is true that the internet resources are growing rapidly, and poses a threat to the libraries. But, this calamity can be challenged by the skill of librarianship.

### **Areas of contestation between the Internet and Libraries:**

#### ***Excuse me!!! One will not get everything on internet:***

One can have deep knowledge on internet searching but during research work, the billions of web pages retrieved may not be able to provide accurate research data. Further, one might not get qualitative books which were written by famous scientists and philosophers belonging to the ancient period. Whereas, most of the research orientated libraries have the bound volume journal section, where all the old issues of journals are preserved. The aim of the library is to supply to “every reader his/her book” <sup>[1]</sup>. The internet is too young to provide one with century back data and information for research.

#### ***Actually the internet is not well-organized:***

With the growth of internet, it is facing a challenge of lack of proper indices. Sometimes, one can also be misguided by the internet. The library resources are fully organized either by digital or card catalogue. All the inter-related subjects are arranged in APUPA pattern <sup>[2]</sup>. Thus, every single query can be answered in a scientific way. The

internet search engines mostly answer queries by matching the keywords but a librarian tries to understand the right semantics of a query and only then he refers the right data and information. Further, a Librarian can also provide referral service, if required. Though, promises of semantic web are high, there is a long way to go. A classic proof of the dumbness of the internet has been provided in Figure 1 [3].



Figure 1: Misleading information provided by a popular search engine.

**Free, free and free!!! An absolutely wrong concept:**

By putting desired queries on internet search engines, one may retrieve billion of resource addresses. This might apparently make one happy. But the truth is that maximum web resources are paid subscription based service, and full access to them can be achieved after payment only. An alternative to avoid this is to check out the library's website to get the desired resources which are already subscribed by the library. One can further avail benefits of inter library loan services and referral services of a library. In India, Vikram Sarabhai Library, IIM Ahmedabad also started the e-book reader facility.

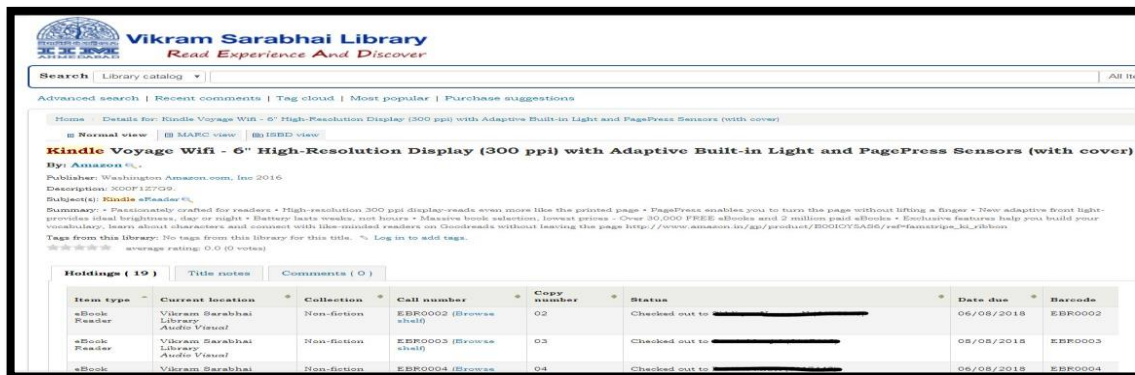


Figure 2: e-book reader and online catalogue

**Have you thought about the quality of the resources?**

The internet is full of lies, misinformation, partial and manufactured truth. Almost anyone who has a computer and an internet connection, without having proper expertise knowledge on a topic can put junk information on the web. Some websites mislead people in order to suck money and change opinions on controversial issue. Recent elections from all over the world are a testimonial to this fact. On the other hand, the acquisition process in library strictly follows some prescribed rules. All the available books are usually written by renowned writers and a library usually subscribes to peer-reviewed journals.

### ***What are the sources of information?***

When one writes a research paper, it is obvious to cite the sources. Sometimes it is very hard to locate the author of the internet resources and the funny thing is that the information taken from internet can change overnight. But, libraries can easily provide the source of the information they have provided.

### ***What about the depth of information provided on a topic?***

According to the search query that has been provided, one will get approx 30 to 40 websites on or related to the topic but most of these websites will provide the same information without much detail. Many user behavioral studies have proved that users hardly visit more than the first few links retrieved by a search engine <sup>[4]</sup>. Also, the retrieved results which are at the top may be promotional content. A lot of time is being spent on the internet for in-depth information on a topic. Dr. S. R. Ranganathan advocates to 'Save the time of the user' <sup>[1]</sup>. In a library, the resources may be less but the information is multifarious and more in depth. Further, a library can always supplement its services by participating in interlibrary loan services.

### ***Trained qualified professional to deal with queries:***

When one is searching any information on internet, he/she usually searches alone without any guidance. Whereas in libraries, skilled, knowledgeable librarian and other trained professionals will be always there to assist in locating the desired information. This is in conformance with Dr. S.R. Ranganathan's law "Every reader his/her book" <sup>[1]</sup>.

### ***Fake news:***

Fake news has been one of the most debated topics of recent years. On the internet, one can find websites dedicated to regularly publishing hoaxes and misleading information, which are abundantly shared mostly via social media. IFLA, a premier association of libraries has spearheaded the movement against fake news by publishing some guidelines to spot fake news <sup>[5]</sup>. They have charted out a path to eradicate the menace of fake news and are educating and advocating the importance of this mission.

### **Conclusion:**

The internet can not be the alternative to the library and librarianship but it can be an additional search tool. Library professionals should be smart and skillful enough to stop the internet from engulfing library and librarianship. Library orientation and outreach programs must be conducted. The increasing popularity of internet is also due to its availability. Libraries should start or revamp their book delivery services and try to reach the doorstep of its users. International organizations like IFLA, which are already on the forefront in the fight against fake news, should identify and accredit institutions all over the world as institutions of eminence in the fight against fake news. The initiatives of these institutions must be awarded and popularized widely. Governments must be pressurized to take steps against and penalize fake news manufacturers. Control of information flow has become the key to control a civilization. Though, the claim of libraries being the unquestionable sources of authentic information have been questioned, library and librarianship must work in tandem to regain and enforce it.

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