International Journal of Science and Research (IJSR)
ISSN: 2319-7064
Impact Factor 2025: 7.089

The Role of INFLIBNET in Promoting Library Networking and Resource Sharing in India: An Analytical Review

Deepamoni Das

Librarian, Kampur College, Kampur, District- Nagaon, State-Assam, India
Email: *deepamoni17[at]gmail.com*

Abstract: ***In today's digital environment, library networking and resource sharing play an important role in improving access to scholarly information. The INFLIBNET Centre has contributed significantly to connecting academic libraries across India through various programmes and services. This study examines its role in promoting library networking and resource sharing through a descriptive and analytical review of research literature, institutional reports and official documents. It focuses on major initiatives such as IndCat, SOUL, e-ShodhSindhu, N-LIST, Shodhganga, ShodhGangotri, INFED, VIDWAN and One Nation One Subscription (ONOS). The study highlights their contributions to library automation, access to electronic resources and scholarly communication. However, limited infrastructure, financial constraints and lack of user awareness remain major challenges. It emphasises the need for stronger institutional cooperation, improved digital facilities and regular training to make these services more effective.***

Keywords: INFLIBNET, Library Networking, Resource Sharing, Academic Libraries, Digital Repositories

1. Introduction

Libraries play an important role in collecting, organising, preserving and sharing knowledge. However, the growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has gradually transformed their functions. In addition to traditional services, libraries now manage digital information, provide access to electronic resources and support scholarly communication. At the same time, the increasing volume of research publications and the rising cost of information resources have made it difficult for individual libraries to meet all the information needs of their users. As a result, library networking and resource sharing have become essential for improving access to information and making effective use of available resources.

Library networking connects libraries through common technologies and information systems, enabling them to exchange bibliographic records, documents and services. Resource sharing allows institutions to use one another's collections to meet users' information needs. Such cooperation helps to reduce duplication and expenditure while widening access to scholarly resources.

In India, the need for a coordinated library network emerged to strengthen cooperation among university libraries and improve access to information. With this objective, the University Grants Commission (UGC) established the Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) initiative in 1988. It became an autonomous Inter-University Centre of the UGC in May 1996, with its headquarters at Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Since then, INFLIBNET has supported the development of academic libraries through automation, bibliographic databases, electronic resource sharing and digital repositories.

Over the years, the Centre has introduced several initiatives, including IndCat, SOUL, e-ShodhSindhu, N-LIST, Shodhganga, ShodhGangotri, INFED and VIDWAN. These programmes support library services, access to scholarly information and academic collaboration. The introduction of One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) has further expanded this effort by promoting coordinated access to scholarly publications across the country. In this context, the present study examines the major INFLIBNET initiatives and their contribution to library networking and resource sharing in India.

2. Review of Literature

Several researchers have studied library networking and resource sharing in India, particularly the role of INFLIBNET and library consortia. Their studies highlight the growing importance of cooperation among libraries and the use of digital information resources.

Cholin et al. (2003) discussed resource sharing in the digital environment and highlighted the role of INFLIBNET in connecting libraries through information technology. They stressed the need for a strong national information-sharing network.

Chand and Arora (2008) examined access to scholarly information through INFLIBNET in Indian higher education institutions. Their study showed the growing importance of electronic resources in supporting teaching, learning and research.

Arora and Trivedi (2010) discussed the services and future prospects of the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. They highlighted how collective subscriptions help institutions access a wider range of scholarly journals and databases at a lower cost.

Arora et al. (2013) examined the relationship between access to electronic resources and research output in member universities. They reported that the first 50 participating universities produced more than 75% additional research

articles during 2005–2009 compared with 2000–2004, indicating a positive association between electronic resource access and research productivity.

Chauhan and Mahajan (2013) examined library consortia in India, particularly UGC-INFONET, and discussed their role in improving cooperative access to electronic information resources.

Atchamamba et al. (2023) studied the awareness and use of Shodhganga among Andhra University users. They highlighted the importance of digital thesis repositories and the need to improve user awareness and guidance.

Yadagiri and Venkateshwarlu (2023) investigated the use of N-LIST resources in a Government Degree College in Telangana. Their study highlighted the usefulness of electronic resources in meeting the academic needs of college users.

Katagi and Kumbar (2024) examined the use of Shodhganga among social science research scholars at Karnatak University. They recognised its research value while pointing out difficulties related to internet connectivity and the availability of recent theses.

Pandey and Gautam (2025) assessed INFLIBNET initiatives in 13 central universities of North India. Their study highlighted the contribution of these initiatives to university library development and identified scope for improving their utilisation.

3. Research Gap

The existing studies provide useful information about various INFLIBNET programmes, but most of them examine individual initiatives or selected institutions. Less attention has been given to their combined contribution to library networking and resource sharing across India. There is therefore a need to understand how library automation, bibliographic networking, electronic resource sharing and scholarly communication work together to strengthen academic libraries. The introduction of One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) has further created new opportunities and challenges in this area. In this context, the present study examines the major INFLIBNET initiatives collectively, focusing on their contributions, limitations and future prospects.

4. Objectives of the Study

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1) To understand the origin, growth and major functions of the INFLIBNET Centre.
2) To explore the major initiatives introduced by INFLIBNET for promoting library networking and resource sharing.
3) To examine how INFLIBNET has contributed to library automation and the exchange of bibliographic information.
4) To understand the role of INFLIBNET in improving cooperative access to electronic information resources.
5) To assess how INFLIBNET's digital repositories support open access and the sharing of scholarly research.
6) To identify the major difficulties and challenges faced in the effective use of INFLIBNET services.
7) To suggest practical measures for further strengthening library networking and resource sharing across India.

5. Research Methodology

The present study follows a descriptive and analytical approach to examine the role of INFLIBNET in promoting library networking and resource sharing in India. It is mainly based on a review of existing literature and relevant documents. The study is qualitative in nature and draws information from research articles, official INFLIBNET publications, institutional reports and other relevant government documents.

For collecting the required information, relevant literature published between 2003 and 2026 was consulted, with greater attention given to developments that took place during 2015–2026. The materials were identified through sources such as Google Scholar, institutional repositories, academic journal websites and official INFLIBNET platforms. The search was carried out using terms such as "INFLIBNET and library networking", "resource sharing in India", "library consortia", "e-ShodhSindhu", "N-LIST", "Shodhganga" and "One Nation One Subscription".

The study considered publications that were directly related to INFLIBNET, academic library networking, electronic resource sharing and digital repositories. Duplicate entries, irrelevant publications and sources whose details could not be verified were left out of the review. The information collected from the selected sources was then examined and grouped into major themes, including library automation, bibliographic networking, electronic resource sharing, digital repositories and scholarly communication.

It is important to mention that the study is descriptive relies entirely on secondary sources. Therefore, the findings are based on the available literature and documentary evidence and should not be interpreted as the results of a nationwide assessment of INFLIBNET's impact.

6. Results

The following results are derived from the study-

6.1 Major Initiatives of INFLIBNET and Their Contributions

6.1.1 IndCat: Online Union Catalogue

IndCat is an online union catalogue developed by INFLIBNET to bring together bibliographic records of participating university libraries. It helps users search for books, theses and journals available in different institutions through a common platform. By making library collections easier to identify, IndCat promotes cooperation, resource sharing and better collection development while reducing unnecessary duplication.

6.1.2 SOUL: Software for University Libraries

Software for University Libraries (SOUL) is an integrated library management software developed by INFLIBNET. It supports major library activities such as acquisition, cataloguing, circulation, serial control and OPAC services. By managing these activities through a single system, SOUL simplifies routine library operations, improves record management and supports library automation.

6.1.3 e-ShodhSindhu: Consortium for Higher Education Electronic Resources

e-ShodhSindhu was launched in December 2015 by merging the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium, INDEST-AICTE Consortium and N-LIST. It provides member institutions with access to scholarly journals, databases and other electronic resources through collective subscriptions. This arrangement reduces the financial burden on individual libraries and supports teaching, learning and research.

6.1.4 N-LIST: National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content

N-LIST aims to improve access to electronic information resources, particularly for eligible colleges with limited financial resources. It provides students, teachers and researchers with access to selected e-journals and e-books. The initiative has helped college libraries extend their information services and support academic activities.

6.1.5 Shodhganga: Repository of Indian Theses and Dissertations

Shodhganga is a national digital repository maintained by INFLIBNET for collecting and preserving Indian electronic theses and dissertations. Participating universities can deposit doctoral theses, making them accessible to the research community through open access, subject to copyright and embargo conditions. It improves the visibility of Indian research, helps scholars identify previous studies and reduces unnecessary duplication of research.

6.1.6 ShodhGangotri: Repository of Research Synopses

ShodhGangotri provides access to research synopses and approved research proposals submitted by participating universities. It helps scholars identify research topics being pursued in different institutions and understand ongoing research activities. The platform also supports research planning and encourages academic cooperation.

6.1.7 INFED: Indian Access Management Federation

INFED provides a secure system for accessing subscribed electronic information resources. Through federated authentication, authorised users can access scholarly resources even outside their institutional campuses, subject to access permissions and publisher licensing conditions. This facility makes electronic resources more convenient for students, teachers and researchers working remotely.

6.1.8 VIDWAN: Expert Database and National Researcher Network

VIDWAN is a national database containing information about scientists, faculty members and other experts from academic and research institutions. It provides details of their qualifications, subject expertise and research interests. The platform helps users identify experts, establish academic contacts and develop opportunities for interdisciplinary research and collaboration.

6.1.9 One Nation One Subscription (ONOS)

One Nation One Subscription (ONOS) is a national initiative aimed at improving access to scholarly publications across India. It was approved by the Union Cabinet on 25 November 2024 and became operational on 1 January 2025, with INFLIBNET serving as its implementing agency. The initiative provides nationally coordinated access to scholarly publications for eligible government higher educational institutions and central government research institutions.

ONOS aims to make academic publications more widely accessible while reducing the need for separate subscription arrangements by individual institutions. According to the official ONOS portal, it covers more than 13,000 journal titles from 32 publishers. The initiative represents an important step towards strengthening India's national scholarly information infrastructure (Government of India, n.d.).

6.2 Analytical Discussion: Role of INFLIBNET in Library Networking and Resource Sharing

The contribution of INFLIBNET to library networking and resource sharing in India can be understood through the following major areas.

1) **Development of National Library Networking:** INFLIBNET has helped connect academic libraries through common databases, library software and digital platforms. These initiatives encourage cooperation among institutions and make the exchange of bibliographic information and library resources easier.
2) **Promotion of Cooperative Collection Development:** Through electronic resource consortia, INFLIBNET enables libraries to access scholarly journals and databases through collective subscriptions. This approach reduces the financial burden on individual institutions and helps avoid unnecessary duplication of resources.
3) **Improvement in Information Accessibility:** Initiatives such as IndCat, e-ShodhSindhu and N-LIST have made scholarly information more accessible to students, teachers and researchers. Shodhganga further extends access by providing a platform for discovering Indian theses and dissertations.
4) **Strengthening Scholarly Communication:** Digital repositories such as Shodhganga and ShodhGangotri increase the visibility of research work, while VIDWAN helps users to identify researchers and subject experts. Together, these platforms encourage knowledge sharing and academic collaboration.
5) **Reduction of Information Inequality:** INFLIBNET's resource-sharing programmes have created opportunities for institutions with limited financial resources to access scholarly publications. However, differences in internet connectivity, infrastructure and user awareness continue to affect the effective use of these services.
6) **Development of Remote Access Facilities:** INFED allows authorised users to access subscribed electronic resources beyond their institutional campuses. This facility is particularly useful for students, teachers and

researchers who need information while working remotely.

7) **Emergence of National-Level Resource Sharing:** The introduction of ONOS has extended cooperative access to scholarly publications towards a broader national framework. Its long-term success will depend on effective implementation, institutional participation, regular usage and financial sustainability.

Overall, INFLIBNET has made a valuable contribution to modernising academic libraries and improving access to scholarly information in India. However, developed infrastructure, professional training and greater user awareness are necessary to make its initiatives more effective.

6.3 Major Challenges

Despite its significant contributions, several challenges affect the effective utilisation of INFLIBNET services.

1) **Inadequate technological infrastructure:** Limited internet connectivity and computer facilities in some institutions restrict access to digital resources.
2) **Lack of user awareness:** Students, teachers and researchers may not be fully familiar with the services provided by INFLIBNET.
3) **Digital literacy:** Users and library professionals require regular training to search, retrieve and manage electronic information resources effectively.
4) **Financial constraints:** Subscription expenditure, infrastructure development and maintenance create challenges for long-term sustainability.
5) **Copyright and licensing restrictions:** Publisher agreements may restrict downloading, reproduction and redistribution of electronic materials.
6) **Technical interoperability:** Differences in library software, metadata standards and institutional systems may affect information exchange.
7) **Institutional participation:** Delays in updating records, onboarding institutions and promoting services may reduce the effectiveness of national programmes.
8) **Evaluation of services:** More systematic assessment is required to understand actual usage, user satisfaction and the cost-effectiveness of individual initiatives.

6.4 Suggestions for Improvement

The following measures may strengthen the role of INFLIBNET in promoting library networking and resource sharing:

1) Encourage greater participation of eligible academic and research institutions in INFLIBNET programmes.
2) Improve internet connectivity and digital infrastructure, particularly in rural and geographically remote institutions.
3) Organise regular user-awareness programmes, workshops and orientation sessions.
4) Provide continuous professional development opportunities for library professionals.
5) Strengthen inter-library loan and document delivery arrangements among academic libraries.
6) Promote standardised metadata practices and interoperability among library information systems.
7) Encourage universities to deposit eligible theses and research publications in digital repositories.
8) Improve the accessibility and user-friendliness of electronic resource platforms.
9) Ensure adequate financial and administrative support for sustainable library networking.
10) Conduct periodic assessments of resource usage, institutional participation and user satisfaction under programmes such as ONOS and e-ShodhSindhu.

6.5 Major Findings

The study identifies the following major findings:

1) INFLIBNET has established an important national framework for academic library networking and resource sharing.
2) IndCat supports bibliographic discovery, while SOUL promotes library automation.
3) e-ShodhSindhu and N-LIST facilitate cooperative access to scholarly electronic resources.
4) Shodhganga and ShodhGangotri strengthen research dissemination and access to academic information.
5) INFED supports secure and remote access to electronic resources.
6) VIDWAN contributes to researcher networking and academic collaboration.
7) ONOS represents an important development towards nationally coordinated access to scholarly publications.
8) Technological inequalities, limited awareness and institutional differences remain significant challenges.
9) Greater professional training, institutional participation and systematic evaluation are necessary to improve the utilisation of INFLIBNET services.

7. Limitations and Scope for Further Research

The present study is entirely based on secondary information and does not include data collected directly from librarians, students or researchers. It also does not examine the financial benefits of INFLIBNET programmes through a quantitative assessment or establish their direct impact on research activities. Future researchers may explore users' experiences and satisfaction with services such as N-LIST and e-ShodhSindhu, compare the use of INFLIBNET facilities across different types of universities and examine how ONOS is benefiting research institutions. Further, a regional study focusing on academic libraries in Northeast India could provide a better understanding of institutional participation, existing challenges and access to digital information resources.

8. Conclusion

Library networking and resource sharing have become essential for academic libraries in today's digital environment. The INFLIBNET Centre has played an important role in strengthening India's academic library system through various initiatives related to library automation, bibliographic databases, electronic resource sharing, digital repositories and remote access facilities.

Over the years, its programmes have helped libraries move beyond traditional resource sharing towards a more connected

digital information system. Initiatives such as IndCat, SOUL, e-ShodhSindhu, N-LIST, Shodhganga and INFED have made scholarly information more accessible to students, teachers and researchers across institutions. The introduction of ONOS has further strengthened this approach by promoting coordinated access to scholarly publications at the national level.

However, the success of these initiatives depends not only on technology but also on proper infrastructure, active institutional participation, adequate funding, professional skills and user awareness. Therefore, continuous technological improvement, stronger cooperation among institutions and regular evaluation of services are necessary to make INFLIBNET more effective. Such efforts will help to promote wider access to knowledge and support the growth of higher education and research in India.

References

[1] Arora, J., & Trivedi, K. (2010). UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium: Present services and future endeavours. *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology, 30*(2), 15–25.
[2] Arora, J., Trivedi, K. J., & Kembhavi, A. (2013). Impact of access to e-resources through the UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium on research output of member universities. *Current Science, 104*(3), 307–315.
[3] Atchamamba, L., Siva Prasad, G., & Sirra, S. D. (2023). User awareness and use of INFLIBNET Shodhganga Indian Electronic Theses and Dissertations Digital Repository at Andhra University, Visakhapatnam: A survey. *Pearl: A Journal of Library and Information Science, 17*(3), 118–122. https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6922.2023.00013.X
[4] Chand, P., & Arora, J. (2008). Access to scholarly communication in higher education in India: Trends in usage statistics via INFLIBNET. *Program: Electronic Library and Information Systems, 42*(4), 382–390. https://doi.org/10.1108/00330330810912061
[5] Chauhan, S. K., & Mahajan, P. (2013). Library consortia in India with special reference to UGC-INFONET Digital Library Consortium. *The International Information & Library Review, 45*(3–4), 127–138. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iilr.2013.09.002
[6] Cholin, V. S., Vijayakumar, J. K., & Murthy, T. A. V. (2003). Resource sharing in the digital environment in India: Role of INFLIBNET. *Library Hi Tech News, 20*(3). https://doi.org/10.1108/lhtn.2003.23920caf.001
[7] Government of India. (n.d.). *One Nation One Subscription*. https://www.onos.gov.in/
[8] INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *About INFLIBNET Centre*. https://www.inflibnet.ac.in/
[9] INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *e-ShodhSindhu: Consortium for higher education electronic resources*. https://ess.inflibnet.ac.in/
[10] INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *Shodhganga: A reservoir of Indian theses*. https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/
[11] Pandey, R. K., & Gautam, J. N. (2025). Assessment of the impact of INFLIBNET's initiative on libraries with special reference to central universities of North India. *Journal of Indian Library Association, 61*(1), 135–155. https://journal.ilaindia.net/index.php/lib/article/view/1094
[12] Yadagiri, S., & Venkateshwarlu, V. (2023). Awareness and use of N-LIST e-resources by the users of Government Degree College Sircilla Library, Rajanna Sircilla District, Telangana: A study. *Pearl: A Journal of Library and Information Science, 17*(4), 179–186. https://doi.org/10.5958/0975-6922.2023.00022.0