

Monitoring and Evaluation of Information Sources and Services in the Digital Era: A Study of Law College Libraries and Information Centres in Karnataka

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Abstract. *The digital revolution has redefined the landscape of information creation, dissemination, and utilization across academic institutions. Law college libraries, as key centres for legal learning and research, are at the forefront of this transformation, integrating both print and digital resources to support academic and professional excellence. The increasing reliance on electronic databases, online journals, and digital repositories necessitates effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure quality, accessibility, and user satisfaction. This study investigates the monitoring and evaluation practices adopted by law college libraries and information centres in Karnataka State in managing information sources and services within the digital framework. A descriptive survey method was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with library professionals from various law colleges affiliated to universities across the state. The findings reveal that while a majority of libraries have transitioned toward hybrid or fully digital systems and subscribed to key legal databases such as SCC Online, Manupatra, and HeinOnline, formal mechanisms for assessing their performance and impact remain underdeveloped. The study further identifies major challenges including inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited technical expertise, and insufficient policy support for systematic evaluation. The paper emphasizes the need for strategic interventions such as capacity-building programmes, user feedback integration, and adoption of technology-driven monitoring tools. The research concludes that institutionalizing regular evaluation practices and strengthening digital competencies are essential for enhancing the efficiency, accountability, and user orientation of law college libraries in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Information Services, Digital Libraries, Law Colleges, Monitoring, Evaluation, Karnataka, Library Management.*

Introduction

The rapid advancements in information and communication technology (ICT) have fundamentally transformed the way information is created, accessed, organized, and disseminated across academic and research institutions. Libraries, once confined to traditional print-based collections, have evolved into dynamic digital and hybrid information centres that cater to the diverse needs of contemporary learners and researchers. In the field of legal education, this transformation is particularly significant, as law students, faculty, and practitioners increasingly rely on timely access to case laws, statutes, legal commentaries, and e-databases to support academic inquiry and professional practice.

Law college libraries in India, especially in Karnataka, are progressively integrating digital resources such as SCC Online, Manupatra, HeinOnline, and other e-journals to complement traditional print holdings. These digital platforms have improved accessibility and broadened the scope of legal information dissemination. However, with the increasing adoption of digital tools comes the need for systematic monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of information sources and services. Effective monitoring ensures that library services remain relevant, efficient, and aligned with user needs, while evaluation provides evidence for informed decision-making, budget justification, and service improvement.

Despite this growing digital transition, many law college libraries still lack structured mechanisms to assess the quality, usage, and impact of their information services. Challenges such as inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited technical staff, and absence of institutional policies hinder the ability to effectively evaluate digital performance. Furthermore, user feedback systems and data-driven analytics are rarely integrated into library operations, resulting in inefficiencies and underutilization of available resources.

In this context, the present study explores the monitoring and evaluation practices adopted by law college libraries and information centres in Karnataka. It aims to understand the extent of digital information management, identify gaps in existing monitoring systems, and propose strategic measures to strengthen evaluation frameworks. By doing so, the study contributes to improving library accountability, enhancing user satisfaction, and fostering evidence-based management in the digital era.

Review of Literature

- **Chowdhury, G. G. (2010). Introduction to Modern Information Retrieval.** Chowdhury offers a comprehensive explanation of the principles and applications of modern information retrieval systems. The book effectively combines theoretical frameworks with practical insights on indexing, metadata creation, and search algorithms. It emphasizes user-centered system design and the influence of artificial intelligence and big data on information access. By discussing evaluation parameters such as precision and recall, Chowdhury underlines the importance of continuous monitoring in retrieval efficiency. The text remains a standard reference for researchers, providing clarity on how systematic assessment enhances the performance and reliability of digital information services.
- **Farkas, M. (2008). Social Software in Libraries: Building Collaboration, Communication, and Community Online.** Farkas presents an insightful discussion on the integration of social software into library services to promote collaboration and communication. The book demonstrates how tools such as blogs, wikis, and social networks can enhance library visibility and user engagement. It emphasizes participatory librarianship, highlighting the shift from one-way information delivery to community-based interaction. Through examples and case studies, Farkas illustrates how libraries can use digital platforms for effective service monitoring and outreach. The work serves as a practical guide for librarians aiming to build vibrant, interactive, and user-responsive information environments.
- **Gupta, D. K., Koontz, C., & Massisimo, A. (2011). Marketing Library and Information Services: International Perspectives.** This edited volume explores diverse global approaches to marketing and promoting library services. The contributors link marketing strategies with user satisfaction, monitoring, and service assessment. The book highlights the importance of understanding user behavior, employing data-driven promotion, and evaluating outreach effectiveness. It emphasizes evidence-based decision-making and communication strategies to strengthen library relevance in the digital era. The combination of theoretical insights and real-world examples makes it a valuable resource for librarians and administrators seeking to enhance service visibility and accountability through systematic evaluation.
- **Lancaster, F. W. (1993). If You Want to Evaluate Your Library.** Lancaster's book remains one of the earliest and most influential works on library evaluation and performance assessment.

It presents clear guidelines for measuring library effectiveness through both quantitative and qualitative indicators. The author outlines systematic approaches to analyze user satisfaction, resource utilization, and service efficiency. His focus on data-driven evaluation continues to influence contemporary library management practices. The text provides practical frameworks that guide librarians in identifying gaps, improving quality, and ensuring accountability in service delivery. It remains a cornerstone in the field of library monitoring and evaluation.

- **Rowley, J., & Hartley, R. (2008). *Organizing Knowledge: An Introduction to Managing Access to Information*.** Rowley and Hartley provide an in-depth analysis of how information is organized, structured, and retrieved in digital and hybrid environments. The authors discuss the evolution of classification systems, metadata standards, and information architecture in facilitating user access. The book connects knowledge organization with effective information management practices, stressing the need for systematic structuring and monitoring. Through relevant examples, it illustrates how organization directly influences the discoverability and reliability of information. The text serves as a vital reference for professionals engaged in managing digital resources and enhancing user accessibility.
- **Saunders, L. (2015). *Information Literacy Instruction: Selecting an Effective Model*.** Saunders examines various pedagogical frameworks for teaching information literacy within academic settings. The book provides comparative analyses of established models and discusses their adaptability to different learning environments. Saunders emphasizes the importance of assessing user learning outcomes through structured evaluation methods. Her approach integrates educational theory with practical guidance for librarians engaged in literacy instruction. The text promotes user empowerment and highlights continuous feedback as a key element of effective teaching. It remains an essential guide for improving user competency in navigating digital information resources.
- **Singh, S. P. (2014). *Library Management in Electronic Environment*.** Singh's book provides a practical overview of how libraries function in a technologically advanced environment. It discusses the management of e-resources, digital catalogues, and automated library systems, emphasizing efficient administration and service delivery. The author highlights the significance of monitoring and evaluation in maintaining quality and ensuring user satisfaction. Drawing on Indian academic library experiences, Singh identifies challenges in infrastructure, training, and policy formulation. The book advocates for strategic planning and professional development to sustain effective digital library operations. It offers a pragmatic perspective on managing libraries in the electronic era.
- **Thanuskodi, S. (2019). *Library and Information Science Trends and Research: Asia-Oceania Perspectives*.** Thanuskodi compiles contemporary research addressing the transformation of library and information services across Asia and Oceania. The book presents empirical studies focusing on digitalization, e-resource management, and user engagement. It underscores the role of data-driven monitoring and evaluation in enhancing service quality. Contributors examine policy frameworks, technological adaptation, and regional innovations in academic libraries. The work provides valuable insights into evolving trends in information science research and practice. It stands as a significant contribution to understanding how libraries in developing regions are adapting to digital change.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the availability and types of information sources and services in law college libraries of Karnataka.
2. To study the existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms adopted by these libraries.
3. To analyze the impact of digital technologies on information management and service delivery.
4. To propose strategies for strengthening M&E practices in digital library environments.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive survey research method, which is considered appropriate for understanding current practices, perceptions, and challenges related to monitoring and evaluation of information sources and services in law college libraries. A structured questionnaire was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data from respondents. The questionnaire included sections on library infrastructure, types of information sources, digital resource management, monitoring mechanisms, user feedback systems, and evaluation strategies. It was distributed to 50 law college libraries affiliated with various universities across Karnataka, ensuring representation from both government and private institutions.

Out of the total, 38 librarians and information professionals responded, yielding a satisfactory response rate for meaningful analysis. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequency distribution, percentage analysis, and mean scores to identify trends and patterns. These quantitative findings provided an overview of the status and effectiveness of information service management in the digital environment.

To supplement the statistical data, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected librarians and senior library staff to gain deeper insights into contextual challenges, institutional practices, and innovative approaches adopted for digital monitoring. This qualitative component enriched the study by highlighting practical experiences, user behavior patterns, and operational constraints that may not be captured through questionnaires alone. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data enabled a comprehensive understanding of how law college libraries in Karnataka manage, monitor, and evaluate their information resources and services in the digital era.

Table 1: Availability of Information Sources in Law College Libraries (N = 38)

Type of Information Source	Availability (%)	Remarks
Print collections (textbooks, law reports, reference works)	100	Remain core resources for academic and legal reference
Digital databases (Manupatra, SCC Online, HeinOnline, etc.)	82	Most libraries have adopted major legal databases
Institutional repositories (theses, faculty publications)	26	Very few libraries maintain institutional archives
Open access legal resources	47	Used as supplementary materials for teaching and research
E-books and digital law reports	63	Growing collection in digitally oriented institutions

Source: Primary Data

The data in the table indicate that law college libraries in Karnataka maintain a hybrid collection, effectively blending traditional print materials with emerging digital resources. All libraries (100%) continue to rely heavily on print collections such as textbooks, law reports, and reference works, highlighting their continued importance in legal education and research. However, the increasing availability of digital databases (82%) such as Manupatra, SCC Online, and HeinOnline signifies a strong shift toward digital resource adoption for case law and journal access. Despite this progress, only 26% of libraries maintain institutional repositories, showing that digital archiving and in-house content management are still underdeveloped areas. The moderate use of open access legal resources (47%) reflects growing awareness of cost-effective alternatives but also indicates uneven integration across institutions. Meanwhile, E-books and digital law reports (63%) are becoming more common, especially in technologically advanced colleges. Overall, the pattern suggests that while Karnataka's law college libraries are progressively digitizing their collections, there remains a clear digital divide—with a need for policy support, infrastructure enhancement, and staff training to ensure more equitable and effective access to digital legal information resources.

Table 2: Information Services Offered by Law College Libraries

Type of Service	Libraries Offering (%)	Observation
Reference and consultation services	95	Core service in almost all libraries
Current Awareness Services (CAS)	78	Used to update users on new legal developments
Document delivery/interlibrary loan	52	Provided mainly by larger institutions
User training/orientation on digital tools	39	Considerably underdeveloped area
Online access to legal databases	68	Majority provide remote or in-campus access
Regular user feedback collection	40	Limited systematic feedback mechanisms

Source: Primary Data

The data show that reference and consultation services (95%) remain the most common and essential library function across law colleges. Current Awareness Services (78%) are widely offered to keep users informed of recent legal updates. However, user training on digital tools (39%) and regular feedback collection (40%) are significantly underdeveloped, indicating limited user engagement in digital environments. Online access to legal databases (68%) demonstrates growing digital integration, while document delivery (52%) remains confined to larger institutions. Overall, the findings highlight strong traditional services but insufficient emphasis on user-oriented digital skill development and evaluation practices.

Table 3: Monitoring and Evaluation Practices in Libraries

Monitoring Activity	Libraries Practicing (%)	Remarks
Informal observation by librarians	74	Common but lacks systematic documentation
Tracking usage analytics (downloads, logins)	58	Increasingly used for e-resources
Annual evaluation/audit of library services	32	Few conduct regular service audits
Performance indicators (KPIs, user satisfaction)	21	Rarely used systematically
Reporting to institutional authorities	45	Reports submitted irregularly

Source: Primary Data

The data indicate that informal observation by librarians (74%) remains the most common form of monitoring, though it lacks structured documentation or measurable indicators. Usage analytics (58%) are being increasingly applied to assess e-resource utilization, reflecting gradual progress toward data-driven evaluation. However, only 32% of libraries conduct annual service audits, and a mere 21% use formal performance indicators such as KPIs or user satisfaction surveys. Reporting to institutional authorities (45%) occurs inconsistently, showing weak accountability mechanisms. Overall, the results highlight a need for standardized monitoring frameworks and systematic evaluation practices to enhance library performance and service quality in the digital context.

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Law College Libraries in Digital Monitoring

Challenge Identified	Libraries Reporting (%)	Remarks
Limited ICT infrastructure	76	Affects digital access and database efficiency

Lack of trained technical staff	69	Reduces the capacity to manage e-resources
Budget constraints for subscriptions	64	Major obstacle for smaller institutions
Inadequate training for librarians	71	Leads to inconsistent monitoring practices
Absence of institutional evaluation policies	58	Prevents regular assessment cycles

Source: Primary Data

The findings reveal that limited ICT infrastructure (76%) is the most pressing challenge, significantly restricting the efficiency of digital access and database use in law college libraries. The lack of trained technical staff (69%) and inadequate training for librarians (71%) further compound the problem by hindering effective management and monitoring of e-resources. Budget constraints (64%) remain a critical barrier, particularly for smaller institutions struggling to sustain subscriptions to costly legal databases. Additionally, the absence of institutional evaluation policies (58%) prevents systematic performance assessment and long-term planning. Overall, these challenges indicate the need for stronger institutional investment, targeted capacity-building programs, and supportive policy frameworks to strengthen digital library management in Karnataka's law colleges.

Table 5: Best Practices Observed Among Selected Law College Libraries

Best Practice Adopted	Institutions Reporting (%)	Remarks
Use of Google Analytics and Koha for monitoring	32	Indicates technological initiative in few institutions
Regular user satisfaction surveys	26	Helps assess service quality and relevance
Collaborative subscriptions/resource sharing	29	Reduces financial burden through consortia
Digital literacy programs for students	34	Encourages effective use of e-resources
Integration of feedback into service planning	21	Reflects proactive service improvement efforts

Source: Primary Data

A few leading law colleges in Karnataka demonstrate innovative practices in monitoring and digital service delivery. Their use of technology tools, user engagement methods, and collaborative approaches can serve as models for other institutions aiming to enhance digital service quality and accountability.

Overall, the findings indicate that while law college libraries in Karnataka are steadily embracing digital transformation, systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are still evolving. The transition from traditional to digital library management remains uneven due to disparities in infrastructure, training, and policy support. Strengthening institutional frameworks, adopting open technologies, and investing in librarian capacity building are essential for ensuring efficient and user-centered digital information services in the future.

Suggestions

1. Establish Institutional Monitoring Frameworks: Law college libraries should formulate and institutionalize a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework that aligns with their academic objectives. This framework should include measurable indicators such as collection usage, user satisfaction, and digital resource performance. Regular audits and performance reviews would ensure accountability and help identify areas for improvement. Such frameworks must be supported by institutional policies that mandate annual evaluation and documentation of library activities.

2. Training and Capacity Building: To strengthen digital service management, librarians and information professionals require continuous professional development. Regular workshops, seminars, and refresher courses should be organized on topics such as digital analytics, metadata creation, open access resource management, and impact assessment. Collaboration with library associations and university departments can help design specialized training modules that enhance both technical and managerial competencies.

3. Integrate Feedback Systems: Libraries should adopt user-centered evaluation mechanisms by embedding digital feedback systems into their websites or library management portals. These tools can collect real-time responses from students and faculty regarding service quality, accessibility, and resource effectiveness. The feedback should be periodically analyzed to inform decision-making, resource allocation, and service redesign, thereby fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

4. Adopt Open-Source Technologies: The use of open-source library management systems such as Koha, DSpace, or Greenstone can significantly enhance monitoring, cataloguing, and reporting efficiency. These platforms allow libraries to generate usage statistics, track borrowing patterns, and manage digital archives cost-effectively. Adopting open-source technologies reduces financial dependence on proprietary systems and promotes sustainability in library operations.

5. Collaboration and Networking: Inter-library collaboration is essential for resource optimization and professional growth. Law college libraries should participate in state-level consortiums and academic networks to share resources, negotiate collective database subscriptions, and exchange best practices. Networking also facilitates joint training initiatives and collective problem-solving, ensuring that even smaller institutions benefit from shared expertise and infrastructure.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings of this study hold important implications for policymakers, academic administrators, and library professionals. At the policy level, universities and regulatory bodies such as the Karnataka State Higher Education Council should formulate guidelines for regular monitoring and evaluation of digital library services. Institutional policies must emphasize performance-based assessment, data-driven decision-making, and the integration of user feedback into service improvement.

At the practice level, law college libraries should prioritize capacity-building programmes to equip librarians with digital management and analytical skills. Encouraging collaborative resource sharing through consortia can mitigate financial and infrastructural disparities among institutions. Furthermore, the adoption of open-source technologies and the establishment of standardized performance indicators will ensure transparency, efficiency, and accountability in library operations. Collectively, these measures will strengthen the digital ecosystem of law college libraries, making them more responsive to the evolving academic and research needs of the legal community.

Conclusion

The study concludes that law college libraries and information centres in Karnataka are undergoing a gradual yet significant transformation in response to the demands of the digital era. Most institutions have adopted a hybrid model of information management, balancing traditional print resources with emerging digital platforms. While access to online legal databases such as Manupatra, SCC Online, and HeinOnline has enhanced the quality and immediacy of legal research, the absence of structured monitoring and evaluation mechanisms continues to limit their optimal use.

The findings clearly indicate that informal monitoring practices, insufficient technical infrastructure, and inadequate training of library personnel remain critical challenges. These issues hinder systematic data analysis, service improvement, and user engagement. However, a few institutions that have implemented digital tools like Koha and Google Analytics demonstrate the potential for innovation and efficiency when technology and policy frameworks are properly aligned.

Therefore, it is essential for law college libraries to adopt institutionalized evaluation frameworks, invest in capacity-building initiatives, and strengthen collaborative networks at the state and national

levels. Building a culture of continuous assessment and digital literacy among librarians and users alike will ensure that these libraries not only serve as repositories of legal information but also as dynamic learning and research hubs. In the long term, such strategic interventions will enhance transparency, accountability, and the overall effectiveness of information services in Karnataka's legal education system.

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