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Ahmedabad's walled city holds India's rare holy treasures

In a quaint corner in Pankor Naka in the Walled City is one of the few libraries in the country which is treasure trove of medieval Persian and Arabic documents and religious texts. This is Hazarat Pir Mohammed Shah Library. In its collection lies some of the rarest Hindu Sanskrit scriptures and portions of Hindu epics, like the Gita, translated into Persian. During the medieval times, most of the translation works in Gujarat were done in Vadnagar in Mehsana — the birth place of Prime Minister Narendra Modi — and Nandol village in Dehgam taluka in Ahmedabad district by Brahmin community who were well versed with Persian and Sanskrit.

For instance, Pandit Jivandas, a well known Sanskrit scholar of Vadnagar, had translated portions of the Gita teachings into Persian almost 320 years ago. These pages have survived and are present in the library that has also one of two copies of 'Karantilaka' in Persian. The Sanskrit text that delves in great details into the principles of Indian astrology and astronomy was originally written by Pandit Baijnath and was translated into Persian in the 11th century by the famous medieval Islamic astronomer and astrologer Al-Biruni during his India visit. The translated version of the book is called Ghurrat-ul-Zizat.

"Though Al-Biruni translated Karantilaka in Allahabad, several handwritten copies of the Persian translation were sent to Vadnagar and Dehgam which were then one of the main Sankrit study centres of the country. The library today has among the last surviving copies of the text, the other being in Pakistan," says Professor Mohidduin Bombaywala. Most of these rare Persian documents were translated and deciphered by the former chief epigraphist of ASI Dr Z A Desai who also organized the library before he died in 2002.

"WE LOVE THE LIBRARY, BUT WE LIVE ON THE WEB"

Survey: How Academic Library Users View Online Resources and Services

This report details the findings of a survey of users at seven UK academic libraries. Over 4,000 responses were collected between November 2014 and February 2015. Both the survey and report are sponsored by Innovative and managed by Sero Consulting.

Findings:

The study found that user behaviours and attitudes are increasingly uniform and that the 'digital-native' is no longer a subset of library users. Although most access online library resources in the library, users see access from anywhere – on any device – as the 'most important' consideration.

The results suggest that libraries can meet the needs of their users by including all manner of library resources – including multimedia – in a single, effective discovery source; providing more direct workflows geared toward electronic research; enabling social features; and empowering users with apps. In addition, the report suggests libraries should seize the opportunity to engage users by surfacing their data on the greater web (through linked data, for example).

'User behaviour and the larger technology system are rapidly changing, so the library community has to 'take the pulse' of its user base in order to sustain a high level of service. We'd like to salute the staff at these academic libraries for their efforts and participation in the study.'

The report includes results from survey findings at: University of Glasgow; University of Hull; University of Keele; London South Bank University; Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh; Queen's University, Belfast; and the Wellcome Library.

Source

| https://www.iii.com/sites/default/files/UK-Survey-Report-July-2015.pdf?submissionGuid=a43fea70-cc07-4bf2-b168-3ea4b8d7a7d6

JAIN E-Library

To protect, preserve, and disseminate the ancient and contemporary Jain literature, the Jain Education International organization in cooperation with Shri Mahavir Ardhana Kendra, Koba Ahmedabad; and Shri Prachya Vidyapith, Sajapur, India has launched a Jain eLibrary project. Under this project the Jain literature is converted electronically into eBooks (pdf or other formatted files) or other electronic media and made available via the website to the readers who are interested in the Jain religion and its philosophy.

The Jain eLibrary website is an online collection of Jain scriptures, Jain manuscripts, Jain dictionary, Jain encyclopedia, Jain articles, Jain magazines, and ancient and contemporary Jain books in English, Hindi, Gujarati, and other languages. It contains Shvetämbar Ägams, Digambar Shästras, Four Anuyogas, Commentary literature, Präkrit and Sanskrut literature, and ancient and modern literature representing all aspects of Jainism. It also includes the literature of various Jain sects. Catalogues of Jain manuscripts of various Jain libraries add to the diversity of this collection.

The eLibrary comprises of a vast collection of literature on Jain principles, such as Ahimsa, compassion, karma philosophy, and Anekäntaväda. It also provides Jain educational material for Jain Päthashälä or Sunday school.

While the readers discover the richness and spirituality of our ancient Jain tradition it also helps the authors and publishers to reach the new audience.

The website is freely accessible for all users and the registered users can freely download any material. No commercial use and freely distribution to the general public is permitted. The entire project is financed through contribution from the Jain communities of North America, India, and other parts of the world. None of the organizations and individuals benefit financially from the websites or from the readers.

A rare kind of book club

With 50,000 members, the Rare Book Society of India is more than a digital library it's also a forum for discussion and debate

Interest in Indian history is near universal, says Subbiah Yadalam, the founder of the Rare Book Society of India.

Within minutes of his posting details about a new (old) book on the society's vibrant, 50,000-member community page on Facebook, there are views and `likes' from places flung as far apart as Uganda, the US and Slovenia, says Yadalam, who started the society's website and Facebook page to connect with bibliophiles especially those who share his passion for rare, out-of print books from all over the world. "There are viewers from 72 countries at any given time," says the 52-year-old founder, who is as passionate about the power of sharing and social media as he is about rare books; his goal to make these books accessible to everyone through digitization and free downloads.

The obsession with rare books started a decade ago when Yadalam came across a book, The Castes and Tribes of Southern India, a scholarly and encyclopaedic tome by Edgar Thurston and Kadambi Rangachari published in 1909, at his club library. He found it fascinating and wanted to buy it from the club, which refused to sell it. But Yadalam had tasted blood and started hunting down old, rare titles at bookstores, auctions and online, starting with bibliophile KK Murthy's Select, where serendipity a quality abundant in that most gloriously anarchic of bookstores played a huge role in helping him start his collection.

Today, while his personal collection of rare books on Indian history numbers around 175 titles, Yadalam also sources digitized versions from websites such as Gutenberg.org and

Archive.org. The focus of his collection is books on Indian history, and he has created a digital library of hundreds of rare, out-of-copyright books on the subject, meticulously digitized to retain the look and feel of the original volume.

Not just that, they are curated and tagged by subject; so if you are looking for books under the subject, say, `Pallava Expansion', you would find posts on the website related to the topic along with URLs, using which you can download PDF versions of the books. There's also an option to read them online.

"Many of these books could be considered as history, opinion or plain propaganda, but the aim is to show that there is no wasteful source in the study of history, there is only an added perspective," says Yadalam. He's proud of the fact that what started off as a group for rare book collectors has been transformed into a forum for history buffs, scholars and "the silent curious."

 "It is time for us to look at the reference sections of books and go read those books ourselves. Research empowers you, it makes you appreciate the fact that there are always many versions to the truth; that there is often no one `definitive version'. We need a society that can see layers and nuances, and this will only happen when we familiarize ourselves with the many versions

of history," he says.

Source | Times of India | 30 July 2015

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Google App now offers instant visual translations in 27 languages

If you have a smartphone camera and need to translate printed text from English to Hindi, all you need to do is open the Google Translate App, click on the camera, and point it at the text. Bingo! Your job is done.

The upgraded version of the app, announced by Google on Thursday, will now allow instant visual translations of printed text in 27 languages, including Hindi.

"It could be anything — a street sign, a hoarding, an ingredient list, an instruction manual, or text from a newspaper or book. Users will instantly see the text transform live on their screens into their preferred language," Google said in statement, adding that no internet connection or cell phone data is required.

The company said the new features come from extensive research to develop so-called "convolutional neural networks", or using artificial intelligence to recognise letters and words and filter out backgrounds. Google said it is updating the app by expanding the instant visual translation to 20 additional languages (seven are already available), and making real-time voice translations faster and

smoother.

The original seven languages are English, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish. On Thursday, Google added 20 more. Also users can now translate English printed text into Hindi and Thai.

Source | Business Line | 31 July 2015

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Library selected as regional centre to preserve heritage

Qatar National Library will represent 25 countries in the Middle East and North Africa where Arabic is one of the official languages.

Doha: The International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) has selected Qatar National Library (QNL), a member of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), as the Regional Arabic Speaking Preservation and Conservation Centre (PAC).

The announcement came during the 81st IFLA general conference and assembly in Cape Town, South Africa, earlier this month.

IFLA has 13 PACs worldwide. The PAC strategic programme aims to ensure published and unpublished library and archive materials in all formats are preserved in accessible form for as long as possible.

Dr Joachim Gierlichs, Associate Director, Special Collections and Archives, QNL, said: "The library is proud to become the first PAC. This comes as a result of its continuous efforts to preserve Qatari and regional heritage."

Heritage Collection is a contribution to Qatar's cultural landscape.

Its early Arabic printing section contains some of the first Arabic books printed on presses in Shweir (Lebanon), Aleppo, Mosul, Bulaq and Hijaz.

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UP colleges to get centralized digital library facility

Lucknow: All the 639 colleges affiliated with the Uttar Pradesh Technical University (UPTU) will soon be connected to a central digital library, an official said on Saturday. Orders have already been issued by the varsity vice chancellor for preparations of a detailed project report for the same, the official said.

The newly appointed Vice Chancellor Vinay Pathak said that over four lakh students study in 639 colleges associated with the UPTU and it has been found that many colleges are unable to afford expensive research journals, modules and e-books.This prompted the university to establish a centralized digital library, he added.

The digitized library would be based on the vision of late former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam after whose name the new campus of the varsity will soon be named.Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav has already announced that a memorial will also be constructed in memory of the late president.

Singapore firm donates $10 mn for Nalanda library

A Singapore company has donated $10 million to build the central library in the newly revived Nalanda International University, a varsity official said on Tuesday.

Vice Chancellor Gopa Sabharwal said a five-member team of a Singapore-based RSP construction company visited the university site in connection with the construction of the proposed library. Spread over 446 acres, the university's new campus would come up in Nalanda district's Rajgir city.

"The library's design will be made by RSP company and Ahmedabad-based Vastushilp Consultant," she said.

Former Singapore foreign minister George Yeo is the new chancellor of the university. Shabharwal said a tripatrite MoU was signed in Rajgir on Monday by the RSP company, Vastushilp Consultant and Nalanda University for the design and construction of the library. She said the construction of the new campus would start by this year-end.

The campus is 12 km from the site, where the original Nalanda University, an international centre for learning in ancient times, once stood.

In the 12th century, it was razed by an invading army led by Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general of Qutbuddin Aibak. The university was established in the 5th century during the reign of the Gupta dynasty.

According to university officials, the entire university campus would be built by 2020. The cental government has sanctioned Rs.2,700 crore for the university.

Forthcoming Events

18th National Convention on Knowledge, Library and Information Networking - NACLIN 2015

Time: November 24, 2015 to November 26, 2015

Location: Gulbarga University, Kalaburagi, Karnataka

Website or Map: http://www.naclin.org/

Organized By: DELNET in collaboration with Gulbarga University Library, Gulbarga

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