

DIGITAL RESEARCH PLATFORM FOR RURAL ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Dr. Mohan S. Ratkanthiwar

Librarian (Professor)

Yadaorao Poshattiwar Arts College

Talodhi (Balapur), Dist. Chandrapur

Email : mohanratkanthiwar@gmail.com

Mob. No. : 9371461267

Crossref DOI -

Abstract :

Digital Research Platforms can enhance the research support services in rural academic libraries by providing an integrated system of scholarly resources, institutional repositories, researcher profiles, research tools and scholarly communication services. Rural libraries have to deal with limited finances, connectivity, infrastructure and technological capabilities. A cost-effective and mobile-friendly Digital Research Platform can help in accessing digital and open-access resources. It can help in developing digital research competencies and enhancing research visibility. It can also connect users to the existing national initiatives like Shodhganga, ShodhGangotri, VIDWAN, IRINS, ShodhShuddhi, N-LIST and e-ShodhSindhu. This paper is intended to present a practical model for utilizing Digital Research Platforms to mitigate the digital divide and convert rural academic libraries into research-support centres.

Keywords : Digital Research Platform, Rural Academic Libraries, Research Support, Digital Divide, Open Access, Scholarly Communication

Introduction :

Academic libraries play a vital role in providing research and education support. Traditionally, library services were mainly provided by means of printed books, journals, references and other physical resources. The advent of information and communication technologies has turned library services into digital and networked systems.

Modern researchers require not just access to electronic journals and databases, but also digital repositories, research data, researcher profiles, scholarly communication facilities and research support services.

But rural academic libraries can face difficulties in developing such infrastructure owing to lack of financial resources, poor connectivity, technical capabilities and specialized research support services. All this can result in digital and knowledge gap between well-



endowed and rural libraries.

A Digital Research Platform for Rural Academic Libraries can offer an affordable solution to this problem. Instead of creating a new research ecosystem, the platform can connect the existing institutional resources with open-access resources and digital initiatives at national level.

Concept of Digital Research Platform :

A Digital Research Platform can be defined as an integrated digital system that offers scholarly information resources, research tools, researcher information, repositories and research support services throughout the research process.

A Digital Research Platform is different from the traditional digital library, as it serves purposes beyond information provision. It can support researchers during the whole research process starting with literature review and finishing with research dissemination and visibility.

The main functions of the Digital Research Platform can be as follows:

- Digital resource discovery
- Literature searching
- Researcher profiles
- Institutional repositories
- Research data support
- Research alerts
- Research integrity guidance
- Scholarly communication
- Research collaboration
- Research visibility and analytics

For a rural academic library, the Digital Research Platform can be used as a one-stop shop for research-support services.

Need for a Digital Research Platform in Rural Academic Libraries :

1. Bridging the Digital Divide :

Digital divide is a significant issue for rural higher education institutions due to the disparities in terms of connectivity, infrastructure, financial resources, and digital literacy which could impact the availability of scholarly information. Digital Research Platform can contribute to bridging the digital divide through offering organized access to digital and open-access information.



2. Limited Financial Resources :

Due to the limited budget, many rural colleges find it difficult to subscribe to various scholarly databases on their own. A platform would allow better utilization of open-access information, institution-level subscriptions, library consortia, and nation-wide services.

3. Research Discovery :

For literature review, preparing a proposal and publishing scholarly articles, researchers need to access recent scholarly literature.

4. Development of Digital Research Skills :

Digital resources become useful only if the researcher knows how to search for, evaluate, organize, and ethically use information.

5. Increased Research Visibility :

The research carried out in rural institutions may lack visibility because it is not systematically organized and disseminated. Institutional repositories and researcher profiles would improve the visibility of research outputs.

Major Components of the Digital Research Platform :

1. Digital Research Resource Portal :

The proposed platform needs to provide common entry to:

- E-books
- E-journals
- Research databases
- Open-access journals
- Theses and dissertations
- Research reports
- Government publications
- Institutional publications

The digital resources could be organized by discipline or by user category for effective discovery.

2. Institutional Repository :

Institutional Repository should be one of the key components. An institutional repository can allow preserving and disseminating the following types of scholarly information:



- Faculty research papers
- Student research projects
- Dissertations
- Conference papers
- Seminar proceedings
- Research reports
- Institutional publications

The Indian "Shodhganga" initiative represents a valuable example of digital preservation and dissemination of theses and dissertations on the national level. INFLIBNET lists Shodhganga and Institutional Repository Services among major digital initiatives (INFLIBNET Centre, n.d.).

This is consistent with the expectations of academic integrity regulations by the UGC also contain provisions regarding institutional repositories and the submission of theses and dissertations to relevant institutional repositories (University Grants Commission, 2018).

3. Researcher Profiles :

The platform can provide the following information about the researcher:

- Name and designation
- Department
- Research interests
- Publications
- Research projects
- Awards
- Conferences
- Research identifiers

For instance, "VIDWAN and IRINS" represent major research-related services. The IRINS allows managing the research information and creating scholar profiles, while VIDWAN provides information about experts and scholars (INFLIBNET Centre, n.d.).

4. Literature Search and Research Discovery :

The platform can provide the following:

- Advanced literature search
- Citation discovery
- Saved searches
- Research alerts
- Subject-wise research guides
- Thesis and dissertation discovery
- Institutional research discovery



This saves researchers time and improve the effectiveness of literature search activity.

5. Research Skills and Digital Literacy :

A special section devoted to research support can provide tutorials on:

- Literature search
- Database search
- Citation and referencing
- Reference management tools
- Academic writing
- Research methodology
- Research ethics
- Plagiarism awareness
- Open-access publishing

Regular training programmes can be conducted by academic librarians to develop research competences of students and faculty.

6. Research Integrity and Plagiarism Support :

Research integrity is an important component of the digital research platform. The University Grants Commission laid down Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions Regulations, 2018 as a regulatory framework for promoting academic integrity and preventing plagiarism in higher education institutions (University Grants Commission, 2018).

The Digital Research Platform can also provide access to institutional research integrity policies, academic writing guide, citations and referencing guidelines, and appropriate plagiarism detection service.

7. Research Alerts :

Researchers can receive alerts concerning the following:

- New journal articles
- Newly available theses
- Conferences
- Funding opportunities
- New research databases
- Subject-related developments

8. Mobile Accessibility :

Mobile accessibility is especially important for rural areas. The responsive platform



working effectively on smartphones can provide increased access to research resources outside the physical library.

Mobile-friendly approach corresponds to the wider goal of increasing open-science knowledge and infrastructure availability to diverse research communities (UNESCO, 2021).

Indian Digital Research Ecosystem :

India has built a digital research-support ecosystem with the help of the Information and Library Network Centre or INFLIBNET.

INFLIBNET lists projects such as Shodhganga, ShodhGangotri, e-ShodhSindhu N-LIST VIDWAN, IRINS, ShodhShuddhi, Shodh-Chakra and the Institutional Repository Services.

These initiatives help at every stage of the research process.

- **Shodhganga** gives you access to theses and dissertations.
- **ShodhGangotri** offers details about research synopses.
- **VIDWAN** helps you find experts and researchers.
- **IRINS** manages research information.
- **ShodhShuddhi** helps detect plagiarism.
- **E-shodhsindhu** give you access, to scholarly electronic resources.

So, a rural academic library does not have to build every research service on its own. Its Digital Research Platform can act as an integration and access layer linking users to these national resources.

Role of the Rural Academic Librarian :

According to UNESCO, training and capacity building are among the components of open science implementation. Digital Research Platform provides an opportunity for the academic librarian to move away from the role of a provider of information to that of a research support professional.

The academic librarian could play a role of:

- Digital Information Manager
- Research Consultant
- Digital Literacy Trainer
- Institutional Repository Manager
- Scholarly Communication Facilitator
- Research Information Navigator

The academic librarian could organize workshops on databases, open access sources,



citation management, academic writing and research methodology.

Benefits of the Digital Research Platform :

1. Student Benefits :

- Ready access to scholarly information
- Better search skills for literature
- The ability to use theses and dissertations
- Achieving better academic writing
- Higher level of awareness about digital research technologies

2. Benefits for Faculty Members :

- Better literature searches
- Research alerts
- Faculty profiles
- Publications assistance
- Increased research visibility

3. Benefits for the Organization :

- Consolidation of research information
- Storage of the organization's research
- More efficient use of digital resources
- Research visibility increase
- Research culture improvement

4. Benefits for Rural Communities :

This platform can enable rural communities to better disseminate academic information and take an active part in the research community.

Challenges :

The implementation of a Digital Research Platform may face several challenges.

1. Internet Connectivity :

Reliable internet connectivity is essential for digital research services. Reliable Internet connectivity and bandwidth are important elements of open-science infrastructure.

2. Financial Limitations :

Institutions may have limited funds for hardware, software, storage, maintenance and



staff development.

3. Technical Expertise :

Technical support is required for repository management, authentication, interoperability, security and digital preservation.

4. Digital Literacy :

Students and faculty members may require training to use advanced digital research services effectively.

5. Sustainability :

Digital platforms require continuous maintenance, updating, security monitoring and staff training.

Impact on Rural Academic Library :

The impact can be particularly significant in rural academic libraries. A Digital Research Platform can compensate, to some extent, for limitations in physical collections and specialized research infrastructure.

For rural institutions, the platform can provide:

- Access to national and international scholarly resources
- Open-access research literature
- Digital theses and dissertations
- Online research training
- Researcher networking
- Institutional repository services
- Remote research assistance
- Mobile access

This can help rural academic libraries participate more actively in the wider research ecosystem.

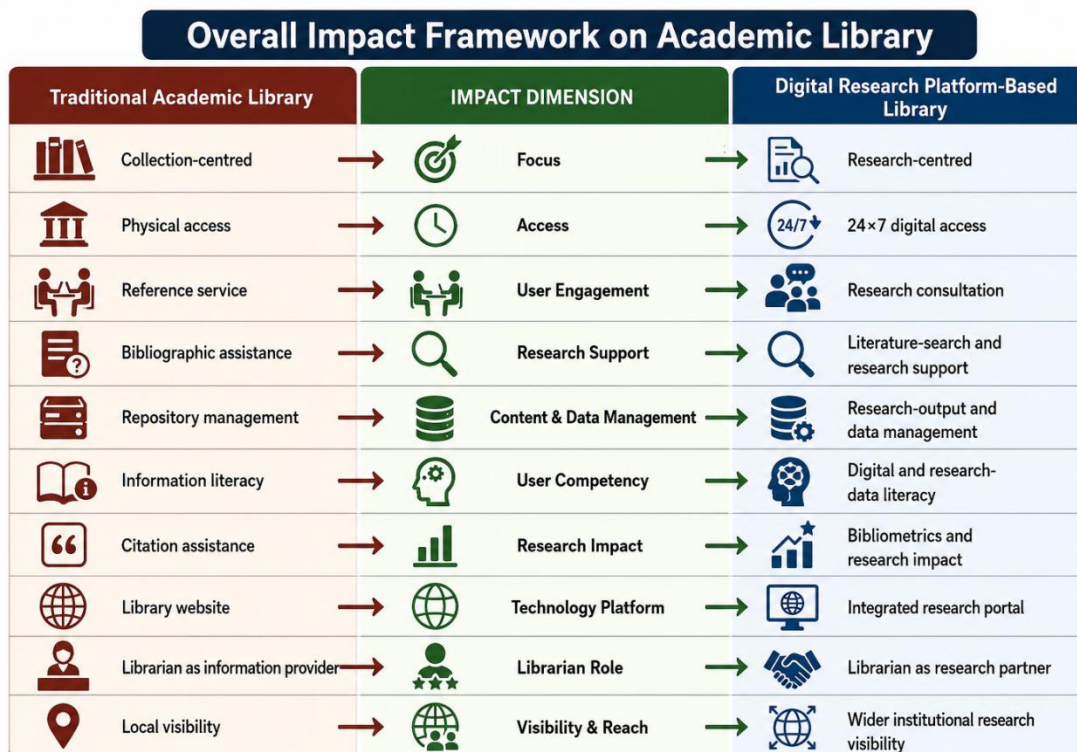
10. Overall Impact Framework on Academic Library :

The impact of the Digital Research Platform on rural academic libraries can be summarized as follows:

Traditional Academic Library	Digital Research Platform-Based Library
Collection-centred	Research-centred
Physical access	24×7 digital access



Reference service	Research consultation
Bibliographic assistance	Literature-search and research support
Repository management	Research-output and data management
Information literacy	Digital and research-data literacy
Citation assistance	Bibliometrics and research impact
Library website	Integrated research portal
Librarian as information provider	Librarian as research partner
Local visibility	Wider institutional research visibility



This transformation does not mean that traditional library services become irrelevant. Instead, existing professional knowledge is extended into new digital and research-support environments.

Conclusion :

A Digital Research Platform can transform rural academic libraries from traditional information centres into integrated research-support centres. By connecting digital resources, repositories, researcher profiles, research-support services and national digital initiatives, it can improve access to scholarly information, research visibility and digital research skills. Its successful implementation requires affordable technology, reliable connectivity, trained librarians, institutional support and sustainable policies. A low-cost and mobile-friendly platform can therefore help bridge the digital divide and create an inclusive research environment for students and researchers in rural higher education institutions.

References :



- Corral, S., Kennan, M. A., & Afzal, W. (2013). Bibliometrics and research data management services: Emerging trends in library support for research. *Library Trends*, 61(3), 636–674. <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2013.0005>
- Cox, A. M., Kennan, M. A., Lyon, E. J., & Pinfield, S. (2019). Maturing research data services and the transformation of academic libraries. *Journal of Documentation*, 75(6), 1432–1462. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JD-12-2018-0211>
- Ducas, A., Michaud-Oustry, N., & Speare, M. (2020). Reinventing ourselves: New roles and competencies of academic librarians in Canada. *College & Research Libraries*, 81(1), 43–65.
- Haq, A., & Jan, R. (2025). Assessing research support services in academic libraries: A systematic literature review. *Annals of Library and Information Studies*, 72(3), 280–297. <https://doi.org/10.56042/alis.v72i3.18904>
- Ho, R. C. Y., Wong, S. N., Chia, P., Tang, C., & Ng, M. T. T. (2026). Research data management services in academic libraries to support the research data life cycle: A systematic review. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 77(1), 272–300. <https://doi.org/10.1002/asi.70008>
- INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *Downloads*. Information and Library Network Centre. [INFLIBNET Centre – Downloads](#)
- INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *IRINS: Indian Research Information Network System*. Information and Library Network Centre.
- INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *ShodhGanga: A reservoir of Indian theses*. Information and Library Network Centre.
- INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *ShodhShuddhi*. Information and Library Network Centre.
- INFLIBNET Centre. (n.d.). *VIDWAN: Expert database and national research network*. Information and Library Network Centre.
- Research Information Network. (2010). *If you build it, will they come? How researchers perceive and use web 2.0*. Research Information Network.
- Sheikh, A., Malik, A., & Adnan, R. (2025). Evolution of research data management in academic libraries: A review of the literature. *The Bottom Line*, 38(2), 157–176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/02666669231157405>
- Singh, B. P., & Madhusudhan, M. (2023). ICT based research support services in academic libraries: A new frontier to enhancing research integrity and productivity. *Journal of Knowledge & Communication Management*, 12(2), 128–149. <https://doi.org/10.5958/2277-7946.2022.00010.9>
- Singh, R. K., Bharti, S., & Madalli, D. P. (2022). Evaluation of research data management (RDM) services in academic libraries of India: A triangulation approach. *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 48(5), 102586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acalib.2022.102586>
- Singh, R. K., Raj, R., & Madalli, D. P. (2025). Investigation of research support services (RSS) in academic libraries of India. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006241245714>
- UNESCO. (2021). *Recommendation on Open Science*. UNESCO. [UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science](#)



- UNESCO. (2021). *UNESCO recommendation on open science*. UNESCO. <https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/recommendation-open-science>
- UNESCO. (2025). *Implementation of the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science*. UNESCO. [UNESCO – Implementation of the Recommendation on Open Science](#)
- University Grants Commission. (2018). *UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018*. University Grants Commission. [UGC Regulations on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism](#)
- University Grants Commission. (2018). *UGC (Promotion of Academic Integrity and Prevention of Plagiarism in Higher Educational Institutions) Regulations, 2018*. University Grants Commission.
- Yu, H. H. (2017). The role of academic libraries in research data service (RDS) provision: Opportunities and challenges. *The Electronic Library*, 35(4), 783–797. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EL-10-2016-0233>

