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Content Analysis of Websites of Public Library Located in G7 Countries: A Comparative Study

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Abstract:

The library's website acts as a reflection of the physical space by showcasing its mission, programmes, services, and other aspects of the institution as a whole. It's crucial in today's digital age for all types of libraries to have a rich website of their own, whether they are academic, public, or specialized. This study reveals the differences in the web content provided by the various websites of public library located in G-7 countries. It also evaluates the accessibility of various material formats to both registered users and the general public. The gathered information has been examined in terms of content management for users to create a comparative study that will describe the state of the public libraries in various nations at the moment.

Keywords: Public Library, Library Website, Rich Web Content, G7 countries.

1. Introduction: Although there are many type of libraries present in a nation but public libraries are the one which is planned to cater the largest section of the society with variety of users from different age groups, sex, religion, cast creed, economic background etc. On other words, it can been said that the public library is the prime community access point designed to respond to a multitude of ever-changing information needs.(Koontz & Gubbin, 2020)But with the growing age of online and digital environment the first, if not the primary, point of contact that people have with their public library is frequently through the public library website. In the future, users of public libraries might not even need to visit the physical location; instead, they could simply use the website to obtain the services, resources, and programs they require. Members can find resources, reserve materials, manage library accounts, pay bills, download e-books and audio books, and access online databases made available by their local public library, among other things, through a public library's website. A library website can be thought of as the physical library's online

extension. A brick and mortar branch of the library is where users physically enter, while an electronic branch is the library's website.

Access to the actual library has always been the most important factor, but as more users choose or are obliged to participate online, there are challenges with website design that need to be addressed. Today, having a website for a library is not sufficient; it is crucial to have one with rich web content and a user-friendly user interface. As with maintaining a traditional library, if a website is not designed or maintained in a way that makes it simple for users to use, traffic will eventually decrease. For example, if a library has bad lighting or damaged infrastructure, the number of visitors will inevitably decrease.

Websites for public libraries offer data on catalogues, databases, events, marketing, employee bios, programming, and services. A total of 35 libraries that operate within the political borders of the G-7 countries will be assessed as part of this study. The G-7 countries—the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan—were taken into account because they are all developed and well-established. It's intriguing to examine how their public libraries present themselves online and to consider what other countries can learn about public library websites from them.

2. Review of Literature: Previously there are many works that has been done in this area, which tries to evaluate the library websites of different libraries the design, content and site management was first evaluated for this type of study(Chow et al., 2014).Now second thing which an user came across in opening any website was the homepage of the website and its evaluation was necessary the same work was done in 2015.(Thorpe & Lukes, 2015). A same type of content analysis was done on special libraries websites of India which define the point of comparison very aptly.(K S, 2016).Public libraries in Indonesia has been evaluated for a similar kind of study to trace their transformation.(Anna, 2018).A multi country library evaluation was done few years back but there only Australia, Canada and USA.(Velasquez & Evans, 2018). For this kind of study a researchers needs to analyses the usability of the websites to patrons and for that some parameters needs to be their upon which the scaling should be done.(Shevchenko, 2019).A similar type of content analysis was dome on websites of colleges affiliated to Delhi University (Rahman & Sadik, 2020).One of the milestone study in this domain was done just a couple of years back which mentions every point to level up the public library websites and what needs to check for that before. (Yorke, 2021).

3. Objectives of the Study: Following objectives have been set for the study:

- 1) To assess the content of public library websites located in G-7 countries.
- 2) To be aware of the features offered on public library websites in developed nations like the G-7 countries.
- 3) To evaluate the usability and user interface of the websites offered by these public libraries.

- 4) To determine whether techniques or content used on these library websites should be adopted by public libraries in soon-to-be developed countries like India in order to better serve their patrons.

4. Research Methodology: For this study, a survey-based methodology has been used. First, there was through research in terms of selection of libraries from these countries, and the researchers came to a conclusion that since the research is about public libraries, the sample of five libraries from each country must be taken from the provinces where the majority of that country's population resides. Although, the choice of each one of the 5 libraries are totally random among the list of libraries present in that state or province. The assumption was based on the idea that public libraries located in densely populated parts of a country would attract the most visitors and, as a result, would eventually perform the best in the nation in terms of their web positioning and catering the patron base.

Secondly a list of point of comparison has to set for these research for evaluating the library services provided by these libraries. So, again after relevant literature was studied, and a select number of useful websites and papers were consulted in order to create a checklist for analyzing the websites of public libraries. The checklist was primarily based on two researchers research one is of Powers (2011) and Manjunatha (2016).

In terms of sampling, the following libraries are considered for this study:

Table 1 : List of public libraries evaluated for this study
(Rank shows in terms of population)

Sl. No.	Library Name	Nation	Province	Rank
1	Los Angeles Public Library	USA	California	1
2	Austin Public Library	USA	Texas	2
3	Titusville Public Library	USA	Florida	3
4	The New York Public Library	USA	New York	4
5	Abington Township Public Library	USA	Pennsylvania	5
6	Weybridge Library	UK	South East England	1
7	The London Library	UK	London	2
8	Carnforth Library	UK	North West England	3
9	Richmond library	UK	East England	4
10	The Library of Birmingham	UK	West Midlands	5
11	London Public Library	Canada	Ontario	1
12	Roger-Lemelin Library	Canada	Quebec	2
13	Vancouver Public Library	Canada	British Columbia	3
14	High Prairie Municipal Library	Canada	Alberta	4

Sl. No.	Library Name	Nation	Province	Rank
15	Thompson Public Library	Canada	Manitoba	5
16	Bibliothque publique d'information	France	Île-de-France	1
17	Bibliothque Valle de Gre	France	Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes	2
18	Bibliothque Intercommunale du Verteillacois	France	Nouvelle-Aquitaine	3
19	Bibliothque Municipale	France	Occitania	4
20	Bibliothque Jacques Prvert	France	Hauts-de-France	5
21	St. Matthäus Public Library	Germany	North Rhine-Westphalia	1
22	Weißenburg City Library	Germany	Bavaria	2
23	Stuttgart City Library	Germany	Baden-Württemberg	3
24	Stadtbibliothek Syke	Germany	Lower Saxony	4
25	Giessen City Library	Germany	Hesse	5
26	Laudense Library	Italy	Lombardy	1
27	Libreria Tra Le Righe	Italy	Lazio	2
28	Municipal Library of Cesinali	Italy	Campania	3
29	Paduan Provincial Library Network	Italy	Veneto	4
30	Biblioteca Centrale della Regione Siciliana	Italy	Sicily	5
31	Tokyo Metropolitan Library	Japan	Tokyo	1
32	Zama City Library	Japan	Kanagawa	2
33	The Osaka Prefectural Library	Japan	Osaka	3
34	Tsurumai Central Library	Japan	Aichi	4
35	Saitama Municipal Library	Japan	Saitama	5

Source Data: (Statista, n.d.)

5. Analysis and Interpretation of Data:

5.1 General Information Available in the Websites: The website's general information comprises information about the library, its mission, its working hours, its membership policies, its copyright policies, its employee's details, its sitemap, its sections, its visitor counter, and the date of last update. These all point of comparison will let us allow to identify what are the general information these public libraries are providing their patrons.

Table 2 : General Information in websites of G7 countries

Sl. No.	General Information	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	About library	24	68.57	11	31.43
2	Mission statement	10	28.57	25	71.43
3	Working hours	35	100.00	0	0.00
4	Membership	21	60.00	14	40.00
5	Rules & regulations	34	97.14	1	2.86
6	Copyright info.	20	57.14	15	42.86
7	Staff information	11	31.43	24	68.57
8	Site map	16	45.71	19	54.29
9	Library sections	15	42.86	20	57.14
10	Visitors counter	4	11.43	31	88.57
11	Date of updating	6	17.14	29	82.86

Instead of analyzing the data individually, each nation's data will be analyzed in groups. Now the results are bit astonishing from the table which are listed as below:

1. France was leading the pack among the G7 countries in terms of supplying "About Library" information. However, the vast majority of American libraries were effective in reflecting their "Mission Statement".
2. All libraries include the necessary information on opening and closing times.
3. When it came to "Membership Rules," the USA and the UK were more open in outlining their policies in advance than the rest.
4. With the exception of one library on the list, the majority of libraries are quite clear about their "Library Rules."
5. In terms of copyright, France is the only country where libraries fared very poorly; otherwise, they are all roughly on par.
6. Three out of five library websites in the USA and Canada provide information on their "Library Staff" to users, placing them in the lead.
7. In terms of sitemaps for websites or library floor plans, libraries in the USA and Japan assist their customers in finding the information they need from websites the most.
8. Japanese libraries are quite clear about mentioning the information on their webpages under the heading "Library section."
9. Only 4 and 6 out of 35 libraries, respectively, exhibit positive reaction in terms of "date of update" and "visitor counter," while the remaining 35 libraries all failed to

do so. As a result, it was difficult for users to determine when the information was updated.

5.2 Details Regarding Library Collection in Websites: This section will analyse the specifics of each library's collection and how it is represented on its own website. The information comprises the name of the types of materials that could be present in a public library as well as their availability.

Table 3: Information about Library Collection

Sl. No.	Information on library collections	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Books	35	100	0	0
2	Periodicals/Magazines	32	91.42	3	8.58
3	Reports	16	45.71	19	54.29
4	Newspaper	30	85.71	5	14.29
5	Conference Proceedings	11	31.43	24	68.57
6	Annual Report	12	34.29	23	65.71
7	Monographs	35	100	0	0
8	Cartographic Material	26	74.29	9	25.71
9	Standards	5	14.29	30	85.71
10	Microfilms/Microfiche	8	22.86	27	77.14
11	Manuscript	8	22.86	27	77.14

The study found the following results from the table given above:

1. All the libraries listed in the table consist of books & monographs as their primary available sources for patrons. Magazines or periodicals also enjoy this same with exceptions of three libraries in which two are from Italy and one from Japan.
2. In case of Reports availability in the catalogue, USA & UK was leading with 4 out of 5 libraries having the same. In terms of newspaper support USA, UK, Canada & Japan are the countries who compulsorily provide this facility in their libraries.
3. Libraries from France and Italy clearly do not entertain conference proceedings in their stock.
4. In terms of Annual reports of libraries, Japan and Canada are two most honest countries in terms of showcasing their report to the library users.
5. In terms of cartographic material, standards, microfilm/microfiche & manuscript France is the only country where its unavailability of all three of these is an issue.

5.3 Details about the Library Services: This section will give a bird's eye look to the different services provided by the public libraries situated in different G7 nations.

Table 4: Information about Library Services

Sl. No.	Information on library services	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Circulation Service	34	97.14	1	2.86
2	Reference Service	18	51.43	17	48.57
3	Digital Library	29	82.86	6	17.14
4	Reprographic Service	4	11.43	31	88.57
5	Recommendation Service	19	54.29	16	45.71
6	Chatbot	3	8.58	32	91.42
7	Email Queries	24	68.57	11	31.42
8	SMS Queries	3	8.58	32	91.42
9	Database Service	16	45.71	19	54.29
10	Web OPAC	24	68.57	1	31.42
11	Photocopying/Printing	21	60.00	14	40.00
12	Computer Infrastructure	24	68.57	11	31.42
13	ILL	21	60.00	14	40.00
14	DDS	8	22.86	27	77.14
15	Wi-Fi Services	26	74.29	9	25.71
16	Alerting Service	8	22.86	27	77.14
17	Event Information	28	80.00	7	20.00
18	Sections for kids	21	60.00	14	40.00
19	Sections for Adults	10	28.57	25	71.43
20	Meeting Room/ Personal Space	10	28.57	25	71.43

The following results have been found from the above table:

1. All libraries offer circulation services, with the exception of one in Japan that forbids customers from borrowing books outside of the building.
2. The USA & Japan libraries win the race in terms of user accessibility to reference services. The digital library services libraries from Italy, on the other hand, are a bit behind.
3. In the public libraries mentioned above, microfilm reprographic services are a rarity, although the majority of the libraries offers photocopying and printing services.
4. The majority of libraries accept email requests, however only libraries in the USA allow SMS requests.

5. While most libraries, with the exception of one, offer Web OPAC services, France and German libraries are unwilling to offer database services.
6. Other than libraries in Italy, most public libraries provide computer infrastructure and Wi-Fi services.
7. In terms of ILL (Inter Library Loan) and DDS (Document Delivery Service), German libraries are leading the first while Canadian libraries are leading the latter.
8. In each country's library, there are fragments of the Alerting Service available.
9. Regarding event details and a separate area for children among the libraries of the other G7 countries, Japanese public libraries are in the lead.
10. At long last, the adult section and obtaining personal space in libraries in the USA are outperforming others.

5.4 Availability of E-resources: This is a category for library materials that may be found electronically, such as books, periodicals, CDs, DVDs, electronic databases, institutional repositories, etc.

Table 5 : Availability of E-resources

Sl. No.	Information on availability of e-resources	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	E-books	32	91.42	3	8.58
2	E-journals	17	48.57	18	51.43
3	E-Database	26	74.29	9	25.71
4	Audio books	30	85.71	5	14.29
5	Music Cassettes/CD	34	97.14	1	02.86
6	Podcast	10	28.57	25	71.43
7	DVD	30	85.71	5	14.29
8	Games & Softwares	20	57.14	15	42.86
9	Blog Of Library	12	34.29	23	65.71

The interpretations from the above table are as follows:

1. The first interpretation from table 5 is that the E-book, Music cassettes, E-database and DVD are almost available in most of the libraries.
2. E-Journals are very common in the USA, UK, and Canada, while the libraries in the other G7 countries lagged behind. Similar circumstances apply to the library's podcast and blog, where US libraries are acting pro-actively in comparison to libraries in other countries by including this sort of content on their websites.
3. On the other hand, German libraries are the ones that are reluctant to make audio books, games, and software available to their patrons.

5.5 Domain & Display Recognition:

Table 6 ; Domain and Display Recognition

Sl. No.	Information on domain & display	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Background Color Change	30	85.71	5	14.29
2	Audio or Video Support	10	28.57	25	71.43
3	Multilinguality	20	57.14	15	42.86
4	Font Size	21	60.00	14	40.00

The interpretations are as follows:

1. A close examination of the domain name reveals that public libraries in the United States and Canada are a combination of privately run and publicly sponsored institutions. It is largely of government in the UK and Japan. In Italy, Japan, and France, libraries are frequently a part of bigger networks or receive additional space on municipal websites where they are located.
2. The other component, display recognition, is useful for elderly or visually impaired persons. The first point, the background color change, may usually be seen on the websites of public libraries in Japan. The second point of audio visual assistance, which mostly comprises of text to voice, is also accessible in Japan and the USA. The absence of Font Size in the USA, UK, and Italy makes them less competitive than others in this criterion.
3. On the other side, libraries in France and Germany should be concerned about the multilingualism of internet material in their website.

5.6 Interface for Links, Search, and Retrieval: The objective of this section is to check the interface for the users' information retrieval and places to give their suggestions and feedback along help option and contact for additional inquiry. Other than these there are few more miscellaneous information which are listed in the table below.

Table 7 : Links, Search and Retrieval Interface

Sl. No.	Information on links, search and retrieval	No. of websites (mentioned)		No. of websites (not mentioned)	
		No.	%	No.	%
1	Downloads	5	14.29	30	85.71
2	News	21	60.00	14	40.00
3	Suggestion Box	10	28.57	25	71.43
4	Careers/Jobs/Internships	18	51.43	17	48.57
5	Images	34	97.14	1	02.86
6	Contacts	35	100	0	0

7	Help	13	37.14	22	62.86
8	Social Media Links	34	97.14	1	02.86
9	Feedback	10	28.57	25	71.43
10	FAQ	34	97.14	1	02.86

The interpretations are as follows:

1. The table above makes it very evident that the majority of libraries include images, contacts, and social media connections on their web pages.
2. Regardless of the nation they are from, the majority of libraries fall short in providing a space for support, criticism, and suggestion boxes on the web pages.
3. In comparison to other libraries, the Canadian libraries are fairly aggressive in posting job and internship listings on their websites.

6. Summary of Findings: The overall findings are presented in this section but it will be presented in form of Pros and Cons of each country overall conditions of libraries. The findings are listed below:

6.1 Libraries in USA:

Pros: Whether it's a mission statement, library staff, or site map, all of the libraries in the country of USA are well-established and offer appropriate information to users, on par with or better than others. In addition to everything else, US libraries maintain collections of "Standards" and "Microfilm/Microfiche." In terms of services, the USA is the only nation that makes reference service essential and offers SMS services in libraries for inquiries. They even started the chatbot services in their website. Additionally, a personal area and conference room are provided in the library. Podcasts and blogs are the US libraries' strongest online resources. Regarding content, USA Libraries offers online content in several languages. These libraries also value user feedback, which is why they include the greatest number of feedback, help, and suggestion boxes.

Cons: One drawback is that libraries in the USA do not list the date of their updates. Additionally, they are reluctant to make their yearly report public. Despite having the greatest number of microfilms in their libraries, they fall behind in terms of reprographic services. They also fail to include DDS and games and software in their collection of online resources. The libraries had not taken any action up to this point on changing the background color and text size for those who are visually impaired. Additionally, it appears that they do not support the notion of publishing library news on their websites.

6.2 Libraries in UK:

Pros: Libraries in UK are doing well in terms of operating hours, membership requirements, copyright regulations, and staff information. In addition to other genres, the library's collection includes newspaper, conference proceedings, and reports. If we look at the services libraries in these nations offer, we can observe that each library has Wi-Fi and computer equipment and also maintained a section for kids separately. In terms of online

resources, the collection of podcasts is what makes them stand out. All of the libraries in this nation are government-funded, and each one's website offers the option of enlarging the font used in its online material. To inform the public, libraries in these nations post information on library news on their websites.

Cons: The goal statement of UK libraries is avoided, and they don't even include the date of the most recent update to indicate the freshness of the displayed item. They don't maintain standards in their library collection, and even producing yearly reports doesn't interest them. Even though over 19% of their population is beyond the age of 65, they don't even have adult areas. Libraries in the UK should concentrate more on their e-resources in the areas of games, software, and blogs, to name just three. Regarding presentation, they don't consider changing the background colour, and as of the final table, table 7, it is evident that they are also not particularly interested in receiving feedback or suggestions.

6.3 Libraries in Canada:

Pros: Canadian libraries are performing rather well, regardless of the subject, such as about library, its mission statement, specifics of operating hours or library employees. When compared to other countries, Canadian libraries are at the forefront when it comes to offering ILL and DDS services to its patrons. These libraries have one of the most sincere collections since they publish their yearly report and make it available for public reading. To allow users to access audiovisual information without an internet connection, all Canadian libraries contain CDs and DVDs in their collection of electronic resources. The majority of Canadian libraries provide its web content in various languages. Canadian libraries actively include a job page in their websites as part of their focus on developing future information specialists.

Cons: The lack of a sitemap for the web or a floor plan for physical access in all Canadian public libraries eventually reduces user convenience. Reports, standards, and manuscripts are not things that these libraries want to maintain in their holdings. Additionally, some libraries place restrictions on the reference services they offer and are reluctant to create adult sections. Despite being a close neighbor of the United States, Canada's libraries do not have any podcasts in their collection of electronic resources. Up until this time, the libraries hadn't done anything to adjust the background color and font size for those with visual impairments. Additionally, the websites of Canadian public libraries do not offer any materials that may be downloaded.

6.4 Libraries in France:

Pros: France's libraries are undoubtedly establishing their Working Hours and About Us pages. It also discusses the collection's more conventional materials, such as books, monographs, and periodicals. In addition to their regular tasks, the majorities of libraries in France also hosts a variety of events and provide information on their websites. The majority of French libraries include an electronic database in their selection of online

resources. The capability of changing the font on websites is present in all French libraries that were considered.

Cons: Regarding membership regulations, copyright policies, and library personnel, libraries in France provide nothing. In order to convey the recentness of the change and the freshness of the presented item, they don't even provide the date. Conference proceedings, standards, manuscripts, and microfilms are not available in French libraries. A significant drawback is how few libraries in France offer databases, photocopying, and other services like these. E-journals, podcasts, and blogs are not available in French libraries' online collections. There is no content on French libraries' websites that is available in any other language. There is no comments section or support button for users in French libraries. Additionally, there are no job listings on it.

6.5 Libraries in Germany:

Pros: In term of general information German libraries performs mediocre with respect to others. In case of collection it focuses on Cartographic materials other than books and periodicals in services, German libraries leads in ILL and providing computer infrastructure and Wi-Fi. In e-resources, it has a collection of audio books and games & software to highlight. It also takes care of Font size in their websites.

Cons: The mission statement and staff information for German libraries are not displayed on their websites. Moreover, there are no user-accessible annual reports, manuscripts, or microfilms in the collection. Additionally, it doesn't offer any support for email or SMS inquiries. It doesn't offer access to services like photocopying, DDS, or database access. They had never thought of blogs in electronic resources. Additionally, they oppose the concept of multilingual web content and show little interest in suggestions and feedback.

6.6 Libraries in Italy:

Pros: Italian public libraries are pretty clear in membership & copyright policies in their web pages. They also like to have cartographic materials in their collection. They do fairly well in terms of ILL service. They also provide access to e-database and are support multilingual content in their web pages.

Cons: Italian libraries dislike disclosing details about their staff or various library departments. Additionally, they dislike keeping annual reports and reports in their collection. They fall short in terms of offering DDS & computer infrastructure services. Even their libraries don't have a section just for adults. They don't have any e-journals in their collection of online resources. Additionally, they don't emphasize font size changes or job postings for libraries on their website.

6.7 Libraries in Japan:

Pros: On their websites, Japanese libraries are particularly careful to include information about their hours of operation, copyright rules, sitemaps, and library sections. They even mention visitor count and date of last update in few libraries. Their collection includes items

like microfilms, standards, and newspapers. Regarding services offered, every library offers a distinct children's area, a digital library, event information, and reference services. Japanese libraries favor audio books, CDs, and DVDs as their preferred e-resources. All four display recognition requirements are fulfilled by these libraries. Additionally, they include library news in their online material.

Cons: Libraries in Japan do not place as much emphasis on staff information, mission statements, or about library. Rarely do they have conference proceedings in their library. Additionally, they don't offer any DDS services. Because of their conventional nature, podcasts and blogs are not popular at libraries. These libraries don't offer a suggestion box or a place for user comments.

7. Conclusion: The key take away from the article's results is that Japan is the nation where administration in libraries are worried about what the fundamental requirements of the users are and how it can be met, whereas the USA is the country that is most advanced in implementing new technology for the public library. The UK is more concerned with providing computer infrastructure to its patrons and was just after the USA in adapting new generation content like Podcast. Canada is also channeling their libraries in advertising jobs for future information specialists and work in tandem with other libraries to provide ILL and DDS services. France is more like a typical library with just the necessary collection in stock and database access. France and Germany are keen about solely offering web material in their own languages. Italy was a little more lenient and offered information in many languages, but all of these EU nations only allow their libraries' websites to be included in city municipal websites because those libraries are affiliated with the local municipalities. As a result, we may conclude that from the libraries under examination, nations like India can learn how the libraries are evolving beyond their traditional role as repositories of books to become experience hubs where a variety of other activities take place concurrently. Additionally, it is not necessary to create a standalone library; one may instead attach to a municipality. A library website must include social media links, open days, and contact information. The translation of web information is essential in nations like India where there is a significant level of diversity to expand library accessibility to the general populace.

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