



Rising of the Digital Reading List! A tale of Contemporary Library Scenario and JNU Library, New Delhi

Shiva Kanaujia Sukula
Deputy Librarian, Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library, JNU, New Delhi
Email: shivasukula25@gmail.com

Somesh Vishwakarma
Assistant Librarian, Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library, JNU, New Delhi
Email: somesh12000@yahoo.com

Parveen Babbar
Deputy Librarian, Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library, JNU, New Delhi
Email: parveenbabbar@gmail.com

&
Shweta Dhingra
Professional Assistant, Dr B R Ambedkar Central Library, JNU, New Delhi
Email: shweta1610@gmail.com

Abstract

The technology and reading needs have been profound reasons for imbibing the solutions to user needs in library. Various software and platforms have been in vogue to deliberate the task of development reading list for library users. The paper has focused upon the studies and experiences from the recent past and few glimpses from Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Central Library, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. Intricately related components such as planning, software, composition and future prospects of Digital Reading List have been described. Concepts discussed in the paper would be able to bring supportive ideas for the libraries and information professionals. Prolific exercises in the contemporary times in context with Digital Reading List would prove helpful and instrumental in highlighting library-user collaborative efforts and usage.

Keywords: *Digital Reading List, Reference List, Academic Libraries, Electronic Reserves*



1. Introduction

While there have been many provisions for seeking reading material such as an open access, free resources, DAISY format for print-disabled users and digitally enhanced resources for the students registered in the various courses in academic settings. For example, the Open Textbooks have been instrumental for paving way to make the courses more affordable. The alternatives in the shape of Reading lists have been created by using library-subscribed materials [1]. The shape and form of reading lists in libraries can be understood as “course packs” in the digital version. These are collections of subject/paper related articles along with the book chapters. The presence of the Electronic Reserves in few academic organizations is put to function in the catalogs [2, 3]. Another open alternative has emerged as LibGuides. The LibGuides proved a platform to generate various topics related freely-available web pages; the example is of EBSCO Curriculum Builder. It functions within the Learning Management System and supports building of course packs [1, 2, 3, 4]. Similarly, Oxford Reading Lists Online (ORLO) is the online reading list service provided by the University of Oxford [5]. The students are privileged to access up-to-date reading lists through ORLO without time limit or frame across the range of devices. This service includes checking “the live library availability of print items” with the given details (hyperlinks in the lists), also the access to digital books, articles with the hyperlink and ‘View Online’ button. Such services and arrangements are very useful and time-saving for the scholars [1, 2, 3].

Apart from consolidated and updated information at one place, there are many advantages of library digital reading lists. Few of them are listed as following:

- With the technological support, the digital reading lists are accessible through various platforms such as Moodle or can be accessed through the link given on the library website.
- Provides the pre-selected and listed subject related authentic resources in lesser time than the OPAC or other library tool.
- The course related material is found in the form of digitised/scanned chapters which are quickly available



- There is provision of searching and filtering the lists to access the prioritized materials.
- Users are free to create their own bibliography and converting into other reference styles as per the need.
- Help the students with print disability to get the error free document for their course study.

Academic libraries provide access to online reading lists. These lists are supported with active hyperlinks to various components, such as:

- a. Library Catalogue material
- b. e-journal articles, and
- c. e-books,
- d. websites
- e. open access material

Such availability of resources are helpful in creation, editing, and annotating the reading lists; the methods are as following:

- a. Direct linking of library catalogue records into Digital Reading lists
- b. Provisions of useful analytics and display frequency of reading lists views
- c. Rating the reading list items in relation to relevance of books, etc.
- d. Providing the easy provision for easy access to document via hyperlink.

The placing and position of the reading list especially digital nature is significant in higher education, there are various aspects related to Digital reading lists.

2. Pedagogy, Learning and Digital Reading Lists

The reading list software are connections between the libraries and teaching along with the pedagogical values. The reason behind constructing a reading list is to offer the ‘sense of direction’ to provide the writing resources in a subject field. Also, the reading lists can function in transformation as autonomous learners. There is also a side that the reading lists should not be visualized as “spoon-feeding” to impose the dependent learning. In fact, these reading list



platforms have the mechanism and potential to reinvent the conventional reading into the digital reading lists.

The facets of reading lists such as collaborative nature, user tagging, reference tool and learning support activity are able to support the development process. The annotated lists are useful for better information. The inclusion of technologically enhanced reading lists can function as the tools of information literacy practice. There can be certain aspects to hinder the tasks of creating reading lists such as “lack of engagement by faculty with the library in relation to submitting or updating their reading lists” (O’Neill & Musto, 2017) as the roles of faculty is that of as the significant reasons of digital reading list to “actually create and maintain reading lists” (Jones, 2009).

3. Planning, and Design

The design and development of reading list software come into picture with the mention of ‘Talis Aspire’ (Barlett, 2010; Talis Aspire, 2013) a proprietary software which was used at Nottingham Trent University. The same software has been used Cross (2015) at Nottingham Trent University and University of Glamorgan, as well as more than a decade ago. The factors for the generation of software can be related with less participation of teachers with creation, editing and annotation beyond the library software. Also, to add journal articles, the manual methods are cumbersome also full of errors. The proprietary software enables to create and edit the lists along with the linking to the library catalogue, databases and the WWW. It all demands continuous developments, updates and upgrades. The creation and development of a dashboard interface to provide valuable analytics are also significant attaché. The system should have Feedback mechanism, also the book loan information, a purchasing predictor application, interoperability with other library/virtual systems. With the availability of various website designer like wordpress, drupal, blogger, weebly, joomla, zyro and many more, the libraries can build their own digital reading list platforms.

4. Assessment of reading list software

The examination of reading lists should include certain aspects such as:

- a. Reading lists as the area of academic workflows,



- b. Ability to intuit student needs
- c. Interaction of library services in direct mode.

The staff resistance, time constraints, real-time copyright permissions and authentication systems are few other components to be taken care of (Bartlett, 2010). The standardization of mechanisms and processes is something valuable and invites attention and relates to “a standard way of handling them” (Jones, 2009; Cross, 2015). There are the issues such as inconsistent coverage, module guides, print format, shared systems, related services, etc., which are gruesome. The provisions of shared systems and well-planned related services among the number of academic institutions are helpful to reduce costs.

5. Perceptions and Usage

Regarding the student attitudes towards digital reading lists, there are certain facets such as to read widely, student ability and autonomy evidence of “exploration and proactive reading”. Consultation of the reading list may be disheartened due to lengthy nature and obsolete contents (Brewerton, 2014). Stokes and Martin (2008) “advocate the use of annotated bibliographies and reading list software to foster greater engagement with students in the context of reading lists calling for a re-examination of this stalwart of the academic environment”. There are few components which invite attention towards the usage, application and future provisions of digital reading lists:

1. teachers’ status and rank to impact awareness and use of digital reading lists.
2. the number of years related with the faculty members; engagement and digital reading lists promotions and awareness creations among students.
3. role and prospects of a discipline to impact the use of digital reading lists.

It is also significant to have subtle marketing and advocacy steps for digital reading lists tailored to kinds of disciplines and users:

- a. The awareness among the scholars is must; they should be knowledgeable about the institutional reading list templates.



- b. The students should also be informed about the standardization of the processes in context with digital reading list management according to the nature of organizational policies and goals.
- c. To all said purposes before, the use of multi-media tutorials for digital reading lists can be arranged.

6. Advantages and disadvantages

The demands from students may include the single login facilities, awareness, and embedding into the library website or content management platform. Other technical needs are relating to link easily to videos, articles found on the digital reading lists, linking with catalogue are also the aspects to be covered vastly. It promotes library resources by:

- providing highlights of the key resources on reading lists
- facilitating the digital reading list on an accessible central online platform for round the clock reach
- showcasing the teaching excellence and providing reference in an easy way.

7. Significance of reading list in higher education

The role of the reading list connection with the library services in higher education are encompassing. For students, the choice of materials on a reading list to select more than one option such as colleagues' recommendations, library staff recommendations, and the online library catalogue. The use of digital reading lists can be considered as a good starting point and help to keep teachers at the forefront to keep up to date. In higher education the reading list remains “a key teaching and learning tool”. The open-mindedness towards “use of technology and enhance the digital reading list usage aspects” is assumed the transition through varying levels of digital literacy.

8. Suggestions: There are few suggestions, such as:

- Secure: the smooth and smart policy-making for digital reading list.
- Review: reading lists workflows at institutional level
- Ensure: institutional reading list templates among faculty members.
- Awareness and training: During the semester



- Training and advocacy: initiatives should be taken keeping in view certain issues such as faculty length of service, digital literacy training and “building a connector between digital reading lists” and a range of Virtual Learning Environment.

The areas require a parallel attention and hard work for the continuous, up to mark and functional digital reading list journey (yet to embarked by many academic libraries across the world), such as:

- Librarians' perceptions towards the creation, development and roles into the usage of digital reading lists.
- Student' perceptions of digital reading lists' relevance and strengths
- The collaborations among the faculty members, various students, and library staff)

9. The developments observed through Literature

As discussed by Marshall, Price, Golovchinsky, & Schilit, (1999, August) have discussed about the emergence of digital library “reading appliance” in the library users’ group while the virtual library services have made their place into the library in the ending of last decade (Masson, 2009). The virtual reading lists tried to come into picture in the library services which were a kind of learning services to support users. During the same time, Stokes, & Martin (2008) brought the idea of considering the Reading lists as a way of better tutoring. The users’ perceptions were equally important while developoing and implementing the reading lists in the perspectives of lirbaries’ realities. A group of authors (Kazai, Manghi, Iatropoulou, Haughton, Mikulicic, Lempesis, & Manola, 2010) endeavored to understand and elaborate the architecture for a “collaborative research environment based on reading list sharing”. Such an effort (Brewerton & O'Neill, 2014) was necessary as the digital libraries’ developments were also on the speedy tracks. Libraries have been facing the resource crunch as well as the pressures of resources management which paved the way for “resource list management” (Brewerton, 2014) along with the qualitative approaches. Whereas the libraries have been facing the challenges of reading lists implementations, the software entry could be considered as the new option as Online Reading List Software and library centric reading list systems (Cross, 2015; Chad, 2018) could be observed. The example of Kenya National Library Service and the necessity of reading



list provision (Kingstone, 2014; Heavner, Lowe & Mwachi-Amolo, 2017) bring the bridging journey of conventional and digital reading lists.

While Krol (2019) pointed out the role of online reading lists as a modern and meaningful engagement in a digital landscape, the linking of resources through “determination, collaboration and innovation” (Walsby, 2020; Kumara, Hinze, Vanderschantz, Timpany, & Saravani, 2021; Li & Ma, 2021) have been an answer to quick reach to subject information needed in academic scenario. The higher education in India and across the globe is facing new challenges and vistas due to changing policies. In this context, the diverse subject areas of reading lists can function as a link (Taylor, Hung, Che, Akinbosede, Petherick, & Pranjol, 2021; Weinstein & Holcomb, 2021) to fulfilling the gaps.

10. An experience at JNU Library

Dr. BR Ambedkar central library is one of the tallest buildings among the academic libraries in India. Enriched with huge collection of over six lakhs of volumes including books, bound journals, reports, theses/dissertations. Library is equipped with latest infrastructure of information technologies to cater the need of academic fraternity of JNU, comprising with 14 schools of teaching and 08 special centres for study in various disciplines like management, engineering, sciences, humanities and social sciences. Library has a provision of special services to students having print disabilities by using screen reading software, text to speech softwares, conversion of braille to text and text to braille and to generate the emboss print in braille.

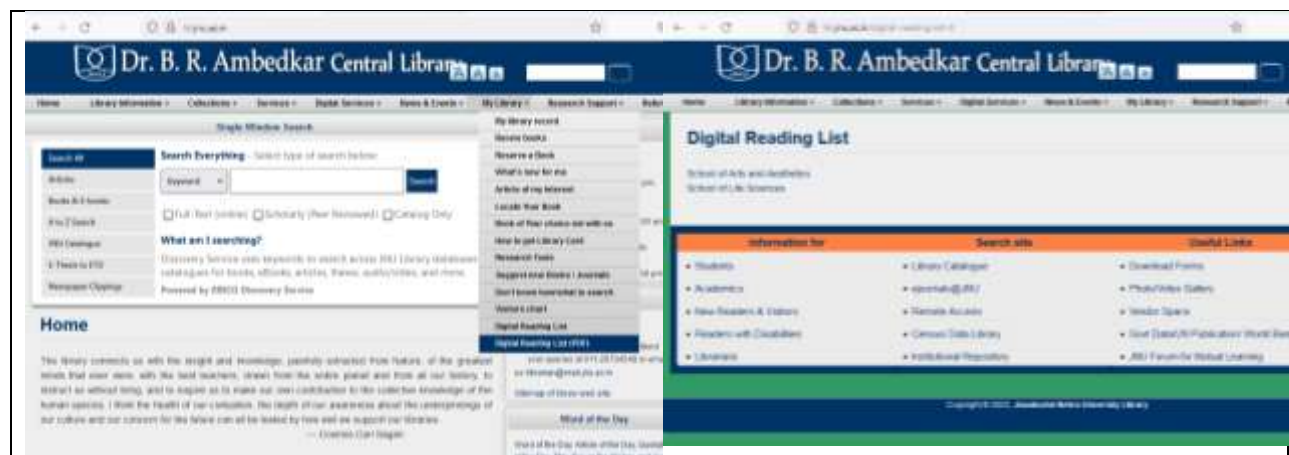


Figure: 1 Screenshot of JNU Library Webpage Navigating to the Tab for Reading List



JNU library is an active member of DELNET and INFLIBNET network. JNU library is known for the advancement in library services among the academic fraternity. Always adopting and incorporating the latest trends in the field of information science to serve the faculty members and students.

Recently, JNU library launched a project to create digital reading list with a view to provide the instant access to reading material to the registered students of the university. The motive behind to save the time of students is related with searching and collecting the reading material. It also removes the duplication of the document by photocopying method etc. It will also help the students with print disability to get the document easily. Presently, it was decided to create the available reading list to digital form using MS Excel Spreadsheet. The process was initiated by collecting the reference provided by faculty members, organizing them into a standard format, indicating the document availability in print on the library shelves via library catalogue and providing the hyperlink to the online available document may be subscribed by the library or free available online.

The team is collecting the references of books, book chapters, journal article or news items, which are made available on school/centres website. After collection, we are completing the bibliographical information of the particular title using OCLC and library of congress database. Organizing and arranging them in a standard format viz. author, editor, title-sub title, publication information, ISBN number. Thereafter, adding the information like, call number, accession number, and library code gathered through library OPAC. Lastly, converting it to a PDF file to upload on library website readily available to access by students. The active hyperlinks are provided to the title column. While collecting and linking the URL/hyperlink to a title, a search is being made using document discovery portal is used to fetch the link form subscribed resources. It was decided to use using MS Excel Spreadsheet for creation of digital reading list because in near future it will be easy to migrate the bibliographical data to any other software, if used.



The screenshot displays a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet with a reading list. The spreadsheet is organized into columns and rows. The columns include 'Author', 'Edition', 'Title with link to the full text document', 'Classification/Department', 'Call Number', and 'Acc. No./Classification'. The rows list various books, such as 'The Great Gatsby' by F. Scott Fitzgerald and 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J.D. Salinger. The spreadsheet is shown in a windowed view with a standard Windows interface.

Figure: 2 Screenshot showing the format of Reading List

However, there are different softwares and applications are available to create digital reading list for the students facilities. These softwares are such as Talis Aspire, Loughborough Online Reading List System (LORLS), Basmo, Goodreads, Reading List, Bookly, CLZ Books, BookBuddy, Notion Reading List template, A spreadsheet, Pen & Paper, Specialized websites:- (Libib, BookSloth, Litsy, Candl, Scribd, LibraryThing, Dupal). JNU library is using MS Excel Spreadsheet to create the digital reading list. These softwares are helpful in creating the digital reading list by providing various features like search option, display of book page icon, auto sorting of a particular field. Selection of a compatible software as per the user need and requirement is very important element in any project. No software can be fully compatible therefore somewhere we have redesign our requirements and need.

11. Conclusion

The need of standardization of workflows is related with mutual standardized data template across academic institutions. Smart approaches include integration into library services and interoperability with other systems such as Virtual Learning Environment, and the Library Management System, including “data ingest, data import and automated processes”. Today it is a challenge in front of every academic library to provide error free document in compatible format for print disabled students. So creation of digital reading list can meet their most of the requirements.



References:

- Bartlett, S. (2010). Resource list management: A system-based approach. *Library and Information Update*, June 42–43.
- Brewerton, G. (2014). Implications of student and lecturer qualitative views on reading lists: a case study at Loughborough University, UK. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 20(1), 78-90.
- Brewerton, G., & O'Neill, M. (2014). The reading list challenge: implementing Loughborough Online Reading List Software (LORLS).
- Chad, K. (2018). The rise of library centric reading list systems. *HELlibTech* Briefing Paper No, 5, 1-13.
- Cross, R. (2015). Implementing a resource list management system in an academic library. *The Electronic Library* 33(2), 210–223. Retrieved Feb 20, 2022, from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,custuid,cookie,url&custid=s6175963&db=lxh&AN=101788107&site=eds-live>
- Heavner, R., Lowe, Z., & Mwachi-Amolo, J. (2017). LEAP From Pilot to Scale: Embedding Digital Reading within the Kenya National Library Service.
- Jones, H. (2009). Reading Lists in Cambridge: A Standard System?. <http://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/221924>
- Kazai, G., Manghi, P., Iatropoulou, K., Haughton, T., Mikulicic, M., Lempesis, A. & Manola, N. (2010, September). Architecture for a collaborative research environment based on reading list sharing. In *International Conference on Theory and Practice of Digital Libraries* (pp. 294-306). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Kingstone, J. (2014). Bridging the gap: Why the library is a necessary mediator in academic reading list provision. *SCONUL Focus*, 60, 44-46. https://www.sconul.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/14_14.pdf
- Krol, E. (2019). Can online reading lists achieve meaningful engagement with the academics and students within a digital landscape? A case study from the University of West London.
- Kumara, N., Hinze, A., Vanderschantz, N., Timpany, C., & Saravani, S. J. (2021, September). Resource Types linked in Academic Reading Lists. In *2021 ACM/IEEE Joint Conference on Digital Libraries (JCDL)* (pp. 266-269). IEEE.
- Li, L. K., & Ma, L. F. (2021). Digital reading lists as a teaching and learning tool for the Divinity School of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. *Journal of Electronic Resources Librarianship*, 33(2), 126-130.



Marshall, C. C., Price, M. N., Golovchinsky, G., & Schilit, B. N. (1999, August). Introducing a digital library reading appliance into a reading group. In Proceedings of the fourth ACM conference on Digital libraries.

Masson, A. (2009). VRE library services: Learning from supporting VLE users. *Library Hi Tech* 2, 217–227. Academic OneFile, EBSCOhost. Retrieved Feb 19, 2022, from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,athens&db=lls&AN=502967272&site=ehost-live>

Stokes, P., & Martin, L. (2008). Reading lists: A study of tutor and student perceptions, expectations and realities. *Studies in Higher Education* 33(2), 113–125. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03075070801915874>

Talis Aspire. (2013). Talis Aspire adds new copyright service. *CILIP Update* (February), Supplier News. p. 20. Retrieved October 14, 2015, from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,cookie,url,athens&db=lls&AN=85790217&site=ehost-live> [Google Scholar]

Taylor, M., Hung, J., Che, T. E., Akinbosede, D., Petherick, K. J., & Pranjol, M. Z. I. (2021). Laying the groundwork to investigate diversity of life sciences reading lists in higher education and its link to awarding gaps. *Education Sciences*, 11(7), 359.

Walsby, O. (2020). Implementing a reading list strategy at The University of Manchester—determination, collaboration and innovation. *Insights*, 33(1).

Weinstein, R. S., & Holcomb, M. J. (2021). Reading List: Select Healthcare Transformation Library 2.0. *Telemedicine and e-Health*, 27(9), 964-973.

Websites:

Library Resources: Creating Library Reading Lists. https://www.affordablelearninggeorgia.org/library_resources/reading_lists

Reading lists. <https://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections-and-resources/reading-lists>

Providing essential e-resources and online reading lists. <https://www.ul.ie/library/reading-lists>

What is a digital reading list? Reading List Guide: Providing easy access to resources. <https://libguides.exeter.ac.uk/reading-list> Accessed on 04-Mar-2022

Oxford Reading Lists Online (ORLO). Create digital reading lists with Oxford Reading Lists Online. <https://wwwctl.ox.ac.uk/orlo>

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU). JNU Schools and Centre https://jnu.ac.in/node#quicktabs-front_page_qui