

From Academic Library to Knowledge Commons: A Case Study of IIHMR University

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Summary

Academic libraries are increasingly transitioning from conventional information repositories to dynamic knowledge commons that promote shared access, collaboration, and knowledge creation. This transformation aligns with “India’s vision of Viksit Bharat 2047,” where institutions are central to sustainable national development. The present study aims to examine the role of an academic library as a knowledge common through a case study of IIHMR University. The study adopts a descriptive case study methodology, using institutional documents, library records, observation of library services, and analysis of digital resources to assess the library’s contribution to teaching, learning, and research. The findings reveal that the IIHMR University library has evolved into a digitally enabled, user-centric knowledge hub that supports equitable access to academic resources, research facilitation, and interdisciplinary learning, particularly in the domains of health management and public health. The study highlights the significance of academic libraries in fostering knowledge sharing, enhancing research capacity, and supporting evidence-based education. It concludes that the transformation of academic libraries into knowledge commons is essential for strengthening higher education institutions and contributing meaningfully to national knowledge and development goals. The case study provides insights that may guide similar institutions in reorienting library services toward inclusive and sustainable knowledge ecosystems

Keywords: Academic Library; Knowledge Commons; Digital Resources; Knowledge Access

Introduction

Academic libraries are undergoing significant transformation due to transformation in digital technologies. No longer limited to physical collections libraries. They are no longer just about shelves of books. Today, they are knowledge commons, spaces designed to foster collaboration, make information accessible to all, and support lifelong learning, - functioning as knowledge commons that promote collaboration, accessibility, and continuous learning. The concept of knowledge commons emphasises shared access to information resources, collective learning spaces, and inclusive knowledge dissemination.

In India, academic institutions are central to achieving promoting growth and national development. Access to quality information is essential for building human capital, particularly in specialized fields such as healthcare management and public health. Digital libraries contribute to this process by enabling learners and researchers to access global knowledge resources irrespective of physical location.

IIHMR University, Jaipur, is a premier institution specializing in health & hospital management education, public health, healthcare analytics, and development management. Its academic library and documentation center (Dr. D.A. Henderson) play a crucial role in supporting students and faculty by providing both print (books, journals, magazines, etc.) and digital

resources (My Loft). This paper examines the transformation of the IIHMR University Library into a knowledge common and analyses its contribution to academic learning and research (IIHMR University, 2024).

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the transformation of the IIHMR University Library into a knowledge common.
- To analyze My Loft and services provided by the library.
- To assess the contribution of the library to teaching and research activities.
- To understand how digital initiatives help bridge the knowledge divide among students.

Methodology

The study adopts a descriptive case study approach to examine the transformation of the

IIHMR University Library into a knowledge common. A case study method was considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth understanding of institutional practices within their real-life context.

Primary data were collected through direct observation of library facilities and services, review of institutional records, and informal interactions with students and faculty members to understand patterns of library usage. Secondary data were obtained from peer-reviewed literature on academic libraries, digital libraries, knowledge commons, and institutional repositories. The analysis focused on evaluating how physical and digital library resources support teaching, learning, and research activities at IIHMR University.

Profile of IIHMR University Library

The IIHMR University (Dr. D.A. Henderson) Library serves as a central academic support unit for programmes in health management, public health, hospital administration, pharmaceutical management, digital health and development analytics. The library provides access to textbooks, reference materials, national and international journals, and a wide range of electronic resources (ProQuest, Sage etc.).

The library delivers digital access through the My LOFT platform, integrating EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Pearson Library, SAGE Knowledge, IEEE Xplore, EPW, DELNET, and the National Digital Library of India. Students use these resources for assignments, projects, and research work. Orientation sessions are conducted for new students to enhance digital literacy.

In addition, the Dr. D.A. Henderson Library & Documentation Centre maintains an institutional digital repository providing access to dissertations, faculty publications, IIHMR reports, MPH capstone projects, practicum documents, summer internship reports, PhD theses, case studies (HBR and ICMR) and old year question papers. This repository preserves institutional knowledge and supports academic continuity.

Library as a Knowledge Commons

Digital Resources and Access

The library provide access to electronic journals, e-books, and subject-specific databases related to health systems, hospital management, public health, and digital health. Remote access facilities enable students to use resources beyond college hours (Borgman, 2000).

Support for Teaching and Research

Faculty members utilize digital resources for curriculum development and research publications. Students rely on online journals and databases for case studies, dissertations, presentations, research, bound journals, summer internships, IIHMR publications, CD ROM/ video collections, magazines, and newspapers (Tenopir et al., 2012).

User Engagement and Knowledge Sharing

The digital repository enables access to student dissertations, internship reports, faculty publications, and institutional research outputs. This promotes - learning and strengthens academic continuity.

Bridging the Knowledge Divide

Centralized access to paid databases reduces financial barriers and promotes academic ownership (ACRL, 2016).

My LOFT as a Digital Knowledge Commons

The My LOFT platform functions as a digital knowledge common by providing a shared virtual environment that integrates multiple academic databases and institutional resources under a single access interface. It enables seamless remote access

to licensed e-resources, allowing students and faculty to engage in academic activities beyond physical library spaces. Through features such as centralised discovery, personalized dashboards, and cross-disciplinary access to scholarly content, My LOFT supports independent learning, research continuity, and interdisciplinary exploration. By reducing dependency on physical infrastructure and enabling equitable access to digital knowledge resources, the platform strengthens the role of the IIHMR University Library as a collaborative and inclusive knowledge ecosystem.

Institutional Repository as Knowledge Commons

The Dr. D.A. Henderson Digital Repository preserves and disseminates IIHMR's intellectual output, reducing duplication of research and supporting inclusive access (Crow, 2002; Lynch, 2003).

Findings

The case study reveals that the My LOFT platform significantly improves access to academic databases; the institutional repository provides centralised access to IIHMR dissertations, faculty publications, and student projects; students actively use MPH capstone projects and internship reports; remote access reduces dependency on physical visits, and integration of external databases with institutional repositories enhances academic equity.

Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that academic libraries can move far beyond their traditional roles by evolving into integrated knowledge commons supported by digital platforms and user centered services. The experience of the IIHMR University Library shows how strategic use of e- resources, institutional repositories, and remote-access systems can create an inclusive learning environment that supports teaching, research, and professional development. By enabling seamless access to scholarly content and encouraging knowledge sharing among students and faculty, the library has strengthened research engagement and reduced barriers to information access. Continued investment in digital infrastructure, user training, and information literacy will be essential to sustain this progress. Overall, the transition of academic libraries into knowledge commons plays a critical role in enhancing educational quality and contributing meaningfully to long-term institutional and national development goals.

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