



Digital Transformation in Legal Information Services: A Practical Approach in Academic Law Libraries

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Abstract:

*This study examines the impact of digital transformation on legal information services in academic law libraries affiliated with Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Out of 16 law colleges, responses were received from 8 institutions, while the remaining colleges were newly established. The findings reveal that 50% of libraries are fully automated, and a majority subscribe to digital legal databases, with **Manupatra and SCC Online** being the most widely used. Digital services such as **OPAC/WebOPAC, user training, e-reference, and legal research tutorials** have been adopted to varying extents, significantly improving access to legal information, research quality, and user satisfaction.*

*However, the study also identifies challenges including **high subscription costs, budgetary limitations, and lack of trained staff**, which restrict the optimal use of digital resources. Despite these constraints, 87.5% of respondents acknowledged some level of improvement, with 50% reporting significant progress in their services. The study concludes that digital transformation has greatly enhanced academic law libraries, but **sustainable development requires strategic investment, capacity building, and collaborative resource-sharing models** to strengthen legal education and research support.*

Keyword: Digital Transformation, Legal Services, Academic Law Library, Legal Resources

Introduction:

The rapid growth of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has significantly transformed the way legal information is created, accessed, and disseminated. In the past, academic law libraries primarily relied on print collections such as statutes, case law reporters, and law journals to meet the information needs of students, researchers, and faculty. However, with the digital revolution, the landscape of legal information services has shifted towards electronic databases, online repositories, and digital research platforms.

Digital transformation in legal information services not only enhances access

to a vast range of national and international resources but also provides tools for advanced legal research, quick retrieval of judgments, and improved user experiences. The integration of platforms such as SCC Online, Manupatra, Westlaw, LexisNexis, and HeinOnline has redefined the role of academic law libraries from being custodians of print resources to becoming facilitators of digital legal scholarship.

For law librarians and information professionals, this transition has brought both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, digital resources offer efficiency, remote accessibility, and comprehensive coverage of legal materials. On the other, issues such as

high subscription costs, infrastructure limitations, user training, and licensing restrictions continue to affect their effective utilization. Academic law libraries must therefore adopt practical approaches to manage these transformations, ensuring that both faculty and students are equipped to leverage digital tools for legal research and practice.

This study seeks to explore the **practical aspects of digital transformation in academic law libraries**, focusing on the availability, accessibility, usage patterns, benefits, and challenges of digital legal information services. By analyzing the perspectives of law library professionals, the article highlights the strategies required to strengthen digital legal services and support quality legal education and research in the academic environment.

Objectives of the Study:

1. **To examine the extent of digital transformation** in legal information services offered by academic law libraries.
2. **To identify the types of digital legal resources and databases** (e.g., SCC Online, Manupatra, HeinOnline, LexisNexis, etc.) subscribed and made accessible to users.
3. **To study the role of LIS professionals** in planning, managing, and delivering digital legal information services.
4. **To evaluate the adequacy of digital infrastructure and training** provided to both professionals and users in academic law libraries.
5. **To analyze the benefits and challenges** associated with the implementation of digital legal information services in academic institutions.

6. **To assess the impact of digital resources** on legal research, teaching, and learning within academic law environments.
7. **To suggest practical strategies and best practices** for strengthening digital legal information services in academic law libraries.

Methodology Adopted:

To achieve the objectives of the present study, a **survey research method** was adopted. The study focused on collecting both quantitative and qualitative data from Law Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals working in academic law libraries.

1. **Research Design:** The study is **descriptive in nature**, aiming to examine the current status, practices, benefits, and challenges of digital transformation in legal information services in academic law libraries.
2. **Population and Sample Population:** LIS professional working in academic law libraries affiliated to Shivaji university, kolhapur.
3. **Data Collection Tool:** A **structured questionnaire** was designed, focusing on areas such as availability of digital resources, infrastructure, training, benefits, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. The questionnaire consisted of both **close-ended questions** (multiple-choice, Likert Scale)
4. **Mode of Data Collection:** The questionnaire was distributed through **Google Forms**. Follow-up communications were made to ensure maximum response.
5. **Data Analysis:** Collected data was **tabulated and analyzed** using simple statistical tools such as percentages,

frequency distribution, and charts for easy interpretation.

6. **Scope and Limitations:** The study is limited to academic law libraries and does not cover court libraries, bar association libraries, or private law firm libraries. Findings are based on the responses received from LIS professionals and may vary depending on the sample size and institutional context.

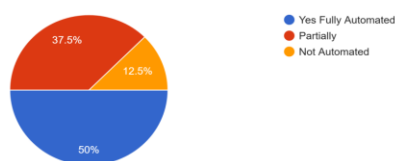
Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Out of the **16 law colleges affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur (SUK)**, responses were received from **8 institutions**. The response rate (50%) can be attributed to the fact that the remaining **8 law colleges have only recently been established (this academic year)** and are still in the process of setting up their library and information services. Consequently, they could not participate in the study.

The data collected from the **8 responding law colleges affiliated to SUK** was analyzed to understand the extent of digital transformation in legal information services. The analysis was carried out under the following heads:

1. Automation Process:

1. Is your library automated?
8 responses



The analysis of responses from the eight law colleges shows that **50% of the libraries are fully automated**, while **37.5% are partially automated**. Only **12.5% of the libraries remain non-automated**. This indicates that a **majority of academic law libraries affiliated with SUK have either**

completed or initiated the process of automation. The presence of a significant proportion of partially automated libraries suggests that many institutions are still in the transition phase, working towards full-scale digital integration. The very small percentage of non-automated libraries reflects that complete lack of automation is now rare, highlighting a positive trend toward digital transformation.

2. Library Automation Software:

The survey data reveals that the law colleges affiliated to Shivaji University, Kolhapur are at **different stages of adopting automation software** for managing their library services. Out of the eight respondents, **Koha** is the most widely used system, with three institutions reporting its use. This reflects the growing acceptance of Koha as a popular, open-source, and cost-effective solution for library automation.

Other colleges have adopted different systems according to their institutional needs and resources. One college reported using **E-Granthalaya**, a library automation software developed by NIC, while another institution indicated the use of **Vidyasagar**, which may be a locally developed or institution-specific application. Interestingly, one college reported using **both E-Granthalaya and Koha**, which demonstrates a hybrid approach, possibly to maximize efficiency in different areas of library operations.

In terms of legal information resources, **Manupatra** was cited by one college, highlighting access to a specialized digital database that supports legal research. **TechnoArv** was mentioned by another respondent, indicating the presence of alternative library software solutions in use. However, one college reported **no automation software at all**, suggesting that digital

transformation is still pending in certain institutions.

Overall, the findings suggest that while progress has been made toward automation, there is **no uniformity in the choice of software**. The use of multiple and varied systems reflects institutional diversity but also points toward a **lack of standardization across law colleges**. This uneven adoption indicates that while some libraries are moving toward advanced digital services, others remain in the early or transitional stages of automation.

3. Subscription of Digital Legal Information Database:

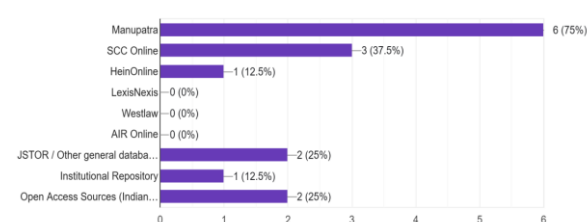
The analysis of responses shows that **100% of the participating law colleges subscribe to digital legal information databases**. This indicates a strong commitment by all responding institutions to provide access to digital legal resources for their students, faculty, and researchers.

The uniform subscription rate reflects a **positive trend in the digital transformation of academic law libraries**, ensuring that users have access to updated case laws, statutes, commentaries, and other essential legal research materials in electronic format. This also highlights the recognition among law colleges that **digital databases are indispensable for modern legal education and research**.

Such a complete adoption demonstrates that while levels of automation software may vary among institutions, the **importance of digital legal information resources is universally acknowledged** across the affiliated colleges.

4. Availability of Digital Legal Resources:

4. Availability of digital legal resources (check all that apply):
8 responses



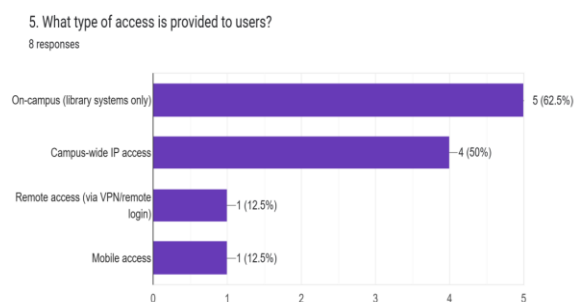
The survey results clearly indicate that **Manupatra is the most widely subscribed digital legal database**, with **75% (6 out of 8)** of the responding law colleges providing access to it. This highlights its dominance and preference among academic law libraries for Indian case law, statutes, and legal commentary.

The second most used resource is **SCC Online**, subscribed by **37.5% (3 colleges)**, showing its significant role in supporting advanced legal research. **HeinOnline** and **Institutional Repositories** are available in **12.5% (1 college each)**, suggesting limited but specialized use of these platforms for international and archival legal resources.

General academic resources such as **JSTOR/other databases** and **Open Access Sources** are utilized by **25% (2 colleges each)**, reflecting attempts to broaden the scope of information beyond strictly legal databases.

It is notable that **LexisNexis, Westlaw, and AIR Online**—well-known international and national legal databases—were **not subscribed to by any of the responding law colleges**. This could be attributed to high subscription costs or institutional budget limitations.

5. What type of access is provided to users:

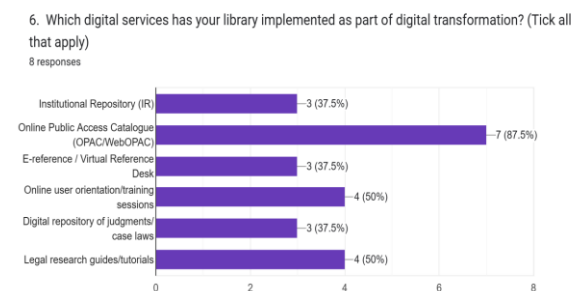


The survey results indicate that the **most common mode of access to digital resources** in law colleges is **on-campus access restricted to library systems**, reported by **62.5% (5 out of 8) institutions**. This suggests that a majority of colleges still rely on traditional access points within the library premises.

Campus-wide IP-based access is provided by **50% (4 colleges)**, enabling broader availability across the institution's network. This reflects progress toward improving user convenience and flexibility in accessing resources beyond the library walls.

However, only **12.5% (1 college each)** reported providing **remote access through VPN/remote login and mobile access**. This indicates that **off-campus access is still very limited**, which may restrict the ability of students and faculty to access legal databases during research or study outside campus hours.

6. Which digital services has your library implemented as part of digital transformation?



The analysis reveals that the **most widely implemented digital service** among the responding law colleges is the **Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC/WebOPAC)**, adopted by **87.5% (7 out of 8 libraries)**. This highlights that **automation and online cataloguing are now a standard practice**, enabling users to easily locate library resources.

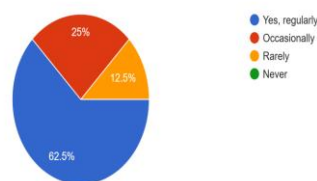
Other digital services are being adopted at varying levels:

Online user orientation/training sessions and **legal research guides/tutorials** are offered by **50% (4 colleges each)**, showing growing efforts to strengthen digital literacy and legal research skills among students and faculty.

Institutional Repositories (IR), E-reference/Virtual Reference Desks, and Digital Repositories of Judgments/Case Laws are each implemented by **37.5% (3 colleges)**, indicating a moderate level of engagement with advanced digital services.

7. Does your institution conduct regular training/orientation for users on digital legal databases:

8. Does your institution conduct regular training/orientation for users on digital legal databases?
8 responses



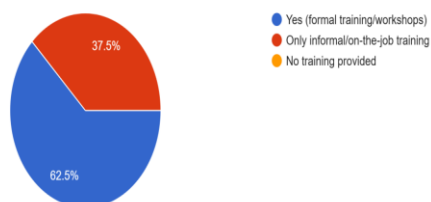
The analysis shows that a **majority of law colleges (62.5% or 5 out of 8)** conduct **regular training and orientation programs** for their users on digital legal databases. This indicates a strong commitment toward enhancing user competency and ensuring effective utilization of subscribed digital resources.

In addition, **25% (2 colleges)** organize such training **occasionally**, while **12.5% (1 college)** reported conducting it **rarely**.

Importantly, none of the institutions selected the option “Never,” which means **all participating law colleges acknowledge the importance of training initiatives** for their users.

8. Have you received specialized training in digital legal resources and services?

9. Have you received specialized training in digital legal resources and services?
8 responses



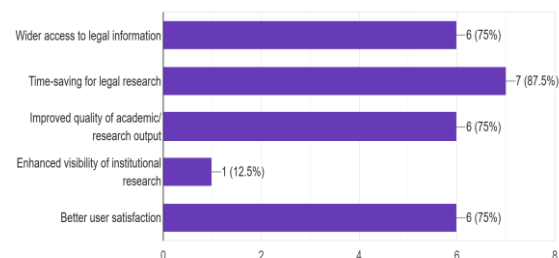
The survey results indicate that a **majority of respondents (62.5% or 5 out of 8)** have received **formal specialized training or workshops** in digital legal resources and services. This reflects a positive trend toward **capacity building among law librarians and LIS professionals**, ensuring that they are equipped to manage and deliver digital services effectively.

Meanwhile, **37.5% (3 respondents)** reported receiving **only informal/on-the-job training**, which suggests that while they are familiar with digital legal resources, their skills are acquired in a less structured manner without formal certification or workshops.

Notably, **no respondent indicated “No training provided”**, which shows that **all professionals in the surveyed colleges have some level of exposure to digital legal resource training**.

9. What benefits has digital transformation brought to your law library:

10. What benefits has digital transformation brought to your law library? (Tick all that apply)
8 responses



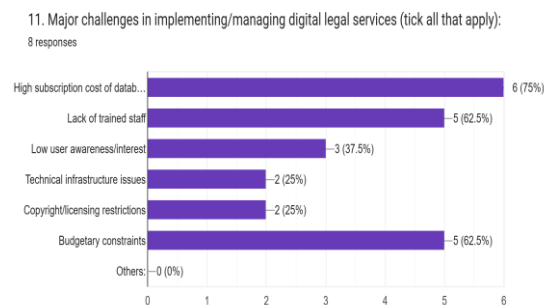
The survey findings highlight several significant benefits experienced by law libraries as a result of digital transformation:

Time-Saving for Legal Research is the most widely acknowledged benefit, reported by **87.5% (7 out of 8)** of the libraries. This demonstrates that digital tools and databases are greatly enhancing research efficiency by providing quick access to judgments, statutes, and legal references.

Wider Access to Legal Information, Improved Quality of Academic/Research Output, and Better User Satisfaction were each cited by **75% (6 libraries)**. This indicates that digital transformation has not only broadened the availability of legal information but also contributed to **higher research standards** and a more **user-centered service environment**.

Enhanced Visibility of Institutional Research was reported by only **12.5% (1 library)**, showing that while repositories and digitization efforts are being introduced, they are still in the early stages and not widely adopted across all institutions.

10. Major challenges in implementing/managing digital legal services:



The survey responses reveal multiple obstacles faced by law libraries in effectively adopting and managing digital legal services:

High Subscription Cost of Databases emerged as the **top challenge** (reported by 75%, i.e., 6 out of 8 libraries). This indicates that financial sustainability is a pressing concern, as most specialized legal databases require substantial annual fees.

Lack of Trained Staff and **Budgetary Constraints** were both highlighted by **62.5% (5 libraries)**. This suggests that beyond financial issues, there is also a **skills gap** in handling digital legal resources, which may affect the quality of services offered.

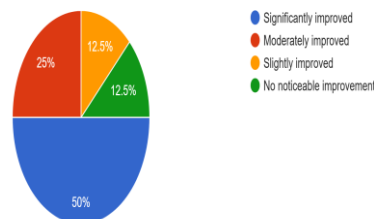
Low User Awareness/Interest was cited by **37.5% (3 libraries)**, showing that even when resources are available, users (students, faculty, or researchers) may not fully utilize them, reducing the return on investment.

Technical Infrastructure Issues and **Copyright/Licensing Restrictions** were each reported by **25% (2 libraries)**, pointing to ongoing concerns related to technology readiness and legal compliance in the digital environment.

No respondents mentioned **“Other” challenges**, suggesting that the listed barriers capture the most significant issues faced.

11. To what extent has digital transformation improved legal information services in your academic law library:

12. To what extent has digital transformation improved legal information services in your academic law library?
8 responses



The responses clearly show that digital transformation has had a **positive impact** on legal information services in academic law libraries, though the degree of improvement varies:

50% of respondents (4 libraries) reported that services have **significantly improved**. This indicates that for half of the institutions, digital initiatives have meaningfully enhanced access, efficiency, and quality of legal information services.

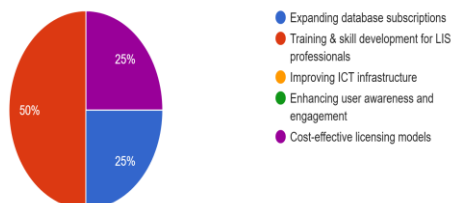
25% (2 libraries) felt that services have **moderately improved**, suggesting that while progress has been made, there is still room for further development.

12.5% (1 library) indicated **slight improvement**, pointing to minimal benefits, possibly due to limited infrastructure, resources, or user engagement.

12.5% (1 library) reported **no noticeable improvement**, which highlights that digital transformation has not yet translated into tangible service enhancement in every context.

12. Which area requires maximum focus for future improvement?

13. Which area requires maximum focus for future improvement?
8 responses



The chart shows the results of a survey asking, "Which area requires maximum focus for future improvement?" with 8 total responses.

The key takeaways are:

Training and skill development is the top priority, with 50% of respondents selecting it. This suggests that a significant majority of the people surveyed believe that improving the skills and training of LIS professionals is the most crucial area for future development.

Expanding database subscriptions and cost-effective licensing models tied for second place, each with 25% of the responses. This indicates that improving access to more resources and finding more affordable ways to license those resources are also important concerns, though less so than professional development.

Improving ICT infrastructure and enhancing user awareness and engagement received 0% of the responses. This means that none of the participants identified these areas as the highest priority for future improvement.

In summary, the results highlight a clear consensus that focusing on the training and professional development of LIS professionals should be the primary goal for future improvement.

Findings of the Study:

There are some findings found from the study they are as follows:

1. Adoption of Digital Legal Resources:

All participating law libraries (100%) subscribe to digital legal databases, indicating universal recognition of their importance in legal education and research.

2. Implementation of Digital Services:

The most widely adopted service is the **Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC/WebOPAC)** (87.5%).

Online user orientation/training sessions and **legal research guides/tutorials** are moderately implemented (50%).

Institutional repositories, e-reference desks, and digital repositories of case laws are less common (37.5%), reflecting uneven adoption of advanced digital services.

3. User Training and Orientation:

A majority of libraries (62.5%) conduct **regular training/orientation** sessions for users on digital legal databases.

25% provide such sessions only occasionally, and 12.5% rarely, suggesting a need for consistent user engagement across institutions.

4. Specialized Training for Library Staff:

62.5% of respondents received **formal training/workshops** in managing digital legal resources. The remaining **37.5%** rely only on informal/on-the-job training, pointing to a gap in professional development opportunities.

Benefits of Digital Transformation:

Major benefits include **time-saving in legal research** (87.5%), **wider access to legal information** (75%), **improved academic/research output** (75%), and **better user satisfaction** (75%). However, **enhanced**

visibility of institutional research (12.5%) remains underutilized.

Challenges in Implementation:

High subscription costs (75%), lack of trained staff (62.5%), and budgetary constraints (62.5%) emerged as the most critical barriers.

Suggestions of the Study:

There are some suggestions from the above study they are as follows:

1. Enhance Budgetary Support & Cost Management:

Institutions should allocate **dedicated budgets** for digital legal resources and explore **consortia-based subscriptions** to reduce high subscription costs.

Negotiating with vendors for **customized packages** and adopting **open-access legal resources** can also minimize expenses.

2. Strengthen Training & Capacity Building:

Organize **regular, structured training programs/workshops** for library professionals to build expertise in managing digital legal databases.

Encourage participation in **refresher courses, webinars, and conferences** to keep staff updated on emerging digital trends.

Expand User Awareness & Orientation:

Conduct **frequent user orientation sessions** (both online and offline) to improve awareness and utilization of digital legal services.

Develop **legal research tutorials, guides, and videos** to assist students and faculty in independent learning.

Improve Technical Infrastructure:

Invest in **high-speed internet, reliable servers, and updated library**

management systems to ensure seamless access.

Implement **remote access facilities (VPN, mobile access, cloud-based services)** to extend usage beyond campus.

Promote Institutional Research Visibility:

Strengthen **institutional repositories** and integrate them with national/international platforms for **greater visibility of faculty and student research**.

Encourage digital archiving of judgments, case laws, and legal dissertations to enhance academic contribution.

Encourage Collaboration & Networking:

Establish **resource-sharing networks among law libraries** for collective access to specialized legal databases.

Partner with professional associations (like IALL, INFLIBNET, or Bar Councils) for collaborative training and resource support.

Policy & Licensing Reforms:

Advocate for **flexible licensing models** and **academic-friendly copyright policies** to maximize digital resource utilization.

Institutions should adopt clear **digital resource policies** covering subscription, usage, training, and evaluation.

Continuous Evaluation & Feedback:

Conduct **regular surveys and feedback studies** from students, faculty, and researchers to assess digital service effectiveness.

Use this feedback to make data-driven decisions for improving access and satisfaction levels.

Conclusion:

The study highlights that digital transformation has brought about a significant positive impact on academic law libraries affiliated with Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Despite only half of the institutions being able

to participate due to their recent establishment, the responses provide meaningful insights into the current state of digital legal services.

The findings reveal that most law libraries have adopted essential digital tools such as **Manupatra, SCC Online, and OPAC/WebOPAC systems**, which have substantially improved access to legal information and enhanced the quality of academic and research output. Libraries are also providing **user training and orientation programs**, which play a vital role in maximizing the benefits of these resources.

However, challenges such as the **high cost of subscriptions, budgetary constraints, and shortage of trained staff** continue to hinder the full realization of digital transformation. While 50% of respondents reported significant improvements in legal information services, others noted only moderate or slight progress, reflecting uneven implementation across institutions.

Overall, digital transformation in academic law libraries has led to **wider access, improved efficiency, and better user satisfaction**, but sustained growth requires **stronger financial investment, staff capacity building, technical infrastructure enhancement, and collaborative efforts**. By addressing these challenges strategically, academic law libraries can fully harness the potential of digital resources to support legal education and research in the evolving knowledge society.

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