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## INFLIBNET Centre: A UGC Initiative for Strengthening Academic Libraries in India

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### Abstract:

The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre an Inter-University Centre (IUC) of the University Grants Commission (UGC) has been a cornerstone of India's nationwide effort to modernize academic libraries since 1991. This paper reviews INFLIBNET's major services (e-ShodhSindhu, N-LIST, Shodhganga, ShodhShuddhi, SOUL, IndCat, INFED/identity federation, IRINS/VIDWAN and e-content projects), synthesizes findings from published research about their usage and impact, and identifies ongoing challenges and researchable opportunities. Drawing on government/INFLIBNET documentation and academic studies, the review finds that INFLIBNET's combination of consortial licensing, national repositories, library automation, identity federation, and plagiarism-detection provision has measurably expanded access, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced research visibility while also revealing persistent gaps in awareness, training, and tool-quality evaluation. It draws on official documentation and recent developments to argue that INFLIBNET functions as national scholarly infrastructure coordinating resources, standards, and services that reduce costs, increase equity of access, and raise research quality for universities and colleges throughout India.

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**Keywords:** INFLIBNET, UGC, Academic Libraries, India.

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### Introduction

The Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET) Centre was launched as a UGC initiative on 27 February 1991 and became an independent Inter-University Centre in 1996. Its stated mission is to modernize university libraries, promote resource sharing, and provide national scale services that reduce cost and improve equity of scholarly access across India.

Indian academic libraries operate in a rapidly expanding higher-education ecosystem, where equitable access to digital resources, interoperable systems, and integrity in research are paramount. The INFLIBNET Centre in Gandhinagar provides the backbone

infrastructure that enables these priorities at national scale.

This paper is a focused literature review that (a) summarizes INFLIBNET's flagship services, (b) integrates empirical findings from recent studies about their adoption and impact, and (c) highlights gaps and future directions for practice and research.

### Methods:

This is a narrative/systematic review synthesizing: INFLIBNET documentation and project pages, national reports, and peer-reviewed or scholarly papers investigating INFLIBNET services (Shodhganga, e-ShodhSindhu, N-LIST, SOUL, ShodhShuddhi,

IndCat, IRINS/VIDWAN). Literature was identified through targeted web searches of institutional pages, repository records (Shodhganga, Digital Commons), SSRN/Research Gate entries and journal articles referencing the named services. Representative empirical studies and impact analyses were selected to illustrate adoption patterns, usage metrics, and evaluative findings. (Search samples used: e-ShodhSindhu evaluation studies, N-LIST usage studies, SOUL automation case studies, Shodhganga impact analyses, ShodhShuddhi region-wise analyses).

### Expanding And Equalizing Access To Scholarly Content:

- **e-ShodhSindhu (e-SS) and N-LIST:** e-ShodhSindhu is a national consortium that provides universities with high-quality scholarly e-resources at negotiated rates, aiming to maximize coverage while minimizing cost through collective licensing and usage monitoring.  
**N-LIST** (National Library and Information Services Infrastructure for Scholarly Content) extends comparable access to colleges—routing authenticated users through INFLIBNET’s servers to publisher platforms. The programme advertises access to thousands of journals and large e-book packages, bridging the resource gap between universities and colleges. These layered consortial models reduce duplicative spending and expand access equity—especially critical for non-autonomous colleges and rural institutions.
- **e-content ecosystems: e-PG Pathshala, e-Acharya/Vidya-mitra, and e-Adhyayan:** INFLIBNET manages national repositories and portals of curriculum-linked e-content developed

under the National Mission on Education through ICT (NME-ICT) **e-PG Pathshala** (open PG courseware), **e-Acharya/Vidya-mitra** (integrated access to e-content projects), and **e-Adhyayan** (UG/PG e-books derived from e-PG Pathshala). Together, these platforms support teaching-learning with openly licensed, peer-developed materials across disciplines.

- **Discovery, Interoperability And Shared Services:**

#### **IndCat: National Union Catalogue:**

**IndCat** is the free union catalogue of books, theses, and serials held in major Indian academic libraries, providing MARC/MARCXML records, locations, and holdings data. It enables inter-library loan, reduces cataloguing duplication, and supports national-level resource sharing.  
[indcat.inflibnet.ac.in+1IJCRT](http://indcat.inflibnet.ac.in+1IJCRT)

#### **SOUL: Library Automation at Scale:**

**SOUL (Software for University Libraries)**—developed by INFLIBNET—is a widely adopted integrated library management system tailored to Indian academic workflows, with OPAC and modules for acquisitions, serials, cataloguing, and circulation. Its availability (including a demo edition and upgrade path to v3.0) has enabled thousands of libraries to standardize operations cost-effectively.  
[soul.inflibnet.ac.in+1klessccmumbai.edu.in](http://soul.inflibnet.ac.in+1klessccmumbai.edu.in)

- **INFED: Federated Identity & Access Management:**

**INFED**, India’s first national access-management federation, adopts Shibboleth/SAML to authenticate users via their institutional identity providers and deliver seamless access to licensed e-

resources—on-campus and remotely. By centralizing trust and enabling single-sign-on, INFED improves security, user experience, and license compliance. [infed.inflibnet.ac.in+1refeds.org](http://infed.inflibnet.ac.in+1refeds.org)

• **Research Visibility, Assessment, And Integrity:**

**Shodhganga: National ETD Repository:**

**Shodhganga** provides open access to Indian theses and dissertations, increasing global visibility of Indian research and reducing duplication in topics and methods. As of **May 7, 2025**, the repository crossed **600,000 theses**, underscoring its role as a premier national ETD platform.

[shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in+1](http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in+1)

**IRINS and VIDWAN: Research Information Infrastructure:**

**IRINS** (Indian Research Information Network System) is a national, web-based RIM service that institutions can adopt as a free SaaS to curate faculty profiles and publications; **VIDWAN** is the national expert database underpinning profiles and scholarly networking. These tools support evaluation, collaboration, and analytics across institutions and disciplines. [irins.orgINFLIBNET+1](http://irins.orgINFLIBNET+1)

**ShodhShuddhi (Plagiarism Detection Services):**

Under **ShodhShuddhi**, INFLIBNET has provided national access to plagiarism detection software to enhance research quality and compliance. Since **October 1, 2023**, the programme has provisioned **DrillBit-Extreme** for participating HEIs, succeeding earlier deployments (e.g., Ouriginal), and has processed millions of submissions. Recent field reports and studies reflect both the initiative's scale and ongoing debates regarding tool

performance and training needs—signaling the importance of continuous improvement and capacity building. [shodhshuddhi.inflibnet.ac.in+1BioMed CentralSAGEJournalsTheTimesofIndia](http://shodhshuddhi.inflibnet.ac.in+1BioMedCentralSAGEJournalsTheTimesofIndia)

**Literature Review:**

He, H. T. (2024). - Studies of e-ShodhSindhu and N-LIST show high perceived value among research scholars and college users but also reveal uneven awareness and varied usage patterns across institutions. Research on e-ShodhSindhu usage by scholars at premier institutions reports that access to subscribed journals supports research productivity and literature review activities, while N-LIST studies at college level indicate that many users remain unaware of the platform or lack training to exploit it fully. ([Taylor & Francis Online](#), [Indian Library Association](#))

Surwade, Y. P. (2023). - Multiple case studies and descriptive studies document SOUL's broad adoption (thousands of libraries) and its role in lowering automation barriers for small/medium institutions. Empirical reports praise SOUL's fit with Indian cataloguing needs, while also calling for stronger training and long-term support to realize full benefits. ([ijrils.in](#), [ResearchGate](#))

Pradhan, P. (2023). - Impact analyses of Shodhganga (ETD repository) indicate the repository has greatly expanded thesis visibility; bibliometric studies find Shodhganga deposits are increasingly cited and referenced in subsequent research, demonstrating measurable scholarly reach for Indian theses. Several studies have used citation and reference-analysis to quantify Shodhganga's influence on downstream research. ([docs.ndltd.org](http://docs.ndltd.org), [ResearchGate](#))

Arunkumar, V. R. et al (2022). - Research on ShodhShuddhi shows wide

uptake of plagiarism detection across regions, but studies also surface concerns: tool selection and coverage (especially for foreign commercial databases), interpretation training for similarity reports, and consistent institutional policies. Region-wise analyses document heterogeneity in usage intensity and call for capacity building to accompany automated checks. ([ResearchGate](#), [DigitalCommons](#))

Ramesh, S. et al. (2013). - Scholarly work proposing impact-assessment tools for INFLIBNET services highlights the need for standardized metrics (usage, ESG: equity-scope-governance) and improved outcome measurement—moving beyond counts of signups or records to measure teaching/research outcomes and cost savings. ([ResearchGate](#))

#### Synthesis:

1. **Access and equity:** Consortial procurement (e-ShodhSindhu) plus college access (N-LIST) have demonstrably expanded access to subscription content, but awareness and training gaps limit full uptake at some colleges. ([Taylor & Francis Online](#), [Indian Library Association](#))
2. **Operational efficiency:** SOUL and IndCat reduce cataloguing duplication and enable basic automation across resource-constrained libraries. Evidence shows many smaller colleges successfully automated with SOUL but require ongoing skill development. ([ijrils.in](#), [E-Books INFLIBNET](#))
3. **Research visibility & reuse:** Shodhganga has substantially increased the discoverability of Indian theses; citation and usage studies confirm measurable downstream use. ([docs.ndltd.org](#), [ResearchGate](#))

4. **Research integrity challenges:** Provisioning a national PDS under ShodhShuddhi is a major policy step, but studies caution about tool-coverage limits and the need for human judgement and training in interpreting results. ([ResearchGate](#), [DigitalCommons](#))
5. **Measurement & governance needs:** Researchers urge standardized impact metrics and more rigorous program evaluation to guide investments and feature development. ([ResearchGate](#))

#### Challenges and Opportunities:

**Challenges** identified across the literature: uneven digital literacy and awareness (esp. at college level), bandwidth/connectivity constraints, inconsistent metadata quality, limited ORCID/identifier integration, and the need for careful evaluation of plagiarism and AI-detection tools.

**Opportunities** for INFLIBNET and researchers:

- Design and validate standardized impact metrics for national library services.
- Evaluate comparative performance of similarity-detection tools against benchmark corpora (including foreign-commercial databases).
- Expand ORCID/ISBN/DOI integration across IRINS, Shodhganga, and IndCat to improve disambiguation and analytics. ([ResearchGate](#))
- Conduct randomized or quasi-experimental studies assessing how N-LIST training interventions affect usage and learning outcomes in colleges. ([Indian Library Association](#))

#### Conclusion:

INFLIBNET's integrated services form a functioning national scholarly infrastructure that has materially improved

access, automation, visibility, and research-quality workflows in Indian higher education. Empirical studies corroborate many positive effects (usage of consortia; SOUL adoption; Shodhganga visibility) while highlighting persistent implementation and evaluation gaps. Addressing training, metadata, evaluation metrics, and evidence-based tool selection will further strengthen INFLIBNET's contributions to India's research and educational ecosystem.

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