

Report

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Coil-Net, the Hindi Website

IGNCA is developing a unique Hindi website Coil-Net for the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Government of India. The basic idea of this website is to offer quality material on the broad area of Culture and Art for the large number of Hindi end users. The fact that Hindi is the preferred medium of a huge majority of population in India has been established by the initiatives of several news and information channels starting their programmes in Hindi to reach larger audiences (National Geographic, Cartoon Network etc.)

The Ministry of Information Technology found that though there are a lot of initiatives in creating quality content English sites, the efforts in Hindi were limited. IGNCA has the resources both in terms of manpower as well as intellectual input to create such a website in Hindi. Hence the joint project 'Cultural heritage Digital Library in Hindi with Special Focus on Hindi Speaking Region.

IGNCA hosted a two-day workshop on 'Cultural Content: Exploration and Finalization' to discuss and draw up appropriate material suitable for the coilnet. Scholars, mainly from the disciplines of anthropology, sociology, art history, history, folklore, Sanskrit, Hindi, Prakrit, Pali, Buddhist Studies, archaeology, prehistory, music, manuscriptology and museology from various art institutes in Delhi and neighbouring regions participated in the workshop. The objective of the workshop was to arrive at an appropriate, well-connected, suitable, ordered, simple yet convincing materials, viz., text, audio, video, visuals etc. for the COIL-net. This website is a mega effort to provide and disseminate extensive, useful, lucid and research-based information on all possible dimensions of cultural heritage of India in Hindi for the users (schoolchildren, tourists, researchers and the general browser). The web-users of Hindi heartland: Rajasthan, Haryana, Delhi, Uttaranchal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand and Bihar are the focused targets.

In this inaugural speech, Prof. N.R. Shetty, Member Secretary, IGNCA, explained the immense significance of cultural heritage about the Hindi speaking regions, which is sadly referred as BIMARU States. Professor Shetty stressed, "Library is an ideal as well as practical indicator of sustainable development. It covers all possible branches of development, social, economic, historical, cultural, scientific to name a few. The library, as matter of fact, has served the great social purpose by offering its services to the users. The concept of digital library is a great opportunity to provide democratic access to information resources. However, because of various reasons, the web based content is mainly in English. Hence, what is potentially a democratizing technology is contributing in increasing the information gap between English literate and English non-literate."

Kailash Mishra, the Co-Investigator of COIL-net in IGNCA, gave a brief introduction to the participants about the coil-net Project. He said though India is among the English literate countries, for most Indians their mother tongue remains the preferred choice for communication, entertainment and *edutainment*. This reality of mother tongue is best expressed by the great Maithili Vaisanava poet Vidyapati Thakur: *Desila bayana Sabha Jana mittha* (Everybody loves the sweetness of his mother tongue)".

While the Central as well as State governments have been taking initiatives on Personal Computer (PC) and Internet penetration, in the absence of the localized content, this will possibly prove to be counter productive. Hence, there is an urgent need to prepare web-enabled localized content

corpuses in Hindi and also in other Indian languages. Some well known and highly circulated Hindi newspapers and magazines have already started their web versions. This effort needs to be complimented with Hindi based multimedia corpuses on regional heritage.

The COIL-Net project of IGNC A in tune with its Lifestyle project on *Lok Parampra* and *Kshetra Sampada*, is about developing the reusable model design, repeatable development process and one pilot corpus in Hindi. The lessons learnt in this exercise will also help in taking up similar assignments for developing corpuses on the web for other Indian languages.

The participants unanimously decided to include a huge quantity of diversified quality-base information as the basic text and audio-video materials substantiated with photographs, sketches etc., as the content of the website. They emphasized on the need to offer input that is carefully selected, thoughtfully compiled and contextually integrated on areas such as cultural heritage, folk literature and life style of Hindi speaking region. The studies and multimedia documentation of cultural zones of Braj, Varanasi, Gaya, Vaidyanath, Rajim, Amarkantak, Ujjain, Nathdwara, Pushkar, Ajmer, Kumaon, Garhwal, Chattisgarh, Malwa, Bundelkhand, Gondwana, Kurukshetra, Ang, Magadh, Mithila, Harit Kshetra, Santhal Pargana, Mewat etc. shall be included in the corpus.

It was decided that:

- The cultural heritage section shall offer the content under the categories of folk theatre, puppetry, folk and classical traditions of dance and music, rituals, legends, fairs, festivals, temples and other places of worship, pilgrimage centres, artizan's creativity (such as painting, embroidery, weaving, handicraft, jewelry, story-telling, architecture, rivers, forest landscapes and interpersonal communication etc). It would also include allied areas of interest such as people's knowledge on medicinal plants, folk fames, rural adages, meteorological poetry etc.
- The folk literature section shall contain the literature (including proverbs, folklore, riddles and poetry) in major dialects of Hindi e.g. Avadhi, Angika, Magahi, Maithili, Braj, Bhojpuri, Majjhi, Santhali, Chattisgarhi, Bagheli, Marvari and other Rajasthani dialects.
- Traditionally popular literature like *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesha*, *Jataka* stories, *Singhasan Battisi* and oral epics like *Alha Udal*, *Raja Salhesa* and *Devnarayan* etc. shall be made available through this library.
- The works of poets and writers such as Vidyapati, Surdas, Rasakhan, Tulsidas, Kabir, Mira, Rahim, Ghalib, Keshavdas, Jayasi, Chandravardai etc., on the one hand and Premchand, Phanishwarnath "Reno", Bhartendu Harischandra. Nagarjuna, Subhadra Kumari Chauhan etc., on the other, shall be included with selected multimedia renderings.

Four major Hindi publications of the IGNC A: (a) *Hazariprasad Dwivedi Ke Patra*; (b) *Dharati aur Beej* by Rajendra Ranjan Chaturvedi; (c) *Bundelkhand ki Lok Sanskrit Ka Itihasa* by Narmada Prasad Gupta; and (d) *Parvrajak Ki Dairy* by Nirmal Kumar Bose are already included in the COIL-Net as base materials.



Scholars and computer professionals worked together at the workshop to produce cultural heritage in a unique way as per the growing requirement of the web users. The Cultural Informatics Lab of IGNCIA will be wholly involved in the project, providing the technological support.

(Report compiled by Kailasha Mishra)