

Empirical Insights and a Framework for Strengthening Reading Habits

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Online First 13 July 2026

Keywords:

Reading Habits,
Academic Libraries,
Bibliotherapy,
Library Habits,
Digital Divide

ABSTRACT

Academic libraries are important in promoting good reading practices among students that will greatly impact their academic performance, lifelong learning, and personal growth. But the growing popularity of electronic resources has damaged the traditional reading culture in many university libraries. This study is designed to examine the impact of the digital divide and demographic characteristics on students' reading practices and to suggest a practical solution to strengthen the reading culture in the academic library. A survey method was used in the research with 181 students from the Shyamsundar region of West Bengal, India. The results show that the digital factors are reading habits, with significant positive relationships with access to devices, internet usage, and digital literacy. By contrast, most demographic factors have little effect. The study offers a comprehensive model based on assessment, strategic partnerships, multicultural reading programs, interactive reading areas, bibliotherapy, resources, technological tools, promotional efforts, and ongoing feedback and evaluation. This model combines traditional and digital reading experiences to create engaging reading environments. This framework brings together empirical knowledge and concrete solutions, enabling academic libraries to mitigate the loss of reading trends, close the gap between the "digital divide" and "cultural reading," and cultivate a culture of reading among students.

1. Introduction

Reading is a basic skill that develops knowledge and growth. Reading benefits students' academic performance and fosters a broader perspective. However, with the digital age, it is common to see many students opting for screens over printed books. This has made them less interested in deep reading and adversely impacted their learning outcomes. The rise of digital resources worldwide threatens traditional reading culture, as academic libraries play a major role in promoting reading among learners. Reading promotion is a prominent task of academic libraries. They can use traditional

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techniques and contemporary technology to help students return to reading and establish good reading habits. The findings of this study are based on actual observations and surveys. It is primarily targeted at schoolchildren aged 14-21 from selected schools in the Shyamsundar area of West Bengal. This study examines the impact of the digital divide and demographic factors on learners' reading behavior. The study shows that the reading habits and the digital factors have a significant positive relationship, including device access, Internet connection, digital literacy, and the availability of reading resources. Most demographic factors, however, have limited influence. Based on these results and a detailed review of the literature, a practical approach to improving reading habits in academic libraries is suggested. The framework highlights the integration of technology, organized reading campaigns, strategic faculty collaboration, the introduction of bibliotherapy, interactive spaces, and a diversity of programming, the development of resources, promotional activities, and continuous feedback and evaluation processes. A holistic model combines traditional and digital methods to provide an engaging and supportive reading environment. It tackles some of the challenges faced by students in the digital era, including digital distraction, resource shortages, and shifts in students' preferences. Academic libraries need to act quickly to rebuild students' love of reading. A successful implementation of this task by libraries means substantial improvements in learning outcomes and students' personal growth. This study offers solid, feasible concepts and a logical framework that libraries can easily implement. With the suggested strategies, academic libraries can re-establish healthy reading habits and have reading become a habit for all students.

2. Literature Review

Personal, social, technological, and environmental factors interact in complex ways in the development of reading habits. Reading promotion activities in academic libraries, such as author visits, book clubs, reading competitions, and comfortable reading spaces, are well known as effective ways to boost reading participation among students. The increasing number of digital resources—such as e-books, Internet databases, audiobooks, and mobile reading applications—has also changed how people read by providing information that transcends the physical library setting. The development of reading habits can be explained based on several theoretical perspectives. Theoretically, several theories can be used to explain reading habits. According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) proposed by Ajzen, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control determine reading behaviour. From this view, students will have positive attitudes towards reading, see their peers' support for reading, and feel confident accessing and using reading resources, making them more likely to become active readers. Likewise, theories of habit formation provide greater support for automatic reading behaviour in stable contexts over the long run. Thus, frequent exposure to reading opportunities, supportive environments, and positive reinforcement can help to develop long-term reading habits. These theoretical assumptions have been supported by recent empirical research. In a meta-analysis of 37 studies around the globe with a sample size of 15,434, the authors concluded that reading attitude ($r = 0.51$), self-efficacy ($r = 0.47$), and satisfaction with the library services ($r = 0.44$) had the strongest effects on reading intention in University libraries

(Zhao & Li, 2026). The results of this study show that psychological and motivational factors are important determinants of reading behaviour. Similarly, Mandal (2008) showed that the reading environment has a significant effect on students' reading interests and frequency. Other social factors, such as peer groups, family encouragement and institutional culture, have also been found to be significant predictors of reading engagement. The transition from print to digital reading has created opportunities and challenges. For one thing, digital materials are flexible and convenient, allowing easy retrieval of information. However, research has found issues with screen fatigue, decreased attention span, eye strain and greater vulnerability to digital distractions. Devi (2025) found a significant increase in digital reading, with more than 60% of students' academic reading currently done online. Nevertheless, when students are reading with depth, analyzing and critiquing, or learning in a lengthy fashion, they still seek out print. This is a paradox, as the results show that neither print nor digital media can meet all reading needs on their own. Rather, a balance between both formats seems to be required. The digital divide, as an important concept that influences reading behaviour, has come to light. The digital divide is not just about access to technology; it is also about differences in digital literacy, internet access, device availability, and the capacity to use digital resources effectively. Even with electronic resources, students with limited or insecure Internet connections or limited digital literacy skills may struggle to read. Research has begun to focus on the positive effects of digital technologies on reading engagement, while others have reported on disparities in access and competencies that generate inequalities. This means that technology-supported reading programs can't necessarily have a positive impact on all students unless digital literacy and accessibility are considered in tandem. There has also been an investigation of the relationship between reading habits and demographic factors. Adetayo et al. (2024) revealed gender gaps in library usage patterns and reading preferences; however, other studies found that demographic effects were limited when motivational and environmental factors were taken into account. Lopes et al. (2023) noted that 88% of students had a positive attitude towards reading, whereas only 59% regularly borrowed books from academic libraries. This mismatch implies that positive attitudes don't necessarily equate with regular reading. The results do support the significance of institutional support mechanisms that connect intention to read and actual reading. Bibliotherapy has also been a recent topic of study, involving the use of specific reading materials to aid emotional, psychological, and personal growth. Recent research suggests that bibliotherapy can positively impact not only readers' emotional health but also their engagement in reading activities, as it relates to their personal experiences and difficulties. Mandal and Mandal (2024) highlighted the importance of bibliotherapy in promoting reading habits and mental health. Although the potential of bibliotherapy seems great, the practice is not widely explored in academic library reading promotion programs, which have traditionally focused on literacy development rather than all-inclusive student support. Academic libraries have responded to these developments with a range of different strategies, all of which involve a mixture of traditional and digital services. Despite the availability of digital tools for accessing information, Lokeshappa (2025) noted that many students need training and guidance to make effective use of electronic resources and e-books. Mandal and Bandyopadhyay (2012) also found that awareness of resources, a reading-friendly environment, and institutional encouragement were critical factors that could help enhance reading behavior. Current research, however, has tended to focus on individual

factors rather than on components of a broader reading promotion strategy. While there's plenty of literature out there, a few areas of research remain underexplored. First, very few studies attempt to combine digital reading behaviour and traditional reading promotion in a single study. Second, in the context of academic libraries, the digital divide has been less studied in relation to readers' reading behaviours, especially in developing countries. Third, despite the evidence, there is little evidence of the use of bibliotherapy in complete models of developing reading habits. Lastly, the existing frameworks often focus primarily on the provision of services and resources in the library, rather than on the mechanisms of ongoing assessment, feedback, and co-construction of partnerships among librarians, faculty and students. Based on the literature, it is recommended to develop a comprehensive model that integrates technological accessibility, reading promotion programs, bibliotherapy, strategic partnerships, user-centered services, and constant assessment.

3. Hypotheses

The hypotheses are formulated and tested at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level:

There is no influence of demographic factors on reading habits among pupils.

There is no significant impact of the digital divide on reading habits among learners.

4. Objectives

This study aims to examine how the digital divide and demographic factors influence students' reading habits. It explores the realities of reading habits and helps design a framework to promote them in academic libraries. This study employs a variety of methodologies to effectively design a framework for promoting reading habits in academic libraries, aiming to gather insights and evidence to support best practices. To identify and suggest collaborative programs that encourage student participation in reading activities.

- To assess the impact of library design on students' motivation to read.
- To design a resource framework to shape students' reading habits and preferences.

5. Methodologies

The present study is a real-life survey. The population includes students from Shyamsundar College, Adarsha Balika Vidyalaya, and Shyamsundar Ramlal Adarsha Vidyalaya in Shyamsundar region, Raina-I, PurbaBardhaman, West Bengal. They are aged 14 to 21 and are studying in Class IX to Graduation. Stratified random sampling is used to collect data, and the correlation technique is used for this study. The sample size of 231 is determined by the sample size calculator (calculator.net), with a 78.4% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and a population proportion of 50%. A

questionnaire is used for data collection, which is divided into three parts: Part I deals with demographic information (Age, Cultural Background, Educational qualification, Family Income level, Gender), digital divide (Availability of Reading Sources, Device Access, Digital Literacy Economic barriers, and Internet Connectivity) and reading habits (Cognitive factors Practice, Educational Background, Environment Socio-economic Status, Home Literacy). All these questions are on a 5-item scale, measured on a 4-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree (SA=4) to strongly disagree (SD=1). The study is conducted for educational purposes only from September 1, 2024, to September 10, 2024. Of the 231 copies of the questionnaire, 181 are duly filled out and returned. The response rate is 78.4%. Hypotheses One and Two are tested using simple correlation analysis. Therefore, to create appropriate strategies for the institution's academic libraries to foster excellent and healthy reading habits, it is necessary to develop research-based constructs and implement them in practice. The following are critical steps in the methodology. First, gathering information regarding the status of the audience's reading activity using questionnaires or interviews is necessary. These data will enable the specific needs and preferences of various consumers regarding library programs for reading promotion to be determined. Second, building faculty relations can broaden the scope of contact with relevant areas. They are engaging with educationists to ensure that the library fits into reading schemes or syllabi for various courses and that students use existing library resources effectively. Another essential feature is the elaboration of the content to be released through the digital channels. The library should establish web channels, including book reviews, author interviews, and live discussions on books. These add value to encouraging digital reading and building an active readership community in the learning context. Further, arranging for readers to come to the library to discuss their favorite books, or organizing book circles, meetings with authors, or special weeks for specific types of literature, encourages interest in reading activities. They give the students an avenue for interaction while promoting literature that might suit every student's preference. The evaluation must be conducted constantly in the long-term functioning of these initiatives. It also helps fine-tune strategies in the long run through participant feedback and by staying relevant to readers' preferences. With this systematic approach to faculty development tailored towards library academic institutions, the culture of literacy among students can be enhanced, and students' education can be complemented with the values of a well-deserved library collection.

6. Insights of the Study

Table 1. Demographic Factors Influencing Reading Habits

Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	92	50.83
	Female	89	49.17
	Tri-gender	0	0.00
Total		181	100.00
Age	12 Years to 14 Years	61	33.70

		15 Years to 17 Years	54	29.83
		18 Years to 20 Years	66	36.46
Total			181	100
Family Income Level		Rs 1 - 2 lac per Year	77	42.54
		Rs 3 - 4 lacs per year	62	34.25
		Above 5 lacs per Year	42	23.20
Total			181	100.00
Cultural Background		Literacy Rate	79	43.65
		Media's Influence	89	49.17
		Moral Values	13	7.18
Total			181	100.00
Educational Qualification		Class from IX and X	55	30.39
		Class XI and XII	55	30.39
		Class B.A/B.Sc/B.Com	71	39.23
Total			181	100.00

Table 1 explores the demographic details of the students. Most of the respondents are female. Their ages range from 14 to 21. The educational range lies from class IX to B or B.Sc or B.Com. Family income lies between Rs 1 lac and more than Rs 5 lacs. Most of the respondents are below the poverty line. The media's influence is strong, with 8.9 (49.17%).

Table 2. Correlation between Digital Divide factors and Reading Habits

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Reading Habits	1				
Device Access	.206*	1			
Internet Connectivity	.302*	-0.131	1		
Digital Literacy	.156*	0.076	0.067	1	
Availability of Reading Sources	0.179	-0.161	0.187	0.101	1
Economic Barriers	-0.012	-0.68	-0.13	-0.056	-0.21
Mean	29.51	6.01	4.33	4.8	4.29
Standard Deviation	5.39	1.21	1.29	1.3	1.39

Correlation Significant @ $p < 0.05$
Dependent Variable: Reading Habits

Table 2 shows an important relationship between digital literacy ($r = .156$, $p (.036) < 0.05$), availability of reading materials ($r = .179$, $p (.016) < 0.05$), device access ($r = .206$, $p (.005) < 0.05$), and internet connectivity ($r = .302$, $p (.0001) < 0.05$) and reading habits of the respondents. Conversely, there is no significant relationship between economic barriers and the respondents' reading habits ($r = -.012$, $p = .873$).

Table 3. Correlation between Demographic Factors and Reading Habits

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Reading Habits	1				
Family Income	.013	1			
Educational Qualification	.084	-0.76	1		
Cultural Background	.066	.010	.641	1	
Age	0.165	-0.28	.591	.409	1
Gender	.048	.011	.720	.513	.591
Mean	25.59	1.51	44.19	1.98	3.13
Standard Deviation	5.39	0.50	9.92	0.57	1.48

Correlation Significant @ $p < 0.05$
Dependent Variable: Reading Habits

Table 3 shows a relationship between reading habits and demographic factors of age ($r = .165$, $p < .027$) $< .05$) of the respondents. That is the age correlated with reading habits. On the contrary, there was no significant relationship between the demographic factors of family income ($r = .013$, $p (.866) > .05$), educational qualification ($r = .084$, $p (.260) < .05$), cultural background ($r = .066$, $p (.376) < .05$), educational qualifications ($r = .048$, $p (.519) > .05$) and reading habits of the respondents. There is no correlation between the demographic factors of Gender, educational qualification, cultural background, and family income and students' reading habits. From the above study, it is clear that demographic factors do not significantly influence reading habits, whereas the digital divide plays a significant role.

7. Challenges in changing the reading Culture in Academic Libraries

There are many challenges faced in today's academic libraries. The growth of digital content has affected the reading of conventional books. Due to other activities, students sometimes need more reading time, which makes leisure reading even more challenging. Another rise that came with the development of reading platforms is that of digital distractions and shorter attention spans. Academic libraries should adopt a practical approach to embracing reading traditions through current technologies. Some challenges in academic libraries in promoting reading habits are as follows:

7.1 Digital Distractions

Modern students can indulge in smartphone usage, social networks, and watching movies and other TV programs, which turns their favorite pastime into reading books. The library's shifting focus makes it challenging to capture and sustain students' interest in reading.

7.2 Limited Access to Diverse Resources

When it comes to a variety of reading materials, some academic libraries may still need to be able to procure books for all sorts of interests displayed by students. The absence of generic titles and fresh stocks hampers students' interest in making reading a regular practice.

7.3 Time Constraints

Students are primarily busy with class work, extracurricular activities, and informal employment, so they need more time to read leisurely, which becomes a low-priority activity.

7.4 Lack of Reading Culture

Reading traditions must be preserved for pleasure in some academic environments. The unwritten message students might receive is that reading is a tedious chore that is not even worth doing if no one encourages it through words or actions.

7.5 Inadequate Promotion and Engagement

More methodologies to popularize reading programs, like clubs, challenges, or authors, will likely need to be implemented in the institution. The learners will likely need help accessing different resources or opportunities.

7.6 Changing Student Preferences

Students' tastes in reading are shifting, and they prefer to read using electronic devices instead of printed books. These trends could pose difficulties for libraries in acquiring resources that fit current students' interests.

7.7 Resource Constraints

Several challenges, such as financial constraints, can limit libraries' ability to buy new books, replace old books, or set up new reading programs. These constraints may affect the library's ability to provide an attractive and lively reading culture.

7.8 Competing Academic Priorities

School challenges threaten to force students to read more of the standardized books and materials assigned by their teachers, leaving them with little or no time to read for pleasure. It can also reduce their interest in reading optional school books, thus limiting their exposure.

7.9 Lack of Personalized Reading Guidance

Students may not quickly come across books they will like, especially if there is no one to recommend them. It results in frustration, making the person less willing to read or engage in learning.

7.10 Physical Accessibility Issues

Some learners may find it challenging to access the library by physically locating themselves during operational times or if they have a disability. These barriers can limit their opportunities to encounter the reading material.

8. Designing a Framework for Promoting Reading Habits

The proposed framework is based on nine critical assessment criteria: innovation, strategic partnerships, diverse programming, interactive spaces, introduction of bibliotherapy, resource development, technology improvement, promotional campaigns, feedback, and evaluation. Criteria, steps, actions, and goals are stated in a tabular form:

Table 4. Proposed Frameworks for Promoting Reading Habits in Academic Libraries

S1. No	Criteria	References	Steps	Actions	Goal
1	Assessment and Understanding	Hiller(2014).	Surveys and Data Analysis	Surveys on reading preferences and library usage statistics	Identifying the gaps
2	Strategic Partnerships	Hardesty & Latham (2018)	Collaborations	Work with faculty to prepare reading lists based on curricula and students' needs	Increase library resources to foster a community of readers
3	Diverse Programming	Mandal (2010)	Book clubs, Author Events, and Reading Challenges	Establish book clubs; Organize Authors' talks and launch seasonal reading competitions	Increasing participation and engagement
4	Interactive Spaces	Armstrong et al. (2023)	Displays and Group discussions	Displays new arrivals and creates an attractive reading nook	Attract students' attention
5	Bibliotherapy	Mandal & Mandal(2024)	Identifying populations, specifying themes, organizing sessions, discussions, and implementation	Assess the mental health	Enhanced emotional well-being
6	Resource Development	Budd(2008)	Prepare curated lists and Accessible Collections	Ensure a diverse range of resources, such as e-books and audiovisual	Improve Resource Accessibility

7	T e c h n o l o g y Integration	Jhang, Y., & Lee, S. (2019)	Digital Platforms and Reading Apps	materials. Introduce an online platform for virtual engagement	Increase digital engagement
8	P r o m o t i o n a l Campaigns	Sharma (2025)	Thematic promotion and social media engagement	Regular posts and campaign programs like National Reading Month	Encourage community involvement
9	Feed back	Doganet al. (2024)	Collection of feedback	Schedule programs based on feedback	Meet the needs
10	Evaluation & Metrics	Jhang, Y., & Lee, S. (2019)	Set goals and analyze outcomes.	Review metrics to assess initiatives.	Refine strategies based on data.

8.1 Novelty and Advancement of the Proposed Framework

There are several key differences between the proposed framework and a previous set of reading-promotion models: The existing research has tended to concentrate on a single element, be it reading clubs, library setting, digital tools or bibliotherapy, and to explore these elements in isolation. On the contrary, this framework has combined 10 dimensions into one operation: assessment, strategic partnerships, diverse programming, interactive spaces, bibliotherapy, resource development, technology integration, promotional campaigns, feedback, and evaluation. This comprehensive framework provides academic libraries with an opportunity to tackle reading behavior in a coordinated way rather than individually. The latter is an additional development because evidence from the current study has been integrated. The results suggest that there are certain factors which can be referred to as digital-divide factors, such as internet connectivity, device access and digital literacy, which are related to reading habits. In contrast, most demographic factors have no significant impact. The framework thus emphasizes technology integration and digital accessibility, which are not always the main features of previous frameworks. Third, the framework treats the bibliotherapy step as an integral part of library service, not just an option. This model is not confined to a traditional literacy-based perspective on reading promotion; rather, it connects to emotional well-being and personal development. Lastly, the framework uses an iterative approach that involves collecting feedback and assessing outcomes. The proposed framework differs from many previous conceptual models of activities, which focus mainly on activities, and it includes assessment mechanisms that enable libraries to observe their impact, adjust interventions, and respond to user needs. The evidence-informed design, technological responsiveness, bibliotherapeutic support, and continual evaluation of this framework set it apart from other approaches and make it more applicable in today's academic libraries.

9. Recommendations for Promoting Reading Habits

Enhancing reading culture within academic libraries can foster a learning environment and high academic achievement among students. Thus, the following recommendations emerged from the work concerning the defined challenges and the given framework to optimize the existing strategies for promoting reading in the context of academic libraries. Some recommendations are given below in promoting reading habits in academic libraries: Some recommendations are given below in promoting reading habits in academic libraries:

9.1 Create a Welcoming Reading Environment

Provide premises in the library containing soft and cozy armchairs that will help students spend more time reading. It includes comfortable, relaxing chairs, adequate lighting, and obscure areas.

9.2 Diversify the Collection

It is also crucial to capture diverse interests among the students by offering different types of literature, languages, and formats the library has (e.g., e-books and audiobooks).

9.3 Implement Reading Programs and Challenges

Develop reading overtures that include reading tours, reading clubs, and reading competitions where students can read side by side with friends.

9.4 Introduction of Bibliotherapy

Expand the idea of bibliotherapy in libraries and provide students with selected literature on the subjects they face, e.g., stress, anxiety, and lack of motivation.

9.5 Integrate Technology with Reading Promotion

For the convenience of the technical generation, try to offer the best digital books and reading materials, including reading apps, online sessions for book discussion, and e-readers.

9.6 Personalize Reading Recommendations

Share students' preferred genres, if any, the subjects they are learning, and their reading history to make the book selection more convenient and appropriate.

9.7 Collaborate with Faculty and Student Organizations

Consult with faculty and student organizations to organize reading activities associated with courses, guest lectures, and joint events.

9.8 Promote Reading Across the Campus

Organize and conduct campus-wide reading programs and crusades to create awareness of the need for reading within the campus society.

9.9 Provide Professional Development for Librarians

Seminars and training sessions should be held for librarians to keep them aware of the latest advancements in reading promotion, digital, students' perceptual approaches to reading, and bibliotherapeutic principles.

10. Conclusions

This study examined the impact of demographic and digital divide variables on students' reading habits using a survey method with students in the Shyamsundar area of Purba Bardhaman district, West Bengal. The results suggest that reading behavior is more strongly related to digital factors, such as access to the internet, to devices, digital literacy, and access to reading resources, than to most demographic factors. The only demographic factor found to be significantly related to reading habits was age. These findings and the literature review have led the study to propose a framework to improve reading habits in academic libraries. The framework incorporates assessment, strategic partnerships, varied programming, interactive spaces, bibliotherapy, resource development, technology implementation, promotional campaigns, feedback mechanisms, and evaluation processes. The framework integrates several aspects of reading promotion into a coherent framework, rather than individual interventions. The results, however, should be interpreted in light of the study's limitations. The study was a small, self-selected sample of a geographic and educational population. Thus, the results are to be interpreted as findings from a local case study and not as generalizations. The proposed framework should also be considered a context-specific model, offering suggestions for academic libraries facing similar challenges. The study joins a growing conversation about reading promotion by offering a call to action not to overlook the importance of digital access and engagement, and to continue supporting traditional reading practices. However, more studies are needed to demonstrate the framework's wider applicability and effectiveness. The framework needs to be applied in different institutional, cultural and geographical settings in future studies. In particular, longitudinal studies should be conducted to assess whether the proposed interventions have enduring effects and to pinpoint their long-term impacts, helping guide future research. The investigations would generate additional evidence to develop further and validate the overall framework for broader adoption in academic libraries.

Statements and Declarations

Author Contributions: Partha Sarathi Mandal and Dr Sukumar Mandal developed the concept of the study. Both authors designed the methodology. Partha Sarathi Mandal carried out the data collection and performed the analysis. He also prepared the original draft of the manuscript. All authors reviewed and edited the manuscript. Dr. Sukumar Mandal supervised the work. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding

Data Availability Statement: Metadata are collected from Academic libraries.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Dr. Sukumar Mandal is designated as Assistant Professor in the Department of Library and Information Science at The University of Burdwan. He obtains M.Com from the University of Burdwan. He also obtains MLIS and Ph.D from The University of Burdwan. His area of interest are Machine Learning, Artificial Intelligence, Knowledge Graph, Scientometrics, Bibliometrics, Integrated Library system, Digital Library System, Community Information System and Services, Institutional Digital Repository, Multilingual Information Retrieval System, Semantic Web, Library Administration and Automation, Thesaurus Construction, Visual Vocabulary, Linked Open Data, Open Access, Open Knowledge System, etc.
