

Digital Library Initiatives at BRAC University

Successes and challenges

Hasina Afroz, 2014



Hasina Afroz is the University Librarian of BRAC University. Prior to joining BRAC University she worked as a Librarian at the Centre on Integrated Rural Development for Asia and the Pacific (CIRDAP), and held several positions at Victoria University library, Melbourne, Australia.

Hasina has worked as Team Leader for several digital library projects and has also acted as a consultant for the establishment of institutional repository and integrated library systems at several university libraries and institutions, including Parliament Library, British Council Library and the Military Institute of Science and Technology Library in Bangladesh.

BRAC University (BRACU) is based in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Established in 2001, we have always worked hard to meet the changing needs of teaching, learning and research communities.

From 2007 to 2013, we carried out a number of projects to ensure the university had a modern library capable of supporting all academic and research activities. The vision was to develop a 21st Century world-class Knowledge Resource Centre that would provide innovative services and collections to the university community.

“Moving toward a next-generation library, BRAC University Library has implemented a number of projects using open source software”

In a time of decreasing budgets and changes in technology we decided to evaluate the existing technology and services, develop new services where needed, and re-examine our missions and priorities. The approach we took enabled us to provide services more effectively for the next generation library users and to meet the challenges of changing technologies.

Moving toward a next-generation library, BRAC University Library implemented a number of projects using open source software. This included: Dspace, for developing an institutional repository (www.dspace.org); Koha, an integrated library system (www.koha.org); Vufind, a library resource portal (<http://vufind.org>); and Drupal, a content management system (<https://drupal.org>).

The process consisted of several stages over the years.



A photograph of BRAC University Library, showing a member of library staff assisting library users.

2007-2008

We used Dspace (<http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd>) to create an Institutional Repository (IR) to manage, preserve and disseminate research outputs generated by BRACU faculty, students and researchers. After participating in a Dspace training course in India, a member of our project team successfully downloaded and installed DSpace on the repository server and added different features, such as RSS Feeds and statistics.

During the implementation of the IR, one of the greatest challenges was not with the technology but with getting the content from the university departments. However, this has now become easier as the staff can see the benefit of a well-populated repository.

2009-2010

BRAC University is the first in Bangladesh to implement a complete Integrated Library System (ILS) using Open

Source Library System Koha and MARC 21 (<http://library.bracu.ac.bd/opac>). The ILS enables us to create and record bibliographic information in electronic form, simplifying the processing and tracking of records from the time it is encoded as a possible order until it is circulated and finally retired. The ILS has strengthened the information services of BRAC University and has provided an opportunity for library staff to skill up the application of international standards in the performance of their duties.

2010-2011

The implementation of Discovery Tool VuFind has enabled users to access all of BRACU Resources (catalogue records, digital library items, institutional repository, databases, and e-journals) in one single search-and-browse system (<http://library.bracu.ac.bd/vufind>). It has provided a clean, consistent interface for the users. The most complex part of this project was integrating Koha and Dspace with VuFind. BRAC University is the first university in Bangladesh to do this and has built a Koha-VuFind Driver.

“BRAC University now employs the latest technologies to provide fast and easy access to information”

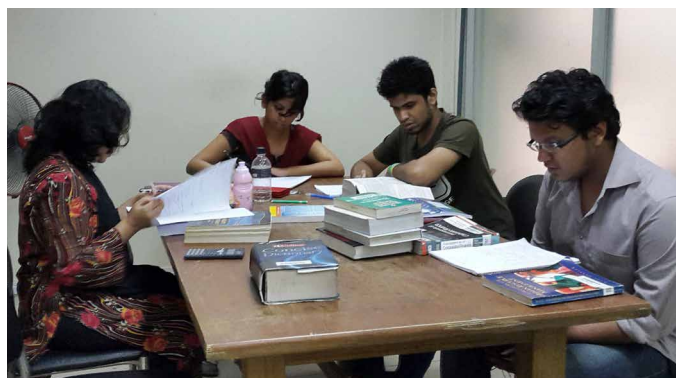
2012

BRACU Library completed its Drupal-based library website project in 2012. We selected Drupal to develop the new content management system (<http://library.bracu.ac.bd>) because of its flexibility, stability and security; the customization that it allows has made our job easier. At the time of implementing Drupal we had to depend on online tutorials, online forums and Drupal website development books. We also needed to develop modules and drivers to make our Drupal site talk to our library management system Koha.

2013

The library team successfully completed the mobile library website project (<http://library.bracu.ac.bd/m>) in 2013. BRACU library decided to create a mobile interface because of user demand. The interface includes information such as library hours, new events and news archive, links to My Account and MyAthens login, library’s catalogue, repository items, and links to important features of our library site.

BRACU library now employs the latest technologies to provide fast and easy access to information. The institution met its goals by integrating appropriate technologies with skilled and experienced staff committed to customer service. The university staff has acquired considerable expertise, and the library hopes to provide a useful case study to help build the capacity of other institutions in Bangladesh embarking on similar projects.



Students using the BRAC University Library

Expanding the training

BRACU library has conducted several workshops and training programmes on Koha, MARC 21, DSpace, VuFind, Drupal, etc., to increase the capacity of library professionals working in other university libraries (public and private) and to prepare the next generation of librarians in Bangladesh. A total of 372 librarians have been trained from 2007-2014.



	Number of training sessions	Number of participants
Koha (ILS)	10	109
MARC 21 (Cataloguing Standard)	9	88
Dspace (Institutional Repository)	10	102
VuFind (Discovery Tool)	3	49
Drupal (CMS)	2	24
Total	34	372

Training conducted by BRAC University Library (2007-2014).

In addition to this, the BRACU library team directly assisted a number of private and public universities to implement digital library initiatives in Bangladesh as part of the capacity building programme. From 2009 to 2014 this resulted in eight setups (partial/complete) of KOHA (ILS) and MARC 21, and seven setups (partial/complete) of Dspace institutional repositories.

Bangladesh Journals Online

BanglaJOL is part of the Journals Online projects. The JOLs aim to improve the accessibility and visibility of developing country research. BanglaJOL has been established in association with the Editing and Publication Association of Bangladesh (EPAB) and the Bangladesh Academy of Science (BAS).



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