Navigating the Digital Shift: An Analysis of Record Management Practices at JSSAHER Library, Mysore

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Abstract

Karnataka deemed to be university libraries, particularly the JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research in Mysore, showcase strong collection development and user services. This study investigates the library's record management practices, focusing on record types available in Life Science, Pharmacy, and Medical Science libraries. Data collected via a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS 22v revealed a trend towards maintaining circulation records in digital formats, while core administrative, legal, and personal records predominantly remain in hard copy. Significant gaps were identified, such as the lack of Kardex records and inconsistencies in document agreements, underscoring the necessity for a structured records management policy and metadata standardisation. The study emphasises the evolving nature of record-keeping systems in academic libraries and suggests recommendations for enhancing accessibility, preservation, and compliance.

Keywords
Library Records, JSSAHER, Deemed to be University, Record Management, Governance

Electronic access
The journal is available at www.jalis.in
DOI: **10.5281/zenodo.17490533**

Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 14. No.4. 2025. pp.340-345

INTRODUCTION

In an information era, academic libraries support higher education institutions by keeping data safe, preserving institutional data and resources. Also, it facilitates users access to knowledge and research productivity. A foundational aspect of these functions is the management of complete records in the library such as acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, financial records, patron-related records and legal and other privacy or confidential records or documents, it ensuring continuity of operations and accountability. In the digital era digital transformation has very much influenced how libraries approach the storage and retrieval of records. In Karnataka, studies such as Automation of Academic and Research Libraries in Karnataka: A Survey of Mysore City (Chandrashekara, Mulla, & Selvaraja, 2012) show that many academic libraries have adopted automation in core operations like circulation and cataloguing, but administrative, legal, and personal record functions often lag behind. Similarly, Library Automation in First Grade Colleges Affiliated to University of Mysore: A Study (Chitra & Kumbar, 2020) reveals that while many colleges use library software, comprehensive management of all record types is inconsistent. Library records including acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, financial transactions, patron information, and legal documents, must be accurately maintained to ensure operational continuity, legal compliance, and accountability (Smallwood, 2013). The book provides international best practices for e-records, metadata, standards, and preservation strategies, a valuable framework for analysing hybrid physical/digital record environments. This study aims to assess the current state of library record management at JSS Deemed to be University, Mysore, examining which kinds of records are maintained, in what formats (hard copy, soft copy, both, or not available), how gaps exist, and what recommendations may align practice with both institutional needs and global best practices. The study reveals that JSS Mysore University Library demonstrates progress in digital transformation for user services but faces significant challenges in administrative and legal record management. It highlights the need for a comprehensive, policy-based, and technology-supported approach to achieve efficient, secure, and sustainable record management.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Higher education academic libraries across India are progressively accepting digital transformation and automation to enhance their service delivery and operational efficiency among their user community. A study by Rajput and Pandey (2024) has examined ICT integration in Indian academic libraries, and the study highlighted how digital tools reshape knowledge sharing and resource optimisation. The study also revealed widespread adoption of automated systems for circulation and cataloguing but the study also found that yet uneven implementation across administrative and legal record-keeping functions was noted. Nimbhorkar (2024) has conducted a comparative study on library automation in Indian academic institutions and library automation in international academic institutions. The study identified that the core functions of libraries, such as acquisitions, circulation, and cataloguing, are more commonly automated, whereas preservation of legal and personnel records is less frequently digitised. In a study documenting barriers to complete digital record management, Subaveerapandiyan et al. (2022) explored challenges faced by academic libraries in managing e-resources. They rightly pointed to infrastructural limitations, lack of staff training, and insufficient policy frameworks as key impediments. Another similar study by Chatterjee and Dey (2023) studied that digitisation strategies in an academic library and emphasised technical difficulties, metadata standardisation, and resource constraints as significant hurdles during digital preservation efforts. Another study by Chandrashekara et al. (2012) surveyed academic libraries in Mysore city and found variability in automation adoption, underscoring a common regional scenario of hybrid record management systems. So this aligns with findings from JSS Mysore, where several record types are maintained in hybrid or hard copy formats, indicating room for improvement. These kinds of insights provide a contextual backdrop for assessing record management practices at JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research, Mysore and identifying specific gaps through this study. The hybrid nature of record formats and varying degrees of automation emphasise the need for institution-specific assessments to guide targeted improvements. Supporting this, Nimbhorkar (2024) carried out a comparative study on library automation across Indian and international academic institutions. The study found that while essential library operations such as acquisitions, circulation, and cataloguing are widely automated, areas like preservation, legal documentation, and personnel records remain largely non-digital. These observations mirror the situation at JSS Mysore University, where many record types are still maintained in hard copy or hybrid formats. This comparison highlights that, although progress has been made, there is still significant potential for advancing digital record management practices.

METHODOLOGY

This study focuses on assessing the current state of library record management at JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research, Deemed to be a University, Mysore in Karnataka, India, through a structured questionnaire administered to three librarians. The research explores the availability and formats of various categories of records (hard copy, soft copy, both, or not available). The data was analysed using SPSS version 22, focusing on key record types (Hard copy and soft copy) such as acquisitions, circulation, financial, legal, preservation, and administrative documents. Confidentiality of individual respondents was maintained, data were used in aggregate, and informed.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of this study are

(1) To evaluate the current record management practices at JSS Mysore Library
(2) To identify gaps in availability or format
(3) To recommend best practices to align the institution with international standards.

By presenting a focused case study, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on academic library modernisation in India and provides a practical framework for other institutions facing similar challenges.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study is confined to the library of JSS Mysore University and its librarians and staff; therefore, generalising the findings to other universities or public libraries should be cautiously approached. It examines both physical and electronic record-management practices, focusing on staff perceptions and implementation. Key areas explored include policy, classification, retention and disposal, digitisation, security, metadata, staff training, and disaster recovery.

This study is limited to practices within a single university library. Therefore, the findings may not be generalisable to other types of libraries, such as public, special, or national institutions. Data collected through self-reported questionnaires may be influenced by respondent bias. Although efforts were made to include all types of records, some records may have been overlooked if staff were unaware of or did not manage them. The results represent the situation at the time of data collection, and subsequent changes in practice may not be reflected.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

This section presents the findings from the survey responses of three librarians at JSS Mysore University. Data were analysed using SPSS-22 and are presented thematically under categories such as Master Records, Circulation Records, Privileges, Financial & Legal Records, and Personal Records. The analysis highlights the format in which records are maintained (hard copy, soft copy, both, or not available).

Table 1. Master Records Availability

Record Type	Hard Copy	Soft Copy	Both	Not Available
Acquisitions Records	2	0	1	0
Accession Register	2	0	1	0
Circulation Records	0	1	2	0
Financial Records	1	1	1	0
Patron Records	1	1	1	0
Kardex	0	0	0	3
Cataloguing Records	0	1	0	2
Recommendation/Approval Files	1	1	1	0

The above data shows that most foundational records, like acquisition and accession, are maintained in both hard and soft copies. Kardex records are not maintained at all, indicating a significant archival gap. Cataloguing is partially digitised but not consistently maintained. The trend suggests a slow transition toward digitisation, with many records still dependent on physical formats.

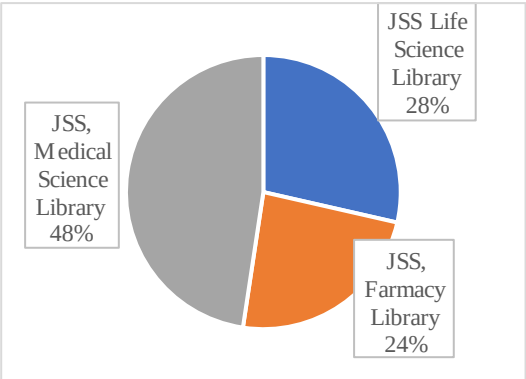

Figure 1: *Average Library visitors in a day*

Table 2. Circulation Records

Record Type	Hard Copy	Soft Copy	Both	Not Available
Members Database	0	3	0	0
Circulation Privileges	1	1	1	0
ILL Loan Records	1	0	2	0
User Requests	1	1	0	1
Borrowing Records	0	2	1	0
Agreements	0	0	1	2
Return Requests	0	3	0	0

The above table data proves that circulation data is increasingly managed digitally, especially for members, return requests, and borrowing. However, agreements are poorly documented, with two libraries indicating they do not maintain them. The absence of agreement records could pose legal and operational risks.

Table 4. Financial and Legal Records

Record Type	Hard Copy	Soft Copy	Both	Not Available
Invoice	2	0	1	0
Purchase Orders	2	0	1	0
Receipts	2	0	1	0
Donation Records	2	0	1	0
Serial Subscription Records	2	0	1	0
Serial Renewal Records	2	0	1	0
Legal & Regulatory	2	0	0	1

Records				
Contracts, Policies, Procedures	2	0	0	1
User Policies	2	0	1	0
Rules and Regulations	2	0	1	0

The data on Financial and Legal Records reveals a pronounced reliance on hard-copy documentation, indicating a significant area of vulnerability in the library's record management system. For core financial transactions including invoices, purchase orders, receipts, and serial subscriptions the primary, and often sole, format is physical paper. While one library unit maintains some records in both formats, the complete absence of a solely digital approach for any of these record types underscores a systemic resistance to digitization in administrative functions. This reliance on physical documents creates inefficiencies in retrieval and increases the risk of loss or damage.

More critically, the state of legal and regulatory records presents a direct compliance risk. Two out of the three libraries maintain contracts, policies, and legal records solely in hard copy, while one library reports these crucial documents as not being available at all. Inferences drawn from this data point to a fragmented policy environment and a critical need for immediate intervention to digitize and centralize these essential records to ensure continuity, security, and legal compliance.

Table 3. Circulation Privileges Details

Privilege Type	**Hard Copy**	**Soft Copy**	**Both**	**Not Available**
Loan Period	0	2	1	0
Renewal / Notice Period	0	3	0	0
Book Reservation	0	2	0	1
Online Renewal	0	3	0	0
Fine Management	1	1	1	0
Borrower Information	0	1	2	0
Due Dates / Loan History	0	3	0	0

As per the data in the above table there is strong digitisation of circulation privileges. Fine management and borrower information are managed in both formats. These findings suggest that circulation services are relatively mature in their digital transition.

Table 5. Personal and Preservation Records

Record Type	**Hard Copy**	**Soft Copy**	**Both**	**Not Available**
Appointment/Recruitment Orders	2	1	0	0
Performance Evaluation Files	2	1	0	0
Promotion/Appraisal Files	2	1	0	0
Training Records	3	0	0	0
Service Records	3	0	0	0
Binding/Conservation Records	2	0	1	0
Treat Agreements	1	0	1	1

The data above shows that most records are maintained primarily in hard copy form, with limited use of soft copies or both formats. Appointment, performance, and promotion files are mostly available in hard copy with some digital versions, indicating partial digitisation. Training and service records exist solely as hard copies, suggesting no digital backup. Binding/conservation and treaty agreement records show mixed availability, with some missing entirely. Overall, the data highlights a strong reliance on physical documentation and a need to enhance digital record management for better accessibility and preservation.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the evolving yet uneven state of record management at JSS Mysore University's library. While user-focused services like circulation and borrowing have been effectively digitised using Library Management Systems (LMS), key areas such as administrative, legal, financial, and personnel records remain largely paper-based. Critical gaps, including the absence of Kardex records and missing agreements, pose risks to inventory control and legal accountability. The lack of digital backups for staff records further raises concerns about data loss and security. These findings echo those of Sarojadevi et al. (2013) and Maheswarappa (2002), who observed similar challenges in Indian academic libraries, including inconsistent digitisation, inadequate metadata use, and weak policy frameworks. Despite notable progress in certain areas, a comprehensive digital transformation is needed. The study underscores the importance of clear institutional policies, regular audits, standardised metadata

practices, and a centralised digital repository. Moving forward, a coordinated approach involving technology integration, policy reform, and staff training is essential for sustainable and secure records management. Based on the data analysis and key findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the effectiveness, security, and accessibility of library record management at JSS Mysore and other similar academic institutions:

- Develop and enforce a formal policy outlining standards for the creation, maintenance, retention, access, and disposal of records. I suggested ensuring alignment with international standards such as ISO 15489 for records management and ARMA principles.
- Priority should be given to converting critical documents such as legal and policy files, personal/staff records, and acquisition or accession registers into digital formats. Using standard metadata formats like MARC21 or Dublin Core will help ensure consistency, ease of access, and better organisation.
- Immediate attention is needed for key records that are currently missing or incomplete. For example, Kardex records are entirely absent, and some user agreements and legal documents are only partially available. A compliance audit should be conducted to identify these gaps and take corrective action.
- Establish a secure, searchable digital repository to store and manage records over the long term. Access should be carefully controlled using role-based permissions, especially for sensitive or confidential files.
- Organise workshops and training sessions to equip library staff with practical skills in digital record-keeping tools like Koha, DSpace, and Greenstone. Sessions should also cover cataloguing, metadata creation, data protection, and legal compliance related to RTI, privacy laws, and institutional policies.
- Regular reviews of both digital and physical records should be scheduled to maintain accuracy, compliance, and completeness. Using structured audit tools will help track progress and pinpoint areas needing improvement.

  By implementing these steps, JSS Mysore Library can enhance accountability, ensure better access to information, safeguard valuable records, and align itself with global best practices in academic library management.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that while JSS AHER Deemed to be University library has made noticeable progress in adopting digital tools for user-centric services like circulation, borrowing, and membership management, its overall record management system remains heavily dependent on hard copy documentation. Overall, the research highlights that sustainable records management at JSS AHER Deemed to be University, Mysore requires a balanced strategy combining technology adoption, policy reform, and human resource development. Establishing clear governance mechanisms, ensuring data redundancy, and fostering a culture of accountability will be critical for long-term success. With these measures, the library can not only safeguard its institutional memory but also set a model for digital transformation in academic record management across Indian higher education institutions.

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