

Jain eLibrary

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With the aim to protect, preserve, and disseminate ancient and contemporary Jaina literature, the Education Committee of the Federation of JAINA, North America, has launched a Jaina eLibrary project. Under this project Jaina literature has been converted electronically into eBooks (pdf files) and made available via the website to readers who are interested in Jaina religion and its philosophy.

The idea for this project was inspired by a comment made by Professor Nalini Balbir during the Parliament of World Religions conference in Chicago in 1993. Professor Balbir indicated that if Jaina literature was made easily accessible then many students in the western world might be interested in Jainism to their advance study. It was not possible to create the eLibrary at that time but today it has become possible with the development of the World Wide Web, Internet, and email.

Books for the eLibrary are identified in consultation with academics and learned monks of various Jaina sects. If the book is copyrighted material, we obtain permission from the author and/ or publisher. Then we contact various libraries for the availability of the books, acquire the books and deliver them to the scanning company.

The scanning company is required to do a complete job of high resolution scanning, cleaning, creation of eBook pdf files, uploading the pdf file to website, updating the master database and quality control. We really had to work very hard to establish a system whereby a scanning company in India could easily acquire the books needed for the project. Several Jain monks and Acharyas and some community leaders cooperated on this project. Since the website is totally non-commercial, we were able to establish proper trust and confidence with several institutes to support this activity.

The website was established at the end of December 2008, and the result has been very positive and encouraging. Jaina scholars and community leaders of different Jain sects seem to have appreciated our effort. Several academic scholars have sent us notes of appreciation and suggestions for future additions. In its first month,



Over 4,000 books are housed at the Jain eLibrary Headquarters, namely the author's basement.



January 2009, 1,048 different people visited, and the total number of visits was 1,348 (1.28 visits/visitor). 400 people stayed more than 15 minutes and 51 people have spent more than one hour. 11.59 GB of information has been downloaded by visitors, which is more than 50% of our total database.

In the next five years we hope to convert 5,000 to 7,000 ancient and contemporary Jain texts into eBooks and make them available on the website. We plan to establish a separate database of Jain articles written in Hindi and Gujarati that are published in various journals but not in books. Finally, we intend to enhance our search engine so that scholars and other interested parties can more easily access the material they need. It has been our hope to put a system in place that can provide Jain literature freely to anyone desiring to study Jainism.

Please visit the website at:

www.jaineLibrary.org

Pravin K. Shah is Chair of the Education Committee for the Federation of Jain Associations in North America. An electrical engineer by profession, he retired from IBM in 2002 after 34 years of service. During the past 8 years the Education committee has prepared and published 12 books for Jain Sunday Schools in North America, now serving 3,700 students.