

Several documentation centres and libraries strewn across the city are a haven for researchers, students and professionals

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In today's e-age where information is just a click away, the age-old city-based libraries and documentation centres continue to hold their charm, and many students are invariably drawn to these centres for reference work. Be it projects, presentations or workshops, it seems a mere Google search is not sufficient for submitting a quality assignment, and hence, these centres have stood their ground even in the face of growing electronic infiltration.

"If you go through a search engine, you're likely to find most of the information on the internet. But that's a basic challenge we face," says John D'souza, trustee, Centre for Education and Documentation (CED). Almost 34 years old, this documentation and reference centre at Colaba boasts of a database of material on 800 topics available through newspaper, magazines, journals, reports, audiovisual material and books on topics like environment, politics, gender and women, slum rehabilitation, displacement issues, to name a few.

Talking about its inception, D'souza says that CED, earlier a part of another

Storehouse of information



Students browsing through reference material at Centre for Education and Documentation

organisation, was largely borne out of a study circle. "During 1960s and 1970s, there was a trend of study circles where people discussed topics like Marxism and problems of the poor. Though there were libraries laden with books, we added newspaper and magazine clippings and it was not just theoretical data but laid an emphasis on current issues too," he states. Personalities like documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan and environmentalist Darryl D'monte have carried out reference work at CED.

Anisha Sharma, member of CED, and a St Xavier's College graduate extensively used the Centre for her final year project submission. Her topic was violation of women's rights with emphasis on rape and trafficking. "It was a common topic and I didn't want to do a cut paste job off the internet as I was sure many others would end up doing the same. Hence, I began looking for a different angle and visited CED," she says. With a bit of research she found a book on Indian women in prostitution and that was her



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lead. "It was a goldmine for me. I not only found many case studies but also details like how Nepalese women are tricked into the flesh trade, the routes they take etc. These details gave an edge to my project," she says.

Rini Fernandes, currently a student at TISS and a member of CED, is all praise for the Centre. While doing her graduation research project on lesbianism, Fernandes couldn't find much off the internet. "I was amazed to find such well catalogued articles here. I actually

got newspaper and magazine clippings dating back to 10 years and more," she states.

Akshara library at Dadar is another resource centre that is quite a hit with students, especially sociology students seeking research material on gender-related issues. There are no reference charges at Akshara and students can take notes or photocopy the requisite material. "We started the library in 1995 as there was no serious alternative documentation happening on women at that time," says Nita Shirali, library in-charge at Akshara. The library has a collection of 5,000 books, 500 posters and banners on social issues, which students can rent for their workshops and presentations, as well as a collection of documentary films with a special focus on gender and women.

Asiya Memon, (20), did not mind travelling often from her home at Fort to Akshara at Dadar to complete her final year college project. Apart from books, she got to read through several case studies from various newspaper articles and went on to score 17/20 in her project.

The SNDT University library at Marine Lines is yet another centre with an extensive database. The National Information Centre set up by the UGC was discontinued in 2003. However, the SNDT library not only possesses the data until 2003 but it also keeps updating the existing database. The students here are not only undergraduates but nursing, post-graduate and library science students who frequent the place. One can also find thesis and dissertation at the SNDT library making it quite popular with research students too.

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