

## Availability of Open Access Books in Punjabi over Different Web Portals: A Descriptive Study

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### **Abstract**

*Punjabi is the eleventh largely spoken language of the world. It is the mother tongue of 120 million Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians inhabiting the vast stretch from Multan to Delhi in the North-West of the Indo-Pak subcontinent. Of the total 120 million speakers, 76 million are in Pakistan and 33 million in India. Punjabi diaspora in 35 countries, especially in North America, Europe and Australia has taken its culture to the adopted countries. By another account, Punjabi has registered its presence in 150 countries of the world. No wonder then Punjabi is the second largest spoken language in England and ranks third in British Columbia, Canada. In the age of information communication technology (ICT), a large number of multilingual e-books are freely available over Internet on different subjects. Books in Punjabi (Gurmukhi) have no exception of this influence as several web portals and digital libraries also provide open access electronic/digitized books in Punjabi. The present study talks about them.*

**Keywords:** Sikh book club, Punjabi library, APNA, Unistar Books, PDL

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Punjabi (also written as Panjabi) is one of the ancient languages of the Indo-Aryan family related to Rigvedic culture. By this relation, it is estimated to be 3500 years old, though its modern shape and form evolved only about 1000 years ago. Its modern period of development is considered to be 15th to 18th centuries. About 500 years ago, the Sikh Gurus used and popularized its *Brahmi* script from where it got the name *Gurmukhi* (from the mouth of Guru) [1].

Punjabi is one of the recognised national languages of India and enjoys the same legal status as languages of other states of India. By the 1968 Punjabi Official Language Act (Amended in 2008), it has given the legal status of the official language of the Punjab state. It is mandatory to use it for all sorts of official and judicial work in government offices and its subsidiaries and autonomous institutions.

Now Punjabi language is a compulsory subject up to graduate level in Punjabi University (Patiala) and Guru Nanak Dev University (Amritsar). In Punjabi University, the post-

graduate students have the freedom to opt Punjabi as the medium of examination. Half a dozen universities in Northern India have research and post-graduate teaching departments of Punjabi language and literature [2].

In 1837, the Christian missionaries established Christian Mission Press in Ludhiana. It has a significant impact on cultural and literary history of Punjab. The pioneers of this press undertook the initiative to compile first ever grammar and dictionary of Punjabi. It was to equip them with the proper knowledge of Punjabi. In 1849 was published the first dictionary of Punjabi while its first grammar was published in 1851 [3]. With these premier works, the era of Punjabi publications started. Development of books in *Gurmukhi* can be divided into three stages:

#### **Initial Stage**

It started before the British occupation. Such sources in manuscript form were compiled to understand the religious texts of ancient and medieval ages.

#### **Historical Stage**

It spans the period from British annexation of Punjab to the independence of India.

### Development Stage

It started with the independence of India. Bhai Vir Singh (1872–1957) is considered a pioneer of modern Punjabi literature [1].

Advances in computer applications during the last few decades have brought radical changes in the way information is gathered, stored, organized, accessed, preserved and consumed. The application of computers in information processing has brought several products and services to the scene. Now-a-days internet is a genie for information seekers which instantly provides the desired information searched from the World Wide Web. The internet and the web are constantly influencing the development of new modes of scholarly communication without any geographical barrier encountered by the producer as well as the consumer of the information. In the age of internet, time lag between production and delivery of scholarly information has been drastically reduced.

Thousands of digitized/electronic books in Punjabi on different subjects are freely available over internet. Regretfully, the readers of Punjabi books are not much aware of these web portals and digital libraries storing open access books in Punjabi. The present study highlights the web portals and digital libraries that would be beneficial to access e-books of Punjabi language and literature.

### WHAT IS A WEB PORTAL?

A portal is a network service bringing together content from diverse distributed resources. It is a possibly personalized, common point of access where searching can be carried out across one or more than one resources and the amalgamated results viewed. Here information may be presented via other means, for example, alerting services and conference listings or links to e-prints and learning materials.

### RESEARCH PROBLEM

As discussed earlier, there are a number of web portals over internet providing open access books in Punjabi. It covers almost all the disciplines of human knowledge.

But so far no effort has been made to conduct a study of these web portals hosting Punjabi publications. Furthermore, readers of Punjabi books are not much familiar with such online sources of Punjabi books of greater importance. Therefore, keeping the significance of this topic, the present study has been undertaken and justify.

### SCOPE

The study examines web portals related to open access digitized/electronic books in Punjabi. It is only concerned with those web portals and digital libraries which gather, store, organize, preserve and provide open access books in Punjabi language and literature.

### OBJECTIVES

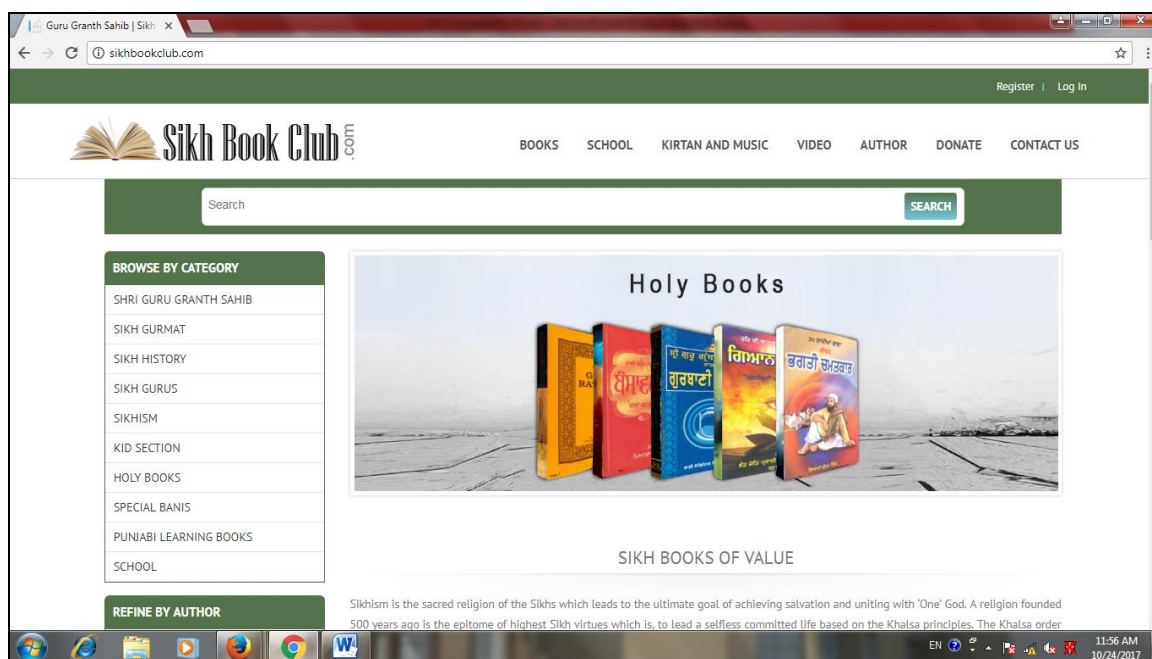
- To explore the web portals and digital libraries providing open access books in Punjabi;
- To make the readers familiar with online sources of e-books related to Punjabi language and literature;
- To open a new way of building every reader his/her personal library of Punjabi books by connecting the web users with available web portals and digital libraries whence they can download books of their interest;
- To encourage the readers of Punjabi language and literature to use web portals related to Punjabi publications;
- To ascertain the numbers, types and formats of e-books in *Gurmukhi*.

### WEB PORTALS OF OPEN ACCESS BOOKS IN PUNJABI

Web portals and digital libraries related to e-books in *Gurmukhi* are as follows:

#### Sikh Book Club[4] (Figure 1)

It brings in the collection of digitized books that unite its readers to the ideology and principles of Sikhism. It is an attempt to educate the high-tech generation. The portal provides three types of broad access points to e-books namely category, author and language. Except these, there is a search box atop the homepage to retrieve the desired e-books instantly. The portal stores e-books in the following languages (Table 1).



**Fig. 1:** Home Page of SikhBookClub [4].

The huge digital collection comprises of books written by Bhai Vir Singh, Giani Sant Singh Maskeen, Khushwant Singh, Prof. Sahib Singh, Bhai Randhir Singh and many more eminent writers and notable poets. The e-books can be downloaded in Portable Document Format (PDF). The readers have to create their accounts to download the desired e-books.

**Table 1:** Language Wise Distribution of E-Books.

Sr. No.	Language	Number of E-Books
1	Punjabi	1786
2	English	840
3	Hindi	228
4	Urdu	14
5	French	10
6	Romanian	08
7	Spanish	07
8	Russian	05
9	Italian	05
10	German	04
11	Dutch	03
12	Kannada	03
13	Malay	02
14	Sanskrit	02
15	Portuguese	01
16	Thai	01
17	Sindhi	01

**Vidhia.com (<http://www.vidhia.com>) (Figure 2)**

It is a project of USA based Khalis Foundation dedicated to raise awareness about Sikhism and Sikh history. It holds 29 folders under different subject headings consisting of 432 files of PDF books in Punjabi and English. All the digitized books are related to Sikh religion and Sikh history. It is a useful subject portal for scholars and students of religious and spiritual study.

**Academy of the Punjab in North America (<http://www.apnaorg.com>)[6] (Figure 3)**

**Table 2:** Category Wise Distribution of E-Books.

Sr. No.	Category	Number of E-Books
1	Classics	13
2	History	14
3	Biography	21
4	Novel	16
5	Poetry	16
6	Travelogue	07
7	Short Stories	16
8	Prose	32
9	Play	11
10	Shiv Manuscripts	03
11	Magazine	01
12	General	16
13	Dictionaries	02



### Punjabi Library

(<http://www.punjabilibrary.com>) (Figure 4)

The purpose of this web portal is to promote Punjabi books by using information communication technology. It holds prominent and widely read titles of Punjabi books related to different subjects, especially of Punjabi literature. Readers may download PDF files easily. Those who are interested in reading Punjabi books can visit this portal [7].

### Marxwaad Wordpress

(<http://www.marxwaad.wordpress.com>)

(Figure 5)

Marxism is a methodology of philosophical, sociological, political and economic analysis exploring class relations and societal conflict

using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of social transformation. Marxist theory originates from the mid-to-late 19th century works of German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels [9].

This web portal provides access to Marxist literature in Punjabi. Available literature is in the form of novels, poetry, children books, etc. Each e-book first gives its bibliographic details followed by a PDF link to download. Majority of the children e-books has pagination not more than 20 pages. It is useful portal for those who are interest in reading Marxist literature.

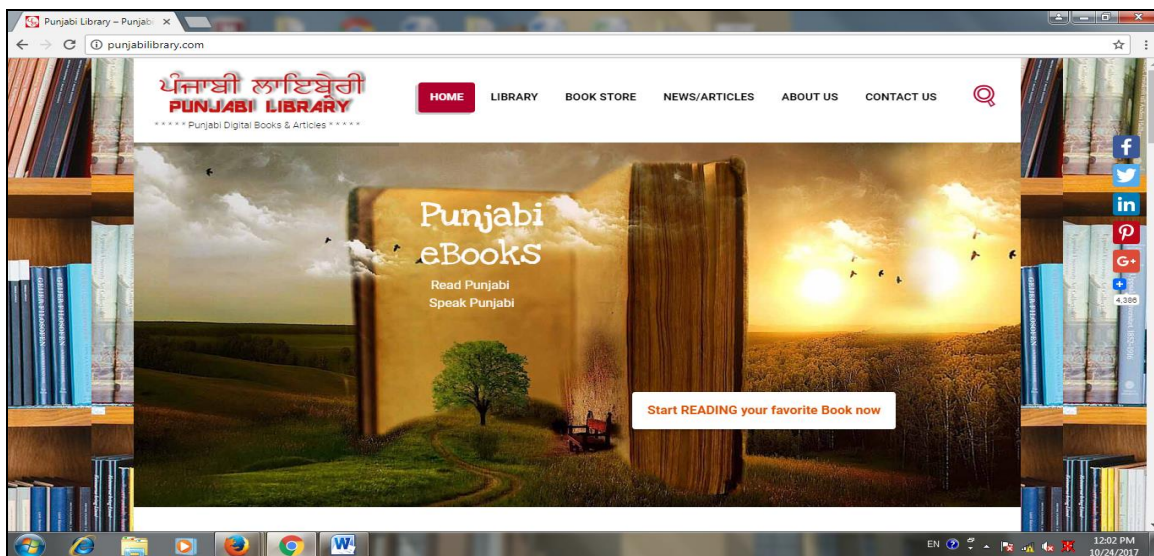


Fig. 4: Home Page of Punjabi Library [7].



Fig. 5: Home Page of Marxwaad Wordpress [8].

**Unistar Books**

(<http://www.unistarbooks.com>) [10]

(Figure 6)

Unistar Books is a Chandigarh based multi-language publishing house. It publishes books in Punjabi, English, and Hindi and occasionally in Urdu. Its official website <http://www.unistarbooks.com> has an option of ‘Free EBooks’ from where readers can download PDF files of popular books in Punjabi. Majority of the e-books are of poetic nature.

**Digital Library of India**

(<https://www.archive.org/details/digitallibra ryindia>) (Figure 7)

The archive of Digital Library of India (DLI) consists of digitized books in different languages on different subjects. Valuable books in *Gurmukhi* are also available on different subjects, especially books on Punjabi language and literature. Available books of Punjabi language have been published by the reputed publishers, e.g. National Book Trust, Punjabi Sahit Academy, Delhi, etc. Here, there are a number of formats to download the desired e-books such as PDF, ePub, Plain Text, DAISY and Kindle. Users may download the books in their desired formats [11].

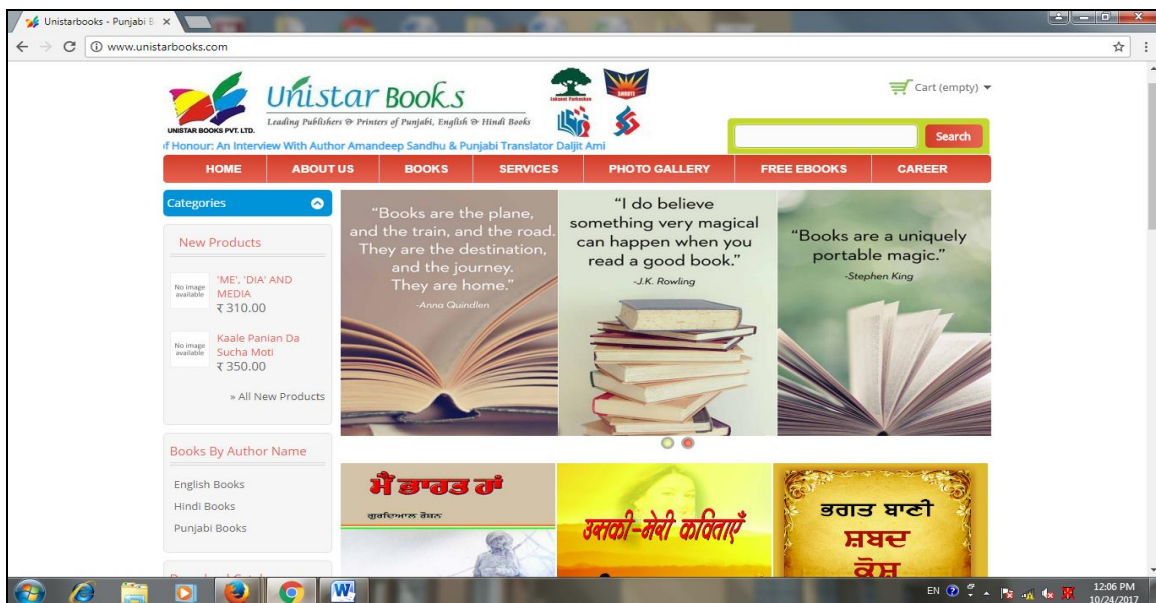


Fig. 6: Home Page of Unistar Books [10].

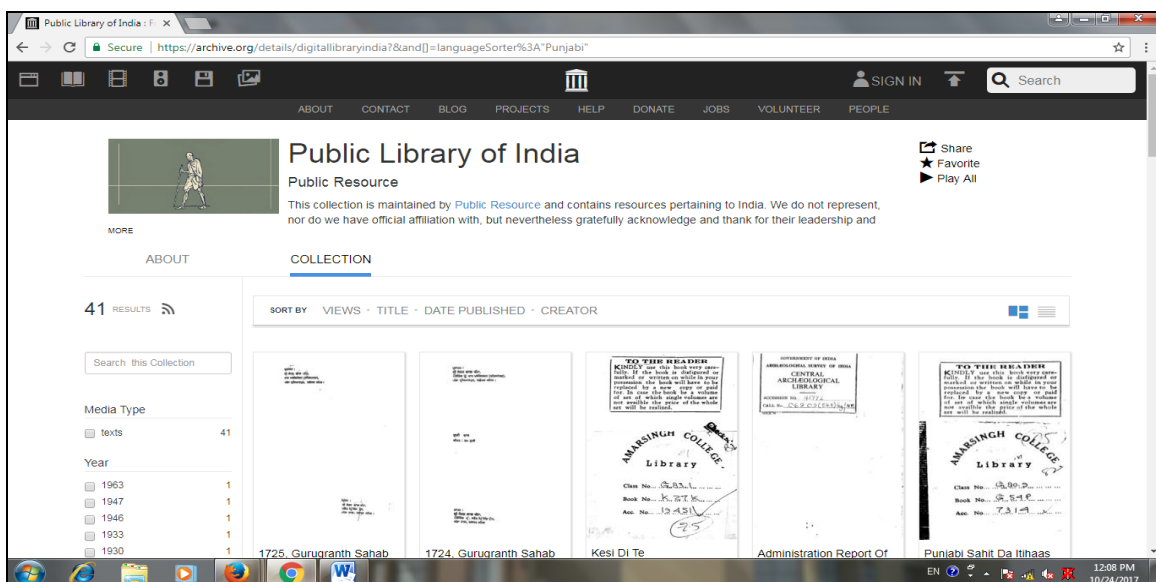


Fig. 7: Home Page of Archive of DLI [11].



Fig. 8: Home Page of PDL [12].

### Panjab Digital Library [12]

Panjab Digital Library (PDL) is dedicated to locate, collect, digitize, preserve, and make accessible the accumulated wisdom of the Panjab region, without any distinction to script, language, religion, nationality, or other physical condition. Objectives of the library are:

- Address heritage loss due to environment, ignorance and destruction;
- Save invaluable treasures to enrich the present and enlighten the future;
- Connect people globally by providing continued free online access of digitized documents [12].

Thousands of digitized documents consisting of books, manuscripts, newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets are available on different subjects in different languages. Interesting titles of Punjabi books can be read here. Documents can be read online/onscreen. There is no option to download the desired document. It may be said that it is a place where researchers and students may have a peep into the past of Punjab with the help of social, cultural, political, economic, and historical documentary heritage. (Figure 8)

### CONCLUSION

It has been seen that several web portals and digital libraries are available over internet that

can be visited to download the valuable e-books in Punjabi. Some digitized books uploaded to these web portals and digital libraries are rare in nature. They are difficult to locate in any traditional library. In that case, these web portals work as web archives for researchers and administrators. It has also been observed that Punjabi people residing in other countries are more interested and dedicated to create such web portals. Sikh Book Club, Apnaorg.com and Khalsa Foundation are the best examples of it. The researcher is of the view that universities of the Punjab, Punjabi sahit academies, and the department of language, Government of Punjab must take initiatives to build such types of web portals from where web users can download qualitative e-books in Punjabi at no charge. If it happens, it would be a great tribute to promote Punjabi language, literature and its culture.

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