

# A Survey on magiran.com: A Database for the Magazines of Iran

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## Abstract

This paper presents the design and function of magiran.com, a database of periodicals published in Iran. It also attempts to answer the following questions: How many of the total periodicals published in Iran are covered by magiran? What is the subject coverage of the periodicals covered? Which subjects seem to have been given importance among the periodicals covered? How many of the periodicals are available full text? What is the subject coverage of the periodicals available full text? What are the languages of the periodicals covered? How many of the periodicals accredited by MSRT are found in magiran? What is the subject coverage of the accredited periodicals? Which subjects seem to have been given importance among the accredited periodicals covered? How is the general structure of the site in terms of colors, icons, pull-down windows, and so on?

**Keywords:** Iranian periodicals; subject coverage; user feedback

Although there have been some sporadic activities to index and abstract Iranian periodicals by some organizations responsible for the press in Iran, there has not been any complete source, employing the Internet and indicating the outcomes of the activities of people involved in country's press. The *fāb Software Company* (fābsoft.com) sponsored the design and development of magiran website [1], a database of periodicals of the country, simultaneous with the Press Festival held in May 2001 in Iran. The purpose of designing the site is producing an effective source for Iran's periodicals in the Internet.

The site has been able to cover and present services related to more than 1300 periodicals in publication, authorized by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG). The site claims that it is used by more than 15000 users inside and outside of Iran. The free services offered by magiran are of two kinds: General and special. The general ones, besides the ones mentioned above include: the allocation of special address such as <http://www.magiran.com/YOURMAGAZINE> to provide quick access to periodicals information, the allocation of an email address by POP3 service with at least 10 Mb capacity such as: *YOURMAGAZINENAME@magiran.com*, the inclusion of subscription rates and forms for each periodical to subscribe from inside or outside of Iran, informing the users of the publication of new issue of each periodical, and the inclusion of the full text of new issues and the last ten issues of some periodicals. Free special services include: providing special pages for each periodical. There are some Extra services that are based on request and payment. Another useful service of the site is its acting as a dealer.

The subject directory of periodicals is a list that is continued via a link in another page. On the same page, the periodicals are presented according to a subject directory, the Ministry of Sciences, Researches, and Technology (MSRT)-accredited periodicals given importance by being at the top. On the same page, the periodicals can be searched through a search box, the search can be limited by some options, and the newspapers covered are also shown. There's a "sending message, viewpoint, and suggestions" page, on the same page, as "Introduce the site to your friends" and "Report the problems with the information" options. The site is totally independent and private and has no connection to any governmental or non-governmental institution or organization.

This paper tries to find answers for the following questions: How many of the total periodicals published in Iran are covered by magiran? According to the latest statistics belonging to 2005 [2], the total number of periodicals published daily, monthly, bi-monthly and quarterly in Iran is 1832. Thus the site covers approximately 70% of the periodicals authorized by MCIG; 2. What is the subject coverage of the periodicals covered? Literature, Art, Technical and Engineering, Society and culture, Areas and ethnicities, Industries, Agriculture, Information, computer and internet, General, Basic sciences, Islamic sciences, Humanities, Groups, Ecology, Commerce and economics, Health and treatment, Sport and entertainment, Education and research, Associations and NGOs; 3. Which subjects seem to have been given importance among the periodicals covered? The periodicals covered by Magiran are categorized in 20 subject groups, each subdivided in turn into some sub-categories with each of which the total number of periodicals in that sub-category is given. Of these subcategories, "Industries" with 31

sub-categories has the highest rank but "Health and treatment" with 192 titles has the highest rank in respect to the total number of periodicals in sub-categories; 4. How many of the periodicals are available full text? 92 titles; 5. What is the subject coverage of the periodicals available full text? No information on the subject coverage of these full-text periodicals is given; 6. What are the languages of the periodicals covered? No specific information on language coverage is given in the site, but periodicals are mostly in Farsi, the official language of Iran, and some are in English. For some periodicals, only the abstracts are given in English. Some periodicals are also bi-lingual, or in fact bi-dialectal, such Farsi-Kurdish; 7. How many of the periodicals accredited by MSRT are found in magiran? 130 titles (10%); 8. What is the subject coverage of the accredited periodicals? Agriculture, Medicine, Basic sciences, Art and Architecture, Humanities, Technical and Engineering; 9. Which subjects seem to have been given importance among the accredited periodicals covered? "Medicine" with 65 titles seems to be the most important subject; the "Agriculture" and "Humanities" both with 20 titles is the second; 10. How is the general structure of the site in terms of colors, icons, pull-down windows, and so on? The site was matched against some criteria [3], and the results are as follows: The site address and domain and the keywords in the site name are visible; the name of the site is short and informative; the text is readable but the fonts could be better; the illustrations, though not very frequent, are attractive; no site map; writing and grammar are acceptable; there's the possibility of navigation through the site; the name of the designer company is seen, but not the site administrator; the last date of updating is not seen; no FAQ provision; the introduction of new periodicals exists; no "help" provision but "about us". The site takes between one and two minutes to load, much longer than the standard 8 seconds.

Suggestions to improve the site are as follows: more beautiful Farsi fonts could be applied; and the inclusion of more illustrations; the site map; the total periodicals authorized by MCIG; more full-text periodicals; the last date of updating; FAQ provision; and "help" provision seem necessary.

## Notes and References

- [1] <http://www.magiran.com>
- [2] <http://www.sci.org.ir/portal/faces/public/sci/sci.gozide>
- [3] SABERI, M. *A comparison between the content and construct features of the central libraries' homepages of US, Canada, and Australia with those of Iran along with a survey on the viewpoints of users and experts to present an optimal model*. MLib. Dissertation, School of Education and Psychology, Shaheed Chamran University (in Farsi)