

E-boards are the new noticeboards

Even Colleges And Places Of Worship Are Turning To Them

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Bangalore: If you haven't noticed yet, you soon will. Those old-time noticeboards — onto which you would pin sheets of paper containing the info you want to communicate — are gradually disappearing. They are being replaced by electronic signages.

It's happening in railway stations and restaurants. And it's happening even in places you least expect, like traditional colleges and churches.

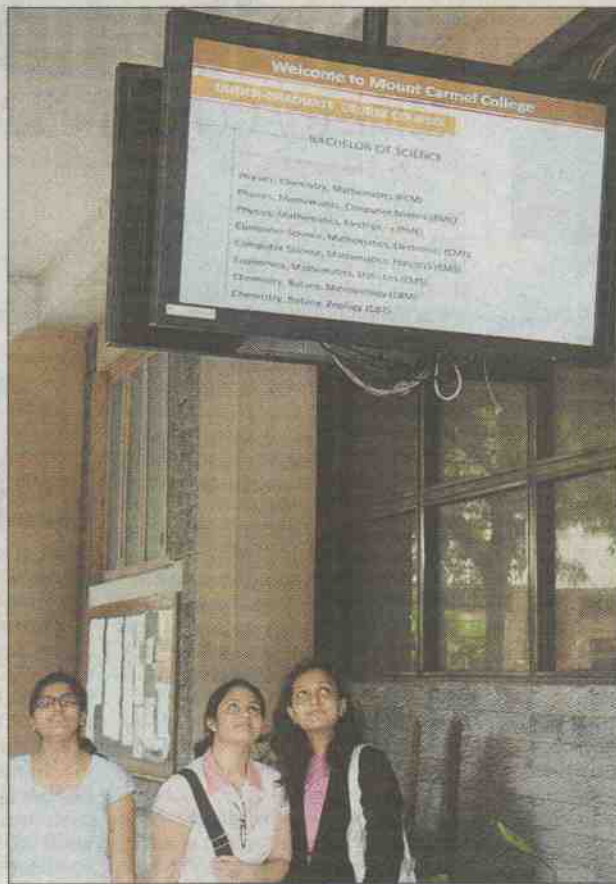
Mount Carmel College installed electronic digital boards four months ago. The college uses it to display examination results and information about college activities. The board also displays educative information on things like cultures and countries, and human rights.

Shri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College uses electronic boards to flash education-related programmes, including about competitive exams like MAT and CAT.

Some churches like the East Parade Church on M G Road now even have one of their hymn number display boards in the electronic format.

Though some people find certain changes objectionable — “they look completely out of place in traditional settings” — many find that electronic boards allow for greater flexibility and to convey more information.

“The e-board runs a special presentation for freshers on popular hangouts in college and anti-ragging messages. This is interesting to read when we are standing in the long queue in the canteen,” says Shylaja Varma, final-year BSc student of MCC. A teacher



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in the same college says students have become a lot more aware of supplementaries and credit courses following the installation of the boards.

MCC principal Sr Albina is also impressed, adding that “Since it is a visual medium with no audio, it does not distract students.”

The way the system works is simple. The college emails the required information to Elucido Networks — the company that operates the system and which has its office in In-

diranagar — which then uploads it on to the college board remotely.

And the revenue model for the operator currently is advertising. “When there is no news to flash, the agency runs ads,” says principal N Sundarajan of Shri Bhagawan Mahaveer Jain College. So the outgo for colleges is minimal.

Newer digital signages come with technologies like bluetooth, RFID, SMS and MMS capabilities. “When you walk past the digital boards,

you can connect with the boards via your mobile phone,” says Rajat Rakkhit, co-founder of Elucido Networks. This, he says, can be particularly useful when placed in malls, since the boards can convey to you things like discounts and offers available in the mall.

“We update information through our internet protocol network,” says Rakkhit. “We even have the option of cloud print which allows customers to take print outs, giving commands on the mobile phone.”

LG has just introduced triple-view display models — one LCD module that can display three different images at the same time. They are specially designed for bars, restaurants, retail outlets, educational institutions, flight schedule boards, concert hall back screens and government (traffic control centre). The products start at Rs 43,000 and go upto Rs 4.70,000. The company is in talks with Cafe Coffee Day and McDonald's for installation of their products.

“After airports and railway stations we will look into the education sector,” says Moon B Shin, MD of LG Electronics India.

Many restaurants, hotels, resorts and cafes already use digital boards to explain the history of the city as well as promote their cuisine. Advertising concerns are secondary, if at all.

Digital boards or e-bulletins was a \$312 million market in India in 2007. It is estimated by some to touch \$550 million by 2012, growing 14% year-on-year. With the newer generation getting used to living a digital, internet-connected life, and with equipment costs declining, that growth rate may soon look conservative.