REVIEW ARTICLE

Library Services and User Satisfaction in the Digital Era: An Overview

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Abstract

The article gives a brief account of digital libraries and information services in the Digital era. The methods of offering high quality reliable and user-friendly library services will be different in different types of libraries. Library services conducted in the past such as selecting, acquiring, managing/processing and disseminating information are still valid today in the digital environment. Today we need to package information in a more selective manner because the digital resources are vast and diverse in nature. The paper highlights the quality information services and user satisfaction in the digital era.

Keywords: Information Services; Electronic Information Service; Digital Library; Information System and Digital Environment.

Introduction

Libraries have remained the repositories of knowledge for the last few centuries. Even now users get access to published information and knowledge resources through these libraries. In the past library quality has been regarded as "synonymous with collection size – an assessment of what the library has-rather than with what the library does [1].

Quality is now recognized as a multi-faceted concept, one that can be approached from different perspectives. One perspective focuses on the library user. Or customer, and assessment that " if customers say there is quality service then there is. If they do not, then there is not. It does not matter what an organization believes about its level of service" [2].

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This ultimate goal of bringing together a perfectly customized collection of books for the purposes of fulfilling users needs was driving collection size constantly upwards in the 20th century. It is really libraries' commitment to quality that was driving quality, librarians are concerned about throwing away information content and want to safeguard the container, traditionally known as the book.

Digital Library

Provide access to large collections; capture, store and manipulate information. For that reason libraries will need to upgrade architectures to accommodate digital materials (i.e. high speed local networks and fast connection to the internet; full text search engines, FTP Servers etc.)

Building digital resources (i.e. e-journals, full-text, CD-Rom databases, books etc.) for access, preservation and managing good qualities of information [3].

Information and Library

With the rapid development of in information and communication technology (ICT) people are coming to the library to get their-information to a model where the information and the library are actively engaged in taking the resources to the user, a movement towards disintermediation facilitated by technological development. The library of the future is less of a place and more of a portal that provides high quality content on the web- a scholar's portal for research libraries. Access to digital materials though involve challenges of "Scale, funding, law, and access" as well as issues of cultural change and transformative assessment.

Therefore users' expectations (Quality services and satisfaction) and outcomes assessment should be central on the following.

1. What are quality service and user satisfaction and how do they differ?

2. How can we best measure quality service in libraries?

3. How can we best measure user satisfaction with library services?

4. What is outcomes assessment?

5. How can such assessment be measured?

6. How is outcomes assessment linked to quality service and user satisfaction?

Janet G. Donald and Brian Denison mention that quality assessment "must meet the needs of the people whom it is intended to benefit and aid and evaluated institution [or organization] to make improvements".[4] As a result, data related to service quality, satisfaction, and outcomes assessment should be linked to a planning process. That process may well connect the library to the larger organization or institution and may produce a partner ship among administrators, teaching faculty, researchers and librarians in the accomplishment of an educational mission and its accompanying goals and objectives. Within such an environment, quality relates to perceptions, quality service and satisfaction and the actual performance of users as they complete a programme of study or even a work shop.

Concept of Quality Service

The concept of quality service has been perceived from several perspectives. Carol A. Reeves and David A. Bednar identify for dimensions of quality:

1. Excel lance. It is the "mark of uncompromising standards and high achievement ". But there may be measurement difficulties, the "attributes of excel lance may change", and a "sufficient number of customers must be willing to pay for excellence".

2. Value. Although value "incorporates multiple attributes", it is difficult to extract "individual components of value judgment". Besides, value and quality are not synonymous.

3. Conformance to Specifications. Conformance is based on reducing errors, defects, or mistakes to improve quality. It "facilitates precise measurement" and "leads to increased efficiency". Nonetheless, users do not know or care about interest specifications" and such a perspective is "internally focused" and in appropriate for services".

4. Meeting and or exceeding expectations. This perspective focuses on expectational and evaluates service from the user's perspective. Yet, users may not know [their] expectations", and there may be "confusion between user service and user satifaction" [5].

7. Quality Service in Libraries. For libraries, quality service applies to three general areas, each of which consists of assorted variables:

Resources: Information Content

• *Organization*: Service environment and resource delivery; and

• Service delivered by staff [6].

These Variables Encompass the Five Elements of Quality Services

1. Tangible (the appearance of physical facilities, equipment, personnel, and communication material);

2. Reliability (ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately);

3. Responsiveness (Willingness to help customers and provide prompt service);

4. Assurance (knowledge and courtesy of employees and their ability to inspire trust and confidence); and

5. Empathy (the caring, individualized attention that a firm provides its customers).

Philip J. Culvert and Peter, Hermon recast these three areas as dimensions, or broad constructs of the total range of quality service including.

- Guidance;

- Waiting times;

- Electronic Services;

- Library Staff (available, courteous, approachable, and friendly) and materials in

- Their correct place [7];

- Equipment is kept in good working order;

- Material arriving within a set time;

- The building and the library environment;

- Library furniture and facilities;

- Material for course needs.

Quality Service and User Satisfaction

This distinction between both quality services and users satisfaction is more complex because of some gaps which generally hinder an organization in providing high quality service. These five gaps reflect a discrepancy between.

- Quality service specification and management's perspective of users' expectations;

- Service quality specifications and service delivery;

- Service delivery and external communication regarding the delivery; and

- Users' expectation of service and perceived service deliver.

Moreover, expectations are subjective and compromise desired wants, or the extent to which users believe a particular attribute is essential for an excellent service provider, and perceptions are judgments about service performance. Further more expectations are not static; they change and evolve over.

Conclusion

Quality service focuses on the interaction between users and service providers, and the gap or difference between expectations about service provision and perceptions about how the service was actually provided. An environment of assessment is emerging in which libraries and information centers demonstrate accountability and engage in planning to balance the service expectations of users and the collection objectives of libraries.

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