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Electronic Information Sources: An Emerging Issues for Libraries

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Abstract

ICT applications in libraries have made drastic changes in the library housekeeping activities, specifically with the electronic information sources. In the present Information age, Electronic Information Sources gain lot of popularity and compatibility both in terms of usage and information dissemination. In the light of these facts, how to manage or organize the e-resources in libraries and various issues concern to the development of e-resource collection have been discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Electronic Information Resources; E-books; E-journals; Information Technology.

Introduction

The libraries today are reorienting their collections and their collection development policies in the light of e-resources. Not only are the collections changing so are the role of librarians. Today the library collections are different from the way they were a decade or two ago. This is so because of the ability to deliver information to remote users electronically, but then this requires drastic changes in the services pattern, staffing, budgeting and planning. The changes in technology combined with shifting styles of teaching and learning in higher education and expectations of the society at large, have merged to make academic libraries something quite different from what they were even as recently as the 1980s.

Electronic delivery of information requires delivery platforms, equipment, software, substantial user support & time to access various services & products that producers offer. Few users have time, energy, inclination or funds to handle all these activities effectively. Librarians can & should undertake these tasks; if we do not do it someone else will do it. [1]

Definitional Analysis

E-Resources

According to AACR2, 2005 Update, an electronic resource is: "Material (data and/or program(s)) encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device (e.g., CD-ROM drive) or a connection to a computer network (e.g., the Internet)." This definition does not include electronic resources that do not require the use of a computer, for example, music compact discs and videodiscs. [2]

E-resources are those electronic resources, which deliver a collection of data, it may be e-journals, image collection, multimedia products and

numerical, graphical or time based. It may be have an aim to provide access as a commercially or non-commercial (open access) available till that has been published with an aim to being marketed. The electronic resources may be delivered on CD-ROM or made available access through website/ portals via internet or intranet mode.

According to Barker, there are three types of documents used in digital resources, namely Static, Dynamic and Living.

- Static - Static e-resources are the most basic, they contain unchanging information and never change their form (such as traditional online data)
- Dynamic - Dynamic e-resources are also containing unchanging information but also able to change their external form, the way embedded material is presented to users (such as multimedia CD-ROMs).
- Living - Living e–resources are able to change both their form (outward appearance) and these embedded information (such as information contain on the web.)

E-Resources can be disseminate to the library user community as part of the library service in many way which includes; E-Databases, E-Journals, E-Magazines, E-Books/Wiki Books/E-Audios/E-Musics, E-News, E-Images, Data/GIS, Digital Library Projects, Electronic Exhibitions, E-Subject Guides, E-Newsletter, E-White Papers, E-Conference Proceedings, E-Reports, E-Studies, E-Interesting Development, E-Directories, Web Search Tools on a choice of topic of the users interest.

Why to adopt Electronic Information resources

Electronic publishing has led to new era of communications and information sharing .It creates opportunities for users as well as authors and publishers to share the unpublished knowledge to the world as well as a target user community through electronic information gateway. Many of the electronic books or electronic publishers' web site freely permit and encourage readers to provide feedback on works, often directly to the author rather than to the publisher. Nevertheless users may establish their own accounts, charge services. User can access the restricted access to content by paying through credit cards or pay by prearranged payment method, which enables to have requested material delivered directly to them by fax, e-mail, etc.

Today, libraries of all kinds have been spending larger and larger shares of their budgets to adopt or gain access to electronic resources from publishers and vendors. This is due the fact that e-resources have enabled libraries to improve services in a variety of ways. E-resources are equipped with powerful search-and-retrieval tools that allow users to perform literature searches more effectively and efficiently. Moreover, since most relevant e-resources are now available through the web, users can have desktop access to them around the clock. Users can navigate directly from indexing databases to the full text of an article and can even follow further links from there. Nevertheless, the emergence of e-books and e-journals followed the widespread adoption and use of electronic mail, list servers and discussion groups to disseminate information quickly to large audiences [3].

The myths about Electronic Information -resources especially e-journals (Hazel WoodWord, 1997) are:

- E-journals provide better access to journal articles.
- Academics & researchers read journals at their office desks.
- Readers want e-journals.
- E-journals are quick & convenient to access.
- Readers know & care who publishes a journal.
- Readers want page integrity.
- E-journals will bypass libraries & make them redundant.
- E- Journals will save libraries money.
- Storage & dissemination of e-journals is inexpensive or free.
- Publishers care about readers.
- E-journals will save papers.
- E-journals will save publisher's money.
- E-journals will make subscription agents redundant.
- Only recent issues of e-journals are required.
- All scholarly journals will be available electronically in a few years.
- E-journals are always more current than their print counter parts.
- E-journals provide all graphic materials of their print counter parts.
- E-journals are always accessible.
- All readers have equal access to required computer at any time.

- E-journals will save library staff time & effort in handling journals.

Selection of Electronic Information resources

Selection is not a new term to librarian and staff as they have been doing it since long back the libraries started acquiring printed material. However libraries are now focusing to adopt e-resources information technology approaching towards the e-resources rather than printed materials as technology developed. In fact, the emergence of Internet, particularly, the www (World Wide Web) has a triggered proliferation of web based full text online resources as a new media of information delivery. As the web has grown, not just in popularity and use, but also in content, librarians are trying to meet the needs of the user and identify new resources, such as online databases, web based resources, collections in digital library, e-books, e-journals etc. The selection process should be done in relevant with the demands of the users, committee, focus group, user's recommendation etc. Apart from this, it should take into consideration the following steps;

- Recognize library needs;
- Categorize content and scope of the e-resources;
- Assess the quality of that particular resource and search capabilities;
- Estimate the cost of the e-resources;
- Check sort of access either subscription based or web based when acquiring;
- Evaluate the systems and technical support required to access the e-resources;
- Analysis licensing agreements to avoid future conflicts with publisher or supplier;
- Evaluate application software and installation, updated sporadically or in regular schedule; and
- Confirm the facilities for educational support and training to achieve maximum utilization by the users.

Evaluation of Electronic Information Resources

Evaluation of resources assumes a greater importance due to the large e-resources such as e-journals, database, e-text, etc available on the net. Authority, Audience, Scope, Time Coverage, Geographic coverage, Currency, Update, Language, Publications, Record format, Availability format, etc are some responsible criteria for evaluation of e-resources. Moreover, extensiveness of the content, accessibility, quality of technical support, cost, conditions of licensing agreement are also other responsible factors which should taken into account while procurement/subscription of e-resources.

While evaluating the e-resources the following points should be considered

- To identify the electronic version have the retrospective data (as mostly electronic resources do not include data prior to some year);
- To determine particular source of information of e-resources offer any special features which are not available in other print version;
- To check the content of the e-resources with relevant to the users as well as to the collection as a whole;
- To check whether the information is often updated or not;
- To determine the e-resources have affordable price or not though offered diverse pricing system by the publishers;
- To identify the method of accessing of e-resources available;
- To identify the e-resources needed to maintain and redesign the library website identified;
- To check the staffing needs for training of recruiting with the existing technology.

Develop of Electronic Information Sources collection

The various issues involved in developing a good Electronic collection are as follows:

1. *How access can best be provided:* Providing access to the latest electronic resources is the key to a good electronic environment, this may be due to ownership or from some remote source. The important factors to provide effective access are:

2. *Infrastructure:* Not only the availability of computers in libraries for the users to access e-journals but also their configuration is important. Timings of the library, staff assistance, as also the speed of Internet, download facility and option to copy the information on CD or take print outs etc. make the purpose of electronic resources.

3. Technical infrastructure: In a digital information service system, infrastructure such as software, hardware, internet facilities and other physical equipments are required to provide easier, faster and complete access to information. Therefore, libraries in the digital age need to enhance and upgrade current technical infrastructure, which is essentially required to provide access to e-resources to the user community of the library.

4. Inadequate library fund: Most of the libraries have inadequate fund for the procurement of e-resources. In these cases, access to e-resources through library consortia will reduce the financial burden among the library in acquiring the electronic resources.

5. Cost analysis: The main advantage of having e-resources is that there can be savings from storage costs, and some e-resources are available more quickly than print. In this transition period selectors need to consider carefully what is gained and what is given up with print and electronic version of the same title. Form purpose and source of access will vary considerably among the categories of full text. Decision should be made on title-to-title basis depending upon the needs of each library's users. Funds must go to "access, just-in-time collection building, document-delivery, and online publishing ventures."

6. Developing selection criteria: There are various ways of providing access to the users. Every library has to make its individual choice depending upon the budget available, content of the source and also the requirement of its users. Some of the ways of providing access are:

Publishers: Many journal publishers provide access to their titles as a package.

Aggregators: Many libraries have cut costs by replacing some print subscriptions with electronic full-text databases of journals supplied by aggregators. Aggregators of electronic collections and services may include document delivery services as well as integration of full text electronic documents into a common interface. Examples of aggregator databases are JSTOR, ProQuest, EBSCO etc.

7. Preservation: Though the e-resources are enabling information to be created, manipulated, disseminated and located with increasing ease, preserving access to this information posses a great challenge. Unless, preservation of digital information is actively taken, the information will become inaccessible due to changing technology platform and media instability.

8. Lack of professional skills: inefficiency among the library professionals in handling the e-resources, will result in reduce in usage and dissemination of information to the end user. Electronic information handling require both professional and computer technical skills to handle the information in digital format. Library professionals must be abreast with the latest technological developments and skills which are require for working in today's rapidly changing digital environment.

9. Lack of cooperation of staff members: There is a need of proper coordination among the computer professionals and library professionals to provide effective service in a digital environment. Computer professional's helps in troubleshooting the problems associated with the computer hardware and software. As such, the library staff must have proper coordination among the computer experts and must be technically competent in troubleshooting the user queries in accessing the e-resources with a user-friendly-approach.

Conclusion

Information & communication Technology has dramatically changed the nature of Librarian's work and the various services offered by the libraries. With the rapid advancement in computer technology along with information technology, libraries and information centers have been blessed with electronic materials and therefore libraries are gradually changing from traditional library to electronic libraries by procuring and providing access electronic information resources. Libraries nowadays require updating with latest computer hardware and softwares infrastructure, which are essentially required to provide access to the e- resources both in offline and online mode. Librarians will have to be flexible enough to continue changing, adapting to change as they have done over the past decades, but more rapidly and more creatively. In order to meet the ever increasing demand of the user community in a digital environment, libraries have to develop ways to manage access to materials available in electronic format and to effectively share them mush as they have shared print resources for over a century through inter library lending.

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