

Access To Electronic Information Resources In Academic Libraries

Dr. Rajashekhar Kumbar

Librarian Government First Grade College Kapu, Udupi – 574106.

ABSTRACT

This paper makes an attempt to highlight and discuss the emerging challenges and opportunities associated with the use of information resources in the academic libraries. In the present age of information exploration, knowledge of the latest and correct information is the key for personal and professional development, and electronic information resources are essential for academic purposes. With the advent of the Internet, users have more opportunities to access online information resources anytime and anywhere for academic and research purposes. The Internet is the gateway for libraries and information centers to enter the electronic information era and provides information generated by publishers, organizations, institutes, research centers, and individuals worldwide. In an ideal world, the information resources available in electronic form are certainly the answer to many of our traditional problems with speedy delivery, availability, unlimited time, geography, and security. In addition, in some situations, librarians face difficulties in adjusting and developing habits to handle electronic information resources and lack proper infrastructure to handle electronic resources.

Keywords: Academic Libraries, Electronic Information Resources, Information Technology, User Satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Technology is changing the nature of libraries, and continues to exert a major influence on the strategic direction of libraries in society. Today, library resources and services are transforming from conventional collections to global resources provided on demand through the most advanced networking technologies. It is now possible to retrieve information independently of time zones and geographical location and to obtain the most up-to-date information from the form of the library without walls or the virtual library. Libraries are challenged to provide greater access to information and improved levels of service while coping with the pace of technological change and ever-increasing budget pressure. As a result, professional librarians must be computer-literate and knowledgeable about the use of electronic information resources.

To cope with the changes and keep pace with the dynamism successfully is a difficult task that is unattainable because of the speed at which drastic changes occur. Therefore, all the

activities of the library should be mechanized, and manpower needs to be trained on the job to be at par with the organization where every job is carried out using information technological tools and techniques. The use of electronic information resources in academic libraries has increased tremendously because it provides enhanced user satisfaction, cost effectiveness, faster and simpler programs, rapid responses, and easier operational procedures. Generally, the use of electronic information resources includes online access to library collections, bibliographic databases, online literature searches, and personal computers for libraries.

2. ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

The utilization of electronic information resources has become important in the drive to make information and data transfer available to users. The need for electronic information for research and learning in various institutions poses challenges in relation to system connections, working abilities, and access. Electronic information serves as a motivating factor for users, as it provides the opportunity to transmit, acquire, or download processes and disseminate information on a subject of interest.

Electronic information sources propose that today's user opportunities differ from those of their predecessors (Ray & Day, 1998). Brophy (1993) stated as "the information needed which can be delivered from the most appropriate source to the user; the user can re-specify his or her needs dynamically; the information is obtained when it is wanted, so becomes 'just in time' rather than 'just in case'; the user selects only the information needed to answer the specific question and finally, the information is only stored should user wish."

The accessed electronic resources can be printed, and searches saved to be repeated at a later date; they are updated more often than printed tools. Related to this, the Internet is used as a medium of expression to educate learners, provide information needs at their desktop, and send hitch-free and cross-referenced data to the appropriate location. It could be said that improved data transmission facilities will go a long way to reduce the time and energy of students in the acquisition and generation of data, which will serve as the basis for research and academic performance improvement. This is because it seems that the use of electronic information by users enhances their academic performance. Among the electronic information system users use to obtain most of their information are the Internet, e-mail, electronic journals, bulletin boards, telephone, telex, CD-ROM databases, electronic journals, and electronic books.

In academic libraries, a large proportion of respondents had access to both Internet facilities and online services provided by the library, yet usage figures for these media were quite low (Swan and Brown, 1996). The use of computers in young children's education promotes social interaction and academic achievement. Elliot (1996) suggested that there should be provision for an introduction to computers in early childhood settings to enrich learning opportunities and guidance provided to teachers to find developmentally appropriate software and hardware.

3. TYPES OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES

Libraries with their traditional holdings in print format are now being added to electronic information resources in various formats, such as CD-ROM and DVD-ROM databases, online databases, e-journals, and plenty of Internet or Web resources. The content of these sources varies from bibliographic to full text.

3.1 CD-ROM databases

The use of CD-ROM databases is increasing daily in almost all fields, owing to their many advantages in information storage and retrieval. The majority of publishers of books and journals, online vendors, and various learned societies are bringing out new titles in the CD format with powerful, user-friendly retrieval software. Electronic information resources in the CD format include abstracting and indexing services, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories, yearbooks, back volumes, patents, standards, and many other reference works. CD-ROM technology has provided ample opportunities for information professionals to introduce more information services to end-users.

3.2 DVD-ROM database

The ultimate advantage of DVD- Digital Video disc or digital versatile disc, with its 17 GB of high data storage capacity, has made it possible to include more multimedia elements, such as video and sound, and to integrate many reference sources on a single disc. "The other features like higher quality of sound and video, higher rate of data transfer, data security etc., are making DVD more viable option than CD-ROM. However, at present, due to problems such as a lack of standards among the manufacturers of DVDs and drives, the need for extra hardware on PCs and their higher prices are making the growth of DVD technology slow". Some DVD reference sources include Britannica DVD 99, Webster's International DVD Encyclopedia-2000, Grolier Multimedia Encyclopaedia, Eyewitness World Atlas DVD-ROM Deluxe Edition, and The Complete National Geographic on DVDROM.

3.3 Online Database

The recent growth of the Internet and the popularity and ease of use of the Web have led libraries to subscribe to online information services. The usage of online databases against their CD-ROM counterparts must be evaluated and decided on the basis of cost-effectiveness and timeliness. A few online information services include KR ScienceBase and STN. KR ScienceBase includes information sources such as BIOSIS, CA Search, Elsevier Science Publishers, Reuters, and NTIS. The STN International provides a complete collection of in-depth databases in science and technology that provides quick, direct links to the literature, patents, and chemical catalogues. The Chemical Abstract Service, the world's largest and most

comprehensive database of chemical information, offers several databases on STN, such as CAplus, INSPEC, MEDLINE, SCISEARCH, and TOXLIT.

3.4 E-books

An electronic book is the content of a book made available to the reader in electronic form. According to the Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science, electronic books are “a term used to describe a text analogous to a book that is in digital form to be displayed on the computer screen”. Electronic books, or e-books, are books in computer file format that are read on all types of computers, including handheld devices designed specifically for reading e-books.

3.5 E-journals

With the emergence of the Internet, e-journals and Electronic Journals are gaining more importance. The publishing world is undergoing a revolutionary change, as an increasing number of publications are becoming WEB centric. “Most of the publishers are choosing WEB as a an access medium using HTML to mark up the journal content so that it can be read using a web browser. These journals are also called networked e-journals. Other publishers have chosen to use additional access software in conjunction with the WEB, the most popular being Adobe Acrobat and its associated Portable Document Format (PDF) file type”.

3.6 INTERNET as an Electronic Information Resource

INTERNET and its World Wide Web (WWW) have given rise to a paradigm shift in information management. The information available on the Internet is increasing rapidly, and the task of providing relevant information to patrons is gaining paramount importance in all types of libraries. Most of the reputed publishers, learned, and commercial societies host their products on net, and all libraries share their internal and external information resources by means of web pages and Web-OPACs. Powerful search engines over the net are aiding the information location efficiently. Internet services such as E-mail, Bulletin Boards, Newsgroups, Discussion Lists are gaining importance in libraries and becoming indispensable resources for users. Owing to the impact of the Internet, there is swift migration from offline to online, as the Web is becoming a popular user interface for providing access to remote and frequently updated resources.

4. NEED OF INFORMATION SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES

The ability to find and retrieve information effectively is a transferable skill that is useful for future life, as well as enabling the positive and successful use of electronic resources. Blandy (1995) found that the need for information skills and techniques in searching influences users to identify metadata and find materials in the library. There are techniques that users can use to locate materials in the library, such as

BOOLEAN operator (“AND”, “OR” and “NOT”)

Keyword search/free text search

Truncation

Word proximity and others

The technique used by the user seeks information from a variety of sources to fulfil their needs. These needs are often initially vague and evolve during the search process so that browsing is a more accurate description of users’ behaviour than searching. Brophy, P. (1993). The term browsing emphasizes the determinate, situated, and unexpected aspects of search, which contrasts sharply with the single-query or single-answer model of traditional information retrieval.

5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The emergence of information explosion has influenced libraries to meet even more challenges and opportunities to serve students, faculty, staff, scholars, and other users, all with much expectation and many more demands triggered by the growth of emerging and cutting-edge technologies in academic learning environments.

5.1 Advantages of Electronic Sources

Electronic information sources are often faster than consulting print indexes, especially when searching retrospectively, and they are more straightforward when using combinations of keywords. They opened up the possibility of searching multiple files at one time, and a feat was accomplished more easily than when using printed equivalents. Electronic resources can be printed and searches saved can be repeated at a later date; they are updated more often than printed tools. One main advantage, especially to distance learners or those with limited time to access the library, is their availability from outside library access.

5.2 Challenges of Electronic Sources

The main reason for the non-use of e-resources was the lack of adequate searching skills. The limited use of electronic resources is primarily due to the absence of basic skills. To exploit the full potential of electronic information, libraries need to undertake a more active role in informing, promoting, and educating members of the academic community. Serve as a portal to access vast information resources and concentrate on access and knowledge management, rather than physical ownership. Libraries, leadership, and staff should recast their identities in relation to the changing models of knowledge creation and dissemination, and in relation to the academic communities they serve. Academic libraries and staff should be torchbearers to lead versatile information seekers and relinquish their tasks by providing the right information to the right users at the right time and, if possible, with the right personal touch Togia A. and Tsigilis N. (2009). To promote on-screen help, printed guides, and training for less popular electronic resources, encourage users to see their potential.

6. USER STUDIES

There are two main types of user studies: system-oriented studies and user-oriented studies. In the first case, users are viewed as passive recipients of information, and the study investigates their external behaviour, generally using qualitative methods. Brenda D. and Michael N.(1986) Although these surveys yield quantitative data, which give an overall picture of information needs and seeking behaviour, they fail to convey a real picture regarding the factors that trigger the information search and a more in-depth insight into the individual's conception and thoughts. However, in user-oriented studies, users are viewed as active and self-controlling recipients of information and are concerned with the internal cognitions of users, which are investigated using qualitative methods.

Despite the large number of user studies, information scientists are still left with an unsettling feeling of an elementary level of knowledge concerning user needs and information-seeking behaviour. Considering the constant development in the provision of electronic systems, the lack of understanding of information-seeking behaviour poses an obstacle in the process of interpreting the way electronic information services are being delivered Sugar, W. (1995). There is a need for alternative research methods and conceptual frameworks that will provide to the information science community evidence to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the users of information services.

7. CONCLUSION

The use of electronic resources, even though they are found in various electronic formats, is becoming ever more popular and pervasive. Electronic information resources have become the backbone of many academic organizations. The awareness and use of electronic information sources by users depend mainly on the skills of each individual to locate discrete knowledge elements. Information explosions have increased the number of electronic information sources available on the web. Electronic information resources help expand access, increase usability and effectiveness, and establish new ways for individuals to use information to be more productive in their endeavours. Awareness of electronic resources may aid users in keeping abreast with current developments in their respective subject fields in contrast to print media. The use of electronic information resources is necessary for users mainly because electronic resources provide better, faster, and easier access to information than information accessed through print media. Electronic information resources can be relied upon for timely information that upholds the quote: the right information to the right user at the right time.

8. REFERENCES

Blandy S.G and Libutti, P.O'B (1995). As the cursor blinks: electronic scholarship and undergraduates in the library. *Library Trends*, 44(2), pp 279-305.

Brenda D. and Michael N.(1986). Information needs and uses. In: Williams, Martha, ed. Annual Review of Information Science and Technology: volume 21. Knowledge Industry Publications, pp.3-33.

Brophy P. (1993). Networking in British academic libraries. British Journal of Academic Librarianship, 8(1),pp 49-60.

Burden M. K. (1995). Using a computer based messaging system at a high school to increase school/home communication. Ed.D. Practicum Report. Nova Southeastern University.

Day J. and Bartle C. (1998). The Internet as an electronic information service: Its impact on academic staff in higher education. IRISS Conference Papers, U.K. Retrieved December 29, 2010 from <http://www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/archive/iriss/papers/paper06.htm>

Dutton B.G. (1990). An introduction to end-user searching. User searching: the effective gateway to published information. London: ASLIB, pp 1-18.

Eliot A. (1996). Learning with computers. AECA Resource Book Series, (3)2, pp 14-20.

Mischnick E. (1998). Responsible use of computers and information system. Executive Memorandum, No 16.Retrieved August 8, 2003 from University of Nebraska website: http://www.nebraska.edu/about/exec_memo16.pdf

Naidu M.K. and others (2001). Creation & Management of Digital Resources- Caliber 2001, INFLIBNET Centre, Ahmedabad, 2001.

Osunrinde A. A., Adekiya, I. A. & Adeyemo, K. A. (2002). Internet connectivity vis-à-vis prospect and problems on research Growth in academic institutions in Nigeria. Nigeria Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics, 4, pp 90-91.

Sugar W. (1995). User-centered perspectives of information retrieval research and analysis methods. Annual Review of Information Science and Technology: volume 30. American Society of Information Science, pp.77-109.

Togia A. and Tsigilis N. (2009). Awareness and Use of Electronic Information Resources by Education Graduate Students: Preliminary Results from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, qualitative and quantitative methods in libraries Theory and Application, Greece, pp 464-468.