

Webology, Volume 3, Number 1, March, 2006

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Book Review

Digital Libraries: Principles and Practice in a Global Environment. Lucy A. Tedd & Andrew Large. Published by [K.G. Saur](#), Ortlerstrasse 8 81373 Munchen, Germany, 2005, xx, 280 p., Hardcover, ISBN 3-598-11627-6, € 88

A simple search in the Amazon bookstore (Amazon.com) returns more than 300 books with the term digital library/libraries in their title. '*Digital libraries*' is a topic that has been attracting a great deal of attention from researchers in a variety of academic disciplines - especially the library and information science (LIS), and computer science communities. However, there is no consensus on the formal definition of digital libraries. This is partly due to the fact that researchers in different fields look at digital libraries from different perspectives.

Born from their teaching and global consultancy experience, '*Digital Libraries: Principles and Practice in a Global Environment*' by Tedd and Large, tries to put digital libraries into a new perspective, within global environment. The goal of this book is to 'introduce the principles underlying digital libraries' - something a few other books (e.g. [Chowdhury & Chowdhury](#), 2003) have already tried to achieve. However, the authors have adopted a different approach by referring to a wide range of digital library practices throughout the world, filling the gap in our knowledge of digital library developments in the non-English-speaking countries.

Adopting a LIS-oriented approach, the book starts (chapter 1) with an effort to put digital libraries in context by explaining their background and their relationship with traditional libraries. Moreover, the first chapter seeks to clarify what the authors mean by a digital library. The authors preferred to apply [Borgman's](#) (2000) definition of a digital library rather than proposing a new one. The structure and the content of the book reflect the adopted definition. Borgman defined digital libraries by clarifying their content, users, and hosting organisations.

Chapter 2 deals with '*Users and Services*' of digital libraries. Two of the main issues discussed in this chapter are the digital libraries that are developed for clients of different organisations, and information literacy - an ability that is needed for using digital libraries. Although the book does not include a separate chapter about usability, some of the barriers to users' access are described in this chapter, and some other usability-related issues are discussed in the sixth chapter. Chapter 3 describes '*Digital Information Sources*', in fact, what digital libraries consist of.

The next three chapters focus more on the technical issues of digital libraries. Chapter 4 deals with '*Standards and Interoperability*'. Metadata is the core of the chapter. The next chapter examines the technical foundations needed for organizing access to digital information sources. Several software packages used for digital libraries are briefly introduced and examples of the libraries using them are given. However, more technical information about these packages and what distinguishes them from each other could have

been provided. Chapter 6 is about '*Interface Design*' and it benefits from several screenshots of webpages of digital libraries. However, it is worth mentioning that the book is not a technical manual for implementing digital libraries. It does not provide details of how things are done with respect to digital libraries. It discusses the issues involved in, and challenges of, developing and implementing digital libraries. The variety of covered issues is one of the book's main sources of value.

Chapter 7 is allocated to '*Searching and Browsing*' i.e. the ways in which digital libraries can be used. The technical issues involved in running and managing digital libraries are outlined in the 8th chapter. It covers issues such as staffing, evaluation, preservation, selection and planning. The last chapter (Case Studies) illustrates and delineates eight digital libraries from Europe, Asia and America. One drawback to the book is that the authors do not have a critical approach to the case studies and this chapter serves rather as a kind of introduction to the discussed digital libraries. Nevertheless, these case studies and practical examples make the book a practical textbook for students. In addition to the case studies, the authors have tried to highlight projects of note by presenting about 125 screenshots from different digital libraries in different countries throughout all 9 chapters of the book. However, there is another small drawback to the book in that the small size and low resolution of some of the screenshots have made them difficult to read.

In brief, the authors have pulled together a great deal of material and examples to help the reader understand many aspects of digital libraries as they emerge in the global multi-lingual environment, and they have achieved their objectives. The book is definitely a worthwhile read for students and LIS professionals, although the price (€ 88) does not seem reasonable for students. Overall, the book is a good start point for those who want to follow up the issues involved in developing and implementing digital libraries.

References

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Bibliographic information of this book review for citing:

Jamali, H. R. (2006). "Review of: Tedd, L.A. & Large, A. *Digital Libraries: Principles and Practice in a Global Environment*." Germany: K.G. Saur, 2005. *Webology*, 3(1), Book Review 3. Available at: <http://www.webology.org/2006/v3n1/bookreview3.html>

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