CHANGING DIMENSIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICES TO NEW DIGITAL ERA

Mrs.Nirmala G. Borade
Librarian
Sant Dnyaneshwar College, Tal.Soyagaon
Dist.Aurangabad

ABSTRACT

Library information services are a huge element in libraries since day time. Their vital role is increasingly becoming a measure of the library's contribution to the transformation and development of a society and the nation at large. The use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTS) has caused a transformation in the users' perception from what is being hosted in the library to how and when services are rendered to fulfill their requests. Transformation has brought a challenge in the field of library information services of dealing with the ever-increasing complexity of information, differentiating useful information from misinformation, and upholding the rising needs expectations of the users. This paper will discuss the available technological opportunities, dimension and its wider implication in every niche of library services having better nurturing nature.

KEYWORDS

Library Services, ICT, Technological Opportunities & Dimension

RESEARCH PAPER

1. Introduction

The literature on library and information science/services indicates that Libraries started off as store houses, where books were more preserved than utilized and librarians acted like some form of custodians and their interaction with users were minimal, for example only in locating books and serving users, then there was a shift as a result of information communication technology. Librarians were supposed to be custodians who did not encourage the use of books. The users were expected to use the library on their own. At most, if a user asked for a book, then the service that would be offered by the so called librarian was to pass on the book and leave the user alone. From the ancient times to present we note that this trend in services has tremendously changed to due information technology.

2. New Dimensions of Library Services

Changed Resources of Information

Today, users may have access a variety of textual information resources. There are different kinds of web based reference resources and services for accessing information from libraries such as OPAC, Gateways, Portals, Subject Portals, Electronic Journals, Online Databases, Subject Directories and Search Engines. These resources overlap considerably in the type of information they cover, and sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between some of them. A library should have a good collection of these resources like selected Web links, subscription resources, and library materials in well-organized pages for serving better services to their users.

Many libraries and organizations are providing digital reference service through collaborative services. Existing library consortia are adding digital reference to current shared services, and networks of libraries. Some regional library consortia are offering member libraries the opportunity to share reference questions with each other using the Internet and other technologies.

I. OPAC

OPAC's - On Line Public Access Catalogues, form an important part of many digital library's collections. It allows users to search for the bibliographic records contained within a library's collections. Now days, some OPAC also provide access to electronic resources and databases, in addition to the traditional bibliographic records.

II. Gateways

A gateway is defined as a facility that allows easier access to network based resources in a given subject area. Gateways provide a simple search facility and a much-enhanced service through a resource database and indexes, which can be searched through a web based interface. Information provided by gateways is catalogued by hand. Gateways cover a wide range of subjects, through some areas, such as music and religious studies, currently lack subject gateways.

III. Portals

In the library community, portals may be defined as an amalgamation of services to the users where the amalgamation is achieved through seamless integration of existing services by using binding agents such as customization and authentication services, search protocols such as 239.50, loan protocols such as ISO10161, and e-commerce. The result is a personalized service which allows the individual to access the rich content of both print-based and electronic systems. Portals are either commercial or free web facilities that offer information services to a specific audience. The facilities include web search to communication to email to news etc.

IV. Subject Portals

Web Search Engines had been developed initially by computer scientists, by borrowing techniques from information retrieval search such as best match searching and relevance ranking. Information professional are increasing bringing their skills to help organize the growing wealth of Internet resources. A good example of their influence is the development of subject-specific web search engines known as subject portals, where evaluation of material covered is a major concern. Two prime UK subject portals are SOSIG Social Science Information Gateway, covering social science resources and OMNI Organizing medical networked information covering medical resources.

V. Electronic Journals

Electronic journals form a large part of the collection of a library for providing web based services. Today many journals are available electronically some are full text and some contain only bibliographic information with abstract. Major advantage of electronic journals is that they are constantly updated and easy to access but disadvantage is that breaching of copyright law is very easy. They are available as bitmaps, PostScript, PDF, ASCII, SGML and HTML. Library services may be delivering to users on CD Rom, through email or through web. Some international societies and associations have developed their own digital libraries through which users can get access to all their publications. Services are available to the members of society or associations through subscription. Some of popular one is shown here

- ACM Digital Library http://portal.acm.org/portal.cfm

- EBSCO databases http://search.epnet.com/

- Elesvier's Science Direct http://www.sciencedirect.com/

- Emerald full text http://iris.emeraldinsight.com/

- IEL Online http://www.ieee.org/ .

- OCLC http://www.oclc.org.

- Springer Verlage link http://www.springerlink.com/

VI. Search Engines

Search Engines are huge databases of web page files that have been assembled automatically by machines where as the subject directories are human-compiled and maintained. Search engine indexes every page of a website and subject directories linked only homepages. Search Engine is the popular term for an information retrieval (IR) system. A search engine is computer software that searches a collection of electronic materials to retrieve citations, documents, or information that matches or answers a user's query. The retrieved materials may be text documents, facts that have been extracted from text, images, or sounds. A query is a question phrased so that it can be interpreted properly by search engine.

Depending on the type of software, it may be a collection of commands, a statement in either full or partial sentences, one or more keywords, or in the case of non-text searching, an image or sequence of sounds to be matched.
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VII. Subject Directories

Subject directories differ from search engines in that search engines are populated by robots that finds and index sites whereas humans making editorial decisions that populate subject directories, Subject directories are basically index home pages of sites and can be classified as general, academic, commercial or portal. Among the well known subject directories are the Argus Clearinghouse (www.clearinghouse.net) and Yahoo (www.yahoo.com). Strengths include relevance, effectiveness and relative high quality of content. Weaknesses are that they lack depth in their coverage of the subjects

VII. Internet based services

Internet is also treated as the biggest source of information. All sorts of information resources are available on the internet. They are also useful for providing the various services to users like e-mail, chat, List serves, remote log on, free journals services, virtual reference desk, subject portals and gateways, electronic publishing services, business and trade information, TOC services, blogging, Bulletin board, push and pull based services, OPACS, house keeping operations, full text downloads etc. By using the Internet it is possible to integrate different services using web browsers and e-mail facilities.

IX. Intranet based services

Intranet acts similar to the Internet, but it is based on the institutional level or on local network. On the intranet the services like Communication (e-mail), CD Rom data bases search, OPAC based services, EDDS, resource sharing, circulation based services, SDI and CAS services including alert, creation of internal databases, development of institutional home pages, online training, FTP facilities, etc are being provided. The intranet services are more useful, usable, affordable and economical and thus help in resource sharing

X. Online databases search services

This is the most important service provided by the library professionals to the users as per their specific needs. Though the online services are costly, but these provide pinpointed information and serve the user needs properly. The information brokers like STN/ CAS, Dialog make these services available. These agencies hold all the databases with them. Based on the need, users have to select the databases. Multiple database search facility is also made available.

This service is primarily a user need service which helps in providing accurate information to the users.

XI. Digital Library based services

Digital library (DL.) is called so because all the resources there are in the digital form. The services provided by DL are the extension of the traditional library services and in addition more powerful services are provided through DL Pol has rightly pointed out that DI. based services are not entirely new but they are replacing the traditional services and methods. In addition to this a few more services based on digital collection are provided. The services like virtual reference desk. personalized services, integration of libraries and the resources of the various organizations, A TOC, SD, CAS, Alert, E Publishing, remote access, bibliographic database services, institutional repositories, hyper linking, e-reference desk et
Web based Services

XII. Web based Services

Web technology is being used more in day to day library functions and is also useful for the dissemination of the information products on the net. The web-based services are grouped in to publishers, database developers, Institutional Web, libraries on the net and users who search information independently. The services like Web based reference services (LOC project), Web based digital services, Web 2,0 based services (Lib 2.0) etc.(Wikis, blogs, RSS, IM, Social networking etc)

XIII. Virtual Library Tours

Websites of libraries provides virtual library guide to the physical facilities including collections, services and infrastructure available in the library. The combination of library maps and floor plans, library departments and photographic views are used for the tour. Virtual library fours are also using new technologies such as Quick Time movies etc and are beginning to replace image maps on main campus Web sites.

XIV. Ask-A-Librarian

Ask-A-Librarian services are Internet-based question and answer service that connects users with individuals who possess specialized subject knowledge and skill in conducting precision searches. Most "Ask-a-Librarians" services have a web-based question submission form or an e mail address or both. Users are invited to submit their queries by using web forms or through e-mail Once a query is read by a service, it is assigned to an individual expert for answering. An expert responds to the query with factual information and or a list of information resources. The response is either sent to the user's e-mail account or is posted on the web so that the user can access it after a certain period of time. Many services have informative web sites that include archives of questions and answers and a set of FAQs. Users are usually encouraged to browse archives and FAQs before submitting a question in case sufficient information already exists.

XVI. Real Time Services

A new and exciting method of digital reference service that libraries are attempting to provide more and more now is live reference. These are real-time, interactive reference services

in which the users can talk to a real, live reference librarian at any time, from anywhere in the world. User and librarian can interact using chat technologies, and unlike with email reference the librarian can perform a reference interview of sorts by asking the users to elaborate or clarify if needed before proceeding to answer the question. The librarian can perform Internet searches and push websites onto the user's browser, and can receive immediate feedback from the users as to whether their question have been answered to satisfaction.

XVII. Bulletin Boards

A bulletin board is an electronic communications forum that hosts posted messages and articles connected to a common subject or theme or interest. It allows users to call in and either leaves or retrieves messages. The messages may be directed to all users of the bulletin board or only to particular users. But all messages can be read by all users. Several libraries are using bulletin boards for their web-based library services. The bulletin board system is also used as an interactive interface to invite suggestions on activities and services of a library. It can also be used as an interface to distribute library services.

XVIII. Web-based User Education

Web guides and teaching tools are found everywhere on the Web because they are easily updated, accessed, and printed on demand. The web-based user education provides a high degree of interactivity and flexibility to the users. The library web sites can use web-based r r education for imparting training to users in teaching the basic library skills along with glossary of library terms, using Library OPAC, locating books, magazines, biographical data and other library materials, understanding how to navigate the libraries website and how to select the most relevant database, instructions for searching CD ROM and guidance in locating web-based databases and other electronic resources and instructions on subject searching training, using Boolean operators and searching internet resources through search engines (How to make efficient search strategies).

XIX. Web Forms

Library web sites have some web forms for suggestions and comments of the Library Services. Different types of Web Forms are available on web that may be an Indent form for acquiring some publication interlibrary loan request form for document delivery, Ask-a-Librarian forms, on line restrm or user survey form etc.

XX. Consortium Based Services

These are the advanced level services provided to achieve resource sharing among the like group of libraries. The UGC Infonet, CSIR, INDEST, FORSA etc. are playing a major role in cooperative acquisition of the digital information resources. The services like information retrieval, EDDS, download, review of literature, are major benefits.

Information Repackaging and Library Services

Information repackaging is a way of improving library services, particularly in this era of electronic information. Libraries served repackaging information in the following ways; translation, literacy, scientific and technical information, economic information, selective dissemination of information etc. information repackaging involves selection, analyzing, and processing information with a view of communicating a message in a convenient and effective

form to a target audience defined for the purpose. It is very essential for information canters to have a thorough knowledge of the target audience, the message and the message carrier.

An Information Repackaging service could assemble relevant information from a variety of sources such as local archives e.g. the company's past budgets, performance appraisals and projected goals and plans; and external resources e.g. competitive intelligence, market surveys and government regulatory information. These sources are checked for accuracy and currency. Their contents are then synthesized and edited to enhance their pertinence to the overall organizational management philosophy or style, the client manager's role in the budget process, in relation to his/her relevant previous experience, knowledge and skills. Based on this diagnosis, the information needed is coded or documented in the format that best accommodates the manager's information processing, cognitive and learning styles. Thus, primary information from books, annual reports, video and audio recordings may be reduced to graphs and charts with explanatory notes. The mode and time for delivery of the package would also be designed to gain the manager's attention and meet his/her constrains in time and other facilities e.g. effectiveness of operations, thereby increasing the profit margins of the corporation.

Information repackaging entitles a systematic process of adding value to information services. It is a value added components would include but are not limited to information analysis, synthesis, editing, translating and transmitting its symbolic and media formats. IR ensures currency, accuracy, pertinence, comprehensiveness, ease of comprehension and convenience of use.

3. CONCLUSION:

Library services are going in a tremendous change from traditional approach to the IT based nature. Professionals have to make their mindset according to the changing nature users, information technology and institution policy. New information tools certainly garland the library and are able to fetch divine knowledge to humankind through the library services. In opine that this changed nature of library services make a unbeaten position for the librarian in the future.

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