Development and Use of Web based Information Resources with Specific Reference to E-Books : A Case for S&T Libraries

By

Harish Chandra

Librarian

Central Library

Indian Institute of Technology Madras

Chennai-600 036

URL: http://www.cenlib.iitm.ac.in/librarian

E-mail: hchandra@iitm.ac.in

ABSTRACT

The present paper discusses the importance of web based Information resources with specific reference to e-books. It also highlights the various types of web based information resources. The concept of e-books, challenges for S&T librarians, utility, need and the motivating factors for providing access to e-books through the Central Library website of IIT Madras are also highlighted. The major e-book providers, evaluation of e-books, major issues and use of web-based resources is also described briefly.

KEYWORDS: Web based Information sources, E-books, Science & Technology Libraries, Use of Web based information

0.   INTRODUCTION

It has been experienced that web based information resources have great role to play in academic activities. Keeping this fact in view, all Universities, educational institutions, professional associations and societies in developed countries are largely depending upon the web based information resources. Robyn Greenspan in his paper entitled "The Web as a Way of Life" states that Internet users have come to rely on the vast amount of research and information content available, and often consult the web before making dramatic life changing decisions. The survey showed that notable numbers of Americans turn to the Internet as a basic reference tool to gather information and in some cases to compare alternative courses of action. Pursuant to this, libraries and information resource centers of Indian universities, institutions of higher education, S&T organizations and other institutions of national importance like IITs, IIMs and IISc are actively engaged in building electronic information resources for providing value added services to users to meet their current and diversified information needs.

It has been observed that currently, S&T institutions are deeply involved to create best possible IT infrastructure for their scientists, faculty, students, staff and other potential users including industries with the objective to assist them to achieve excellence in respective areas. It is a positive and progressive step that institutions are coming ahead to take up digital initiatives. Under digital initiatives, e-collections building is the major component which is extensively discussed and debated for effective and coordinated implementation in respective environments. In this direction, various S&T institutions are allocating special funds for creating IT infrastructure for providing CD-ROM networking, OPAC, access to Internet resources, multimedia resources, subscription to e-journals and more recently the development and procurement of e-books.

1.   CHALLENGES BEFORE S&T LIBRARIANS

Presently, S&T Librarians are facing various challenges. Some of them are listed below:

Ø   New roles and responsibilities

Ø   Speedy delivery of information materials

Ø   Increased users information needs

Ø   Demand for quality based library and information services

Ø   Responsiveness and dynamism in library system

Ø   Creation of culture for creativity

Ø   Modern techniques in information handling

Ø   Need for effective and strong users interface and feedback system

Ø   Resources sharing

Ø **New electronic information environment**

Ø **Marketing of library and information services & products**

Ø **Users information behavior**

Ø **Explosive growth of information and documents**

Ø **Interaction with external environment**

Ø **Formulation of pragmatic collection building strategy**

Ø **Database creation and it's security**

Ø **Increased cost of information materials**

Ø **Diversity of programmes**

Ø **Emerging thrust areas**

Ø **Consortia approach and Information literacy programme**

2.   WEB BASED INFORMATION RESOURCES

These resources are also known as Internet information resources. These resources may be categorized as below:

Websites

Portals

Online-Courses

E-Journals

E-Books

Listserve

Special Internet Groups

Virtual Conferences

FAQs

Chat

Web links

Web Catalogues

Image Collections

Map Collections

Sound Collections

Virtual Help Desks

Mailing Lists

On-line Bookshops

Fact Books

3. E-BOOKS

The e-book is the XXIst century reader's companion. It combines all the benefits of the multimédia, digital coding and the Internet. It enables user to carry everywhere books and can be read on all types of computers including handheld devices. E-books also contain audio, video and dynamic hyperlinks. E-books can be delivered immediately from anywhere in the world by downloads, e-mail file attachment, on diskette or CD-ROM. Compared to paper books e-books are faster, cheaper, searchable and also have the facility to

1) **Print**

2) **Copy-and-paste**

3) **Make annotations**

4) **Highlight and hyper linking.**

4. NEED FOR E-BOOKS

We have observed that e-books have great potential and bright future to attract users. In addition to this fact, there are some other major factors which also motivate S&T institutions to consider to develop e-books are listed below:

Ø   E-books can be updated and, stored very easily

Ø   E-books can be downloaded instantly

Ø   E-books contain the latest and most updated information

Ø   Users can bookmark, annotate and search as they like

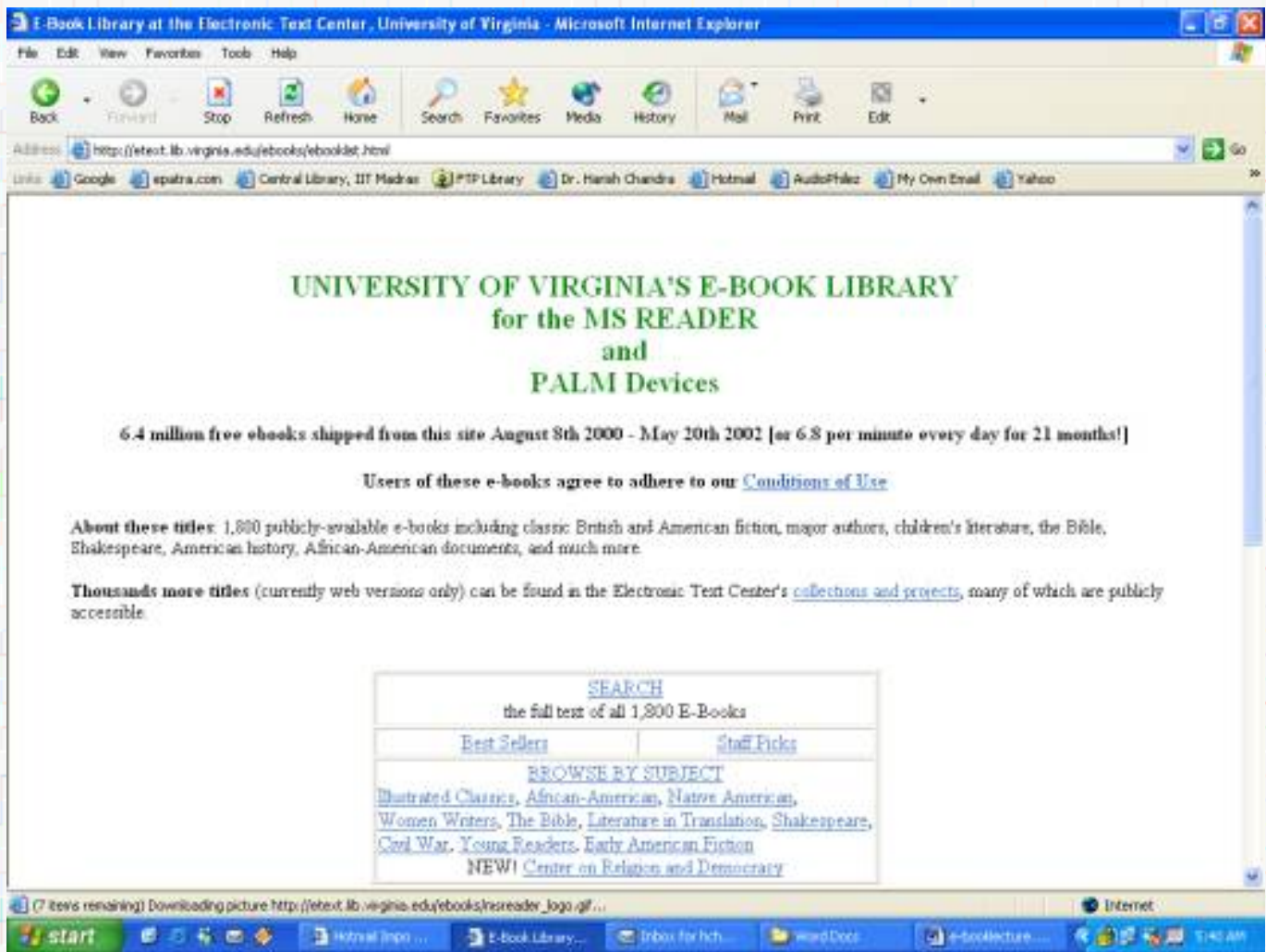Ø   Users can read an e-book any time

Ø   Due to portability, e-Books can be taken any where on portable computer

Ø   Business and recreational travelers can load e-books on their portable computers without adding weight or taking up space in their luggage

Ø   Font size can be changed suitablly.

Ø   E-books provide facility to hold and turn pages easily

Ø   Physically disabled users can hear audible e-book

Ø   In buying e-books, the overhead charges like shipping, postal, handling are totally ruled out

Ø   Some e-books are interactive

Ø   E-books have background music and animations.

Ø   Hyper linking enables users to communicate directly with authors

Ø   E-books save library space

Ø   E-books do not require bindery and repair

Ø   E-books save human resources for shelving and rectification

Ø   Users can not misplace e-books

5.   MAJOR E-BOOKS PROVIDERS

The concept of e-books is growing very fast and have great future in the area of science and technology. Therefore, various instituions and publishers have initiated to produce e-books. Some of them are discussed here.

5.1   University of Virginia e-book Library

Approximately, 1,800 publicly-available e-books including classic British and American fiction, major authors, children's literature, the Bible, Shakespeare, American history, African-American documents and much more are available. Thousands more titles can be found on electronic text center. The screen shot of the web allowing access to e-books to the students is given below:

5.2   NAP Open book

National Academy Press provides over 2500 free e-books on various subjects. Users can search the titles, texts and can also browse subject catagories which are given below:

Agriculture	Ø	Environmental Issues	Ø	Medicine/Public Health
Behavioral Science	Ø	Food & Nutrition	Ø	Natural Resources
Biology	Ø	General Interest	Ø	Physical Sciences
Computer Science	Ø	Industry and Economics	Ø	Public Policy
Chemistry	Ø	International	Ø	Research Issues
Earth Science	Ø	Marine/Maritime	Ø	Space Science
Education	Ø	Math & Statistics	Ø	Science & Ethics
Energy	Ø	Materials	Ø	Transportation

Engineering   Ø   Urban Development

The screen shot of National Academic Press e-book website is given below:

5.3 Internet Public Library

The Internet Public Library, a project at the University of Michigan School of Information, is an educational initiative designed to provide students and professionals in the library and information science profession. The IPL books collection (formerly known as Online Texts) contains over 20,000 titles that can be browsed by author, by title, or by Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme. Screen shot of the Internet public library is given below:

5.4   University of Pennsylvania e-Books

It provides access to more than 17,000 English works in various formats. It also provides the listing of the books in progress. The Online books page was founded and is edited by John Mark Ockerbloom. He is a digital library planner and researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. He is solely responsible for the content of the site. You can

Search listings by author and title

Browse new listings

Browse by author

Browse by title

Browse by subject

Browse serial archives

The screen shot of the website is given below:
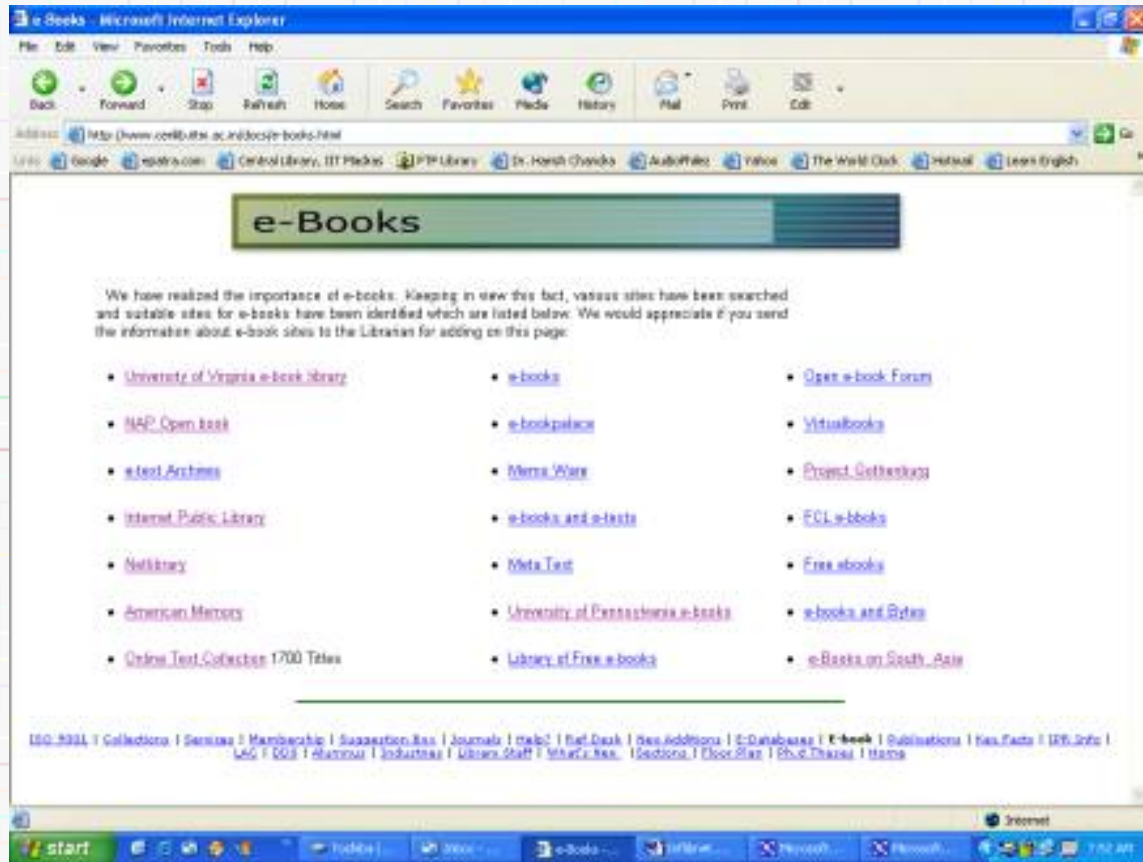
5.5   Project Gutenberg

Project Gutenberg is the Internet's oldest producer of free e-books. Project Gutenberg is the brainchild of Michael Hart, who in 1971 decided that it would be a really good idea if lots of famous and important texts were freely available to everyone in the world. Since then, he has been joined by hundreds of volunteers who share his vision.

Now, more than thirty years later, Project Gutenberg has the following figures (as of November 8th 2002): 203 new e-books released during October 2002, 1975 new e-books produced in 2002 (they were 1240 in 2001) for a total of 6267.

6.   DEVELOPMENT AND USE OF E-BOOKS AT IIT MADRAS

The Central Library of IIT Madras is involved in implementing digital library initiatives with the objective to provide networked electronic resources access to stakeholders. In this regard, we have made necessary arrangements to provide over 2000 full text e-journals, e-reference resources and also various e-books .We have identified various e-books and special page has been created in the website (http://www.cenlib.iitm.ac.in) of the Central Library for e-books which are freely available for academic

use. Our users are using these e-books extensively. A screenshot of the *e-book home page* is given below:

7.   EVALUATION OF E-BOOKS

E-book publisher Versaware's interviewed the students in 63 colleges in 22 states and found 87% students believed e-textbooks could be more interesting than print textbooks because of convenience and additional features like hyperlinks and video. Survey lists e-textbook features attractive to students are given below:

Ø   **Instant searching and integration of other information on the Web (75%)**

Ø   **Updating by publishers (73%)**

Ø   **Reducing the weight of textbooks students must carry (72%)**

Ø   **Keyword searching in one e-book or across e-book collections (71%)**

Ø   **Organizing research in personal binders (71%) & Highlighting text (71%)**

Source: "Groundbreaking survey finds majority of college students.," *PR* Newswire, January 3, 2001

Accordingly, we also need to conduct survey periodically to assess that the resources, services and facilities created are used by our stakeholders. The usage report is required to be submitted to ISO-9001:2000 team visiting in connection with conducting quality auditing as well as surveillance. During conducting survey, we found that our users prefer that e-books may be evaluated on the following factors:

Ø   The Author of e-book

Ø   Scope of e-book

Ø   Publishing Body

Ø   Nature of Matter

Ø   Updation Frequency

Ø   Hyper links

Ø   Multimedia Affect

Ø   Searching Capability

Ø   Interactivity

Ø   Content Quality and it's Organisation

8.   MAJOR ISSUES

We have noted that e-books are very useful source for academic and research pursuits, teaching and serving the stakeholders effectively and effeciently. The librarians can provide satisfactory services using e-books. There are various issues which need to be considered in an open discussion for formulating a workable and comprehensive strategy and guidelines. This will help us to develop e-book collections in S&T Libraries and Information Resources Centers. Some major issues for discussion are listed below:

Detailed Procedures to be Developed

Staff and Users Training

E-Book Review

Competebility

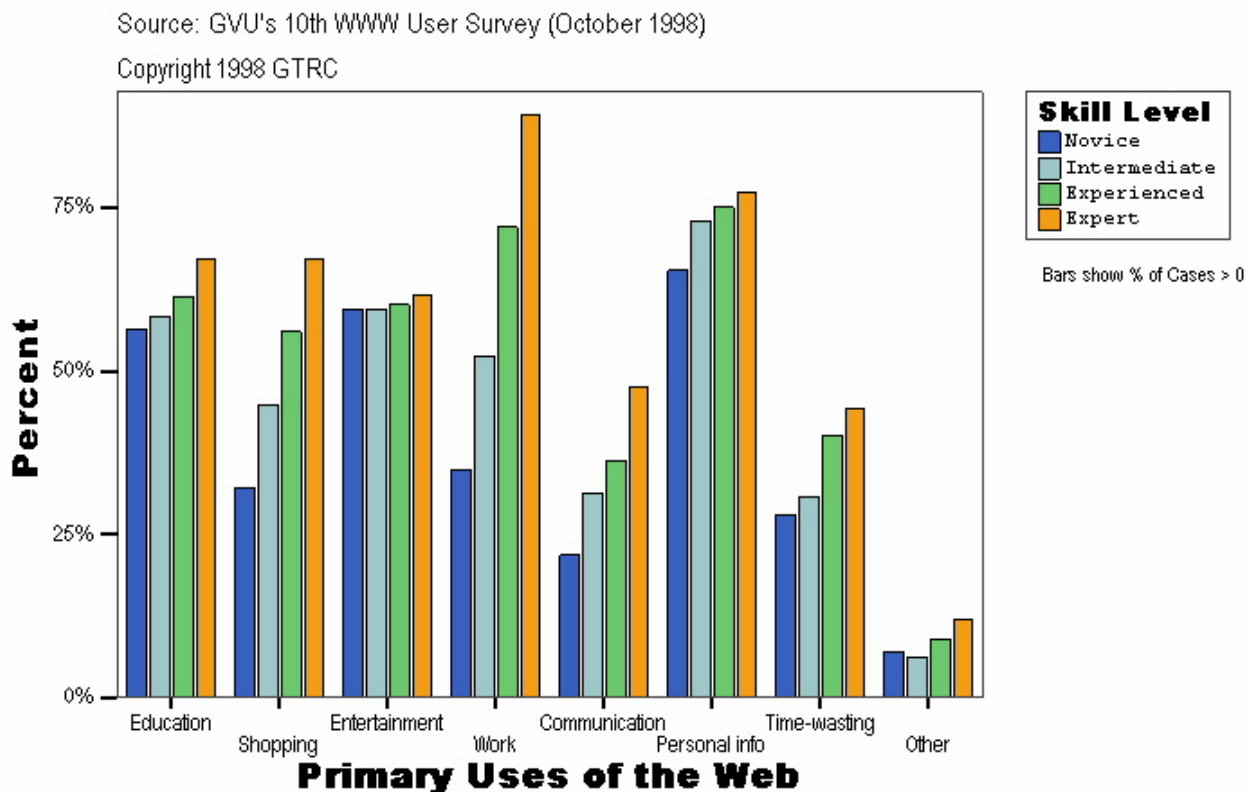Use of Credit Cards

Virtual Help Desk

Televaluation

E-Books Preservation

Development of e-books

9.   USE OF WEB

As we see that the usage of web is drastically enhanced for primary activities which will give an opportunity to the librarians to re-orient and redesign their efforts for e-collections building.

10.   CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there is need to formulate a workable and sustainable strategy in S&T institutions for e-books development, procurement and circulation policies. There is great future for e-books in S&T libraries. It is also urgently needed that systematic efforts are taken to develop suitable information infrastructure for providing access to e-books.

WEBSITES REFERRED

1. http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/ebooks/ebooklist.html

2. http://www.nap.edu/index.html

3. http://www.netlibrary.com/

4. http://www.ebookpalace.com/

5. http://www.web-books.com/cool/ebooks/Library.htm

6. http://digital.library.upenn.edu/books

7. http://e-books.org/

8. http://www.ebookjungle.com

9. http://www.ebookpalace.com

10. http://ebookheaven.co.uk/directory.html

11. http://www.free-ebooks.net/

12. http://www.ebookad.com

13. http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books_s.html#Information%20Technology

14. http://www.cenlib.iitm.ac.in

15. http://www.ipl.org/div/books

16. http://memory.loc.gov

17. http://www.bartleby.com

18. Greenspan Robyn, The Web as a way of life on

http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/demographics/article/0,1323,5901_1142561,00.html

19. http://promo.net/pg/

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR

Dr Harish Chandra holds M.A in Public Administration, Economics, M.L.I.Sc and Ph.D and attended specialized training from University of Cambridge, UK. He has 21 Years of progressively increasing responsible and productive professional experience in large academic and research libraries of India and presently working as Librarian at IIT Madras.. He has in to his credit of 60 papers and two edited volumes.