ELECTRONIC RESOURCES IN THE MODERN LIBRARIES : A NEW PATH

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Abstract

The development of Information Technology has made great changes in all industries. Library is no more an exemption of this. The technological advancement in the use and delivery of information media has changed the role of library professionals. The library is no more a mere stack holders of books, now they became owners of electronic information. The print media is getting digitized and through the advent of internet, the information is available to anybody from any corner of world. The use of e-journals, e-books has created a new source of information to the users. Their features attract the users to seek information from these media. The open access publishing has enhanced the availably of information by breaking down the financial barriers. It is this technology which has made greater impact on libraries.

Keywords : E-books/ E-journals/ Open Access Publishing

1.   Introduction

The development in Information Technology has created revolutionary changes in all fields of knowledge. Libraries being the reservoirs of knowledge are no exception to this development. People seek information for their research, education, reference and guidance from libraries. The media of communication is developing and the format of information delivery and exchange is also undergoing rapid change. People require most up-to-date information from libraries. Hence, the technological developments have to be adopted in libraries to meet the needs of users.
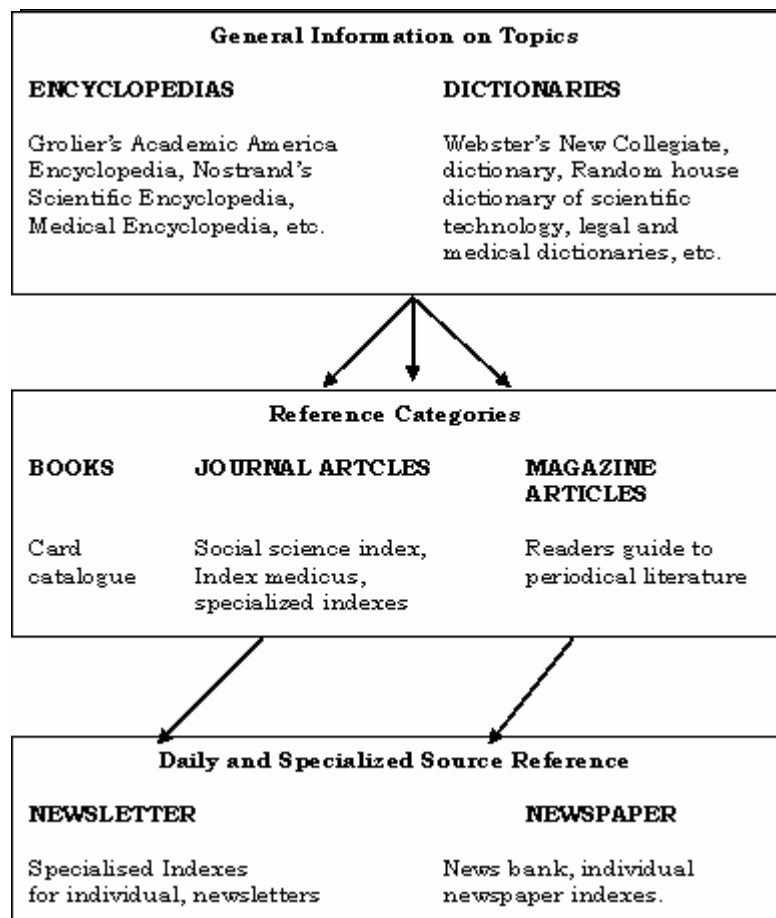
The invention of internet the World Wide Web (WWW) has almost brought the world very closer and shorter. The recent developments or an invention made in any part of the world is available to the user almost immediately. This has increased the responsibilities of the library to provide up-to-date and latest information to the users. Now the development of e-books, e-journals have changed the library from information stackers or consumers to owners of electronic resources.

2.   Changes in the Library Scenario

The society and environment around the libraries are changing and getting altered. The amount of information is increasing day by day. The users get huge variety of

information and there is an information explosion. The users need to have a special search and indexing technique to get the correct and appropriate results. The traditional search method used in the libraries was as shown in Figure – 1

Figure – 1

General Information on Topics

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Grolier's Academic America Encyclopedia, Nostrand's Scientific Encyclopedia, Medical Encyclopedia, etc.

DICTIONARIES

Webster's New Collegiate, dictionary, Random house dictionary of scientific technology, legal and medical dictionaries, etc.

Reference Categories

BOOKS

Card catalogue

JOURNAL ARTCLES

Social science index, Index medicus, specialized indexes

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Readers guide to periodical literature

Daily and Specialized Source Reference

NEWSLETTER

Specialised Indexes for individual, newsletters

NEWSPAPER
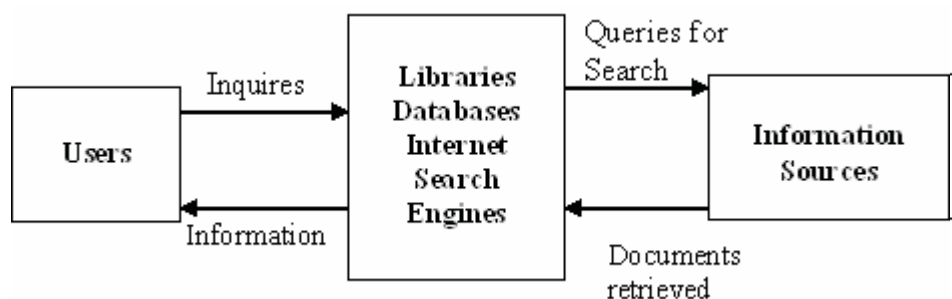
News bank, individual newspaper indexes.

3. Traditional Search Process

This process requires many sources to be traced for any information search. If the subject of search is very specific then the search can be very easy but if the term is vague then the search involves use of a number of sources that requires a lot of time and searching itself becomes a difficult task. The users might end up with quite a lot of irrelevant information.

The task of librarian now has enhanced to be experts in all the subject areas so as to help the readers get the right information. The development of technology has reduced the task of library professionals. Now the library should act as a tool between end-users and existing information resources. The information in the desirable format as is required by the users can be searched through efficient search technique embedded within the source. The new means of searching the information by the user is depicted in Figure–2.

Figure – 2

The role of traditional libraries from acquiring and storage has enhanced by becoming in charge of electronic resources. Libraries in future will help and implement good strategy to maintain and preserve the digital information in the same way as the books.

4. New Roles of Library Professionals

The role of library professionals is also changing. They have to get incorporated into this technology and help the users in guiding and locating the required information. They need to be a skilful persons in indexing and searching the databases. They can help readers with alerts, TOC, local mailing through intranet and other information bulletin board displays on the topics of their interests and such other information from internet. Their increased roles are like:

- Creating a helpful interface for the users to link all available resources.
- Providing proper guidance on the usage and usability of the available resources.
- Locating the resources from the internet and getting their database updated.
- Collaborating with the digital information and services.
- Improving the information usage.

Alerting the users on the technological advancement in their field and the information that is available in the library.

5.   Use of E-resources in libraries

The electronic resources are becoming more and more available in the libraries. The print media is now being digitized, which increases the availability of books and journals in the electronic format. The electronic books are helpful because of their portability and its feature of incorporating more than one book in a single hand held device. The published material is also available on open access. This helps the poorer people also to get the information required free of cost. They need not worry for licensing and usage of the information.

The government is also undertaking various steps to introduce this facility in academic institutions for the benefit of research scholars. The university avails this facility and gain access to e-resources. UGC-INFONET is a programme that provides electronic access to scholarly literature in all areas of learning to the Universities in India. This programme is wholly funded by the UGC and administered and monitored by INFLIBNET. Universities which are always short of funds, are greatly benefited by this facility.

6.   Role of E-books

E-books are preferred by the users for their features like portability, upgradability, note making, citation, changeable font size, references, links to other relevant sites, searching,etc. The libraries purchase the e-books and view them on monitor or some specific e-book readers. E-books can also be circulated as printed books. They can be transferred from libraries catalogue to users e-book readers for a fixed loan period and after which it is automatically taken back.

E-books help the readers by giving more possibility of access and media of learning. They can be accessed from anywhere at anytime and are free from time lag. The books need not go out-of-print. They can also create a personal book library from the collections they hold. The content, however, needs to be compatible to all hardware devices. They need to support any formats to make it easy to transfer and read. The features of e-book include;

- Their portability gives a new chance of learning, eg., Distance learning.
- Can be carried and transferred anywhere.
- Their feature like changeable font size makes it easy for use.
- Searchable and navigable through links are provided.

7.   Role of E-journals

E-journals have now become a major source of information delivery for scholars and researchers. Their timely production, delivery, incorporation of multimedia, hyper linking and searching facility has attracted the interest of people. E-journals facilitate documentation in many ways. They help for getting the most recent publications even before they are published in hard copy.

The libraries incorporate these facility, they subscribe to the journals online and get their login details and upload in their local server. The users of that library can browse through the journals. The e-journals provide closer link with a wider variety of publicizing and publishing by bringing informal and supplementary information into the closer proximity with formal, peer-reviewed material. The libraries can help the users by:

- Creating a subject wise list and linking to all resources under the subject.

- Creating search for journal title and locating the sites that provides access.

- Maintaining the list of websites that provided e-journals and checking for access at frequent intervals.

The users appreciate the ways of online searching, browsing, scanning, retrieval and even submission of articles as it saves their time and make them more productive in their work.

8.   Role of Open access publishing

The fee-based model publishing has restricted the users from accessing scholarly literature by using their security system and access mechanism, thereby putting a limitation or restriction for the use of researcher. If this was made available freely, then the new research findings can be obtained by any one without any restriction. This helps the libraries reduce the financial constraints as now they can own a collection of archives of different subjects. Access is not restricted by any means; they can lend and copy digital archives.

The objective of open access is to maximize research impact by maximizing research access. Open access journals are mostly used by researchers for their reference compared with other media. This also helps the researcher to find journal articles in his subject irrespective of their subscription. This helps libraries tackle the problems of small budget.

According to the Directory of Open access journals only about 7% of all journals are open access. Hence in some cases, a researcher will not get the information he requires from any of the sources. Moreover, there are some authors who could not publish their articles in any open access journals. This situation must change and the number of open access journals must increase.

9.   Conclusion

The technology helps the reader to get the information in various other formats than the traditional means. The e-journals as well as the e-books have made changes in the way the information is delivered to the readers. They help them to get up-to-date and latest information that is updated frequently. The hardware required for the use of e-books has to be considered before creation of the content. Their licensing, pricing

and standards are the usability constraints. The open access publishing help the readers with free information availability but in some cases their standards are not tested, they may have broken links, wrong mappings and server problems. This has to be taken into consideration. Although the technological advancements have helped the people, yet it has some disadvantages as well. However, the use of resources is in the hand of users. It is the expertise of users to handle this tool efficiently which helps them to get right information. The future developments should overcome the disadvantages of the technology and give a new path for its effective usage.

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