Library Portal: A Mirror of the Library

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is library portal. Nowadays, the library wants to provide a web based environment, which enriches learning and research by providing time, convenient access to relevant and appropriate resources. This enables users and the library to focus on fruitful use of collection. Such environments increasingly need to interact with portal framework. The library portal is one approach to organize information resources and services and a way that supports users' needs.

Keywords: Copyright, Information Architecture, Library Portal, Metadata, Web Portals

1. Introduction

Rapid changes in Information Technology point to the web as the main framework for organizing information for work, research and e-commerce. The web has now become the preferred venue for information, financial transactions, document management and more, with the development of World Wide Web. One of the many useful applications of the Web is Web portals, often referred to simply as portals.

2. Defining Library Portal

A portal is a website or web service that provides information content to serve a specific community. It is derived from the Medieval Latin word 'portale', meaning 'city gate'.

American Heritage Dictionary defines a portal as "a doorway or an entrance, or a gate, especially one that is large and imposing".

Library Portals are the subset of web portals and serve specific academic research communities. Library portals typically provide a gateway to an institution's resources by listing them for users and creating a direct link to the interface of each resource. Library portals in this digital era enhance the value and function of electronic resources with the facility of searching multiple resources.

Library portals offer access to a broad array of resources and services to libraries such as e- journals, online databases, web-OPAC, new addition and any other static information about library services.

A library portal is only one possible component of library websites'. A library website can be made up of three types of content:

❖ Information about the library – staff, directories, departmental descriptions, maps of the building, hours etc.

❖ Electronic version of traditional library services- online tutorials, book renewals, inter-library loan requests and status reports, requests for purchase, online chat reference, virtual tours of the building etc.

❖ Access to library content- catalogue, indexes, full-text magazines and journals, digitized

special collections, free and commercial e-books, government documents, freely accessible internet resources, electronic encyclopaedias and dictionaries, licensed content from vendors etc.

3. Role of Librarian

3.1 Librarian as an Information Architect

Librarians are practically responsible for the organization of content in their libraries. In library portal planning and implementation, they bring their expertise with content, their knowledge of copyright, their commitment to customer service, and their experience in creating customized Web-based information delivery systems'.

3.2 Librarian as Content Creators

In the field of portal design, the librarian provides contents like papers, newspapers, theses, dissertations and many other documents in digitized forms and these are uploaded and linked to the library portal where clients can easily make reference to.

3.3 Librarian as Copyright Experts

Librarians' knowledge of current copyright policy is now helped in setting up electronic resources and online information for learning portals created using web-based course management systems.

3.4 Librarian as Metadata Creators

Metadata is data about data. Standard bibliographic information, summaries, indexing terms and abstracts are all together called metadata. The librarian or the information professionals create the metadata.

3.5 Librarian as a Portal Specifier:

As a portal specifier, the librarian should bear the following in mind (Boss, 2002):

❖ The portal should be web-based.

❖ The portal shall accommodate multiple protocols and formats like Z39.50, HTML, SQL, Open URL, MARC format and others that could emerge.

❖ TCP/IP shall be supported.

❖ Linkages to other library portals.

❖ Access to the online databases to which the library subscribes.

❖ Access to records for all material types.

❖ Search features provision, etc.

3.6 Librarian as a Portal Educator

The librarians teach the clients how to navigate the library portal and make use of the various features offered by such portals.

4. Challenges to Librarians

4.1 Lack of Training in IT-related matters

There are some librarians with no knowledge of usage of computers to carry out their routine job, which poses threat to the duty of librarian as information architect.

4.2 Classification troubles

Master in cataloguing and classification make it easier for application in portal platform where there is need for metadata creation.

4.3 Lack of Interest

Some librarians may not have the interest of becoming Information Architect, which causes problem in library portal.

5. Impact of Library Portals

5.1 Impact on Users

Users need automatic access to their portals, in order to ensure acceptance and increase usage. Students will be benefited by easy access to useful information together with latest information. The portal should help user to get what they want when they want it and decrease their anxiety of interacting with librarians or reference environments.

Library subject based portals will save time and anxiety. It will also help in increasing the students' confidence in searching information. The portal should also enable librarians to assess and evaluate the quality of their services.

With the help of campus library portal, students will have easy access to their course schedules, academic advisors, course assignments and library resources directly related to the specific courses. The student and faculty will receive updates such as lists of new books they need, table of contents for new resources, list of newly acquired resources of their subject etc.

5.2 Impact on Continuous Assessment

Library portal will change libraries, enable librarians to be more effective and create learning communities. It will make librarians and their staff more customers centred. In creating and maintaining a dynamic library portal, following works are involved-

- ❖ Well designed OPAC

- ❖ Precise metadata and good indexing

- ❖ Building subject based resources

These works make librarians more visible and accessible through the portal, which result in better customer relations for the library. It will surely have a large impact on learning outcomes for the students, enhance research and build better learning communities.

6. Conclusion

The library portals need to provide new search and navigation interfaces or unproved ranking and display features for Academic content. In this paper, the emergence of "library portals" has been discussed. Users are benefited by a library portal, but they will also benefit by integration of appropriate resources into their research, learning and information use behaviours in more ways. These means that we are beginning to see an unbundling of library services so that they can better recombined with other environments such as learning management systems and campus portals. The library portal is part of a picture, but we need to look beyond it to build and sustain the services which enter the fabric of our users research, learning and informational experiences.

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