Digitization of Libraries: Benefits and Challenges

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Abstract: - *This paper discusses the benefits of digitization of library resources and challenges therein. It also includes what are the steps in the process of digitization and implications of digitization.*

Keywords: Digitization, Library resources, Benefits, Challenges.

Introduction

Digitization refers to all of the steps involved in the process of making historical and other materials available online. Digitization of information materials is the process of converting analogue information to a digital format. In digitization process traditional documents such as books, papers, manuscripts are converted into electronic format i.e. image format which are machine readable. Digitized materials are easy to access for user at any time any were and also single documents can be accessed by more than one user at time.

Academic Libraries and Digital Resources

In India some academic libraries have huge collection of documents and some old libraries have very rare collection of reading materials such as books, manuscripts, maps, letters, theses, special monographs, research papers etc. Academic libraries are focal point to collection of teaching and learning and research materials. Digital resources such as theses, manuscripts, research papers, images, have very high value for academic purpose.

Reasons for Digitization of library materials:

➢ To allow user/researcher to read older or unique documents without damage to the original documents.

➢ Digitization of old documents to make the documents more accessible.

➢ Digitized documents allow the users to search the full text of the documents or to serve more users than envisaged in remote locations.

➢ Digitization of documents can be accessed by more than one user at a time.

➢ Digitized documents can be used for different purpose such as images are used in slideshow presentation.

➢ The academic libraries are now changing into global libraries, hence digitization is an important aspect of current global information system.

Process of digitization of Library Resources:

For digitization of library resources we follow the following steps:

➢ Policy making

Higher authorities should give sanction of the project. Such a policy will serve as a reference point and guide for implementing the project. The policy should contain the purpose and objectives of digitization project.

➢ Policy Approval from authority

The higher authorities should approve the digitization project.

➢ Planning and budgeting, monitoring

It is most essential part of digitization of library; it involves high amount budgets, so there must be sanction of budget from higher authorities for digitization of library and we should mention various requirements and various heads for budget distributions.

➢ Acquisition of Appropriate Technology

The plan for digitization drawn for the project will determine the appropriate technology to acquire. Technology here refers to all the equipment /hardware and software that are needed.

➢ Legal /copyright issues:

The selection of archival materials for digitization should be based on a clear understanding of copyright law and rights of ownership.

➢ Document Selection Criteria

The high demand for archival materials may justify digitization as a measure to preserve the original, as use of surrogates protects the originals from unnecessary handling. So high demand rare documents should be digitized for easy access for user.

➢ Document Verification: -

Documents verification is most important process for digitization of library. You must check whether digital copies of such materials already exist.

➢ Metadata

It represents the total historic record of the digital object and the totality of information about the object. Metadata helps to identify the work, who creates it, migrated or reformatted it, and other descriptive information; it provides unique identifying informing about the organizations files and a database that have the technical environment in which the digital files were created, equipment's

used, the software, operating systems and other things

Challenges of Digitization of Resources:

- ➢ Funding
- ➢ Changing Software and Hardware
- ➢ Updating of software and hardware
- ➢ Legal Aspects
- ➢ Technical Expertise
- ➢ Technophobia
- ➢ Technological Obsolescence

Benefits of Digitization of Library Resources:

- ➢ The benefit of digitization is improved access. Digital libraries are typically accessed through the Internet and Compact Disc-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM). They can be accessed virtually from anywhere and at any time. They are not tied to the physical location and operating hours of the traditional library.

- ➢ A digital library can provide wider access, and meet simultaneous access requests for a document by easily creating multiple instances or copies of the requested document. It can also meet the requirements of a larger population of users easily.

- ➢ Improved information sharing. Through the appropriate metadata and information exchange protocols, the digital libraries can easily share information with other similar digital libraries and provide enhanced access to users.

- ➢ Improved preservation. Since the electronic documents are not prone to physical wear and tear, their exact copies can easily be made. Thus digital libraries facilitate preservation of special and rare documents and artefacts by providing access to digital versions of these entities.

- ➢ Digital materials can be available to a broader audience than those who have the resources or ability to travel to see the analogue documents and access can be expanded to non-traditional audiences such as lifelong learners.

- ➢ Digitization of library will help to preserve endangered library resources, improve the efficiency of information search mechanisms and enhance access to library resources.

Factors to be considered:

- ➢ Orientation programme should be organized for the staff.
- ➢ Financial allocations should be extended to digitization exercise.
- ➢ Special policies and plans have to be formulated to guide the conversion of library resources to digital resources.

Conclusions:

Academic libraries are the gatekeepers of learning and should keep in mind their goals of the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Digitization is an important aspect for academic libraries. The changes in the information environment are rapid and unprecedented and it is

necessary for the information professionals to change with them. Users of academic libraries are migrating to the web for their information needs, and library services must be keep up with them if those needs are to be met.

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