Digital Libraries: An Overview

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Abstract: - *The present paper discusses digital libraries and their future. It discusses historical background, characteristics, need, advantages, disadvantages of Digital library, and Role of the librarians in Digital libraries.*

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Digital Library

The term 'digital library' has been defined differently within the research communities, and over the years its definition has changed, reflecting the shifting focus of digital library research. Several researchers have discussed and analyzed different definitions of digital libraries" Digital Libraries are organization that provide the resources, including the specialized staff to select, structure, offer intellectual access to interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities."(DLF 2001)

Definition for digital library.

According to Stephen Griffin: Digital Libraries provide for collection development, organization, access, annotation and preservation and deal both information in digital management of information residing or physical media. The Digital library federation in the USA defines them as: Digital libraries are organized to provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of an ensure the persistence overtime of collections of Digital work so that they are readily and economically available for use by a community or a set of communities.

Objectives of digital library

The objectives of digital library are as follows.

1) To provide personalized and retrospective services in efficient way.

2) To have large digitized databases.

3) To save the time of library staff by avoiding routine jobs.

4) To collect, store, organise and access information in digital Form via communication channels.

5) To reduce cost involved in various library activities.

Need for digital library

Advances in printing & information communication technology have completely transformed the publishing industry. A good number of standard publishers have started e-publishing & many of them have now started issuing their publications in e-versions besides paper print format.

This is resulting in -

1) Easy access to latest information.

2) Great saving of time.

3) Ease of use any time any where 24 x 7

4) Ease of portability.

5) Saving in physical space in storing & use.

6) Downloading, saving, reading & forwarding facility at click of a button.

7) Overhead charges like shifting, postal, handling cost in procuring e-resources ruled out.

8) More interactive in comparison with other media.

9) No problem of theft, pilferage, mutilation in online mode.

10) Binding cost eliminated.

11) Shelving & rectification time taken by print resources is saved.

12) No fear of users misplacing or hiding the resources etc.

Components of digital library

1) Hardware Requirement.

2) Software

3) Human Ware (subject skill, technical skill and Management skill)

Characteristics of digital library

1) Converted material from printed works.

2) Original, electronic publication

3) Resources in a wide variety of types such as reference works, visual; materials, sound recording, moving picture.

4) Each stored item is valuable, often with part of its residual value assigned by its author's originality or author's assignees.

5) Document contains cross- references to other documents.

6) To find specific information, each user must understand the catalogue structure.

7) Different patter are permitted different action and to see different parts of each collection.

8) Users are usually elsewhere than theinformation; they want and often

wish to correlate things from several sources.

Advantages of digital library

The advantages of digital library as a means of easily and rapidly accessing books, archives and images of various types are now widely recognized by commercial interest's public bodies.

1) Traditional library are limited by storage space, digital libraries have the potential to store much more information.

2) A traditional library must spend large numbers of money paying for staff, books, maintenance rent and additional costs. Books, Digital library may reduce or in some instances, do away with these fees, both type of library require cataloguing input to allow users to locate and retrieve material.

3) An important advantage of digital conversion is increased accessibility to user. The user of a digital library need not go to the library physically, people from all over the world could gain access to the same information.

4) Help the inter library loan system

5) The same resource can be used at the same time by a number of users.

6) E-publication data can be maintained up to date so that the buyer will be able to.

7) Easy participation in resource sharing library Networks

Disadvantages of digital library.

1) Digitization can violate the copy right law as the thought content of one author can be freely transferred by others without his acknowledgement.

2) As more & more computers are connected to the internet its speed of access is decreasing.

3) The infrastructure cost of digital library i.e. the cost of hardware, software, leasing communication circuit is very high.

4) Digital library will need high bandwidth for transfer of multimedia resources but the bandwidth is decreasing day by day.

5) With the much larger volume of digital information, finding the right material for a specific task becomes increasingly difficult.

6) Due to technological developments, a digital library can rapidly become out-of-date and its data may become inaccessible.

Role of librarians in digital library

Librarians have always played an intermediary role between the information needs of users by providing high quality information system, services, products, based on the record of human knowledge in this ICT era as the role of LIS professional in modern society has been strongly influenced by information & communication technologies. Librarian needs to possess the knowledge in the field of information technology i.e. computer networking, information analysis, internet surfing techniques, digital sources & various websites. Information is easily available through internet, but it is generally in an

unorganized form. The users need to learn the technique for retrieving the digital information.

In order to handle a digital library, a professional has to be dynamic & well equipped with relevant knowledge of linking of digital libraries to digital learning environment, knowledge sharing & how to make it user friendly so that it usage became maximum. It is also important to select right persons & train them in away that they cultivate a techno-information temperament. Overall, a librarian should have gone through the entire procedure of digitization and should remain updated with it forever.

Conclusion

Libraries are challenged as never before to remain relevant to the community to which they are offering their services. Libraries need to treat their users as 'customers' & understand that they exist for their customers. Digital library is essentially a fully automated information system with all resources in digital form. It not only facilitates the library functions but also saves the precious time, strength & energy of the users. The electronic media will replace the printed media in the form of electronic, digital & virtual.The librarians will have to ascertain the impact of information technology on the library and will have to monitor and acquire skills to cope intelligently and objectively for effectiveness and efficient function of a library. Digital library plays an important role I promoting the use of information. Due to information explosion, technological development, increasing cost, globalization etc.

There is a need for global library with modern facilities.

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