Difficulties and Chances of e-resources

MAHESH R. SOLANKI

Research Scholar, Saurashtra University, Rajkot

Librarian,

Shree C. U. Shah College of Commerce, Mgt. & Computer Education, Wadhwan.

Gujarat (India)

Abstract:

The advent of e-resources and their increased use have changed the library scenario from physical to virtual. Users' preferences are more for e-resources and virtual libraries with little attraction for physical libraries. In spite of innumerable advantages of e-resources, there are certain problems also relating to their acquisition, maintenance, management, etc. The Article highlights these issues, emphasizing the need to develop an ERMS which can integrate all these resources along with printed material to provide single window approach to all resources available locally as well as globally in a universal library.

1. Introduction

Information technology has made a profound impact on availability and accessibility of e-resources. To provide quick and comprehensive access to resources by using best possible tools and techniques is the ultimate aim of every library. Multiple resources in the present electronic environment can be seamlessly integrated with a single login gateway which makes is user friendly. Among all academic electronic resources, the advent of electronic journal has been called the greatest revolution in the capture and dissemination of emerging academic knowledge. Today, e-resources are in abundance, available individually or through package deals from the various publishers. It is the contribution of information and communication technology and impact of Internet that information processing, storing, searching, dissemination and uses have become expeditious, easy and user-friendly. E-resources are available with increased accessibility beyond time and space restrictions, restricting information users to visit physical libraries.

2. Impact on user behaviour

The impact of communication technology on user behavior and attitude has been tremendous. Communication pattern in local research environment significantly influenced e-resources use. Usability of e-resources depends on the facilities available to use them whereas use of printed material is less dependent on technology. Therefore, usability of e-resources has been increasing with the improved Internet facilities. There is a sea change in the users' behaviour and attitude in information searching and use. In the present electronic environment, user is highly impatient and time conscious, wants information *just now or never*. So, libraries are forced to change from physical to virtual environment and make available tools and techniques so that flow and use of information is simple as well as effective.

3. Collection development

Materials collection irrespective of forms and types is the foundation of any library. Therefore, digital collection should respond to the users' needs and provide an appropriate balance between quality and demand. Collection development of e-resources is essentially more complex than the printed resources. The decision to subscribe print or e-version or both is important. There are five important elements of collection development: Budgeting, type of material, election, acquisition and evaluation to be taken into account by all libraries. Reading of e-books is still not as convenient as printed books. Packages of e-books are costly. In the present scenario, e-books and printed books are complementary and supplementary to each other having their own advantages. Challenge with the library profession is to build collection based upon the users' demand and preferences anticipating

the future and allocate funds both for e-books and printed books accordingly, keeping the balance between the two perhaps with increasing trend of allocation of funds for e-books. Libraries need to develop separate collection development policies for each type of material for proper decision making. All types of material that are in use and in demand have to become the part of e-collection. Libraries shall have to change and adapt to the new environment keeping the future needs of users in view. It is important to consider the range of purchase, pricing models available and determine which one meets the needs of the library in terms of access and archival and value for money.

4. E-resources and consortia purchase

In the present era, only collaborative efforts can be sustainable. The cooperative purchasing of e-resources through consortia seems to be surviving hope for the profession, though consortia purchase has also its limitation where resources seems to be huge and attractive but with least utility. Electronic resources are purchased more through consortia providing wider accessibility by minimizing cost of resources to a great extent. To become the member of a consortium has become almost essential for every library. In consortia purchase, libraries have to accept predefined package which of course seems to be quite affordable to libraries but may not be cost effective in terms of usability. Nevertheless, in consortia, large electronic resources that are prohibitively expensive for individual libraries become affordable when several libraries work together and share the costs.

5. Pricing of e-resources

The greatest enigma of e-resources is pricing which are not fixed as in case of printed material. There is no standard pricing models for e-resources as yet. There are different subscription rates depending upon various factors like number of users, availing of inter-library loan, duration of subscription, level of use, on standalone system, on Local Area Network, with IP address or on Proxy Server etc. Consortia prices are much different than subscribing individual titles. Librarians have to negotiate the subscription rates as subscription rates/outright purchase are not fixed.

6. Conclusion

E-resources represent many challenges at every level of their selection, acquisition, preservation, maintenance and management as discussed in preceding paragraphs. At the same time, these resources have also come with many advantages giving solutions to many professional problems like solution to space problem, providing remote access, convenience in use, increased readership with improved services, leading to more opportunities for productive research output and academic excellence within shortest possible time. Use of e-resources is increasing leaps and bound as shown by many user surveys. Technology has been behind the evolution and development of e-resources, and the same technology may be able to provide better solutions and more opportunities to have complete bibliographical control over world literature which is impossible in case of printed resources. More cooperation and interaction are required among library professionals, publishers, vendors/aggregators, users and software engineers to discuss common issues to arrive at common goal of mutual interests to promote more production, use of these resources with their improved, maintenance and management to the maximum benefit of the users. It is being predicted that by 2020, more than 90% of the material would be in digital form. In such situation and future trend, library professionals shall have to cope up with new emerging digital environment and devise best possible techniques and methods of managing these resources efficiently.

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