



Electronic Resources Management in Libraries

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Abstract:

In today's information-rich world, the ability to retrieve relevant information quickly and effectively is paramount. This research paper explores the landscape of information retrieval tools, both traditional and digital, and their pivotal role in facilitating access to knowledge. By examining various search engines, databases, and emerging technologies, we aim to highlight the evolution, challenges, and potential future developments in the field of information retrieval tools.

1. Introduction

Access to information has become a cornerstone of modern society, enabling individuals to make informed decisions, conduct research, and stay connected in a digital age. Information retrieval tools are the key enablers of this access, serving as gateways to vast repositories of knowledge. The advent of Internet has dramatically changed the way people and institutions function. It has led to tremendous change in the way libraries function and offer services to their users. At present, the libraries actively procure, organize, display and issue e-forms of books, journals, newspapers, theses and dissertations. This is also due to change in information seeking behavior of users. The new generation of users prefer online resources as they want all information at the click of mouse. The e- resources have certain inherent characteristic features which offer convenience to the users. This lesson discusses the concept and importance of e-resources. It deals with different types of e-resources, their advantages and disadvantages.

2. Objectives

comprehend the definition and importance of e- resources;

- categorize different types of e-resources;
- define e- books and e- journals;
- understand the concept of electronic databases; and
- distinguish between bibliographic and full text databases.

3. E-resources

An e- resource is material which requires computer mediation in order to access its content and make it useful. Both online and offline resources such as CD ROMs fall within the scope of e- resources. The term e-resource refers to all the products which a library provides through a computer network.

The electronic resources are also known as online information resources covering bibliographic databases, electronic reference books, search engines for full text books, and digital collections of data. They include both “born digital” material which has been produced directly online. For example-e-journals, databases, and print resources which have been scanned and digitized. The electronic resources, e-journals, online databases are not “owned” by the libraries as they own the print material. Ownership of electronic resources lies with the providers of these resources. Access to the electronic resources may be free via Internet or may be available against a fee.

Some of the examples of e- resources are magazines, encyclopedia, newspapers, journals or articles published in them. These may be accessed on Internet connected devices such as computers, tablets, smart phones, etc.

4. Advantages of e- resources

E- resources have many advantages; some of these are :

- E-resources may be accessed over the Internet. The users need not physically visit the library. This is very useful for the users who reside in remote and far flung areas. The users may download the articles and save them in their PCs.
- The same resource, i.e., article or journal may be accessed by many users at the same time.
- E-resources may be accessed from anywhere, anytime as per the convenience of the users.
- The users may search a large number of resources in one go through a single search interface.
- E-Resources also provide usage statistics which help the library staff In finding out the usage of the product .
- Articles/issues of journals appear online before their print version is available.
- Hypertext format and links of e- resources lead users to related content and articles.
- Electronic resources have audio, video and animation content which is not present in print format.
- The subscription of e- resources helps libraries in saving space.

5. Disadvantages of e- resources

- The readers need to have access to Internet in order to read electronic resources.
- If a library cancels or stops subscription to an e-journal, it is not certain that the library will get access to back issues of that journal. Whereas, library having printed material certainly has back issues of that journal in its possession. In case of e-books too, if a library stops subscription to ebooks, it is denied access to the e- book. Whereas the physical copy once bought always remains in the possession of the library.
- Use of e- resources entails reading on screen which is tedious and harmful too.

6. Managing e-resources

The management of e- resources involves the following:

Selection

E-resources may be selected by any of the following methods:

1. Serendipity (finding by chance something which is useful and beneficial) while surfing the Internet
2. Faculty recommendations
3. Reviewing the electronic journals provided by other libraries
4. Publisher advertisements

Acquisition

A Library acquires print resources for ownership. But for electronic resources, the libraries simply get license for access rights. Some important activities involved in acquisition of e- resources are as under:

1. Determining the price
2. Negotiating with the vendor
3. Completing the licensing agreement
4. Allocation of funds
5. Placing the order
6. Verifying if the title is accessible
7. Communicating with the vendor if it is not accessible
8. Processing the invoice for payment

Staffing

The library has to decide if acquisition functions for e-journals will be performed by the regular staff or staff with expertise in dealing with electronic format. In order to acquire and process electronic resources, the staff requires the skill of negotiating licenses, familiarity with the electronic format, etc.

Licensing

A license is usually a written contract or agreement between the library and the publisher. An agreement has various aspects like method of calculating payment, definition of users, restriction on use, archival rights, etc. Licensing agreements are generally written for the vendors' advantage, so the library staff has to be extra careful to negotiate favourable terms for the library.

Budgeting

Libraries usually have a separate budget for procuring e-resources.

Cataloguing

E-resources are catalogued and details are entered in to library's OPAC. Some libraries may decide to list them on the website and provide their links. They may not catalogue them.

Maintenance

For e-resources, maintenance is an important issue. Library has staff to maintain e-resources. The staff ensures that the subscribed e-resources are accessible on IP (Internet Protocol) ranges of the institute. Some of the e-resources are accessible through Username (UN) and Password (PW). The staff is entrusted with the responsibility of distributing UN/PW to the authorized users. In case, an e-resource is not accessible and the staff cannot resolve the problem, the same is communicated to the publisher to resolve the problem.

Staff Training and User education

The staff must be trained in accessing, browsing and retrieving information from e-resources. Libraries need to conduct user education programmes in order to teach the users how to use e-resources and thus promote and enhance the use of e-resources among the users.

7. Categories of E-Resources

There are different types of e-resources as mentioned below:

- E-journals
- E-Books

Electronic databases

- E-reports
- E-Theses and dissertations
- Institutional repositories

These have been dealt with in the following sections.

8. E- Journals

An e-journal has been defined as a periodical publication which is published in electronic format usually on the Internet. A periodical publication means that it has some periodicity i.e., It may be published weekly, fortnightly, monthly, quarterly or annually. The term electronic journal has been used for the following:

- An electronic version of an established print journal like *Cell*, *New Scientist*, *Scientific American*, etc.
- An e- only journal like *Ariadne*, *D-Lib magazine*, etc.
- An established journal could stop its print version and transfer to e- only format.
- An electronic journal can be free or fee based through annual subscription, licensing or pay per use.

8.1 Advantages of E-journals

E-journals have the following advantages:

- can be accessed from anywhere and any time;
- can be searched non sequentially using keywords;
- additional content is provided which may not be available in print;
- storage and binding concerns are eliminated; and
- back issues can also be accessed with the current ones.

9. Library consortia

Libraries procure subscription to e- journals through consortia in order to save on money. In this consortia approach, libraries form an association or network or cooperative organization to procure and share journals. Some of the examples of consortia which provide access to e- resources are as under:

DeLCON-Electronic Library Consortium-(delcon.gov.in/)

UGCInfoNet digital Library consortium(<http://www.inflibnet.ac.in/econ/>)

10. E- Books

An e- book, also known as electronic or digital book is a text and image based publication in digital form. It is produced or published to be read on computer or other digital devices. E- Books are the digital equivalent of standard printed books. E-books are available in a wide variety of formats. Some may be downloaded in full to be read offline, whereas others may only be read online while connected to the Internet.

10.1 Advantages of e-books

The advantages of e- books are listed as under:

- Can be accessed from anywhere and any time
- The readers may make notes, save and print a number of relevant pages
- The books may be searched for keywords.
- Access the video and audio content
- The problem of space and storage in libraries is reduced or eliminated
- E- books also eliminate damage, loss and security concern
- Old titles do not go out of print
- Low production, shipping and handling charges.

10.2 Disadvantages of e-books

- The libraries have to procure more number of licenses in order to provide their access to more number of users.
- E- books require power or electricity to be accessed. In case, there is power shortage, the users cannot access the book.
- The publishers use DRM (Digital Rights Management) software to control access to e- books. This limits the ability of the users to share an e- book with others.

11. Traditional Information Retrieval Tools

Traditional tools, including library catalogs, bibliographic databases, and manual indexing, continue to play a crucial role in information retrieval. These tools are the foundation upon which modern digital systems are built.

12. Digital Information Retrieval Tools

a. Search Engines: Search engines like Google have become synonymous with online information retrieval. They employ complex algorithms to index and retrieve web content, making it accessible to billions of users. b. Online Databases: Academic, scientific, and commercial databases provide access to a wealth of specialized information. They offer advanced search functionalities and features for refining search results. c. Content Aggregators: Aggregator platforms like PubMed, ProQuest, and JSTOR compile content from various sources, simplifying access to extensive collections of articles, journals, and books.

13. Challenges and Considerations

a. Information Overload: The sheer volume of information available poses a challenge. Tools must help users navigate this abundance effectively. b. Quality Assurance: Ensuring the credibility and accuracy of information retrieved is crucial in an era of misinformation and fake news. c. Privacy and Security: The collection and use of user data by information retrieval tools raise privacy and security concerns. d.

Multilingual Search: Addressing the linguistic diversity of users requires tools to support multilingual search capabilities.

14. Emerging Trends

a. Semantic Search: The use of semantic technologies and natural language processing is improving the precision of search results. b. Personalized Search: Customized search experiences, based on user preferences and behavior, are enhancing user satisfaction. c. Voice and Conversational Search: Voice-activated and chatbot-based search interfaces are gaining prominence. d. AI and Machine Learning: Machine learning algorithms are being integrated into search engines to predict user intent and deliver more relevant results.

15. Future Directions

a. Enhanced Personalization: Information retrieval tools are likely to become even more personalized, adapting to users' unique needs. b. Interdisciplinary Search: Tools will continue to support interdisciplinary research by facilitating access to diverse knowledge domains. c. Ethical Considerations: Ethical information retrieval, including addressing biases and ensuring privacy, will be a focus of future developments. d. Integration of Emerging Technologies: Augmented reality, virtual reality, and blockchain may find applications in information retrieval.

16. Conclusion

Information retrieval tools have evolved significantly, enabling individuals to navigate the vast sea of information in today's digital era. As these tools continue to develop, they will play a pivotal role in ensuring that knowledge remains accessible, empowering users to make informed decisions and contribute to the advancement of society.

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