10. Library in Digital Environment: A Distant Dream for Rural Areas

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Abstract

In this paper, an approach has been made to clear the concepts of digital library, its objectives, functions and its utility among the users in digital environment. Information Technology has changed the concept of traditional library system and for that library and information professionals are also required to acquire knowledge and skills as the library professional is one of the highly IT influenced service profession. The discussion is focused on the process of digitization with the aim of delimiting the notion of digitization based conflicts across the societies especially in rural areas.

Keywords: Digital Library, Digitization, Information Technology,

Introduction

Today's libraries are faced with challenges of integrating the traditional and the emerging Information Technology. The latest Information and communication environment unambiguously prompts libraries to leverage on the latest digital technology towards building practical digital library and in setting up dynamic electronic information system. Digital libraries do enable the seamless integration of the scholarly electronic information, help in creating and maintaining local digital content and strengthen the mechanism and the capacity of the libraries information systems and services. They increase the portability, efficiency of access, flexibility, availability and preservation of digital objects. Here, we shall discuss the status of Libraries in digital environment. In the following discussion we will first try to understand what is meant by Digital Library and then we be moving forward to the main theme of this articulation, that is the scenario of the contemporary rural libraries in context to the digital areas.

Objective

To understand the prospects of digital library and contemporary challenge of libraries in rural areas.

Methodology

The paper is based on direct observation of the present structure.

Understanding the Term

Digital Libraries are now becoming widely known key component of global information infrastructure, adopting the latest information and communication technology. Digital Libraries are networked collection of digital text, documents, images, sounds, data, software and many more that are core of today's Internet and tomorrow's universally accessible digital repositories of all human knowledge.

According to the Digital Library Federation, "Digital Libraries are organizations 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 collection of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or a set of community".

The definition of a digital library can be given as a set of characteristics are as follows. The digital library is a collection of services, collection of information objects, supporting users with information objects, availability directly or indirectly, and electronic/ digital availability. It is a library in which collections are stored in digital formats and accessible by computers. The digital content may be stored locally, or accessed remotely via computer networks. A digital library is a type of information retrieval system.

Prospects of Digital Library

The primary objective of digital library is to improve the access as well as it also includes the cost saving preservation, keeping peace with technology and information sharing. The main benefit of digital library is to preserve rare and fragile objects by enhancing their access to multiple users simultaneously. There are several reasons for libraries to go for digitization, but the prime reason for the digitization is the need of the user for convenient access to high quality of information. Other important considerations for the digital libraries are quality preservation, multiple referencing, wide area usage, and archival storage and security measures.

The basic advantage of a digital library is that it's easy access to the required information in a fat way. One can easily access to various books, archives and images in a single mouse click without investing much effort and time. Where in a conventional library, one has to search physically to get the required information which also consumes time, but in a digital library one

need not invest much time and effort. Besides the easy access of information, digitalization also improves the preservation of its resources.

Another important advantage of digital library is that it can contain much more information in a smaller space. Conventional libraries require huge space for storage but the digital libraries have the potentiality to store much more information as because the information are stored in a digital form.

Another aspect of digital library is that there is no time bar for access to information. Information can be attained round the clock. The user-friendly access to information throughout the world with multiple accesses, the digital library can provide information to users simultaneously through internet.

The Basic Infrastructure Needed for Digitization

- Computer with high configuration
- Audio visual material
- Network
- Printer
- Scanner
- Storage device
- Software

Basic function involved in setting up a Digital Library

a) Identification and collection of content to be digitized.

b) Classification and digitization of this documents.

c) Editing, formatting and storage of the document.

d) Designing search engines to search and access the content selectively.

e) Publishing content for end user.

Main Advantages

a) No physical boundary

b) Round the clock availability

c) Multiple access

d) Structured approach.

e) Information retrival is easy.

f) Digital Library provide very user friendly interface

g)   Preservation and conservation can be made easily

h)   Space is required is less compared to traditional library.

We are moving towards an era where computers and internet will be an integrated part of our life. Although not all but almost in every aspect of our life will be dominated by computers in the near future. From that angle, library services will also be not spared any more. A well established and well-equipped library is very much essential for an academic institution. Academic libraries are therefore duty bound to collect, preserve and disseminate information and in that process, digitalization can help libraries to arrive at the milestone.

A Distant Dream for Rural Areas

What is digitalization that we all are talking nowadays? Is it the use of computers? Or is it the world created by computers? Or is it something which make human more developed and informative? Whatever may be the literary definition of digitalization, one thing is common in all of them is that the concept of digitalization has affected our lives to a great extent. It has delivered everything at our doorstep more conveniently and much faster than ever before. The Library world and the digitalization in this particular field is also not an exception.

The use of internet, emails, fax, computers, software etc have overall revolutionized library and information science. Nowadays, different workshops, seminars etc are being organized in order to input training to the library staffs for the proper implementation and maintenance of a digital library. But, have we really achieved the goal of digitalization of the library environment in reality? The Answer is however not fully affirmative. There are different problem faced by various colleges, school, institutions in the way of digitalization of the libraries both in the rural as well as urban areas.   In rural areas the problems faced by a librarian in maintaining the library is more acute.

Developments without proper positive attitude and intention always remain vague. And it has been clearly portrayed in the case of libraries in the rural areas. It is by now common that each of us owns a smart phone. We feel it a matter of pride to resemble us more digital and upgraded but it has been found that many a times we have neglected the temple of knowledge- the Library.

We have failed to accelerate the pedals of progress for our libraries. Digitalization of library environment attempts to create a space where information efficiently flows to the users. We may agree or disagree but it is a fact that libraries in rural areas suffer from a lack of

knowledge and awareness mostly of the college or school authority. The librarian tries his/her best in creating a better library environment, lamentably the profession is always overlooked just merely as a book keeping organization. It has also been noticed that many a time's funds have not been fully utilized as sanctioned for the library welfare.

The problem of lack of awareness of the college or school administration is right now endangering the library position. Citing an example of a college library it is worth mentioning that the college administration only posses a bookish knowledge regarding library and digitalization of the environment. They were not aware of the entire concept. It has been found that most of the people are in a confusion state regarding the difference between library automation and digitalization. It becomes a difficult for a librarian to make them understand that library automation is completely a different practice from digitalization.

Rural libraries mainly suffer from different technical burdens. When we discuss about creating a digital environment which is mainly based on the use of electricity. But, in many cases the situation is just the opposite due to the poor power conditions. Frequent power-cuts have always stood as an obstacle in creating a smooth digital environment for libraries. We are in a world of 4G connectivity but still the internet speed in our rural institutions is horrific. This all together add as an emerging burden in digitalization of library environment.

The problem of finance is another set-back. Every now and then the librarian needs to concern the administration for finance. They are required to convince the authorities about their necessities. Creating or maintaining a digital environment for library needs a sufficient amount of expenditure, which many times the librarians fail to sort out. Rural libraries also suffer from the lack of digital skill among library workers. Except the librarian, the other staffs are mostly non-professional so it also stands as a barrier to initiate innovative insights for the library welfare. Those staffs are mainly unaware of the new developments in the field of library and information science.

If librarians and information professionals are going to progress into the 21st century then a clear and effective "digital library" model for library services and development will be increasingly important. An increasingly complex technological, social, legal, and economic environment defines many boundaries within which "digital library" services will evolve. The announcement of the Government regarding the development of the educational institutions and the library, imitating virtual classrooms and digital library is a welcome step.

But, the toughest challenge would be to reform the rural institutions. Because, these is the place where a total change in the mental outlook is required along with the change in infrastructure. We need digital librarians not just a digital library. Along with investment in technology, investment in people is also the need of the hour. The questions that have been raised here are very basics but if we introspect, we will find that this is the time where we must address such issues, only then we will acquire the required change and it would be the change which will be accepted by all the sections of people. They would eventually understand the importance of library and the profession as well. Only then the dream of transforming library in the digital environment could be achieved.

Conclusion

We cannot ignore the importance of our traditional library system. Users are more comfortable with our present system. But use of new technology is also necessary to move forward along with other parts of the world. So, for present and coming generation, digitization technology should be introduced so that our libraries become equally competitive and up to date with other parts of the world.

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