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ACCESS OF INFORMATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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1 COMPONENTS OF A DIGITAL LIBRARY

As per Clifford Lynch, Digital Library is an "Electronic Information Access

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System that offers the user a coherent view of an organized, selected, and managed body of information".

Commercial publishing interests are presenting the future of the book in the digital world through the promotion of e-book reading appliances and software. Digital technologies increasingly serve to integrate information resources. Increasingly access to digital libraries is via the Internet and the World Wide Web. Not only is access increasing from the web, but also many of the functions and content offered by a digital library is located remotely across the world of web. Digital library may use functions from across the web, or may use the web or the Internet to make the library more functional for the users. A library can also access an online classification scheme to organize the collection of its materials or can add a search engine to its site to allow the users to collect the information within the library from other sources. Some of the Library software companies are providing these types of features to their clients. The Internet is basically a vast collection of computers all talking with each other through a network that is linked with them. Every server on the Internet has an address.

2 APPLICATION OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

With the growth of digital technology, the library and archival community faces wonderful opportunities to provide new forms of access to an increasing amount of information, and formidable challenges in managing that information, especially in ensuring the long-term availability of, and ready access to data in digital formats. Digital technologies are enablers of knowledge management. Traditional approaches to preservation cannot address the whole range of issues that arise from data created in digital formats, carried on a variety of media, such as magnetic tape, CD-ROMs, and computer hard drives, and retrieved through a large number of software programs that routinely and rapidly become obsolete.

3 AVAILABILITY OF WIDE VARIETY OF AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

Digitization of the libraries has become essential in the modern age due to the significant advances in the computer and communication technology. In India, for last three decades computers are being used in the libraries. The availability of a wide variety of library automation software, viz LIBSYS, CDS-ISIS, Alice for Windows and now Slim-21 reflects the progress of the libraries, which helps the libraries to handle its in-house operations more accurately. Right from the clerical jobs to complex managerial operation, information technology is being used in the

libraries. Use of CD-ROM has also become more common now-a-days. CD-ROM and electronic databases provide bibliographic information and some of them also provide full text information to the users.

Electronics are providing benefits to the libraries. Many of the libraries are providing Web-OPAC information to its users, which have been welcomed by the users commodity. Many of the libraries do provide access of CD-ROM and electronic databases through Intranet.

Libraries and the professional bodies have started resources sharing programmes through Inter-library loan as well as Consortia and provide library users with access to a larger collection, without having to spend valuable price on the available resources. This has been started because a particular individual library could not satisfy the information requirement of its users. To supplement the information requirement from sources that are not available in their library, they collaborated with other libraries through network to provide various information required by the users. DELNET, INFLIBNET, MALIBNET, MYLIBNET, PUNENET, CALIBNET, etc are some examples of networked library. Library Consortium is the association of libraries that are working on the same or common goal and equipped with latest information technology. The association has its own structure of governance and also acts as a corporate body on behalf of its member libraries. Libraries work together by forming consortia. The member libraries share collections, electronic resources, databases, digital collection, etc/ available in the other member libraries of the consortium. INDEST is the example of Consortium provided by MHRD. The consortia based subscription of e-resources is being provided to all the institutes that are under MHRD. IIT Delhi is headquartering of INDEST. It is operational from 2003.

4 PREDOMINANT FORMS OF INFORMATION SOURCE

In the digital age CD-ROM, DVD,/HDD and the World Wide Web (WWW) are the three predominant forms of information source. Like print materials, the publishers also provide electronic materials. Libraries subscribe electronic/online journals through the publishers. For the information professionals Ingenta provides an extensive range of free full text articles to their members. M/s Informatics Limited is providing J-gate, which is an E journal gateway and also started JCCC for networking the libraries. Some of the publishers are offering free online/electronic journal with the subscribed print version. Elsevier Science, Springer Verlag, Taylor and Francis, Blackwell etc are some of the publishers online as well as of print journals. Majority of publishers' are charging for online journals along with the print version. If any library is interested in only the online journals and not the print version, then the publishers' are also providing this facility to the libraries.

With the advancement in the information technology and Internet facilities use of microcomputers and laptops have become more and more useful. This has enabled people to work in their home. People can sit at their home and work. They can also send information across to their employers. This has saved traveling time, money and also other related problem of the employees. The information is being sent in time to the users. Teleconferencing facility is also an added advantage in the technology age. Libraries, in any academic or research institutes, are the prime source of information. They are the reservoirs of both print and non-print materials. By the development and advancement of information technology the researchers can now choose the research problems till the submission of his/her thesis in easy way without much efforts. They can submit their synopsis in a day or two as the bibliographic information is readily available on the net.

4.1 PRIME SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Access of information in the new technology age has tremendously created new steps and the libraries are currently moving over from information technology to data management. The information now can be made accessible to the organization and the users through virtual libraries also. Virtual library is a library, which has no physical existence, being constructed solely in electronic form or on paper. The building blocks required for such a library may not exist, and the chemical steps for such a library may not have been tested. These libraries are used in the design and evaluation of possible libraries. (web definition), <http://vlib.org/> is one of the example of virtual library which provides access to the following subjects like Agriculture, Economics, Library and Information Technology, Computers, Education, Science, Engineering, Humanities, Medicine and many more. The site has a link up with other sites and provides the users wide variety of information on the topics required by them. There are many more sites like the above one.

5 IMPACT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology brings many advantages to the society but it also brings many disadvantages too. They have changed traditional working practices. Technology is creating new publishing media and materials are available on magnetic tape, CDs and other electronic forms. It seems that achieves are no longer bound to hold all the information in their library collection physically. Materials or documents can be preserved from analogue format to digital format. Information technology enables libraries to save storage space, faster ways of dissemination of information, and also to access wide range of information. But there are some disadvantages too because digitization safeguards only the intellectual

content and not the physical object. Due to economic constraints many of the libraries are still not automated. Storage of information in the digital media possesses a big problem. A rapid change in the IT also is a big problem for the institutes. The older versions become obsolete and the hardware also required to be changed for the newer version of any software. Digital information is extremely fragile. Every time, whenever the new version adopted by the institute, staff training may be needed and it may be possible that organization or institutes may oppose it and may also ignore to opt the automation.

6 CONCLUSION

Technology is a tool that enables libraries to deliver services better to library users and helps libraries make the most efficient and effective use of library staff in public service and library support operations. Through technology, access to information, both within and outside the library, is improved. To use technology effectively, the library must plan carefully, provide ongoing support and training, and continuously evaluate, upgrade, and replace hardware, software, and information resources.

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