

Web-Based Services in Library - An Overview

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Abstract

21st century web savvy people believe that one day everything ever created by humans will be available online. With the emergence of the internet and associated technologies, in particular the World Wide Web has opened up an entirely new medium for providing improved information services and resources for the users. Library services provided by using web technology are referred as web based library services. The present paper mainly discusses that what are the web based library services, their features, advantages and disadvantages. Different web based services i.e. weportal, Blog, Web OPAC, ask-a-librarian, email have been highlighted.

Keywords: - Library Web page, Web OPAC, Ask-A-Librarian

Introduction

The day by when the Internet is emerged, more specifically the World Wide Web which is one of its major services has completely revolutionized the way to communicate, studying, teaching, business, employment, education, healthcare and more. It has a major impact on the publishing and information delivery system in 21st century (Arora, 2001) Libraries are mainly entrusted with a host of predetermined tasks like acquiring, organizing, preserving, retrieving and disseminating information to the users. Right from ancient times to the present Internet era, the primary objective of library has always been this. However, the way this purpose has been achieved has drastically changed. Information technology has influenced the very nature of business and management libraries. They are undergoing significant changes today not only in outlook but also in function, services, methods and techniques for collection development, processing and dissemination of information (Singh & Krishna, 2004). The conventional set up of brick and mortar libraries that store information within a constrained physical space have given way to data centers that integrate data sources around the globe by way of networking.

Libraries have not yet explored their full potential to the full (Miao, 2001). With the advancement in technology and its direct application to libraries, business and management libraries are becoming lean and agile libraries that streamline information supply. The pervasive nature of the Internet, coupled with platform independent database connectivity is turning library portals more and more effective. The main purpose of this study is to study the availability of websites at management institutes and the extent of library information hosted on it. The study also aims to examine the reasons behind why websites have failed get the attention of majority of users and to identify the library services that they wish to carry through the internet. Digital Library Services, Internet Library Services, Electronic Library Services are the terms used interchangeably for Web Based Library Services. According to (Bhatnagar, 2005) there are four generations have passed from traditional online services to today that assist users in searching the World Wide Web. The first generation of information retrieval tools was designed for use with bibliographic databases. The second generation of tools attempts to collect and index resources as an automation function. The third generation deals with World Wide Web Meta search engines. The fourth generation involves new ideas such as search agent technology currently being developed to search for information on the web.

World Wide Web

World Wide Web is one of the services of the internet. It is a way of accessing integrated information in the form of web pages over the medium of internet with the help of web browsers. Definition - What does World Wide Web (WWW) mean? The World Wide Web (WWW) is a network of online content that is formatted in HTML and accessed via HTTP. The term refers to all the interlinked HTML pages that can be accessed over the Internet. The World Wide Web was originally designed in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee while he was a contractor at CERN. The World Wide Web is most often referred to simply as "the Web." According to

(Jeyshankar, 2009) World Wide Web is a global network of internet servers which provides access to interlinked documents locally and remotely. It is a vast network of linked hypertext files stored on computers throughout the world that can provide computer users' with information on a huge variety of subjects. The information can be in the form of regular text, hypertext, pictures, sounds, use net news groups and other types of data. To access such information from web use client program is necessary like Internet explorer, fire fox, etc. Web uses http protocol language over the internet to transmit data. In the web each web page can hold not only information but also links to other pages. In each page a particular word or group of

words are highlighted and there is a link between the highlighted item and other information, this is called hypertext.

Library Services

Library Services are defined as the facilities provided by a library for the use and dissemination of library material like books, journals, theses, dissertations, etc. in order to meet the users' requirement. Some of commonly existing library services are cataloguing, classification, circulation services, reservation, renewal, new arrivals, current contents, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, reference service, document delivery service, interlibrary loan service, externally purchased database, CD-ROM databases, access to other library catalogues, access to online databases, internally published newsletters, reports and journals, bibliographies, indexing and abstracting services and so on. With the advent of internet and web the mode of providing such services has changed to web environment.

Web Portals and Libraries

A Web Portal can be defined as a website for a specific audience that aggregates an array of content and provides an array of services (Pienaar, 2003). They are the sites on the World Wide Web that typically provide personalized capabilities to their visitors. They are designed to use distributed applications, different numbers and types of middleware, and hardware to provide services from a number of different sources. Content linked in library portal is superior to the open access content available on the Web (Joint, 2005). Authentication software, commonly known as Web Access Management (WAM) are available that allow the library to govern the access to licensed electronic content (Myhill, 2004). Commonly referred to as simply a portal, it is a website that offers access to a broad array of resources and services of libraries such as e-journals, online databases, Web OPAC, new additions and any other static information about library services.

The developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) and their subsequent absorption in library and information science (LIS) have forced information professionals to change the way they are functioning at present. Because of their popularity with the users, an overwhelming attention is being given to the web-based information services in libraries (Krishnamurthy & Chan, 2005). LIS community has realized that the academic world is increasingly becoming web-based. Those institutes who wish to attract prospective students and the faculty members must show significant improvements in the institute's infrastructure.

Libraries with mere books and journals may no longer lend a credible support to the academic fraternity. Having a tech savvy library and information center with exhaustive information resources in all formats has become unavoidable. Libraries are procuring more and more electronic sources like electronic journals, electronic books, online databases along with locally digitized theses and dissertations. The efforts of libraries in providing users with an integrated way of checking the availability of a source in all possible formats have necessitated a properly designed web portal (Cox & Yeates, 2003). Management libraries are also supposed to define and redefine their services and continuously keep their efforts on value addition to the services offered by them. Proliferation of electronic resources has posed several challenges like multiple logins, multiple interfaces and resource discovery. Web portal offers effective solutions to these challenges (Groenewegen & Huggard, 2003).

Web OPAC

An online public access catalog (often abbreviated as OPAC or simply library catalogue is an online database of materials held by a library or group of libraries. Users search a library catalog principally to locate books and other material available at a library. In simple language it is an electronic version of the card catalogue. OPAC is the gateway to library's collection.

Web OPAC is a library catalog on the web. Users can search the required information by connecting to Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of Web OPAC at anytime from anywhere in the world. It facilitates the users to access the bibliographic details of holdings in the collection of particular library. In this system the library books and other reading items are arranged according to the subject content that is given a call number. Some of the major services available through Web OPAC are library catalogue, search facility on entire database, group wise restricted access for users and guest.

Features

- It is worldwide and all the time accessible.
- No limitation of space and time for search of any information. Any person can search not only
- information of its own library but also can access any networked library.
- The status of books whether it is issue, lost may be available at both staff and public terminals throughout the library.
- Make easier to access catalogue data in the form of bibliographic records.

- It is possible for users to send reprint request immediately by e-mail.

E-mail

E-mail is a web based excellent media that the librarian can use for various purposes specifically for delivering some web based services like electronic document delivery service, table of contents, RSS feeds, etc. It serves as an excellent current awareness service to the scientists. It is widely used service by publishers and researchers

Ask-A-Librarian

Ask-A-Librarian services are Internet based question and answer service that connect users with individuals who possess specialized subject knowledge and skill in conducting precision searches. Users ask question either through web form or by an e-mail address provided by the service. Once a query is read by a service, it is assigned to an individual expert for answering who in turn responds to the query with factual information or a list of information resources. The responses are either send to the user's email account or is posted on the web so that the user can access it after a certain period of time.

Bulletin Board

A bulletin board is an electronic communications forum that hosts posted messages and articles connected to a common subject or theme or interest. It allows users to call in and either leaves or retrieves messages. The message may be directed to all users of the bulletin board or only to particular users. Several libraries are using bulletin boards for their web based library services. The bulletin board system is also used as an interactive interface to invite suggestions on activities and services of a library. It can also be used as an interface to distribute library services." (Sangale, 2015).

Web Forms

Interactivity is a key feature of successful web based services and web forms are good examples of interactivity. Most of the library websites have web forms for inviting feedback from the users such as:

Suggestions for services:-

- Users Survey;
- Comments on the website and suggestions to improve it;
- Requests for library to acquire certain titles or materials;
- Reference Service (often Ask-A-Librarian);

- Interlibrary loan or other document delivery services.

Advantages of Web Based Services

Following are the advantages of Web Based Services:

- It saves the precious time of the users
- A large number of users can be helped simultaneously by using web based library services
- Less dependent on the library staff for getting the required information
- No need of library staff in large numbers to carry out library works and services
- Availability of information in different places and also in different formats
- Cut in Library Budget
- Fulfill information requirements instantly
- Operating costs are minimal

Disadvantages of web based services

- A huge volume of information is generated every minute
- No order or rules are imposed on the generation, distribution, access and use of this information
- No fully comprehensive record of the different documents is available at the moment
- Requires some training for users to use special equipment required
- Use is limited by copyright laws and licensing agreements
- Access is currently unreliable (URL problems, internet connection problems)
- Format is in the early stages of development

Conclusion

Developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) have a profound impact on every sphere of academic activity. Library and information science is not an exception for this.

The first and foremost function of the library is to provide quality information service in order to satisfy their users with the right information at the right time. Web based library service is a trend. Although, we actively transfer library services but our central purpose remain the same, to serve and teach users to find, evaluate and use information effectively. To meet these challenges the librarians may play a leadership role in providing better web based library

services to their techno savvy users. The librarians have to join the learning community as coaches and collaborators, guide the students, teaching them how to search effectively and helping them judge the quality and usefulness of the information that they meet with.

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