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Electronic resources: Advantages and disadvantages for academic library users

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Abstract
The electronic resources (e-resources) have great significance in digital libraries and amongst the academic library users. Digital libraries are developing all over the world to collect, store and communicate the information through electronic media. The user's needs and usage of e-resources are day by day increasing, depends on their academic need. Therefore electronic resources are very essential and very much useful to students, faculty and researchers as well as professional librarians.
This paper discusses the advantages of electronic resources for academic library users. The main objective of this paper is academician should know the import and advantages of electronic resources.

Keywords: Electronic resources, academic, library users

Introduction

The electronic resources (e-resources) available in a library play a prominent role in facilitating access to required information to the users in an easy and expeditious manner. The e-resources like CD-ROM, e-Databases, e-Journals, e-Books/e-Audio/e-images, OPACs and the internet are slowly replacing the importance and usage of print media. The government has taken various steps to introduce facility in academic institutions for the benefit of research scholars because information resources especially journals are becoming very expensive due to their availability in electronic format. On the other hand libraries are facing financial crunch which has given rise to the birth of library cooperation/resource sharing. The universities and institutions of higher learning institutions have stated optimally utilizing the resources amongst themselves via resource sharing over the network available under various consortia like INDEST, DELNET, UGC-INFONET and N-List programme of MHRD/UGC (INFLIBNET). The present work is a completely integrated presentation of library automation systems, networking and new electronic technologies in modern libraries.

Definition

- According to library and information technology glossary "Term used to describe all of the information products that a library provides through a computer network".
- According to Wikipedia, Electronic Resources means "Information (usually a file) which can be stored in the form of electrical signals, usually on a computer; Information available on the internet".
- According to Gradman glossary, "A publication in digital format which must be stored and read on a computer device. There are two types: Direct access: these are physical objects such as CD-ROMs, diskettes, computer tapes and computer cards, containing text, images, software etc.

Electronic resources in academic libraries

E-resources are those resources which include documents in electronic or e-format that can be accessed via Internet in digital library environment. E-resources are that electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it text, image collection, other multimedia products like numerical, graphical mode for commercially available for library and information centres. These may be delivered on CD-ROM/DVD, over the internet and so on. Providing access to e-resources is a service to help academic library users to find e-databases, e-journals, e-magazines, e-books, e-audio, e-images, data, GIS, digital library

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projects, electronic exhibitions, e-subject guide, e-newsletters and web search tools on a range of topic. Many of the electronic resources are freely available to anyone over internet access but some are commercial resources.

Need of E-Resources
E-resources enable the librarian to provide better service to the user community. The few considerable points are mentioned below:

- **Multi-access:** The accessibility of information is made available 24x7 days. To get access to an information source by the more than one users.
- **Speed:** E-resources can be searched quickly. E-resources are quicker to browse or search, extract, integrate information into other material and to cross-search between different publications.
- **Functionality:** E-resource will allow the user to approach the publication by click of the mouse on search mode. These can be found easily by the user.
- **Content:** It can contain a vast amount of information, but more importantly the material can consist of mixed media video, audio and animation which could not be replicated in print.
- **Storage:** The ability of store and retrieve large amount of information. These resources can be stored in huge amount.

Types of E-Resources
The e-resources are basically divided in two major types are:

Online E-Resources (which may include):

- **E-journals** (full text & bibliographic): The journals available in electronic format. "A remote access electronic serial is a continuing resource that is accessed via computer networks; it provides easy access, keyword search ability, and accessibility just at publication time, independent of space and time access, interactivity and customization etc. A large number of important full text articles are available free of charges in the personal or institutional websites of few eminent personalities.
- **E-books:** E-book is a book-length publication in digital form, consisting of text, images or both, readable on computers or other electronic devices, although sometimes defined as "an electronic version of a printed book" (Wikipedia, 2008). E-books can be transferred from library catalogue to user's e-book readers for a fixed loan period and after which it is automatically taken back. An e-book can be offered indefinitely without ever going "out of print".
- **E-database:** An e-database is an organized collection of information, of a particular subject or multidisciplinary subject areas. The information of an e-database can be searched and retrieved electronically. E-database usually updates on a daily, weekly, monthly or quarterly basis. Full text database contain the whole content of an article such as citation information, text, illustrations, diagrams and tables. Bibliographic database only contain citation information of an article such as author name, journal title, publication date and page numbers.

Other Electronic Resources (may include)

- **CD-ROM:** Compact Disc Read Only Memory is a pre-pressed compact disc that contains data. Accessible to, but not writable by a computer for data storage and music playback.
- **E-Image:** Due to adventure of e-images facility image databases are used specifically in subjects such as history, geography, medical science etc. The libraries develop in house digital image collections and also provide access to selected external databases to them clientele.
- **E-Newspapers:** E-Newspapers resources provide access to collections of online newspapers as well as selected individual titles within those collections. An online newspaper also known as a web newspaper. The creditability and strong brand recognition of well-established newspapers and the close relationships they have with advertisers are also seen by many in the newspaper industry as strengthening their chances of survival.
- **Consortia:** the consortia can play an important role in acquiring licenses and sharing electronic resources by as a platform for promoting activities and programs in the area of electronic resources sharing. A consortia is community two or more information agencies which have formally agreed to co-ordinate or consolidate certain function to achieve mutual objective.
- **Internet:** Internet is a network of networks. It is the worldwide collection of multiple computer networks. Internet is a network of thousands of computer network. To accomplish exchange of information all the computers on the internet have to use a common set of rules for communications. It is a capable to transfer information across the geographical boundaries in an electronic format at a very fast speed.
- **E-Thesis and Dissertations:** An E-Thesis and dissertations are now very useful tool to collect large data for specific subject. it is an electronic document that explains the intellectual work of researchers. E-thesis and dissertations providing a technologically advanced medium for expressing ideas with less expensive and easy handling with high longevity.

Types of E-Resources Services
- **Current Awareness Service (CAS):** CAS aims to provide information to library members about the recent arrival of books, journals and other library documents. These difficulties are overcome through the E-CAS method that combines both CAS and SDI and makes the new arrival information periodically available to library patrons using email services.
- **Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI):** SDI is a technique for the recovery of information that allows users to receive relevant information automatically, through profiles on a regular basis that reflects their needs for information.
- **Document Delivery Services (DDS):** DDS generally deals with the provision of documents to the users on request, whether original or copied in print or non-print form, regardless of the location and type of the original. Systems that use electronic technology to receive and supply requests described as Electronic Document Delivery Systems (EDDS) of documents.

- **Web-Based Online Public Access Catalogue (WEB OPAC):** Web OPAC is a web-based online catalogue of library or library resources. It is a library's principal tool for retrieving material within its archives. Incorporated into a library management system. Web OPAC enables users to access and scan the collection of libraries from remote on the network. Web OPACs were also developed as standalone online catalogues accessible to the entire world from a server.

Methods of Accessing E-Resources/Online Databases
The following methods provide access to e-journals, e-books and databases provided by the academic libraries.
- **IP Based Access:** Resources access to the specific range of IP (Internet Protocol Address)
- **Username and Password:** Using by username and password to access the resources
- **Free Access:** Freely available electronic resource access via the web.

Objectives of the study
The objectives of the study are:
- To create the awareness of the usage of e-resources among the academic work of students, faculty and research scholars.
- To analysis the advantages and essential of electronic resources for academic library users.
- Users should get the quality of information.
- To find out the problems faced by the academic library users.
- To give some suggestions to increase the electronic resources usage and also improve the electronic library services to academic users.

Advantages of Electronic Resources
- **Accessible:** Can be accessed from any computer on campus and usually any computer off campus, any time of the day or night, so there is no need to make a trip to the library.
- **Easily searchable:** Each journal can be searched quick and easy often through the complete full text of articles and via online index.
- **Speed:** Articles/issues appear online before printed version is available.
- **Interactive:** Rapid turnaround time means articles can be read, commented by the readers, amended quickly and greater feedback through the web.
- **Links:** Hypertext format should be exploited and links to related articles, information on other web sites, stable URLs for individual articles and email alerts when latest issue loaded.
- **Added Value:** Advantages taken on the web is to add value by using animation, virtual reality and interactive mathematical charts.
- **Inexpensive:** Savings can be made over printing costs, distribution costs and extra costs by new features.
- **Flexibility:** E-journals evolved quickly. They are not tied to a format, printer and distribution network.

Disadvantages of Electronic Resources
The few disadvantages are:
- **Difficulty in reading computer screens:** Electronic journal is the limitations of the computer monitor, this leads to problem with reading and long reading from screen can cause eyestrain.
- **Less Permanent:** Electronic version of online journal is easy to lose and their reliance on soft-wares and hard-wares makes them impermanent.
- **Higher cost:** Retrieve some electronic articles need more cost.
- **License/Copyright issues:** issues regarding revision of the licenses and copying and distributing of resources.

Selections of E-Resources
The selection of e-resources should be done according to the need and demand of users. As a librarian one should consider the following steps at the time of selection.
- To know the needs of users.
- To know content and scope of e-resources.
- To examine quality of the e-resources and search facility among them.
- To maintain cost effectiveness.
- To check either subscription based or web based at the time of purchasing.
- To check the license copy.
- To evaluate educational support and training.
- To check the compatibility and technical support.

Suggestions
The following some suggestion to increase the electronic resources usage in academic libraries.
- Need to amplify the bandwidth so as to enlarge the speed of upload/download and without blackout.
- More computer terminals should be installed in the library for easy access to users.
- There should be made necessary arrangements for resource sharing (by using Wi-Fi Technology) with libraries.
- The library should be an IT trained staff in the digital library room for helping the users in case of difficulty.
- Library users (students/faculty/researchers) must be given orientation and user awareness training time to time for maximum utilization of e-resources.
- Library and information professionals should be given training for managing the e-resources and given services to the end users.
- Librarian and library staff should familiar in online databases searching techniques.
- Yearly once get back the feedback from library users, this is help to know the users need and to take decision to improve the usage of e-resources usage in future.

Conclusion
The use of e-resources is supportive to ensure comprehensive and pinpointed information. The e-resources provide the user and library handle various search options them. Usage of e-resources helps the library to save library space and user time. The increasing the electronic resources subscription bring more satisfaction to users about the library services. The Developments in the Information and Communication Technology services are available in the present made wonderful changes in the library operations. E-resources have confidently subjective their research activities by helping them to keep the latest and by saving time. An e-resource is an electronic information resource that one can access on the web, on or off campus.

Enhancement in infrastructure like high speed network, Wi-Fi in the campus, LAN portals at various rights to use points in the campus and also in departments can be prepared to improve the practice effectively.

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