

# Chapter 4

## Academic Libraries' Mobile Initiatives and Research from 2010 to the Present: Identifying Themes in the Literature

**Barbara Blummer**

*Center for Computing Sciences, USA*

**Jeffrey M. Kenton**

*Towson University, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*An examination of the literature from 2010 to the present reveals a variety of academic library mobile initiatives. In addition to creating mobile library websites, librarians utilized iPads to support roving reference, rounding library services, as well as information literacy instruction. iPads were also offered to patrons for circulation and librarians conducted research to enhance their understanding of students' use of iPads. Articles documented the availability of Quick Response (QR) codes in academic libraries to support students' access to materials. Despite the diversity of these mobile initiatives, academic librarians' employed similar strategies to foster their development including: obtaining support, collecting data, as well as promoting and assessing the projects. One or more of these strategies remained characteristic of libraries' mobile initiatives identified in the literature during these years.*

### INTRODUCTION

The increasing popularity of mobile devices for communication by 2010 led to numerous library initiatives to develop or enhance their mobile presence (Kim, 2013). Librarians' interest in developing mobile services paralleled activities at the international and national level during these years. In 2007 The Open University in Milton Keynes, United Kingdom and Canada's Athabasca University hosted the first M-

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libraries conference, an international bi-yearly event focused on mobile libraries services (M-libraries: Information, n.d.). Two years later numerous libraries in the United States formed My Info Quest, a national text reference collaborative (Avery, Docherty, & Lindbloom, 2011). Likewise, the M-libraries wiki offering information on mobile library interfaces and applications appeared during this period (Farkas, n.d.). Moreover, these years witnessed an increase in the number of open source and commercial products designed to foster mobile access to library websites, catalogs, and databases as well as support for mobile reference delivery (Burns & Marcus, 2011; Haefele, 2011; Houghton, 2012; Luo & Bell, 2010; Stahr, 2011). Consequently, in this chapter the authors seek to identify themes in the literature on mobile library initiatives in academic libraries from 2010 to the present. Similarly, Vassilakaki (2014) conducted a literature survey on mobile information services in libraries to illustrate themes among the papers. However, her study, that spanned 2004 to 2014, considered informational papers as well as research reports. In this chapter the authors sought to focus on mobile initiatives in academic libraries as well as research conducted by their librarians. This research remains important for academic librarians considering the adoption of mobile initiatives since it illustrates trends in the development of these services and offers best practices in their implementation.

The organization of the chapter begins with the introduction and background. Following these sections, the authors present the methodology and findings of the literature review. Each theme is then discussed separately. Lastly, the chapter offers a conclusion and recommendations for future studies.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Mobile Devices in Academic Libraries**

Statistics illustrate the global popularity of mobile devices. *Business Insider* noted one in every 17 individuals worldwide owned a tablet and research suggested their adoption rate was exceeding smartphones (Heggestuen, 2013). Mobile devices or web enabled smartphones are ubiquitous on college campuses. The technology is increasing in importance in academia, especially in libraries. According to Mohamed (2014) the popularity of mobile phones heightened users' expectations on the availability of accessing library services through these devices. Research on students' information use supports the development of mobile library services. Sam Houston University's librarians surveyed students in 2010 and 2014 on their desire for mobile library services. The authors found students especially interested in accessing library services from mobile devices during the period (Cassidy, et al., 2014).

Smartphones and other mobile devices offer librarians new opportunities in the delivery of services for users including instruction, systems, reference, and access to resources (Little, 2011). Similarly, Lippincott (2010) suggested the mobile revolution offered instructional opportunities for librarians in teaching students about accessing information in the field, utilizing software for organizing their information on devices and developing mashups using various information sources. Bell and Peters (2013) pointed to the need for librarians to evaluate library services and especially to develop new ones to support mobile patrons. Likewise, Mohamed (2014) noted academic librarians are developing services to support mobile users. Consequently, the authors identify themes in the literature on mobile initiatives in academic libraries to foster librarians' adoption of similar services and resources in their institutions.

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