Chapter 2
Academic and Research Libraries' Portals:
A Literature Review From 2003 to the Present

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents a synthesis of the literature on academic library portals. Library portals remain a component of the modern academic library. Portal features differ, but typically contain a single authentication process and access to metadata as well as some services (Laouar, Hacken, & Miles, 2009). The authors examined 87 papers in their review. This examination revealed six themes including: developing library portals, utilizing assessment strategies, collaborating on portal projects, incorporating personalization and customization features, conducting environmental scans, and creating instructional portals. The authors assigned themes to the papers based on the primary focus of the material. The findings revealed various issues with the development of academic library portals. The content of academic library portals continues to evolve as their importance to the user increases. Ultimately, an examination of the literature illustrated academic libraries' efforts to remain relevant through the availability of new resources and services on their portals.

INTRODUCTION

Library portals remain a component of the modern academic library. In the digital era students expect seamless access to information without the burden of multiple logins. Portal features differ, but typically contain a single authentication process and access to metadata as well as some services (Laouar, Hacken, & Miles, 2009). Some definitions of portals equate them with webpages or gateways (Feeney & Newby, 2005; Jackson & Preece, 2002; Ketchell, 2000; McDonald, 2004; Rozic-Hristovsk, Humar, & Hristovski, 2003). Strauss (2003) and Zhou (2003) highlight users' abilities to customize portals. Cox (2003) identified three core portal functions including: browsing, cross searching and support for OpenURLs. Many portals provide usage statistics, searches, collaborative tools, and reference support (Laouar et al., 2009, p. 467). Some authors emphasize the educational perspective of library portals with the availability of tutorials as well as tours (Somerville & Vutto, 2005). Research also highlights the metadata harvesting potential of library portals (Halbert, 2006). The content of academic library portals continues to evolve as their importance to the user increases. Ultimately, an examination of the literature illustrates academic libraries' efforts to remain relevant through the availability of new resources and services on their portals. As Murray (2003) reminds us "Services provided by academic libraries today must be about more than just discovery - more than just links" (p. 146).

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

BACKGROUND

Portals in Academic and Research Libraries: Early Library Portals

Academic Libraries' Efforts to Create Portals

In the late 1990s various library portals existed on the Internet such as Yahoo, the Librarians' Index to the Internet, Michigan elibrary, BUBL Information Service and Info Mine (Davidsen, 2005). Many of these sites represented horizontal portals since they provided information on a variety of topics compared to their vertical counterparts that were subject specific (Campbell, 2001; Ketchell, 2000). Although

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