

Chapter 17

Digital Libraries and Copyright of Intellectual Property: An Ethical Practice Management

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the ethical management of digital collections in a way that enhances compliance to copyright requirements. The chapter clarifies similarities and differences between the terms digital, electronic and virtual. The author emphasises that the digital librarians have a duty to preserve their professional integrity by committing to professional ideals in carrying out various information dissemination activities in a manner that guarantees positive consequences for the users, the library and all other stakeholders such as the owner of the intellectual property, the parent organization, the professional association and the society at large.

INTRODUCTION

From the description, characterization and format of the traditional library comes the digital library which may synonymously be called electronic or virtual library without fuss or much semantic contradictions. The evolution of digital libraries has ensured the emergence of global networked environment that has dramatically changed the face of libraries, their functions, services as well as their storage and delivery systems (Awoyemi & Egunjobi, 2013). Libraries using the new technology have converted many of their traditional information sources to electronic. Omoniyi, (2013 quoting Sutton 1998), defines traditional library as a specific place with a finite collections of tangible information and it is geographically constrained. Stressing further he notes that this is the type of library that operates within the four walls of a building and its use compels users to visit the location before accessing the resources. The resources of traditional libraries are mostly print materials of various kinds. Their collections, organization, processing and dissemination are manually done with a lot of stress and slow speed in handling information.

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He listed some of the inadequacies of traditional library to include their resources not being able to be accessed outside the hours of operation, services localized and in addition to poor services, there is a general problem of dearth of core textbooks, materials not well organized for easy retrieval, too many books are given out as loan leaving only few and irrelevant books on the shelves. All these shortcomings of traditional libraries among others are the reasons for the emergence of digital library. The physical space of 21st Century libraries has now been modified to accommodate the additional technology necessary to provide patrons with the tools to use library resources successfully and to meet their information needs (Patel, Verma & Lodhi, 2011).

Digital library initiative came as a bail out to save users the stress of going to the location of traditional library. Availability of digital library services ensures that users can access information across the globe remotely from wherever they are. Hence, the reason it is required of libraries globally to preserve their cultural heritage and make them accessible in order to contribute positively to the global information base (Ominiya, 2013).

(Uzuegbu, Uguah, Nwosu and Aniedu, 2013) opined that the world today is a knowledge society. Publications and other works of knowledge hitherto held in library shelves are now domiciled on the cyberspace and digital networks, some as subject or professional gateways and others as aggregated database, accessible via the internet or as files installable on computer desktops that can be shared through local and wide area networks. Such products are what information professionals have called electronic resources.

The digital library is a library whose collections are stored in digital formats as opposed to print, microforms or other media (Nwokocha & Chimah, 2013). It can be accessed only through computers. The stored digital content of the digital library may be stored locally and accessed remotely via computer networks from wherever and at any time. Digital libraries do enable the seamless integration of the scholarly electronic information, help in creating and maintaining local digital content, and strengthen the mechanisms and the capacity of the library's information systems and services. They also increase the portability, efficiency of access, flexibility, availability and preservation of digital objects. (Esew, Michael & Ikyember B. T. 2013) in their submission agreed that, the electronic information sources facilitated by the digital library are very accessible, reliable and highly cost effective, and this is having an edge over print sources.

Digital library service is not a new phenomenon, and to this Brophy (2005), noted that at the beginning of the 1990s, new services based on digitization of full text started to become widely available. However, the norm now is for end-user access to full text, and users independently access vast information resources across the internet, using the World Wide Web (WWW) as the medium for delivery

Traditional Library vs. Digital Library: A Conceptual Framework

The collection of a traditional library consists of books, periodicals, maps, atlases, standards and specifications, trade catalogs, reprints etc. mainly in printed format. Traditionally a library has been defined as a place, a room or a building, where books, journals and other sources of information are kept and used for study, research and recreation. This concept of a library is one in which hard copies of books, journals and other sources of information are stocked on rows of shelves, such as the ones available in Nigeria universities, polytechnics, and colleges of Education. This is to protect the information sources as well as provide guidance to the users in the interpretation and use of the information sources, where library staff are to attend to users (Esew and Ikyember, 2013).

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