

Chapter 18

Managerial Perspective of E-Resources in Academic Libraries

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ABSTRACT

The rapid increase of e-resources together with several value-based applications has been gradually superseding the traditional means of communication in almost all parts of the world. The transformation enforced government-funded consortia to build ICT environments in academic institutions and created a pressing demand on the libraries for increasing their acquisitions. The bundled (packages) resources available to libraries through several means are raising issues about their usefulness, real benefit as per user's preferences, and also the usage. Issues of the kind invariably require thought, exceptional policy decisions, and implementing standard procedures for the optimum utilization of expensive resources and their management. The chapter discusses the features of e-resources, challenges encountered by the library administrators, the existing and innovative practices in their evaluation and organization, while highlighting the supporting technologies and integrated management tools emerging as per the latest requirements of academic institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Advancements in the computer generation of scholarly information as well as documents in electronic form and the emergence of electronic publishing during early 90s have revolutionized the entire process of scientific communication, ensuring instantaneous dissemination of content over the worldwide networks very easily to scholars. The e-publishing was initially applied for highly priced peer reviewed research journals in a view

to disseminate research results speedily to the researchers working all over the world and no sooner extended to other popular forms of information material viz. Abstracts, indexes, books, serial publications, reference sets, statistical handbooks and technical manuals etc. The rapid increase of e-journals in developed countries coupled with the addition of advanced applications has been gaining value among the scholarly circles since they can search and retrieve the information in the form of text, data and also as multimedia objects, further replacing the traditional print resources those exist over decades as well superseding the traditional

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means of communication. The phenomenon was scarcely perceptible in developing countries like India until late 90s and it has been highlighting more during the current decade with the dynamic efforts and association of publishers, aggregators, academicians, academic institutions with the respective government departments.

The transition enforced government funded consortia, to build ICT environment in academic institutions and libraries for facilitating access to electronic resources in a view to raise academic and research standards at international level. Further, this transformation has been one way creating a pressing demand on the libraries of research and academic institutions for increasing the acquisition of e-resources, on the other side publishers or content providers are in the process of demonstrating cost wise benefits to various organizations by offering numerous (bundle of) resources via package subscriptions or collections at almost 20-25% of the list price. Almost all the publishers are facilitating online access to academic institutions only after executing legal agreements for retaining their rights over the intellectual content of researchers. The situation has been raising scope for the conflict as this imposition laid down by the publishers (content providers) are refraining authors from their rights to disseminate their own articles and the institutional users to preserve their subscribed content for perpetual use or to operate on interlibrary loan services etc. Further the bundled (packages) resources subscribed by the libraries at cost-benefit pricing models are raising questions about the usefulness of entire resources, especially when user's preferences vary or in contrast with the publisher's packages or modules. Issues of the kind invariably require exceptional attention, policy decisions as well as implementing standard procedures for their optimum utilization of expensive resources and their management.

Thus, the chapter discusses about the e-resources; challenges encountered by the library administrators in connection with their procurement,

evaluation and organization and the emerging techniques and integrated management tools that would be supporting the library management while providing services as per the latest requirements of institutional users in academic environment.

E-RESOURCES

E-resources can be basically referred as the documents produced and preserved in electronic medium and distributed through networks. The terms digital, virtual or paperless or online are used almost synonymously with electronic in spite of holding slightest variations. The definitions of e-resources especially the journals illustrate their development over the period. An early definition by Brandt (1992) for e-journal is "some grouping of information which is sent out in electronic form with some periodicity". Mcmillan (1991) observed an electronic journal that "any serial produced, published and distributed nationally and internationally via electronic networks such as bitnet and the internet". Lancaster (1995) defined "electronic journal as -"the one created for the electronic medium and available only in this medium". Nissonger (2004) referred the electronic journal broadly covering any serial or serial like publication available in an electronic format. Accordingly, networked, non-networked, electronic only, and dual print + electronic titles are considered as electronic journals. CONSER Cataloging Manual 31 stated while addressing some issues regarding the cataloging of electronic serials that - the OPACS, gophers, listservs, www home pages, online services such as DIALOG etc should not be considered as serials, however the current serial/monograph distinctions may need reconsideration because the "transition from print to online format may result in a serial becoming a monograph by virtue of continuous online updates without making distinct issues or editions". AACR2 in its revision has included electronic resources and defined as "the material (data and/or program(s) encoded for manipula-

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