

Chapter 25

University Library Portal: A Tool for Web-Enabled Information Services

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ABSTRACT

In today's modern digital information environment, a well-defined e-platform is needed to organize, store, retrieve and dissemination of information effectively. A library portal is highly beneficial tool for web-enabled information services. Most of the university libraries are adding e-resources to their collection. The utility of these e-resources will be limited in the absence of an effective library portal that facilitates the users to exploit these to the maximum extent. Web portals are the tools that enhance access to the e-resources by providing visibility to various e-resources. This paper highlights the role of a library portal in providing effective library services in electronic environment. An attempt has been made to explain the term 'library portal', need of university library portal, Role of Librarian in designing library portal and development of library portal literature study at national and international level.

INTRODUCTION

The library portal is acting as an effective key to knowledge; it is a tool for Web-enabled information services. The library portal serves as an integrated interface to a wide variety of e-resources and web-based library services to its users. Library portals also host links to important digital resources useful for the users as well as parent organizations (Surulinathi, 2010). The dynamic linking capability of the web has provided users unrestricted access to information and to librarians an effective method to organize the contents (Letha, 2006). The principle benefit of the library portal is to supplement the formal education system by making knowledge available to all users. It has thus become mandatory for libraries to

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design and develop their portals to provide users access to their resources. This chapter deals with the discussion on development of portal technology and further presented the detail discussion on overview of the university library portals in the world.

BACKGROUND

Web portals became a buzz word in the digital era. It is one of the most popular topics of discussion in technology today. A web portal plays a specialized role in the digital world (Sharma & Gupta, 2005). Web-portals are meta-resources that function as a gateway or point of access to information. Portals gather a variety of useful information resources at one place called a “one-stop” webpage where users can customize their information sources by selecting and viewing information they find personally useful. The term ‘portal’ describes a variety of web-based interfaces called a dynamic one-stop homepage where users can customize the content to meet their needs. The web portal is a site that functions as a point of access to information on the web (Mane & Pange, 2015). The term portal derives from the Latin word ‘portale’ which means door, gate. The web portal originated from web search engines and evolved through web push technology. Portals were so popular in business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumers (B2C) applications (Zhou, 2003). After the proliferation of web browsers in the late 1990s, many companies tried to build portal to have Internet market. Web portal refers to only the website that can be customized by individual users. The ‘My trend’ emerged and dominated the Internet platform since the late 1990s. Most of the well-known internet companies such as Yahoo, Lycos, AOL and even the state of California web sites started using My-Trend in portals. The ‘portal’ term entered into the world of education.

Early Background of Library Portal

The term “portal” is relatively new in the library field. Library portals practice first appeared in January 1998 at the North Carolina State University Libraries which was designed by Eric Lease Morgan. The MyLibrary portal (my.lib.ncsu.edu) was the first academic library website which allowed its users to customize their webpage. In January 1999, during the American Library Association meeting, the experts of the Library and Information Technology Association identified library portals as one of the future trends for library technologies. This trend of web customization remained the LITA top trend for the 2000 and 2001 ALA midwinter meetings. In September 1999, more than eighty research, academic library directors came together to engage in a series of discussion and working sessions at the ARL / OCLC Strategic Issues Forum for Academic Library Directors in Keystone, Colorado, 24-25 September 2000. In December 2000, Information Technology and Libraries published a special issue on user customizable library portals, and it stated clearly that user customization was the key for library portals. Library portals have been available only since 2001; in fact, many of these portal functions have roots in services provided by libraries. However, unlike commercial portals, library portals did not proliferate after the pioneering stage and there were only a dozen library portals at the end of 2002. Only a few dozen universities had implemented web portals according to Eislers report in syllabus (www.syllabus.com). Many universities, government, education agencies and commercial web technology providers published numerous white papers or guidelines on higher education portal development. Some of the pioneer academic library portals are discussed in the following section:

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