


## Chapter 9

# Beyond Library Beginnings: Understanding Digital Libraries

**Iguehi Joy Ikenwe**

*Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria*

**Obiora Kingsley Udem**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0597-6435>

*Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter x-rayed digital libraries as a tool beyond a library's beginning for information service delivery and function. It discussed the conceptual nature of digital libraries, benefits of digital libraries, digital library resources, components of digital libraries, digital literacy skill, digital library: the university focus, hardware and software for building a digital library, and challenges facing digital libraries. It recommended among others that for the effective implementation of digital library programmes to satisfy users' needs, government and library's parent bodies must endeavour to allocate a huge amount of finance for digital library infrastructural development in libraries of all types, which should be judiciously used by library management for the intended purposes.*

### INTRODUCTION

Libraries are fundamental to educational development in any society that offers a potential means by which humans can access a vast amount of knowledge. From indication, knowledge is an important asset and human resource, recognized as a powerful force for human survival and overall growth in the present day. In collaboration, Ikenwe and Ose-Abame (2021) stated that humans need knowledge for competitive advantage and survival in the knowledge economy, identified by more intensive knowledge activities and reliance on intellectual assets. However, this has given more increase in knowledge pursuit. Consequently, libraries are the storehouse of this human knowledge from which information users turn for information for societal survival. In time past, libraries have relied so much on the traditional means of disseminating information and service delivery to users where the focus was majorly on printed resources, traditional

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functions, services, and routines. The users' encountered the challenge of accessing these services and tasks in due time, resulting in less satisfaction with libraries. This led to a change in users' perception of the library as just a mere collection and keeper of old books on the shelf. However, Libraries in this 21<sup>st</sup> century have broadened and gone beyond the origin of the provision of mere traditional services and resources to satisfy users' information needs because it became evident and of concern for libraries to bring back the users and change their perceptions.

One influential force that has assisted libraries in achieving this in the last decades is adopting evolving technologies to improve their information service delivery significantly to users due to the numerous benefits derived from the use of these technologies, resulting in a tremendous change in traditional roles to digital. According to Ikenwe and Anaehobi (2021), today's world has experienced profound innovations, primarily in digital form. The world has become a global village due to the strong impact of technologies like Information Communication Technologies (ICT). These ICTs have opened the gateway for libraries to move beyond their origin by keying into the new opportunities of the global world. Thus, integrating them into their routines, services, and resources. Ikenwe, Adeton, and Ose-Abame (2021) asserted that ICTs had ushered radical change in developed and developing countries, changing libraries' productivity and services to more sophisticated ones. Choi and Rasmussen (2006) opined that global fashion has shown that information delivery has moved from traditional to web-based and electronic forms. Notably, this birthed digital libraries and has rebranded the services and resources of libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The value of digital libraries in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be overstated. It gives access to a vast amount of information as well as an almost infinite number of resources and possibilities. Organisciak and Schmidt (2021) concluded that the emergence of large multi-institutional digital libraries has opened the door to aggregate-level examinations of the published word. Thus, the fundamental reason for the development of digital libraries is to offer quick access to global information via rapid transformation because of the emergence of fast-growing digital technologies and artificial intelligent-based solutions. However, this chapter x-rays the following sub-topics: Conceptual nature of digital libraries, benefits of digital libraries, resources in a digital library, components of digital libraries, digital literacy skills, Digital Library: University Focus, hardware and software for building digital libraries, building digital library collections, and challenges of digitalization of library resources.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Conceptual Nature of Digital Libraries**

A handful of scholars have debated that the existence of digital libraries originated in the 1960s and 1980s. Notwithstanding, the concept of "digital libraries" can be argued to have emerged and kicked off in the late 1990s with the proliferation and advancement of ICTs. The emergence of the digital library is traced to scholars like Vanennar Bush and Licklider, J.C.R to identify a possible means for easy access to global information and knowledge, running with a long-term vision for the bright future of libraries in a digital age. It is nexus to note that the critical development in ICTs (such as computer appreciation, internet, and web) and globalization, to mention a few, prepared the way for the digital library agenda. Notably, the vision and benefits of digital libraries have attracted information professionals, librarians, computer scientists, researchers, and other noble professions worldwide. In this light, Sarafi (2019) pointed

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