

Chapter 7

Information Preservation and Information Services in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

In the digital world, library services need to be transformed utilizing the advancements possible due to that automation and machine-to-machine communication of information. In this chapter prime focus is laid upon the need of digitization and how to achieve it effectively and appropriately. The strategies for digitization have also been discussed at reasonable length. The issues debated are digital decay as against paper decay, accessibility interpretation in digital world, utility of e-journals, gray content boom, problems of access to excess, human dependence of information sharing and collaboration, dis-intermediation. In this chapter adequate care has been taken to visualize the importance of traditional conservation as well. The main emphasis is on the spirit of collaboration and skill to take initiative for digitization project. It has been repeatedly mentioned that institutional collaborations at national and international level have given more fruitful results in the area of digitization. This chapter shows the changed picture of librarianship in digital environment along with the change in user perspectives and service perspective.

INTRODUCTION

As developed for more than 200 years, academic libraries have generally been designed first and foremost as a place to collect, access and preserve print collections. To enter and use them was considered privilege. Despite their handsome exteriors

the interior spaces were often dim and confining. The buildings were difficult to navigate and specialized services and collections were inaccessible to all but the serious scholar. Building planning and design of these libraries were primarily devoted to the preservation and security of materials and to the efficiency of the library collection services. Prime space was routinely reserved for processing materials.

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Information today is being produced in greater quantities and with great frequency than at any time in history. The ease with which electronic information can be created and published makes much of what is available today. Digital is now often the first choice for creating, distributing and storing contents from text to motion pictures to sound. As a result digital content embodies more and more of the world's intellectual, social and cultural history. And the preservation of such content has become a major challenge for society. (Glister, 1997)

Libraries collect and preserve books and other materials for future generations to ensure that every citizen has equal access to information. With the advent of the internet and World Wide Web libraries can extend their reach unbound by time and space. The internet had made shared knowledge and technical collaborations across national boundaries a viable endeavor. This is a defining moment for libraries.

Technological innovation and the ubiquity of communication tools, economic uncertainty, changes in workplace and educational structures, the globalised economy, generational differences, the blurred distinction between the production and consumption of information and heightened national security are just some of the factors affecting the creation of digital library programs. In addition, there is an almost insatiable demand for content to meet the needs of the more than six billion internet users worldwide. And libraries no longer have market concerned on information services. Studies have shown that today's students first turn to internet and that many library patrons are willing to settle for less, convenience over comprehensiveness.

Academicians, students or researchers, all have a craving for information. Digital library is being renamed to library itself because everything in this library is stored electronically and digitally. Digital libraries are sets of electronic resources and associated technical capabilities for creating, searching and using information. In

a sense they are an extension and enhancement of information storage and retrieval systems that manipulate digital data in any medium [text, images, sounds, static or dynamic images] and exist in distributed networks. The content of digital libraries includes data, metadata, that describes various aspects of the data and metadata that consists of links or relationship to other metadata, whether internal or external to the digital library (Caplan, 2008).

DIGITAL LIBRARIES

Digital libraries are constructed- collected and organized by a community of users and their functional capabilities support the information needs and the uses of that community. They are a component of communities in which individuals and groups interact with each other using data, information and knowledge resources and systems. In this sense they are the extension, enhancement and integration of variety of information institution as a physical place where resources are selected and collected and organized, preserved and accessed in support of user community. Implicit in its definition digital library is a broad conceptualization of library collection.

The meaning of digital library is less transparent than one might expect. The words conjure up images of cutting edge computer and information science research. They are invoked to describe what some assert to be radically new kinds of practices for the management and use of information.

According to Digital Library Federation, "Digital libraries are organizations that provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities."

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