E-Resources: A Windfall to Academic Libraries

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Abstract:

Today's organisation needs to know their knowledge assets and how to manage their e-resources and make use of these assets to get maximum returns. At the same time this new and young generation is more technosvy and can manage the information available in electronic form more easily and accurately. Thus they expect value added services from their library. This paper explainswhy to adopt e-resources, the concept and types of e-resources,the advantages and disadvantages of e-resources, briefly discusses the purpose of e-resources in academic libraries. Finally it gives suggestions to improve the facilities and services for effective use of E-resources.

Key Words: Academic Libraries,E-resources, E-journals, E-Database, E-prints, Digital collection

Introduction:

The information sector around the world is changing every minute and growing at a tremendous speed due to the emergence of the web based Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), globalization of networks and Internet. Hence ensuring and organizing access to educational materials in the electronic environment is an important factor in determining realistic request for development and advancement of education. Education aims to impart knowledge and make good citizens. Libraries are the repositories of knowledge and form an integral part of education. Present-day libraries use the latest technology for provision of information through various services. Advances in computer and communication technologies have brought about radical changes in the way information is gathered, stored, organized, accessed, retrieved and consumed. The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) revolution is considered to be one of the marvels of the twentieth century, and has played a pivotal role in transforming the conventional library into a digital library. Availability and access to information in general and E- Resources in particular are playing a major role in the present knowledge society.

Objectives of the Study:

➢ Know the Definitions and types of e-resources
➢ Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of e-resources in academic libraries
➢ Study the purpose of e-resources in academic libraries.
➢ To give suggestions to improve the facilities and services for effective use of E-resources.

Why to adopt E-resources:

Electronic resources had led to new era of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and information sharing. It creates opportunities for users as well as authors and publisher. Many of electronic form publishers' website freely permit and encourage reader to provide feedback on works, often directly to the author rather than to the publishers. Today libraries of all kinds have been spending larger and larger sharesof their budgets to adopt or gain access to electronic resources from publishers and vendors. This is due to the fact that e-resources have enabled libraries to improve services in a variety of ways. Generally e-resources come equipped with powerful search and retrieval tools that allow user to perform literature

searches more effectively and efficiently. Nevertheless, the emergence of e-books and e-journals followed the widespread adoption and use of e-mail, list servers and discussion groups to disseminate information quickly to large audiences.
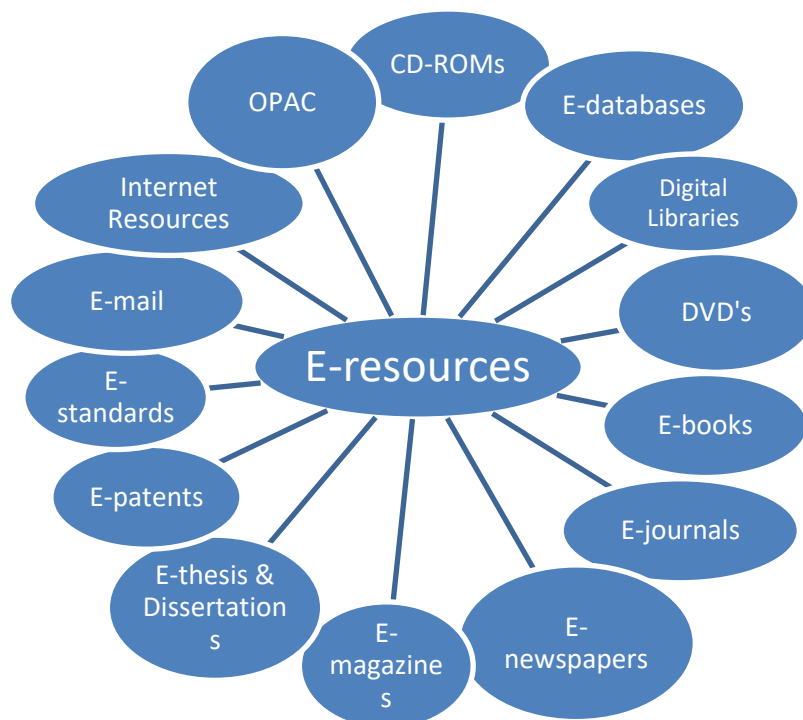
Definitions of E-resources:

According to AACR2, 2005 Update, an electronic resource is a "material encoded for manipulation by a computerized device (e.g., CD-ROM drive) or a connection to a computer network (e.g., the internet)"[i]

Material consisting of data and computer programs encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer or by the use of peripheral devices directly connected to the computer remotely via a network such as the internet includes software applications, electronic texts, bibliographic databases, etc. An e-resource is collection of digital content delivered to the user via internet.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, "Electronic Resources means: signals usually, but not necessarily, on a computer".

Types of E-resources:

The following chart is the sources of Electronic Information:

Types of E-resources

The Web Resources may be grouped in different ways.

The following is one way:

1. Open Web: Anything online for public, cooperative and standards World Wide Web communications (HTTP, HTML, and JavaScript etc.)[ii]
2. Gated Web : Online Resources accessible by subscription e.g. OED[iii]
3. Deep or Invisible We : Databases that are not found by search engines and can only be accessible through a particular page or front end e.g. American Web site http://memory.loc.org[iv]

Web Resources may be accessed by the following means:

A) Through Search Engines

○ Yahoo http://www.yahoo.com
○ AltaVista http://www.altavista.com
○ Lycos http://www.lycos.com
○ Google http://www.google.com
○ Hotbot http://www.hotbot.com,

B) Through web OPAC

C) Through specified URLs/Websites/hyperlinks, e.g.:

o J-Gate (http://www.informindia.co.in):India'sfirst global e-journal portal. J-gateoffers around 3 million articles since 2001, it covers10, 000 journals and 28 lakhs of articles in the database.

o IEEE Online (Ieeexplore.ieee.org): IEEE/IEE Electronic library (IEL) provides asingle source to almost of the world's current electronic, electrical and computer science literature.

o Elsevier's Science Direct (http://www.science_direct.com):Science Direct is theweb-based interface to the full text database of Elsevier science journals. It is one of the world's largest providers of scientific, technical and medical literature.

o ACM Digital Library (http://portal.acm.org/portal.cfm): ACMdigital libraryincorporates digital versions of works published by ACM since its inception.

Need for E-resources in Academic Libraries:

Academic libraries are faced with the challenges of providing better services with declined budgets. E-resources can become an admirable system for the process of collection building, digitizing and providing information to the user in an easy way. E-resource technology creates unprecedented opportunities for the library in the way they organize resources and make it easy to carry out the library development activities. The inter library loan facilities via internet; make for speedy availability of knowledge resources.

In academic libraries, where the parent institution has PG and doctoral courses, e-resources are optimally used by the readers. Undergraduate students also use information available on the internet for their assignments and project work. They can manage the information available in electronic form more easily and accurately due to technology user friendly. Almost all the academic libraries are providing internet access to their readers.

The E-resources are needed for libraries because of:

➢ Eternallygrowing cost of the print journals
➢ To get access to an information source by the more than one users.
➢ Technological development
➢ E-resources can be searched quickly and easy to access.
➢ Minimal searching time
➢ Availability of e-resources in every field of knowledge
➢ Information Explosion
➢ Diversity of users' needs
➢ Impossibility of self sufficiency
➢ E-journal facilities to build up digital libraries
➢ To promote efficient delivery of information economically to all the users.
➢ Security

➢ Time saving, more informative, less expensive and more useful.

Advantages of E-resources:
➢ The e-resources are published electronically rather than in paper form and no new costs are introduced.
➢ Innovative ways of presenting research results can be supported by electronic page layout.
➢ Low cost of production compared to printed documents
➢ Can be used by many users simultaneously
➢ Allow remote access from anywhere at any time
➢ Provide hyperlinks to related additional resources
➢ Do not require physical processing
➢ Provide improved access through full text searching
➢ Can be updated more easily and reduce storage space
➢ Support searching capabilities
➢ High speed and efficiency benefits the publishing and distributing electronically
➢ Linkage can be enabled by hypertext and hypermedia formats among sections within an electronic resource.

Disadvantage of E-resources:following drawback of e-resourcesin academic libraries
➢ Lack of awareness on IT skills for use of e-resources
➢ Initial high infrastructure and installation cost
➢ Excessive printing of documents
➢ Causes more concern about copyright
➢ Efficient manpower is required

Access to E-resources:

The access to current e-resources may help the faculty and research scholars to become aware of latest developments in Science & Technology and thus improve the research atmosphere of the institutions. The cost of subscription of foreign journals and access charges to foreign e-resources is escalating at a very high rate and even the most prestigious and well funded libraries can hardly afford them. A number of national consortia constitute the most prominent development in promoting better, faster and more cost effective ways of providing broad access of scholarly e-resources.

The current web trends connected everything to the internet comprising telephone to Smartphone's, power supply, education, commerce, entertainment etc. The college teaching and learning, academic libraries and research have been immeasurable affected by this development. The librarian in the digital world now acts as a guardian of information, as a consultant to the users, an information broker and also a continuous learner (Balakrishnan, 1996)[v]. The platform of Internet and WWW has helped to change the ways of accessing and locating information and thereby change the functions of an academic librarian and academic library in the modern information society. The technological advancement in storage and silicon revolution has radically decreased the space required to store data, information and the traditional books have been replaced by the digital books, more colloquially called as the eBooks.

Suggestions:
➢ The library management therefore needs to conduct user study programs to know about electronic resources needs of users
➢ E-resource users should be taught about advanced search strategies and the use of controlled vocabulary to make electronic search process much easier.

- The policy makers should allocate a separate budget for the Development of Academic Libraries with full of E-Resources to provide E-Library Services on 24*7 basis.
- The LIS professionals should be given training for updating their skills.
- User Orientation programmes should be arranged for the student community to inform them about the e-resources which are available in the library.
- Academic libraries should collaborate through Library Consortia, which is an unavoidable situation in this ICT Era.
- Every academic library should and must start digitisation of print material into digital formats and also have membership in other organisations such as INFLIBNET, UGC-Infonet E-Journals Digital Library Consortia including INDEST and New Inflibnet N-List Programme which is very useful to all types of user communities in India.
- User training is essential for the better use of electronic resources in the library
- An electronic document delivery system should also be introduced in to the library at the earliest opportunity.
- The library should also identify the non-users of electronic resources and proper steps should be taken to convert them into potential users of the resources.

Conclusion:

At present electronic resources have become the most popular tools for exploring the academic libraries and research. It is because e-resources are up-to-date sources of information and they can be accessed from anywhere through internet, at any part of the world.They find it more convenient to use the digital library as it reduces the physical strain, saves the time, and enables them to complete the work within the given time. It minimizes expenses, retains accuracy and requires minimum storage capacity etc. The libraries are recognized as repositories of information. E-resources are useful for libraries as well as each and every users of the society who are starving to get a variety of information throughout the globe.Sowe can conclude by saying that E-Resources are a windfall to academic libraries.

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