

# EVOLVING ROLES OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SERVICES IN WEB ENVIRONMENT

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**ABSTRACT** - *Web Environment has become reality with the advancement in information and communication technologies, where e-learning and online learning are evolving as a new method for teaching and acquiring knowledge. Likewise, the libraries' role is also changing; they are expected to serve as information literacy trainers, experts in organizing and providing access to online resources, content providers through digitization projects and providers of print resources for learners. This paper aims to discuss evolving roles of library and information centres in Web environment.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

LIS in Web environment includes all forms of electronic supported learning and teaching, which are procedural in character and aim to effect the construction of knowledge with reference to Individual experience, practice and knowledge of the learner. Information and communication systems, whether networked or not, serve as specific media to implement the learning process. Web-based training, computer-based training or web-based learning, and online learning are a few synonymous terms that have over the last few years been labeled as e-learning. Each of this implies a "just-in-time" instructional and learning approach and there is a slight difference in between them.

LIS in Web environment can be defined as the delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means. It involves the use of a computer or electronic device in some way to provide training, educational or learning material. Wang and Hwang (2004) say, e-learning "denotes information and communications technology enhanced learning by delivering learning contents and activities via internet, intranet/extranet, audio/video, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, and CD-ROM." Many authors agree with this definition and the fact that e-learning is blended traditional face-to-face teaching and learning that is combined with using communication technologies to enhance student focused and directed learning and teaching processes (Ojedokun, 2003; Akeroyd, 2005) that support both life-long and distance learning. Australian National Training Authority (2003) proposes that "

LIS in Web environment is a broader concept, encompassing a wide set of applications and processes which use all available electronic media to deliver vocational education and training more flexibly the general intent to

support a broad range of electronic media to make vocational learning more flexible for clients". Brunel University (2004) equates an LIS in Web environment strategy with web-enhanced learning.

## 2. NEED FOR WEB ENVIRONMENT

Web environment is self-paced and gives students a chance to speed up to slow down necessary

Web environment is self-directed, allowing students to choose content and appropriate to their differing interests, need and skills levels

It accommodates multiple learning styles using as variety of delivery methods geared to different learners, more effective for entrain learners

It is designed around the learner, and eliminates geographical barriers and opens up broader education options

Its accessibility makes scheduling easy and allows a greater number of people to attend classes on demand access means learning can happen precisely when needed travel-time is reduced or eliminated, Overall students' costs are frequently less in Web environment her than tuition ,residence, food etc.,

## 3. LIBRARY BLOGS

Blogs are the extension of what we already do identify, organize, and make information accessible in libraries. They give us an opportunity to be more responsive, to reach out to the faculty and students via our library blogs to highlight news, post student/faculty book reviews and invite comments, announce events, list new acquisitions, etc. Blogs are a simple and efficient way for librarians to stay informed and for libraries to disseminate information in a timely manner (Dhiman and Sharma, 2008a). Library blogs can be used in current awareness service to highlight news or resources of interest; and to post book reviews from students, faculty and the staff members; and to list new acquisitions and to announce library news and events. Using of systems such as RSS technology is another blog application in libraries for selective dissemination of information. But it is amazing that despite the increasing

popularity of blogs, few libraries have taken advantage of what they offer.

#### 4. DIGITAL REPOSITORIES OR INSTITUTIONAL REPOSITORIES

Institutional repositories have been posited as a requirement for universities in order to preserve the intellectual record of the institution (Akeroyd, 2005). Institutional repositories bear many characteristics of a traditional institutional archive, except that the content is always digital and is usually aimed exclusively at research and teaching material rather than institutional records or special collections (Dhiman and Sharma, 2008b; Dhiman, 2010). Their role is to deposit publications or research output for ease of accessibility to researchers and they serve a multiple purpose of preservation, archiving, and dissemination of information for knowledge sharing amongst learners. Many academic institutions nowadays use D-Space open source platform for accessing, managing, and preserving scholarly works. Institutions can customize the D-space system for management of their digital materials. IISc; IITs (Delhi & Kharagpur); National Institute of Technology (NIT), Rourkela; National Aerospace Laboratories, Bangalore; National Chemical Laboratory, Pune; INFLIBNET, Ahmedabad; National Institute of Oceanography, Goa; Raman Research Institute, Bangalore etc. have established *OpenAccess Institutional Repositories* (Singh et al., 2006) in India. *Vidyanidhi* of University of Mysore is the example of document type specific collection repository, which store and provide access to theses and dissertation collection. It accepts any thesis or dissertation from any researcher or the student, accepted by Indian Universities or the institutions.

#### 5. ELECTRONIC REFERENCE SERVICE

Information & Communication technologies have also transformed the way academic libraries provide reference services to the students and faculties. The expectation and demand of users is for academic libraries to provide personalized assistance irrespective of location and time (Dollah and Singh, n.d.; Mardikian, 2007), because such assistance can be provided electronically without users being physically available in the library.

The provision of electronic or digital reference services involves the use of networked technologies through which users can ask questions and receive answers online. The services generally include, among others, face-to-face reference service, e-mail reference service, interactive reference service using chat technology, links to e-resources including free resources, frequently asked questions, feedback form service, web form or query form service, question point service, video-conferencing, and collaborative reference service through library consortia. The ready reference services in the form Frequently Asked Questions is

most convenient for the learners. Collaboration in providing electronic reserve services can also be done at institutional level, where institutions within the same consortia work together to provide access to relevant resources and services in support of learning, teaching, and research. Such collaboration eliminates duplication of effort where resources are already available.

Students and lecturers can request for materials online through OPAC and receive email response when request material is available. Customers also receive e-mail communication regarding overdue materials. Mardikian and Kesselman (2007) has identified following opportunities of providing electronic reference service in an academic library:

1. Providing proactive service at point of need by being a roving reference librarian on the floor.
2. Network users with specialists in other institutions for them to get relevant information including full text and multimedia.
3. Providing information literacy over the networked environment using interactive tutorials.
4. Developing interface to link users to access appropriate information resources on specific subjects.
5. Develop expert systems to assist users with information retrieval and filtering based on need
6. Partnership with teaching and research whereby a librarian works within the faculty and together with individual lecturers consult with students on progress with assignments and research projects and provides relevant assistance.

Web-based reference service is an emerging field in reference services, which enables students and faculty to get seamless access to relevant resources on a 24/7 service. Moyo (2004) point out that the "24/7 availability of the web has resulted in users expecting 24/7 online help" at the time of need. Virtual learning environment is also an upcoming area which according to Hall (2001) is a *Learning Environment* based on software and designed as an all-in-one solution that can facilitate online learning for an organization. It includes the functions of a learning management system for all courses within the learning environment, however, it may not be able to track online courses that were not created within this particular learning environment. A learning environment is characterized by an interface that allows students to register and take courses, staying within that environment for the duration of the course. The programme usually includes some self-instructional portions, along with an academic model of a multi-week course. This model is often facilitated by an

instructor, where a group can proceed on a week-to-week basis with seminar assignments. Most learning environments also include an authoring capability for creation of additional courses for the instructor.

## 6. CHALLENGES AND ISSUES FOR LIBRARIES IN WEB ENVIRONMENT

The library authorities have to discuss seriously with publishers on this aspect in order to evolve some mechanism profitable to users, publishers as well as to the authors. Users may be charged for each access, downloading from servers and/or each kind of digital library collection. This could provide a reverse for publishers, authors and libraries. Security aspect is another most pressing challenge of digital affairs. Piracies of database, viral invasions, and parallel satellite networking stress are some other issues for digital libraries, which are confronted as a way of routine. According to Jayaprakash and Venkatramana (2006), major challenges can be enumerated as under:

1. There is no mechanism available to establish standards for internet materials, instruction, design and quality of interaction.
2. Information providers are more interested in profit than quality services.
3. Lack of organization of information on Internet, as not all sites are updated regularly.
4. Lack of expertise as not many vendors/experts are available in the country and abroad as well. Overseas vendors charge too much and also reluctant to import techniques/technology
5. Lack of motivation, because in a classroom instruction the teacher and students interact in discussing and understanding the subject spontaneously, which creates motivation among the students towards learning. Whereas, in e-learning, due to lack of motivation sometimes it may appear dull.

## 7. CONCLUSION

A recent study by Pandey (n.d.) shows that only 12 percent of the school children continue their study till 10th standard and about only 10 percent of the people eligible to take admission in universities get themselves enrolled in one of those 18600 colleges and 360 universities. This needs alternative means for education and several distance learning programmes have already been started in India for such people who can not take admission into regular courses due to several reasons. Surprisingly ever since faculty and instructors have also begun to adapt e-learning strategies as a part of their teaching repertoire and libraries are playing a key role by way of helping to find and organize resources to

complement programmes and courses making use of e-learning and to provide support as students work their way through their assignments. In e-learning process the future libraries will emerge as active bridge between the learners and information (Dhiman, 2008). Web Environment supported by digital library is very much significant and critical in higher education and research. The librarian can help in creating and developing repositories and content management. Web environment helps the learner to acquire education quickly and economically. The importance of libraries is very crucial in online environment, and this is narrated by CARL (2005) in following words

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