Evaluation of Electronic Resources and Electronic Services in Academic Libraries: Some Observations and Suggestions

S. Rosy Malarvizhi
Research Scholar
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore – 641 046
rosymalarvizhi@karunya.edu

R. Sarangapani
Professor and Head/Librarian,
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore -641046
rspani1967@gmail.com

Abstract

An electronic resource is a type of resource which needs computer access that gives an information about collection of data, e-journals and other multimedia products. Most of them have been published with a prime interest of marketing it and available in the form of tape, CD ROM, internet and other electronic formats. Now a days academic libraries are collecting data through optical and magnetic media. One of the very important types of electronic resources is E-Journals. UGC-INFONET and INDEST consortium are two major initiatives stretching out their helping hands to cater the needs of library users to subscribe a reasonable fee to use these libraries and suggest some measures for the evaluation of electronic resources as well as the electronic services. This paper gives a broad view of the changing trend of Libraries with emphasis on the skills necessary for the Academic Librarians to keep in pace with the new digital environment.

Keywords

E-resources; E-services; Service Quality; UGC-Infonet; INDEST consortium; Content Evaluation

Electronic access

The journal is available at www.jalis.in

Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 4. No.4. 2015. pp.304-306

INTRODUCTION

The dawn of the new millennium have witnessed an increasing percentage of library budgets directed to the purchase of electronic resources. Nowadays libraries have the responsibility to demonstrate their importance to their parent organization by reciting statistics focused on inputs (resource investments) and outputs (services produced). The ratio of the input and output could provide a better picture of how well libraries are functioning and enable them to prepare for institutional accreditation (certification). In recent years, libraries have the responsibility to respond to two specific needs:

- Increasing demand for libraries to demonstrate outcomes/impacts in areas important to the institution.
- Increasing pressure to maximize use of resources – benchmark best practices to save or reallocate resources

ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN THE NEW ICT ERA

The World Wide Web/Internet was originally created to speed up or enhance scientists' research activities individually and collaboratively. The most interesting technology relationships on an academic campus is the one between the library holdings and library services. As regards to the library holdings, majority of the libraries are turned towards building digital collections rather than hard copies of books. These digital collections are made available any time and from anywhere. Hence it has become an acceptable fact that the clientele visiting the library is gradually diminishing. Hence, the librarians of academic libraries are trying their best to find out ways and means to enhance the traditional reference service to electronic services. Thus the activities of the Libraries from frontline staff to the most senior Librarian revolve around the use of technology. Due to Information Technology based sources and services, more services needed from product vendors. Having access to and using technology effectively and efficiently allows libraries to anticipate and quickly adjust to changing circumstances to meet the emerging needs of its readers.

SKILLS NECESSARY FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS TO SURVIVE IN THE ELECTRONIC/DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Ranganathan has pointed out that the main aim of a Librarian is to establish a contact between the right reader and right document in the right time. In this changing environment, the duty of the present librarian is to find out the right information to the right reader at 24x7 time. In order to achieve this, the library professional need to have the following qualities

- Communicate and connect – Use Social media
- Build your professional skills – participate in professional development opportunities
- Volunteer and get involved – Avail the professional activities that help to develop the skills that make indispensable to the library and instrumental in creating the future.
- Stay informed - Keep up with breaking news and relevant information affecting every type of library.
- Put your skills to work and advocate for Library support- Learn to advocate effectively for your library, its future, and the profession.
- Be heard – be aware of the issues affecting the libraries
- Share your ideas and experience and expertise - Share through social media and by submitting proposals for programs, papers, poster sessions, table talks, and panels national and international conferences / symposia,

LITERATURE REVIEW

Kiran and Diljit (2012)[1] discussed that service quality has been explored widely and defined differently in many research studies. Parasuraman et. al (1988)[2] defined service quality as a perceived quality, which it is related with the consumer judgment of the product. Even though the service quality concept is drawn from the marketing literature, the indicators for quality of library services are still not well defined (Kiran and Diljit 2011)[3]. Service quality also has received a lot attention in information system literature (Nicholson, 2005)[4].

Parameters for evaluating the Electronic Resources and Electronic Services

In the conventional library setup, the library users must be physically present in the libraries if they need to make use of the library services such as reference services, interlibrary loan and bibliographic search services. Advances in information and communication technologies have led to changes in the way libraries provide and manage (e.g., gathering, organizing, storing, retrieving and disseminating) activities into digital format and the information behavior of the users. The evaluation of electronic resources and Electronic Services can be thought of in two angles namely

- Performance and evaluation of Electronic Resources
- Performance and Evaluation of electronic Services

Parameters for measuring the Performance of Electronic Resources

Electronic resources contain lots of information for research. The quality of this information will vary considerably. One can find very high-quality resources like many articles in scholarly journals. At the same time there are also very poor resources, like some personal and commercial websites. Because of this, evaluation is essential. The most important parameters for evaluating the Electronic Resources are

- Content evaluation - Whether the authors are qualified and reputed? What is the affiliation of the authors and who is the publisher
- Accuracy of information - Is the information accurate and error-free? Whether necessary supporting evidences are provided in the text
- Currency of information – Whether the information contained in the electronic resource is of nascent type without any plagiarism
- Structured - Whether necessary indices are provided in the text along with hyper text and tool tips to enable the user to read and understand quickly

Parameters for measuring the value of Electronic Services

Deming (1986),[5] the father of Total Quality Management, considered service quality to be the reduction of errors, defects, and mistakes in the product or service provided to the customer. Libraries and information centres are service oriented and hence the dimensions of the evaluation of service quality are

- Tangibles - Physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of personnel – Whether necessary gadgets are available for rendering electronic services and whether the library personnel are available for providing such services
- Reliability - Ability to perform the promised service dependably and accurately – whether the electronic resources are reliable and the library

- personnel are confident of the electronic services provided by them
- Responsiveness – Whether the library personnel are willing to help their clientele and provide prompt service.
- Assurance - Knowledge and courtesy of library professionals and their ability to inspire trust and confidence in the clientele.
- Empathy - Caring, individualised attention the library personnel provide to the clientele.

CONCLUSION

Academic libraries are in a state of transition from traditional to digital which is more or less a hybrid library containing both traditional documents and digital/electronic documents now a days. There are many variations of library evaluation methods and hence it is the right time for the Academic Librarians to analyse the environment and the user community to order to maintain good status for the Librarians

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