IMPACT OF DIGITAL SOURCES ON REFERENCE SERVICE

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ABSTRACT

The progress in the modern age of information technology has touched the height and still is in progress and its impact has influenced the every aspect of life. The researcher community do reaping the benefits but most of the scholars are stall unaware of the recent developments in respect of the resources available globally through web based services. The digitization has brought revolutionary changes in the academia. This paper aims to enhance the knowledge of the users who are not technology savy.

Keywords: Digital resources, impact of digitization, use of web sources, e resources, reference service.

I. INTRODUCTION

Before the advent of internet, the librarians in universities, colleges or other higher educational institutions of technology and management, had to guide the students about encyclopedias, journals, different types of abstracts, indexes, maps, atlases, subject dictionaries and biographies.[1] Reference librarian had to be practically familiar with reference tools. Because of online sources, a lot of information is available on net. However, e-content management is very essential for the librarian only then he can guide the users.

Internet: Initial Response

Within two decades the scenario has changed to such an extent that printed reference sources like encyclopedias, dictionaries, journals, biographical dictionaries stopped their publications. For few years the library professionals were absolutely confused what to do and how to run the libraries.

The first step was to computerise the library and its services. Library professionals had to learn how to use computer and internet. In spite of the fact that to use computer and internet is very easy but the traditional type of staff who was to retire within few years did not try to learn anything. The fault lies with the library teaching schools also as they are not properly providing training of library management softwares, e-resources and e-content management.

Within two decades the concept of reference service has absolutely changed. Now these online e-encyclopedias unlike the printed ones which used to have multi-volumes and occupied sufficient space are only on the net. After some years new printed edition was to be purchased for latest information which used to prove very costly.

An encyclopedia is a type of reference work or compendium holding a comprehensive summary of information from either all branches of knowledge or a particular branch of knowledge. Encyclopedias have existed for around 2000 years; the oldest one 'Naturals Historia' was written starting in CA AD 77 by Pliny the Elder and was not fully revised at the time of his death in AD 79. Encyclopedia Britannica was started during 1768-71 in three volumes. The last edition was 15th in 32 volumes. Because of internet Encyclopedia Britannica stopped its publication in 2012 AD but its online edition is available. Articles on Google and Wikipedia have drastically decreased the use of Encyclopedia Americana which is now an integral database with the Grolier online product.[2]

In 2001 Jimmy Wales and Larry Sanger launched Wikipedia, a collaboratively edited, multilingual, open-source, free internet encyclopedia supported by the non-profit Wikipedia foundation. As on 30 January 2016 there are 5,068,588 articles in the English Wikipedia. There are 287 different editions of Wikipedia. In February 2014, it had 18 billion page views and nearly 500 million unique visitors each month.[3]

Online Encyclopedias

For lack of sale and limited articles in comparison to Wikipedia and Google, Encyclopedia Britannica is available on annual subscription. However, limited access is free of cost. According to Wikipedia there are eighteen encyclopedias in English about general nature, thirty four encyclopedias in English are not freely accessible.[4]

Online Encyclopedias of Art and Culture

There are eight online encyclopedias of antiquities, art and literature out of which six are freely accessible. Culture, country or state pacific, has 21 encyclopedias out of which nineteen are open accessible whereas two are available on subscription.

Online Biographies

There are seven dictionaries of biographies which belong to different countries and give comprehensive coverage to the dead or living personalities, authors, politicians, masters of other fields. Photographs are an additional information to the users.

Online Encyclopedias Mathematics

We have six encyclopedias which the scholars can access without any cost. Almost all these encyclopedias are in English. It covers different aspects of Mathematics.

Music and Philosophy (Online Encyclopedias)

So far as encyclopedias in music are concerned we have four but three are open one is available on subscription. In philosophy there are three open-access and one on subscription available encyclopedia.

Politics and History (Online Encyclopedias)

Wikipedia site shows seven encyclopedias all are free and in English language. Detailed information on any aspect is available

Religion and Theology (Online Encyclopedias)

There are ten open access encyclopedias all are free of cost and in English except one.

Science and Life Sciences (Online Encyclopedias)

There are eight encyclopedias in science which have free access. So far as life sciences are concerned there are fifteen encyclopedias two are available on subscription. Different fields of Life Sciences have been covered in these encyclopedias.

World Bank e-Library

It provides books, journals, articles, e-resources, projects and operations, publications, research reports etc. One can browse open knowledge repository, documents and reports, archive, libraries and International Debt Statistics.[5]

Some latest books are available for consultation. There used to be printed version of World Development Indicators, which was in great demand especially by the researchers, teachers and scholars of economics, commerce, sociology etc. Now its online version is available which can be freely used by millions of scholars at one time in any country.

E-Journals

The greatest wonder of internet is online journals their archives and databases. In the initial stage the publishers were feeling hesitant to upload all the backsets and current issues. However, it proved a great success. Within seconds the readers can see the relevant article. Unlike the traditional libraries where it was very cumbersome to find the printed article now the readers are able to access at any time and at any place.

(1) Most of the e-journals are not free. The publishers are earning a lot in case someone needs any article the reader will have to pay the charges. Subscription to e-journals is only for one year.

(2) About 200+ Indian universities are getting 7500+ e-journals and eleven databases from Inflibnet. N-LIST is also giving access to 6000+ e-journals and 97,000 e-books on a nominal payment of Rs. 5000/-.[6]

(3) There are a number of open access journals which can be accessed by any reader. However, we will have to be very careful is using these as most of the journals are fake-ones. Almost all the prominent publishers are offering some open access journals.

(4) According to Ulrich's Periodical Directory there are about 3,80,000 journals in different languages all over the world.[7]

Earlier, it was very difficult for the researchers and students to find the article from the printed journals. It was more difficult to find any article from the back-sets of any journals. Printed back-sets used to cover a larger portion of space in the libraries.

In most of the cases the students and researchers now can access any article within seconds. Reference service has become very fast. Generally there is need of librarian if the students and researchers are to be given proper orientation regarding e-resources, consortia, databases etc. However, the new students need some guidance. Librarian should guide the students in the beginning of session.

E-databases

With the help of internet the major publishers have prepared databases which cover millions of articles, abstracts, fulltext with images, diagrams and photographs. Proquest, Thomson Reuters, Springer, Ebsco and some foreign Universities are playing a significant role. All of these are highly priced and only Academic

institutions can subscribe to those. There are about 128 databases belonging to Academic fields about 62 are free of cost. The number can be more high if medical etc. databases are considered.

Internet has proved very useful for the publishers, as the e-databases have millions of articles and e-books, proceedings and reports. These e-databases are in English and other major languages. However, these are not free. Only financially sound universities can subscribe to these. The prices of e-databases are increasing on yearly basis for the reason that these e-databases are regularly updated with latest information. As a huge amount is spent on e-databases therefore, charges for use are genuine.[8]

Online Dictionaries

Albeit we still have dictionaries in our houses and libraries yet the use of online dictionaries is very useful as most of the important publishers have uploaded some versions of their dictionaries on the internet. It does not provide only meaning of the word but also how to spell, syllbles, origin, noun, related terms, any example from the Bible, definition of the word, etc.

Some e-dictionaries have been mentioned as under:

(1) Dictionary.com, (2) Cambridge dictionary, (3) Collins dictionary, (4) Macmillan, (5) Oxford (6) Merriam Webster, (7) Cambridge multipurpose dictionaries etc. In addition to it there are e-dictionaries of various subjects such as law, mathematics, medical terms, marketing power dictionary, vocabularly.com, webopedia and wikitionary. Wikitionary is covering many languages as well as different aspects of a 'word'.[9]

On-line Biographical Dictionaries

Twenty years ago we used to make a number of efforts to get information about a particular personality. It used to be a very tedious exercise, sometimes the small libraries of colleges have to request the universities for brief bio-data of a personality. Now internet has solved this problem and the result is before you within a split of second if you write the correct name of spelling of a person you can access a lot of information. We have a very large number of online biographical dictionaries belonging to almost every country of the world.

Some countries have more than one biographical dictionary. A survey reveals that some dictionaries are not free whereas some are very useful. One can get very comprehensive biography of a person mostly with photographs. Now it is an instant reference service.[10]

e-Maps

Map preparing or cartography has been an integral part of the human history for a long time, possibly upto 8000 years. The earliest map was the creation of Babylonian scholar. Map shows a stream running down a valley to join another or running from that of divide into three, it shows river valley. This tablet also illustrates the sexagesimal system of mathematical cartography developed by the Babylonians and represents the earliest known example of topographic map.

In 1963 James Mellaart found a wall printing map in Ankara during an excavation of Catal Hyuk in Antolia. It is nine feet long, light colour painting depicts a town planning. More than 80 buildings and volcanoes have been shown in this painting.

Now we have instant online maps:

(i) e-maps Google maps

(ii) Google earth

(iii) Google earth directions

(iv) Google maps api; new google maps, google maps distances, google map live, google maps ph.etc.[11]

E-Geographical Sources

There are now free atlases on the Net which provide exhaustive information of various aspects of the universe e.g. hills, oceans, countries, population, flags, distance, longitude and latitude, time, equator, hemispheres etc. One can open site of any country and can see description, famous natives, flags, fast facts, links, maps, symbols, time geo-statistics, geography, latitudes and longitude, timeline, travel, information of weather etc. Some relevant articles are also there on the Net which are very exhaustive, coloured maps of the countries particularly of USA are available.[12]

E-books

Day by day e-books are becoming popular throughout the world. The younger generation is happy with the e-books which are on different forms like laptop, i-pad, kindle paper white, nook glow light etc. So far as the history of the e-books is concerned there is confusion about the first e-book. Publishers began distributing books that were in the public domain. Copyright free books can be accessed by any one in any country. Most of these books are in English.[13]

In 2010, 60% public libraries in U.S.A. were offering e-books. The internet archive and open library offers over 6 million books. According to the New York Times by 2018 about 50% books in USA and Great Britain will be online.

Publishers like Sage, Harper Collins, Wiley, Random House, Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Taylor and Francis, Ebsco etc. are producing e-books.[14]

A survey of some Indian Universities has been made regarding e-books. Most of the top universities in India subscribe to very few e-books. Some universities do not prefer for various reasons such as no continuous availability of electricity, faulty internet access, need of availability of large number of computers, subscription is generally given for one year with restrictions of users, regular increase of prices of various packages and financial constraints. E-books have not become popular especially in the developing countries. Everyone will need e-book reader and net connection at home also.

Inflibnet

UGC through Inflibnet centre is helping the universities and colleges through e-resources like e-books, e-journals, e-databases etc. 433 universities and other educational institutions are taking benefit from it. These e-journals are of 29 prominent publishers. The number of e-databases is eleven.

Under N-LIST programme 6000+ e-journals and 97,000 e-books are given for online access to colleges. The colleges can take maximum benefit from N-LIST because of multiple accesses and downloading facility.[15]

Shodh Ganga: Theses Site

A very significant step has been taken by the Inflibnet to provide online PhD theses. Now more than 80,000 theses on various subjects are available to the students and researchers. It is a free open access site. The number of theses is continuously increasing. However, the number of synopsis is very small.[16]

Shodhganga is regulating uploading the theses. It is a great help to the researchers, teachers update figure on 01.06-2016 is 86,220. Panjab University, Chandigarh has uploaded 4983 theses and comes on fifth place. AMU has uploaded 6058 theses.

Open Access Theses and Dissertations

OATD offers more than 1.5 million theses, dissertations, project reports etc. However most of the theses and dissertations belong to U.S.A., Europe etc. It is also an open site which the librarians must know.[17]

Open Access Theses and Dissertations

OATD aims to be the best possible resource for finding open access graduate theses and dissertations published around the world, Metadata (Information about the theses) comes from over 600 colleges, universities and research institutions. OATD currently indexes over 1.5 million theses and dissertations OATD currently indexes.[18] Search for theses can be from Google Scholar and NDLTD. (Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations 3,143,354 theses and Dissertations. Proquest Theses and dissertations database is a commercial one.[19]

e-Shodh Sindhu

Merging of UGC-Infonet DLC, INDEST-AICTE & NLIS programme will provide 15,000 core and peer-reviewed journals and number of bibliographic citations and factual databases.[20]

II. CONCLUSION

Internet has changed the format of e-reference service. The facilities which are being provided by internet for reference service are unthinkable. No one thought or dreamed that all the e-resources paid or unpaid will be available to the users. Digital sources have absolutely changed the reference service. Students and researchers try to find the open access sources at their own. The subscribed sources need proper password/IP address. Traditional reference service has been replaced by e-reference service.

End Note

[1] Before internet, very heavy abstracts, Backsets used to occupy the space.
[2] www.wikipedia.com accessed 28 May, 2016.
[3] Cohen, Noam (9 February 2014) wikipedia vs the small screen. New York Times accessed 28 May, 2016.
[4] www.listofonline academic encyclopedias accessed 28 May, 2016.
[5] http:en//wikipedia_world Development Indicators accessed 27 May, 2016.
[6] www.inflibnet.ac.in see also UGC Infonet consortia
[7] http://en.wikipedia.org.wiki/ulrichs'_periodical_directory accessed 28 May, 2016.
[8] 'List of academic databases and search engines'
ttp://en.wikipedia.org.wiki/List_of_academic_databases_and search.engines Accessed 26 May, 2016.
[9] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_online_dictionaries Accessed 1 June, 2016.
[10] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/online_Biographical_dictionaries Accessed 1 June, 2016.
[11] http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_cartography accessed 1 June, 2016.
[12] http:en.wikipedia.org/wiki/geographic_information_system accessed 1 June, 2016.
[13] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/E-book accessed 1 June, 2016 see also
Brown, Bob, The Readies, Google Books, retrieved 2013.08.28 accessed by the author 1 June, 2016.
[14] http://en.publishers of open access books.

[15] www.inflibnet.ac.in

[16] www.inflibnet.ac.in see also 'Shodh Sindhu'

[17] http://en.wikipedia_Directory of open access_theses accessed 1 June, 2016.

[18] http://oat.org/oatd/search.... Accessed 28 May, 2016.

[19] Ibid.

[20] www.inflibnet.ac.in/ess/about/php.