ISSUES AND INSIGHTS INTO LIBRARIES: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNET

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Abstract

The paper discusses the uses of the Internet to the libraries. The concept of the Internet was defined. A brief history of the Internet was also given, in addition the paper highlight how the Internet works and the need for . libraries to exploit the Internet facilities. Finally recommendations are made on how the Internet facilities could be utilized effectively.

Introduction

Libraries are established to provide information by selection, acquisition and proper organization, for easy retrieval by the information seekers.

To perform this function, processes like checking through publishers' catalogues, staff recommendations and union list of other libraries, as well as cataloguing, classification and filling of the entry cards were done manually. This has taken a lot of the librarian's time and energy, and frustration to the user. In addition, no single library can acquire the available information materials for its users with present technological development which brings about the information explosion.

However, with the advent of Information Technology (IT) and subsequent use of its facilities into library activities, processing and accessibility of information became a matter of a fraction of a second. This development also led to the emergence of libraries without walls where a user can access the needed information any where through the Internet. The Internet has revolutionalized libraries and library services by providing access to many facilities, such as the publishing (i.e Journals, the e. Books); easy communication (e-mails); research collaboration and a host of others. Libraries need to exploit these facilities to enrich their services.

The Internet

According to the world Book Encyclopedia (2004: Volume 10), Internet is a vast network of computers that connects many of the world's businesses, institution and individuals. The Internet which is short for interconnected network of networks, links lens of thousands of smaller computer networks. It enables users of computers and other network devices throughout the world to send and'-receive messages, share information, in a variety of forms and even play computer games with people thousands of miles or kilometers away. The Internet can also be defined as network of computers with -national and international connectivity and application.

Sylvester, Ugbe (2004), in Ogunieye (2001), stated that Internet can be described as an International network, comprising of computer network connected by communication packs all agreeing to use the same communicatin language which is known as Internet Protocol (IP). It is widely described as the information superright past way since it deals on sharing information at super fast way. The Internet can also be defined as an open worldwide communication network; linking countries and thousands of computers through telephone lines. Its components are individually run by government agencies, universities, polytechnics, commercial and voluntary organizations (Sylvester Ugbe, 2004 in Coroiine, 2000).

Sarah E. Hutchinson and Stacevy C. Sawyer (2000) defined Internet "as the mother of all networks'[1] connecting 400,000 smaller networks in more than 200 countries. These networks are formed by educational, commercial, 11011 profit, government and military entities. Each of these small autonomous networks on the Internet makes its own decision about what resources make available on the Internet,

Brief History of the Internet

Dannis (1998), traced the historical development of the Internet during 1960s, when computers began to play an important role at major universities and research firms in US defence department agency, the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) decided that everyone would benefit if computers could be linked together so that programmes and data could be easily shared among the different departments of the defence agency.

Osuala (2001) believed that the Internet was created by research of U.S military industrial complex in the late 60s who were working on military projects to share computer field. Sarah, E. Hutchinson and Stacery C. Sewyer (2000) traced the history of Internet in 1969 by U.S department of Defence (under the name ARPA net. ARPA was the department's Advanced Research Project Agency). The Internet was built to serve the two purposes. The first was to share research among the military, industry, and university sources. The second was to provide a system for sustaining communication among military units in the event of nuclear attack. Thus, the system was designed to allow many routes among many computers so that a message could arrived at its destination by many possible ways not just as a single path. This original network system was largely based on the unix operating system.

Ugbe (2004), assert that the Intergrew out of a distance network developed by the united states government's Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) in the late 60s which was connected to four universities, hi about a decade over 2000 computers in military and research agencies were connected throughout the United States and overseas. These inter linking networks like Internet network were both practical and reliable.

Me further added that the suggestion and ideas from ARPA were then developed by the universities of standard, Los Anjeles, Santa Barbara and-Utal, which sets up the first Internet connection in 1969. By 1971 about 23 computers were directly linked to the net, prompting the birth of tLe E-mail which has since became a major means of communication worldwide. Vintan Cert known as the father of the Internet becomes the chairman of the Internet working group (INWG) in 1971. The body was formed lay down code of conduct for the Internet.

How Internet Works

The World Book Encyclopedia (2004, Vol. 10) stated that computer networks enables computers to communicate and share information and resources.

The simplest network consist of users computer, known as client and server. The client makes requests of the server, which in town provides the requested resources such as information or software. The Internet works in much the same way, on a far vaster scale. To connect the net a user logs on by instructing his or her computer's communications software to contact the Internet Service Provider (ISP) or online service. The Internet was built around the telephone connections. But the ever - increasing volume of Internet traffic and the large size of video and send files, require faster communications links. High speed links, often called broad and connections, can deliver large amounts of information move quickly than traditional telephone lines can.

Among the most common broad band connections are (1) cable television connections (2) Fiber optic telephone lines, (3) Integrated service digital network (ISAN) and Digital subscriber (DS1). Television connections use the same cables that deliver television signals to country Internet traffic.

They require the use of special cable modern. Fiber-optic telephone lines employ thin, high - capacity fibers to transmit vast amount of information as pattern of height. ISDN and DSI use new technologies to increase the information carrying capacity of traditional copper phone lines while satellite connections use wireless communications with orbiting satellites. They enable to use the Internet even in locations with no land based communication lines. Therefore to be connected to the Internet, the Librarian needs hardware components, a modern, a computer unit, a telephone line and a Server (ISP).

Some Uses of the Internet

The following are some uses of the Internet to be exploited by the library as listed by Heathcate (2000) and O. Leave and O. Leavy (2001).

Researches: - Researchers can search large libraries available by visiting virtual libraries to select items and even checkout books.

Teleconferencing:- Researches and professionals can communicate with each other through the telephone. The more advanced telecommunicating is the video conferences where participants can see each other on their monitors.

Sharing resources:- Through the connection of several computers, information stored on disc packs could be shared among libraries and be accessible.

Instant Conferencing:- This conferencing allows instant massaging 'live' and provides greater control and flexibility. It also help the users in doing a collaborative work with others using the right software.

Other uses of the Internet in libraries includes, providing many sites specially for education as well as being a source of more general information, delivers information on aspects of personal researches, gives opportunity to publish or get e- publications like journals and books etc.

Recommendations

The computer and Internet have become a way of life. Millions of people and organization on the super highway take advantage of very cheap and efficient Internet and communications, some advitises their wares, some provide services i,e libraries and others to gain access to the mass media for online data. Libraries should improved the training of their staff in this area by:

1) Enough computers and Internet system should be provided for the training of staff.
2) All departments and sections of the library should expose their staff through training tours to well equipped Internet centers, seminars and workshops of this nature to acquaint the staff with the latest development in Internet usage,
3) Librarians as instructors should possess adequate knowledge of the computer and Internet/other modern information technology and they should always be up to date.
4) In training the future librarians, library schools should include the knowledge of the latest devices of automation technologies like Internet.

Conclusion

Though libraries from ancient times provide information to their users, the advent of Internet has facilities e-journal and books, research, online conferencing etc found on the net, libraries can enrich their collections as well as the services. Therefore, it is important to note that such facilities need to be exploited by libraries.

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