WEB- BASED SERVICES IN LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT

With the emergence of the internet and associated technologies, in particular the World Wide Web has opened up an entirely new medium for providing improved information services and resources for the users. Library services provided by using web technology are referred as web based library services. The present paper mainly discusses that what are the web based library services, their features, advantages and disadvantages. Different web based services i.e. library webpage, Web OPAC, ask-a-librarian, email have been highlighted.

Keywords: - Web Based Services, Library Web page, Web OPAC, Ask-A-Librarian

1. Introduction

The day by when the Internet is emerged, more specifically the World Wide Web which is one of its major services has completely revolutionized the way to communicate, studying, teaching, business, employment, education, healthcare and more. It has a major impact on the publishing and information delivery system in 21st century (Arora, 2001). Similarly in case of libraries too, applications of internet and web technologies have changed the way the libraries operate and provide information services to users. Libraries are playing a vital role for the promotion of education and research. With the application of this technology it became possible to have access to various information sources and databases available in various parts of the globe (Deka, 2007). It is not affecting only the formats and resources of the information, but also how and where to provide library services (Bhatnagar, 2005). Traditionally, the library services were static. To access the library users needed to go to the library physically during the library opening hours only. But in web era, library services have become dynamic. Now a day the users can access the library at anytime from anywhere. No need to go to the libraries physically and no time restrictions. With the advent of information technology and web based services, contents are now available to users on their desktop. Digital Library Services, Internet Library Services, Electronic Library Services are the terms used interchangeably for Web Based Library Services. According to (Bhatnagar,
there are four generations have passed from traditional online services to today that assist users in searching the World Wide Web.

The first generation of information retrieval tools was designed for use with bibliographic databases. The second generation of tools attempts to collect and index resources as an automation function. The third generation deals with World Wide Web Meta search engines. The fourth generation involves new ideas such as search agent technology currently being developed to search for information on the web.

Web Based Library Services are mainly provided through the library portal which is a special kind of gateway to web based library resources. It provides integrate access to the metadata of a library’s multiple databases. It gathers a variety of useful information resources into a single webpage that allows users to customize their information resources by selecting and viewing information they find personally useful (Jackson, 2002). Some of the commonly used web based library services are library webpage, web OPAC, Bulletin Board Services, Ask-a-Librarian services, web forms, digital reference services, online document delivery, interlibrary loan, online help and information skill tutorials, online current awareness bulletins, e-mail based services, online reference services, electronic journals (UGC-INFONET digital library consortium), online circulation service, electronic SDI services, online acquisition, electronic article alert service, etc.

1.1 World Wide Web

World Wide Web is one of the services of the internet. It is a way of accessing integrated information in the form of web pages over the medium of internet with the help of web browsers. According to (Jeyshankar, 2009) World Wide Web is a global network of internet servers which provides access to interlinked documents locally and remotely. It is a vast network of linked hypertext files stored on computers throughout the world that can provide computer users’ with information on a huge variety of subjects. The information can be in the form of regular text, hypertext, pictures, sounds, use net news groups and other types of data. To access such information from web use client program is necessary like Internet explorer, fire fox, etc. Web uses http protocol language over the internet to transmit data. In the web each web page can hold not only information but also links to other pages. In each page a particular word or group of words are highlighted and there is a link between the highlighted item and other information, this is called hypertext.

1.2 Library Services

Library Services are defined as the facilities provided by a library for the use and dissemination of library material like books, journals, theses, dissertations, etc. in order to meet the users’ requirement. Some of
commonly existing library services are cataloguing, classification, circulation services, reservation, renewal, new arrivals, current contents, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, reference service, document delivery service, interlibrary loan service, externally purchased database, CD-ROM databases, access to other library catalogues, access to online databases, internally published newsletters, reports and journals, bibliographies, indexing and abstracting services and so on. With the advent of internet and web the mode of providing such services has changed to web environment.

1.3. Web Based Library Services

Web based library services means the services provided through particular website accessible on internet which provide integrate access to the multiple databases. According to (Madhusudhan, 2012) “Web based Library Services means library services provided using internet as medium and library website as a gateway with the help of integrate library management system.” (White, 2001) has defined web based services as an information service in which users ask questions via electronic means e.g. email or web forms. Web based library services provides users with the convenience of accessing information in their own time, saving them travelling cost and time and new options for answering reference questions. The provision of these services is not constrained by the traditional opening hours but can be offered on a 24 hours.

According to (Sangale, 2015) web based services are established due to following reasons:

“Ensuring the needs of users and the accessible information sources are suitable matched at all times;

Delivering those information sources to the users in a timely and appropriate fashion;

Ensuring the information provided is high quality, accurate and appropriate;

Assisting the user in interpreting the materials, if necessary;

Promoting user awareness of new services and information sources as they develop;

Providing users with individualized guidance and support as they build their information research and application skills.”

1.3.1 Library Webpage

Library webpage can be defined as gateways for searching information about the library. It provides integrate access to the metadata of a library’s multiple databases, e-journals and library catalogues and deliver detailed information about a library and also provide access to all computer based services like
library collection, library timing, library working hours, list of subscribed online journals, CAS/SDI/Reference services, popular documents based on circulations, reservations, user feedback, etc offered by a library. With the help of library webpage, library can easily propagate its services and facilities to the academic community worldwide.

Some common features of library web page

- Facilitates and promotes library use.
- Keep informed about library activities and new services
- Saves the time of the user
- Allow easy bridging of distances
- Gateway to networked information services

1.3.2 Web OPAC

Web OPAC is a library catalog on the web. Users can search the required information by connecting to Uniform Resource Locator (URL) of Web OPAC at anytime from anywhere in the world. It facilitates the users to access the bibliographic details of holdings in the collection of particular library. In this system the library books and other reading items are arranged according to the subject content that is given a call number. Some of the major services available through Web OPAC are library catalogue, search facility on entire database, group wise restricted access for users and guest.

Features

- It is worldwide and all the time accessible.
- No limitation of space and time for search of any information. Any person can search not only information of its own library but also can access any networked library.
- The status of books whether it is issue, lost may be available at both staff and public terminals throughout the library.
- Make easier to access catalogue data in the form of bibliographic records.
- It is possible for users to send reprint request immediately by e-mail.

1.3.3 E-mail

E-mail is a web based excellent media that the librarian can use for various purposes specifically for delivering some web based services like electronic document delivery service, table of contents, RSS
feeds, etc. It serves as an excellent current awareness service to the scientists. It is widely used service by publishers and researchers.

1.3.4 Bulletin Board

“A bulletin board is an electronic communications forum that hosts posted messages and articles connected to a common subject or theme or interest. It allows users to call in and either leaves or retrieves messages. The message may be directed to all users of the bulletin board or only to particular users. Several libraries are using bulletin boards for their web based library services. The bulletin board system is also used as an interactive interface to invite suggestions on activities and services of a library. It can also be used as an interface to distribute library services.” (Sangale, 2015).

1.3.5 Ask-A-Librarian

Ask-A-Librarian services are Internet based question and answer service that connect users with individuals who possess specialized subject knowledge and skill in conducting precision searches. Users ask question either through web form or by an e-mail address provided by the service. Once a query is read by a service, it is assigned to an individual expert for answering who in turn responds to the query with factual information or a list of information resources. The responses are either send to the user’s e-mail account or is posted on the web so that the user can access it after a certain period of time.

1.3.6 Web Forms

Interactivity is a key feature of successful web based services and web forms are good examples of interactivity. Most of the library websites have web forms for inviting feedback from the users such as:

Suggestions for services;

Users Survey;

Comments on the website and suggestions to improve it;

Requests for library to acquire certain titles or materials;

Reference Service (often Ask-A-Librarian);

Interlibrary loan or other document delivery services.
1.3.7 Web Based User Education

Web guides and teaching tools are found everywhere on the web because they are easily updated, accessed and printed on demand. The web based user education provides a high degree of interactivity and flexibility to the users. The library websites can use web-based user education for imparting training to users in the following area:

Basic library skills along with glossary of library terms;

Using Library OPAC/ Web OPAC, locating books, magazines and other library materials;

Instructions for searching CD-ROM and web based databases and other electronic resources; and

Instructions on subject search training, using Boolean operators and searching internet resources through search engines.

2. Advantages of Web Based Services

Following are the advantages of Web Based Services:

- It saves the precious time of the users
- A large number of users can be helped simultaneously by using web based library services
- Less dependent on the library staff for getting the required information
- No need of library staff in large numbers to carry out library works and services
- Availability of information in different places and also in different formats
- Cut in Library Budget
- Fulfill information requirements instantly
- Operating costs are minimal
- Cannot be stolen or miss shelved
- Saves considerable storage space
- Immediate receipt of issue
- Fast publication
3. Disadvantages of web based services

- A huge volume of information is generated every minute
- No order or rules are imposed on the generation, distribution, access and use of this information
- No fully comprehensive record of the different documents is available at the moment
- Requires some training for users to use special equipment required
- Use is limited by copyright laws and licensing agreements
- Access is currently unreliable (URL problems, internet connection problems)
- Format is in the early stages of development

4. Conclusion

The first and foremost function of the library is to provide quality information service in order to satisfy their users with the right information at the right time. Web based library service is a trend. Although, we actively transfer library services but our central purpose remain the same, to serve and teach users to find, evaluate and use information effectively. To meet these challenges the librarians may play a leadership role in providing better web based library services to their techno savvy users. The librarians have to join the learning community as coaches and collaborators, guide the students, teaching them how to search effectively and helping them judge the quality and usefulness of the information that they meet with.

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