New Vistas in Collection Development: The Internet Perspective

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Abstract

The author discusses the constraints and criteria for collection development in libraries and information centres, and examines the Internet as a world-wide source of information and as scope for electronic collection development. The role of Internet as more than just a channel for communication is also discussed. The different roles the Net has to play in the information scenario, specially in connection with collection development, are given.

1. INTRODUCTION

Collection development is one of the primary functions of any library and information centre. The collection of a library reflects the efficiency and effectiveness of its services. Often 'strength' of collection is used as descriptor in describing a library. Dr SR Ranganathan's five laws have profound implications for policies regarding collection development. The gist of the these fundamental laws towards collection development is reflected in the principle of the best for the largest at the least cost.

2. CONSTRAINTS AND CRITERIA FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

There are several constraints in building a huge collection, the most obvious being:

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- [ ] Cost of publications
- [ ] Space limitations
- [ ] Manpower limitations.

Criteria for collection development is derived keeping in mind, the demands and constraints. Other factors that add to the constraints are:

- [ ] Information explosion
- [ ] Interdisciplinary nature of studies and demands for information
- [ ] Increasing rate of obsolescence
- [ ] Multiple forms of data availability
- [ ] Lack of adequate ways of retrieval of nascent information.

All or most of the above factors are interlinked. Research at advanced levels often leads into interdisciplinary areas. With the onset of computer applications at most of the research levels in virtually every field of study, the available data for input or the intermediate results of studies have a very short life as nascent information. There is no storage value for such data as the interactions regarding

problems are instantaneous and continuous. Such a trend and culture may be attributed to the world-wide network—the Internet.

3. IMPACT OF INTERNET ON INFORMATION

The Internet can be defined as the global community of information resources. Of course, this is a take off from more common definitions of the Net as the 'network of networks', 'world-wide computer network' and 'universal communication channel'. The Internet has made distances insignificant for discussions or group research work. More than one person can work on the same project on a machine irrespective of their locations. All this lays stress on the importance of the Internet as a communication medium which has made the world a global village. But what constitutes the Internet is the tremendous amount of information in computers across the world. There is no end to the number of subjects being discussed on the Net. The Net has become the backbone of most scientific communications. This being the case, the Net definitely offers potential for generating interesting information services in information centres. The Internet represents the present trend in the information flow. The whole process from generation of information, dissemination, absorption, and feedback has become instantaneous with the Internet.

4. INTERNET FOR COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

The concept of virtual libraries and digital libraries has been discussed at length for its practicality and feasibility. Has the Internet taken the information professionals unawares? The Net was not designed to the world-wide entity it is today. It rather happened without plan. maybe that is the reason information professionals are yet to envisage Internet as library without walls that has been discussed much earlier.

The Net has established itself as the store house of all world's resources in the electronic form ready for accessing. Various kinds of sources exist on the Net. The nomenclature of these electronic documents is comparable to the that in any traditional collection, though some documents may be new, incorporating multimedia, hypertext and built-in processing codes. But for the general purpose of developing a collection, it suffices that the kinds of documents available on the Net conform to the kind of collection in libraries and information centres like dailies, reference books, reports, periodicals, textbooks, maps and the like. The following section is an attempt to cover the various kinds of documents that are available on the Net and examples of some titles for each and the addresses to access them.

4.1 Primary Sources

Primary documents may be monographs or research reports that give the first published data or information on a topic. Full text of monographs and research reports are available on the Net. For examples:

(a) Electronic Journal of Differential Equations

   http://ejc.math.gatech.edu.8080/ journal

(b) PC Magazine

   ftp: ftp.cco.caltech.edu

(c) Good Medicine Magazine

   http://none.coolware.com/health/ good- med

(d) US Government Publications

   ftp: ftp.uu.net/doc/literary/obi/usa

4.2 Secondary Sources

Textbooks, reference books, guides to primary documents, reviews and digests are also available on the Internet. Though, organising the mass of information that is available on the Net is nearly impossible; there are some tools to keep track of what is available where. These are referred to as servers which give information of files and their location. Archie is an example of such a tool and it helps the users locate the information they are looking for, through simple commands like 'what is' and 'where is'. Some of the documents falling under this category available are:

(a) Technical Report Index

http://cs.indiana.edu /cstr/search

(b) The Whole Internet Catalog

http://nearnet.gnn.com /wic/newrescat

(c) Book Reviews

ftp: csn.org path:/pub/alt.books.reviews

(d) The Internet Resource Guide

ftp: una.hh.lib.umich.edu path:/inetdirs

4.3 Tertiary Sources

Tertiary sources of information act as guides to the primary and the secondary sources. Tertiary sources like guides to indexes and directories are also available on the Net. some examples are as below:

(a) Directory server — Directory of all directory servers

ftp: gopher.colarado.edu

(b) List of gopher sites

ftp: cwis.usc.edu

(c) Internet tools list

ftp: rpi.edu path:/pub/communications/ internet.tools

(d) InterNIC—Directory of directories

ftp: ds.internic.net

4.4 Other Sources

Apart from the above mentioned kinds of electronic documents other sources of information, that are usually discussed as non-conventional documents human and institutional resources, discussions and debates and corporate notes, are also part of the information of the Net—such as newsgroups and discussion forums on various topics. The examples are:

■ Newsgroup on women in science and technology
Bionet.women-in-bioinfo.wise.net

■ Newsgroup on JFK case
grind.isca.uiowa.edu /info/jfk

■ Newsgroups on cataloguing
bit.listserv.autocat

■ Bulletin Board System on Environment
*cue.bc.ca login:cosy
on Internet
cybernet.cse.fau.edu
login: bbs*

4.5 Libraries Online

Internet has made it possible to access library catalogues of libraries world-wide. This is possible through the online public access catalogs (OPACs). Example of catalogues online are:

(a) Media net OPAC

gopher.colarado.edu/OPAC

(b) University of Maryland library

ino.umd.edu/library and information resources

(c) Library of Congress

locis.loc.gov

(d) Catalogue of catalogues—Guides to several OPACs

ftp: funet.fi path: /pub/doc/library

5. CONCLUSION

The discussion focuses on the Internet as a storehouse of documents. Each kind of information sources used to generate services in libraries is available on the Internet. The only constraint here is the availability of Internet access to libraries. But most technical libraries and research laboratories already have access to Internet. The world resources are made available at finger tips. Only a knowledge of what is available and how to access the documents is required to make optimum use of the opportunity the Internet has given. There are tools to locate information and to access and obtain information sources. Most of the sources are available on anonymous ftp sites.

Thus, Internet has tremendous prospects for collection development. Perhaps all that is needed is orientation of thoughts, in terms of what is possible using the Internet. If there ever will be a 'library without walls' that would be the Internet within a library. In the scenario of

large amount of nascent information availability and demand for it, Internet is the only solution for speedy, expedient and exhaustive information services.

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