



E-RESOURCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The rapid development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has significantly changed library services and information accessibility. Electronic resources, including e-books, e-journals, online databases, and digital repositories, have become integral elements of contemporary libraries. These resources offer immediate access to extensive information, allowing users to obtain data swiftly and effectively. The incorporation of electronic resources has augmented information distribution, elevated research output, and broadened access beyond the confines of physical libraries. Nonetheless, its implementation also poses problems including technological infrastructure demands, licensing expenses, digital literacy deficits, and copyright issues. This paper explores the concept of e-resources, their types, advantages, challenges, and their overall impact on library services and users.

Keywords:- E-resources, Digital libraries, Academic libraries, ICT, Electronic information resources.

INTRODUCTION

For centuries, libraries were defined by their physical holdings. However, the 21st century has seen an "information explosion" that has rendered physical storage alone insufficient. Electronic resources (e-resources) refer to any information source that requires computer mediation to access. Libraries have traditionally been centers for collecting, organizing, and disseminating information. With the emergence of digital technology and the internet, libraries have undergone significant transformation. The introduction of electronic resources has changed the way information is accessed, stored, and shared.

‘**Electronic Resources**’ refer to information materials that are available in digital form and can be accessed through computers or electronic devices. These include e-books, e-journals, online databases, digital archives, and multimedia resources. The use of ICT in libraries has made information available anytime and anywhere, thereby increasing the efficiency of information retrieval and research activities.

The change from traditional print materials to digital resources has transformed library functions and services. Libraries currently operate as both physical venues and digital information hubs, offering distant access to knowledge.

Concept of E-Resources

Electronic resources are materials that require computer access, either through personal computers or mobile devices, to access their content. They may be available through the internet, CD-ROMs, or institutional databases. According to library science literature, e-resources include digital formats of scholarly and informational materials such as journals, books, theses, reports, and reference works stored electronically.

Modern libraries manage a diverse portfolio of digital assets:

- **E-Journals and E-Books:** Providing full-text access to scholarly and popular literature.
- **Online Databases:** Aggregators like JSTOR, ProQuest, and ScienceDirect that offer indexing, abstracting, and full-text services.
- **Institutional Repositories:** Digital archives for an institution's intellectual output (theses, research papers).
- **Multimedia Resources:** Streaming video, audiobooks, and interactive datasets.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The literature directly related to the present study has been reviewed to understand previous research and developments in the field of electronic resources and their usage in libraries.

Sahu and Basa (2009) explored the usage patterns of existing electronic information resources and services among students. Their study revealed that the majority of students frequently access subscribed e-resources available in the library and show a strong preference for internet-based information resources to fulfill their academic needs.

Kaur and Verma (2009) examined the development of e-libraries and e-journals in the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi using a questionnaire-based survey. The study suggested that libraries should provide updated electronic resources according to the evolving needs and demands of users.

Sahu and Mohapatra (2011) investigated the status of digital library facilities in engineering colleges affiliated with Biju Patnaik University of Technology in Odisha that were established up to 2008. Their research highlighted the growing importance of digital library infrastructure in technical institutions.

Sahu (2013) conducted a survey on the skill requirements of library staff working in engineering college libraries. The study emphasized the need for new competencies, technological skills, and updated knowledge for librarians to effectively manage digital resources in the modern information environment.

Mendhe, Kamble, and Taksande (2013) reported that several widely accepted academic databases and electronic resources are extensively used by scholars and researchers for academic and research purposes.

Das and Choudhury (2014) studied the management and utilization of electronic resources in the web environment, particularly in selected university libraries of Odisha. Their study focused on the administrative and technological aspects of managing digital resources in academic libraries.

Singh (2015) examined the gradual shift in library usage patterns over a decade. The study found that users increasingly prefer electronic resources over traditional print materials due to their convenience and accessibility.

Lewis (2016) emphasized the growing dependence of students and scholars on electronic resources. The research also evaluated the usage and effectiveness of e-resources subscribed through INFLIBNET in engineering colleges affiliated with two universities in Karnataka state.

Khan et al. (2017) analyzed the impact of digital resources on academic and engineering research in Pakistan. Their findings indicated a significant relationship between the purpose of using digital resources and the frequency of their use among researchers.

Aravazhi (2017) discussed various types of electronic resources and their impact on library services. The study highlighted the advantages of electronic environments, including efficient use of space, time savings, multimedia capabilities, and enhanced search functionality.

Finally, **Srivastava and Kumar (2018)** analyzed the availability and scope of electronic resource titles in academic libraries and emphasized their growing importance in supporting teaching, learning, and research activities.

Overall, the reviewed studies indicate that electronic resources have significantly transformed library services and user behaviour, making information access faster, more convenient, and more efficient for academic communities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine the impact of electronic resources on libraries and information seeking library users.

IMPACT OF E-RESOURCES ON ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

1. **Improved Access to Information:** E-resources provide 24×7 access to information irrespective of location. Multiple users can access the same resource simultaneously, which is not possible with print collections (*Tenopir & King, 2008*).
2. **Enhanced Research and Learning:** E-resources provide quick and easy access to updated information, which is essential for research and academic activities. Researchers and students rely heavily on electronic journals and databases for scholarly work.
3. **Transformation of Library Services:** These resources support academic activities by offering advanced search features, hyperlinks, and citation management tools. Libraries have strengthened their offerings by providing digital reference services, online catalogues, and remote database access. Librarians now serve as information managers and digital resource facilitators.
4. **Space Saving:** Digital resources reduce the need for physical storage space in libraries. Thousands of books and journals can be stored electronically without occupying shelves.
5. **Multiple User Access:** Unlike printed books, electronic resources can be accessed simultaneously by multiple users, making them highly efficient for educational institutions.
6. **Changing Role of Librarians:** The role of librarians has shifted from custodians of books to information managers, digital curators, and trainers. Librarians are now involved in licensing, consortia management, and user education in digital environments.

Shift in Library Roles

The role of the librarian has evolved from a "gatekeeper" to a "facilitator" or "information consultant." Key roles include:

- **E-Resource Librarians:** Focused on managing licenses, SUSHI harvesting, and counter usage statistics.
- **Digital Literacy Educators:** Training patrons to navigate complex databases and critically evaluate AI-generated content.

CHALLENGES OF E-RESOURCES

Electronic resources (e-resources) have become an essential part of modern libraries, providing quick and convenient access to information. However, despite their many advantages, libraries and users face several challenges in the management and use of e-resources. These challenges affect accessibility, sustainability, and effective utilization of digital information.

1. **High Cost of Subscription:** A significant problem of electronic resources is the substantial expense associated with subscriptions to electronic journals, databases, and e-books. Numerous academic publishers impose exorbitant licensing costs, thereby imposing a financial strain on libraries, particularly in underdeveloped nations. Libraries frequently have difficulties in balancing their finances while ensuring access to vital digital resources.
2. **Licensing and Copyright Concerns:** In contrast to printed items that libraries acquire outright, the majority of electronic resources are accessed via licensing agreements. These agreements put limitations on use, dissemination, and downloading. Libraries are required to adhere to copyright legislation and publisher regulations, which may restrict information accessibility for users.
3. **Technical Infrastructure Specifications:** Access to electronic resources necessitates adequate technological infrastructure, comprising computers, servers, high-speed internet, and a dependable power supply. Institutions with constrained technology resources may have challenges in ensuring continuous access to electronic materials.
4. **Lack of Digital Literacy:** Many users, particularly new students or individuals unfamiliar with digital technology, may lack the necessary skills to effectively search and retrieve information from electronic databases. Librarians often need to provide training and orientation programs to help users utilize these resources efficiently.
5. **Conservation and Sustained Accessibility:** Digital material may become inaccessible due to technology advancements, software obsolescence, or terminated subscriptions. Securing the long-term preservation of electronic materials poses a significant difficulty for libraries, as they depend on publishers or digital archiving systems.

- 6. Authentication and Access Concerns:** Numerous electronic resources necessitate authentication mechanisms, like institutional logins, IP-based access, or passwords. Users occasionally encounter challenges in accessing resources from remote locations due to authentication issues or network limitations.

Future of E-Resources in Libraries

The future of libraries is closely linked to the growth of digital technologies. Emerging trends include:

- Artificial intelligence in information retrieval
- Open access publishing
- Digital repositories
- Cloud-based library services
- Integration of mobile technology in libraries

CONCLUSION

Electronic resources have significantly changed libraries and the methods of accessing and utilising information. They have extended the accessibility of libraries beyond physical confines and enhanced the efficacy of research and educational methodologies. Despite hurdles including cost, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy, the advantages of e-resources surpass these constraints. Libraries must persist in adapting to technological advancements and invest in digital infrastructure and user education to optimise the utilisation of electronic resources. In the digital era, electronic resources are essential for enhancing the dynamism, accessibility, and user-centricity of libraries.

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