Future of e-libraries in universities

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1. Introduction

Traditional libraries are places designed to serve all people in a society. The needs of libraries change depending on the sizes of these constructions that include printed books and publications. Traditional historical libraries limited in number are our important sources of information today (Abuzaid & Singh, 2009). The need for preserving the printed sources by transferring them to future generations has accelerated the change in libraries. Since ancient times, libraries have been used in different ways as a storage center that provides information. With the developments in print technologies, libraries have become not only a center of mass production of books but also an environment for information storage. The increase in audio and visual media has led to the development of such storage tools as magnetic tape and CD-ROM. The most important milestone for the history of digital libraries is the discovery of the Internet (URL-1). Since 1950s, both the development of computer and Internet technologies and the capability of network technologies to allow digital access from a single point to quite far places have provided the opportunity to establish digital libraries in traditional libraries (Keralapura, 2009). In today’s global world, in which there is no limit to information, institutions insisting on traditional libraries have become constructions that serve only the neighborhood they are located in. Today, it could be stated that mostly universities provide people with library services. Therefore, each university has a library with traditional structure.

University libraries constitute an important part of university education and research. Historically, university libraries have been structurally influenced by the institutions they serve. Students’ purposes for using the libraries at universities differ not only with respect to their faculties and but also with respect to whether they are undergraduate or postgraduate students (Tenopir, 2003). Most university libraries that students use to reach information include limited sources such as conference reports, printed journals and books (Bancroft et al., 1998). With the development
and spread of the Internet in Turkey, E-library studies started, and the number of these studies was higher especially at universities. However, studies on e-libraries were limited to searching for and reserving the books present in traditional libraries via the Internet. In real sense, e-library applications should allow users to access all the sources and download these sources into their computers via the Internet (Akçayol et al., 2005). According to Graham (2003), undergraduate university students prefer the Internet environment for their homework in the first place.

Today, the Internet is one of the basic tools in providing library services. This communication tool plays an important role in exchange of information thus in library services. Therefore, it is necessary for universities to adopt the concept of e-library and to take electronic librarianship into consideration while restructuring their services they provide via their libraries.

In the academic world, libraries allow world-class access to information and play an important role in research and development studies in the country. For scientists, university libraries can create physical environments in their own bodies to encourage learning and research. In order to allow participants to benefit from more than one book at a time, the number of the sources in these libraries could be increased; in addition, they can be given trainings on how to choose and use books and how to use sources and source-discovery tools to evaluate the documents effectively (Sheeja, 2010). Besides the developing software and information systems, the spread of the Internet has helped libraries adapt themselves more quickly to the digital environment. Revealing the difference between libraries transferred into electronic environment by overcoming legal issues and university libraries that still provide their students with services in traditional ways could change the related perspectives of universities. In this respect, the future of e-libraries has an important place in universities.

In Turkey, both due to the inadequacies of the current universities and due to failure to establish a library in every region, e-libraries play quite an important role. In addition, the fact that e-libraries will not need a number of workers and tools necessary for a traditional library decreases the cost of e-libraries (Akçayol et al., 2005).

1.1. Research Purpose

The present study aimed at determining the needs by revealing the interface features, differences, ease of use, comprehensibility for users and the advantages and disadvantages of the system in the processes of e-library designing.

In this respect, it is believed that universities to use e-library will provide their students with better services by increasing the quality of the education they give.

1.2. Features regarding the design process

1.2.1. Interface features

- Web page designed with the XML language,
- Digital objects, java-based media client,
- Support to more than one type of files: JPEG, TIFF, BMP, PPT, PNG, PDF, DOC, AVI and more,
- Multi-page visual support,
- Database support,
- Document indexing, media-file association,
- Introducing and watching out the copy-right issues,
- Membership procedure,
- Using and monitoring sources and statistical reporting.

1.2.2. Differences

- Reaching the library sources via the web (Keralapura, 2009),
- Classified membership option (Keralapura, 2009),
- Users are defined with respect to their user names and passwords (Chowdhury, 2002),
- There is no limitation for participants in terms of time and place (Sheeja, 2010),
- Services such as searching for information and scanning and reserving the sources have been transferred into the electronic environment,
Documents such as books and e-journals can be read in the form of e-books. Any book can be read online as well as downloaded into the computer in a zipped format.

1.2.3. Ease of use
- All sources can be downloaded by users into their computers on demand or can be examined online (Chowdhury, 2002),
- Reaching any source for 7 days / 24 hours (Roes, 2001),
- Ease of learning such that the user can quickly begin using it (Kling & Elliott, 1994).

1.2.4. Comprehensibility
- Simple and clear visual structure,
- Summary information about any document,

1.2.5. Advantages of the system
- Prevention of the wear of such documents as books and journals and especially historical and written works (Yazar, 2007),
- Opportunity to reach information fastest,
- Opportunity provided for users to reach the initial information about the material they will research without having to change the study environment,
- Decreasing the work-load of library workers,
- Data safety,
- No cost of installation and no cost for place or employees; or at least minimum costs for these,
- No need for large and big places.

1.2.6. Disadvantages of the system
- The Documents uploaded to the system have different formats,
- Difficulty to read the documents on the screen,
- System should have low error rate with few user errors and easy recovery from them. Also no catastrophic errors (Kling & Elliott, 1994).

2. Conclusion

However physically big libraries designed for university students to benefit from are, the sources they include are more important. In general terms, libraries with traditional structures are designed to carry out such functions as social interaction, education, information, archive, preservation, maintenance, culture and information-sharing. Considering the increasing student capacity of universities, the problems experienced by libraries with traditional structures are gradually increasing.

According to Lance (2003), the success of students attending schools with large and strong libraries increases with a rate of 10-20%. It is seen that libraries suggestions are important in the process of designing e-libraries and that faculty members’ suggestions are important in determining the sources (Tenopir, 2003; Waldman, 2003). According to Abuzaid & Singh (2005), services provided by e-libraries can contribute to the student in the e-learning process. In this way, students’ negative attitudes towards information and communication technologies could be decreased. Researchers who have to go to libraries with a countless number of walls inside to obtain the information they need are provided with the opportunity to access information in any format and from any place at any time via “non-wall libraries”.

The present study focused on interface features, differences, ease of use, comprehensibility for users and the advantages and disadvantages of the system in the processes of e-library designing. In this respect, it is believed that universities giving e-library services can serve students with better services by increasing the quality of education. To conclude, today, the Internet is one of the basic tools in giving library services. This communication tool plays an important role in exchanging information and thus in library services. Therefore, it is necessary for universities to adopt the concept of e-library and take electronic librarianship while structuring their library services.
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