A STUDY OF E-COMMERCE IN MODERNIZATION OF INDIAN LIBRARIES

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Introduction

E-commerce is becoming ubiquitous but what does it mean for libraries? Some would argue that in EC terms, libraries have been involved in e-commerce for years with the marketing of services and resources through web pages. Others would argue that libraries are just beginning to enter the world of e-commerce with forays into offering ways for library users to pay fines or buy copies of photographs or other items online. Learn about the different ways e-commerce can be interpreted and how libraries are implementing e-commerce initiatives.

In the beginning it was e-mail (electronic mail). This was followed by e-publishing, e-journals, e-magazines and now e-commerce and e-business (e-biz); the extension of the IT lexicon is still growing. Internet catalised the proliferation of the electronic and online journals as well as the development of the digital, and most recently, virtual libraries. Electronic commerce (e-commerce) is another area where the impact of Internet is increasingly felt in the library and information field. It is nothing but the business and financial transactions made using Internet. Computer hardware and software, books, music and travel are the most popular purchases over the Net. Variously known as e-commerce, Internet (or Net) commerce, e-biz, online market place, cyber commerce etc, electronic commerce is one of the most exciting areas beneficial to the institutions, industries, individuals with specialised skills, expert professionals and commercial organisations alike. Many of these are doing thriving business by offering expertise, consultancy services, buying and selling, job hunting and placement, advertising and marketing. Apart from supplementing the vast electronic information resources Internet, is also helping in achieving increased visibility to and enhanced marketability of their products, services and expertise.

Review of Literature

Mukherjee (1965) carried out a study titled, "Library Facilities in Training Colleges of India" to assess the prevalent position of 50 teacher training college libraries. Questionnaire was used as data collection tool. Study revealed that majority of libraries did not have sufficient space for proper functioning. Some of teacher training colleges did not have their own libraries. Staff and students depended on the university libraries to which education section was attached. All libraries were lacking abstracting, indexing and inter-library loan services.

Naidu (1981) in his research paper, "College Libraries in Andhra Pradesh: With Special Reference to Andhra University" attempted to find the causes leading to unhappy situation of libraries. Author disclosed the gloomy picture of college libraries and suggested to lay down some norms and standards for college libraries by inspection commission of each university. He further suggested that atleast 6% of the college budget should be spent on library. Author emphasized the need to give initiation to users in the beginning of each academic year.

In an article titled "A Survey of College Libraries in West Godavari District" Raju (1984) explored the prevailing position of libraries of 18 colleges affiliated to Andhra University, Waltair. Various facets of libraries i.e. library staff, building, collection, book banks, budget and technical services, etc have been examined. Financial sources were found inadequate. DDC and AACR-I were popular among libraries. Survey revealed the immediate need to improve the services to meet information needs of students, teachers and research scholars.

E-Commerce in Libraries

Libraries have so far been very slow in embracing electronic commerce. This is largely due to that fact that most libraries are originally institutionalized as non-profit organizations. Furthermore, the cost of setting up an e-commerce infrastructure was a barrier as libraries are generally not cash-rich organizations. However, electronic commerce and Internet have played a significant role in the way libraries operate and the way library services have developed.   Many libraries have made their presence felt on the Web by making their collections searchable and their services accessible. The web sites of the New York Public Library (NYPL), the British Library, and Singapore National Library Board (NLB) are good examples of libraries using current technology to enhance and extend their services to current and future clientele.

Whether in digital or traditional environment, libraries were set to provide various mechanisms for knowledge archival, preservation,

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and maintenance of culture, knowledge sharing, information retrieval, education and social interaction. Barker (1994) states that as an educational knowledge transfer system, a library fulfils a number of important requirements, these being:

- The library is a meeting place – a place where people can interact and exchange ideas.
- The library provides a range of resources that access to them otherwise is difficult.
- The library provides an effective mechanism for information acquisition and dissemination.
- The library provides access to expert in different field and help users to locate relevant information.
- The library is an educational institution and plays an important educational role for the fulfillment of life- long learning.

In keeping up with the changes and advances in technology, and the need to creating self-sustaining entities, some libraries are changing their practice and adapting to the new environment by starting to charge their users for certain classes of value-added services such as document delivery, reference services and information research. The Canadian Institute for Scientific and Technical Information (CISTI) is an example of such a library or resource center that charges the public for value-added services (Song, 1999). In Singapore, the Library 2000 report recommended that basic library services remain free, however value- added services such as translating, analyzing, and repackaging information will be chargeable (Fong, 1997). Currently, the National Library Board (NLB) of Singapore has adopted and implemented cashless payments through the use of the cash-cards. The use of cash-cards at NLB branches for all transactions was introduced in 1998 in an effort to automate payment processing. Although the introduction of cash-card systems at NLB branches initially drew some negative responses, the majority of library users soon grew accustomed to this mode of payment.

Charging Models for Digital Libraries

Since the definition of a digital library is till evolving, there is no prevailing e-commerce model for digital libraries. However, most of the goods sold on digital libraries are content such as electronic journals and databases. But there is no reason to exclude the fact that digital libraries cannot still sell physical goods such as postcards, books, T-shirts, mugs and other forms of goods. Given that, digital libraries might have to adopt different charging models. These charging

models need to be integrated into a seamless and convenient interface. Some of the charging models that can be used for digital libraries include the *pre- paid subscription model*, *pay later subscription model*, and *pay now or as you use model.*

E-Commerce Using Metadata For Libraries

``Metadata'' is the Internet-age term for structured data about data. Typical examples are library catalog records, bibliographic headers in Web pages, ``terms of use'' statements, and ratings. Different user communities -- from librarians and computer scientists to government agencies, cultural heritage organizations, publishers, businesses, and the legal community -- scope and purpose metadata differently. International communities in areas such as biodiversity, the space sciences, and museums seek to refine the semantics of specialized metadata for the rapidly evolving needs of their fields. Likewise, publishers and other content providers are seeking agreements on standards to enable new forms of electronic commerce.

The creation and management of metadata is a sizeable and rapidly expanding industry. In the scholarly communities, libraries and abstracting and indexing services invest heavily in the creation of metadata to manage the published literature. Scholars are increasingly publishing their work in electronic journals or in less formal Web forums, and scientific datasets are proliferating. Metadata will be needed for these materials. As libraries and museums digitize cultural heritage information, they must create metadata to organize and manage it; indeed, the cost of creating this metadata is often comparable to the cost of digitization itself. In the consumer world, metadata in the form of ratings and reviews has long been important. Now it is becoming clear that good metadata is needed to allow consumers to find products for sale on the Web as well. As we look towards worldwide commerce in intellectual property over the Internet, metadata to support rights management will be an essential part of this new marketplace.

Conclusion

Electronic commerce (e-commerce) is another area where the impact of Internet is increasingly felt in the library and information field. It is nothing but the business and financial transactions made using Internet. Computer hardware and software, books, music and travel are the most popular purchases over the Net. Variously known as e-commerce, Internet (or Net) commerce, e-biz, online market place, cyber commerce etc, electronic commerce is one of the most exciting areas beneficial to the

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