



IMPORTANCE OF E-LITERATURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA

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1. INTRODUCTION

A survey on the sources of acquiring knowledge, among the teaching faculty of Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow was performed. It was found that 90% of the staff, irrespective of seniority prefers e-journals and only 10% preferred hard bound copies of the journals. None of the teaching faculty was subscribing to the journals. They are acquiring latest academic knowledge through the e-journals from the library. Hence it is appropriate to overview the advantages and disadvantages of this source of electronic media, especially in the long term for the benefit of dissemination of knowledge in various fields. In the present digital era, dissemination of e- information, e- resources to the scholastic society and community has become an important task though information is transmitted through various media such as periodicals, serials, journals, databases, etc. The size and number of journals published has increased to accommodate the volume. New journals are created to publish work in emerging specialist branches. This is known, as 'twigging'. Libraries with financial crunch are unable to acquire all publications that their users would generally expect to have. The increasing volume of available publications has also created problems for libraries trying to provide all of the resources that their users need. Digital journals thus came in to existence to come across such problems. Here we explore to provide information about electronic journals in terms of their development, advantages and disadvantages, main features and other issues, for academics.

2. DEFINITIONS

The term "electronic journals", differ from; author to author. Electronic journals are often referred to interchangeably as "electronic publishing", "electronic serials", "online journals" and "electronic periodicals". There are certain intrinsic factors that make these terms interrelated or equivalent. Some authors simply take an electronic journal as "a publication whose primary means of delivery to subscribers is through a computer file", others define it strictly to be "a full text electronic publication, which may include images, and is intended to be published indefinitely". So it is said that e-journals are serial publications available in digital format.

3. ADVANTAGES

Easy Access: Access to a specific article or journal is easier for the users. They can access the desired material within minutes, or even seconds, on their desktops, provided equipment is available. Large collections of material can be searched and retrieved simultaneously and instantly. There is an active dissemination of information by alerting the readers at their desktops about the new articles that are accepted into the database. In other words, electronic journals allow intelligent full-text retrieval based on past use and interests. "Virtual issues" can be generated through dynamic interaction with the users.

Speed: High speed and efficiency benefits the publishing and distributing journals electronically. Authoring and publishing systems can be integrated easily by computer- readable text. Also, electronic transmission, especially in the review process, saves valuable time.

Linkages: Linkages can be enabled by hypertext and hypermedia formats among sections within an article and among articles in journals and other electronic resources. E- Mail contacts would be easier among users, publishers and suppliers. Users have more creative ways to have their information queries answered.

Costs: The journals are published electronically rather than in paper and are at no new cost.

Multimedia: Innovative ways of presenting research results can be supported by electronic page layout. Interactive three-dimensional models, motion video and sound are a few possibilities.

4. DISADVANTAGES

Financial constraints: The infrastructure required displaying, storing or print electronic journals are expensive. Downloading and printing each article will be a costly affair. This means a net increase in economic and ecological costs and it becomes a relatively expensive way to acquire a single copy. Many e- journals do charge subscription fees. The pricing schemes of some suppliers are very complicated and limiting, and this might hinder libraries from utilizing e- journals.

Social constraints: Electronic interfaces can take a long time to master. Electronic searching, downloading and printing replace the traditional activities of physically browsing, scanning and photocopying journal articles. The intricate steps to accomplish the previously simple or habitual tasks might frustrate users. People read up to 25 to 30 percent more slowly on a computer screen than on paper.



Technological constraints: Digital journals depend up on technology and equipment for storage and display. Proper Infrastructure facilities are required for the access. The academic community can be divided into “haves” and “have-nots” because of access to equipment and network. The network or connection speed can be too slow. Screen quality of graphics and photos is still primitive when compared to print. A typical screen has a resolution of 72dpi, with at most 300dpi for some expensive and special purpose screens; while the average journal is printed at approximately 1,200 dpi.

5. ISSUES

Stability and storage: The volatility of e- journals makes preservation of e- journals a major concern. In case of the benefits of access are enhanced, the ability of electronic journals to transmit information through time is not completely confirmed. Offline storage methods suggested are magnetic media, such as tape, hard disks, and floppy disks, and optical media such as CD-ROMs. There are issues of preservation of storage media, hardware and software dependency and dynamic versions of electronic journals that also need to be dealt with.

IPR Issues : There are certain issues like; protection of the intellectual property of the author in order to preserve the originality and integrity of the work; warrant for the attachment of the author and the work in public; protection of the author’s ideal and economic interest and benefits, including publication and reproduction of his/her work. This is usually accomplished through the publishers, who disseminate the work in an appropriate, protected and retraceable manner. Electronic journals presently emphasize information access instead of ownership.

Reviewing: There have been challenges for electronic journals in getting contributions because tenure committees in academic institutions question the legitimacy of electronic journals. Nevertheless, vigorous peer review process is implemented in many scholarly electronic journals.

Selection and acquisition: The selection criteria for e – journals resemble the selection of other periodicals. The library selection policies can be applied to electronic journals, there are considerations unique to electronic journals that should be addressed by libraries, such as: subscription scheme, ordering procedure, standards, effectiveness of the search engine, ability to limit to local holdings (if not full text), and hardware and software compatibility.

Cataloguing: E- journals can be classified according to the ordinary guidelines, such as LC call numbers. Libraries should be alert to emerging standards for cataloguing electronic publications.

Users’ access: Depending on the licensing agreement and local funding, downloading and printing can be provided in libraries as well as at the desktops of the users. Minimum hardware and software requirements are going to progress as technology progresses, but basic entities such as hard drives, colour monitors, external disk drives, printers, security cables, tables and chairs are often inevitable to be equipped onsite. Internet connection and bibliographic linking software are extras to provide value added service.

6. INDIAN INITIATIVES IN E- JOURNAL AND E- CONTENT ACQUISITION

In India, few Institutions felt for the importance and necessity of developing consortia based subscription of E – Journals for online access of information, to foster the research needs and craving for information of the scholarly community .

UGC – Infonet (University Grants Commission – Information Network)

University Grants Commission has launched two projects namely “UGC-INFONET” and “UGC-Infonet: E-Journals Consortium” for dissemination of e - information to the academic community of the country in the year 2004. This is the largest consortium with a vision and plans to reach out to more than 150 universities and several thousand colleges affiliated to these universities, over a period of time. It is monitored by INFLIBNET. It is subscribing e – resources of high quality collection of more than 4000 full text e - journals, Indexing and abstracting databases for the benefit of millions of users in India, from 25 different publishers to the academic community, comprising of faculty, staff, researchers and students.

The CSIR (Council of Scientific and Industrial Research)

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) can take the credit being the first major and formal consortium at national level. This well conceived pilot project with a limited central funding set a process and model for identification of resources and favourable licensing negotiation. This has been established in April 1, 2000 to benefit its 40 laboratories in India. It was pioneer to establish consortia in 1998. The members are IISC, ISI and Maths. This is the only consortium in the field of Mathematics covered by mathematical science network of American Mathematical Society.



INDEST (Indian National Digital Library in Engineering Sciences and Technology, MHRD, New Delhi) : This Consortium can truly take the credit as the first well planned and thoughtfully implemented national and multi-sector consortium with both funding and management commitment. This consortium disseminates electronic resources of information to Technical education system in India. All IITs, IIMs, RECs and 38 leading Engineering and Technological institutions can search online access of journals. INDEST has expanded its consortium membership to 120 institutions at present.

7. CONCLUSION

It is said that **E- journals can't replace print journals** yet because only a fraction of scholarly materials is available electronically. What is available varies in quality, accessibility and price. But E-journals provide many opportunities and potentials for academic libraries. Out of the advantages and disadvantages of e-journals institutions need to be able to identify and balance the factors that would make e - journals a success or failure in their libraries.

Certain bottlenecks still arise with e-journals such as users experience frustration and difficulty in their first efforts to use e-journals if they lack proper infrastructure they may oppose efforts by libraries to replace printed journals by electronic ones. Institutions facing financial pressure identify journal price rise as a significant contributing factor. Library users want the advantages of the digital format.

However, until archiving issues have been satisfactorily addressed, many institutions consider it necessary to acquire the print format as well. As a result, total subscription fees and delivery costs have increased significantly. There is a general consensus that e- journals would not replace but coexist with the print format.

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