

EDITORIAL PREFACE

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This issue continues the mission of *International Journal of Digital Library Systems* to present a variety of perspectives on new advances in digital library technology and its applications. The rapid changes in technology that have marked the development of the digital library have led to vastly different methods for the delivery of traditional library functions and services such as reference and information dissemination; information storage and retrieval; scholarly communication; and user information interaction. The articles in this issue deal provide international perspectives on these issues.

Writing from Egypt, authors of our first article, Salama and Shawish provide a concise overview of the development of libraries from traditional physical entities to current cloud based computing systems. The reader will find in this article a very useful historical treatment of the evolution of digital libraries. The authors conclude with an argument for treating digital libraries as a separate category of library that transcends school, public, academic and special libraries.

One of the most profound changes in library services is in the area of reference services. For quite some time traditional libraries have incorporated a variety of virtual reference applications, the most recent of which are intelligent Question and Answer information retrieval systems. One of the newest forms of

these systems is the community-based Q&A system, which aggregates answers to a user's query across a community of responders. The article by Nigerian authors Ojokoh and Ayokunle presents an experimental evaluation of a proposed new form of community-based Q&A that answers questions proactively without the lag time associated with older methods. Their data suggest the usefulness of further developing this approach for future digital library systems.

The third article in this issue presents a case study of the design and development of the institutional repository at Kuvempu University, India, using D-space software. As traditional publishing models have come under pressure, universities worldwide are increasingly turning to institutional repositories and open source platforms as a way to manage the production of faculty scholarship. While the digital library provides the ideal technical infrastructure for developing institutional repositories, there is no single model that currently acts a standard. Case studies such as this one provide valuable lessons learned from real world experiences.

Our next article reminds the reader that developments in digital library systems are not happening at the same pace nor with the same results across the globe. Writing from Nigeria, Ubogu turns our attention to the overall benefits and limitations of library automation systems. Although many countries accept library auto-

mation to be more or less taken for granted, in some countries such as Nigeria, the decision of whether and how to incorporate library automation is still a debatable one. Ubogu writes her article as a cry for Nigeria's libraries to "wake up from their slumber" to begin to adopt automation systems and appropriately train librarians to use them.

Discussions of digital library systems sometimes fail to include the people who use them as part of the system itself. Questions about user access mechanisms, and user information behavior tend to lag behind those centered around more technical concerns. The last article in this issue takes a welcomed look at user information behavior in digital environments, in particular the internet knowledge and use among medical students in Nigeria's Delta State University, Abraka. Survey results presented by the author, Enovwor, reveal that although a majority of these students use the internet regularly, most of this usage takes place in cybercafés outside of the library. Furthermore, students rely more often on friends for assistance in using the internet, rather than on librarians.

Results of this study leave us with questions about ways in which academic libraries can use digital library technology to connect students to the library, rather than move them away from it.

Overall, the articles in this issue touch on some of the central concerns that remain to be important for those involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of digital library systems worldwide. In keeping with previous issues of IJDLS we have attempted to bring to the reader a broad range of international perspectives and experiences.

We wish to inform our readers that this marks the final issue under our co-editor-in-chief status. Professional obligations at our university make it necessary for us to pass this important job on to others at this time. It has been our sincere pleasure to serve as editors-in-chief of IJDLS over the past eighteen months.

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