Chapter 5

Developing Digital Collections

ABSTRACT

Digital collections are found in most libraries. They include not only databases but also photographs, institutional repositories, manuscript collections, materials from the university archives, or special collections. Designing digital collections and making them available to users expands the resources users can access for a research project.

INTRODUCTION

Remote access technologies for library collections are not limited to library resources such as databases and the catalog. Many colleges and universities have institutional repositories that allow faculty to share research projects and include electronic theses and dissertations. Institutional repositories are used for digital collections created through an institution’s archive or special collections. Digital collections expand the scope of a library’s collections. Many institutions have digitized their yearbooks, photograph and manuscript collections. Digital collections help preserve collections and make them accessible to everyone.

The key to finding materials in online collections is the metadata used to identify the items in the collection. As with any collection or new resource, marketing is important to having the collection used. Digital collections will continue to increase and allow access to more material beyond the library’s books and databases.

BACKGROUND

Digital collections provide access to resources beyond the usual books, periodicals and databases. They often provide students, faculty and researchers with access to primary source materials. The Digital Library of Georgia is an excellent example of a digital collection with a wide variety
of materials. In 2008, the collection expanded to include a Civil Rights Digital Library with original television video of events from the Civil Rights Movement. Digital collections provide libraries with the opportunity to display their special collections or archives. Digitization does cost money and in today’s economy, libraries often seek grant money to support major digitization projects. Digital collections will have specific digitization requirements for materials and the types of materials they will digitize.

Another example of a digital collection is arXiv.org from Cornell University. This institutional repository provides scholarly papers in the sciences especially physics, mathematics, and computer science. An institutional repository is different from a digital collection in the fact it is a collection of scholarly articles or papers written by faculty members at that particular institution. arXiv.org accepts papers from scholars at institutions outside of Cornell University, Cornell and supporting user institutions and the National Science Foundation fund the project. As with any online collection, the ability to search and find the materials you need is crucial to a digital collection.

Metadata for a digital collection allows users to search and find the materials they are looking for. Google is an excellent example of how to use metadata to improve search results. The metadata provides users with better search results through Google. Another important factor in digital libraries is the architecture used to create them. Once they are created if libraries want their collections used, they need to market them and promote them to students, faculty and researchers. Digital collections and remote access to them is crucial to meeting the needs of academic researchers.

Digital library services provide users with access to the catalog, databases, subject guides, interlibrary loan, digital collections, document delivery and reference services. The extent of digital services allows users to browse collections, databases, and the library catalog. It provides researchers with the opportunity to identify the possible resources to use for their project. Users can access these materials on or off-campus with patron authentication through either EZproxy or VPN. Once a patron provides their user, ID and password, they can access the materials they need. User acceptance and student perception of digital libraries or digital library services is important because without them the collections and services will be underutilized. In the digital age, easy access to materials they need and want is an expectation from researchers.

**MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER**

The first step to creating access to digital library collections and services is the computer architecture needed to access the resources. EZproxy and virtual private networks (VPN) are two of the more well known methods to authenticate patrons. There are other options and one example is ALADIN created by the Washington Research Library Consortium (Gourley, 2001). The Access to Library and Database Information Network (ALADIN) used by the Washington Research Library Consortium is based on middleware architecture for core services it broker’s communication between components (Gourley, 2001). This type of software architecture allows patrons to access different services without having to know how to log into all the library resources. The ALADIN digital library system provides access to content and services for over 500 subscription databases, digital collections and library catalogs for seven medium sized academic libraries in the Washington Research Library Consortium (Gourley, 2001). It also allows access to library digital collections and services through campus portals.

Open access, open source software and digital libraries are linked together in the creation and development of digital libraries. The licensing agreement for open source software allows users to give away or sell any part of the software. The source code for the software must be readily
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