The Digital Library: A Multi-Faceted Information and Communication System

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ABSTRACT

For centuries, physical media determined the daily routine of a library. The Internet evolves as a medium for information and communication for specific and general use. Libraries, nowadays, pass through a radical change. They are changing from a more media holding institution towards a multimedia access and content provider in a physical and a digital environment. This paper deals with the various aspects, looked at from the information science point of view, i.e. IT, people and knowledge.

Keywords: Data Librarian, Europe, Information Professionals, Key Qualification, Library Patron

INTRODUCTION: BEING WHERE THE LIBRARY PATRONS ARE

An increasingly powerful information and communication technology already provides the average citizen a wide access to international sources of information. People exchange information of all kind, network, and realize ideas together via social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, with and without the support of experts. (Deeg, 2011, p. 408)

This trend leads to increased requirements on library services. The library patron will be served wherever he or she is and the library patron is expecting access to library sources via social media, smart phones, at home, or in a physical library. Budget cuts, considerable price increases, and changes in library patron behavior points out, especially in Germany, the challenges for libraries. These tendencies are, e.g., captured in terms like hybrid library, virtual library, and digital library. In order to get in contact with the library patron a special communication and distribution strategy is required. And this is where human resources, education and training come into play. (Ratzek, 2011) LIS programs at universities and colleges are available in Europe, especially in Germany, Great Britain, and the Nordic Countries. (Feather & Sturges, 2013)

WHAT IS A DIGITAL LIBRARY?

Much has been written about digital libraries. At first it seems unproblematic: In a narrower sense, an eLibrary which offers access to a

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repository. Closer inspections show the entire spectrum of digital libraries. Digital libraries may be subdivided into:

- The hybrid library which offers print media as well as digital media, represented by a conventional library;
- The pure digital library like “Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek” (see below);
- The virtual or the internet based library like the german “Virtuelle Fachbibliotheken” (see below);
- The fully automated library like the Sen-gkang community Library in Singapore (see below);
- The book kiosk like the Swedish bokomaten (see below);
- The cybrary (see below).

The Pure Digital Library

A pure digital library exists only on the Internet; it is therefore a virtual library. The user conducts her/his online-research via an IT based user-interface. The user, in principle, does not know where the original data source is located. A current example is the “Deutsche Digitale Bibliothek – Kultur und Wissen online” (DDB: German Digital Library). The Beta version is available since 2012 and represents a network of 30,000 German cultural and scientific facilities. The portal offers access to approximately 5.6 million documents. The DDB is to be integrated into the European digital library’s Internet portal Europeana which gives global users access to the cultural assets of the European Union’s member states. (http://www.deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de/content/about/).

A particular case is that of South Korea: As a counterpart of The National Library of Korea serves since 2009 the National Digital Library of Korea, the “dibrary”.

The Book Kiosk

While the pure or virtual library has a fixed place on the internet (URL), represents the book kiosk a dislocated philosophy. An “entire” library of the size of an ATM or drink vending machine is placed there where the reader is located, e.g. at train stations, attached to the outside of a building, e.g. banks or post offices, gas stations, or department stores. Excellent examples are:

- The Krimi-Automat (Thriller automat) of the Cologne City Library (Germany) which is located in a shopping center (Neumarkt-Passage). According to the coffee- or pizza-to-go follows “Thriller-to-go” with approximately 800 thrillers and a weekly title update. This 24/7 service can be used with a valid borrower’s ticket. The library patron may borrow and return the book at any time;
- The Swedish Bokomaten works in a similar way. The first of its kind in Sweden was operated by the Lindingö City Library. In the meantime, there are many more. Bokomaten stores 800 media of all kind and genre. (Woodward, 2012, p. 39)

ViFA: Virtuelle Fachbibliotheken

The virtual subject library (ViFa) provides a standard access point, i.e. web portal to scientifically relevant information and documents from all over the world. The task of ViFa is to group together the various internet-based search services under one roof (“one-stop-shop”). The core modules are: (Meta) search engines, periodicals and database indexes, special, subject OPAC, Online-Contents-SSG (subject section from the “Online-Contents Database”, subject guide, and open access repository. The areas of scientific disciplines are:

- Humanities and cultural sciences;
- Pedagogy;
- Theology and religious studies;
- Linguistics and ethnology/ ethnic studies;
- Law, economics, and social sciences;
- Natural sciences and medicine;
- Engineering and mathematics.
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