Benefits of Institutional & Collaborative Repositories Development in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

The paper deals with the concept of Institutional repositories, explains the need for establishment of repositories by academic libraries. Especially the university libraries, which are meant for catering the higher academic needs of researchers and teachers, have to procure books on diverse subjects and their serial holdings is also very large. Even the so-called large libraries are also finding it difficult to manage their overcrowded stacks which have resulted from an increase in scholarly publishing and the high cost of traditional library buildings. All this have made the repository an attractive option.

Keywords: Academic libraries, repository library, collaborative repository.

Introduction

In the dynamic world of academic libraries, no library will succeed for very long unless it manages its most valuable resource, i.e. its collection as effectively as possible to extend maximum services to its users. Present society is a knowledge based society, where knowledge is the major creative force. In a knowledge society, the economic status of country is decided by its information resources. Information being the basic resource for knowledge expansion has divided the world into information haves and have-nots.

In the academic libraries where the users comes with multidisciplinary requirements, varied documents related to each subject have to procured and maintained in the collection. In the print era, libraries were acquiring and maintaining the volumes in large numbers. But with the availability of huge online academic resource the policy of maintaining print holdings in the libraries is being debated.

Space Constraint in Libraries

In the changing times, though many aspects of libraries are often discussed in various platforms, yet the burning and practical problem of space constraint in the academic libraries is hardly addressed. Coupled with the increase in collection, the academic libraries - which have to cater to the different needs of users and provide access to information in varied forms under the single roof - are yielding place to the hybrid libraries. Most of earlier academic library buildings were not built with a vision of providing IT based services. This has added to the problem of ever present space constraint in the libraries.

There is no denying the fact that only the collection goes on increasing but there is no corresponding extension of building and other infrastructure due to stringent budgets. This results in problem for accommodating the new acquisitions in the library.. .

Repositories

The Concept of repositories was floated by Eliot way back in 1902 when he noted that "rapid access to well organized repository is probably quicker than retrieving un-catalogued material from the deeper recesses of individual library collection". It is an accepted fact that most of the libraries are facing the space constraints to house their collections. Academic libraries are facing this problem more as their weeding

policy is different from the public libraries.

Collaborative Repositories

Among the variety of media, paper based materials accounts for the largest portion of research collections. For centuries the university libraries have been the house of written record of human intellectual achievement. Hence, if the university libraries of a region collaborate and preserve their less used collection under a single roof, it forms a collaborative repository. It may be defined as "... a means through which multiple institutions work together and pool resources to manage significant portion of their holdings.

Establishment of repository, libraries when viewed from the economic angle by the institution, turns out to be economically viable because repositories are cheaper to build and the capital and running costs for storing individual volumes is considerably less than that of a conventional library. The purpose of repository being storing but not facilitating browsing can accommodate many more volumes in the same area; in other words the density of storage is far greater in a repository.

Leading Repositories of the World & India

Accommodating the growing collection is a problem faced by the librarians across the world. Librarians from different parts of the world have formed their own groups and have established repositories. They may vary in their organizational set up, but the ultimate objective of preserving the valued collection for the future generation remains the same.

There are many repository libraries functioning across the globe, some of the leading repositories of the world are as follows, CRL Center for research libraries, Chicago is a leading repository. It was founded in 1949 as a regional repository by 10 Midwestern Universities and now has 150 member colleges and universities. Its holdings consist of low-use primary source materials for research. Its goal is to make best use of resources and to provide for the scholars of the future most rich and diverse pool of knowledge possible.

The Five College repository of Ohio was founded in 1995 with funding from the Andrew W. Melton foundation. The participating five colleges are Hampshire College, Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College and University of Massachusetts. This Collaborative repository offers substantial cost savings through the elimination of duplication of copies stored in the repository and it guarantees ready access to original paper copies of research materials.

In India, some institutions, like Indian Institute of Science; Indian Institute Management, Kozhikode; Indian Statistical Institute, Bangalore; Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi; National Institute of Technology Rourkela; National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL); National Chemical Laboratory; Information and Library Network (INFLIBNET); National Institute of Oceanography; Raman Research Institute; etc. have set up open access institutional repositories (IRs) that archive and disseminate research outputs of respective institutions. While self-archiving by authors is slowly picking up, mostly it is IR staff that collect and archive the documents to respective IRs on behalf of authors. There are some subject specific IRs as well, Librarian's Digital Library (LDL) of Documentation Research and Training Center (DRTC), Bangalore and OpenMed@NIC of National Informatics Centre, New Delhi are examples giving access to LIS and biomedical literature respectively. Vidyanidhi of University of Mysore is an example of document type specific collection that archives and provides access to theses and dissertations of Indian Universities. Some archives like OpenMed@NIC offer RSS (Really Simple Syndication or Rich Site Summary) feeds to the registered users, who also get notification on addition of new items in

regular intervals. Search engines and metadata harvesters index most of the Indian operational repositories. Registry of Open Access Repositories (ROAR) from University of Southampton lists out 22 IRs of Academic and Research Institutions in India. These IRs have adopted self-archiving model and have been using two most popular open source software – Dspace and GNU Eprints. Somehow ROAR has not listed few Indian IRs such as that of Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (www.icrier.org/publications.html), IITB (www.library.iitb.ac.in/~mnj/gsdl/cgi-bin/library), IIT Kanpur (library.iitk.ac.in:8080/examples/thesis/index.html), INSA Digital Library (drtc.isibang.ac.in/insa), Vidhyanidhi of University of Mysore (www.vidhyanidhi.org.in).

The benefits of establishment of a Repository

Repository of less used and valuable collection are multifold.

l   The problem of space constraints in the libraries   will be solved.

2. The life of the less used collection will be   lengthened under controlled environmental

   conditions in the repository.

3. The new collection can be accommodated easily

4. The libraries can make room for IT based services

5. The collection in the library will be easier to maintain

6. Users find the collection of the library neat and convenient to browse

7.   Users will have access to the valuable collection of other universities libraries through the repository

8. The administrative authorities will be relieved from the pressure for extension of library buildings

Initially the network may be started in few states where the number of old libraries with huge collection is more and the transactions may be limited to the universities of that state. The strengths and weaknesses of the network should be identified and the guidelines and policies must be framed accordingly.

Conclusion

Repositories are established to conserve and transmit authentic documents of historical or scientific value for the generations to come. The repository library can play a much stronger   and definitive role in provision of information across our systems. Also the librarians should start thinking beyond their institutions and it is time that they agreed that the strength of library is not the quantity of its collection. The academic libraries represent an indispensable link in knowledge innovation. Knowledge management in libraries is to promote relationship between libraries, between library and users and to strengthen the network to quicken the flow of knowledge. Knowledge is the most important resource in the present era. Hence society depends on the continued availability of historical and cultural records that chronicle political events, document achievements in the arts, track scientific discoveries and capture human experience. These records are of immense value to society in helping to understand the past, shape its view of the present and plan for future.

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