

## USE AND MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION RESOURCES: A REALITY?

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**ABSTRACT:** The need for information about people and institutions is growing day by day. The growing in specialization is forcing us to create better control of information. The subject is even more applicable to libraries because being responsible we have the challenge of taking advantage of this information, keeping in mind, that everything is proportional. We have a large amount of information and we will need to increase our informatics resources such as hardware, software, human-ware, etc. That's why we need a quick and clever solution to the need.

First, it is necessary to create the bridge between the expert in information technology and the marine sciences user so one can appreciate the advantages of the new technologies in order to create an active actor instead of being a passive one.

With the purpose to provide the users a global vision of the technologies and systems that we have, it would be good to qualify it for an optimum use of the resources through conferences, manuals, courses, etc. which should be functional for the end user.

Finally, we should work on understanding the value of tendencies of the new era of digital information, always seeking a greater commitment of the experts for the working-out of digital resources. This will allow us to improve the image of our library web page that is extremely important for us because of the regional orientation.

Actually, we are working hard trying to improve the cover, the efficiency of the regional library "Dra. María Elena Caso Muñoz," by using the implementation of an automatic bibliographic information system, and also with the increase of the information available on the web about the bibliographic material and to provide a more efficient service to the community.

Currently we are working on a system that permit us to pass on our information contained in a proprietary system to a system like Micro Isis. This one allows us to handle standard formats, like MARC, and with this incorporate all using the protocols bases already distributed to the colleagues of the IAMSLIC that already provide this helpful service. There are a lot of things to do, but involving users, authorities and colleagues, we will arrive at a safe port and succeed in all our goals as a team.

Before talking about information resources, we should discuss the aspects around this phenomenon: digital age, users, and information services.

Regarding the digital age, a so-called subject in the current commercial relations worldwide, it is common to find sites with an incipient development on this matter in comparison to the more powerful countries. It may sound exaggerated but developing countries are scarcely noted for their scientific and technological development. It is clear that in the project of building an information society, especially for the United States and the European Union, Latin-American countries were not considered and/or the necessary financial resources for technology were not applied. Additionally, a new ideology has been imposed; nowadays it is very common to find words as globalization, quality of services, efficiency, productivity, automated processes, high-speed networks, technological convergence, virtuality, etc. Such ideology is transforming our culture and vision of the world.

The perception of this “technological revolution” should not include the misconception of the Latin-American region as a new way of exploitation based on the application of the digital technology in our current way of life. We must accept new things that can transform our culture. We cannot close our doors and deny the importance of the technological innovations that can improve the quality of life in our societies.

Now the importance of print in terms of the access to knowledge is very clear; however, in the XV century the amanuenses monks used to say that print was an invention of the devil and reading of printed texts was forbidden. They thought it could threaten the privileges they had. Fortunately, nowadays our attitude is very different and the work of librarians is centered not only in books or printed documents but something more flexible, fluid, lighter and abstract: knowledge. Now we have information centers instead of libraries, and information services instead of processing and storage of documents. Social transformations involve every component of society; the libraries from yesterday are not the same as those of today and those of the future. In our times, with all the changes that we are experiencing a new conception and functions of libraries is under way.

The change in the theory and practice of library science is understandable, organization and storage of books, magazines, newspapers, etc. is no longer a priority; instead, the efforts of librarians are now focused on the automatic and digital services and on the access to information through local and remote nets. Thus, libraries of today are not only the site for storing documents but also the channel through which knowledge is made available to users. The user is the reason for the existence of libraries. If we do not want libraries to become museums, we must be ready to give attention to two types of users: those who are aware of the technological advances in the field of information and communications service, and those who perhaps are the most numerous and go to libraries in search of knowledge they can not afford independently.

The success of the above depends on our creativity as well as our capacity for finding the available resources. We must be aware that in this digital age, technology is an instrument for easier connections between the information and the user.

The need for information in our institutions and users force us to create better mechanisms for organizing such information and we must improve our informatics culture. Among the main deficiencies are the lack of personnel, economic resources, fast connections to the web and subscriptions to diverse journals.

Then, are we talking about a chimera? Is it impossible to access to diverse resources of information? The answer should be no!

Even though the lack of skilled personnel is an important variable, we can find mechanisms for solving this deficiency. We must remember to take baby steps; furthermore, software and hardware are expensive but other "freeware" (for instance the ones developed by UNESCO) can be used with inexpensive equipment, free operative systems (LINUX) and free web servers (APACHE). In other words, we could say that the solution is within our reach.

Before looking for the best tools for our libraries, we should identify the needs of our users. Usually, we offer diverse services based on what we think the users need; unfortunately, some colleagues do not really know the library where they work. The challenge is to find out about the needs and conditions of the community we are serving. Such knowledge is basic for planning and operating modern information services.

It is also wise to create the necessary links to the experts of computing technologies and create an adequate evaluation of the different alternatives for solving the problems. The use of manuals, conferences, courses; discussion lists, etc. can be the solution for places where no qualified personnel exist. As a proposal for IAMSLIC or ODINCARSA, it would be important to create a list of advisors for assistance.

In conclusion, we consider that the libraries of our region should hold the appropriate technological information in order to help users and reduce the tremendous gap between developed and developing countries. This will help to change the economical and political dependence of our region.

Lastly, at our "MECASO" library we think that we have understood the user needs and our efforts are directed towards an updated database; however, we still need to improve our services considering that our regular users are not only local people but also web users.

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