



Libraries – 2020: Issues in Addressing Inequality

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Inequality

- How to ensure equality of opportunity to access information across countries
- Some are more equal (George Orwell)
- Hence, the euphemisms
 - Third world countries
 - Under-developed countries
 - Developing countries
 - Economically-challenged countries :-)

Open Mantra

- Open Access to Information
- Open Source Software
- Open Standards
- Open Courseware

- Use
 - Open Source Software
 - Open Standards
- to create
 - Open Content
 - Open Courseware
- To ensure
 - Open access to information
 - Open societies ?

- Many Universities in India do not have Internet Connectivity
- Cell phones are one of the cheapest in the world, paradoxically Internet access costs are still high.
- Power problems can drive scientists to become ascetics

- More awareness among library community than the scientific & research community (bottom-up approach)
- National Knowledge commission only recommended institutional repositories, did not mandate it (top-down approach)
- Sporadic advocacy by individuals, could not impress upon the federal government or heads of the institutions

Broad Issues

- Political Issues
- Economic Issues
- Legal Issues
- Infrastructural Issues
- Technology Issues

Political Issues

- Progress of digital repositories, open access journals is impressive – but a lot more is desired
- How to convince scientists to support open Access to information
- How to convince governments to mandate Open Access to Information
- How to make information liberation a movement?

Economic Issues

- All the institutional heads take pride to state their library is the hub/heart of their institute. In case of financial crunch, library budget is the first to be axed, if not the librarian
- For less funded libraries Open Content is a solution
- How can the library fraternity help others with subscribed/priced information? Consortia is a marketing trick.
- However, hardware and internet connectivity still pose challenges.

Legal Issues

- Copyright laws are legal. Are they ethical?
- How to liberate information from legal tangles?
- author/user friendly copyright laws at global level.
- Especially, transfer of copyright should be addressed

Technological Issues

- How to make content future-proof?
 - How to make information reusable in future irrespective of the current formats/media
 - Open standards is one solution, migration issues could be costly.
- How libraries could exploit Grid Technology?

- Internet may break geographical barrier
- Breaking language barrier requires lot more effort
- Breaking politically prejudiced barriers -- a Herculean task (Cleaning the Augean stables in a single day)

Role of Librarians

- Library should provide access to information
- Publish and focus institutional research activities to the rest of the world
- More organized effort in not only organizing networked information, but also networking researchers and research activities

Required Technologies

- Semantic Web to provide web-based information services
- Mining technology for resource discovery
- Intelligent agents to filter information
- Open source OpenURL software

Research Issues

- We can contribute developing ontologies/ folksonomies with the experience in library classification
- We can help in developing metadata schema with the experience in MARC and authority files
- how to harvest metadata from non-OAI compliant journals/resources. In other words, automatic generation of metadata.

Research Issues cont...

- Can we build a freely downloadable world-wide shared cataloging of print and web-based information (Open WorldCat).
- There was a debate (unsuccessful), whether we should have .lib. Should we have to re-investigate to easily identify library resources and services.
- Should libraries provide access to information, OR, help accessing information.

Research Issues cont...

- measuring how much information available on the web, how much we do help accessing
- How much we provided, how much we have filtered (if we do not find what we are searching, we search even the trash bin)
- how do we measure information scattered in deep web
- measuring ease of information access

Research Issues cont...

- How to organize
 - Large data Sets
 - Peer Reviewed information
 - Information filtered by peer reviewers, if scientists still publish using the web technology (Peer reviewing is great but not without pitfalls)
 - In brief, how to organize information on the web (Internet! Thy name is chaos)

- Is it Global Research Libraries?
- Or, Global Research Library?
 - Distributed, yet virtually and transparent

Will there be libraries?

- As long as humanity exists, it requires information. Therefore, we will exist
- With information glut, we do require people who can selectively disseminate/filter information
- the form of the libraries may change, not the content/essence (Form Vs. Content: An old philosophical and beaten issue).

- Thank you for your patience
- Thanks to the organizers for inviting & supporting my participation