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Development of Library Portal– In Print and Non-Print Era

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Abstract Libraries are rapidly changing and expanding to web-based delivery of content and related access services to cater the information needs and expectations of their modern users. One approach is to design and develop multi tired architectures that include an integration layer providing programme level services for user level applications such as a portal. The library portal is a tool to organize information resources and services in a way that supports the users' needs. However, LIS professionals should be aware about portal technology, its applications in academics and usability of the portal which is based on effective content management system. Library portal is key to knowledge, it is an effective Tool for Web-enabled information Services. The main aim of this paper is to highlight the historical development of library portal and the role of the librarian in developing significant library portal.
Keywords *Library Portals; Library Automation; Portal Approach*

1. Introduction

Libraries provide effective services to the academic community by selecting and organizing information resources, and disseminating information resources supports research and education. As the use of electronic resources has grown libraries have developed 'Library Portal' or 'Gateway Systems', online to provide some of these selection and organization services in the digital era. Retrieval of library information resources has undergone rapid changes in post liberalization. The credit goes to impact of Information Communication and Technology in different fields of economy. Availability of data and information in different format has become the need of information maker and information searcher due to complexity of various forms of information resources. Library has been considered as the knowledge hub based on which Managers and top executives can take important business decisions in time. The need of library portal was first realized on the user's wide use of Internet in all the fields. This paper aims to study the situation of library portal (Knowledge Bank) before and after the computerization and its benefit to different facet of users.

2. What is a Portal?

The "portal" is called as an entry point to a world of resources, [1] purposely designed to save the users' time, to act as a best guide to library users with relevant resources, and to motivate the maximum use of acquired resources, free resources available on it [2].

1) "A Portal is a website that collects information for a group of users that have common interest" [4].
2) "A variety of useful information into a single, 'one-stop' web-page, helping the user to avoid being overwhelmed by 'Infoglut' or feeling lost on the web" [8].

The term "portal" describes a variety of web based interfaces at one place [5]. It is also called as one-stop homepage where users can customize the content to meet their information needs. It is also called as a place to return to when user get lost, a place to store the user's information and a place from which to communicate with others.

Origin of Portal

The word "portal" is derived from the Latin word "porta", which translates to "gate" [9]. In the context of network, the portal server acts as gateway to the enterprise. Web portals originated from web search engines in the early 1990s to its mature model in the late 1990s. It was a hot commodity at that time. Excite was among the first portal to offer users the ability to create a site that is personalized for individual interest. "Portal" has been the buzzword of the networked age since 1997. Portals were so popular in business-to-business (B2B) and business-to-consumers (B2C) applications. After the proliferation of web browsers in the late 1990s many companies tried to build or acquire a portal to have a piece of the Internet market [12]. The history of current Web portal can be traced back to the Boolean Search technology develop in 1994 and 1995, Web portal refers to only the website that can be customized by individual users. Recently the Portal Technology is becoming popular in education system [8] and in libraries and Information Centers which gave birth to the concept Library Portal.

3. What is a Library Portal?

The developments in information and communication technologies (ICT) and their application in library and information science (LIS) have forced information professionals to change the way they are functioning their role in modern libraries. Because of the popularity with the users, an overwhelming attention is being given to the web-based information services in libraries [6]. Thus, LIS professionals understand the importance of Library portals in higher education. It enhances the value of electronic resources with functions such as resource description & discovery, combined searching of multiple resources, context-sensitive linking, and personalized services. It is define as,

"Library portal is a single-user interface for accessing wide variety of electronic resources, both within and outside the library" [14]

Library portals are also called as an information hub. It is a density of resources and services on the network. A 'portfolio' of resources, potentially customized to specific role or individual interests. An aggregation or collection of resources organized to assist particular categories of users. A library portal mediates the engagement of users and resources in a network environment [2].

4. Development of Library Portal in Print Era

Though the term 'Library Portal' appears new in this digital era, it has found that it's deeply rooted from print era when in traditional library users were using Card Catalogues to cater their information needs. In historical days Card Catalogue was acting as a 'Portal' or 'Single Stop' to find desired

printed information [11]. Card catalogue was an effective tool for information discovery in the library. Library catalogs originated as manuscript lists, arranged by format (folio, quarto, etc.) or in a rough alphabetical arrangement by author. Printed catalogs, sometimes called dictionary catalogs enabled scholars outside a library to gain an idea of its contents. These would sometimes be interleaved with blank leaves on which additions could be recorded, or bound as guard books in which slips of paper were bound in for new entries. Slips could also be kept loose in cardboard or tin boxes, stored on shelves. The first card catalogs appeared in the nineteenth century, enabling much more flexibility, and towards the end of the twentieth century the OPAC was developed Card catalogs are now electronic databases that are called Online Public Access Catalogs (OPACS) for short.

5. Development of Library Portals in Non- Print Era

Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) is a long term which is now transformed and known as "electronic library catalog" or the "library database". Now it has become a buzz word and very rarely we find paper cards in modern libraries. Though, those good old cards catalogues had/have value but now OPAC also offer lots of features. The evolution of library automation systems starts with the development of the Web OPAC. It has a basic feature like the ability to search a library's catalogue remotely, through an easy-to-use and nontechnical interface has opened up the resources of many libraries in a way that could not have been envisaged earlier. The second stage in this development has been the extension of these OPACs, to allow it to search remote metadata (primarily through Z39.50) [9] and more recently, local & remote digital information, allowing primitive 'interoperability' between the library system and the other resources available on web and opened a new, innovative digital platform for libraries.

6. Birth of Library Portal

The Library portal is growing in its importance as the preferred way of organizing and using information in libraries. The Web portals became positive potential frameworks for achieving order out of chaos [10]. As portals become a primary means for transacting information and commerce, libraries of all types are becoming involved in thinking, planning and building various frameworks and services for their libraries. LIS professional should aware that the concept is not new in Library and Information Science field. 'Library Portal' is nothing but a combination of OPAC and Web discovery tools. Librarians and library automation companies have started calling this combination of OPAC and broader discovery tools known as 'library portal'. Librarians need to recognize that the portal is not a new concept; it is transformation of Card catalogue into Library portals [13]. Many libraries were in impression that the portal is a very narrow concept, but it is not, it born out of an extension of the traditional Web OPAC.
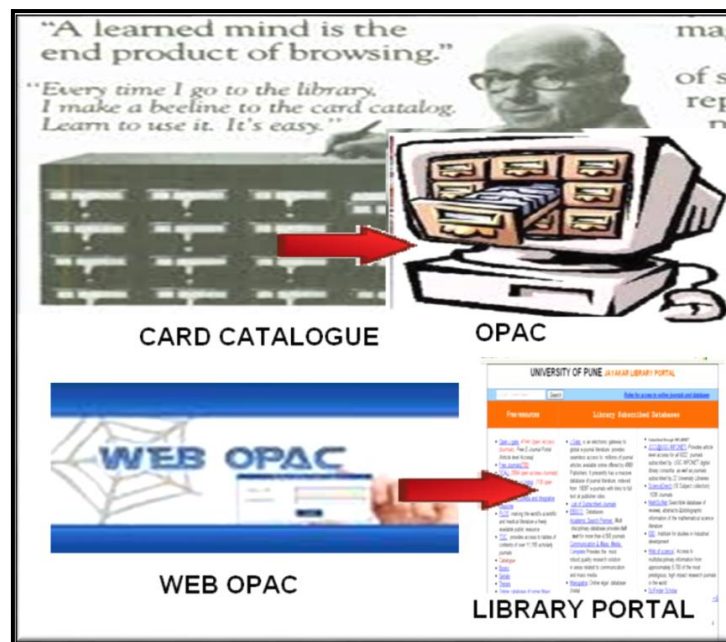
Figure 1: Evolution of Library Portal

The portal gives the library a tool to channel users towards preferred resources. As this tool is invented by librarians it is essential to adopt this technology in the modern libraries. Librarian should be positive towards the new technology and its effective implementation to cater the users need.

7. Role of a Librarian in the Development of Library Portal

Library portals need librarianship skills and library-managed content to be truly effective. As efficient educators who organize and evaluate information resources, academic librarians bring unique perspectives and skills to the development of portals in their colleges and universities to campus portal planning and implementation, they bring their expertise with content, their knowledge of copyright, their commitment to customer service, and their experience in creating customized web-based information delivery systems.

Librarians need to actively engage with enterprise portal projects, both to add value and to preserve their role in the enterprise. In this scenario the library portal has the same issues that other targets have, including how to define the attributes and entitlements necessary to determine what resources and services to offer the user. But the portal must also implement access policy for a wide range of resources in order to present the appropriate links to the user. These rules may make use of entitlement attributes from the origin or be based on group membership attributes that are associated in the portal with authorization for certain resources. Academic librarians can provide credible content that has been selected for a specific learning community. The students who may have difficulty determining what is valuable and what is useless on the web, the librarians offers a safe harbor in a flood of information. Thus, Librarian's role is very important in designing and implementing Library portal system on the web.

8. Conclusion

Library portal is an art and science of the usage and application of library knowledge for decisions as well as research purposes which will in turn support our education system. Portal technology is about to become very significant, and is both an opportunity and a threat to the library. The use of Library card system was replaced by Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) which is further developed as

Web-OPAC, further it transformed into Library Portals. Library Portal plays significant role in the advancement of the education system. Library portal is meant to create a nascent mind turned into a well-developed, talented mind. Well-developed mind means the capability of creating new ideas and theories and its application in the challenging world. In this social networking era, to fulfill the ever increasing requirements of users in a most efficient manner, there is a need for every library to provide its services and collection through an easy interface by developing a library portal.

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