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ELECTRONIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: E-RESOURCE ACQUISITION AND LICENSING IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

Emerged ICT has changed the traditional concept of the library. Libraries are fast moving in this Internet era from the manual mode of action to digital access. Technological integration has redefined library services. By collecting diverse resources, the digital library has brought a new dimension to how library services operate in collecting varied resources. As libraries increase their dependence on these resources, their effective management becomes essential. Electronic resource management (ERM) subsequently became a core function that many academics effective implementation seems to be challenging for libraries around the world. It is helpful in the teaching-learning process and promotes research and development. This paper would help the librarians to understand the challenges in procuring and managing electronic resources and to take appropriate measures to avoid the issues related. The aim of the paper is to provide an overview of procurement policies, current trends, issues and challenges faced by the library professionals to provide an effective electronic resource collection to its users in a better way.

Key Words: *Academic libraries, Electronic resources, Electronic resource Management, E-Resources Acquisition Methods, E-Resource Licensing*

Introduction

The traditional concept of the library has changed with emergence of ICT. The concepts of electronic library, digital library, and virtual library came into the present situation. ERM stands for Electronic Resource Management, referring to the processes, practices, and software systems libraries use to handle digital materials like e-journals, databases, and e-books throughout their lifecycle, from selection, acquisition, licensing, and access to ongoing maintenance, usage tracking, evaluation, and preservation. ERM systems help manage complex subscription details, license agreements, access rights, and usage statistics. Smith (2006) viewed that electronic resource management (ERM) is an area of technical services responsible for the evaluation, selection, pricing, securing, maintenance and provision of electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books and databases. As e-collections explode in size and use, Electronic Resource Management (ERM) became a specialized, distinct job within library acquisitions, requiring unique skills for librarians to manage digital assets like e-journals and databases. Anderson et al. (2004) Described an ERMS as a system to manage information and workflows for various stages of electronic resources, including selection, evaluation, acquisition, maintenance, and access, in accordance with their terms. IFLA While defining e-resources, points out the need for management related to aspects like access control and licensing.

Electronic Resource Management (ERM) within the context of library science refers to the systematic approach and set of practices employed by libraries to acquire, organize, maintain, and provide access to electronic resources. These electronic resources encompass various digital materials, including e-books, e-journals, databases, streaming media, and other digital content. ERM involves various tasks such as acquisition, cataloging, licensing, authentication, access management, usage monitoring, and preservation of electronic resources. The primary goal of ERM is to ensure that library patrons have seamless access to a diverse array of electronic resources while efficiently managing the complexities associated with digital materials, including licensing agreements, copyright compliance, budget constraints, and technological requirements. By implementing effective ERM strategies, libraries can optimize the use of electronic resources, enhance user experience, and fulfill their mission of providing equitable access to information in the digital age.

E-Resources Acquisition Methods

The process of identifying, selecting, and obtaining electronic materials like databases, e-journals, and e-books for library users called Acquisition. Benny, (2015) in his study said that, E-resources can be acquired either through purchase, subscription or consortia, he further stated that, subscription to e-resource is the commonly used method by a large number of libraries for acquiring e-resources. There are four methods of acquiring electronic resources in academic libraries according to Creibaum and Holloway (2017) these are: Subscription, Purchase, Consortium and Open Access. Library acquisitions is the process of selecting and acquiring selected materials for library and information centers in all formats including digital items and maintaining the necessary records related to acquisitions. First, the selections of materials are done according to the collection development policy of the library. User recommendations, subject relevance, network capability, user-friendliness, content relevance, and retrieval efficiency.

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Subscription Model: Most common method of acquisition is subscriptions method. Libraries pay a recurring fee (annual/multi-year) for access. Access ends when the subscription expires just like subscribing to Netflix for content. Examples: Publisher packages (Taylor & Francis, Emerald), Aggregators (JSTOR, Project MUSE, EBSCO collections).

Advantages: Access to updated content. Predictable costs.

Limitations: No ownership, Continuous budget commitment.

Perpetual Access: Subscription by purchase method is called perpetual access method. A one-time purchase for ongoing access, often with optional annual maintenance/support fees. Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA). Library pays once and retains permanent access. Often applies to e-books and back files of journals.

Advantages: Long-term value. No recurring payments.

Limitations: High upfront cost. Limited updates.

Consortia-Based Acquisition: Multiple libraries form a consortium to negotiate pricing. Shared access to e-resources.

Advantages: Cost-effective. Broader resource access

Limitations: Limited choice flexibility. Dependent on consortium policies.

Demand-Driven Acquisition (DDA) / Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA): Resources are purchased only when users access or request them.Widely used for e-books.

Advantages: User-centric. Reduces unused purchases

Limitations: Budget unpredictability. May favor popular over scholarly works

Open Access (OA) Resources: Allow free access to scholarly content. Includes OA journals, repositories, and databases. unrestricted access to scholarly works, often under Creative Commons (CC) licenses for non-commercial share, adapt, use commercially, build upon, Share, adapt, build upon (non-commercial only) or open-source software licenses (GPL, Apache) for the platforms themselves.

Advantages: No cost. Supports knowledge equity

Limitations: Variable quality. Coverage may be limited.

Academic libraries adopt multiple acquisition methods based on budget, user needs, and institutional goals. A balanced approach ensures cost-effective access, sustainability, and user satisfaction.

E-Resource Licensing

Digital content use is managed by specific licensing contract agreements between users and owners, detailing allowed actions like viewing, sharing, modifying beyond basic copyright, because online interactions require defined terms of service and usage rights, not just the blanket protections of copyright law. In short, "Digital content access is governed by specific license contracts, not solely copyright, as these agreements legally define usage rights and restrictions online". The statement delineates permissible actions and access parameters, such as specifying authorized users or IPs and defining rights to print or share content, while also outlining conditions like data privacy, thereby extending clarification beyond the scope of fair use.

Electronic Resource Management (ERM) licenses for libraries and institutions dictate access rules for digital materials like journals, e-books, and databases, operating on models such as one-time perpetual purchases or recurring subscriptions [1]. Access is typically managed via methods like IP authentication, proxy servers, or Shibboleth, and licenses fall under categories including publisher collections (e.g., SAGE, OUP), aggregated platforms (e.g., JSTOR, EBSCO), and open access agreements (like GPL or Apache), all focused on defining authorized users within secure networks.

Electronic Resource Management Within the context of library science Electronic Resource Management (ERM) refers to the systematic approach and set of practices employed by libraries to acquire, organize, maintain, and provide access to electronic resources. These available wide variety of electronic resources are including e-books, electronic journals, databases, and digital content like streaming media. ERM involves various tasks such as acquisition, cataloging, licensing, authentication, access management, usage monitoring, and preservation of electronic resources. The primary goal of Electronic Resource Management (ERM) is to efficiently manage the entire lifecycle of digital library materials (like e-journals, databases) so users get easy, reliable, and consistent access to a wide variety of online resources, ensuring users find what they need without hassle. In simpler terms, ERM helps libraries handle the complex backend (subscriptions,

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licenses, access) so patrons have a smooth front-end experience finding and using e-resources. By implementing effective ERM strategies, effective Electronic Resource Management (ERM) helps libraries manage digital content better, making it easier for users to find and use, which supports their goal of providing fair digital access for everyone.

Advantages of E-Resources

24/7 remote access: One of the major advantages of electronic resources is its uninterrupted 24/7 remote access facility throughout the year. Enabling simultaneous use provided remotely hence eliminates the geographical barrier to access the resources. Further, the same resource can be used simultaneously by many users from different locations. The cost of publication and distribution is less than the print versions.

Saving Space and Time: There is no issue related to physical space for accessing the resource. Save time by providing easy and instant access without wasting time for processing, printing, binding, and delivery. Eliminates printing, binding and postage costs Facilitate easy duplication.

Instant Search Across Vast Collections: It also supports resource sharing without wasting much time of the user.

Contents can be acquired very easily and can easily be viewed, downloaded and preserved and they provide up-to-date information, cost-efficiency, and sustainability. It also provides online feedback facility to comment on the resources used by the users. The resources can be easily searched and retrieved using search interfaces by providing different search keywords.

Disadvantages

The academic libraries face enormous challenges in the acquisition and access of e-resources. There are many disadvantages as the initial cost of e-resources is very high. Require special equipment to access which are expensive. Hardware and software compatibility problem. Lack of compatibility among different publishers. Lack of awareness on IT skills for usage of e-resource. Use of products according to the user's requirement is not possible. It has certain technological restrictions. Lack of uniform standards in the retrieval of e-resources from different publishers create problems in their usage. Users have to acquire certain skills before hand in accessing the electronic documents. Copyright violation problem

Conclusion

Electronic Resource Management has become a vital function of modern libraries, especially academic and research libraries, as digital resources continue to dominate scholarly communication. Effective ERM ensures the systematic selection, acquisition, licensing, organization, access, and evaluation of electronic resources such as e-journals, e-books, databases, and institutional repositories. A well-structured ERM system helps libraries maximize the value of their investments by improving accessibility, ensuring compliance with license terms, enabling usage analysis, and supporting informed decision-making. It also enhances user satisfaction by providing seamless and reliable access to digital content anytime and anywhere. Despite challenges such as rising costs, complex licensing models, technological changes, and preservation issues, efficient electronic resource management allows libraries to adapt to the evolving information environment. In conclusion, ERM is not merely a technical process but a strategic activity that supports teaching, learning, and research, reinforcing the library's role as a key knowledge facilitator in the digital age.

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