



Digital Library: Concepts, Definitions, Importance and Advantages

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Abstract: *The development of computer and communication technology has led to development of electronic devices and has changed the traditional libraries to digital libraries. This paper discusses the concept and definition of digital libraries, importance of digital library and advances of digital library.*

Keywords: *Digital Library, Electronic Devices, Networks, Communication Technology.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term digital library has a variety of meanings ranging from a digital collection of material that one strength find in a traditional library to the collection of all digital information along with the services that make that information useful to all possible users. Digital libraries have changed as a result of fast technological development in order to provide to the needs of individuals with varying interests in various fields. Although the term digital library has increased popularity in recent years, such libraries they have changed along the technological ladder for the past 30 years. There is lot of interest in digital libraries today.

In spite of the excess of literature it is not clear what we mean by the term “Digital Library”. The term is rarely defined, or even characterized. It has been applied to an extraordinary range of applications from digital collaborators to collection of electronic journals, software agents that support inquiry based education, collection of e-mail and similar objects, electronic version of a public library, personal library collection and the entire internet among others. It is not easy to see what these have in common except for their digitization. A digital library contains digital representation of the object found in it.

Most understanding of “digital library” probably also assumes that it will be accessible via the internet, though not necessarily to everyone. But the idea of digitization is perhaps the only characteristic of a digital library on which there is universal agreement. Digital library is popularly viewed as an electronic version of a library. The term digital library evokes a different impression in various groups. To some it simply means computerization of traditional libraries. But to others who have studied library science, it indicates carrying out the function of libraries in a new way, encompassing new types of information resources, new approaches to acquisition, new methods of storage and preservation, more reliance on electronic systems and networks. But to a computer professional, a digital library is simply a distributed text-based information system, a collection of distributed information service, etc. A digital library is a library of digital documents, artifacts and records. The advantages of having library material in digital form are:

- (i) The content occupies less space and can be replicated and used electronically,
- (ii) The content can be made available on networks,
- (iii) The search for content can be automated.

II. CONCEPTS

The working group of the US Government’s Information Infrastructure Technology and Applications defined the digital library as ‘system’ providing user with a coherent access to a very large organized depository of information and knowledge. R. R.

Larson defined digital library as a global virtual library – the libraries of thousands of “networked electronic libraries”. The digital library need not be networked. A digital library is a library which has all the information in electronic form and having electronic devices to have access to the digitized information. Thus digital library is a library which has number of machine-readable publications and facilities for remote access to several databases.

III. DEFINITIONS

1. The American Digital Library Federation (2002) has defined the digital library as “Digital libraries are organizations that provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret,



- distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collection of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities.”
2. The Stanford Digital library projects states that “Integrated digital library will create a shared environment linking everything-personal information collection to collection of conventional libraries to large data collection shared by scientists. Integrated virtual libraries provide an era of new services, uniform access to networked information collection”.
 3. Edwaeed A. Fox, “A digital library is a distributed technology environment which dramatically reduces barriers to the creation, dissemination, manipulation, storage, integration and reuse of information by individuals and groups”
 4. Digital Library Federation, “ Digital libraries are organizations that provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to, interpret, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use a by a defined community or set of communities”.
 5. Gary Marchionini, “Digital library is a concept that has different meaning in different communities. To the engineering and computer science community, digital library is a metaphor for the new kinds of distributed data base services that manage unstructured multimedia data. To the political and business communities, the term represents a new marketplace for the world’s information resources and services. To futurist communities, digital libraries represent the manifestation of Wells’ World Brain. The perspective taken here is rooted in an information science tradition”

“A digital library is a machine readable representation of materials which might be found in a university library together with organizing information intended to help users find specific information. A digital library service is an assemblage of digital computing, storage and communicates machinery together with the software needed to reprise, emulate and extend the services provided by conventional libraries based on paper and other material means of collecting, string, cataloging, finding and disseminating information”.

From the above definitions it is possible to describe some prominent characteristics of digital library.

- The digital library is not a single entity.
- The digital library requires the technology to link the resources of many.
- The linkage between the many digital libraries and information services are transparent to the end users.
- Universal access to all information is a goal.
- Digital library collections are not limited to document substitutes.
- They extend to digital artefacts that cannot represent to distribute to printed formats.

In short, “Digital Library is an organized collection of digital resources or information which is available at anywhere, anytime and can be accessed by anybody”.

IV. IMPORTANCE OF DIGITAL LIBRARY

Digital Libraries are organizations that employ and display a variety of resources, especially the intellectual resources embodied in specialized staff. Digital are providing useful products and hence these any have many credits:

- ✓ It select, structure, offer intellectual access, interprets, distribute, preserve integrity, and ensure persistence. It is subject to the special requirement of operating in a rapidly evolving electronic and network environment.
 - ✓ It preserves integrity.
 - ✓ It ensures persistence. The integrity of digital object is measures in terms of contents, fixity, reference, provenance and context.
 - ✓ Digital libraries need to development criteria for measuring their performance in an evolving and highly competitive environment.
 - ✓ One essential measure of the quality of service evaluates performance in terms of cost.
 - ✓ A second essential measure of service quality takes account of how willing and how responsively a digit library makes information available to its patron community.
- (a) Access databases containing titles and descriptions of digital objects.
 - (b) CDs containing folders of hundreds of images.
 - (c) Web pages offering prototype public access to images and documents.
 - (d) A library catalogue system holding MARC records of object metadata.

V. ADVANTAGES OF DIGITAL LIBRARY

The following are some of the major advantages of digital library.



- ❖ Faster addition to the collection with better quality control.
- ❖ Improved search functionality.
- ❖ Faster access to information found.
- ❖ More freedom and reduced bureaucracy for individual users.
- ❖ Access anywhere.
- ❖ Distributed storage-central access.
- ❖ Better cataloguing.
- ❖ Cross references to other documents. Full-text search.
- ❖ Protected information service.
- ❖ Wide exploration and exploitation of the information.
- ❖ Promote universal accessibility.
- ❖ Protecting rare books that are rapidly deteriorating due to over use and poor storage conditions.
- ❖ The user can peruse them instantly.
- ❖ The e-books and journals provide key words, subject and various other searches.
- ❖ Provide multiple access and access through the campus LAN.
- ❖ Facility for the downloading and printing.
- ❖ Saving the cost and manpower required for publishing and bring out new edition.
- ❖ Saving space which is required for physical documents.
- ❖ A tool for preservation of heritage.

VI. CONCLUSION

Digital library plays an important role in promoting the use of information. Digital libraries give solutions to the main challenges of traditional libraries such as shortage of space, economic survival and management of materials; it has its own limitations. End users who are exposed to information technology will have difficulty to access the information, which is stored inside the computer in digitized format.

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