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# E-Services: A Way Forward For Library Services In The Digital Era

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## ABSTRACT

The main objective of this chapter is to explore the challenges and opportunities presented by e-services or internet-delivered services. E-services are web-based systems that use specialized resources to meet service demands and enable complicated interactions, sometimes in real-time. The shift towards electronic service supply in libraries has been evident in recent

years, replacing traditional manual and conventional methods of providing services. Practitioners have expressed concerns about the effectiveness and feasibility of library e-services. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the importance of e-services, particularly in libraries and educational institutions where reliance on online databases, eBooks, and e-journals has increased significantly. The chapter emphasizes the transformation of library services from traditional to electronic methods and the growing importance of e-services in the current environment.

Keywords : E-Services, Internet, E-Book, E-Journal, Database

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The contemporary trend of globalization has been aided by advancements in information technology, particularly the Internet and telecommunications. Today, the Internet is utilized to give information and conduct e-commerce activities and as a platform for companies and customers to receive services. The growth in the quantity and kind of services and service providers necessitates methods and frameworks that assist providers in developing and providing e-services, as well as customers in locating and accessing them. Several software manufacturers and consortiums are developing methods, frameworks, and platforms for specifying and delivering e-services to consumers (Casati, Sayal & Shan, 2001). Each and every business engagement is increasingly being considered a service transaction. The awareness has coupled with a fresh and renewed emphasis on the Internet's interaction. While the earlier age of the Internet placed a strong emphasis on digitization and marketing of easily digitized things, the current era is focused on the user rather than the product or the merchant. The present Internet age recognises the Internet as a powerful channel for delivering services. E-services is a philosophical and practical subject that arises at the intersection of a renewed the focus on services in marketing and the resurrection of the web as a crucial channel for consumer interaction and involvement (Evanschitzky & Iyer, 2007).

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Tiwana & Ramesh (2001) classified e-services depending on the level of automation and the character of their market segments (B2B, B2C, C2C). Also, he examined how services and applications vary from conventional software acquisition and development.

Scupola, Henten & Nicolajsen (2009) discussed the notion of e-services, including its strengths and limitations, and added to the common understanding and meaning also aims to investigate one of the key criteria for the growth of e-services, namely knowledge standardization about knowledge-intensive services.

Salam & Islam (2015) studied the Challenges and Plausible Propositions of E-Service Delivery in Bangladesh. The study findings indicated that a shortage of competent labour is the most significant issue in e-service delivery, with good computer and IT training being the most crucial instrument for overcoming the adoption of an e-service delivery route in Bangladesh.

Oseni & Dingley (2014) examined the several issues facing e-Service uptake and administration in Nigeria, as well as lessons learned from e-Service administration in Asia to evaluate how it might be applicable in Nigeria, like country with a lower middle income, and the examined data from an online survey indicated that the Nigerian people are well aware of e-Services, but they have had trouble accepting and implementing them.

## 3. E-SERVICE DEFINITIONS

E-services are defined in a variety of ways. Some concentrate on distribution and delivery infrastructure (digital networks), whilst others highlight both the delivery method and the benefits or outcomes of the service. Whereas the common definition is that e-services are distinguished by electronic service delivery (Hofacker et al., 2007).

E-services are also defined as web based apps that meet service demands by seamlessly connecting scattered, advanced systems to make possible complicated (sometimes

real-time) interactions. The letter "E" in E-service stands for electronic, which signifies electronic service. It means any services that are fulfilled over the Internet or any other electronic medium.

## 4. WHY E-SERVICES?

It is evident that e-business strategies need software applications and techniques and supply chain management, coordination, inventory management, buying, call centre management, distribution, and other fundamental business operations, workflow management, and order fulfilment. E-services try to provide these features while being flexible, adaptable, and cost-effective. They also enable links between several stakeholders (vendors, suppliers, retailers) inside the company's business internet without the typical lock-ins associated with substantial expenditures in specialized, custom-developed information systems.

When an intangible product meets software to perform previously performed by humans, e-services are established. They combine conventional service criteria with cutting-edge technology. Before reviewing the present e-services literature, we define the distinction between products, traditional services, and e-services in the table below:

**Table 1. Differentiating characteristics of goods, e-services, and services.**

*Differentiating characteristics of goods, e-services, and services*

| *Goods* | *E-Services* | *Services* |
|---|---|---|
| Tangible | Intangible, but need tangible media | Intangible |
| Can be inventoried | Can be inventoried | Cannot be inventoried |
| Separable consumption | Separable consumption | Inseparable consumption |
| Can be patented | Can be copyrighted, patented | Cannot be patented |
| Homogeneous | Homogeneous | Heterogeneous |
| Easy to price | Hard to price | Hard to price |
| Can't be copied | Can be copied | Can't be copied |
| Can be shared | Can be shared | Can't be shared |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Use equals consumption | Use does not equal consumption | Use equals consumption |
| Based on atoms | Based on bits | Based on atoms |

***Source:*** Charles F. Hofacker et al. (2007): E-services: A synthesis and research agenda, Journal of Value Chain Management 1(1/2)

Then, we look at four commonly discussed service characteristics and their organisational implications: intangibility, heterogeneity, the inseparability of production and consumption, and perishability (Zeithaml, Parasuraman, and Berry, 1985).

## 5. E-SERVICES RENDERED BY LIBRARIES

Libraries have embraced many e-services and self-services in recent years, which have changed many dimensions of how the library functions. Many library services have been turned into e-services with the introduction of the World Wide Web.

### 5.1. Access to electronic journals/magazines

An electronic journal is a type of periodical publication distributed electronically, typically over the Internet. There are various advantages to using electronic journals over traditional printed journals:

- To discover papers on a specific topic, the contents pages and/or full text of journals can be searched.
- Journal articles may be viewed on a desktop computer, eliminating visiting the library.
- Articles can be emailed to users or downloaded for printing.
- Even when the library is closed, the article wishes to read will always be available for the users.
- Hypertext links allow readers to navigate between parts of specific journals or articles and related resources on the Internet.
- More photographs and audio-visual content can be included in journals/Magazines.
- Journals can be interactive, allowing readers to email the author or editor with their feedback.

## 5.2. Access to electronic books

An eBook (short for electronic book), often known as an eBook or eBook, is a digital book publication that contains text, graphics, or both and is viewable on computers or other electronic devices. Although eBooks are commonly characterized as "an electronic replica of a printed book", some eBooks are not available in print. EBooks may be read on e-reader devices, but they can also be seen on any computer with a controllable viewing screen, such as personal computers, laptops, tablets, and Smart mobiles. There are various advantages to using electronic books over traditional printed books:

- Electronic books are lightweight and portable, enabling them to be convenient to transport. Rather than lugging many significant books, one eBook reader may contain high concentrations of electronic books. It takes up very little room in your house and in your suitcase. There is no need to be concerned about storage space.
- One single device is sufficient to access the maximum number of books. Students profit the most because they no longer have to bring a bag filled with books every day. It enables the readers to keep many books on the hardware, considerably more than anyone could ever read in a lifetime.
- E-Books may be retrieved and saved to be read later. The eBook may be carried with you and read anytime you wish. Students and staff can access the instructional material either at home or on the road. It is helpful for students who are constantly on the move. Some e-book readers provide offline access, allowing users to utilize them even with no internet access.

## 5.3. Access to electronic databases

A collection of data or information that has been properly structured for speedy search and retrieval by a computer is referred to as a database. Databases are designed to make it easy to store, retrieve, modify, and delete data in connection with different data-processing procedures. In order to obtain

information, a database management system (DBMS) retrieves information from the database. There are various advantages to using electronic databases over traditional databases:

- E-databases can hold massive volumes of data and facilitate data entry and modification.
- E-databases allow for automated data update and recalculation and facilitate data querying, searching, filtering, and retrieval.
- E-databases compile, organize, and show information in various ways that may be readily shared with other software applications/programs.
- Electronic databases enable numerous users' centralized use of data over a network, reducing duplication. Before entering data into electronic databases, it is verified, so mistakes occur while data entering is reduced.

### 5.4. Library Circulation Service

Library circulation is the activity of lending library items such as publications, serials, sound recordings, moving pictures, and many more to library patrons. Checking out library resources to library patrons, renewing loaned things, and reserving checked out items for the user are all examples of library circulation. The development of different library management software enables easy and convenient access to the traditional method of the circulation process. There are various advantages to using ILMS over traditional Circulation:

### 5.5. Web OPAC (Web version of Online Public Access Catalogue)

A Web OPAC is a library catalogue accessible over the Internet or Intranet. Users can get the relevant information by connecting to the Web OPAC's Uniform Resource Locator (URL) at any time of day and from anywhere globally. It is intended to allow library users to access the OPAC through their search for the convenience of borrowing, rather than searching through the card catalogue. Members would also be able to seek information about borrowing, reservations, and

other aspects of their library profile and make automated reservations. There are various advantages to using web OPAC over traditional card catalogue:

- It is available on the Internet.
- It is able to search individually by "Author", "Keyword" in title, or "Year" etc.
- It is possible to combine search terms, such as Author + Year or Keyword + Year.
- A wildcard search for the year is possible. It is available all the time, all throughout the world.
- Users can send reprint requests through email right away. It is now fairly simple to compile numerous lists of reprints.

## 5.6. Digital Reference Service

The definition of digital reference service is "the rendering of reference services including cooperation between a library user and librarian in a computer-based medium". Email, Online forms, chat, video, web user call centre technology, and voice over IP and other media may be used to provide these services. There are various advantages of digital reference service over traditional reference service:

- The psychological barrier that prevents shy users from asking inquiries in person is lifted.
- Useful for people who struggle with spoken communication. Physical barriers are removed.
- Librarian of reference finds extra time to ponder, sketch and plan a strategy, and lastly, look for and provide an answer.
- There are no working time limitations; users can ask questions at any time, and this method of receiving and responding to queries is less expensive.

## 5.7. Electronic Current Awareness Service

Current awareness services arose from information users' need to keep current on pertinent information and changes and trends in their fields of interest. There are several

old and innovative techniques and products that may be employed by information services and individuals to meet the demands of delivering and acquiring information that is current and relevant. The usage of computer-based or electronic products for staying current is becoming increasingly popular. As information technology progresses, a rising variety of commercial and externally generated electronic services and products are accessible in the current awareness marketplace (Mountifield, 1995). Electronic current awareness employs a computer-based approach for linking the information product's contents file with the user's desired characteristic (Behrens 1989).The goal of an electronic current awareness service aims to give individuals timely, relevant, and personalized information (Rowley 1994, p.7).

### 5.8. Electronic Document Delivery Service

Electronic Document Delivery Systems use electronic technology to receive requests and provide documents (EDDS). Online Dictionary of Library and Information Science Library and Information Dictionary Online Science describes Electronic Document Delivery Service as Electronic Document Delivery Service as "The electronic transmission of information typically stored on a physical media (print, videotape, voice recording, etc.) to the user via email or the World Wide Web. Libraries use digital technology to provide the information contained in papers and files placed on reserve and requested through inter-library lending".

Electronic document delivery technologies enhance service efficiency while also introducing many more rivals to the document delivery service industry. Users can search for and instantaneously access documents/information by using the services of publishers, e-journal service providers, database developers, and aggregators.

### 5.9. Online Alert Service

Electronic alerting systems can assist users in staying current with current news and freshly released material on a certain topic. Electronic alerting mechanisms are available on many library websites, online databases, and periodicals.

Once a user has set up an electronic alert, the process of executing it at specific intervals and giving fresh results is handled automatically; the user will be alerted even if new contents are not added (e.g. an online journal article, electronic table of content of a new journal issue, a new blog entry, etc.).

## 6. CONCLUSION

With the advent of information, the library's function has changed dramatically. Libraries should make ongoing attempts to deliver electronic services to their patrons in this day and age of the Internet. Furthermore, COVID 19 makes it explicit that library services should be provided electronically to users. The main characteristic of e-service is its adaptability. Electronic services are the future of libraries.

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