INFORMATION GATEWAYS: TOOL FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

In this information age, ICT is playing a very vital role for disseminating information to the users in the networked environment. Internet, www, Digital Library, electronic journals, online databases are all such developments, which are changing the way libraries function today. This article explains in brief about Information gateways, their need, and some salient features of them. It further explains the role of librarians with regards to Gateways. It also lists out some of the well-known gateways.

0. Introduction

We are living in a digital world. The arrival of new information and communication technologies (ICT's) has been heralded as a revolution for the world. Its presence is ubiquitous. In our day-to-day life we see computers, laptops, palm tops, digital diary, digital camera, cell phones with camera, digital television etc. This has encouraged the availability of information in digital form at a large scale. The growing importance of ICT's, Internet, WWW has given a new dimension to the library and information centers. Several reputed and authentic resources are freely available on the Internet. The convenience of accessing remote information through www has resulted in tremendous popularity for WWW. Hence most of the organizations, publishers, Open Archive Initiatives have come forward to put their information content on web. This initiation has led us to the global network information environment, exemplified today by the Internet. Libraries can make use of this advantageous situation by designing,

developing maintaining information gateways for their clientele, which should cover all the subscribed electronic sources, free sources etc.

1. Libraries And Internet

Much has been written about Internet. A simple definition is that it is a worldwide network consisting of individual computers and computer networks that are interconnected by many paths. It is s a worldwide communication system, which links together thousands of computers and networks, which communicate with each other with the help of Internet protocols.

It is said that Internet is one of the most important & complex innovations of mankind. The roe of library in the context of Internet is highly revolutionized.

Use of library and its resources is positively related to educational attainment. Information explosion, Internet, Commercial Search Engines like Google, yahoo, Information Gateways have assisted the librarians in meeting the information needs of their clientele. Traditional information search tools and sources found in the libraries have been adequately supplemented by the information sources available on the Internet. At all educational levels, from elementary schools to universities, students and teachers are accessing information for their teaching –learning process. Users are convinced that Internet offers easy access to almost unlimited information.

Information can be made available on Internet not only in the graphic form but also in the form of other media like audio and video. OPAC's of other libraries on web has changed the availability and accessibility of the information required for providing a variety of services in the libraries. Librarians are using Internet many day to day functions like acquisition,

classification, cataloguing, serial collection, resource sharing, reference, database access, user education, etc.

2. Gateways

A "Gateway' is a word with several meanings. It generally refers to a network point that acts like an entrance to another network. An information gateway is by analogy a point on the networks that leads to several other information resources. It is in the form of a special purpose web site linking users to information on the Net.

3. Information Gateways

Subject gateways are Internet –services that support systematic resource discovery. They provide links to resources, objects, sites or services, predominantly accessible via the Internet. The service is based on resource description. Browsing access to the resources via a subject structure is an important feature of any Information gateway.

A subject gateway is a web site that provides searchable and browsable access to online resources focused around a specific subject.

4. Need For The Gateways

The Information in digital medium is so vast and varied that the users in any field of study cannot overlook it. It is really cumbersome to locate a particular piece of relevant information with minimum amount of time. Gateways reduce this drudgery by brining together all related resources and providing links to them.

Gateways also identify and present high quality free information resources on Internet. They encourage users to access the links directly, without going through the search process.

Gateways have been set up to make this access convenient and help users to locate quality and relevant information on the net.

5. Features Of Information Gateways

Gateway is an innovative way of providing information and services.

The following are some of the salient features of Information gateways.

- ➢ Supplement library website and user specific
- ➢ Provide Search and Browse Access.
- ➢ Authenticity of Resources is ensured as an expert team working on selection and quality criteria supports the Gateways.
- ➢ Continuity of Links: Continuity of links provided is ensured as an expert team working on Collection Management supports maintenance and updating of such links.

6. Role Of Library And Information Professionals

Librarians, acting as custodians of information, have gone through a dramatic change. From providing document to their clientele, they have switched to be information providers. The role of librarian as information organizer and a navigator has gained importance in the Internet era. The library professionals need to focus and seize new opportunities and demonstrate how the tools of Internet can be gainfully harnessed for improving library services. Librarian can play a greater role in identification, listing and classification information sources and providing systematic approach to accessing the required information.

The role of the librarian grew from that of a collector and preserver of information resources to a professional involved in very complex issues of organization, the dissemination of and access to information.

During the past two decades the role of librarian has further evolved to encompass the burgeoning technological developments. Crawford and Gorman (1995) have defined the role of

the librarian today: To acquire, give access to, and safeguard carriers of knowledge and information in all forms and to provide instruction and assistance in the use of the collections to which their users have access. Libraries are about the preservation, dissemination, and use of recorded knowledge in whatever forms it may come

Succinctly, the role of librarian as for as Information gateways are concerned can be put in the following way:

- ➢ To provide intellectual access to information in any format
- ➢ To evaluate available sources of information
- ➢ To organize and structure information
- ➢ To ensure the preservation of information
- ➢ To provide specialized staff to offer instruction and assistance in interpreting resources and access to resources

7. Some Important Gateways

Name of Gateway	Subject Coverage	Classification	Search Facility	Browsable
ADAM www.adam.ac.uk	Art, Design, Architecture and Media	Yes	Yes	Yes
AHDS ahds.ac.uk/	Arts and Humanities Data Service	No	No	Limited Extent
Biz/ed bized.ac.uk/	Business and Economics	Yes	Yes	Yes
EELS eels.lub.lu.se/	Engineering Electronic Library, Sweden	Yes	Yes	Yes
GeoGuide www.geo-guide.de/	Geography and earth sciences	No	Yes	Yes
MathGuide www.mathguide.com	Mathematics	No	Yes	Yes
SOCIG www.socig.ac.uk	Social Sciences	Yes	Yes	Yes
OMNI omni.ac.uk/	Organizing Medical Networked Information	Yes	Yes	Yes
BUBL Link bubl.ac.uk/link/	Bulletin Board for Libraries: All Subjects	Yes	Yes	Yes

8. Conclusion

Information gateway is a website, a portal that leads to several other information sources. It is the form of a special purpose website linking users to information on the net. Today, almost every subject/discipline has a gateway. Users do not waste time anymore scouting for information on Internet. Visit to such a gateway ensures that they gat all the information at one Pont. They can also be sure that they have not left any important information without accessing.

Librarians have a very crucial role to play in this regard. They must ensure the quality of such gateways by ensuring the availability of authentic sources in a presentable manner.

9. References

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