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"Role Of Librarians In The Open Access Era"

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ABSTRACT:

The advancement of ICT has brought a lot of changes in the library and information service. Information professionals working in libraries have been facing tremendous challenges in disseminating scholarly material and learning objects emanating from their institutions. The push for open access (OA) is to encourage new avenues of disseminating information quickly and broadly to advance knowledge. Self-archiving in open access repositories, metadata harvesting, electronic resource management, interoperability in searching, etc. are presenting a whole new dimension of the information landscape. Many librarians have been vocal and active advocates of open access. These librarians believe that open access promises to remove both the price barriers and the permission barriers that undermine library efforts to provide access to the journal literature. This paper attempts to focus on open access movement, role of librarians, need and impact of OA.

KEYWORDS:

Open access movement, Librarians, Impact on libraries

1. INTRODUCTION

OA is a mechanism of advocating fair principle to promote the free exchange of academic ideas resulting free access to information in the networked environment. According to Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) "OA means its immediate, free availability on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search or link to the full text of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software or use them for any other lawful purpose without financial, legal or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. The constraint on reproduction, distribution and role for copyright in this domain should be to give authors control over the integrity of their work & the right to be properly acknowledged and cited….". To achieve open access to scholarly journal literature, BOAI recommends two complementary strategies: a) Self-Archiving b) Open

LBP

access journals

2. OPEN ACCESS MOVEMENT

It is a social movement in academia, dedicated to the principle of OA to information-sharing for the common good. The movement traces its history at least back to the 1960s, but became much more prominent in the 1990s with the advent of the Digital Age. With the spread of the Internet and the 14 ability to copy and distribute electronic data at no cost, the arguments for open access gained new importance. OA has since become the subject of much discussion among researchers, academics, librarians, university administrators, funding agencies, government officials, commercial publishers, and learned-society publishers. Although there is substantial not universal agreement concerning the concept of OA, there is considerable debate about the economics of funding peer-review in open-access publishing, and about the reliability and conomic effects of self-archiving.

3. ROLE OF LIBRARIANS:

Librarianship is the discipline and profession that is concerned with helping individuals obtain reliable information to increase their knowledge. According to Samantha Ang "Librarianship is a bridge between two entities: people and information. Librarians consider who may need bridge, when and where a bridge is needed, how it is to be built, how it can be utilized. We are the planner, architect, builder and marketer of bridges". Internet and worldwide web are very powerful and changes not only in librarianship but also in his daily professional activities. Librarians have been spurred by technological developments to become more efficient organizers, indexers, abstractors, archives, in addition to assuming new roles such as intermediary, facilitator, end-user trainer/educator, web organizer and designer, interface designer, knowledge manager /professional and sifter of information resources.

3.1. As a content manager: Librarians can play a crucial role in easy accessing of computer indexing, abstract, full-text database and video recording in electronic formats. As a content manager librarians required to organized and disseminate digital information. They can provide digital and electronic reference services, global access and retrieval of digital content, maintain Internet, Intranet, managing new inputs, user access control etc.

3.2. As an intermediary in search: In an organization, though librarians begin training end-users to perform their own searches, the demand for searches by information professionals have not decreased. End users have been trained for their own searches. The most important librarians will continue to play role in the newly emerging digital information world in the open access era by searching queries and providing packed answer, drawing on a range of sources like print, online bibliographic database, Internet and web document.

3.3. As website builder or publisher: A traditional skill of a librarian is locating, evaluating and organizing the information would be of immense use in the creation, development and content filling of a web site for the organization and library. Website of an organization provides access to external resources, where web pages specific to their discipline are available. Managing organizations own information on web sites includes details of course information, directories, statutes, annual reports etc. Role of librarians is creating a web page to deliver information about library and its services like working hours, location of services, details of staff, policies, and an interface to the library Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) etc.

3.4. As end-user trainer / educator: The number and variety of information sources available locally or remotely via www have increased. While users in many cases have not be able to keep up with all the choices open to them, only few users are effective and efficient in accessing the information. Users will need training to use electronic journals, abstracts and indexing databases, data banks, CD-ROM publications and document delivery services. End-users training aspect of librarian includes organization of information resources, search strategies, tools, information searching skills, awareness of resource constraints and alerts to users on the new resources in their subject area.

3.5. In promoting open access: Libraries are becoming increasingly active in promoting positive change in the scholarly communication system. This is represented by a growing number of library outreach programmers on campus as well as advocacy efforts in the public policy arena. A good first step for librarians in promoting OA is to initiate discussions with the various stakeholders about the benefits. It should be noted, however, that the incentives for supporting OA differ for various communities, and efforts to promote OA are much more effective if the messages are tailored appropriately. Many librarians have been vocal and active advocates of OA. These librarians believe that OA promises to remove both the price barriers and the permission barriers that undermine library efforts to provide access to the journal literature i.e. Serials crisis. Many library associations have either signed major OA declarations, or created their own. For example, the Canadian Library Association endorsed a Resolution on OA in June 2005.

Librarians also educate faculty, administrators, and others about the benefits of OA for e.g. Association of College and Research Libraries of the American Library Association have developed a Scholarly Communications Toolkit. The Association of Research Libraries has documented the need for increased access to scholarly information, and was a leading founder of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC).

4. IMPACT ON LIBRARIES

The continuous increase in the price of journal subscription has been curbing the buying power of the libraries significantly. Consequently, academic libraries have been forced to cancel subscriptions or shift the budget from other areas of their budgets in order to purchase a smaller number of high priced journals. In most libraries- science, technology and medicine (STM) journals are consuming an ever-increasing share of library budgets. This is having a negative impact on other acquisitions, such as research monographs, text-books and journal titles in other fields. Meanwhile it has been estimated that the world production of scholarly outputs has doubled since the mid 1980s, increasing the pressure on libraries to acquire more. In response to the rapidly rising prices of academic journals, research libraries have turned to site licensing as a means to increase their buying

power and secure greater access to journals for their users. These licensing agreements usually negotiated by libraries as a group (INDEST – AICTE Consortium) they have greatly enhanced access to scholarly publications in the last several years and provided some relief from the serials pricing crisis.

However, despite the obvious benefits, there is concern that site licensing will further increase the market power of the large academic publishers. Licensing takes away some of the flexibility libraries have because the journals are "bundled" together and purchased as groups in such a way that individual journal subscriptions can no longer be cancelled. Over time, librarians are losing the ability to shape the content and quality of the journal literature at their institution. They face an all-or-nothing choice of paying whatever publishers want or giving up an indispensable resource for their patrons and the largest publishers retain tremendous market power.

This system is simply not sustainable. Even the most well endowed research library cannot afford to provide access to all of the content requested by its faculty and students. The situation is even more critical for smaller college, universities and institutions in the developing world, which already have limited budgets. In 2003, the Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura, stated that "Most developing countries have so far been unable to take full advantage of the advances offered by new information and communication technologies in terms of access to scientific and technological information and learning opportunities."

5. CONCLUSION

To conclude, not surprisingly librarians have been amongst the most vocal advocates for OA. They have shown their support for OA by signing on to OA initiatives and petitions. They have also been actively involved through their institutions or associations in support of OA by - a) Educating faculty and administrators b) building digital repositories to support self-archiving c) Supporting OA journals d) building OA repository e) developing advocacy programs on campus f) through the library website also g) through membership in other library organizations. OA offers a viable solution to the serials pricing crisis. Widespread OA will ensure that libraries can provide access to all journal publications needed by their

constituents. As well, libraries will be able to cancel the financial support they provide to journals (through institutional memberships and other methods) without the risk of losing access to essential publications.

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