



WWJMRD 2017; 3(12): 166-169
www.wwjmr.com
International Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal
Refereed Journal
Indexed Journal
UGC Approved Journal
Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25
e-ISSN: 2454-6615

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Information Explosion, Information Anxiety and Libraries: Strategies for Intervention

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Abstract

This study analyses the circumstances and end results of data blast and techniques for intercession in college libraries. It recognizes the accompanying as reasons for data blast: the creation of imprinting in the mid-fifteenth century, the development of education among the working classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth hundreds of years, the expanding connection amongst data and the focused financial focal points of countries, and the appearance of data and correspondence innovation (ICT). It likewise analyses the impacts of data blast on library clients, for example, harmed wellbeing, terrible judgments, and data nervousness. Data blast additionally postures difficulties to procurement, inventorying and characterization, and reference benefits in college libraries. It perceives that data blast furnishes clients with a chance to choose from an extensive variety of assets. The paper proposes subject specialization among custodians, library participation, outsourcing, and utilization of ICT as strategies for intervention

Keywords: Information, Data, Explosion, Library

Introduction

Data involves information, facts, creative impulses, thoughts, assessments, and social esteems in an assortment of media, including print, varying media materials, and electronic configurations. In the library setting, data incorporates individual information and outside sources, for example, referrals, interlibrary advance and information banks

In a scholastic domain like a college, teachers need to be side by side with disclosures in their fields of study. They have researches to do and lecture to deliver. Understudies have a mission for scholastic greatness. All these need data. Meeting such data needs sufficiently is a test for the college library.

Information Explosion: Causes

Information explosion is a term that portrays the quickly expanding measure of distributed data and the effects of this abundance of data (Wikipedia, 2008). As the measure of accessible information develops, overseeing data turns out to be more troublesome.

Information in this setting possibly inspected on two fronts: flowing information and stored information. Flowing data is what is transmitted over the wireless transmissions, on the Internet and through the phone. Stored information is what is imprinted on paper, film, and other physical media. The examination evaluates that just about 800 megabytes of stored information are delivered per individual every year (Lyman and Varian, 2003).

Katz (2002) reports that the creation of imprinting in the mid-fifteenth century, the wide conveyance of books by the sixteenth century, the development of proficiency among the white collar classes in the seventeenth and eighteenth hundreds of years, and the nineteenth century's mass instruction development expanded both the sum and the interest for data. The creation of electronic media, particularly the Internet, has contributed monstrously to the data blast. Data and correspondence innovation (ICT) has assumed a significant part for the development of data blast. If the invention of printing has prompted an increase in information generation, ICT has multiplied it.

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Information Explosion: Effects

This information explosion has implications to the environment in which we live, to the work place, the academic world, and our own peace of mind. When there is too much information to digest, a person is unable to locate and make use of the information one needs. Information overload can therefore be seen as a state in which the volume of information available hinders its usefulness to the individual.

Information overload has adverse effects on the individual. Winkle (1998) has identified the following problems associated with information overload:

- Damaged health
- Bad judgment
- Information anxiety

This data blast has suggestions to the earth in which we live, to the work put, the scholastic world, and our own true serenity. At the point when there is excessively data to process, a man can't find and make utilization of the data one needs. Data over-burden can accordingly be viewed as a state in which the volume of data accessible blocks its handiness to the person.

As indicated by Winkle (1998), thinks about have connected both diminished vision and cardiovascular worry to data over-burden. Additionally, carelessness in data sources or the inverse has brought about awful judgment or "loss of motion of examination", not having the capacity to perceive truth from actuality. Besides, data nervousness is created by the regularly broadening hole between what one comprehends and what one supposes one ought to get it.

Information Explosion: a 21ST Century Reality

It is a prosaism that individuals are suffocating in an excessive amount of data. Specialists have attempted to measure the extent of the issue. There is in exhaustible insights, frequently with no firm premise, however by and by, startling. The accompanying articulations taken from different sites and articles attest this reality:

- "As much new data will be accessible in the following decade as has been found in the entire mankind's history."
- "There are 550 billion web-associated reports."
- "Fifty thousand new book titles show up yearly, with 1.5 million books now in print from 20,000 unique distributors."
- "Individuals could read 24 hours for each day, 365 days for each year and never make up for lost time with what is composed."
"Very nearly 800mb of new recorded data is delivered per individual every year. It would take around 30 feet of books to store what might as well be called 800mb of data on paper."

So incredible is the volume of data today that Wurman and Bradford (1996) called it "information tsunami ". They state that:

There is a torrent of information that is smashing onto the shorelines of the edified world. This is a tsunami of inconsequential, developing information framed in bits and bytes, arriving in a sloppy, controlled, indistinguishable racket of froth. It is loaded with the floatsam and jetsam. It is loaded with the sticks and bones and shells of lifeless and energizes life. The wave is a well of information – information created at more prominent and more

noteworthy speed, more prominent and more noteworthy adds up to store in memory, on tape, on circles, on paper, sent by surges of light quicker, to an ever increasing extent and that's only the tip of the iceberg.

This wave of information has all the earmarks of being on the expansion by the day, from the created universe of Europe and America to Asia and Africa.

Information Explosion and Reference Services

Reference service consists of professional personnel, assisting individual library users in pursuit of information (Olanlokun, 2003). In university libraries, students need assistance in finding materials for their term papers and assignments whereas teachers and researchers need assistance in finding materials for their research. Lawal (2002) maintained that in general, reference departments serve as the link between the library and its immediate clientele. The main aim is to provide a wide range of services and facilities which will enhance exploitative use of the literature through the concepts of assistance and self-direction.

Since the first reference librarian came into being in Sumer about 5,000 years ago, the day's activities at the reference desk have been shaped by questions. The librarian, from the early "keeper of tablets" to the modern "information scientist", is expected to provide precise answers to sometimes sloppy queries (Katz, 2002). How and where to get the right answers for these sloppy queries in an age of information explosion is a challenge for the reference librarian in the 21st century.

Katz (2002) submits that it is becoming increasingly apparent that finding specific bits of data among the mass of undifferentiated information is a great challenge. And who will meet that challenge? Well, for one, the reference librarian. Reference Librarians get answers to questions from information sources. Less than a decade ago, information sources were synonymous with printed books. Today, the definition is turned on its electronic head. There is one to three billion online websites which may or may not contain useful information. Indeed, the organization of these various media coupled with the management of facilities so as to promote document delivery constitutes one of the new challenges facing the reference librarian in this era (Abioye, 2004).

The Challenge of Cataloguing

With the rate of information generation and acquisition, the cataloguer is faced with the challenge of meeting the demand of the job. Aside from this, the Internet is a "chaotic library" because it displays no discernible order, classification, or categorization. It, therefore, poses a problem for cataloguers. As opposed to "classical libraries", no one has invented a cataloguing standard (such as DDC or LC) for information accessed through the Internet.

Strategies for Intervention

The Role of the Librarian

Librarians are generally very skilled in obtaining information but less inclined to pass judgment on it. That is, the evaluative role of the librarian has been neglected in past years. The role of the librarian, then, must change from that of a locator, to an information evaluator. Included in this is the instructional role of the librarian. The American

Library Association (ALA, 2004) recognizes this fact in its guideline statement:

With increase in the availability of information, user expectations have risen substantially. Librarians are increasingly expected to assist users in evaluating the information they receive. This change evinces an evolving role for librarians, one that suggests a closer With the challenges of information explosion and ICT, there is a shift from the traditional process of providing information to modern approaches to library and documentation services. The concepts of virtual libraries, digital libraries, paperless systems, electronic books (e-books), CD ROMs and ICT all suggest to libraries and librarians that it can no longer be the era of meek and apologetic librarianship as before but the new era of aggressive and active librarianship (Onwubiko, 2006).

Also, the librarian should be willing to teach information seekers how to evaluate sources themselves. Ezzo and Perez (2003) outline the following as ways through which librarians can help users in dealing with information explosion:

- Get partnership with users and a great responsibility for the educational process Get out from behind the desk and interact with patrons.
- Help users understand the search process.
- Teach users critical thinking and evaluative skills.
- Beware of the diversity and needs of the library patrons.
- Choose quality of resources over quantity.

For the librarian to be able to carry out these functions, he or she must be qualified academically. Kumar (1998) advocates that due to the nature of work and functions performed, a librarian in a university library is expected to possess high academic and professional qualifications. In an era of information explosion, many have called for librarians to train as subject specialists. In this regard, Kumar insists that a librarian in a university must possess a master's degree in a discipline other than library and information science and a first degree in library and information science. However, a first degree in a subject area and master's in librarianship is acceptable. According to Katz (2002), this is particularly important for reference librarians, who need not only skilled appreciation of reference sources in general but understanding better than anyone else how to dig out data from a given subject field. Specialization in a specific subject area has become particularly important for librarians in the 21st century.

Library cooperation

In handling information explosion and overload, libraries must cooperate and collaborate with each other. Library cooperation helps to reduce costs, as it enhances users' accessibility to more materials at little or no cost to the library. This is made possible either through computer networking or referral services. Users also have access to the expertise of personnel who may not necessarily be staff of their own libraries.

A commendable effort at library cooperation to help libraries in dealing with information explosion is the creation of the Online Computer Library Centre (OCLC) based in Ohio, United States of America. OCLC is "a nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization" (OCLC, 2010). Since its founding in 1967 by university presidents in Ohio, OCLC's mission has

been to further access to the World's information and reduce library costs. As of April 2005, more than 52,000 libraries participate in a worldwide co-operative that extends to 95 countries (Wikipedia, 2008). Libraries use OCLC services to help manage their collections and provide reference services to end-users.

More cooperation needs to be encouraged and established among libraries, especially in the third world countries where economic crisis is hampering academic activities in universities and their libraries as well.

Library consortium is a form of library cooperation. The basic premise of consortia is that by working through consortial arrangements, libraries can achieve more than could be achieved individually.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing is the term given to the practice of contracting the services of a company outside the local library. Bordeianu and Benand (1998) describe outsourcing as a new name for the old practice of "contracting out" for services that organizations choose not or may not be able to provide internally. Organizations contracted by libraries carry out services or provide services for use by library users. Subscribing to online databases is a form of outsourcing. Adeyemi (2008) outlines these databases to include Journal storage (JSTOR), EBSCO, OARE, Science Direct, etc. These databases give subscribing libraries access to millions of articles and abstracts in journals. Though the subscription prices for these databases appear high, it is cheaper than subscribing to these journals directly from the publishers.

Use of ICT

Use of ICT can help libraries cope with the challenges of information explosion. For instance, the reference librarian can attend to the queries of numerous users through the electronic mail. The availability and accessibility of electronic information resources is made possible through ICT. Such resources as online journals, e-books, CD-ROMs are now accessible to library users. Hundreds of thousands of journals and e-books are available online through such databases as EBSCO, JSTOR, AJOL, etc., thus helping acquisitions librarians keep track of published materials as well as conserving space in the library where hard copies of such materials would have been kept.

Through ICT, cataloguers can now make use of online catalogues of other libraries as well as online classification schemes. This makes their jobs more effective.

However, ICT has its own challenges. It is capital intensive. Facilities such as computers and software have to be acquired and installed. Trained personnel may need to be employed. Librarians may need retraining. There is need for stable electricity. All these demand financial resources. For libraries with small budgets, it will be a hard decision whether to embrace ICT or not.

Conclusion

Information explosion Information explosion is indeed a 21st century reality. Its impact on library services and costs is enormous. Libraries are affected in the variety of services they provide to the users.

Libraries must, therefore, have strategies in place to effectively manage the consequences of information explosion. They must also take full advantage of ICTs,

providing users with access to a wide range of resources on any subject and opportunity to retrieve relevant information. Part of the strategy must be the training of librarians to be subject specialists, who will help users to filter “chaff” from “substance”.

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