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Beyond Bookshelves: The World of E – Resources

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Abstract

This paper explores the multifaceted nature of electronic resources (e-resources) and their growing significance in the digital era. The advancement of digital technology has revolutionized information access, making it faster, easier, and more efficient—especially in remote and underserved areas. E-resources play a crucial role in preserving intellectual content, supporting research, and fostering societal development. As libraries increasingly digitize print materials, their collections now include a wide array of digital formats. E-resources address storage limitations and help manage the growing influx of information. This study offers an overview of their types, benefits, limitations, and includes references for further exploration. It underscores the vital role e-resources play in reshaping academic libraries and advancing knowledge access.

Keywords: Electronic Resources, E- Resources, Digital Access

1. Introduction:

The rise of digital technology has revolutionized the way information is created, accessed, and shared. One of the most significant outcomes of this shift is the emergence of electronic resources (e-resources), which encompass a wide range of digital content—including electronic journals, full-text databases, image libraries, multimedia files, and time-based or numerical datasets. These resources are typically accessed through computers or digital devices and may be delivered via CD-ROMs, storage tapes, or more commonly, through the Internet.

E-resources offer numerous advantages over traditional print formats. They provide enhanced capabilities for information retrieval, ease of access from remote locations, cost-effective distribution, and reduced physical storage requirements. In many cases, digital formats serve as the only available or practical option, particularly in fast-evolving fields. These benefits have made e-resources an essential component of modern academic and research libraries.

The rapid development of electronic publishing and the changing landscape of scholarly communication have introduced new challenges for libraries, especially in managing serials within limited budgets. Libraries are evolving from being passive holders of printed materials to active facilitators of digital knowledge. They are now expected to provide seamless access to a variety of digital content, while maintaining high standards of organization, usability, and accessibility.

Additionally, the advent of Web 2.0 technologies has shifted the focus from static content delivery to dynamic, user-driven platforms. Open-source tools, collaborative environments, and the emphasis on content sharing have further fueled the expansion and popularity of electronic resources. As a result, e-resources have come to play a pivotal role in the global information ecosystem, reshaping how individuals access, use, and contribute to knowledge.

This paper explores the importance of e-resources in contemporary library environments, examines their types and characteristics, and discusses the challenges and best practices associated with their integration and management.

2. What are Electronic Resources?

Electronic resources, commonly referred to as e-resources, are information materials that are accessed electronically using digital devices such as computers, tablets, or smartphones. These resources are stored and made available in digital formats and typically require an internet connection or electronic storage medium (e.g., CD-ROM, USB drive, cloud storage) for access.

2.1 Definition:

According to Wikipedia, Electronic Resources means "Information (usually a file) which can be stored in the form of electrical signals, usually on a computer; Information available on the Internet".

According to AACR2, 2005 Update, an electronic resource is: "Material (data and/or program(s)) encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device (e.g., CD-ROM drive) or a connection to a computer network (e.g., the Internet)." This definition does not include electronic resources that do not require the use of a computer, for example, music compact discs and video discs.

According to Gradman glossary, "A publication in digital format which must be stored and read on a computer device. There are two types: Direct access: these are physical objects such as CD-ROMs, diskettes, computer tapes, and computer cards, containing text, images, Softwares etc.

According to Library and Information Technology Glossary "Term used to describe all of the information products that a library provides through a computer network... .."

3. Review of Literature

Kenchakkanavar (2014) this paper analyses the growing significance of electronic resources (e-resources) in academic libraries. E-resources enhance accessibility, enabling users—including those in remote areas—to access vast information quickly and efficiently. The shift from print to digital formats reflects libraries' adaptation to expanding information demands. Key benefits include cost-effectiveness, portability, and integrated access, though challenges like licensing and technical support remain. The paper underscores the crucial role of e-resources in research, teaching, and learning, concluding that libraries are evolving into dynamic, user-centred digital knowledge hubs, aligned with the broader transformation in higher education.

Dayakar (2018) the paper aims to examine the advantages of e-resources in higher education and to identify the various concerns related to e-resources. The author explains how E-resources have a prominent role to play in supporting higher education and in fulfilling educational objectives. With the world moving rapidly

into digital media and information, the role of e-resources in higher education is becoming more and more important and its importance will continue to grow and develop in the 21st century.

Puneeth (2019) explores the role and effectiveness of e-resources in academic libraries. It highlights how digital technology has enhanced access to knowledge and supported research and societal growth. E-resources help address storage issues and improve information management. The paper discusses their types, benefits, services, and challenges. It emphasizes the growing importance of e-resources in modern library systems.

Deshpande and Waray (2024) explained how libraries are undergoing a major shift from print to electronic resources, impacting both operations and user access. Managing e-resources like e-books and e-journals presents challenges for library professionals. While many libraries use ILMS for acquisition, most lack dedicated ERMS software. This paper examines the acquisition process of e-resources and the challenges involved. It also explores emerging trends and opportunities in e-resource management.

4. “Why Libraries Must Invest in E-Resources”

The need for electronic resources (e-resources) in libraries has become increasingly essential in the digital age. They provide instant and remote access to vast collections of information, allowing users to retrieve data anytime and from anywhere. E-resources support interdisciplinary research by offering access to a wide range of materials, including e-books, e-journals, and databases. Unlike traditional print materials, they are available 24/7 and can be used by multiple users simultaneously. They also reduce the need for physical storage, freeing up space in libraries. With advanced search capabilities, e-resources enable faster and more efficient information retrieval. They play a crucial role in supporting distance education and online learning by ensuring that learners in remote areas can access quality content. Additionally, e-resources provide access to international publications without delays or shipping costs. Their interactive features, such as hyperlinks and multimedia integration, enhance the learning experience. E-resources help preserve rare or fragile materials through digitization and contribute to environmentally sustainable practices by minimizing paper use. Libraries can manage these resources effectively using digital tools and integrated library systems. They also offer cost-effective solutions through bundled subscriptions. Moreover, using e-resources promotes digital literacy among students and researchers. Overall, e-resources are vital for meeting the evolving academic and informational needs of modern users.

5. Types of Electronic Resources in Libraries

Sl. No.	Type of E-Resource	Description
1	E-Books	Digitally formatted books accessible via computers, e-readers, or mobile devices.
2	E-Journals	Scholarly or professional journals available online, often with searchable archives.
3	Online Databases	Platforms like JSTOR, Scopus, and PubMed offering journal articles, theses, etc.
4	E-Newspapers & Magazines	Digital versions of print media providing current and archived news content.
5	Indexing & Abstracting Databases	Reference sources offering bibliographic details and abstracts of published literature.
6	Multimedia Resources	Audio, video, and interactive content including tutorials, simulations, and lectures.

7	Institutional Repositories	University-managed digital collections of theses, dissertations, and research output.
8	Digital Reference Works	Online encyclopedias, dictionaries, and manuals with hyperlinked content.
9	Bibliographic Databases	Databases that provide citations and summaries of research, often without full-text.
10	Open Educational Resources (OER)	Free and openly licensed teaching, learning, and research materials.
11	CD-ROM & DVD Resources	Digitally stored content like encyclopedias or training modules on physical media.
12	E-Patents	Online patent documents detailing inventions, ownership, and legal status.
13	E-Standards	Digitally accessible official standards outlining technical or procedural guidelines.

6. Advantages and Disadvantages of Electronic Resources

Sl. No	Advantages	Disadvantages
1	Remote Access – Accessible anytime, anywhere with internet.	Dependence on Technology – Requires electronic devices and internet access.
2	24/7 Availability – Not limited by library hours.	High Costs – Licensing, subscriptions, and infrastructure can be expensive.
3	Multi-user Access – Multiple users can access simultaneously.	Access Restrictions – Licensing may limit number of users or usage terms.
4	Space Saving – No need for physical storage.	Digital Literacy Needed – Users may need training to use e-resources.
5	Advanced Search ability – Fast, accurate retrieval of data.	Health Concerns – Excessive screen time can lead to eye strain and fatigue.
6	Up-to-date Content – Frequently updated with latest info.	DRM Limitations – Restrictions on printing, sharing, or downloading.
7	Multimedia Integration – Includes video, audio, and graphics.	Inequality of Access – Users in remote or rural areas may lack connectivity.
8	Cost-Effective Distribution – Lower shipping, printing costs.	

9	Supports Distance Learning – Ideal for remote education.	
10	Environmentally Friendly – Reduces paper and material waste.	

7. Selection of E-Resources for Libraries

Selecting appropriate electronic resources (e-resources) is crucial for libraries to meet the information needs of their users effectively. Here are the key considerations and steps involved in the selection process:

a. Assess User Needs

Identify the requirements of different user groups—students, researchers, faculty, and staff—to ensure the resources support their academic and research activities.

b. Content Relevance and Quality

Evaluate the scope, depth, and credibility of the content. Prefer resources from reputable publishers and authoritative sources.

c. Coverage and Currency

Check if the resource covers relevant subject areas and is regularly updated to provide current information.

d. Accessibility and Usability

Ensure the resource is user-friendly, with easy navigation, advanced search options, and compatibility with various devices and assistive technologies.

e. Licensing and Usage Rights

Review licensing terms for user limits, concurrent access, interlibrary loan permissions, and archiving rights.

f. Cost and Budget

Consider subscription fees, maintenance costs, and any additional expenses. Look for cost-effective options such as consortia deals or bundled packages.

g. Technical Compatibility

Verify that the e-resource integrates well with the library's existing systems like the Integrated Library Management System (ILMS) or discovery platforms.

h. Support and Training

Assess the availability of vendor support, training materials, and user guides to facilitate effective use.

i. Trial Access and Feedback

Arrange for trial access and gather feedback from users and library staff before finalizing the purchase.

j. Usage Statistics and Analytics

Use usage data and analytics to evaluate the resource's value and inform future decisions.

By carefully considering these factors, libraries can build a balanced and relevant collection of e-resources that maximizes user satisfaction and supports institutional goals.

8. Legal Difficulties of Electronic Resources for Libraries

a) **Copyright Issues**

Libraries must navigate complex copyright laws when providing access to electronic resources, ensuring they do not infringe on intellectual property rights.

b) **Licensing Agreements**

E-resources are often governed by detailed licensing contracts that restrict usage, copying, sharing, and archiving, limiting how libraries can provide access.

c) **Digital Rights Management (DRM)**

DRM technologies restrict users' ability to download, print, or share electronic content, posing challenges for fair use and academic purposes.

d) **User Privacy Concerns**

Libraries must balance providing access to e-resources with protecting users' personal data and browsing information, complying with privacy laws.

e) **Jurisdictional Issues**

Since e-resources are accessible globally, differing national laws on copyright and data protection can create legal conflicts.

f) **Fair Use and Educational Exceptions**

Determining what constitutes fair use in digital environments can be ambiguous, complicating lawful usage for teaching and research.

g) **Archiving and Preservation Rights**

Legal restrictions may prevent libraries from archiving or preserving digital content for long-term access.

h) **Access Inequality**

Licensing models often restrict access to certain user groups or locations, raising legal questions about equitable information access.

Libraries must balance legal compliance with their mission to provide equitable access, which calls for clear policies, staff training, and sometimes legal consultation.

Conclusion:

The integration of electronic resources has fundamentally reshaped the role of libraries from traditional repositories to dynamic digital hubs. While the advantages are vast—ranging from improved access to enhanced learning—challenges such as cost, legal complexities, and technological limitations persist. With strategic planning, continuous investment in infrastructure, and user training, libraries can fully harness the power of e-resources to support academic excellence and lifelong learning.

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