University Libraries and Their Users in a Changing Environment

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Content

• The Digital Library and User Needs: evaluation and experiences
• Some Trends
• New roles of the university library
• Conclusion
Gradual move to the Digital Library

• In 70s and 80s focused on back office activities (more efficiency and staff savings)
• Online Catalogue first user oriented IT service in libraries
• In 1989 launch of first Digital Library project in Europe (Tilburg University)
The Digital Library concept: User driven?

• New technology and vision of library leaders were driving force, not user demands: We expected that this would be needed and that users would love it
• Support from some university boards, governments, European Commission
• Choices were user oriented
Characteristics of the Digital Library approach

• Library in the Centre of the concept
• Libraries started to make “their” information available online
• Gradual move towards virtual library
• Access to electronic information is no longer connected with THE library
User experiences

- Use of (electronic) information has increased tremendously
- Libraries did not become Museums but lively Study Centres; there is still a very important role for “the library as a place”
- Users always want more: study places, Internet Cafes, online resources, faster network etc.
Major changes in the past 10 years

• Access over the network from anywhere and at any time
• Move to virtual collections, move from ownership to access
• E-journals have become “the rule”
• Direct E-communication between authors and readers creates new opportunities and models
• Increasing power of the user
University Libraries in Europe: some trends

- Less government money to culture and education
- Interests in “skills” and “needs-based” education
- Increasing interest of governments and universities in E-learning, E-publishing and E-science
- More competition AND more cooperation
Other trends in education and learning

- Growing demand for life long education tailored to the needs of learners
- More flexibility in how, when and where we learn: customization
Trends in E-publishing

- University Libraries are supporting their students and researchers in the E-publishing process for teaching and research
- University output on the Web, but organised, well selected and properly (linking, interoperability)
Various types of users, different demands

- Significant differences between needs of undergraduates and graduates
- Differences between young researchers and professors with established reputation
- Differences between subject areas
- Various approaches and services for various users are required
Two types of university libraries or two functions

- "Undergraduate Library":
  - electronic is the rule;
  - E-Learning centre
  - important social function

- "Graduate Library":
  - Print and electronic
  - Centre for study and research
Major changes within 15 years

• In the 80s: Collection oriented
• In the 90s: more Service oriented
• At present: more Customer oriented
Challenges for Universities and Libraries

• **More co-operative activities** between universities nationally and across borders on E-Learning, E-Publishing and Open Archives: common infrastructure and tools; content, quality of people and quality of the place will make the difference

• **Personalised portals** for individuals and groups focused on course information, research information and management information.
New roles of the university library

• Major task in organizing the information environment of the university
• Teaching role (information literacy)
• Role in Electronic Learning and Distance Learning (as part of a team)
• E-Publishing support
• Profiling and Customization of information (connected with trends in teaching, learning, research and business)
Conclusions

• More integration within the university
• More cooperation between universities on licenses, tools, IT infrastructure and E-archiving
• Libraries will have a (bright) future if they can continue to provide added value