Open Educational Resources and the Role of Librarians

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Abstract: *In modern information era information technologies are rapidly change in all aspects. Now the digital resources are readily available from many sources and those contents are available by the teachers and learners through the internet. For that reason a movement aims to encourage and enable sharing content freely called Open Educational Resources. The idea of free and open sharing in education is not new. In fact, sharing is probably the most basic characteristic of education, education is sharing knowledge, insights and information with others, upon which new knowledge, skills, ideas and understanding can be built. OER have gained increased acceptance because of their potential and promise to obviate educational boundaries and to promote life-long learning and personalized learning. This is a very encouraging trend as librarians who are custodians of information are highly aware of OER even though it is a new concept in the field of library and information science. This paper aims to examine the Role of Librarian in Open Educational Resources*

1. Introduction

What is Open Education: - Open education encompasses resources, tools and practices that employ a framework of open sharing to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide. Open Education seeks to scale up educational opportunities by taking advantage of the power of the internet, allowing rapid and essentially free dissemination, and enabling people around the world to access knowledge, connect and collaborate. Open is key; open allows not just access, but the freedom to modify and use materials, information and networks so education can be personalized to individual users or woven together in new ways for diverse audiences, large and small. The idea of free and open sharing in education is not new. In fact, sharing is probably the most basic characteristic of education: education is sharing knowledge, insights and information with others, upon which new knowledge, skills, ideas and understanding can be built.

What are Open Educational Resources?
Open Educational Resources (OER) are those teaching and learning materials that are available to anyone free of cost and under an open license to allow others to retain, reuse, revise, remix and redistribute them with few or no restrictions.

What do OER include?
OER include textbooks, online tutorials, lecture notes, lesson plans, slides, handouts given to students, videos, podcasts, diagrams, entire courses and any other material designed for use in teaching and learning.
- Open Courseware
- Open Textbooks
- Open Learning
- Stakeholders

Stakeholders of OER
Include teachers at all levels of education, administrators, policy makers, library professionals, civil society organisations, and individuals with an interest in promoting access to educational resources.

Activities: Five Activities are includes in OER i.e.
1. Retrain; - Make and Own a Copy.
2. Resuse: Use in a wide range of ways
3. Revise: - Adapt, Modify and Improve
4 Remix: - Combine two or more
5 Redistribute: Share with others

OER Integration and Promotional Strategies in Libraries: No library can ignore the importance of OER in teaching, learning and research if it has to remain relevant. librarians can offer advice to institutions, academic staff and students because they are engaged in OER through metadata and resource description, information management and resource dissemination, digital or information literacy training (finding and evaluating OER), subject-based guides for finding resources, managing intellectual property rights and promoting appropriate open licensing. librarians and education policy makers should be actively involved in using open technology tools like OER to build, strengthen, promote and share free educational resources taking into account the growing illiterate population in developing countries. Librarians provided expertise in information science areas, especially: metadata standards, vocabularies, indexing and classification, information retrieval, information literacy, and repository technology and management All these studies indicate that librarians have multiple roles to play in OER undertakings. However, in the context is not known about the strategies libraries and librarians use to facilitate integration and promotion of OER. This is the gap that this study intended to fill.

Challenges of OER Use and Integration in Libraries : academic librarians also face the challenge of fast changing technology for that requires librarians to consistently upgrade their skill to effectively manage change in order to cope with the changing needs of users and at the same time manage multiple and simultaneous responsibilities. Indeed, to keep pace with the changing innovations in the information environment and age, academic librarians need relevant upgraded skills and competencies.

Barriers to the Use of Open Educational Resources: Lack of access to computers and the internet, Low internet

bandwidth, Absence of policies, and lack of skills to create and/or use OER are the main barriers to effective usage of OER.

Librarians' level of Awareness on OER Open Educational Resources in many developing countries is a new concept. For librarians and users to make effective use of OER they need to be familiar with the terminology. Librarians are aware of the term of OER. OER have gained increased acceptance because of their potential and promise to obviate educational boundaries and to promote life-long learning and personalized learning. This is a very encouraging trend as librarians who are custodians of information are highly aware of OER even though it is a new concept in the field of library and information science.

Librarians' Roles in Open Educational Resources: Librarians have multiple roles to play in OER including promotion, identification, guiding users, dissemination, evaluation, collection, management and integration. Librarians must also have interest in promoting 'openness'/ open resources; help users describe, discover, manage and use OER. This signifies the changing roles of librarians in the new information age. librarians can help in metadata and resource description, information management and resource dissemination, digital or information literacy (finding and evaluating OER), develop subject based guides for finding resources, managing intellectual property rights and promoting appropriate open licensing.

Techniques Applied by Librarians in Promoting Awareness on OER: The most prominent tool used to promote awareness on OER is the library website and the library training, orientation, social media (face book, twitter, blogs), institutional repositories, brochures, current awareness services , The importance of library websites is that they have made it easy to put resources and services in a single access point. Library websites to be considered as the most useful promotional tool for OER. Indeed, the competitiveness of open access sources relies mostly on their ease of access. The academic library website can support research in higher education through providing access to internet research tools and full text databases such as OER. The library website is therefore an essential digital gate to online information resources as well as services.

Challenges Encountered by Librarians in OER: Low level of awareness on existing OER even though they are available on websites and institutional repositories. This could be due to lack of techno know how on how to locate the OER and inability to choose from the vast information resources. This consequently deters effective utilization of OER by staff, teachers and students in supporting teaching and learning. Usage of OER requires one to be techno savvy and well equipped with relevant information literacy skills. Other major challenges mentioned are lack of policy guidelines to guide the use of OER, inadequate bandwidth and OER not being recommended by lecturers. Lack of policies and guidelines is a major challenge to full utilization of OER should be taken into consideration. Users could feel more confident to use the resource which he/she knows the boundaries of so as to avoid litigation. Actually, lack of awareness on their existence, lack of guidelines, policies on the use of OER, inadequate bandwidth and not being recommended by lecturers are not unique .

2. Conclusion

Librarians are aware of the OER concept. It is also argued that librarians play multiple roles in OER including promoting awareness, access and use of OER. Major tool that librarians use to promote awareness of OER is the University website and integration of OER in library websites and institutional repositories. To enhance access and use of OER, librarians employ information literacy training. The major challenges faced by librarians in dealing with OER include lack of awareness on existing OER due to the speed in which they are generated and lack of institutional policies to guide the ethical use of OER. Based on these findings, the study recommends that, there is a need for Librarians to create awareness among users, teaching staff, and the general public on the centrality of OER in academic and research endeavors. This can be done through workshops, seminars, conferences and during orientation. Academic libraries should use web pages to host and promote OER for easy access and use by their patrons. Additionally, institutional repositories should also be used as promotional tools. The importance of Libraries and Librarians in OER cannot be over emphasized.

References

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