Successful Application of Mobile Phones For Library Services

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Abstract

Communication is the process of exchanging information. Mobile phones have revolutionized the daily lives of ordinary people. Within the Higher Education setting, it has been found in research that students want to use their technological devices to access information quickly and efficiently. Mobile Internet users in India is expected to hit 165 million by March 2015. Interaction with the user community can be achieved due to the advancement in mobile technology. Telecommunication infrastructures should be put in place for efficient and effective communication between library users and staff, which will engender mobile phone library services. This study explores the prospect of providing library services with mobile phones.

Introduction

Communication is the process of exchanging information. Mobile phones have revolutionized the daily lives of ordinary people. Before the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), communication in the library was done through books, newspapers, microforms, slides, etc. As scientific knowledge increased, electronic communication systems began to develop. The use of telephones and computers led to the Internet. The application of telecommunications to an automated library system can bring more efficiency to library services.

Mobile devices such as smartphones, iPads and tablet computers are rapidly proliferating in society and changing the way information is organised, received and disseminated. Consequently the library world must adopt mobile services which maximise and adapt to these significant technological changes. This study explores the prospect of providing library services with mobile phones. Mobile Internet users in India is expected to hit 165 million by March 2015. Interaction with the user community can be achieved due to the advancement in mobile technology.

Mobile Technology in Higher Education

Within the Higher Education setting, it has been found in research that students want to use their technological devices to access information quickly and efficiently; as

Connaway states 'convenience is king' and users want instant access to resources 24/7, advocating the 'paperless student' of the future which Harding felt academic libraries should facilitate. There is a clear need for library services to adapt quickly and flexibly to mobile culture. Smart phones are valuable tools that enable library users to tap into library services. During the past year alone, students are now turning to their mobile devices to access academic resources

Due to the flexibility of these devices, as well as their interactivity and convenience, the devices have made learning mobile and more attractive. Now, universities are adopting these technologies for their students to use. Apps, or applications, have become indispensable tools for learning. In fact, many courses, such as Information Technology courses, have integrated them into their curriculum. Mobile apps help foster creativity through content creation. Students learn to utilize a device's camera, microphone and other sensors to express their ideas

An increasing number of colleges and universities are adopting mobile wireless technologies   as teaching and learning tools. Benefits of Mobile Wireless Computers Since wireless PCs have the same capabilities and functionalities as wired PCs, students and faculty can enjoy the same capabilities and functionalities with their wireless computers as they do with their wired PCs. Mobile wireless technologies are an interesting and very recent addition to higher education.

Their power to change the way of educating people is mind boggling. Mobile wireless technologies are the new frontier for teaching and learning in institutions of higher education. Currently and in the near future many educational opportunities are made possible because of 'm-technologies' unique characteristics and positive impacts identified in higher education. Mobile wireless technologies use in higher education will continue to grow and will become the learning environment of choice.

History of Mobile Phones In India
- The first mobile cellular phone was launched in India on 31 of July 1995.
- The first mobile handset production made by Motorola
- First mobile service provider was Modi Groups in 1995 and started in Kolkata, somewhere it was signed that mobile service provider was launched in 2006

Mobile Phones and Academic Libraries
According to Terplan (2000), "telephones and e-mail are important tools to facilitate prompt handling and response to the stream of patron questions from within and out of the library user community. Most university libraries have one phone line, which is mostly used for administrative purposes and located in the library administrator's office. Mobile phones could be deployed at the enquiring desks." Short Message Services (SMS) or text facilities available on all mobile phones, could be used to create awareness amongst the academic library clientele about upcoming events and new arrivals. This could be flashed through a facility called "broadcast" where one text message is sent to all the library contacts listed in the address book on the mobile phone at once.

Academic libraries need to keep abreast of the dynamically changing needs of their clienteles. One way of delivering user-centered services is library surveys. Surveys

could be carried with text and multimedia messaging. Patrons could text a coded number to a particular phone line to indicate their preference. Specialized and personalized information services can be achieved using the wireless technologies made available to all. Renewal notifications could be sent to alert patrons that books are almost due or overdue.

How To Implement Of Mobile Services In Library

➤ library seeking to provide mobile access to online resources, a diverse and talented implementation team is important. Public services personnel in an academic library staff are on the front lines and often field students questions. They may also have the opportunity to observe how students are using mobile devices in the library. If librarians track reference interactions, they may find evidence that students are attempting to use their mobile devices to access library services.

➤ The electronic resources/collections specialist will also play a key role in mobile development. These specialists are often in contact with vendors, and their advocacy is important in encouraging mobile web development in the vendor community.

➤ A web site coordinator interested in mobile services and knowledgeable in current web standards will bring essential talent to the team. Arguably, a mobile-optimized web site should become a standard level of service.

➤ Web sites that are optimized or adapted specifically for mobile access are device agnostic and do not require advanced knowledge of smart phone operating systems. Therefore existing web development staff can apply their current skill set to expand into mobile web design.

➤ In order to launch advanced interactive access to library resources, a programmer who is interested in developing mobile apps on a number of platforms is needed. Device-specific applications allow for the use of phone features such as GPS and orientation sensing via an accelerometer and provide the basis for augmented reality technologies.

How To Design Low-Cost Mobile Websites For Libraries

Libraries face an increasing demand for online content delivered in a mobile compatible format while being constrained by financial and staffing limitations. Solutions are readily available through free and low cost products to create mobile web pages and existing design models from which to draw inspiration. Platform-specific apps can easily support the kinds of content most commonly delivered on library mobile pages: basic contact information and outbound links to the catalog, databases, and other resources. Two software platforms for creating simple pages were tested, the free software from Word Press with mobile detection formatting enabled and Lib Guides' mobile friendly platform in a basic version, free for those with Lib Guides accounts, and the more feature-rich Mobile Builder version.

While someone with a fair amount of HTML knowledge can create a mobile-friendly page, there are easier options that require little or no programming knowledge. In addition to the two sites explored below, there are several free mobile

site builders available on the Internet. We will explore two options to which many libraries have access:

1. Word Press with mobile detection plug in enabled (free)
2. Lib Guides platform (free if the library already subscribes to Lib Guides)
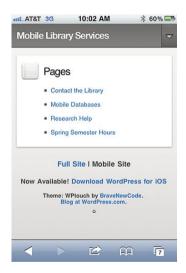

Figure 1:

Figure 2:

The first option is the commercial (free) version of Word Press with the mobile detection formatting enabled. The beta version of the California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) library mobile site (http://mobilelib.wordpress.com/) was authored with the free version of Word Press. Each link goes to a page within the blog. The content was copy-pasted from the full library site with very minimal html editing. The page shown in Figure 1 took about an hour to create, with only minor formatting. The page does not utilize plug-ins or advanced features.

A more advanced example using Word Press can be seen in the mobile efforts of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Library at http://blogs.ntu.edu.sg/ mlibrary. As shown in Figure 2 the NTU Library uses a combination of Word Press and Library Anywhere (which offers a mobile catalog – not a free option) to generate mobile friendly pages.

Conclusion

In light of trends toward more widespread use of mobile computing devices and smart phones, it makes sense for libraries to provide access to their collections and services in ways that work well with mobile devices. We aim to create an environment in which students can use their mobile device to gain entry to a new layer of digital information, enhancing their experience in the physical library. Since a majority of library users own a mobile phone, incorporating it into library services will promote a good relationship between library users and staff and enhance library services, which will attract and retain users.

Telecommunication infrastructures should be put in place for efficient and effective communication between library users and staff, which will engender mobile phone library services. Library users and staff should be educated on the proper use of mobile phone for library services, to eliminate abuse. Libraries can distribute their knowledge of and expertise in library systems and materials via MP3 and video files that patrons can take with them. Technologies such as instant messaging, e-mail and SMS text messaging are making it easy or libraries to maintain their relevance as information hubs by offering convenient services to busy users. Libraries can provide services for mobile users at two levels, internally within the library and at an institutional level.

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