Mobile Library Services: Big Ideas in Small Devices

By

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Abstract

Mobile technology has made dramatic changes in users' way of accessing information and opens the door for a new kind of learning and also providing anytime and anywhere access to information, processes, and communication. Mobile devices are rapidly becoming the main way to access online information. They provide a new channel for accessing information and sharing with others. They are superb at delivering different kinds of resources streamed video and music, written and spoken literature, travel directions, games, photos, etc. The compelling demand of mobile devices has one valid reason that they enable flexibility for users and libraries to access up-to-date information in ubiquitous way. Hence, Bring Your Own Device (BYOD), practice of students bringing their own smartphones, tablets or other miniature devices to access information in ubiquitous environment is a common trend across different academic institutions.

*Mobile library applications opens door for libraries for myriad opportunities. In the age of "**information on the go**" libraries particularly, academic and special libraries can serve their users by leveraging the growing capabilities of mobile technology. There are many initiatives that are adopted by libraries in developed countries to expedite their existing library services and to make them mobile friendly. With a good Internet speed, a user can access information with ease anytime, anywhere his or her library. Thus, providing library services via mobile phones expand the scope of the library services and a library takes a giant step toward becoming a round-the-clock service.*

Further, libraries are offering new services to patrons through mobile web services that can help them to easy access without constraints of time and space, services that the users expect from the communities and content providers. Libraries are always anxious to leverage the modern mobile technology that most of their users are using, such as smart phones and other sophisticated devices to deliver robust services with convenience. These devices are made ready through many library mobile initiatives to integrate library services with user's daily lives.

Interestingly, no library in India has taken any initiative to fully implement mobile devices in the library services and not mobilized their existing services to mobile Web so far and there is no plan to do so in near future. Because, libraries in India are facing a considerable and never ending challenge, how to keep pace with the rapidly changing technological landscape, lack of skilled manpower and ensure the services they provide tap into the new technologies which are infiltrating society. They can mobilize and expand their existing services by offering mobile access to their websites and online public access catalogues, by supplying on-the-go mobile reference services and by providing mobile access to e-books, journals, video, audio books, and multimedia content. This unavailability of mobile library services in the mobile world would ultimately create a gap between libraries and users.

The image of a library as an impervious vault wherein librarians serve as the gatekeepers, guiding patrons through myriad stacks, has become out dated. Today's libraries need to take a new channel to provide their resources, services and Research tools to today's generations and stay tuned with users. Therefore, it is crucial for librarians to understand mobile devices and provide services through them. It has become an important issue to develop methodologies or tools to assist the user community by providing them an easy access by developing information services on mobile devices.

Therefore, considering the potential for fast information access in miniature devices anytime, anywhere with mobile technology. The present lecture highlights the problems faced by the users in accessing information on their mobile devices and how to enhance the existing library services into Mobile based Library Services. It will also touch on various facets of mobile library services, such as: Mobile library website; Mobile library catalogue; Library Apps; Library SMS notification; SMS reference service; Use of Quick Response (QR) codes in library services; Mobile collections; Mobile audio tours; Mobile Augmented Reality; Mobile instructions; Mobile databases, and Mobile services for Persons with Disabilities.