



Acquisition of E-resources: Current library practices, strategies, and emerging trends

Satish

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Library & Information Science, University of Delhi, Delhi, India

Abstract

The acquisition of e-resources is a critical endeavour for libraries as they strive to meet the information needs of their users and support educational and research activities. This paper examines the ways in which libraries acquire e-resources and explores the selection criteria employed during the acquisition process. Various methods such as subscription-based databases, e-book collections, open access resources, institutional repositories, and collaborative initiatives are discussed. The selection criteria encompass aspects such as relevance to user needs, quality and authority of the resources, user experience and interface, licensing terms and usage rights, technical compatibility, cost-effectiveness, and the analysis of usage statistics and user feedback. By considering these criteria, libraries can make informed decisions to build comprehensive e-resource collections that align with their users' requirements and provide optimal access to valuable information. The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of current library practices and strategies in the acquisition of e-resources, assisting libraries in effectively managing and expanding their digital collections.

Keywords: current library practices, research activities, subscription-based databases

Introduction

Definition: In their book "Management of Library Acquisitions," James L. Mullins and Richard E. Schilling define Library Acquisition as the process of acquiring, arranging, and managing library materials to develop and improve library collections in order to fulfil the information requirements of users. It encompasses systematically identifying, evaluating, and obtaining materials through different methods like purchasing, exchanging, receiving gifts, or leasing. The acquisition process involves various activities such as budgeting, selecting vendors, placing orders, handling invoices, receiving materials, and cataloguing them. By employing effective practices in library acquisition, the aim is to ensure that materials are readily available, easily accessible, and of high quality within the library's collection.

The acquisition of e-resources has become a vital component of modern library practices, driven by the rapid advancements in technology and the increasing demand for digital information. With the transition from traditional print materials to digital formats, libraries are continually adapting their strategies to effectively acquire and manage e-resources. This literature review aims to provide an overview of the current library practices, strategies, and emerging trends in the acquisition of e-resources, highlighting key insights from scholarly literature. The acquisition of e-resources has witnessed significant attention from researchers and practitioners alike. Chowdhury and Chowdhury (2013) [3] emphasize the importance of digital libraries in the digital age, highlighting the need for libraries to adapt their collection development policies and acquisition practices to embrace electronic materials. Hossain and Akter (2018) [5] conducted a systematic literature review on the challenges and opportunities in the acquisition of e-resources, shedding light on the complexities faced by libraries in this domain. In recent years, several trends have emerged in the acquisition of e-resources. Kostagiolas (2017) [6] highlights the shift from

print to digital formats as a prominent trend, with libraries allocating a substantial portion of their budgets towards electronic materials. This transition is driven by factors such as the ease of access, remote availability, and cost-effectiveness of e-resources. Lorigo and Patterson (2019) [7] delve into the current collection development policies for e-resources, providing insights into the selection criteria, resource evaluation, and user needs assessment employed by libraries. Effective vendor selection and management are crucial aspects of e-resource acquisition. Mao and Yuan (2018) [9] explore strategies for managing vendor relationships, emphasizing the significance of content quality, pricing models, technical support, and licensing terms in vendor evaluation. Open access and open educational resources (OER) have also gained prominence in the acquisition landscape. Morris (2016) discusses the practices, challenges, and opportunities associated with open access resources, while Wilson and Stephens (2019) examine the role of libraries in supporting OER initiatives. Digital preservation and access are critical considerations for libraries acquiring e-resources. Thomas and Haricombe (2020) discuss strategies for digital preservation, including metadata management, format migration, and archiving, to ensure the long-term accessibility and usability of e-resources.

Review of Literature

The acquisition of e-resources has become a crucial aspect of modern library practices, with libraries continually adapting their strategies to effectively procure and manage electronic materials. This review of literature aims to provide an overview of the current practices, strategies, and emerging trends in the acquisition of e-resources, drawing insights from scholarly works in the field.

1. Trends in E-Resource Acquisition

One significant trend in the acquisition of e-resources is the shift from traditional print formats to digital materials.

Kostagiolas (2017) ^[6] highlights this trend, with libraries allocating a substantial portion of their budgets towards electronic resources. The benefits of digital formats, including ease of access, remote availability, and cost-effectiveness, have propelled this shift. However, challenges such as licensing agreements, pricing models, and vendor relationships accompany this transition (Hossain & Akter, 2018) ^[5].

2. Collection Development Policies

An effective collection development policy is crucial in guiding libraries' acquisition practices. Lorigo and Patterson (2019) ^[7] explore the current collection development policies for e-resources, emphasizing factors such as selection criteria, resource evaluation, budget allocation, and user needs assessment. They stress the importance of aligning the policy with the library's mission and the evolving information needs of users.

3. Vendor Selection and Management

Choosing the right vendors and managing relationships with them are vital for successful e-resource acquisition. Mao and Yuan (2018) ^[9] discuss strategies for managing vendor relationships, highlighting considerations such as content quality, pricing, technical support, and licensing terms. Building strong vendor partnerships and engaging in ongoing communication and negotiation are essential to ensure access to high-quality resources.

4. Open Access and Open Educational Resources (OER)

The emergence of open access and OER has introduced new opportunities and challenges in e-resource acquisition. Morris (2016) examines the practices, challenges, and opportunities associated with open access resources. Wilson and Stephens (2019) focus on the role of libraries in supporting OER initiatives, including integrating OER into collections and providing guidance to faculty and students.

5. Digital Preservation and Access

Preserving and providing long-term access to e-resources pose significant challenges for libraries. Thomas and Haricombe (2020) discuss strategies for digital preservation, such as metadata management, format migration, and archiving. They emphasize the importance of sustainable preservation practices to ensure the ongoing accessibility and usability of e-resources.

This review of literature has explored the current library practices, strategies, and emerging trends in the acquisition of e-resources. The shift to digital formats, the development of collection policies, vendor selection and management, the impact of open access and OER, and the challenges of digital preservation and access have been key areas of focus. By understanding and adapting to these trends and challenges, libraries can optimize their acquisition practices and enhance their ability to provide users with seamless access to a wide range of electronic materials.

Objective

The objective of this write-up is to provide an overview of the various ways in which libraries can acquire e-resources. By exploring different methods such as subscription-based databases and journals, e-book collections, open access resources, institutional repositories, consortial agreements, digital archives and special collections, licensing of multimedia content, and collaborative initiatives, the aim is

to highlight the diverse approaches libraries can take to build comprehensive e-resource collections. References are provided to support and enhance the information presented.

Library Acquisition of E-Resources

In the digital age, the acquisition of e-resources has become a critical function for libraries as they strive to meet the evolving information needs of their users. E-resources, which encompass electronic journals, databases, e-books, multimedia materials, and more, offer numerous advantages such as remote access, instant availability, and enhanced search capabilities. This write-up explores the key aspects and considerations involved in the library acquisition of e-resources.

1. Selection and Evaluation

The process of acquiring e-resources begins with selection and evaluation. Libraries must carefully assess the relevance, quality, and suitability of the resources to ensure they align with their users' needs. Factors such as subject coverage, currency, authority, and the reputation of publishers or content providers play a crucial role in the decision-making process. Librarians often rely on various tools and techniques, including user surveys, faculty input, citation analysis, and peer reviews, to guide their selection and evaluation efforts.

2. Licensing and Agreements

Acquiring e-resources involves negotiating and managing licensing agreements with publishers or vendors. These agreements outline the terms and conditions for access, usage, and sharing of the resources. Libraries need to carefully review and understand the licensing terms, including permitted user access, simultaneous usage restrictions, interlibrary loan provisions, and perpetual access rights. It is essential to ensure compliance with copyright laws and licensing restrictions while maximizing access and usability for library patrons.

3. Budget and Funding

Acquiring e-resources requires careful budget planning and allocation. Libraries must consider the costs associated with subscription fees, one-time purchases, ongoing maintenance, and access fees for consortia agreements. Budgets may vary depending on the size of the library, user demand, and institutional priorities. Libraries often employ cost-effective strategies such as consortia purchasing, resource sharing, and open access initiatives to optimize their budgets and expand their e-resource collections.

4. Vendor Management

Maintaining effective relationships with vendors is crucial for successful e-resource acquisition. Libraries rely on vendors for access to a wide range of e-resources, technical support, and timely updates. Good vendor management includes regular communication, negotiation of favourable terms, monitoring usage statistics, and addressing any access or technical issues promptly. Libraries may also participate in consortia or collaborative purchasing agreements to leverage their collective bargaining power and obtain more favourable terms from vendors.

5. User Support and Training

Libraries play a vital role in supporting users in accessing and effectively utilizing e-resources. Providing training

sessions, workshops, and user guides on navigating electronic databases, advanced search techniques, and copyright compliance empowers library patrons to make the most of the available e-resources. Librarians also serve as intermediaries between users and e-resource vendors, assisting with troubleshooting, access issues, and resource-specific queries.

6. Future Trends and Challenges

As technology advances and user expectations evolve, libraries face ongoing challenges and emerging trends in e-resource acquisition. Open access initiatives, data management services, digital preservation, and the integration of e-resources into learning management systems are areas of growing importance. Libraries must adapt to changing publishing models, shifting user preferences, and evolving formats, while ensuring the long-term preservation and accessibility of e-resources.

The acquisition of e-resources is a complex and multifaceted process for libraries. From selection and evaluation to licensing, budgeting, vendor management, and user support, libraries must navigate various considerations to provide their patrons with robust and relevant electronic collections. By staying abreast of emerging trends and proactively addressing challenges, libraries can continue to enhance access to high-quality e-resources and meet the ever-changing needs of their users.

Acquire Electronic Resources

1. Subscription-based Databases and Journals

Libraries often acquire e-resources through subscriptions to databases and electronic journals. These resources provide access to a wide range of scholarly articles, research papers, and specialized content. Libraries negotiate licensing agreements and pay subscription fees to gain access to these resources on behalf of their users (Bauer *et al.*, 2016) ^[1].

2. E-Book Collections

Libraries acquire e-books through direct purchases or subscriptions to e-book platforms. E-books offer the advantage of remote access and efficient search and navigation capabilities. Libraries collaborate with publishers or aggregators to acquire e-books, ensuring a diverse collection across various subject areas (McCabe & Snyder, 2014) ^[10].

3. Open Access Resources

Libraries actively engage with open access initiatives, which provide unrestricted access to scholarly articles, research publications, and educational resources. Open access resources are freely available to users, promoting the dissemination of knowledge. Libraries curate and promote open access content, collaborate with institutional repositories, or support the publication of open access journals (Suber, 2012).

4. Institutional Repositories

Libraries establish and maintain institutional repositories to house research outputs, theses, dissertations, and other scholarly works produced by their affiliated institutions' faculty and students. These repositories serve as platforms for preserving and providing open access to the intellectual output of the institution (Sale, 2012).

5. Consortia Agreements

Libraries frequently participate in consortia agreements, where multiple libraries or institutions collaborate to collectively acquire e-resources at a discounted rate. Consortia agreements enable libraries to leverage their collective purchasing power, expanding their e-resource collections and maximizing their budget allocation (Frazier & Banks, 2015) ^[4].

6. Digital Archives and Special Collections

Libraries acquire e-resources by digitizing and preserving unique materials from their physical collections. This includes digitizing rare books, manuscripts, historical documents, photographs, and other special collections. Digital archives provide broader access to valuable and often rare resources, ensuring their long-term preservation (Caruthers *et al.*, 2016) ^[2].

7. Licensing of Multimedia Content

Libraries may license multimedia resources, such as audiovisual materials, streaming services, or interactive learning platforms. These resources enhance the educational experience, supporting various disciplines and providing engaging and interactive content for library users (Luo & Strickland, 2015) ^[8].

8. Collaborative Initiatives

Libraries collaborate with other institutions, organizations, or library consortia to pool resources and jointly acquire e-resources. Collaborative initiatives foster resource sharing, cooperative purchasing, and the creation of shared digital collections, enabling libraries to access a broader range of resources (Rowlands *et al.*, 2017) ^[12].

Acquisition of E-Resources: Selection Criteria

Selecting suitable e-resources for a library's collection requires careful evaluation based on specific selection criteria. These criteria ensure that the acquired e-resources meet users' needs and support educational and research goals. This section outlines the key selection criteria commonly used in the acquisition of e-resources.

1. Relevance to User Needs

Libraries prioritize e-resources that cater to users' specific information needs. This involves considering the subject coverage, depth, and currency of the content. By aligning the collection with user requirements, libraries can provide resources that support research, curriculum, and scholarly pursuits.

2. Quality and Authority

Evaluating the quality and authority of e-resources is crucial. Libraries assess the reputation and credibility of publishers, content providers, and authors. Preferred resources often include peer-reviewed materials and content from well-established publishers. Citation metrics, such as impact factors and citation indices, may be used to gauge the influence and scholarly significance of the resources.

3. User Experience and Interface

Usability and accessibility are key considerations in selecting e-resources. Libraries assess the user interface, search capabilities, navigational tools, and functionality of the resource. An intuitive and user-friendly interface enhances the overall experience and facilitates efficient access to information.

4. Licensing Terms and Usage Rights

Libraries evaluate the licensing terms and usage rights associated with e-resources. This involves considering the permitted number of simultaneous users, interlibrary loan provisions, document delivery rights, and archival rights. Libraries aim to acquire resources with licensing terms that meet user needs while adhering to copyright regulations.

5. Technical Compatibility

The technical compatibility of e-resources with the library's existing systems and infrastructure is important. Libraries assess whether the resource can be seamlessly integrated into their catalogue, discovery systems, authentication processes, and other library platforms. Compatibility with different devices and operating systems ensures accessibility across a range of user devices.

6. Cost-effectiveness

Budgetary considerations play a significant role in e-resource acquisition. Libraries evaluate the cost-effectiveness of resources by comparing subscription fees, perpetual access options, discounts, and potential long-term costs. Consortia agreements, price negotiation, and overall value assessment help libraries optimize their resource allocation.

7. Usage Statistics and User Feedback

Usage statistics and user feedback provide valuable insights for selection decisions. Libraries analyse usage data to evaluate the popularity and relevance of existing resources. User feedback helps assess user satisfaction levels and preferences. These inputs guide decisions on acquiring or renewing specific e-resources.

By employing these selection criteria, libraries can make informed decisions when acquiring e-resources, ensuring that their collections are relevant, reliable, user-friendly, and aligned with budgetary constraints and technical requirements.

Conclusion

The acquisition of e-resources is a vital process for libraries to meet the evolving needs of their users in the digital age. This paper has explored the various aspects of acquiring e-resources, including ways to acquire them, selection criteria, and the challenges and opportunities involved. Libraries employ different methods such as subscription-based databases, e-book collections, open access resources, institutional repositories, and collaborative initiatives to acquire e-resources. These approaches allow libraries to build comprehensive collections that cater to diverse user needs. In selecting e-resources, libraries consider several key criteria. They prioritize resources that align with user requirements, ensuring relevance and supporting research and educational goals. Quality and authority are essential factors, with libraries evaluating the reputation and credibility of publishers and content providers. User experience and interface play a crucial role in facilitating efficient access to information, while licensing terms and usage rights are carefully assessed to adhere to copyright regulations. Technical compatibility is considered to integrate resources seamlessly into existing library systems, and cost-effectiveness is evaluated to make optimal use of budgets. Usage statistics and user feedback provide valuable insights for decision-making. Despite the many benefits,

challenges arise in the acquisition of e-resources. These include managing vendor relationships, navigating licensing complexities, and addressing budgetary constraints. However, libraries have opportunities to leverage emerging trends and technologies to enhance their e-resource acquisition strategies, such as exploring consortia agreements, negotiating pricing, and adopting efficient vendor management practices.

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