



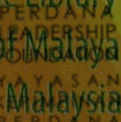
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ICoLIS 2012

# Inclusion and Outreach in Libraries

20 – 21 November 2012  
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Department of Library and Information Science  
Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology  
and  
The Library  
University of Malaya  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia





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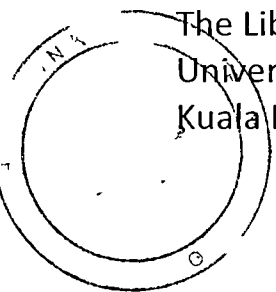
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# Digital information world: what difference can we make?

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## ABSTRACT

*Traditionally library and information services have played an intermediary role connecting information creators and information users. Recent developments in ICT (information and communication technologies) especially the Internet, web and mobile technologies have brought significant changes in the information industry as well as the information services sector. While these new technologies have brought many opportunities they also have brought new challenges for the information services sector. With the emergence of many new digital information systems and services, as well as a myriad of new digital information channels and service providers, it has become apparent that the information profession now needs to find some ways to improve their services and to make their presence felt in the digital information world. This paper proposes some new areas of research and development activities that the information professionals need to undertake in order to make optimum use of the emerging digital technologies for providing better information services.*

**Keywords:** Digital information; Digital information access; challenges

## INTRODUCTION

The information industry and the information services sector have for centuries played a key role in the knowledge continuum. Together they have linked information creators and information users and in that process they have played a big role in the use of existing knowledge and also in the creation of new knowledge. However, this scenario has changed quite dramatically over the past two decades with the rapid developments in ICT (information and communication technologies), web and mobile technologies. In today's digital information world, creation of information – all the activities associated with the creation, publication and distribution of content and data – is no longer within the sole control of the information industry – traditional publishers, aggregators, distributors, database services, etc. The web has created new opportunities for creation of digital content and data, and virtually everyone can now be a publisher and distributor of information. Many new fee-based as well as open access content is now created and made available through the web providing opportunities for users to access content from what looks like an online content marketplace. Traditional library and information services are not the only channels for getting access to information in today's world. In fact, the traditional information services sector is now being challenged in almost every sphere of their activities by a variety of new players ranging from a myriad of commercial eBook services like Amazon to search engine services like Google, Google Books, Google Scholar,

Microsoft Research, and so on. So, the vital question that challenges the very existence of the information profession is: what difference can we make? Why should people come to the traditional library and information services, and more importantly what can the information professionals offer that makes their services better than those that are available elsewhere? What can we do to design and deliver digital information services that are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable? This paper aims to address these questions. In order to find an answer to these questions, it first looks at the current state of digital information with a view to identifying the various stages in the information lifecycle where information professionals can make a contribution. It proposes some areas of research that can help information professionals create better and sustainable information services.

## **DIGITAL INFORMATION CREATION**

In Britain the publishing industry has a turnover of over £18.4 billion, with its 8000 plus companies employing around 164,000 people and contributing to over 8% of GDP (BERR, 2009). Another study (Houghton et. al, 2009) shows that in 2007 the core scholarly publishing system activities may have costed around £5.4 billion in the UK. The global value of the publishing industry is estimated to be “€80 billion and is the second largest creative industry in the world, after television; and is currently bigger than the music publishing; video games and entertainment software; and audiovisuals (DVDs and downloads) industries combined” (Ogunlesi, 2011).

Although commercial publishers have remained at the forefront of publication and distribution of content, especially scholarly content, increasingly digital content is being created and distributed by many non-conventional publishers – individuals as well as institutions. A variety of alternative models for accessing knowledge have appeared over the past few years and they operate under different business models (Bunkell & Dias-Correia, 2009; JISC, 2009a; JISC, 2009b; Nicholas, et.al., 2010; Pool, 2010; Chowdhury, 2011). Many new players and special information services have also appeared in the knowledge sector, typical examples being Google Books, Amazon, Apple, etc. Nowadays, authors can also choose to self publish their books quickly without having to go through a formal publisher. For example:

“CreateSpace, a member of the Amazon group of companies, provides a fast, easy and economical way to self-publish and make your content available to millions of potential customers on Amazon.com and other channels” (Amazon, 2012).

Similarly, the Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) option provides opportunities for publishing books with Kindle. According to the Kindle site, Quick Publishing takes less than five minutes and the new book usually appears on the Kindle store within a day (Amazon, 2012)

Open access publishing has also become quite popular over the past two decades. The open access movement emerged in the early 1990s with the establishment of the open archive arXiv.org in order to provide free access to literature on high-energy physics, and later it became more inclusive covering other subjects like mathematics, statistics, etc. The Santa Fe Convention in 1999, and subsequently the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) in 2001, brought a new era in open access communication (Cullen & Chawner, 2011). The