Integrating Traditional and New Uses in the Library and in its Workstations / Roitberg **Nurit**

Abstract

Academic libraries face new challenges as a result of changes in the electronic information environment. The bibliographic electronic resources are accessible out of the library by using personal computer and the communication network. As a result, most faculty and the majority of graduate students have reduced their visits in the library building, and the undergraduate students are the main audience who come to the academic library.

The workstations have been installed in the libraries for accessing the electronic library which includes the library catalog, databases and electronic journals. These uses are based on access to the Internet. Most libraries decided to allow free access to the Internet, and did not block it to library resources only. They assumed that Internet surfing and electronic mail would be auxiliary uses. They also added word processors and statistical softwares on library workstations as an aid to students. During the three-four last years, it appears that the electronic non-library uses are becoming major uses on library workstations, mainly in libraries with large number of public workstations. Many libraries are embarrassed to see the large amount of non-library uses that were supposed to be auxiliary uses to the electronic library, and have doubts whether this trend can be justified and permitted.

The main goal of this research was to survey the purposes for visiting the academic library building and the types of uses done on library workstations, in order to find out whether a new pattern of use which combines the electronic library with large amount of new non-library uses is developing and whether this process can be justified.

The survey of purposes for visiting the library and the type of uses made on the library workstations was done not only to examine the scale of new electronic non-library uses, but also to check their linkage to the electronic learning environment which has been widely developed during the last two-three years. The electronic learning is using the Internet to deliver teaching material and exercises to the online course sites. Such a linkage can justify non-library uses on library workstations, and can also demonstrate a development which leads the academic library building towards becoming a computerized learning center, which combines activities that would not be possible without the workstations, the access to the Internet and the

auxiliary software packages installed on them. The term 'Learning Center' appears lately in literature to describe a facility that combines the electronic library and other learning activities in one workstation and under the same roof. This change has implications on the physical organization of the library building as well.

The pace of growth of non-library uses in library workstations is not the same in all libraries. The conditions for development of the process described above are, that the library owns a larger number of workstations than the minimum needed for library uses, and that the library workstations are not blocked to library uses only. This is the reason that a comparison has been done between libraries with large number of workstations and libraries with small amount of workstations.

The main research assumption was that the amount of the new electronic non-library uses: electronic mail, Internet surfing, online courses and MS Office software (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) is larger than the amount of the electronic library uses: catalog, databases and electronic journals, among the library building visitors, on condition that the number of library workstations is larger than the minimum needed for the electronic library purposes. The minimum is regarded as 10 workstations, and a library with less is considered a library with small number of workstations. Libraries with several dozen or more workstations with Internet access are regarded as libraries with large number of workstations. This assumption and additional ones that were based on the same principal, were checked on the basis of data collected in a questionnaire survey, which was conducted in 7 academic libraries at the Technion and Tel-Aviv university. In addition, computerized observations were conducted on 10 public workstations in the Technion Central Library. The observations were done on the fully recorded activity which was performed on these workstations during sampling hours, and it was possible to measure the time dedicated to the various uses made on them.

The results pointed out clearly the connection between a large number of workstations in the library, and a large amount of non-library uses on these workstations, sometimes almost double than electronic library uses. Moreover, the trend of the growing scale of non-library uses is also outstanding in libraries with small number of workstations, and this reflects a real need of students coming to the library. The results of the computerized observations show that the majority of electronic non-library uses are linked to the electronic learning. Most non-electronic uses performed on library workstations are done by undergraduate students, but there

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are differences in the amount of use from one faculty to the other. Engineering students' share in the non-library uses is especially outstanding. Many users pointed out the combination of books and workstations as the reason for their coming to the library building.

The findings of this research lead to the conclusion that the library building is developing into a learning center, which combines access to the electronic library, online course sites, a textbook collection and a reference service. An additional characteristic of the learning center is a studying space for groups where conversation is permitted.

The changes in the role of the academic library building, are additional to changes related to the electronic library and to the delivery of information services over the network. A separate chapter in this research deals with the influence of the online courses on the change of librarians' work. Their new duties include linking electronic sources to the online course sites, and delivering remote reference service and guidance using the Internet. The new services complement the traditional ones, and they are part of the academic library new duties which demand initiative and higher involvement in supporting the electronic learning efficiently, using the electronic library tools.

Four interviews were made to check four projects of adding bibliographic contents to the online courses in four university libraries in Israel. At present, in most online courses the librarians are less active then was expected in adding bibliographic information, not because lack of skills, but mainly because of limited cooperation on the lecturers' side. The teachers are very slow to accept library initiatives in preparing a literature site to their course.

The trend of delivering more focused information via the network, and more remote reference services will probably grow and new services will develop, but not all of them can be predicted yet. One of this variety could be subject portals offered by the library without being dependent on the lecturer and his course site.

Integrating the library services with the electronic learning by offering new networked services, and by adopting the library building to new uses, raises the academic library status in the university.

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