

AUDIO-VISUAL AND MULTIMEDIA SERVICES IN LIBRARIES

Prof. Tikararm D. Samrit

Librarian

Late Nirdhan Patil Waghaye College
Ekodi.

Mail - tikaramsamrit@gmail.com

Dr. Yogesh Kumar Atri

Research Guide

Late Nirdhan Patil Waghaye College Ekodi.
OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan

Abstract: As audio-video and instructional technologies converge and as libraries and user's expectations for these resources escalate, multimedia services are the next major strategic asset for institutional success. Multimedia libraries, as information structures, link the collection of traditional libraries and new media resources. For these libraries, schools of librarianship and information science should provide optional courses for more detailed aspects for those wishing to specialize further. This article tries to define multimedia libraries in every aspect, personnel, equipments, advantages, access, copyright and licensing.

Key words: audio-visual resources, multimedia materials, individual users.

Introduction:

Libraries can provide content to its users using tools as books and lectures on the Internet or even handheld computers. A multimedia material, which can also provide text and images, can be modified depending on user's needs or linked to other materials. Audiovisual materials are an important part of our cultural heritage, with a huge amount of information that should be preserved for future use. The rich variety of audiovisual and multimedia materials in society should be reflected in the services offered to users by libraries. Nowadays librarianship and information science should provide optional courses for more detailed aspects for those wishing to specialize further training in this field is all about intellectual, legal and technical aspects.

As techniques and products are changing rapidly, multimedia libraries should have a budget for keeping in line with these changes, taking into consideration purchasing of the new products and also continuing professional development of media specialists. It also involves regular maintenance, storage, repair and replacements of hardware when necessary. A multimedia library is a library that offers such facilities and services including audio, DVD/VCR, multimedia resources in the library collection, multimedia resources on the web. Such a multimedia library should have computers equipped with production software and trained staff on hand to provide assistance with creating graphics, videos, podcasts, websites and much more.

Audio resources should be provided to users as they have the following advantages:

1. Present contemporary and topical information easily.
2. No literacy skills required to use.
3. Support asynchronous presentation.
4. Information can be reviewed many times.
5. Moderate production costs.
6. Can be indexed or catalogued to enable nonsequential access.

Video materials have the following affordances:

1. Highly accessible.
2. Concrete, specific, detailed information.
3. Appropriate for users with „visual intelligence”.
4. Engaging and motivating for many users.
5. Moderate hardware costs.
6. Easily catalogued and reused.

Other justifications to audio and video materials are:

1. Good, solid information can be found on video format.
2. Some information is better transmitted visually than in print.
3. Many people learn better through the visual than through print.
4. Video offers opportunities for learning and recreation for those reading skills are low.
5. Film/cinema is a highly developed art form.
6. Audio/video are in the same price range as books and usually circulate at a very high rate.

Multimedia resources have the following affordances:

1. Active-learning characteristics engage learners via several paths to reinforce concepts.
 2. Quantitative elements are supported and reinforce conceptual learning.
 3. Engaging and motivating for many users.
 4. Interactivity.
 5. Opportunity for users to change values or conditions and see what happens.
- Copyrights and Licensing

The most common multimedia materials that can be found in a library can be divided into:

1. Resources that come from different producers (multimedia centers, publishing houses etc.).
2. Resources produced according to individual orders or demands.
3. Materials produced by users themselves, either individually or in groups including teams communicating via Internet.

Access to audio-visual and multimedia materials:

1. Education: lack of level of training in audiovisual and multimedia services, having implications to the quality of those services.
2. Financial issues: almost everything about audiovisual and multimedia materials involves financial aspects (storage conditions, staffing needs, staff training, different hardware requirements, acquisition).
3. Inadequate infrastructural facilities: lack of spaces, lack of electrical supply needed to run electrically powered hardware.

Some initiatives which can improve access to audiovisual and multimedia materials are:

1. Engaging librarians in providing information and not books.
2. Interconnecting librarians with other professionals interested in information creation.
3. Creating networks and partnerships at national level.
4. Developing adequate library programmes.
5. Fundraising for the acquisition of new materials.
6. Collection development with all kind of formats.

Selection criteria for library multimedia materials:

Useful for all levels (meeting informational and interest needs of every student).

1. According to curriculum and the objective of the educational program (reflecting the expected outcomes of the training program).
2. Presented in a manner to the level of students (accurate in terms of content).
3. Including materials by authors and illustrators of all cultures, thus promoting diversity as a positive attribute of our society.
4. Informative, rather than indoctrinating.
5. Appropriate in format in order to effectively teach the curriculum, meeting the needs and learning styles of a diverse student population.
6. Cost effective in terms of use.
7. Appropriate for students with special needs.

Conclusions:

Nowadays libraries have to deal with all sorts of materials, including print, audio-visual, electronic and multimedia librarians should see the positive effect of audiovisual and multimedia formats as resource materials and include them in their collections. As multimedia resources (both products and processes) have great potential to enhance education, libraries must adopt these resources and be prepared (with staff, equipment) to provide them to users, focusing on their motivations and challenges. Although there are many financial aspects concerning providing qualitative audiovisual and multimedia services in libraries, creative measures must be employed in order to support the development of such services.

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