SUPPORTING DIGITAL HUMANITIES RESEARCH: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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Abstract :

Digital Humanities emerged as an interdisciplinary field that encompasses studies of an Academic Subjects related to Humanities. This deals with digital technologies, digital methods, data Analysis, and digital resources too. The fast growth of digital records, data mining, AI and digital collections, data presentation, geographic Information/Mapping System, and various huge databases and digital data collections has opened new opportunities for Humanities Research. Academic Libraries play an important role in for supporting this Development by using Digital Resources, Research Data Management, Technological Infrastructure, Special Research Services etc. This paper discusses how academic Libraries support in Digital humanities. It covers the main areas of Library Support, New Services, New updated skills and professional expertise in the Library and Information Science it also covers challenges for the institution and future opportunities. The paper also discusses how academic libraries are participating in digital Activities and research and moving beyond their conventional Functions as an Information Providers.

Keywords : Digital Humanities, Academic Libraries, Library Services, Digital Collections

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Introduction :

The development of digital technology impacted strongly on research area in humanities. Humanities such as History, Literature, Political Science, Languages, philosophy archaeology are using technology in their research. They are using computer technology for data presentation, analysis, Digital manuscripts, photographs databases, data visualization tools, network analysis, Geographic Information/Mapping system and various methods to perform research in Humanities.

Academic Libraries plays an important role in this change. Academic Libraries have traditionally supported researchers through collection development, information services, reference assistance, preservation, and access to scholarly resources. But, due to development of digital humanities the responsibility of Libraries is increased. Now, collaborative research requires digital services such as digital resources, research data management, technological infrastructure, special research services, and technical training. The changing requirement in

research requires academic libraries to update their services and facilities. The librarian is transforming from an information custodian to a digital research provider, data advisor, and supporter of multidisciplinary learning.

Digital Humanities :

A digital humanity is an interdisciplinary area of research which deals with humanities and Digital/computer Technology and methods. It does not mean that digitizing tradition humanities material. Instead, it allows scholars to use digital technologies to generate new analysis techniques and raise new research. For example digitized images or photos can be very useful for researcher to examine patterns, past and or present trends, changes and variations can be studied easily in all humanities fields in large collection. Network analysis can reveal relationships between people, organizations, texts and historical events.

In this way Digital Humanities creates new way of research to work with digital collection, structured data and different computerized methods or tools

Changing Role of Academic Libraries :

Academic Libraries are actively participating in Digital Humanities research services. We can understand that through following methods.

1. Developing Digital Collection by providing Digitized books, manuscripts, photographs, newspapers, archival of documents, maps, audiovisual material or developing special digital collection according type of that institution or the users.
2. Digital Humanities Centers are establishing in the institutions where researchers are experimenting with digital tools and methods in their research studies.
3. Data Organization Software is used in various libraries to manage digital resources. Libraries are working with digital catalogue, Classification, controlled vocabulary, metadata standards for information organization.
4. Research Data management is done in libraries to use digitized data like maps, images, geographical information, bibliographic information.
5. Libraries are performing theirs responsibility by preserving cultural and scholarly resources in digital formats for further use. Libraries are also providing the facilities to use that preserved digital resources.
6. Academic Libraries providing training and user education to access available digital resources to the researchers of the humanities background.

Above points can express how Academic libraries are working hard on digital humanities.

Skill and Proficiency Essentials for Library Professionals :

The emergence of Digital Humanities requires library professionals to develop a

bunch of following new skills.

- Digital Literacy and Technology skills
- Data visualization
- Data analysis and data management
- Digital preservation
- Geographic Information Systems(GSI)
- Digital Publishing
- Knowledge of Copyright and Licensing
- Project Management
- Research Consultation
- Communication and collaboration skills

Librarians do not need to be software engineer or data scientist but he should understand basics of digital computer work and technical specifications effectively.

Barriers in Supporting Digital Humanities :

Despite growing opportunities, academic libraries have to face several challenges.

- Lack of skilled staff : Lack of skilled staff and lack of technical education to the library staff are barriers to providing good services in supporting digital humanities.
- Infrastructure and Funding : due to lack of infrastructure and funding academic libraries not able to provide facilities, storage, software digitization equipment and good infrastructure. Limited budget restrict development.
- Changing Technologies : fast changing digital technology needs fast change in infrastructure, software and staff skills too.
- Funding : Digital facilities needs regular funding for maintenance of hardware and software.
- Copyright and Ethical Issues : Libraries have to keep some policies clear for digitizing cultural material and making it available to users. Copyright, privacy, ethical, and heritage issues can create problems.
- Interdisciplinary Collaboration : this area brings various subjects together but differences in their terminologies, methods in different area changes its meaning.eg.
  Cloud-in literature, Computer science, and medical science
  Field- Agriculture, Physics, and Academics
  Scale-Geography, Music and Biology

Cloud, Field and Scale are examples how meaning of these words in that particular area is different; It creates difficulty.

Future Scope :

The future of digital humanities in library services is very bright. Latest computer

technologies like AI, Language Models, Data Visualization, Knowledge graphs, and preservation techniques Optical Character Recognition, handwriting recognition likely be widely used in this. But the use of human expertise remains unavoidable for various activities like ensuring responsible use of technology. Research in the humanities may not be performed without digital humanities.

Conclusion :

Digital humanities have transformed the nature of humanities research by using computerized methods. The use of various technologies has increased the responsibilities of academic libraries and, therefore, the requirements of updating skills in library professionals. As interdisciplinary field collaboration between researchers and academic departments becomes stronger. Successful development of digital humanities support based on organizational dedication, proper infrastructure, skilled staff, and sustainable funding. By fulfilling the above requirements, digital humanities support can be adopted innovatively in academic libraries,

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