

CREATING COLLECTION VISIBILITY FOR SCHOOL LIBRARY MEDIA CENTRES IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF CDS/ISIS FOR WINDOWS AND LIBRARY THING

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the importance of creating collection visibility through the use of freely available softwares such as the CDS/ISIS for windows and The LibraryThing as a strategy for the development of school library media centres in Nigeria. It discusses the benefits of having a visible collection among which is easy access to library materials via electronic means. The paper also highlights the key purposes of the school library media centre to students, teachers, and school administrators and the community and discusses the connection between these functions and the use of open source technologies as a means of ensuring efficiency in their service delivery at minimal cost to management. The uses of the CDS/ISIS for windows as well as the LibraryThing, a web 2.0 software were extensively discussed. The paper pointed out certain factors to consider in the use of web 2.0 tools and concludes with a charge to school library media centres to embrace the tide of change and migrate from the traditional forms of service delivery to the use of new technologies in the present knowledge driven society.

Keywords: Collection visibility; School library media centre CDS/ISIS windows, Library thing.

Introduction

Collection visibility implies strategizing and positioning library collections in a way that readily renders them accessible to the user community that patronize the collection. A collection, refers to the number of documents, in terms of books, reports, records, among others, assembled in a single physical or virtual location by one or more persons, or by a corporate entity and arranged in some kind of systematic order to facilitate retrieval (Reitz:2004;Prytherch:2005). When the word *Library* is added to *collection* it means the total accumulation of books and other materials owned by a library, catalogued and arranged for ease of access.(Reitz:2004). A visible collection is one that is well known and used by the patrons whose interests fall within the collection mandate of the library. One type of library that urgently need to create effective visibility for their collection, are school library media centers. Simply defined, a school library media centre also known as School Library describes a library in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves the information needs of its students and the curriculum needs also of its teachers and staff. This kind of Library is usually managed by a school librarian or school media specialist. Today's school library media specialist wear many caps. Such a person could also be referred to as a teacher, an information specialist, an instructional partner, and a programme administrator. This paper therefore discusses how the ideal school library media centre in Nigeria can effectively show case

its collection with the use of open source library applications such as the CDS/ISIS and the LibraryThing.

Some Benefits of Having a Visible Collection

When a collection is 'visible' from the start, it :

- enables the users to have easy access to the collection via electronic means,
- it gives the user community an awareness of the quantity, quality and formats of the information collection
- Provides access for the stakeholders such as parents to the collection via the internet to keep themselves informed about the 'content' in the collection.
- positions the user community better to maximise the use of what is available in the collection. (They can discover other related and useful information while browsing).
- enables the user community to have mobile access to records in the collection through the use of smart phones, and
- enables materials that ordinarily would have been overlooked or under-utilised, gain visibility and become highly utilized by users as a result of the OPAC interface users interact with when looking for information.

In order to appreciate the need for school library media centres to have an electronic visible collection, there is the need to keep in view the purpose for which the school library media centre exists.

The Key Purposes of a School Library Media Centre

Why are school library media centres very important to the overall wellbeing and development of the schools? According to Morris (2004), school library media centres provide services to students, teachers, school administrators and the community. The ideal school library should provide services to students in the areas of reading, viewing and listening guidance. The school library media centre is also expected to offer reference services such as accessible online and printed reference materials and provide instruction which includes things like teaching the use of special reference materials as well as giving orientation tours and workshops. They are also expected to promote clubs, social and vocational programs. The school library should also focus on specific services to teachers and administrators in the area of curriculum development. An ideal school library media centre is equally expected to assist teachers in the use of materials, helping them become familiar with the materials and equipment required for teaching and learning. Providing services to the immediate community where a school library is located is also part of the functions of a school library media centre. Miller and Shontz (1998) cited in Morris (2004). Their study similarly listed some of the staff functions that are ideally fundamental to providing minimal services in any school library media centre:

- budgeting a balanced media programme,
- selecting materials and equipment,
- acquiring and processing (where not centrally done) all media and equipment.

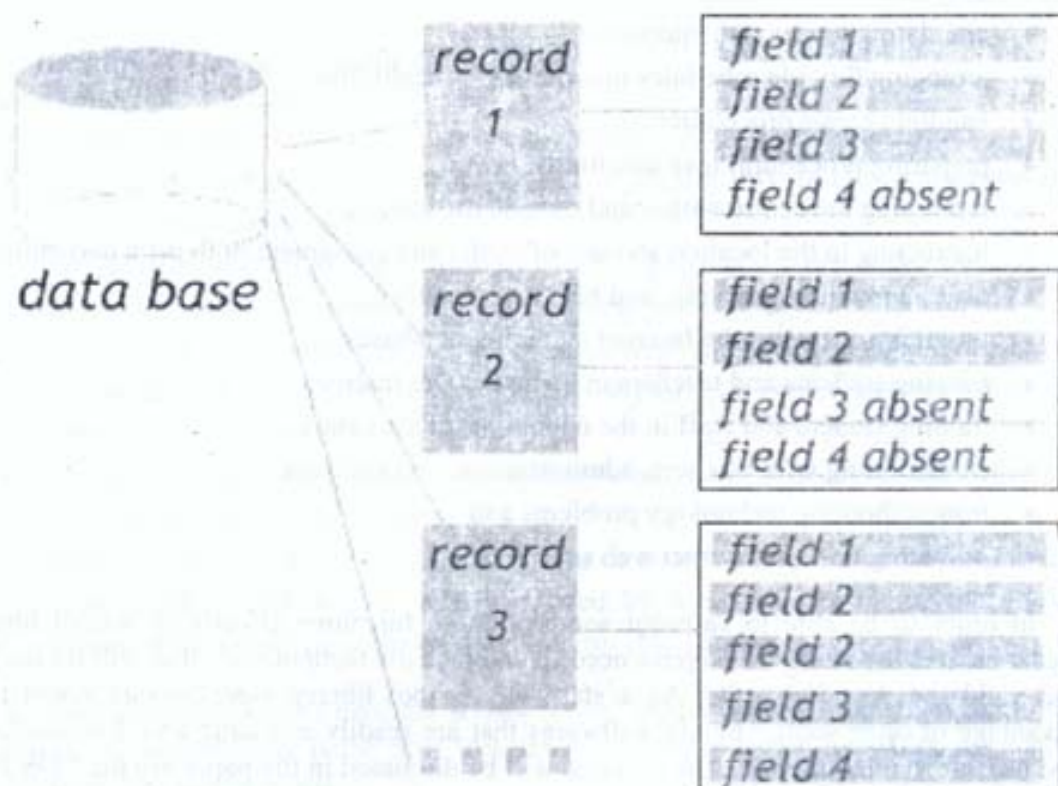
- organising collections of media (including online resources) and equipment for easy access.
- circulating media and equipment,
- arranging flexible schedules that provide accessibility,
- handling repair procedures,
- preparing procedural manuals for the centre,
- promoting the centre within and outside the school,
- instructing in the location and use of media and equipment both print and online,
- offering reading, viewing, and listening guidance,
- providing access to the Internet and other databases,
- training students and teachers in the use of the Internet,
- training student and staff in the operations of the centre,
- collaborating with teachers, administrators, and students,
- troubleshooting technology problems and
- providing links to Internet web sites.

In order to be able to carryout some of these functions effectively school library media centres especially in Nigeria need to embrace the technologies that will do the job and yield the desired results. As a start, any school library media centre could take advantage of open source library softwares that are readily available and downloadable and useable via the Internet. The two that will be discussed in the paper are the CDS/ISIS and the LibraryThing internet application.

CDS/ISIS

CDS/ISIS is an acronym that stands for Computerized Documentation System-Integrated Set for Information Systems (Acronym Finder: 2011). It was developed by The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (UNESCO: 2010a). The software which was originally based on the Mainframe version of CDS/ISIS, started in the late '60s. About twenty-five years ago, the DOS version of the software was developed by UNESCO (Hopkinson: 2011). Since then, the software has migrated to the windows platform. Micro CDS/ISIS is an advanced non-numerical information storage and retrieval software developed by UNESCO to satisfy the need expressed by many institutions, especially in developing countries, to be able to streamline their information processing activities by using modern (and relatively inexpensive) technologies. Many libraries in developing countries have accepted the CDS/ISIS package as a standard software for information system development. CDS/ISIS is one of the software packages for database management developed by UNESCO. It is a generalised Information Storage and Retrieval system (UNESCO:2010b) The Windows version may run on a single computer or in a local area network.

Fig 1: Example of the database structure graphically explained



CDS/ISIS is capable of doing the following task highlighted below:

- * define many databases each of which may have different data elements,
- * enter new records into a given database,
- * modify, correct or delete existing records,
- * automatically build and maintain fast access files for each database in order to maximise retrieval speed,
- * retrieve records by their contents, through a sophisticated search language,
- * display the records or portions thereof according to your requirements,
- * sort the records in any sequence desired,
- * print partial or full catalogues and/or indexes, and
- * develop specialised applications using the CDS/ISIS integrated programming facility,

Other capabilities include:

- * easy access to multimedia content i.e. web links, e-mails, document and image files,
- * data Entry control options - Pick list; Improved record validations,
- * import/Export Options - ISO 2709; XML,
- * dictionary capabilities - Dumping of terms to printer or file; Prefix management,
- * erase database option, and
- * plug-in ready - External 32-bits plus-ins,

The minimum and recommended hardware requirements for running the CDS/ISIS application are:

- Intel Pentium processor 100 Mhz or higher
- At least 16 MB of RAM
- 10 MB hard disk (free)
- 3½ inch floppy disk drive
- VGA 640x480 colour screen (super VGA 800x600 or higher recommended)
- Windows 3.1x or Windows 95/98/Me/NT/2000/XP
- 1 printer (optional)
- Multimedia (optional)
- Internet (optional)

One of the major advantages offered by the generalized design of the system is that CDS/ISIS is able to manipulate an unlimited number of databases, each of which may consist of completely different data elements. The CDS/ISIS user is therefore freed from the expensive task of having to design and write computer programs, each time a new project requires the use of information retrieval techniques. Although some features of CDS/ISIS require some knowledge of and experience with computerized information systems, once an application has been designed, persons having little or no prior computer experience may use the system.

For advanced users, having access to computer professionals, CDS/ISIS offers an integrated programming facility allowing the development of specialized applications and/or the functional extension of the software as originally provided. CDS/ISIS is not a relational database system, although it does provide some relational facilities. CDS/ISIS was written in C++ and Visual Basic.

It should be noted that CDS/ISIS has some system restrictions, they include the following:

- Maximum number of databases: Unlimited
- Maximum record size: 32000 characters*(*Records larger than 8000 characters may not be used with the MSDOS version of CDS/ISIS)
- Maximum field size: 32000 characters
- Maximum number of fields (defined in a FDT): 200
- Maximum number of FST lines: 600
- Maximum number of stopwords: 799
- Maximum size of a display format: 10000 characters
- Maximum size of a display buffer: 64000 characters

LibraryThing

LibraryThing web application was developed in 2005 by Tim Spalding, a web developer and web publisher. As of April 2011 it has over 1,300,000 users and more than 61 million books catalogued. LibraryThing is a web 2.0 based application which can be efficiently harnessed for personal and Professional use by school library media specialist.

LibraryThing is, a great way for library media specialists to keep track of the books that are read. The LibraryThing account is free for the first 200 books, and thereafter for a token of twenty-five dollars the subscriber can have a life-time subscription. LibraryThing allows the user to create a personal library, give tags to books, choose book covers, give star ratings, generate citations (MLA, APA, Chicago), and review books. The user can also connect to other readers and see their reviews. Entries made on LibraryThing can be seen by anyone or made private if the user does not want to share. The tags, which can be sorted alphabetically, are useful for remembering book topics and themes. When a tag is clicked, all of the books in the library tagged with that subject are displayed. (Sibley: 2009; Squidoo: 2011). Users can even view their books on a virtual shelf and add widgets to display titles that exist in their catalogue. This kind of web 2.0 technology development is well suited for students (Scott:2008;Parkes & Walton:2010). *LibraryThing* is an innovative, well-designed and very popular resource.

Things to consider when using Web 2.0 tools.

In harnessing a web 2.0 tool such as the LibraryThing, certain important considerations are necessary. According to Stowe and Teeuwesen (2008) the user of these tools should ask some salient questions: firstly, does the purpose of the tool assist in fulfilling the library's mandate? Secondly, how beneficial will it be to patrons, and staff when it is implemented? For instance will it create more visibility for the library's collection? Thirdly, what are the cost implications on a short and long term basis? How much daily time will it demand from staff that will be working with it? Finally, introducing a web 2.0 tool such as LibraryThing, will mean networking with other users on a highly interactive social networking platform. How comfortable will the library be in this kind of environment?

Conclusion and Recommendations

School libraries in Nigeria will need to look more closely on these relatively less expensive ways to provide cutting edge services for their user communities by making use of what is freely available on the web such as the CDS/ISIS and LibraryThing. Most children in this knowledge age can relate well with digital devices and platforms and as such, school library information provision services can migrate to these digital platforms as well in order to add more value to the traditional information services they provide.

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