Web presence of the Library of the University of Colombo: 2013-2018

M.A.L. Silva

Library, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Librarians in the new millennium find it difficult to fulfil user expectations through the physical library alone and as an augmentation, the website is used as the virtual public face of the library to facilitate time and place independent services to the clientele. University of Colombo (UoC) library built its website in 2001 and the usability was evaluated in 2013. Periodic evaluation, monitoring and regular updating are essential prerequisites of websites. Thus, the aim of the present study was to evaluate the library website of UoC based on content richness and design accuracy and to identify the changes in the web presence over the period of 2013 to 2018. An evaluative instrument consisted of 67 criteria was created by extensive review of literature and expert validation. The instrument consisted of 32 criteria related to content and 35 on design of the website. A systematic structured observation of the library website was conducted during January, 2018. Content richness of the library website in 2018 was 72.38% where as it was 51.88% in 2013. Among sub categories pertaining to content richness, services showed least web presence in both years which was 28.57% in 2018 and 14.28% in 2013. Items relating to general information and resources indicated 100% web presence in 2018 where as 81.81% and 80% respectively in 2013. Design accuracy of the library website was 84.62% in 2018 and 60.06% in 2013. Accessibility which is a design feature showed least web presence in both years which was 50% in 2018 and 0% in 2013 making library website inaccessible for differently abled users. Among items relating to navigation in both years library website is dearth of features as; up and down navigation within long pages, navigation back to homepage in second level pages, breadcrumb navigation and multiple links. Study concludes that content richness of the library website of UoC was developed over the five year period from 51.88% to 72.38% whereas accuracy of the design was improved from 60.06% to 84.62%. The library UoC has undergone a paradigm shift from its physical library to the virtual public interface in the new millennium and over the five year period from 2013-2018 the website of the library was developed to serve users in the digital world in a much satisfactory manner.

Keywords: *content of library websites; design of library websites; library website evaluation*