

Digital Reference Services in Corporate Libraries: Case Study of Tata Consultancy Services, Bangalore.

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Dr.Gavisiddappa Anandhalli

Assistant Professor, Karnataka State Women's
University, Bijapur, Karnataka-586109

e-mail- gavi_teju@rediffmail.com

Jagadeesh B

Information Analyst Tata Consultancy Services,
Bangalore.

Introduction:

The Information Communication Technology (ICT) is playing a very vital role for libraries in **collection, processing, and interpretation and disseminating** of information to their patrons especially in the networked environment.

Internet, WWW, digital library, electronic journals, and online databases are all such developments, which are changing the way libraries function today.

To cope up with this type of environment, now every field is accepting the change and implements new emerging technology. Many Libraries have come up with many innovative services with the use of technologies. Digital Reference Service is one among such services.

Reference Services

The dissemination of information is the basic objectives of any information center. And it can be achieved by establishing a contact with users. This kind of service is usually is called **Reference Service**.

In other words, the Reference is the personalized assistance rendered by the library staff to the users in finding required information.

In special library, this service is also known as **information service**. According to Dr. S.R. Ranganathan Reference service is a process of establishing right contact between the right reader and the right book at the right time and in the right personal way

Digital Reference Services

Digital Reference service in the libraries has taken many forms that include **digital, virtual, chat and on-line services**, as well as **computerized and networked online resources** accessed through libraries. Digital reference is a service by which library reference service is conducted **online**, and the reference transaction is a **computer-mediated communication**.

Digital reference refers to a network of expertise, intermediation and resources placed at the disposal of someone seeking answers in an online environment. Digital reference can provide support for users who find online tools and resources unfamiliar, difficult to learn, or insufficient to answer their information needs. It can also provide **valuable user feedback** to collection builders so that they may better tailor their resources and maximize their investment in content creation.

Forms of Digital Reference

In any convention library system, reference service is confined to the **physical resources** available in the library, with the advancement of **ICT** and **Internet** Technologies have enabled the librarians to use these technologies for effectively providing the new way of information service to their patron popular forms of Digital Reference Services.

- E-mail service
- Webforms
- Chat
- VOIP
- Video Conferencing
- On line Reference Desk

E-mail service

Email is most popular form of Digital reference services. It is **technically** easy to adopt and implement, since it is a common and **easy format** of communication.

It does not require any extra **software** and **training** for the staff to use this form in providing the services to its users. The files or documents can be attached in the mail and sent to the requester for immediate reference.

Reference through web Form

Webworms resemble like paper format users have to fill out the forms in using checkboxes, radio buttons, or text fields. It is effective way of gathering information required for delivering Digital Reference service.

It can be put on the library homepage. Once the user submits the form, the librarian will get an notification through email and the query is usually answered in return mail to the user.

Webforms allow users to provide further and more structured details about their information needs. Many corporate libraries have a webform made available on their library homepage.

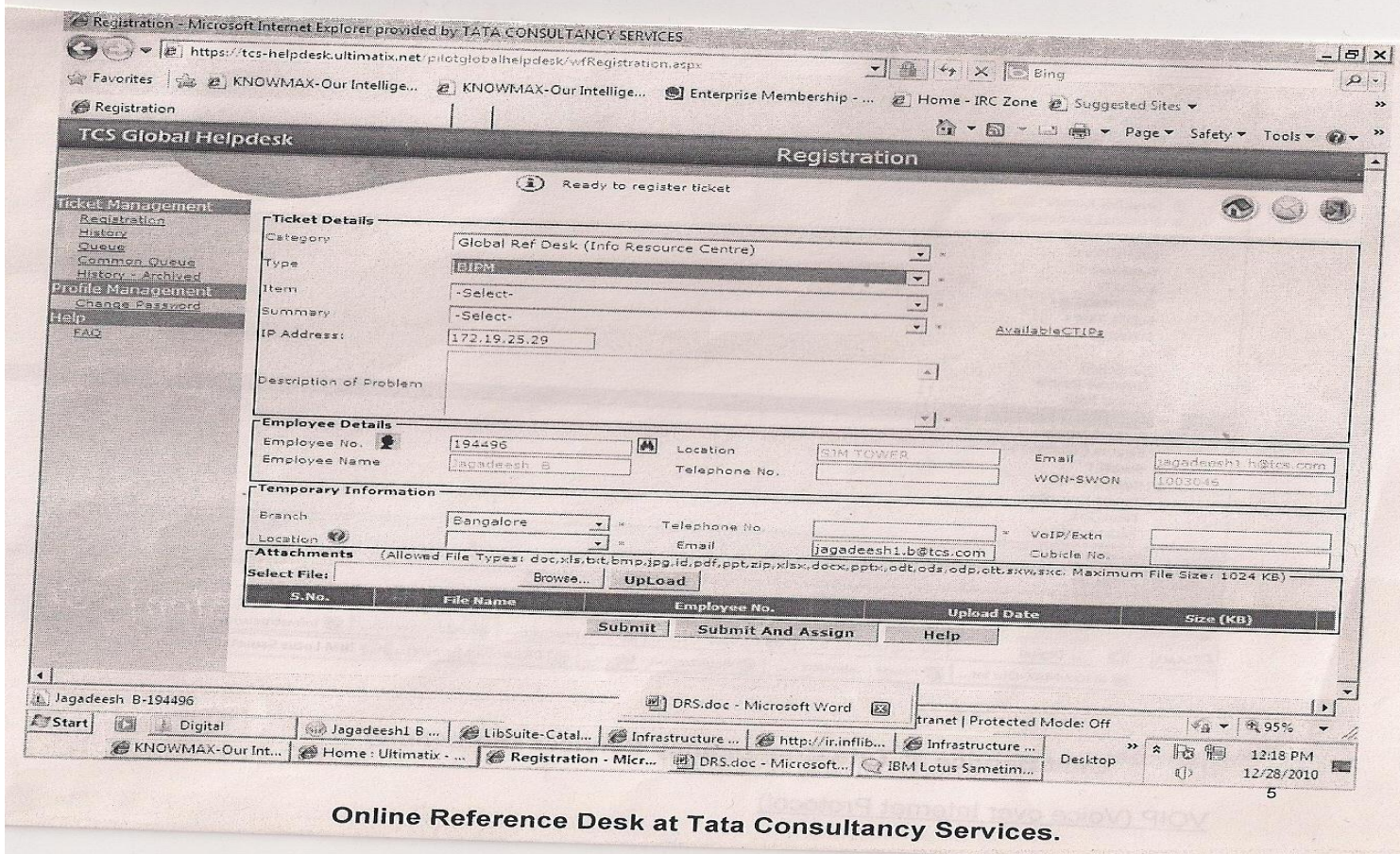
Chat Reference:

Online chat can refer to any kind of communication over the Internet, but is primarily meant to refer to direct **one-on-one chat**. There are many tools available such as **instant messengers, internet relay chat** etc.

important advantage in chat based services is, **librarian** and **users** can interact with each other in **real-time**.

This kind of service will add on value in the services. The users will get the information almost **instantaneously**. **Chat reference** thus allows the reference interview to take place without any time delays in a **virtual environment**. Instant Messaging is a variant form of chat communication that has become increasingly **popular in corporate world** for **internal communication**. Therefore, many corporate libraries have been experimenting with chat based services for their users.

chat service available at Tata Consultancy Service



Online Reference Desk at Tata Consultancy Services.

VOIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)

It is a technology that enables the simultaneous transfer of **voice** and other **data** via **standard internet protocol**.

Reference via Video

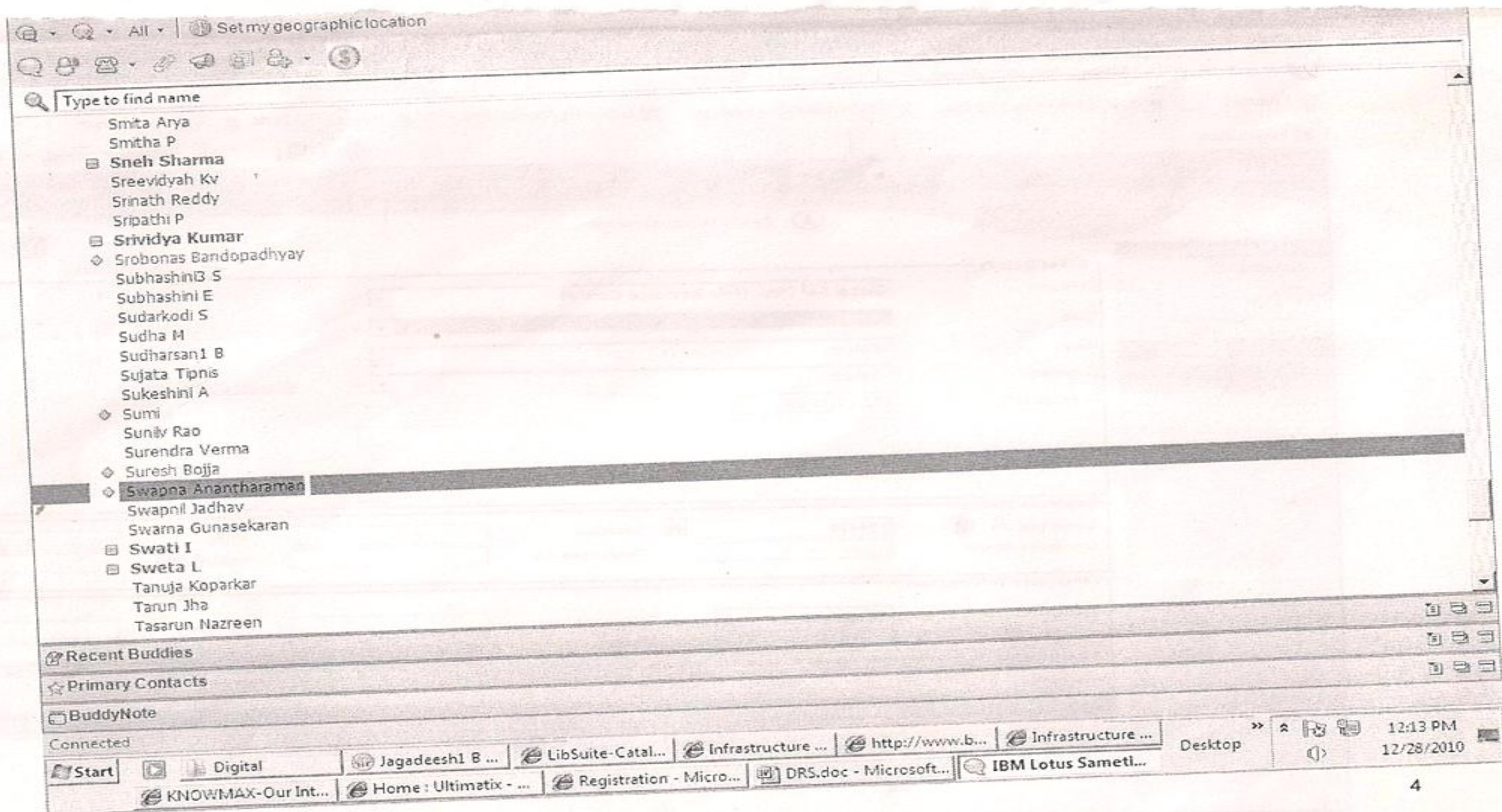
This service is an extension to VoIP. Software for video conferencing has also been tested for digital reference purposes by several American libraries.

Online Reference Desk

Online Reference Desk has many features like **robust, scalable, flexible, configurable,** and **feature-rich Service Desk** and **customer support** solution framework.

- It is a user-friendly application that provides secured access to the users, and has a **feedback mechanism** in place for obtaining valuable inputs and/or suggestions from the user. It provides **on-screen** help to the users, for functionality, and also has a bulletin board to display messages which are common to certain group of users.

Online Reference Desk used at Tata Consultancy Services



Chat Service at Tata Consultancy Services (Sametime)

Planning for Digital Reference Services

- Set up a User-Centered Service Model that Balances Centralization and Decentralization and it should understand and analyze the information needs of users.
- The coordination and cooperation between the Library staff and users need to be incorporated.
- A Strong ICT infrastructure is a basic necessity with campus network of high bandwidth.
- Have clear knowledge of software information technology being used to Support operations, and the specific goals, policies and guidelines for service.
- Ensure quality control as a basic standard for researching questions; types of sources used
- Structured response; referrals to other resources or services

Role of Digital Reference in Corporate Libraries

- All libraries main aim is to provide right information to right user at the right time, whether it is academic library, public library or a special library only difference is in targeted audience.
- Digital Reference Services are very much important for corporate libraries because of the nature of the work of corporate users. Most of the time all the corporate workers would be busy with their project related work and delivery of products. Hence the users may not be able to come to library physically and use the documents available at the library.
- Digital Reference services are highly appreciated and most of the corporate workers are dependent on having online reference kind of information.

In corporate world one organization deals with many clients for their projects, thus their information needs varies with the number of projects. Hence corporate librarians must have to take care of each project group requirements.

Advantages of Digital library services

1. It provide speedy access to qualitative information resources.
2. It makes optimum utilization of available resources
3. It saves time of users.
4. One can access digital information from anywhere without restriction
5. It is available at only one click
6. It increases the access to resources beyond the library.
7. It increases in complexity of information resources and the need for specialized Knowledge
8. It will provide the new options for answering reference questions

Conclusion:

The web has changed and still changing the information culture of the users, who now expect a faster and easier service. Additionally, commercial services, such as "Google Answers", "Lycos 1Q" etc., and now compete with library reference services. Therefore, digital reference had to be developed quickly to react to the challenges posed by commercial rivals and the changed user behavior. Corporate Libraries have already adopted using the Digital Reference Services to provide information to their users. Like wise if the academic and public libraries adopt the Digital Reference Services, they can also provide the right information in a effective manner.



QUESTIONS ? CLARIFICATIONS ?