

# INFORMATION POLICY IN DIGITAL LIBRARIES

## IN VIET NAM

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper is made to systemize theoretical issues on information policy; Define the concept of information policy in digital libraries; Carry out field survey and make comments on the implementation of information policy in digital libraries in Vietnam; and Explain recommendations and solutions for better information policies implementation in the digital libraries as well.*

### **1. Introduction**

Information policy has become a prominent field of research in the last decades of the last century when society has shifted from an industrial economy to an information society and knowledge economy. Digital library research and development trends have grown steadily since 1990s with many large digital library projects deployed in developed countries. In Vietnam, since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the research and development of digital libraries have been carried out by many individuals and organizations. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed in the course of developing a digital library, including the establishment and application of information policies. Therefore, the study and identification of comprehension of information policy concept in digital libraries, survey of information policy practices in digital libraries in Vietnam, and explanation of experience gained are considered necessary to improve the efficiency in sustainable development of digital libraries.

This paper is broken into six main sections: Introduction, research objectives and research tasks, literature review, research methods, findings and discussions, and the last one, conclusions.

### **2. Research objectives and research tasks**

#### **+ *Research objectives:***

Through theoretical study in terms of information policy, digital libraries, practical survey of information policy in digital libraries in Vietnam, this paper is aimed at improving theoretical issues on information policy in the digital libraries, and explaining noteworthy issues in the establishment and application of information policy of digital libraries.

#### **+ *Research tasks***

For the purpose of achieving the aforementioned objectives, the following tasks must be done:

- To give an overview, systematize theoretical issues on information policy.
- To give an overview, systematize theoretical issues on digital libraries.
- To define the concept of information policy in digital libraries.
- To determine the current status of information policy in digital libraries in Vietnam.

- To explain noteworthy of issues in the establishment and application of information policy of digital libraries.

### 3. Overview

#### + *Information policy*

In fact, there are many definitions about information policy. According to Braman S., information policy is defined as the set of all public laws, regulations and policies that encourage, discourage, or regulate the creation, use, storage, access, and communication and dissemination of information. Evelyn Daniel (Information and Library Science Department, University of North Carolina - USA) also provides a similar definition of information policy. According to Evelyn Daniel, the information policy is a set of rules, formal and informal, which directly restricts or encourages information flow.

As such, the information policy can be seen as a set of laws, regulations, by-laws, etc., that regulates the creation, collection, storage, use and dissemination of information. The information policy includes and has a close relationship with many fundamental issues such as: Intellectual property rights; Economic regulations; Freedom of speech; Information security; Access management; Dissemination of information and public policy concerning the use of information.

It is a combination of many different fields including information science, economics, law and public policy. It can be considered from a variety of perspectives and dimensions, for example from: National information policy, branch information policy or even information policy in a unit or an organization.

#### + *Digital library*

Digital library has been defined by many individuals and organizations, typically: Arms W.Y; Chen H., Houston A.L.; Reddy R., Wladawsky-Berger I. ; Sun Microsystems; Witten and Bainbridge; Ian Witten, The Digital Library Federation, etc. The definitions given by these individuals and organizations approach the digital library from a variety of perspectives, taking into account the nature of digital library to consider a place to present organized collections of information. The object of these collections is digital sources and various methods: retrieval, selection, access, organization and preservation of collections.

Main elements used for the creation of digital library include: Information technology infrastructure; Digital documents; Librarians and users. Main activities in a digital library include: Collection, processing, organization and distribution of information.

Through the overall look of elements and activities in the digital library, it is possible to see similarities between the digital library and the traditional one. However, the former may have different characteristics in the way the work is performed. That poses a lot of problems for the construction, operation and management of a digital library.

#### *Information policy in digital libraries*

In fact, there is not any specific concept of information policy in digital libraries yet. According to the paper's author, the information policy in the digital library, based on the above-mentioned concepts; however, is a set of rules that are established and applied to serve the building, operation, management and development of a digital library that meets the goals set out by a library or an organization. Regulations about the information policy in the digital library involve a number of activities that focus on key activities such as: Collection, processing, organization and dissemination of information. These regulations

focus on a wide range of issues such as: Information approach; Copyright and intellectual property rights; Information dissemination; Safety information, etc.

Similar to traditional libraries, the digital libraries have a mission to ensure an equal access to the general knowledge treasure for everyone. However, the management and use of library resources are regulated by copyright issues to some extents. The execution of copyright and intellectual property rights in digital libraries balances interests between the information creator and owner and the information user. The issues related to copyright and intellectual property rights in digital libraries should be considered from the following aspects: Rights of the library to own digital material in its system to serve the public; Rights and statutes entitled and complied by the information users in the digital library.

Information dissemination in the digital library is considered the provision of information (materials) to the user. Establishing information dissemination policy in the digital library is the development and implementation of regulations to ensure the legal, safe and effective dissemination of information, as well as the right of information users to receive information. In other words, the policy of information dissemination in the digital library is the right given by the library to allow its users get access to digital library materials.

Providing information through the digital library's network environment can make the access more widely available. However, this has caused many problems, including the security of information. Therefore, information security content should be paid attention to in the course of establishing information policy of the digital library.

#### **4. Research methods**

This study is performed by the following research methods:

- *Analysis and synthesis*

The author inherited the relevant previous studies on the basis of analysis and synthesis of results obtained.

- *Induction and deduction*

- *Investigation and survey*

The surveys were carried out in 12 digital libraries to determine the current status of information policy in digital libraries in Vietnam

Sampling method, criteria:

+ Survey samples were selected according to the principle of stratification due to heterogeneous survey subjects, by which a wide range of libraries were selected such as: university, public, specialized.

+ Location of survey covered the North, Central and South of Vietnam.

+ Scale of different digital libraries: big, medium, small.

The survey aspects are focused on the application of existing laws in the course of establishing and applying information policy in digital libraries such as; Copyright, intellectual property; Dissemination and access to information.

#### **5. Findings and discussion**

+ *Current status of digital library building*

In Vietnam, digital library building has been implemented since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the stage of 2005 - 2006, the first digital libraries in Vietnam were

established and put into use. Since 2010, the trend toward digital library development has become strong, especially at universities. Up to now, there have been hundreds of digital libraries established and put into use, with the main focus on university libraries. The majority of large universities have built digital libraries. In the public library system, many projects related to document digitization, digital libraries building are also deployed by large libraries.

**+ *Current status of applying laws in the information policy establishment and application***

A number of laws in Vietnam have been applied in the establishment and application of digital library policy information: 83% of surveyed libraries are using the Law on Intellectual Property; 58% using the Internet Information Security Act; 25% using the Law on Information Technology; 16% using the Civil Code; and 33% using the Law on Access to Information.

It can be seen that in varying degrees, 100% of libraries have paid attention to the issue of copyright and intellectual property in digital library building. This is reflected in the fact that the contents of existing laws in Vietnam relating to copyright and intellectual property rights have been applied in the process of building digital libraries. The selected laws are in force, important and typical in Vietnam.

However, it is pointed out by the survey that although there are important laws that directly relate to copyright and intellectual property rights or access to information, some libraries do not use them in the course of building its digital library, for example: Law on Intellectual Property, or Law on Access to Information. The application of existing laws is also performed at different levels without any consistency; for example: For the use of universities' endogenous documents for management and dissemination in digital libraries, there were only 58% of the surveyed libraries asked for permission from the authors. 66% of the surveyed libraries asked the authors' permission to use published materials on the Internet for management and dissemination in the digital library.

The information dissemination on copyright to the users has not been well followed, typically, in a study conducted at the Faculty of Library and Information Science in 2015, only 33% of the surveyed libraries disseminated the copyright status information of digital materials to the users.

**+ *Current status of information dissemination***

In term of the information dissemination, the survey results show that although there were a low number of libraries applying the Law on Access to Information in the course of building digital libraries, the information dissemination to the users has been performed well. About 75% of the surveyed libraries divided digital library users into different groups and applied different policies for each group. This ensures flexibility in disseminating information in accordance with library objectives as well as suitability to the existing regulations on the dissemination of information. For the purpose of ensuring information security, there are different methods of user management used, whereby 75% of the surveyed libraries are applying the account-provided method; 25% using the combination of account-provided and IP address management methods. There are an insignificant number of libraries having more detailed information dissemination policies such as read-only, not allow this file to be downloaded, or limit the size of files downloaded, whereas some libraries still show limitations in the course of information

dissemination, for example: 16% of the surveyed libraries did not allow student users to get access to all the digital library materials developed by the universities.

It can be seen that in the course of building digital libraries, there had been certain attention to the information policy given by libraries in Vietnam. The libraries have applied existing laws to the establishment and application of information policy. With relatively effective information dissemination, it is possible to ensure the access to information of users in the digital environment. However, there are still drawbacks in the establishment and application of information policy in digital libraries in Vietnam such as inconsistencies among libraries in complying with laws, lack of important laws which are critical to information policy in digital libraries such as the Library Law, and failure to fully implement the right to access information of users of digital libraries

+ ***Explain noteworthy issues in the establishment and application of information policy of digital libraries.***

The information policy in digital libraries is an important content to ensure the sustainable development of digital libraries. It is necessary to consider the issue of having a scientific, relevant information policy that achieves the objectives of disseminating information to users, balancing the interests of stakeholders and complying with the law. In the course of developing and applying information policy in digital libraries, the following issues must be paid great attention from the libraries:

+ *Base on unique features of digital libraries*

Main elements used for the creation of digital library include: Information technology infrastructure; Digital documents; Librarians and users. Looking at the overall perspective, these elements are similar to those of traditional libraries. However, the detailed analysis of characteristics of these constituent elements may show a lot of difference. Therefore, it is crucial to base on different characteristics of the digital library in order to have a proper information policy.

The very first one is the infrastructure. A digital library is the result of the application of information technology achievements. It is operated on the basis of information technology infrastructure, information collection, management and distribution under the direction of technology application. Therefore, it is required to approach from the application of technology in the information policy establishment process. This must be reflected in the development of regulations. These regulations must be adapted to the rapid changes in technology.

The features of information resources (documents) in the digital library are also very different. Most digital libraries do not operate dynamically but have a linkage to create one system. This linkage allows digital libraries to share and use resources including information resources. Some digital library management systems also allow interconnected connections to open sources on the Internet. Although this increases the library's responsiveness, it creates "virtual" power in the information resource. This is a feature that should be noted in the information dissemination policy.

Features of documents managed by the digital library are also of interest. Documents managed in the digital libraries (digital materials) have many different characteristics compared to those of traditional documents. Digital documents have high information density and high compression. A database on a server can handle hundreds of millions of documents. This creates favorable conditions for archive and many other activities; however, it may pose many difficulties for dissemination of information as well as

information security. If the information security policy is not implemented well, there are millions of documents that can be lost in very short time. Digital documents are able to be highly shared and reproduced to allow the users to get access, carry out remote exploitation without much dependence on space and time. Through the network environment, they can access the library materials at home, in the office instead of going to the library. As the nature of digital materials is very different from traditional materials, the digital data management profession is very different from those carried out in the traditional library. According to Nguyen Minh Hiep, the ownership of material is important in a traditional library, but in the field of electronic resource circulation, intellectual property rights, particularly copyright is more important. The digital libraries can make access more extensive than that of traditional libraries. This has caused problems because an access to information in digital libraries is less controlled than the use of printed materials. Besides, digital documents, in any form, are able to be reproduced relatively easy. These are considered advantages of digital materials. However, this is a matter of concern when considering the contents relating to the copyright and intellectual property rights in information policy. The infringement of copyright and intellectual property rights of users to digital document is more common than that of traditional documents.

Distinctive features of digital library users are also of concern when the information policy is established. Any library has an intention of serving a specific audience. This results from the fact that the users are the basis of orientation for all the activities of the library. The traditional libraries often serve their users on a certain administrative geographic scale. For the digital libraries, the applications of technology have created interaction with users without any dependence on geospatial space. Such digital libraries also aim to serve one or more specific user groups. Unlike traditional libraries, the information users can be dispersed. According to Chandakanta Swain, changes in search behavior, the demand for information of users in today's libraries poses problems for management. In traditional libraries, the users often use services provided directly. Meanwhile, the digital libraries allow their users to use library services indirectly without being dependent on space and time. Even for some sources, types of information in the digital libraries, the users who may not be the object of library can still use the services. It is the dispersion of users and unclear definition of service object boundaries that create a "virtual" space for users in the library. These changes set lots of problems for management activities, including the establishment of information policy.

+ *Comply with the current laws*

The next factor that should be carefully considered in establishing the digital library's information policy is compliance with the applicable law. This should be reflected in the content of regulations of information policy. The content of these regulations must be set up on the basis of legal grounds. In a study conducted by the Faculty of Library and Information Science of Hanoi University of Culture in 2015, the results of field survey showed that there are now many legal documents relating to library management in Vietnam. However, the system of legal documents on library in general and digital library in particular has many inadequacies, as well as insufficient documents of high legal value. The Law on Libraries is not made available at present while other legal documents or laws relating to digital libraries are still poor, scattered. This fact definitely creates difficulties for libraries in the course of establishing information policy. It

requires the libraries to apply uniformly as well as broadening the scope by referring to other relevant international laws in order to establish the most appropriate information policy.

+ *Select an appropriate management system*

As mentioned above, the digital library is the result of the application of information technology achievements. The information policy in digital libraries is established in line with technological advances. For the effective use of information policy, it is necessary to apply the technology. In other words, a digital library that wants to effectively implement information policy needs to have a system (software) that is powerful enough to enforce established regulations. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the selection of appropriate digital library management software to meet the information management and information policy requirements.

+ *Divide information resources into multiple collections*

The materials managed in the digital library are diverse and include different types. Each of these types can be disseminated to varying levels. There is a wide range of materials that can be accessed by anyone, some accessible to all the official readers of the library, and some not widely available, etc. The library should have a detailed survey of digital document structure to have logical division into collections in digital libraries. The more detailed and scientific division will facilitate the libraries to establish and implement an effective information policy.

+ *Divide the users into several groups*

The digital library users have many different characteristics, dispersed nature and can be anyone, who is not even the object that the library aims to serve. As mentioned, digital libraries are also public organizations which have a mission to ensure an equal access to the general knowledge treasure for everyone. Therefore, in order to ensure the harmonization of benefits and facilitate the application of information policy, it is necessary to have a research on the library's subjects to divide into appropriate groups. Each group can benefit from different policies. Some groups may have access to all the materials in the digital library, some may have limited access, and some may have access to secondary information only.

Documents and users division are indispensable for any library in the course of building a digital library. Because the digital library's information provision policy is applied on the basis of an integrated matrix of users and documents under management.

### **Conclusions**

Digital library with many outstanding advantages is becoming more and more widely developed. For the purpose of building, operating, managing and developing a digital library in a sustainable way, it is necessary to establish and apply the information policy in digital libraries.

As the digital library has different characteristics in the constituents, great attention should be paid to a variety of issues in order to be able to establish appropriate information policies and effectively apply them in the course of management. From practical research in Vietnam, the explanations in this paper are expected to be used as useful experiences in the establishment of digital libraries.

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