CROWDSOURCING IN LIBRARIES: AN OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

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Abstract

Digital libraries have been substituting the paper repositories with the advent of ICT and electronic resources. The digital libraries share the electronic information online with the user community thereby making the information accessible 24X7. Crowd-sourcing is one such endeavour in which the general public is explicitly invited on the web and the chores traditionally performed by an employee or a staff member is outsourced to the unknown group of people to categorize and organize their digital collections. In this article, an attempt has been made to discuss the concept and need of crowd sourcing, its potential advantages and disadvantages. The various types of crowd-sourcing such as crowd wisdom, crowd funding, etc. along with its principles have been detailed.

Keywords
Crowd sourcing, libraries, wisdom of crowd, collective intelligence, digital libraries

1.   INTRODUCTION

The advent of World Wide Web and Internet in 2006 has opened up new avenues to decipher the tribulations. Hence, the inception of a novel idea called 'crowd-sourcing '. Howe (2006) introduced the term 'crowd-sourcing ' as "the act of taking a job traditionally performed by a designated agent (usually an employee) and outsourcing it to an undefined, generally large group of people in the form of an open call." It is a combination of two words 'Crowd' + 'Sourcing' which means the crowd, i.e. general public, be it businessman, entrepreneur, companies, individuals, etc. is invited through web or online for their collective opinion to help them solve their problems. Instead of employing Research and development teams, the corporate offer enormous prizes for solving their problems on crowd-sourcing .

Wikipedia is also a very good example of crowd-sourcing . Wikipedia is an encyclopaedia which is written by people from all over the world, professionals and amateurs alike. Facebook has also been using crowd-sourcing   to translate its website into different

languages since 2008. Similarly, the libraries have started sharing their resources through web and numbers of collections offered online. For this, libraries have started adopting new online technologies to effectively provide the services to their users. The crowd-sourcing has emerged as a means through which library professionals invite opinion of other fellow colleagues to overcome the challenges of digital libraries and can thus solve number of other difficulties they face in their profession such as inviting crowd to mark the errors in cataloguing, creating e-books, integration of digital libraries content thus providing collective data, etc. This method supports a set of labour-intensive and error-free tasks, which include correction, transcription and co-curation of digital material. According to Oomen and Aroyo (2011), "crowd-sourcing has been seen as a way to create a more open, connected, and smart cultural heritage" by involving both the users and consumers of cultural data" (p.147). Crowd-sourcing involves collective interaction and requires more involvement, a different level of effort, time and intellectual contribution . It provides an opportunity for making optimal use of online sharing of digital collections with the users apart from sharing assorted and scattered employees in the library field. Therefore, there is a need for the libraries to understand the occurrence of crowd-sourcing as they have the ability to economically transform the digital collections through Internet-based collaborative sharing, comprehensive information gathering and preserving information in digital environment.

2.   NEED OF CROWD-SOURCING

Brabham (2008) explained that "crowd-sourcing is a model appropriate for the utilization of collective talents by aggregating collective intelligence and knowledge and also by increasing the ingenuity of the crowd". Crowd-sourcing is needed:

1. To overcome financial / staff crunch to provide efficient services to its users
2. To accomplish the library objectives rapidly within the stipulated time.
3. To build virtual communities and user groups.
4. To enhance the quality of library services, collections and resources by dynamically engaging their users.
5. To make the most of the proficiency of the user community.
6. To add value to the library data with inclusion of user comments, tags, ratings and reviews.
7. To know the users requirements, to find answers to difficult questions by asking and then listening to the crowd.
8. To develop trust and loyalty among the library users.

3.   PROS AND CONS

Lippincott (2011) gave a useful suggestion about crowd-sourcing that "organizations particularly libraries should create frameworks in which citizens can contribute". He further elaborated that the 'frameworks' like wiki, flickr etc, is chosen depending upon a library's community and the goals which the libraries want to achieve.

In the same context, crowd-sourcing helps in bringing the following substantial benefits to its users:

1. The associated low price to initiate crowd-sourcing as compared to professional hiring price
2. The libraries can achieve the desired goals as there is no limitation of finances and resources
3. Since the large group of people are involved, accordingly they signify the importance and relevance of libraries
4. The goals of the library are achieved rapidly thereby saving the time of the users and professionals
5. Since the libraries are non-profit making institutions, therefore, crowd-sourcing provides more value for the money involved
6. There is no need to maintain employees as the knowledge and expertise of the crowd is well exploited.
7. As a good marketing tool, it helps in building diverse user groups and implicit communities to solve the problem
8. The user community is actively engaged for updates in the profession
9. The alterations by the crowd improves the eminence of data / text

Of-course, with the execution of crowd-sourcing techniques, certain speculations have also emerged. Some of these include the following:

1. It is very difficult to manage large group of people
2. Also, it is difficult to collaborate between crowd members
3. People from the group can quit anytime
4. The background of the participating crowd is not known
5. There is always a lack of direct interaction amongst the participants
6. The design can be reused by anytime by any other individual
7. It is not always the cheapest deal.
8. The personal touch of working with the colleagues is missing.
9. There can always be chances of inferior quality work as compared to the one by the experienced professionals

4.   TYPES

According to Howe (2006), following are the various types of crowd-sourcing :

1. Crowd wisdom or collective intelligence: This means users ask questions from large pool of people willing to answer, thus solving problems through the crowd. Companies such as Dell and Starbucks are using crowd wisdom or collective intelligence for solving different problems.
2. Crowd creation or user-generated content: This means the use of the creative potential of users to create or design something (e.g. Stockphoto.com, Youtube, Wikipedia). Microsoft invites its users to take part in editing texts of its operational system.

3. Crowd-voting: This means opinions and judgments to choose best outsourcing solutions are sought from group of people on the particular subject. For example Domino's Pizza has crowd sourced a new pizza, Threadless.com selects the T-shirts for sale by crowd-sourcing the designs and voting on the ones they like, which are then printed and available for purchase and Google search results are results of crowd voting, because they represent the site popularity among Internet users. .

4. Crowd funding: This means projects are funded by the community. It means micro-lending, when lending small sums helps, for example, crowdrise.com is for donating to charitable purposes.

5.   PRINCIPLES

1. Select the qualified and diverse crowd suitable for the project. The crowd so selected may not be professionals but have sound knowledge about the topic concerned.
2. Select an appropriate inducement to augment contribution and higher productivity. The incentive may be a financial reward, a compliment for the self-esteem, etc.
3. The objectives must be visibly specified to eradicate the prospective predicaments.
4. The promotion campaign significant to the project shall be initiated. The crowd shall be made actively involved in social media sharing and blogging.

6.   APPLICATION IN LIBRARIES

Traditionally, the libraries have already applied the concept of crowd-sourcing in events like competitions, meetings with readers, book collections, involving users to solve the user related problems in libraries, etc. The concept of crowd-sourcing in libraries is very much at the budding stage. Since, the library professionals are disinclined towards implementing the new concept of crowd-sourcing significantly, still few examples of successful crowd-sourcing projects exists in libraries which are mentioned below:

a.   Australian Newspapers Digitization Program, National Library of Australia: Text Correction.

This was introduced in August 2008. It contained 8.4 million articles to search and correct in November 2009. The crowd is augmenting the 200 years of Australian history data by correcting text and adding tags and comments of historic Australian Newspapers.

b.   Picture Australia, National Library of Australia: Creation and addition of images.

Website: http://www.pictureaustralia.org/

This uploads digital images from over 50 cultural heritage institutions both in Australia and overseas. Since January 2006 the crowd has been adding their own digital images via a relationship set up with Flickr. Any of the contributing institutions / crowd can request for permission from the public contributors to upload the contributed pictures into their own collections, while the same pictures also remain visible in the central Picture Australia pool.

c.   Distributed Proofreaders (DP), Project Gutenberg: Creation of Ebooks.

Website: http://www.pgdp.net/c

DP, a nonprofit organisation, converts public domain books and journal issues into ebooks that are freely available. The crowd of 90, 000 volunteers finds, scans, OCR and mark up the 16,000 books themselves, page by page in last 9 years.

d.   Wikipedia: Creation of digital encyclopaedia; improving personal names authority file at the German National Library; Wikisource.

Website: http://en.wikipedia.org

Wikipedia is the free online encyclopaedia created by the collaboration of the general public.

7.   CONCLUSION

Surowiecki (2004) elaborated that "under the right circumstances, groups are remarkably intelligent, and are often smarter than the smartest people among them". "The principal axion of this approach is that no one knows everything; everyone has a specific expertise, and therefore, solutions can be reached by combining everybody's knowledge and experience" (Papadopoulou, & Giaoutzi, 2014). Crowd-sourcing can be used in various commercial and social activities such as astronomy (e.g. Galaxy Zoo), medicine (e.g. AED4), law (e.g. LawPivot), business (e.g. Cisco), computer science (e.g. ComCrowd) through ecommerce (e.g. Wishabi), catering (e.g. Bar Database) and advertising (e.g. Zooppa), to the typical Web 2.0 (Wikipedia, Facebook). Although crowd-sourcing has not been significantly applied by the libraries till date, yet, it can be the most useful tool for the prospective libraries. The libraries have a massive probability to connect to the volunteers. It is a common belief that if the opinion of the crowd is trusted, in the same way, the crowd will also respond with devotion and dedication. The crowd-sourcing should be encouraged by the libraries as it facilitates the comprehensive, extensive and lucrative information gathering through which the information collection and processing systems can be transformed.

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