

Design and testing of mobile library websites: Best practices in creating mobile library applications

by

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Abstract

Mobile communication technology and its rapid advancement have made great strides in the academic and learning environment. There is no doubt that the libraries are also carrying on the mobile advancements into its library services. Today's information society seems to be living in a world where the offer to provide the library in their handheld devices is not only a dream or a choice but a reality and must. Today's users expect the library be taken to their hands. The first step towards having the mobile presence in the libraries is providing mobile access to library websites.

This paper looks at the overall impact of mobile services and applications in libraries and looks at the specific area of building effective mobile library websites. Library websites being the face of any library, the basics of creating a mobile ready website becomes a necessity to be observed for libraries which care to take their library services to the mobile users. In order to provide user friendly mobile websites it is imperative to implement accepted best practices in creating such websites. A user friendly website starts with the user's views. Lilla Murray (2011) in her research on mobile library website concludes by saying it is imperative for "each library to learn which mobile web resources library patrons consider most useful". Among various ways of learning from users, one way of gauging the needs of the users is to find out through questionnaires on which services the users would like to have them in their mobile as a priority. The backbone of the best practices observed in this paper is a survey taken at JIIT Noida where one of the authors is employed. Taking this survey as a model the important components which the users want to be seen in a mobile library website and other extended mobile related services which they expect are discussed. This paper also looks at various steps in creating mobile ready website, starting with planning and choosing to testing and validating of mobile websites. The basic difference between mobile web and standard web along with the mobile web design process, especially navigation, content and format along with image selection are discussed. The process of intelligently using style sheets to analyse the mobile type, browser type, browser size and other important design aspects of mobile library website are also discussed. The basic ten design recommendation based on the Mobile Web Best Practices Report (www.w3.org/TR/mobile-bp/) is also integrated in the formulation of the best practice and a prototype for a mobile library website along with design and testing guidelines are provided in the paper.