The Web Site of a Scientific Library : From Intranet to Internet

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This study reports the experience of the library of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), the Italian National Institute of health, focusing on the implementation and development of the library intranet services through the results of an investigation conducted among the visitors of the site.

The rapid advances of information technology have greatly modified the ways scientists use their libraries.To promote knowledge sharing in their institutions, medical and research libraries have to redefine their mission changing their policy and strategies, to cope with the overflow of information and give added value to the knowledge they manage, in order to satisfy the new requirements of the user.

The main reason which led to the implementation of a library intranet at the ISS was the need to give access to a selection of electronic resources available only through the library: such as multiple-user databases on CD-rom or web sites of e-journal held by the library and others available through a consortial licence. An other goal was to provide users with daily updated information concerning library activities and news. The library intranet was launched at the beginning of 2001.

Since then, the content of the pages has been continuously monitored and updated, new sections have been constructed, moving the site toward completion, while the working group gained also new participants with different expertises. Furthermore the site was going to be visible also via Internet with an enlargement of initial goals.

In March 2002 a questionnaire for the internal users was launched in order to monitor and audit Intranet library services. The results of this survey were to be considered to check the quality of the product and to realise user-oriented changes and improvements, defining at the same time suitable policy guidelines and strategies for the future development of the web site.