Communication Channels and the Adoption of Digital Libraries for Electronic Theses and Dissertations

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ABSTRACT
This research used diffusion of innovation theory to explore factors that influence adoption of digital libraries for electronic theses and dissertations (ETD-DL) among members of the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD). Communication channels were categorized as being either interpersonal or mediated, and the perceived importance of these channels was assessed both within and between organizations.

A web-based survey collected data from the 133 universities in 26 countries that were NDLTD members in December 2002. Respondents were members of the university’s “ETD Committee” and represented academic administrators, faculty, librarians, and computer systems specialists. Surveys were received from 95 respondents representing 65 universities in 14 countries. Twenty-one of these universities were outside the United States, and represented countries with a wide range of economic development.

Results provide insights into university attitudes towards distributed digital libraries. For example, results suggest that interpersonal channels of communication about digital library adoption are more important than mediated channels within the organization. However, mediated channels of communication are more important for those universities that have decided to adopt the ETD-DL but have not yet implemented the DL. There were also significant differences in the importance attributed to these channels by individuals in different jobs. The results suggest strategies that could encourage development of digital libraries within other social systems. The study also illustrates the importance of planning for the human factor in digital library management. Carefully constructed strategies that address all the parties involved in DL adoption and that account for differences in communication style will more readily facilitate successful adoption of distributed digital libraries.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

General Terms
Management, Measurement.

Keywords
communication channel, diffusion of innovation, digital library adoption, Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations.

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SELECTED REFERENCES