

A Critical Review and Evaluation of the Textbook Entitled Designing the Digital Library Based on the Standards and Criteria of University Textbooks

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study was analytical review of the book *Designing the Digital Library*, written by Mehdi Alipoor-Hafezi and published by SAMT in 2019 based on the criteria and standards of the university textbooks. The type of research was applied in terms of purpose. As regarded method, it was a mixed-method approach. The analysis, review and extraction of required data have been simultaneous. The checklist was used for assessing formal writing structure and content features on a Likert-type 5-pointed scale. Author's expertise in the field can be mentioned as the main advantage of the book. The textbook is the only work in Persian in the field of designing digital libraries. A separate chapter on legal issues in digital libraries can also be considered as another positive point of this work. At the same time, this work has also notable points for improvement, the most important of which are writing points. In general, the work in hand in terms of evaluation of formal writing structure and content criteria received scores of 46, 46, 63 and 63, respectively and achieved at least 70 percentage points, passing as a book appealing to its audience. In spite of some defects and weaknesses, the studied textbook is one of few books on designing digital libraries and suitable for students and audience.

Keywords: Digital Libraries, Book review, University textbook.

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Introduction

Digital libraries include a collection of digital content and store, process and preserve data based on appropriate standards and make data openly-accessible for users. They are a mixture of data, metadata and library management processes (such as information acquisition and organization and providing services) designed for fulfilling users' information needs.

They aim to present a coherent and facilitated access to vast volume of digital information (Xie & et al., 2020). Ten principles help the designation and continuous development of digital libraries, including awareness of content, employing professional human resources, designing useable systems, guaranteeing open access, awareness of data rights, standardization, and quality assurance (Umesh & Satish, 2007).

Implementing and developing digital library systems need integrated principles, procedures, and some information resources for guiding designers and experts. Various information resources have been created on digital libraries;¹ however, there are few resources on the design and implementation of digital libraries.

Designing the Digital Library by Dr. Mahdi Alipoor-Hafezi (2019) is one of these resources in Persian. As emphasized in the introduction of the book (p.3), it has been prepared for master students in digital library management and those of software engineering and information technologies. Its publisher is the Organization for Researching and Writing University textbooks in the Islamic Sciences and the Humanities (SAMT), an academic publishing organization aiming at publishing textbooks in humanities, including knowledge and information science. This book is the 55th textbook in the field of knowledge and information science published by the organization. Its author is the assistant professor in department of knowledge and information science at 'Allame Tabatabai University, Tehran, Iran. He has published some papers on digital libraries, too. The author claimed that the book intends to comprehensively include issues in designing digital libraries (Alipoor-Hafezi, 2019, 2). As there is a two-credit course for master students in knowledge and information science, named "designing digital library", the syllabi of the book match with

1. <https://opac.nlai.ir/opac-prod/search/briefListSearch.do>

ones suggested by the Curriculum Planning Higher Council (Islamic Republic of Iran Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology, 2015). Therefore, this book was critically reviewed in this paper.

The curriculum can also be viewed as a political and social agreement that reflects a society's common vision while taking into account local, national and global needs and expectations. Thus contemporary curriculum development and reform processes increasingly involve public discussion and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders. Curriculum design has evolved into a topic of considerable debate – with frequently conflicting perspectives – engaging policymakers, experts, practitioners and society at large (Unesco, 2013).

The textbook is the only resource for learning content and items when there are no other resources at hand for learning. Therefore, beneficial book review approaches and evaluative procedures need to be adopted for detecting the strengths and weaknesses of university textbooks and making them more effective. Textbooks have many different components and features that should be evaluated from different perspectives (Razi, 2009).

The appropriate and effective features of university text-books have been discussed in some studies (Razi, 2009; Gharagozlu, Soleimani & Armand, 2017; Nili-Ahmadabadi & Dana, 2017; Jamali-Zavare & et al., 2008; Hoseini & Mator, 2012; Refahi-Kamsari, Asnafi & Haji-Zeinolabedini, 2020; Shahlai & et al., 2021; Yar-Mohammadiyan, Armand & Zare'I, 2009). They considered a variety of criteria ranging from format and appearance to structural and content criteria. Mahmood (2011) regarded quality criteria for evaluating textbooks, such as matching to curriculum policy, accuracy, illustrations and vocabulary, critical learning and cognitive development.

This paper critically reviewed the above-mentioned university textbook and aimed to evaluate its format and content in an unbiased manner for potential enrichment of the book. To this end, the criteria for evaluating university textbooks (identified in the related literature) were used .

Method

This applied research used a mixed method approach of an intertwined type. In the qualitative phase, the content of the book was critically

reviewed and evaluated. A checklist was prepared for including the evaluative criteria for writing a literary review. A descriptive survey was used in the quantitative procedure.

The checklist was developed by reviewing some related studies and extracting criteria regarding evaluation of university textbooks. These studies included Virginia Board of Education (2011), Razi (2009), Gharagozlu, Soleimani and Armand (2017), Nili-Ahmadabadi and Dana (2017), Jamali-Zavare & et al. (2008), Hoseini and Mator (2012), Yar-Mohammadiyan, Armand and Zare'i (2009), and Mansooriyan (2013).

These criteria were divided into 4 categories: formal criteria (13 items), writing criteria (12 items), structural criteria (15 items) and content criteria (14 items) on a 5-pointed Likert-type scale. As argued by Jamali-Zavare & et al. (2008), an appropriate textbook is one that achieves at least 70% of scores in each category (49 scores out of 70 scores in the content criteria, 45 scores out of 65 scores in formal criteria, 45 scores out of 65 scores in writing criteria and 52 scores out of 75 scores in structural criteria). Taking the critical book review steps, including observation, description, interpretation, and evaluation (Hoseini & Mator, 2012), the textbook at hand was evaluated accordingly.

Findings

Formal Features

The textbook scored 49 out of 65 (totally 75.3%) and is relatively appropriate in its formal criteria (Table 1). However, some changes and innovations need to be done for optimization. As the book cover is the first communicative tool, its design should be in accordance with the subject and content of the book. The appearance and cover of a textbook indirectly affects learning (Mollai-Tavani & Norozy, 2016). The studied textbook has no attractive cover design related to digital libraries. The cover designer of the textbook is unknown and no innovation can be seen in the design. Such cover designs can be seen in the books published by other academic publishers. As a positive point, the back cover has notes about the work. Size of the book is octavo, as a standard textbook size. The spine of the textbook is not firm, however.

Table 1. The scores of the studied textbook in formal criteria

No.	Formal criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
1	Type of paper used		4			
2	Illustrations and figures inside		4			
3	Enough margins for taking notes		4			
4	Cover material as to its format and size		4			
5	Book size as to its readers and subject	5				
6	Book cover design as to its attractiveness and matching to content			3		
7	Fair use of colors on book cover			3		
8	Enough line spacing		4			
9	Text font sizes		4			
10	Title and sub-title font sizes		4			
11	Proportions between title, text and footnote font sizes		4			
12	Font readability		4			
13	Spine strength				2	
Total score: 49 (75.3%)	5	36	6	2	-	

Structural Features

In structural criteria, the textbook scored 62 out of 75 (totally 82.6%) that is a satisfactory score (Table 2). The studied textbook includes 11 chapters, references, glossary and index as well as questions and exercises for students. It begins with a list of abbreviations and a preface. The textbook has a logical organization and complies with designing process in digital libraries in its 11 chapters. The chapters cover the subjects as follows, respectively: an introduction to the digital library, collection development in the digital library, information organization in the digital library, services provided in the digital library, integration in the digital library, software packages in the digital library, digital library management, legal issues in the

digital library, digital library architecture, evaluation of the digital library, and the future of the digital library.

Table 2. The scores of the studied textbook according to structural criteria

No.	Structural criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
1	Having preface or introduction	5				
2	Concise table of contents	5				
3	Expanded table of contents	5				
4	List of tables and figures					1
5	Readers' guide	5				
6	Mentioning detailed objective of each chapter	5				
7	Introduction preceding each chapter	5				
8	Concluding remarks at the end of each chapter	5				
9	Reference list at the end of each chapter					1
10	Further readings at the end of each chapter					1
11	Glossary	5				
12	Index	5				
13	Questions and exercises for students	5				
14	Logical organizations in order of chapters	5				
15	Appropriate ratio between main items and secondary items		4			
Total score: 62 (82.6%)		55	4	-	-	3

Writing features

The textbook scored 42 out of 65 (totally 64.6%) in this category and was conceived relatively appropriate according to these criteria, too (Table 3). As the editor name is not mentioned in the textbook, its editing procedures are unknown. The author seems to have translated some text pieces inside the book very well with a high rate of accuracy. However, there are some writing errors in the textbook.

Some English equivalents for Persian terms were not mentioned in footnotes, as for "collection development" in page 5, or for elements of Time Framework for Applicability in pages 177 and 178. This is the case for some figures and illustrations. In addition, some illustrations are in Persian (such as Figure 9-2 in page 157) and others are in English (such as Figure 9-3 in page 159). It would be better to make unification in illustrations. Some terms are not jargons as can be seen in the term "web forms" that has been replaced with "offline forms" (page 73). Uniformity in using Persian equivalents to some English terms is needed as it can be seen in "copying" (pages 144, 145, 147). This case applies to "copyright" (page 127 and onwards). As other terms (such as property rights) are used in different countries for the term due to the nature of rights in a certain country (Amoozghar, 2003, 153), this term needs to be explained in the textbook. Confirmed equivalents and sufficient explanations for some phrases are needed (such as "hash function" in page 141, paragraph 2).¹

Table 3. The scores of the studied textbook in writing criteria

No.	Writing criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
1	Definition of special terms and jargons		4			
2	English equivalents in footnote			3		
3	Readers-assisted writing			3		

1. In this paper, only some editing errors are mentioned. If the author or publisher of the work is interested, it will be sent to them.

No.	Writing criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
4	Punctuation			3		
5	Readability for readers		4			
6	Scientific writing		4			
7	Persian grammar				2	
8	Persian spelling			3		
9	Avoiding abundance		4			
10	Originality in quotations		4			
11	Logical length of sentences and paragraphs		4			
12	Coherence and unification of the text		4			
Total score: 42 (64.6%)		-	28	12	2	-

Content features

The textbook at hand achieved 63 scores out of 70 scores (totally 90%) and estimated as appropriate in its content features. Some details on the content of the textbook are explained below.

The author obeyed the standard in-text citation in about all cases. Two sources (Rao, 2004; Hoki, 2012) were cited in page 27 and it was noted in the footnote that about all items on the advantages and disadvantages of electronic books (discussed in pages 24-26) were extracted from these two sources. It is proposed that the two sources be cited on page 24 at the beginning of the related item. APA style is used in SAMT-published books (Book Preparing Manual, 2014). The author used page numbers for direct quotations. As SAMT orders authors to cite as the original language of the cited source (Corresponding SAMT administrator of the Department of Knowledge and Information Science on 11 February 2021), this instruction was ignored in some in-text cases as in the case of the source Gartner, 2016 in English that was cited in Persian (page 49). In repetition of cited sources, even on the same page, full in-text citation needs to be included. However, in the second paragraph of page 153 *ibid* was replaced with the source Principles and Concepts of Web Programming (2006).

As noted in its introduction, the textbook was prepared for master's degree in digital library management and software engineering and information technologies and is useable for bachelor's degree in knowledge and information science for a two-credit course

of designing digital libraries. The syllabi are in accordance with those approved of by Educational Planning Higher Council. Different works on principles of digital libraries have been published in recent years. However, this textbook on designing the digital library is the only book that was published in the format of a textbook. More applicable and feasible cases can be provided in the textbook for better understanding of the items. In addition, few illustrations were used and it is better to use more illustrations for making professional items more readable for students.

Chapter 1 starts with the definition of digital libraries and explaining the historical evolution of libraries. The author claims that the concept of the digital library is explained with some exemplifications (pages 6 and 7). Then, it is expected that some similar concepts are clearly defined, such as digital objects, digital information resources, digital resources, electronic content and digital content. These concepts were defined in other chapters and need to be clearly defined in chapter 1. Some definitions are insufficient (digital objects in page 97 and others on pages 22, 24, 27, 32 and 38). As clearly defining complex concepts is a key to better understanding, the author can provide tangible definitions and consider similarities and differences of confusing concepts by referring to different related sources. For example, digital objects were clearly defined in *Digital Objects in Digital Library* (2015), Arms (1999), Khetmatgozar, Alipoor-Hafezi and Hanafizade (2014), electronic content in Alidoosti, (2009), digital information resources in Alidoosti and Sheikh-Sho'a'i (2006) and State Library of Victoria (n.d.), digital content in Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) (2008), Nazim (2009) and Gasaway (2010).

Collection development in digital libraries was considered in chapter 2. It discussed about electronic content and the management, procedures and process of collection development as well as the evaluation of digital resources. The process of collection development was discussed in sections 2-6. It would be better that the topic was discussed in 2-5, before "the procedures of collection development" as the similarity of these two topics.

Chapter 3 achieved its educational objectives as it considered information organization in digital libraries and separately discussed the rules, patterns and tools of the information organization. Metadata, its history and types were identified in pages 59-66. Metadata

elements were briefly explained in the chapter. However, further readings (for example, Dublin-core Portal¹ in the footnote of page 64) and more exercises (asking for explaining the elements and their practical use in digital libraries in questions 23-25) need to be presented for students' more familiarity with the topic.

In chapter 4, the services of digital libraries were explained by categorizing the services (technical and public services) and emphasizing new ones. In technical services, main topics were considered, including data entering forms, authority names, authority subjects, thesauri, accessing reference systems using protocols such as z39.50 and so on. For students' more familiarity with metadata systems, it is proposed that some illustrations of Dublin-core metadata in digital systems be depicted and explained. In spite of emphasizing three elements of services provided for users, named content, technology and user, service quality and its internal and external dimensions (Shen, Goncalves & Fox, 2013) need to be included and discussed.

The integration of digital libraries was discussed in chapter 5. Accessing information contents and integrated searches and better retrieval are the results of integration and interoperability of digital libraries. Banking and bank system integration were presented as an exemplification. Other objective and factual exemplifications of digital libraries need to be presented and explained as the educational objective of the textbook.

As a need for providing digital services and user interactions, digital library software was discussed in chapter 6. It explained the procedures for using different packages and their advantages and disadvantages. For completion of discussion over the procedures of developing the digital libraries (page 98), Iranian digital library systems should be explained. In explaining GreenStone and DSpace software packages (page 103), their application in Iranian digital library systems needs to be argued. Inclusion of a question about the application of digital library software packages in Iranian libraries in detail (in page 113) would be better.

Chapter 7 considered the management of digital libraries and its challenges. Considering the main issues in the topic, the author tried

1. <https://dublincore.org/specifications/dublin-core/>

to briefly explain human and financial resources in digital libraries. As these resources heavily affect designing digital libraries and selecting their software packages, a separate chapter is necessary for covering some subjects such as digitization, production and maintaining costs.

Chapter 8 focused on copyright and related issues in the digital library. As copyright, security and protective problems are keys to the digital library, a separate chapter on these is one of strengths of the book. Such a main topic has been ignored in the course of "designing digital libraries", planned for bachelor students in knowledge and information science. The author discussed over international and national rules in this regard and identified content security and copyright protection. This is clearly obvious in practical exercises. As security issues and copyright are interrelated in the digital library, the author did his best explaining content security technologies (such as digital signature, codifying) and access protection. Therefore, the appropriate title of the chapter can be "rights and security issues in digital libraries". As the definition of copyright (in the footnote in page 127) is not complete and its explanation is brief (in page 128), some redefinition is needed as well as further readings and more explanations.

The architecture of digital libraries and its types were discussed and depicted in chapter 9. Architecture of Harvest (cited from Frew & et al. (1998)) was depicted (figure 9-2, page 157). But, replication manager and object cache were not included. Bowman (1995) considered five components for digital library architecture, including index/search as the third one. However, the textbook mentioned index/search in explaining the process of the architecture of Harvest, not separately as a component. "Marketing/search" was considered as one component of the architecture of Harvest in the same figure (figure 9-2, page 157) that was not found in the only figure of the original work (here, Figure 1) depicted in its cited source (Frew & et al, 1998). This cited source seems to be mistakenly assigned as original source for figure 9-2 in the textbook. It was likely extracted from figure 12 in page 13 of the paper by Pandey (2003) (here, Figure 2).

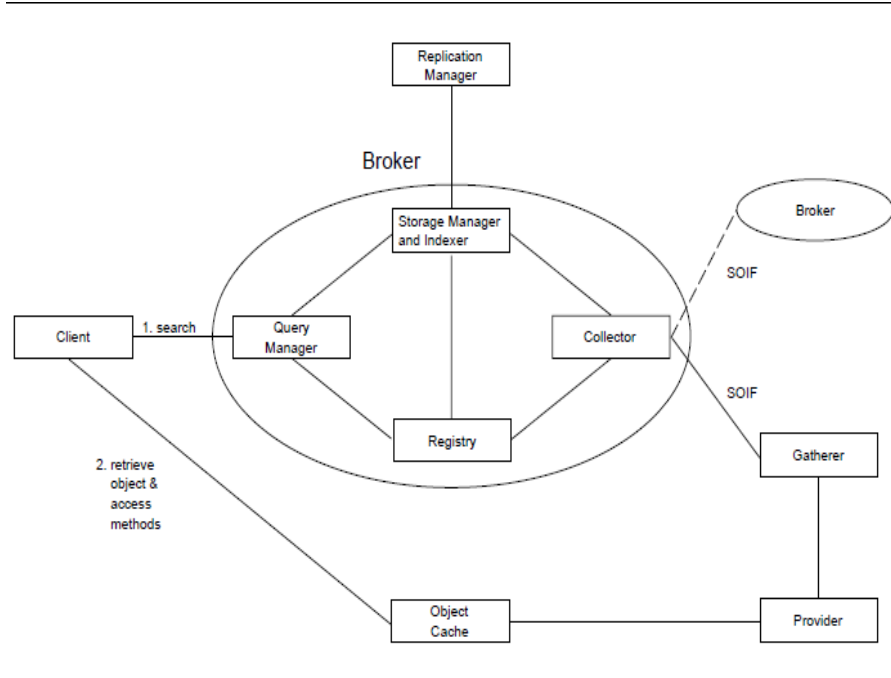


Figure 1. Architecture of Harvest (Frew & et al., 1998, 157)

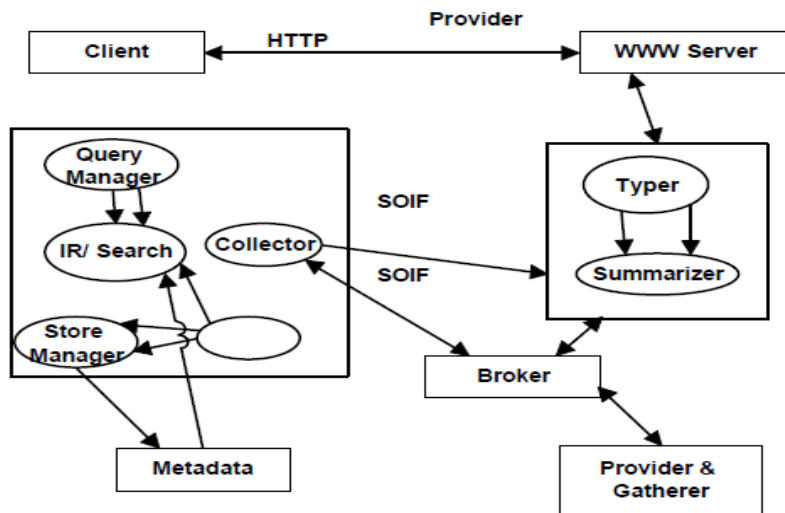


Fig. 12: Architecture of Harvest

Figure 2. Architecture of Harvest (Pandey, 2003, p.13)

The architecture of SARA¹ was explained on page 158 with no depiction. It would be better if figure 9-3 were dedicated to the architecture after explanations in section 9-4-2 and before identifying Digital Puglia Project. Because, SARA architecture is the basic infrastructure of the Digital Puglia Project. In addition, explaining the main elements of the digital library as depicted here in Figure 3 (i.e. user interface, search system, handle system and repository) is helpful in better understanding of the items.

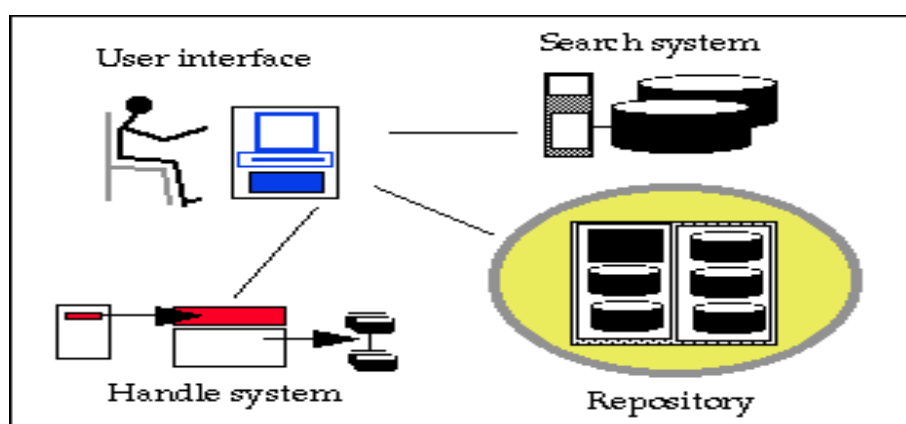


Figure 3. Core components of the digital library (Pandey, 2003, p.2)

In chapter 10, the evaluative frameworks of digital libraries were discussed. Despite the theoretical explanation of 5S, its concept and its included elements were not described. No pictures of the discussed frameworks were presented. These pictures are utterly needed for facilitating the learning process.

Chapter 11 is about the future of digital libraries. Describing the development process of the digital library from electronic libraries to hybrid to virtual to digital ones (in figure 11-1), the author reviewed the past and present of libraries and the states of digital libraries in Iran and abroad. The future of digital libraries was explained as to big data, cloud computing, semantics in information retrieval and so on.

Comparing the textbook at hand with perhaps the only similar work (Witten, Bainbridge and Nichols, 2009), it can be argued that the latter was divided into two sections: principles and procedures (9

1 . Synthetic Aperture Radar Atlas (SARA) digital library

chapters), and Green Stone Digital Library (three chapters) with index, glossary and references. Readers are the public searching for applicable and operational items. As the two books are relatively similar, the latter considered some issues in depth and dedicated separate chapters to some complex and important topics such as user interface and metadata. The textbook, however, considered the digital library as a process (starting from collection development and ending with evaluation). It is proposed that the textbook consider complex professional concepts in depth and explain some technical issues at full length for its audience.

The textbook used a considerable volume of sources in English and Persian (including articles, books, dissertations, etc.) for documentation. Considering the publication year (2019), references are update (2017 and backward for Persian references and 2018 and backward for English references). However, further readings need to be included in the textbook.

Table 4. The scores of the studied textbook in content criteria

No.	Content criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
1	Various items for explanation	5				
2	Documentation (cited sources)		4			
3	Being update	5				
4	Understandability and readability	5				
5	Appropriateness with national and international advantages	5				
6	Fulfilling audience's needs	5				
7	Fulfilling society needs	5				
8	Fulfilling market needs	5				
9	Connectivity with interdisciplinary			3		
10	Content accordance with students' prior knowledge		4			
11	Item accordance with other items in the syllabi		4			
12	Examples and exercises for better understanding		4			
13	Item accordance with the time assigned for learning		4			

No.	Content criteria	Very much (5)	Much (4)	Moderate (3)	Low (2)	Very low (1)
14	Item accordance with items of the syllabi	5				
Total score: 63 (90%)		40	20	3	-	-

Conclusion

The Persian book entitled "Designing the Digital Library" was critically reviewed in this study based on the evaluative criteria of university textbooks. The digital library management is a newly-emerged discipline and requires solid and update information resources. To this end, reviewing this book and other similar resources is helpful in identifying their strong and weak points and consequent satisfaction of the readers.

The textbook is an appropriate university textbook and suitable for its potential readers as it achieved at least 70% of scores assigned for each category of criteria (49 for formal criteria, 42 for writing criteria, 62 for structural criteria and 63 for content criteria).

The textbook is one of few books on designing digital libraries, suitable for students. The author of this textbook is an expert in the field as his research profile shows. Assigning a chapter on "legal issues" is notable in the book since this is ignored in the course of "designing digital libraries" for bachelor students in knowledge and information science. Logical organization of the chapters and topics and process view on the subject are merits of the book. The book can fulfill students' educational needs. However, some topics need to be explained in depth.

The textbook has some defects and weaknesses. The design of the book cover is not attractive and appropriate. Writing rules were ignored in some cases, perhaps due to the lack of accurate proof reading. Practical exemplifications and concrete examples were relatively disregarded in chapters on organization, services, software and architecture of the digital library. Illustrations and figures were few, too. Including a separate chapter on "financial issues" in digital libraries is proposed for discussing the related topics in detail.

Some suggestions can be set forth for improving the textbook in its format and content as follows.

Format-based suggestions are: Proof-reading, revising APA-style citations, providing English equivalents of all professional terms and

phrases, preparing further readings at the end, increasing the ratio of illustrations to the text. Content-oriented suggestions are: inclusion of professional items in depth in future editions, asking some challengeable questions in exercises, more practical and operational views of the topics, inclusion of a chapter on "financial issues in digital libraries", adding "service quality" to the topics in chapter 4, clarifying similar concepts such as digital objects, digital information resources, digital resources, electronic content and digital content in chapter 1, and changing the title of chapter 8 into "legal and security issues in the digital library".

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