ABSTRACT

The study aimed at identifying the reality of collaboration between Learning Resource Centers in Colleges of Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman through the following: (1) Identify collaborative activities between learning resource centers in the colleges, (2) Identify the benefits that have been achieved by networking between resources centers in the colleges. 19 interviews were conducted with participants from 6 learning resource centers and the Ministry of Higher Education in Oman. The range of results produced by the study included the following: (1) The collaborative network and the union catalogue are the most important elements of collaboration between the learning resource centers in the colleges of Applied Science. (2) The benefits of collaboration to these centers include savings in time and effort in the completion of daily business, exchange of experiences, solving workers’ problems, and facilitating the process of electronic subscriptions.

Keywords: Academic Library Cooperation, Applied Sciences, Collaborative Network, Learning Resource Centers, Oman

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INTRODUCTION

Library systems must continuously change to cope with rising information needs and rapidly changing technology as well as social, political, and economic systems. It is necessary to keep pace with users’ high expectations and provide services and information that are up-to-date and well maintained. Reasons for implementing change in libraries can be categorised to two dimensions: those due to internal need for change in the library systems (Budd, 1998; Vicente, 2004) and those due to external factors such as environmental pressure and global change (Stueart and Moran, 2007). The internal need for change occurs when users pressure libraries to increase and update their collections. Users’ behaviors in information seeking and retrieval are constantly changing, forcing libraries to deal with these changes. Library users are becoming increasingly familiar with opportunities to access information online and use search engines to retrieve information. According to Vicente (2004: 37), libraries, especially academic libraries, are required to facilitate their users’ activities with computers, Internet access, and learning resources: “Students need paper-based and web-based information for their learning, as well as other types of information resources like videos and multimedia material. An important role of the library is to support learning; therefore it should maintain an updated and sufficient collection of information resources.” Libraries are also influenced by external factors or environmental pressures, such as the development of new information technology and political and economic crises. Technology such as the Internet, Z39.50, and Web 2.0 has changed the nature of work in libraries and enabled libraries to offer a greater variety of services. To respond effectively to internal and external changes, libraries need to improve their collections, structure, procedures, and financial and technical resources as well as the skills of their staff (Jadhav, 2011). The literature indicates that successful changes require enhancement of awareness and understanding among organizational personnel about the significance of change, meaningful communications, effective leadership and planning, clear vision, involvement of staff from different levels, and availability of technical and financial resources (Stueart and Moran, 2007; Ellis and Dick, 2000).

Modern technology contributed to enhancing communication between various information institutions. It also contributed to the formation of consortiums and unions of large groups of libraries, taking advantage of the huge potential of information networks and remote communication. There are other reasons that helped strengthen cooperation between information institutions, including: the dramatic increase of printed and electronic publications, multiple forms of information resources, increasing number of beneficiaries, higher prices of resources, and the limited library budgets (Gelfand, 2004).
Intellectual Property Issues for Digital Libraries at the Intersection of Law, Technology, and the Public Interest
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