

Learning Resource Centre at Ibri College of Applied Sciences**How Beneficial is it in Fulfilling Students' Needs?****Afraa AL –Hatmi**

Learning Resource Centre- Ibri College of Applied Sciences

Majid Al Zeedi

Learning Resource Centre- Ibri College of Applied Sciences

Younes Audeh

English Department- Ibri College of Applied Sciences

P.O. Box 14, PC 516, Sultanate of Oman

Abstract

Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) at academic institutions- schools, colleges, universities- play beneficial roles in enhancing students' abilities in the academic arena. Almost all students and faculty members make use of them in getting many helpful services. This paper unfolds the crucial benefits obtained from the (LRC) at Ibri College of Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman. In order to get a clear and precise idea about this matter, a questionnaire is given randomly to a group of the (LRC) users to see their satisfaction about it. What the researchers have reached is that the (LRC) at Ibri College offers invaluable services not only to students, faculty, and staff, but also to the local community.

Keywords: LRC, local community, faculty members, online journals, EBSCO, OECD, JSTOR

Introduction

Learning Resource Centers represent a technological revolt against conventional education. In the past students suffered a lot in order to get a certain material from the traditional libraries—referring to cards in specific drawers, standing in queues to have the chance to ask the librarian for help, and at last borrowing a book-if available- for a week or two.

Nowadays, in the digital world, (LRCs) have put knowledge at our fingertips—students get almost all what they need in a fraction of a second. No more boredom or waste of time; things are available and obtained in an enjoyable manner in a certain type of building, relaxed furniture, and good environment, especially for people with special needs. Moreover, the teacher's role has

decreased and students can get whatever they need while at home without referring to him/ her. This paper focusses on the benefits that students get from the learning resource center at Ibr College of Applied Sciences- the Sultanate of Oman.

Review of the Literature

The Library is a collection of source of information which makes accessible to a defined community for reference or borrowing. It contains books, periodicals, newspaper[s], manuscript[s], films, maps, prints, documents, microforms, C. Ds, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, e-books, data basics and others. The first library consisted of archives of the earliest form of writing- the clay tablets. The uniform script was discovered in summer [Sumer] dating back to two thousand six B.C (Saraswat, 2018, para. 1).

The main purpose of Learning Resource Centers (LRCs) is to assist academic institutions: schools, colleges, and universities, in helping students find certain books and references to support their major requirements including writing academic research papers, reports, etc. These (LRCs) are usually run by highly qualified experts who know much about all paper and soft materials such as videos, online journals and newspapers, and national and international periodicals. Students, on the other hand, are to be aware that whatever is at their hands-course books- is not the ultimate goal—they have to know that referring to the (LRC) is not for entertainment; they(students) have become the axis of the academic environment, and their teachers have become guides or facilitators. So, the (LRCs) do blend the courses with technology in one premise. Moreover, students can explore all collections in the (LRCs) and be familiar with a good number of authors in different fields. It seems that this facility - (LRC) - is not new.

Learning resource centers are not a new concept. They have been around a long time, particularly in educational institutions. More than just a library, a learning resource center can include audio-visual aids, tutors, study resources, learning labs, and other self-help support designed to enhance and increase the learner's knowledge, skills, and abilities. (Santaniello, 2017, para. 1).

In fact, students can get a number of advantages by using the (LRCs') facilities and services. They can get online supporting materials that help them in more understanding for the course at hand. Moreover, students can see how technology broadens their horizons by expanding and enriching their educational experience.

Learning resource centers benefit students by supplementing the learning process. They function as a place to introduce, reinforce and expand student learning, and can be school- or community-based. Centers can provide access to learning materials or serve as a peer learning center. There are a various[various] types of learning centers, each geared toward providing students with resources to expand their educational experience (Kay, (n.d.) Para. 1).

The (LRC) at Ibri College of Applied Sciences offers free services and facilities to staff, faculty members, and students. Free students' course books, free use of printers, free Internet, and free paper. The Centre cooperates with the local community in different ways: conducting regular seminars, conferences, meetings, giving people the chance to borrow books and use the (LRC) facilities for free. In addition, the (LRC) - as a way of enhancing reading habits among people-arranges competitions -from time to time- for all users -- read and summarize policy. This center works hard and does its best in order to keep all things updated: having frequent contacts with faculty members for recommending any valuable and worthy books or references that help promote the assets in the College in general, and the (LRC) in particular. One of the most important events in the Sultanate of Oman is the annual Book Fair which is a chance for the (LRC) to search for all that is needed for the benefit of the center. In addition, the center is keen on subscribing to international refereed journals, online database systems such as EBSCO, JSTOR, OECD systems, etc., not to mention offering the center's specialists the chance to attend national or international-if possible- professional conferences so as to excel in their field on one hand, and to promote their professional status on the other hand. The (LRC) at Ibri College offers more.

Assist[s] student[s] and faculty to achieve learning and teaching excellence and support student[s] and faculty development initiatives by utilizing an integrated learning approach and a comprised library management system. The LRC will strive to take full advantage of its information resources and technology in order to best serve the research needs of CAS-Ibri's students and faculty. (Ibri College of Applied Sciences, (n.d).

The (LRC) at Ibri College normally conducts social events and activities, and invites speakers, mainly majors in library science, to exchange ideas and have a direct and open dialogue with the audience. At the beginning of every academic school year, the (LRC) welcomes local school students to strengthen ties with them and encourage them to continue bidding visits to the center and feel free to ask about any matters of concern. In order to draw students' attention to new books and references, or social or academic events, the (LRC) contacts students via social media—twitter, College e-mails, posters and leaflets, and any other possible means. The (LRC) at Ibri College has a spacious hall for references—modern encyclopedias, atlases, table and ordinary dictionaries, M.A. and Ph.D. theses, etc. All in all, the (LRC) at Ibri College is unique: industrious and hardworking staff with extreme politeness.

Methodology and Procedures

The researchers distributed a questionnaire among the (LRC) users to get a clear and transparent idea about students' satisfaction of the facilities and services offered—printed sources, printing services, and the Internet facility.

Ibri College is one of six colleges of applied sciences in Oman. It is located in the city of Ibri in Al Dhahirah Region. All colleges are run under the direct supervision of the Ministry of

Higher Education. It offers three major specializations: Information Technology (IT), Business Administration, Design, in addition to general requirements and an English program. Students at Ibri College are all Omanis, except for a few students from other countries under cultural cooperation agreements.

The (LRC) is a spacious two-story building that lies right in the middle of the campus with eight modern computer labs. The first floor is for the administration, desk staff, technicians’ offices, a big hall for boys, and a big computer lab for girls. Interestingly enough, there are separate computer labs: some are for boys, while some others are for boys, except if accompanied by their teachers, in this case they share the same lab with rows for every sex. The (LRC) opens 7.30 and closes at 8.00 p.m. all week- work days. This serves about one thousand five-hundred students, about 1000 of them are girls in the hostel (just girls).

Results and Discussion

The purpose of the study at hand is to shed some light on an important issue that is one of the (LRC’s) priorities: students’ satisfaction about this center.

The population participated in this questionnaire-131 participants- are the (LRC) users and were chosen at random. They represent all majors. They are between 18-23 of age, and belong to different regions in the Sultanate of Oman. All were briefed about the questionnaire in detail and told it is voluntary and they do not have to write their names.

Users’ satisfaction regarding the (LRC) services at Ibri College of Applied Sciences

Table 1

Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Electronic sources provided by the library are sufficient
17	55	55	
13.4%	43.3%	43.3%	

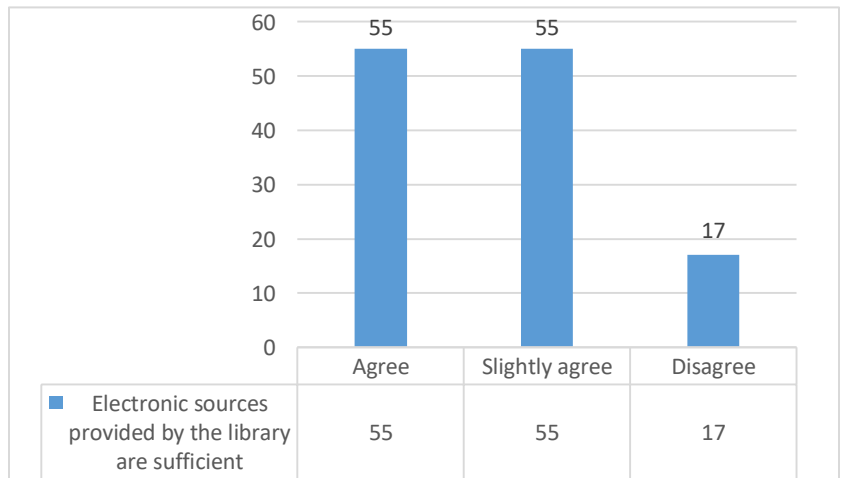


Table 1 shows that 43.3 % **agree** that the electronic sources of information available at the center are sufficient, and almost the same percentage -43.3%- **slightly agree**. This indicates that the community of users has benefited from the training workshops that the (LRC) actively

introduces on the use of electronic sources to introduce students to modern electronic research and documentation techniques, as well as individual training for each user through their study.

Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Printed sources provided by the library are sufficient:
21	55	52	
16.4%	43.0%	40.6%	

Table 2

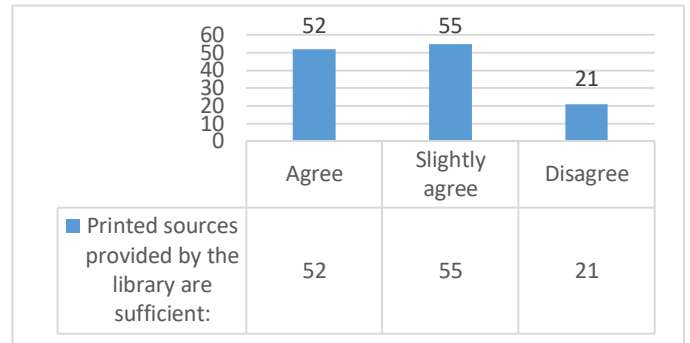


Table 2 shows that 40.6 % **agree** that the printed material is sufficient, but 16.4 % **disagree**. The continuous provision of specialized books and reference books in the library provide a good indication of the users' needs.

Table 3

Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	The printing services are sufficient
52	40	34	
41.3%	31.7%	27.0%	

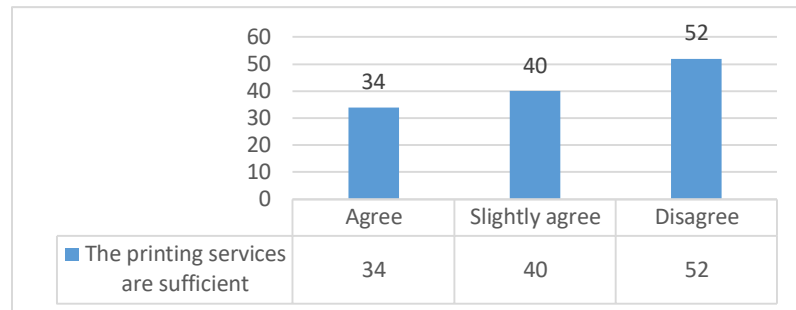


Table 3 shows that:

41.3 % **disagree** and think the printing services are insufficient, while 27.0 **agree**, and 31.7% **slightly agree**.

Table 4

Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Internet Service is convenient in terms of availability and speed:
42	54	28	
33.9%	43.5%	22.6%	

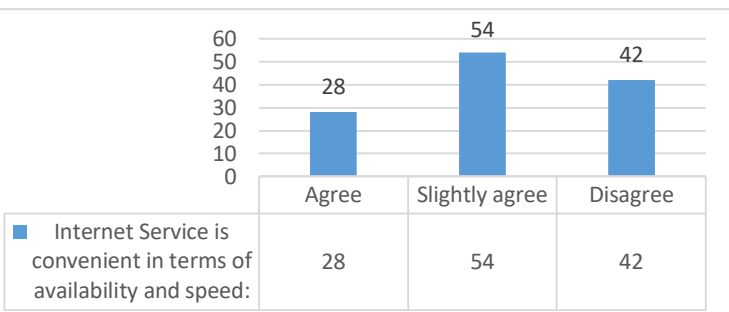


Table 4 shows that (43.5%) are slightly satisfied with the Internet services offered by the (LRC), while (22%) seem satisfied. By adding the two percentages (43.5 + 22.6), it gives a satisfactory result about this service. (33.9), which is almost (40.0 %) of students seem to disagree with the Internet service provided by the (LRC) and that is due to some reasons such as using the Internet during the peak times—researching, downloading materials, having quizzes and exercises online.

To be fair, the (LRC) provides students with a very high speed Internet twenty-four hours throughout the academic year for browsing, uploading, and downloading materials for educational and research purposes. Moreover, the college has two high-speed lines of the Internet with 195 Megabytes, with all means of technical security.

Recommendations

- students need to know that they are always welcome to the (LRC) at Ibri College of Applied Sciences. All facilities and services are available for them.
- (LRC) staff are cooperative, industrious, extremely polite and friendly, highly qualified and eager to offer assistance, so please, do not hesitate to stop by and ask for help.
- be informed that the (LRC) is for academic purposes: not for wasting time, entertainment, or having fun-- drinking and eating are not allowed.
- instructors are urged to accompany their students to the (LRC) regularly as a way of blending teaching with technology.
- the local community, including schools, governmental institutions are welcome to the (LRC) for reading, borrowing, attending and/or participating in the (LRC's) events and workshops. This bridges up the gap between the (LRC) and all local community bodies.
- post graduate students from the local community are welcome to use the (LRC's) assets: encyclopedias, references, e-books and journals, M.A. and Ph.D. theses.

Conclusion

The (LRCs) at all academic institutions, whether national or international, do play crucial roles in providing schools, colleges, and universities with a quality education. They-(LRCs) - enhance and promote blending traditional teaching with modern technology in classrooms. Ibri College (LRC) is the place where our students work hard, especially when they have to work on their assignments and when the final exams start. They feel they are in a relaxed atmosphere and healthy environment—they get all facilities for free: free text books, free hostel, and free Internet

in classrooms and the (LRC), hostel, in addition to a salary that covers all necessities. The Sultanate of Oman really does its best for promoting and qualifying its people; students in all stages, in particular.

Acknowledgement

The researchers would like to express their gratitude and thanks to all participants who played a vital role in doing the questionnaire required.

About the researchers

Afra Hamed AL- Hatmi is an Information Resources specialist in the LRC (Learning Resource Center) at Ibri College of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Higher Education- the Sultanate of Oman. She holds a Master's degree in Libraries and Information Science from Alexandria University –Egypt, 2007. Bachelor's degree (Libraries and Documentation), Sultan Qaboos University -Sultanate of Oman, 1998. Currently, she is a postgraduate student in the International Islamic University Malaysia, Doctor of Philosophy -Library and Information Science.

Majid Al Zeedi is an Information Resources specialist in the (LRC)—Learning Resource Centre- at Ibri College of Applied Sciences, Ministry of Higher education – the Sultanate of Oman. He holds a Master's degree in Technology Education from AOU (Arab Open University) of Oman, 2017, Bachelor's degree in Libraries and Information Science, Sultan Qaboos University – Sultanate of Oman, 2003.

Younes Audeh is the Head of the Translation Committee, and lecturer at the Department of English at Ibri College of Applied Sciences -the Sultanate of Oman. He is an M.A. holder in Applied Linguistics from Indiana University of Pennsylvania- USA. He has been teaching English as an ESL/EFL for a long time. He has taught at a number of colleges and universities in different countries. His research interest is “Academic Writing”.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Basic information

LRC user		<input type="checkbox"/>	Category
IT	<input type="checkbox"/>	Business	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Design	Major
General Requirements			
male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
			Sex

First: Library Section				
Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Item	⤴
			Opening time of library is suitable for me.	1
			Printed sources provided by the library are sufficient.	2
			Electronic sources provided by the library are sufficient.	3
			There's a diversity in the content and specialization of the available sources of information in the library.	4
			Adequate spaces are available for reading inside the library.	5
			The permissible borrowing period is enough for me.	6
			The electronic index helps me to search for sources of information easily.	7
			I can easily reach the information sources on the shelves.	8
			Promoting of services, sources of modern information, training courses, and everything related to the library is done effectively and periodically.	9
			The Library Section provides support, assistance, service, answering queries, upon request.	10

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Second: Computer Section				
Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree	Item	ρ
			The number of labs is sufficient to do my tasks.	1
			The printing services are sufficient.	2
			My storage space on the College Network is enough for me.	3
			Lab. devices give me complete satisfaction in terms of performance and software they deal with.	4
			Internet Service is convenient in terms	5
Third : Information Technology				
Disagree	Slightly agree	Agree		
			Educational devices and materials are available and easy to use.	1
			Borrowing educational devices and equipment (cameras, lenses, etc.) is sufficient.	2
			Labs.are suitable in terms of equipment and space.	3
			TV studio is suitable and helps to accomplish the required tasks.	4
			E-learning is useful and helps me to accomplish academic tasks.	5
			The service of advertising on the electronic screen fulfils my satisfaction of	6

			knowing what occurs at College.	
			The printing service meets the educational purposes.	7
			The College's website and e-applications allow me to benefit from the College's services.	8
			The IT section provides the appropriate technical support to accomplish my tasks.	9