

Libraries in the Digital Age: How are they Viewed by Lecturers at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibri?Afra Al Hatmi¹, Sultan Al Sawafi², Younes Audeh³,Abuzar Abdualaziz Ali⁴ and Ahmed Ismail Qutb Mohammed⁵¹Information Resource Specialist

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Abstract

Research and practice in the field of digital libraries started in the 1990s transforming almost all paper work to electronic stuff. Libraries can develop and proliferate witnessing a flow of progress around the clock. In order to get a complete and precise idea about the effect of the digital library in the academic arena, the researchers have distributed a questionnaire to a number of faculty members as well as librarians at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibri- the Sultanate of Oman. The results were marvelous; almost all participants agree that using the digital library is better than the traditional one-- easier and faster. Recommendations, discussion, and explanation will be highlighted in detail throughout this paper.

Keywords: challenges, digital, future trends, librarians, proliferate, research, speculate

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Introduction

In the evolving of teaching/learning methodology and academic research, lots of things have come into being -- digital libraries as a great technological revolution. This technology utilizes transformative tools that reshape the way information is accessed, dealt with and managed. As traditional libraries have developed into what is called “Digital Space”, it is time to welcome efficiency, accurateness, accessibility, and collaboration. The digital library overpasses the physical one, and has a number of advantages: big capacity in providing wide access to a tremendous amount of information. Moreover, digital libraries continuously offer more facilities around the clock, and covers so many academic resources such as books, journals, databases and multimedia content, making it more flexible and easier for researchers, students, and scholars all over the world to access the essential required materials. This paper explores the major role of the digital libraries in the modern educational and academic fields, advantages and disadvantages, if any, of utilizing technology in digital library.

Statement of the Problem

In the era of technology, everything in all fields has changed and become more complicated; industry, space, education, etc. This change has covered almost all kinds of libraries --school, university, and public. This paper concentrates mainly on university libraries in the digital age.

Objectives of the Study

This study pursues the following:

1. Identifying the exact development of libraries at academic institutions.
2. Checking up to what extent are library users satisfied with the services offered by technology.

Literature Review

“An e-library or digital library is a compilation of digital resources available to users via the internet. These resources encompass a variety of materials, including books, articles, journals, research papers, multimedia content, and more”. (Heritage Girls School, 2024, Para. 1). A digital library is a collection of digital objects, such as books, magazines, audio recordings, video recordings and other documents that are accessible electronically. (Hanna, 2023, Para. 1).

As it is a new era of technology, it is clear that many things have become novel—space, education, industry, technology and digital libraries. It is a wave of change into modernization. “The digital library is a novel concept in the current world that has a bright future.” (Shrivastava, (n.d.), Para. 1). Digital libraries have lots of advantages that make it easier for the users to get knowledge as quickly as possible. Users can access resources from remote places and get in touch with library administrations and other users.

Advantages of Digital Libraries: Access to a vast range of resources. The adoption of technology in libraries has expanded the variety of information resources available to users. Users are no longer restricted to a local collection, but can access resources from other libraries and information sources. Digital libraries provide access to a vast array of high quality, full text information that may not be available in any other format. (Aithor, 2024, Para. 2).

Students, teachers, staff, and other library users can access whatever they need just by a few clicks and they are done. Moreover, most things in the digital library might not be found in the physical, or traditional ones. It really is a blessing to have digital libraries.

The significance of e-libraries for students cannot be emphasized enough. They provide students with the flexibility to access information anytime and from anywhere, requiring only a few clicks or taps. E-libraries house a vast array of resources that aid students in expanding their knowledge, honing their research skills, and enhancing their academic performance. Additionally, digital materials available in e-libraries may not be found in

traditional libraries, granting students access to the latest research and information in their respective fields of study. (Heritage Girls School, 2024, Para. 2).

The beauty of open access lies in its inclusivity. Regardless of a student's location, socioeconomic background, or institutional affiliation, they can tap into a vast repository of knowledge. Textbooks, research papers, and educational materials that were once confined within the walls of exclusive institutions are now freely available, fostering a collaborative and interconnected global learning community. (Mukerjee, 2023, Para. 4).

Both digital and EdTech (Educational Technology) websites have a big role in creating challenge against the traditional way of getting knowledge. Both have a promising future in the way of providing students with what they need.

The integration of open access resources, digital libraries, and EdTech platforms not only transforms how we learn but also challenges the traditional structures of education. This triumvirate creates a symbiotic relationship, each element reinforcing and amplifying the impact of the others. Together, they lay the foundation for a future where education is borderless, accessible, and tailored to individual needs. (Mukerjee, 2023, Para. 12).

No doubt, librarians should cope with the modern technology and utilize it in digital use. This is an essential step in qualifying librarians and providing them with the skills needed for developing, strengthening, and supporting scientific research.

The training of librarians and information professionals is needed so they can meet the challenge of providing information services in the new era. The critical need for libraries in developing countries is to understand how research practices are changing and what is required (with regard to infrastructure and skills) to improve and strengthen library support for research. (Koelen & Quayle-Ballard, 2009, 36).

Wherever the Internet connection exists, it is possible to use the digital library. It is a priority to look for rare and expensive materials browsing from all corners of the globe. So many things can be referred to electronically that are not found in the traditional library. It is really a tremendous revolution in the world of digital technology.

The advantages of using a digital library include access to an expansive collection of materials, increased convenience because users can access the library from anywhere with an internet connection, powerful search and sorting features to narrow results, and multimedia content that is not available in physical libraries. (Hanna, 2023, Para. 10).

The content found in the digital library is of great importance and necessity for researching. Researchers always look for new resources and updated content to use for their work. "Libraries play an important role in the educational and research process. A digital library can provide access to many of the knowledge networks around the world, which is a necessary component of

any research experience”. (Koelen & Quaye-Ballard, 2009, 2). “Digital libraries can be accessed from any computer or device with an internet connection, meaning that there is no need to physically visit the library or store materials to access them”. (Hanna, 2023, Para.5

Methodology

This study follows a quantitative research design using a survey method to collect data on the digital libraries at the university level. The use of surveys is appropriate for collecting standardized, comparable data across a sample of participants, allowing for statistical analysis of their responses.

Participants

The participants (20 male and female lecturers) teach at the Preparatory Studies Center / University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Ibri in the Sultanate of Oman. They are highly educated and experienced.

Sampling Strategy

Due to logistical constraints, the sample size was limited to (20) participants. A convenience sampling method was employed, as the lecturers were readily available to the researchers at the time of the study. However, the small sample size limits the generalizability of the results and is considered a limitation of the study.

Research Instrument

Data was collected using a questionnaire created by the researchers that had (15) questions. The survey asks (Yes/No), (Agree/Disagree), and (Multiple Choice) questions to gauge respondents' opinions on digital libraries, which included empathy, fairness, and communication skills. A pilot study with a number of lecturers was used to validate the device in order to ensure clarity and reliability, and any necessary changes to the wording were made in response to their input.

Data Collection Procedure

Surveys were distributed to participants during their free time at the Preparatory Studies Center. Before participation, they were briefed about the purpose of the study, informed of their right to apologize anytime, and assured of their anonymity.

Ethical Considerations

This study followed universal ethical research guidelines. All subjects gave their informed consent, and they were promised that their answers would be kept private.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Table1

I. Do you think that technology makes Librarians' responsibilities easier than the traditional ones?	Yes	No
	20	0
	100%	0%

I. Do you think that technology makes Librarians' responsibilities easier than the traditional ones?



Table 1 shows that all participants (100%) agree that technology makes librarians' responsibilities easier than the traditional ones. By automating processes, managing digital resources, and improving user services, technology simplifies many aspects of a librarian's job.

Table2

3. Technology increases the speed of information access.	Yes	No
	19	1
	95%	5%

3. Technology increases the speed of information access.



Table 2 shows that the largest group of participants (95%) agree that Technology increases the speed of information access.

Table3

8. The customer service at the library where I work is "excellent"?	Agree	Disagree
	17	3
	85%	15%

8. The customer service at the library where I work is "excellent"?



The findings indicate that the participants (85%) believe that the customer service at the library where I work is "excellent"

Conclusion

The previous article shows the importance of the transformation and change of traditional libraries to digital. It is a great step on the way of library science, especially for university staff, employees, and faculty members. It is a worldwide initiative that promotes research policies concentration on transparency and collaboration. To promote open and wide education, educators should develop and maintain frameworks for saving, archiving and referencing research digital materials. As mentioned above, this paper addresses the various challenges related to digital content complying with possible policies of infrastructure frameworks.

Recommendations

1. Training librarians and information professionals is needed so they can meet the challenge of providing information services in the new era.
2. Digital libraries mean a wave of change into modernization.
3. A digital library can provide access to many of the knowledge networks around the world, which is a necessary component of any research experience.
4. The integration of open access resources, digital libraries, and EdTech platforms not only transforms how we learn, but also challenges the traditional structures of education.
5. Digital libraries mean a chance and priority to look for rare and expensive materials browsing from all corners of the globe.

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