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Pakistan Journal of Library & Information Science

ISSN 1680-4465



Prospects of digitization in university libraries of Pakistan. Unpublished PhD. thesis, University of the Punjab, Lahore, 2011. [Abstract]

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The basic aim of the study was to explore the prospects of digitization in university libraries of Pakistan. To meet this aim, the study analyzed the demand for digital contents in higher education institutions of the country; explored the libraries' readiness to carry out digitization activities; analyzed the prevailing digitization practices; identified the major issues and hindrances affecting digitization practices; and identified the potential collections for digitization.

Keeping in view the exploratory and explanatory nature of the study's objectives, the study used the sequential mixed methods design by using quantitative and qualitative techniques. The study opted for two phases and final results were drawn on the basis of both types of data. The existing practices were explored by self-completion questionnaire survey in the first phase. The subjects of the study were central libraries of 83 universities of Pakistan (public and private sector) recognized by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, and established till June 2005. The survey was designed in a structured format to collect quantitative data. The response rate was 68 percent. The data were numerical and presented nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio scales of measurement.

Keeping in view the structured format of the questionnaire in the 1st phase, the perceptions of library experts were best investigated through interviews. Hence, 25 in-depth interviews were conducted in the 2nd phase of the study to collect the opinions and perceptions of library experts to meet the objectives of the study.

The finding of the study revealed that use of online sources in higher education sector of Pakistan is growing. Demand for digitized contents is increasing in higher education sector of Pakistan. Non-availability of indigenous information resources in digital formats is a major hindrance in providing wider access to the community and meeting users' demands. It was also revealed that availability of digitized contents has positive impacts on learning and teaching while presenting certain challenges and opportunities to the libraries. It was exposed that libraries hold a large number of valued information resources which need to be digitized. Most of the libraries present primitive level of readiness to carry out digitization activities. University libraries which are better equipped with technological resources are relatively advantaged in carrying out digitization activities/projects. Libraries felt the need to digitize their collections. However, a small number of libraries were actually involved in the process. Digitization is still nascent stage and it is being carried out in a disorganized manner in the absence of a formal policy or plan. Hindrances and issues associated with digitization process include: absence of an established digitization plan, policies, and procedures; greater preference to other projects; lack of financial, technological, and skilled human resources; etc. The respondents considered that the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan may play a major role in the promotion of digitization activities in university libraries. Respondents agreed that collaboration among university libraries can be an effective way to successfully precede digitization projects.

The research findings will help the universities' administration, funding bodies and other related government and non-government agencies to understand the prospects of digitization in university libraries of Pakistan and review their priorities and strategies. The study has also implications for the administration of university libraries in Pakistan and other countries with similar economic and social conditions.