ABSTRACT

The existence of Myanmar libraries is nearly thousand years like libraries in the world existing for more than 2,500 years. The progression and transformation of library functions and services were brought by Information and Communication Technologies (ITC) that have been tremendous as well as enormously influenced those functions. Traditional libraries’ role and functions would need to be transformed as the functions of these libraries had been challenged by the new concepts. In connection with these challenges, digital libraries have been under development since the early 1990’s in the world, and Myanmar libraries are now trying to be in line with the other libraries within their extent.

The impact of technology has been so great that libraries have been the provision of global access. Whether digital library or virtual library or electronic library or library without walls, the underlying concepts is universal access through the digitization of library materials, linking the information provider and information seeker directly via the Internet.

This paper is to identify the extent of the University of Yangon Library in providing digital library operations and services, having embraced library automation, including challenges faced and the perceived conditions for future growth of digital library. The main concerned of the study is to come to know about the University of Yangon Library’ digital library initiatives. The other focus of the study will be on going through general and digital library related problems and the perceived conditions that might influence Myanmar digital library future growth. The areas covered are demographic information, general and digital library related problems, library holdings, automation and online services, digitization programs, digital library planning, financial constraint and opinions of library head with the respect to the future of digital library, information professionals and traditional libraries.

Keywords: collection development policy, digital library, digital related problems, hybrid library, University of Yangon Library

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

As Myanmar libraries have been tried in line with the other libraries in the world within their extent. Between them, University of Yangon Library would be explored the extent of library automation, online services, digital initiatives and general and related problems. The problem the researcher faced is the lack of study and published literature on digital library development in Myanmar. The lack of digital library activities and low level of the development in library community rely on the lack of published literature. Even the library tries to step into the field of library automation, and online services, the library itself has not have a strong plan; what part of library operations and services that have been automated, what sources can be rendered in digital format. This is the reason to study the situation of its digital library initiatives and how much do they strongly need supporting from authority and experts in this field.

1.2 Objectives of Study

The objective were covered to identify the extent of the University of Yangon Library in providing digital library operations and services, having embraced library automation, including problems faced for digital library future growth. The specific objectives were:

a. To develop a profile of University of Yangon Library as background information.
b. To gauge its readiness through the extent of library automation in terms of library holdings, media for information storage, installation of integrated library system, provision of digital library operations and services, digitization works and online subscription of databases. Library general problems and the provision of budget and training would also be identified.
c. To identify issues and related problems and to explore its digital library planning and implementation.
d. To obtain and analyze the opinions of Head of Library and the future of traditional library

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the following research questions were used:

a. What is the library type? When it was founded? Who heads it?
b. What made up the library holdings/collections and what were the general problems faced. What library system had been installed and the extent of library online services and digital library initiatives that had been introduced, including the provision of budget and training?
c. What were the issues/related problems and what kinds of digital library planning were in store?
d. What were the library head' opinions on the library' development and Myanmar digital library development?
2.2 Methodology

After considering the objectives of the study, the researcher felt the appropriateness for adopting both the qualitative and quantitative data gathering techniques i.e. the survey method, using the questionnaire as the instrument and structured interviews. A combination of these research designs may provide more data to work with and ultimately a more accurate evaluation. For the purpose of this research, after examining the objectives of the study and realizing the lack of study and published literature on digital library development in Myanmar, an exploratory descriptive research design had been chosen. The researcher believes that exploratory descriptive research will suit best.

2.3 Qualitative data: interview

The interview intended to investigate and identify the scenario that University of Yangon Library was going through in embarking on digitization projects having embraced library automation, thus supplementing the quantitative data. The eleven interview questions were quite similar to the questionnaire, for the purposes of re-affirmation and consolidation and to gauge at some convergence of findings.

Visiting the library and observing the on site development had enabled to see the actual progress that were really taking place at that library. It helped the researcher to grasp the idea, gained some insights and forming a general idea.

Having met, talked and discussed with the librarians from University of Yangon Library as possible, the actual interviews were carried out. On the average, the interview lasted for about two hours. In the interview questions are about digital library planning, budget for digitization projects, online services and operations, basic library functions (acquisition, processing, dissemination and preservation), library services, subscription to online databases, digital library projects, human resource/staffing, management support, external support, digital library collaborative efforts with other libraries, digital library related problems, digital library training, ICT facilities, personal opinion on the initiation of digital library development, and perceived conditions for future.

2.4 Quantitative data: questionnaire

As the questionnaire is the main research instrument in this study, the question development process had taken following steps: overview the library type, who headed them, what system used, budget, problems faced, collections, digitalization program, subscription of online databases, information and communication technologies infrastructure, future planning, and opinions of heads of library, then prepared questionnaire; the questionnaire was sent to selected few librarians for the purpose of pre-testing; their suggestions and comments were considered to perfect the questionnaire and finally, sent to the librarians from University of Yangon Library.

The questionnaire was used as an instrument for the survey. It consisted of demography, general library problems, and statistics on library holdings, library automation, training, digitization projects, budgets and opinions of heads of libraries. These are the main eight categories of questions had been asked, covering the aspects. Demography has 10 variables. They are: (1) name of the library; (2) designation and the name of head of library; (3) grade of head of library; (4) highest academic qualification of head of library; (5) total
number of years of working experience of head of library; (6) staff; (7) provision of e-mail address; (8) perception about hybrid, digital or hybrid library type; (9) intention of becoming full fledge digital library; (10) number of years library been established. This section acts as background information.

General library problems have 15 variables. They are: (1) lack of professional staff; (2) lack of IT personnel; (3) lack of support staff; (4) lack of IT training; (5) lack of leadership; (6) lack of management support; (7) lack of suitable integrated library system; (8) lack of IT facility; (9) lack of ICT infrastructure; (13) lack of collaboration; (11) lack of demand for library services; (12) lack of budget; (13) lack of library space; (14) lack of digital library initiatives; (15) underutilization of library resources. These sections act as a platform to see what kinds of problems the libraries were facing and whether they were ready in certain aspects to migrate to a new library type.

Statistics on library holdings have 10 variables. They are: (1) monographs; (2) journals and periodicals; (3) cassette tapes; (4) video tapes; (5) films; (6) photographs; (7) maps; (8) posters; (9) microfiche; (10) CD-ROM. This section aims to see what constituted their major holdings of digital resources.

Library automation has 8 variables. They were: (1) the year of installation of integrated library system; (2) first system used; (3) current system used; (4) online library operations and services; (5) IT facilities; (6) total number of PCs hold; (7) subscription to databases; (8) technical support. This section is important to gauge their readiness in moving forward towards digital library development. And having at least done some form of library automation and turning their libraries electronically.

Training has 15 variables. They are: (1) introduction to computers; (2) Internet and WWW; (3) application software; (4) web design and homepage development; (5) online searching skills (6) online indexing & abstracting; (7) programming & programming languages; (8) PC maintenance; (9) Data Base Management System; (10) information systems development (11) telecommunication & networking; (12) operating systems; (13) others; (14) trainers; (15) length of training. This section is important to gauge their preparedness and readiness in moving forward towards digital library development that is supposed to be technologically dependent with the necessary skills and know how.

Digitization projects have 11 main variables that included one open-ended question on their future planning. They are: (1) digitization projects; (2) digitized items; (3) digitization method; (4) common storage devices; (5) public or private domain; (6) budget; (7) contents of website; (8) digitization related problems; (9) digitization project with National Library; (10) development of in-house databases; (11) future planning. This section wishes to solicit the extent that they had progressed in relation to digital library development.

Budget has 5 variables. They are: (1) allocation for monographs; (2) allocation for non-print; (3) allocation for print journals; (4) allocation for e-journals; (5) allocation for online databases. This section wishes to see the portion of budget spent on library holdings specifically online resources.

Opinions of heads of libraries have 10 variables. They are: (1) Digital library development; (2) user’s readiness; (3) domination by digital format; (4) collection development policy; (5) blueprint; (6) hybrid library type; (7) books vs. online services; (8) Information
Professionals; (9) IT literate; (10) extinction of traditional libraries. This section wishes to solicit the librarians’ opinions on some important aspects related to digital library development in view of the progresses that had been taking place.

2.5 Expected Outcome

The research findings would be able to serve partly as a view of university digital library development and needs of the development in Myanmar. The research findings would reveal the situations of University of Yangon Library as a continuation of the electronic library efforts, automation, problems faced, ICT training, budget, digital library planning and digitization programs, and head of library' opinions; so that the right mechanisms could be taken to accelerate further the growth of university digital library development.

3. FINDINGS

This part elaborates on the findings based on qualitative and quantitative data, obtained through interviews and questionnaire by focusing on demography, general problems, statistics on collection, automation, training, digitalization projects, and last but not least is the librarian's opinion.

3.1 Demography

University of Yangon Library is located in Ah-Di-Pa-Ti (Chancellor) Rd., Yangon University Campus, Ward (9), Kamayut Township, Myanmar. The University Chancellor and Governor Sir Harcourt Butler laid the foundation stone of University of Yangon Library in 1927. It was the very first modern library building, designed by Architect T. O. Foster. This two-story building is in the shape of English letter, "L". The library is proportionately built to match with four levels of the main stack room with perforated floors and iron racks. It is the one and only library in Myanmar that kind of. The main stack room is fixed with vertical windows to have better ventilation.

U Khin Zaw (pen-name K) was the first University Librarian. Before the Second World War, the library was well known for its comprehensive and rare collection of books and manuscripts including sources in Myanmar and Chinese. At that time it was one of the best university libraries in the Southeast Asia.

During the Second World War, the building and its valuable collections were severely damaged. After the war, U Thein Han (well-known poet, and writer Zaw Gyi) re-established the library. In 1964, under the new education system, University of Yangon Library was re-organized as the Universities' Central Library providing services to all universities and colleges in Myanmar. A new modernized building adjacent to the old one was completed in 1980. U Thaw Kaung served as Chief Librarian from 1969 until his retirement in 1997. In 1987, the old building was separated from the Universities' Central Library and re-established as University of Yangon Library. Now it was 88 years old, and it has been lead by Dr Hlaing Hlaing Gyi, Librarian, and 18 years experience in library filed.

University of Yangon Library could have been largely print-based in content, but some or parts of the operations and services could have been converted to digital and, hence the hybrid designation.
3.1.1 Missions of the library

- Enables students to acquire information management skills which support in pursuing the academic goals and knowledge;
- Enhances the professional growth of faculty by supporting teaching and scholarship endeavors;
- Provides professional intermediaries between users and information sources; and
- Provides high quality information services based on the needs of library users.

3.1.2 Services

University of Yangon Library has given 3 kinds of services to the academic staff and students. There are Traditional Services, Electronic Services, and Digital Service.

For the traditional services
- Catalogue card, close stack & open stack system
- Manual circulation system
- Inter-library loan system with academic libraries under the Minister of Education
- Phone answering is provided to scholarly inquiries

For the Electronic Services
- Locally developed Electronic Library (ELIB) software is being used to record the bibliographic information of each book in the library collection.
- 23,975 English books, 12,870 Myanmar books and 4,959 theses have been updated in the database and then it allows 188 rare books on Myanmar and over 3500 e-books.
- ADSL internet line is provided with wireless router and e-books are available. Eight computers are provided for users in the section. Clients can easily access Internet via wireless to their own laptops or notebooks or i-pads or hand phones within the library premises.

For the Digital Service
- Printing and CD copies are provided on request.

3.2 General Problems

The librarian was asked the problems the library was facing, if any, ranging from lack of professional staff to attitude of staff. As could be seen, lack of IT personnel had been identified as being the most problematic to the libraries. Lack of budget, lack of digital library initiatives, lack of IT training, underutilization of digital resources, renewal subscription of online databases, lack of suitable integrated library system, and lack of library space followed this. Generally, the library lacks professional staff, IT personnel, funds for digital project, digital library initiatives, IT training, suitable integrated library system, and library space; it also faces problem of digital resource utilization and renewal subscription of online databases.
3.3 Holdings/Collections

A library has about 100,000 monographs (including books, theses, and reports), 22 titles of journals and periodicals, over 3500 e-books and 100 of CD-ROM.

3.4 Automation

The library has installed the system, ELIB (Electronic Library) from 2001 to date. Analyzing the library's operational services in starting point, they could not operated OPAC, Web OPAC, online circulation, online acquisition, online registration, online Inter Library Loan, Online reservation, Online reference enquiry, Website services, Mobile Internet services, Smart Card, etc.

3.5 Training

The library's staff have been sent for short courses on introduction to computer, how to use internet and web, application software training, web design and homepage development, online searching skills, database management system, Information system development, telecommunication and networking, operating systems, and social media provided both in house and external. As for the duration of training, majority attended courses are from 1 week to 1 month.

3.6 Digitization projects

The library has ever carried out digitization projects, and they have digitized articles from selected journals, books, manuscripts, newspaper cuttings, thesis and dissertation by its own equipment. Data have been store in PDF files on CD and DVD. After the once digitized, data have not made available online through the website yet, because it does not has its own website. But it will be in the future. The library got a chance to provide offline and online databases are available on various subjects like EBSCO, Pro Quest, e-tekattho, e-library USA. Open Society Foundation supports some databases. The library encountered following problems during the digital and virtual library development: lack of understanding of the actual concept of digital and virtual library phenomena, too busy running the library that do not have the time to plan for digital development, digital proposal has been turned down, management is not very keen to digitization, too expensive, lack of suitable software and hardware, lack of collaborative works among libraries, lack of role model.

3.7 Librarians' Opinion

The librarians gave extremely positive about digital library development. They believed that digital library development has bright future in Myanmar and they thought users are willing and looking forward to be using all the new facilities without any problems. When asking for the digital format, they thought that it will finally dominate the entire library scene. They didn't have a plan to change their collection development policy; even they have being bought digital format. They felt that the information professionals are being threatened by the computer science professionals and traditional libraries are on the brink of extinction.
4. CONCLUSION

The University of Yangon is moving forward digital library initiation; librarians of the library have been both very enthusiastic and positive. It is headed by the person with PhD holder, have been working for 18 years in the library field, Dr Hlaing Hlaing Gyi, active and able to foresee the future trends and anticipate the forthcoming progress. The qualification, the position and experiences of library head does have some influence on the development of digital library.

It had installed local integrated library system, and is being used to record the information of the library holdings. The library has been embraced library automation, despite facing problems. There were six major problems faced, there are the lack of professional and supporting staff, lack of budget, lack of digital library initiatives, lack of library space, lack of IT facilities and ICT training, and lack of suitable integrated library system.

From the qualitative and quantitative findings, University of Yangon digital library development needs a lot more impetus to stand. According to the problems that they faced, it could be easily understand why only a small percentage of the library has done some kind of digitization work. But the library has a good working attitude and good collaboration among librarians.

University of Yangon is seemed to have embraced digital library concepts to some extent where digital library services and operations were permeating into the scene but more impetus were strongly needed to progress further due to the facts that as follows:

- the library still run by lack of professional librarians
- lack of supporting staff especially technical expertise on the subject and IT
- cannot fully in use of installed library system
- even the number of PCs owned and it not enough for the students who attending the UYL
- high dependency on IT personnel for technical support
- Minimum ICT training
- not have strong ICT infrastructure
- need to set up Web site
- digitization related problems were basic in nature (staff, budget, copyright act)
- there had been no significant change in the collection development policy
- there had been no concrete and long term digital library future plan
- there had been no international collaboration on digital library project as yet

The information produced by this research would be useful to the library, mother organization and her counterparts.
REFERENCES


