

## **Digital Learning Practices Using Through Online Resources in Higher Educational Institutions in the United Arab Emirates**

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### **Abstract**

*The objective of the present study is to observe how online databases supporting for digital learning practices in higher education institutions in the United Arab Emirates. 120 questionnaires were distributed among the colleges and universities. The study demonstrates that most of the libraries are using information and communication technology for maximum library operations. i.e collection management (RFID Technology enabled), online –based library orientations, electronic resources, cloud computing etc. This study found that the source of information, online resources and services are most important dimensions, and few respondents are not much comfortable with electronic learning. All the respondent is highly satisfied with implementation of digital learning. To make effective utilization of online resources the new facilities been launched such as mobile app, federated search and accessing of online resources through LMS etc. The study suggested that the feedback always helps to improve their services to the user community.*

*Keyword: Information services, RFID, remote access, digital learning, online databases*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Libraries are committed to provide access to a wide range of information resources to support learning, teaching, and research. Most of the libraries are adopted some best practices in internet-based library services and innovative services through internet-based technology. To enhance the library resources and services libraries are using advanced technologies such as mobile app, federated search, discovery services and LMS etc. to access the online databases both OFF and ON campuses.

In recent days, libraries have faced many challenges in providing information to the users due to lack of human resources and financial support (Liang & Chen, 2017). In United Arab Emirates, educational institutes give most importance to library resources and facilities, the library is an integral part of the overall university evaluation for the purpose of accreditation. At the same time, availability of information does not imply access and use. Educational libraries must address the primary need for their products and services (Popoola, 2001).

### **ACCESSING OF ONLINE RESOURCES THROUGH LMS**

Learning Management Systems is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting, and delivery of educational courses, training programs, or learning and development programs. In UAE libraries are providing up-to-date resources for university faculties and related areas through its hybrid collections i.e. books, print periodicals, CD/DVD's and e-resources (databases). Most of the academic institutes are heavily using Learning Management Systems (LMS) to maintain both students and faculty member's academic record such as attendance, assignment, course details, textbooks, reference books details, faculty details and other coursework etc. At the same time library's subscribed online databases will be integrated with college/university LMS and it could be authenticated through active directory to access the online resources both ON and OFF campuses. During the online classes LMS should be accessed through e-learning portal by both students and faculty members and it will be supporting to access the online resources.

### **Cloud Computing:**

Library provides the remote/cloud-based access the resources through library website, LMS (learning management system) and mobile app. In terms of cloud computing, the library subscribes to the product called DeepKnowledge portal and VitalSource. Deepknowledge portal is

a proxy server and it supports to web-based access and remote accessing of online resources as well as mobile application. This facility majorly helps the users to access the electronic resources on, and off-campus. Electronic textbooks procured from VitalSources and it can be accessed through ‘Bookshelf’ mobile app and Learning Management Systems (LMS).

### **Login Credential And IP Based Access**

Libraries are receiving user id and password to access the online their subscribed online resources for both OFF and ON campus access. At the same time online resources access been enabled with college/university’s IP and their library portal through active directory. To enhance the e-learning and maximize the utilization of library online resources the access will be authenticated with their e-learning portal.

### **Mobile Application And Federated Search For E-Learning**

Mobile App is a type of application software designed to run on a mobile device, such as a smartphone or tablet computer. Proxy server acts as a gateway between client and the internet. It’s an intermediary server separating end users from the websites they browse (Ezproxy). To enrich the library online resources and services libraries are using advanced technologies such as mobile app, proxy server and single window facilities etc. Knimbus and Deepknowledge mobile app/portal are using to access the online databases and VitalSource App supports to access the e-textbooks. EBSCO discovery services, ProQuest summon and WorldCat Discovery portals using for federated search. To maximize the utilization of library resources, mobile app, LMS and federated searching will be authenticated with their e-learning portal

### **Online Literacy Programs**

Libraries are effectively providing the users with the information literacy program through online and offline methods. The main objective of IL program is to promote about the library and services through video display, library website/webpage, social media, video conferencing, etc. with help of web-based technology. Online literacy programs will be enabled with university websites and their learning management systems (LMS).

## **REVIEW LITERATURE**

Chandrasekhar & Murugathas (2012) suggested that for improvement of library usage, selective dissemination of information service should be concentrated. Library plays an important role to enable the institute to achieve its objectives (Larson & Owusu-Acheaw, 2012). According to Vijeyaluxmy (2015), the Library services should be provided on electronic platforms to keep users comfortable. Potential services should be expanded for the betterment of users. The library should organize the orientation program regular intervals. (Veena & Kotari, 2016).

## **OBJECTIVES**

This study systematically examines the electronic-based resources and services supporting for e-learning higher education institutes in the United Arab Emirates. The researcher would like to know how effectively the electronic resources and services support by the respondents academic and research purposes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect data from college/University librarians in the United Arab Emirates. A survey was conducted with a sample of 120 questionnaires through simple random sampling method and the results were analyzed to fulfill the stated objectives.

## **ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### **Reliability Analysis**

The collected data was verified by Cronbach’s Alpha. Based on the formula  $\alpha = rk/[1 + (k - 1)r]$ , where k is the number of variable considered (9 in this case), and is the mean of the inter-item correlations. George, D., & Mallery, P. (2016) suggested that 0.7 an acceptable alpha value. As shown in the table below, all of Cronbach’s alpha was greater than 0.7. Therefore, it is assumed to have sufficient reliability.

### Reliability

Variables	$\alpha$
Source of Information	0.758
IT Infrastructure	0.702
Trained Professionals	0.747
Online Services	0.888
User Satisfaction	0.769

### Descriptive Statistics

The library services are measured with following dimensions: Source of Information, IT Infrastructure, Trained Professionals and Online Services.

#### Descriptive

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.
Source of Information	3.0611	0.744
IT Infrastructure	2.8672	0.886
Trained Professionals	2.92	0.722
Online Services	3.1608	0.769

The above table exhibits the users' satisfaction level of library services. Overall, the highest mean score with (3.1608) library online services and the second-highest with source of information (3.0611). Based on the mean score, the available trained library professionals and IT infrastructure meets the users' satisfaction level. This study found that the two most influential dimensions of Library Sources of Information and Online services.

### Usage Of Online Resources For E-Learning

The libraries are enabled the online-based resource access to the user community. The resources are IP based and integrated with library webpage, learning management system. However, the libraries are offering the cloud-based through Deepknowledge, VitalSource platform and mobile app. The survey evaluated the usage of online resources. The study reveals that the users are much familiar and comfortable with online as well as in offline access to the resources. The respondents have strongly agreed (46.08%) that online resources enhance their academic performance in the e-learning and the second-highest response is that the resources are easy to locate (39.13%) inappropriate time. At the same time, the respondents have agreed that the online resources help recent developments in the core field and are more helpful for professional and career growth.

### Evaluation Of E-Textbook Usage For Digital Learning

Users are proposed to procure the e-textbook, based on the print and electronic material cost. It was compared to print and the e-textbook cost is very minimum. Based on the librarian's recommendations, the library committee has approved the procurement of electronic textbooks based on the faculty interest. Maximum faculty members are more inclined to procure the e-textbooks instead of print copy. The study reveals that maximum number of respondents (88.56%) are comfortable with using e-textbooks, because it is easy to handle and save the time and space. Few respondents have pointed out that they are not much comfortable with electronic format. The study further reveals that they may not be familiar in recent trends or more comfortable in print materials.

**Satisfaction Vs Library Team**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
User Individual Attention	2.75	1.002	1.144	.222	.099	.440
Respond to Users Questions	2.83	1.019	.931	.222	-.386	.440
Technically Sound	2.76	.833	.844	.222	-.071	.440
Decision Making	3.12	1.144	.457	.222	-1.276	.440
Group Attention	2.87	.979	.698	.222	-.763	.440

Library professionals play an important role in academic libraries. Institutes spend or invest more for the knowledge. Library professionals need to be active in their workplace.

This study examined the library professionals are satisfying the library users on the basis of their need and approach i.e. Individual attention, respond to user’s questions, technically whether they sound or not, decision making, and attracting the user community. According to the mean score, the respondents felt that library professionals are very strong in decision making (M=3.12) whenever required and the second-highest score was M=2.87. The study inferred that among the parameters, library professionals are able to answer the users question (M=2.83). There was slightly lacking in users’ individual attention and should improve their technical skills according to the latest developments.

**Library Performance**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness		Kurtosis	
			Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Adequate Resources	3.63	1.134	-.329	.222	-1.293	.440
User Guide	3.68	.956	-.264	.222	-.831	.440
Training	3.66	1.123	-.306	.222	-1.274	.440
Usage	3.52	1.149	-.138	.222	-1.418	.440
Feedback	3.30	1.021	.186	.222	-1.099	.440

**The library performance was measured through five parameters**

1. Does library procure adequate resources based on the core subject and user recommendations?
2. Whether library have user guides for effective use of resources?
3. Does the library properly train users to use resources effectively?
4. Does library properly monitor the use of resource?
5. Does the library receive feedback regularly from the user?

The library performance is measured through these parameters. Respondents have strongly agreed that the library user guides for effective use of resources with the mean value of 3.68 and the second-highest response is that the library trains the users to use resources effectively with mean value of 3.66. This study found that library should concentrate more on the selection of resources and monitoring the usage of library resources. According to least mean score 3.30 IS indicate that the library should get regular feedback from users.

**CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study has investigated the library usage level of electronic-based resources and services in the e-learning. The study found that users are happy to access the e-content and library also perform very well to adopt the recent technology. Based on the analysis report, study found two most

influential dimensions of library's source of information and online services. In terms of online resources, respondents have accepted that the online resources help professional and career growth. While using the electronic textbooks, some respondents are not comfortable with electronic e-textbooks. The study pointed that they are more comfortable with print

materials compared with electronic format. This study recommended that library professionals have individual attention with library user community. Students should be motivated to use the library in frequent manner and they should get regular training. All the respondents are highly satisfied with library performances which reveals the commitment of services. It means library performing well in available resources and services. But, the library fails to get feedback from the user community. The study suggested that the feedback always helps to improve better services to the user community.

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