

What are the main obstacles that hinder the electronic systemization of Kurdistan public universities' libraries?

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Abstract: This research paper is an attempt to understand the computerizing process of the Kurdistan University's Central libraries. Libraries as an important element of any academic institution have existed since the establishment of Kurdistan Universities but their design and management are still classic. The current book classifications in the central universities are fully out-dated in a way that wastes too much time and effort to find a source, which can be performed with a single click if the libraries are computerized. But why that has not been done yet? There are many obstacles that hinder the process that have been discussed in this paper. First of all, the organizational structure is not helpful to the process as it lacks equipments, good electricity and internet. The libraries' staffs are not as professional as they should be, even the library graduates have gone through out-dated curriculum in the technical institutes. Furthermore, the technical barrier is another obstacle as most libraries sources in Kurdistan are in Kurdish and Arabic which they are difficult to encoding and detecting. Finally, the Kurdistan financial crisis has made the process impossible as these kind of projects cost a big budget and the KRG cannot allocate it in the moment.

At the end of the research some recommendations have been provided to the university's leaderships to eliminate the obstacles or at least minimize them.

Key Words: Central Library, Public Universities, Bottleneck, computerization, book classification.

Introduction

The organizational system in Kurdistan universities is a rather continuation and heritage of Iraqi outdated system. Back to the 1990s, the universities were fully centralized in terms of the four managerial functions (planning, organizing, leading, controlling). Now, in our current global age, Universities have no choice but to be independently competitive. This is due to the fact that the ministry of higher education in Kurdistan Regional Government(KRG) has urged universities to play their real role. on the other hand, the labor market demands skillful people and that requires universities to be independent otherwise they cannot fulfill the demands of the global market. Kurdistan universities have just started to search for a healthy way towards

development and competition. Despite the socio-political challenges, there are serious problems in universities' organizational structures.

One of the fundamental components of any educational entity is an effective and efficient library. A University library is important for education as the heart for the blood circulation. Shelby Foote has concluded the whole university meaning in having a good library by saying: "A university is just a group of buildings gathered around a library."(Foote 2015). It is the place where students and researchers try to approach the proved ideas to strengthen their knowledge. In the organizational structure of each Kurdistan University there is a directorate with is called "Central Library". These libraries are supposed to be the helpful centers for readers in terms of getting resources in an efficient and comfortable way. These libraries are still being dealt with by a classic managerial system that are not enough responsive and modern as they should be. There are several aspects that can be identified as weak points within the libraries management system but the main concern is the lack of ICT (Information and communications technology). This paper tries to explore the factors that hinder the systemizing process.

Research methodology

This paper is an attempt to discover the answer for some relevant questions to this issue. The research questions might sound simple but they have not been investigated by Kurdish researchers yet, therefore they are worth to be examined. It is always asked by readers, why the libraries are still being run by classic system? What are the barriers that make the computerization process difficult?

The research methodology will be more qualitative with some quantitative measures. The data and statistics of this paper will be purely primary due to the fact that there is a lack of resources in this field in Kurdistan region of Iraq. The data and statistics will be produced through personal observation, questionnaire and interviews.

Current situation of the libraries in KRG.

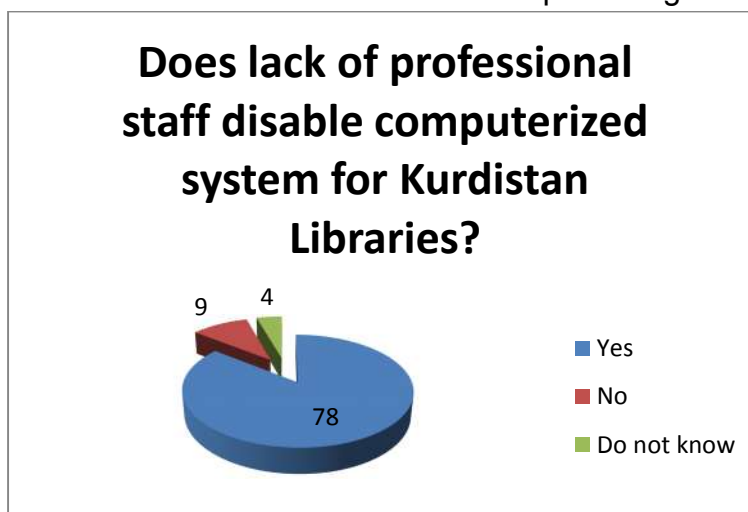
Kurdistan university libraries are managed with the same non-electronic systems as other university departments. The book classification system is completely classic; the central libraries are using Dewey dismissal system to classify the books. This classification focuses on the manual practices and employees' guidance. Readers do not seem comfortable nowadays with searching within the Dewey system. Users don't care about Dewey numbers, they want to be able to find things themselves easily and our online catalogs, building layouts and database vendors need to help patrons easily. The libraries have not been designed to be self-operating without too much human capacity in the ground. Instead, in each library borrowing window there is one or more people lending books to the readers. That kind of service delivery may create what is so called "Bottleneck" which is "A stage in a process that causes the entire process to slow down or stop" (Rouse M 2015). This can be easily seen in the University libraries, which may not be due to too much demand but it is the result of service inefficiency. Each library consists of several sections but the main ones are (purchasing, storing, cataloging and book circulation). All these sections are still being managed by non-electronic methods. For example, book cataloging and

classifications are totally manual, if someone wants to find a book he has to search through cataloged book lists. This is just a waste of resources it takes too much energy for the library management and it takes readers time as well. The reading documents can be categorized in computer databases and easily accessed. In addition, the book circulation process is another restricted access in which students should stand in queue to borrow a book; that is a slow and classic way of library service delivery. Despite the inefficiency of the libraries, in human resource wise that does not make any sense to employ ten people for book circulation while the work can be done by some machines and software. Furthermore, the availability of libraries is very time-limited. The libraries are only service-available during the academic working hours, while an online library can be accessed 24 hours. This helps the students and other readers to check the availability of materials and reserve them at home. "Some libraries believe that customers should come to the library—we can't [wait] for folks to come in to our buildings. We have to be extremely proactive and get out into our communities to show all the services we offer to support our communities." (Kretzmann J&Rans S. 2005).

Barriers of computerization

Staff:

Human resources are the dynamo of any organizational entity, the more they are professional the more they will be efficient. E-libraries need special people who love IT tools and can work with them. We are 10 employees and only 2 of us graduated from library college. The problem is not just the lack of people with library knowledge but the employees are lack of computer skills as well. Surprisingly these employees have not been offered any training to be familiar with new systems and tools. In a survey that has been conducted for this paper the majority of respondents identified lack of professional staff as an effective barrier in computerizing university libraries.



Also, Amed Demirhan who is a library expert believes the lack of professional staff in the Kurdish organizations is the number one problem in computerizing the university libraries. When it comes to staff training it seems that there has not been productive input. People who work in the university libraries are supposed to have some basic knowledge in library management and providing customer services. Despite of

having difficulties with skillful people they have not been trained. If we take University of Raparin as a sample: "out of ten library employees none of them has been trained" this is according to Shwan Hassan,2015) who is the director of central library at University of Raparin. "We need to train ourselves to be more knowledgeable about the new formats of digital materials we are offering. At my branch, we often refer user problems with e-readers and other devices to those staffers who own such devices personally or have experience with them. We all need to know how to address such queries." (Christensen, T., &Lægreid, P 87. 2005).

Organizational policy

Every organization has its own vision and mission then it builds policies and strategies on these two pillars. As Iraq is counted as a non-developed country it has not cared about performing an e-government system. If this can be put as blame, the main credit goes to the universities. The universities leadership has not been able to formulate a policy towards systemizing and computerizing the libraries. Among the four library directors of Kurdistan universities who have been interviewed for this paper only one of them admitted that his university policy includes e-library system. Others frankly expressed their concern about the lack of a clear policy regarding Central libraries. The ultimate goal of having a digitalized library is to provide a library service in a more efficient and effective way, but a will and strategy is crucial to succeed in this process.

Organizational layout and infrastructure

A clear barrier is the organizational layout which is not helpful to set up an electronic system. For example, architecturally speaking the buildings have shortage in a proper design for electric and cabling system, this issue should be considered in future constructions. This can be proved with some clear examples; university central libraries have not been designed in their actual locations. The place is not designed to be a library at all that is in terms of ICT facilities and construction. On the other hand, speaking on the electronic infrastructure, the Kurdistan universities are far from modern technology. As mentioned earlier, Shwan Hassan who is the director of the central library at the University of Raparin clarified that: "there is zero availability of electronic facilities in our central library to start the digitalization process" he continued: we need book tagging machines, reserve database, detecting machines etc... all these need to be provided and basic trainings for the employees to get familiar with using them. Sharma & Gupta2003:129) point out that "implementation of the whole e-government requires a strong technology infrastructure". In addition, generally speaking Kurdistan universities are poor in providing internet service not only within the libraries but inside the whole university campus. That has made the students being isolated from a quick searching process.

Technical barrier:

Some languages cannot be crawled and encoded. Central libraries in the Kurdistan universities are mainly felled with Kurdish sources that have made a kind of difficulty in developing a proper database. Both university of Sulamani and Koya have launched an online library in a free universal website but they have faced a technical obstacle. Dr.Dilan Majid(2015) who is the project supervisor explained that: "Kurdish

language is within the Arabic alphabetical family and these kind of languages cannot be encoded and detected easily” however they have made a Kurdish database and indexed most of the sources but when readers try the search function it is difficult to find the book!

Budget:

Budget is the key or it can be classified as the main key element to start any project. Now, Kurdistan Regional Government goes through a critical financial crisis that it even does not listen to such project proposals. According to the quotations that the University of Raparin has received from companies which are professionals in electronic libraries, the total cost of equipping, computerizing, bar-coding and training will be around \$15,000. That is a budget which cannot be allocated in a near future as the ministry of finance does not spend investment budget. In this financial crisis the universities are being financed with only a limited operational budget which only covers the daily expenses.

Conclusion

In brief, it can be said that Central Libraries in Kurdistan universities are classic management oriented. They are in the very beginning steps of thinking on digitalizing the process. These steps may face many difficulties in both aspects of human resources and ICT infrastructure. Furthermore, yet there is not a strategic planning to start the process and finalize it effectively. Having a digitalized library can be more efficient in providing library services. Some computerization barriers are related to lack of infrastructure, again it needs a will to afford the necessary facilities. Several recommendations can be presented to establish computerized central libraries. The essential human factors are lack of professional staff and the policy to develop some needed skills. Furthermore, an ICT infrastructure should be provided including IT design and hardware facilities. Finally, an efficient software program is needed to be adapted with some technical and cultural adaptation so as to be used by Kurdish students.

Recommendations

- There should be an organizational will and policy to change the library management systems from classic to modern electronic service, by digitalizing the service.
- University leadership should concern on staff trainings. The electronic system is something new for employees and students as well, therefore it is better to train the employees and then work on the implementation.
- Building a strong library infrastructure by bringing modern facilities and setting them up with professionalism.
- Providing internet access inside the university libraries at least to attract the students for searching and reserving books online.

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بوختەى توپژىنەوہ

ئەم توپژىنەوہىە ھەولئىكە بۇ تىگەيشتن لە گرفتەكانى بەردەم بە ئەلكترۇنىكىردنى كتيبخانەى زانكۆكانى كوردستان. كتيبخانە وەك يەكئىك لە رەگەزە گرنەگەكانى ھەر دامەزراوہىەكى ئەكادىمى لەگەل دروستبوونى زانكۆ حكومىيەكان لە كوردستان بوونىان ھەبووہ بەلام دىزاین و بەرپوہبردن و خستەنەگەريان زۆر كلاسكى بووہ و تا ئىستاش ھەر وایە. ديارە ئەم چەقبەستىوويە لە بەرەو پيشچوونىان بۇ چەند ھۆكارئىك دەگەرئیتەوہ كە لەم توپژىنەوہىەدا ھەولداوہ بخرئىنەروو. سروشتى ھەر كارئىك وایە كە زۆرجار بنىاتنانى پڕۆژەىەك ئاسانترە لە چاككردنى كارئىك كە زۆر كلاسكى بئىت. كتيبخانەكانى زانكۆكانى كوردستان لە پەرەوى سىستەمىكى كۆنى پۆلئىنكردن دەكەن كە كات و ئەركى زۆرە، ھەر ئەم سىستەمە وایكردووہ كە دۆزىنەوہى سەرچاوہكان كات و ماندوووبوونى زۆرى دەوئىت لە جىاتى ئەم سىستەمە دەكرئىت بە يەك كلىكى كۆمپىوتەرى بچىتە سەر ئەو سەرچاوہىەى كە بەدوايدا دەگەرئى. بەلام بۇ ئەمە ناكرئىت؟ سەرەتا دەبئىت بلئىن كە پىكھاتەى دامەزراوہىى بنىاى كتيبخانەكان شايستە نىن بە كتيبخانەىەكى مۆدئىرن، ھەر لە بىنا و پىكھاتەى كارەبا و ئىنتەرنئىت و كەرسەكانى تر. دووہم، ستافى كتيبخانەكان يان پىسپۆر نىن يان ئەگەر پىسپۆرپىش بىن لە بوارى كتيبخانە ئەو پەرپەكەى دەرچووى پەيمانگاياكەى تەكنىكىن كە سىستەمى خوئىندنىان تەواو كلاسكە. سەرەراى ئەمەناش، بەربەستى تەكنىكى ھەيە لەبەردەم بە ئەلكترۇنىكىردنى كتيبخانەكان ئەوئىش لەبەرئەوہى سەرچاوہكانى ئەو كتيبخانانە زياتر بە زمانى كوردى و عەرەبىن كە ئەمەش كۆدكردن و دواتر دۆزىنەوہىان لە سىستەمەكە قورس دەكات. قەيرانى داراى يەكئىكە لەبەرەستەكانى تر پروسەى بە ئەلكترۇنىكىردنەكە چونكە ئەم پڕۆژەىە بوجەىەكى زۆرى دەوئىت بە مەبەستى كرپنى كەل و پەلەگان، داتابەيس، سىرفەر، لەگەل راھىنانى ستاف.

لە كۆتايى توپژىنەوہكە، چەند پيشنارى و بەرچاوروبوونىەك دراوہ بە لايەنى پەيوەندىدار تا بتوانن كاريان لەسەر بكەن بە مەبەستى لابرەن يان كەمكردنەوہى بەربەستەكانى بەردەم بە ئەلكترۇنىكىردنى كتيبخانە ناوہندىەكان لە زانكۆكانى كوردستان.

خلاصة

هذا البحث هو محاولة لفهم عملية (كوميبيوترية) حوسبة المكتبات المركزية في جامعة كردستان. وقد وجدت المكتبات باعتبارها عنصرا هاما في أي مؤسسة أكاديمية منذ إنشاء جامعات كردستان ولكن تصميمها وإدارتها لا تزال الكلاسيكية. التصنيفات الحالية للكتب في الجامعات المركزية بشكل كامل هو كلاسيكية و مؤرخة في الطريقة التي النفايات الكثير من الوقت والجهد لإيجاد مصدر، والتي يمكن أن يؤديها مع بنقرة واحدة إذا كانت المكتبات المحوسبة. ولكن لماذا هذا لم يحدث حتى الآن؟ هناك العديد من العقبات التي تعترض العملية التي تمت مناقشتها في هذه الورقة. أولا وقبل كل شيء، الهيكل التنظيمي ليست مفيدة لهذه العملية حيث أنها تفتقر إلى المعدات والكهرباء جيدة والإنترنت. وقد ذهب المكتبات. الموظفين في المكتبات ليسوا المهنية بقدر ما ينبغي أن يكون، حتى خريجي المكتبة من خلال الدراسة يدرسون المنهج القديم في المعاهد الفنية. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن الحاجز الفني هو عقبة أخرى لأن معظم مصادر المكتبات في كردستان هي باللغة الكردية والعربية التي يصعب التشفير وكشف. وأخيرا، جعلت الأزمة المالية كردستان عملية مستحيلة لأن هذه النوع من المشاريع تكلف ميزانية كبيرة وحكومة إقليم كردستان لا يمكن إحالته في الوقت الراهن.

وفي نهاية البحث تم تقديم بعض التوصيات لقيادات الجامعة لتذليل العقبات أو على الأقل التقليل منها.