Challenges And Opportunities In The Library Automation

CHALLENGES

The first challenge in library automation is to develop the human resources in the USIM Library. This is because managing humans requires a variety of strategies and skills as each of the staff has multiple characteristics. The library automation at USIM Library is going to make it harder to change the negative thinking to positive among the staff and the concept of togetherness in the organization is important to ensure that all of the staff are motivated to work together for the advancement of the library. According to West Sussex Country Council (2010), modern technology has changed the way many people use libraries and because of this, the librarian at USIM Library has to embrace this challenge and accept that the library nowadays will be more different than it used to be. The library automation at USIM Library required professionals who have gained much knowledge about ICT and who have very potential about library automation software suites. They can't simply recruit new skilled professionals to do the job, but they can train the existing professionals in a library to take over the automation project. Hence, they require more committed professionals and need the right person who can motivate them to learn and expedite the same.

The second challenge that the librarian at USIM Library needs to face is related to the provision. This is because, in the early stages, the users either the students or the lecturers can just purchase the reference materials but since the situation is changing due to the library automation, it is harder for the users to purchase them. By using library automation, there is various software that needs to be purchased or subscribed by the library for user reference. The librarian might fear that this new way to purchase the reference at the library might change the users to keep using it but the studies such as the one by Oseghale (2008) on "Faculty Opinion as Collection Evaluation Method" have shown that users' participation in library services such as selection of library materials impacts the library positively. So, the librarian at USIM Library does not have to worry so much since the services provided by the library will be fully utilized by the users when they want it.

The second challenge leads USIM Library to have another challenge which is the cost that it needs to cover. In every library, the budget will always play a key role and it is the same for the USIM library. If the library is financially strong, it means that they can reduce the burden of paying the automation that they have used at their library. Subscribing the software and databases will add to the cost but since this is very necessary for the library, it needs to be done. If the library does not have this facility, sure it will impact the users and affect the reputation of the USIM Library. Moreover, USIM Library also needs to choose the hardware which is having high-end specifications, and the compatibility of the hardware should be a must. The library needs a server where they can host their data and high-speed internet for retrieving the data and all of this will add more to the cost. Under such a squeezing situation, the best option left with the libraries is to optimize their resources through extensive sharing (Tanvir, 2005) and fortunately, there is also a reference facility made between the libraries with other local universities. This method helps greatly to enable all parties to get maximum benefits.

4.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Even though there are many challenges to use library automation, opportunities are greater for them. One of the opportunities that USIM Library got after they installed the library automation is they created history as the first Public University in Malaysia to establish an Open Access Policy, which is the concept of unlimited free online information sharing and disseminating to increase access to the writings and research by USIM staff in various publishing media. With the Open Access implementation, USIM is expected to successfully achieve its agenda as stated in the mandate of the Vice-Chancellor 2019, which is to take more proactive steps through the ‘university for society’ approach.

The second opportunity in library automation is USIM Library can collaborate with open access pioneers and forerunners from around the world. If USIM Library can be a pioneer in academic Open Access publishing, it can raise its own name to the international level and the societies may also choose to become affiliated to one or more of their existing journals. Moreover, USIM Library also can be a part of the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute (MDPI) and can get all the benefits provided by them to the USIM Library users who used their services. It will also provide

The third opportunity in library automation is it enhances intellectual control along with new finding tools and support searching capabilities. The users can just use the automation that has been provided at the library to search for the information that they want. The other opportunity is the links are provided to access bibliographical tools. By using the library automation, if the users want to make the citation of the reference for their assignments, they can use the bibliographical tools provided by the library. The other opportunity is the duplication of information is easy for the librarian. They can just make a copy cataloging when the new arrivals arrived at the library. They don’t have to waste their time to make the original cataloging anymore.

5.0 CURRENT TECHNOLOGY USED BY USIM LIBRARY

Current technology used by USIM Library is they have provided three rooms that can be used by the users anytime that they want but before they want to use it, they have to fill the form first so that they would not have to clash with other people who want to use it. The first room is the theater room and USIM Library provides 2 units of them. These theaters rooms are designed specifically based on the cinema concept and are equipped with a white screen projector and sound system. The main room can accommodate up to 63 users while the other room can accommodate up to 36 people. The second one is the internet & multimedia zone and at this zone, the users can use the computers provided by the USIM Library. Each of the users will be given up to 1 hour and they can extend it if there is no reservation from other users but before they can use the computers, the users need to key in their staff or student matric number first for the data. All of the computers have the Internet and also can access the database and there are also specific multimedia computers in this zone to facilitate users to view the multimedia materials. Users also can use their own laptop at the computer desks since each of the desks are equipped with an electrical and networking socket. Other than that, all areas within the library premise are fully equipped with Wi-Fi. The service allows wireless Internet access all over the building to ease users. The third room is the audio room and this room is fully equipped with the audio set, headphones, a plasma TV, and the most comfortable couch in the library. It can accommodate up to 10 users at one time. The room allows users to listen and watch audio-visual material such as CD-ROM, VCD, and DVD. In order to use the room, reservations can be

made at the Multimedia Counter.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Nowadays, library automation has become a necessity for any library since it can provide better library services to their users and it also can maintain the library more properly which a manual library cannot do. Automation also growing in the reality in the libraries, so it is important for the library organization to always keep up-to-date with the new technology within their library. USIM Library also has done its best in implementing library automation even though there are some problems related to it but with all the positive thinking and hardworking staff, they can achieve more in the future.